The Right to a Space: Live Music Venues and the Dissonance Between Meaning Making and Cultural Commodification

By

AFSAR YASSAI-GONZALEZ
THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Geography

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

Approved:

David de la Peña, Chair

Eric Chu

Scott Valois Linford

Committee in Charge

2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

INTRODUCTION 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 4
- Globalization and the Commercialization of Culture 5
- Think Music! Music Cities and the Night-time Economy 8
- Music Venues as Meaningful Sites 14
- Threats 16

METHODS 19
- Positionality 19
- Methods 19
  - A Values Based Approach 24

CONTEXT 25
- Case Selection and Capacity: Small Live Music Venues 25
- Harvard Square 29
- Club Passim 33

FINDING VALUE 36
- Aesthetic & Material 38
- Social & Cultural 40
- Experiential 45
- Historical 46
- Economic 48

DISSONANCE: A DISCUSSION 51
- Right to a Space 55

CONCLUSION 58

BIBLIOGRAPHY 62

ABSTRACT

Music venues have increasingly become sites of cultural commodification as cities utilize live music culture as an anchor for urban branding to appeal to tourism and industry investment. However, branding and marketing strategies based on local cultural vibrancy neglect the needs and desires of the very communities which build the cultural depth being enclosed, leading to a loss of meaningful cultural establishments. Given the juxtaposition between cultural commodification and meaningful sites of cultural production, my research focuses on Club Passim, a local non-profit music venue in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as a case study to uncover the values and meanings ascribed to live music venues by various stakeholders including artists, audiences, venue staff, and business representatives. These values (aesthetic & material, social & cultural, experiential, historical, and economic) reveal the complexity surrounding the benefit of live music venues and capture the ways in which music venues are shaped by the interests of different stakeholders. I use David Harvey's "Right to the City" (2003) to discuss how the manifestation of these values in the built environment express certain claims on space. I argue that Club Passim's right to a space is based on a set of values which serves their local community and therefore functions as a site of meaningful cultural production.

INTRODUCTION

The global COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of live music for many people. Live music venues, as well as countless other 'non-essential' businesses, were forced to close their doors indefinitely as public health and safety measures fell into place restricting the gathering of groups. The loss of live music venues during this time was sorely felt not just by concert-goers, but also by performing musicians, booking agents, music teachers, live sound engineers, and all who work in the creation of live music events who lost their livelihood (Fürnkranz 2021; Roberts and Whiting 2021; Taylor et al. 2020). Not disregarding the loss of income of those involved in the production of live music, the closure of live music venues during the pandemic brought attention to their importance as social and cultural spaces where people experience belonging, identity formation, and community (Bennett and Rogers 2016; Gallan 2012; Hudson 2006; Johnson 2017). It also emphasized that the survival of music venues, especially small-scale venues, is a delicate balance between needing to succeed as financially viable businesses, while simultaneously prioritizing qualities which contribute to social and cultural cohesion, but are often not profit-driven, and are thus thought of as separate from economic qualifiers (Bennett and Rogers 2016; Johnson 2017; Whiting 2021). Articulating the ways that local music venues create this more intrinsic social and cultural value– which cannot directly or solely be measured through economic qualifiers– brings attention to the misalignment between the role of venues in people's lives and the ways in which they are perceived through economic terms.

I draw on cultural political economy to theorize how speculative financial capital encloses culture (Biebuyck and Meltzer 2017), and to contextualize music venues within greater processes of global culture circulation. I engage with scholars who understand small-scale music

venues as alternative sites of cultural consumption, even as contemporary globalization spurs gentrification, homogenizing neighborhoods by pricing out smaller venues. Although indispensable for its contributions to the recent study of music venues and night-time economies, this scholarship largely ignores geographic research in the United States. For example, current academic and professional research has focused on live music venues in Australia (Bennett and Rogers 2016; Ballico and Carter 2018; Gallan and Gibson 2013; Gibson and Homan 2004), the United Kingdom (Behr et al. 2020; Escher and Rempe 2021; Hudson 1995; Miller and Schofield 2016), Canada (Green 2018), and the Netherlands (van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019). If processes affecting the longevity and quality of live music venues are indeed global in scope, then we need to understand them through a more diverse geographical spread, especially by focusing on venues that exemplify tensions between cultural commodification and local place-making efforts. My research contributes to this body of work by centering on Club Passim in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as a case study illustrative of this tension. What values are ascribed to this live music venue by different stakeholders? And, how are these values realized in Cambridge's built environment?

By focusing on a single venue, I hope to better understand why Club Passim is meaningful to its various participants, and how this meaning or valuation informs both Passim's resistance to cultural commodification and homogenization, and its claims on space in Harvard Square as a local grassroots music venue. Through a series of interviews, I uncover what participants enjoy about live music, whether or not the venue makes a difference in this enjoyment, how this ties into their sense of belonging and community, and if greater changes to the neighborhood have impacted their experiences at Club Passim. I supplement my understanding of these interviews alongside information gathered from professional industry

reports to have a well-rounded grasp of how non-local entities such as Music Canada or the UK Music Census perceive the value of music venues on a more global scale. Pulling from both interviews and a content analysis of these reports, I inductively construct a list of values ascribed to music venues to understand how venues are appreciated. In compiling a list of values, my research demonstrates a complexity surrounding the valuation of live music venues by capturing the ways in which these venues are shaped by the interests of different stakeholders, and how this relates to claims on space in the built environment. I discuss these claims through David Harvey's "Right to the City" (2003) to capture how the built environment is reflective and tied to the prioritization of specific values over others. For instance, if economic value is prized, then one expression of the right to the city, or the right to access of the built environment and the ability to shape it, can be seen through the implementation of gentrifying policies and public-private partnerships which cater to consumers and new investors, increasing a locality's marketability and wealth at the expense of local communities. However, if social and cultural production is paramount, then the right to the city is expressed through the existence and support of meaningful cultural institutions like small music venues which foster a sense of local community cohesion, and provide space for the creation of art and creative social practices. I discuss how both of these claims on space are expressed in my case study, and the apparent tension that arises from claims on space born out of different value structures.

The following section introduces my theoretical framework through an overview of the literature on the effects of the global circulation of cultural ideas, norms, and aesthetics on music venues. Specifically, I focus on the cultural commodification and homogenization that occurs through this form of globalization and introduce two narratives: venues as sites of cultural commodification, and venues as sites of meaningful social and cultural experiences. This

theoretical framework is then followed by a section detailing my methodological and analytical framework, and a context section which describes information relevant to understanding my research. This includes a discussion on different types of venues, and a description of Club Passim as situated in the context of Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts. After this, I describe and analyze my results, which center on a list of five value categories gathered through interviews and a content analysis of industry reports. This section highlights tensions between value categories and discusses their implications on the built environment. By using David Harvey's "Right to the City" (2003), I discuss how a prioritization of certain values guides Club Passim to claim a space in Harvard Square which sits counter to cultural commodification.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My research engages two narratives around live music venues. The first narrative describes the broad processes of contemporary globalization and involves the ways in which money, knowledge, power, and culture are controlled and circulated by influential elite corporate players on a global scale. I specify this narrative by describing the commercialization of culture as a distinct tactic used by cities to participate in the global economy, leading to the eventual enclosure and homogenization of culture. The second narrative details the ways in which live music venues directly serve their participants outside of economic qualifiers and focuses on venues as sites of community formation, cultural creativity, and co-creation in the performance of live music. By structuring my theoretical framework this way, I set the stage for an analytical framework which centers on value assessments, capturing the ways in which different stakeholders ascribe value and meaning to live music venues. These two narratives, when viewed together through an analytic framework based in value structures, uncover the tensions apparent within different forms of valuation, and reveal the ways in which music venues can operate in a

value framework not directly motivated by profit. Furthermore, in outlining these values, I am able to discuss how their manifestations in the built environment express certain claims on space based on the needs and interests of different stakeholders.

A recent topic of interest within the fields of geography and urban planning, research on live music venues has focused on a variety of aspects within music ecologies, which are understood as the network of venues, studios, rehearsal spaces, music events, and social actors supporting the creation of live music (Behr et al. 2014; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019). Research on live music ecologies includes: the spatial mapping of venues and creative hotspots in cities (Brennan-Horley and Gibson 2009; Peters 2020; Wang and Zou 2021); the effects of different policies, such as noise and drinking restrictions, on venues (Carah et al. 2021; Gibson and Homan 2004; Homan 2019); music venues as sites of belonging (Gallan and Gibson 2013), identity formation (Gallan 2015), and community ownership (Bennett and Rogers 2016; Gallan 2012; Green 2018); the branding of music cities to generate cultural capital (Behr et al. 2020; Music Canada 2015; Homan 2019; Kong 1995; Waitt and Gibson 2009); and the different strategies used by venues to confront the pressures placed on them by the night-time economy (Carah et al. 2021; Kuchar 2021; Whiting 2021). As I discuss below, the interplay of these topics is brought together and better understood in conjunction with the processes of globalization that are specific to the circulation of culture.

Globalization and the Commercialization of Culture

Theories on the processes of contemporary globalization can be traced back to the 1970s, a time during which responses to various global financial and energy crises saw a shift towards financial deregulation in the United States and Europe. This era marked the beginning of what

are often referred to as neoliberal policies, shifting power from the state to private corporate entities (Harvey 1995). Simultaneously, the rapid development and rise of telecommunication technologies led to an increasing ease of the transfer of ideas and capital (Harvey 1995; Sassen 2015). Dematerialized from space, financial institutions were free to instantaneously coordinate their transactions and rapidly adjust to the changing needs of production and consumption without spatial or regulatory limitations (Harvey 1995). It is this intersection between neoliberal regulatory policies and rise of telecommunications which radical Marxist geographers and scholars such as Henri Lefevbre (2003), David Harvey (1978), Edward Soja (1999), and Saskia Sassen (1996, 2015), understood as catapulting the processes of globalization which dictates how knowledge, power, capital, and culture globally circulate. Furthermore, they highlight the profound effects this intersection continues to have in reshaping the development of cities and urban areas as localities structure themselves to serve corporate needs at the expense of economically powerless groups, raising questions around the imbalanced representation of different communities and populations in the built environment (Soja 1999; Harvey 1978; Zukin 2008).

With the reduction of state oversight and the ability to quickly transcend national boundaries, corporations gained the power to "command space" (Harvey 1995) by centralizing their influence where it best serves expansion and economic growth, a process which continues today (Soja 1999). Simultaneously, due to deregulation, state roles shifted towards "finding ways to promote a favorable business climate" (Harvey 1995, 10) in support of these corporate needs, often through tax breaks and subsidies, as they became more concerned with their competitiveness in the global arena (Harvey 1995). Together, these developments form the private-public partnership that shapes the way speculative capital lands in place, dictating where

and how global corporations choose to do business. Additionally, these corporations depend on what has been referred to as the “corporate service complex" (Sassen 2015, 653), a network of legal, accounting, and marketing firms which provide the high-level services needed to operate across national borders. Included with this agglomeration of services is a workforce of highly skilled employees who have specific needs and expectations for the type of lifestyle that urban centers can provide, further impacting the built environment as cities change to provide these amenities to a desired class of elite corporations and their workforce (Sassen 2015). Most obviously, this is seen in the process of gentrification, as high-end corporate shops replace local businesses, trendy restaurants and cafes invite the refined palate, and luxury apartments promise walkability to the best amenities, disregarding the needs and desires of existing communities (Gibson and Homan 2004; Greenberg 2009; Hudson 1995; Zukin 1996). In sum, during this contemporary late capitalist phase of urban political economy, the flow of the global circulation of knowledge and finance is dictated by particularly powerful corporate actors who have a vested interest in shifting the political-economical landscape to suit *their* interests and *their* needs.

This corporate catering becomes problematic precisely for the ways in which it influences municipalities to shape themselves to corporate needs. The impacts of this globalizing process and circulation of a particular kind of knowledge can be seen in the homogenization of the built environment as localities participate in similar marketing and branding strategies to attract the same speculative capital. Again, this strategy derives from the fact that due to deregulation and the rise of corporate power, states require a competitive edge to participate in the global economy (Harvey 1995; Sassen 2015; Zukin 1996). In addition to providing tax breaks and subsidies as economic incentives to attract corporations and their investments, municipalities engage in urban branding practices to market a specific urban image, one based on the

consumption of culture and leisure for tourism and business (Greenberg 2009; Swyngedouw and Kaïka 2003). This strategy of capitalizing on creative and cultural communities of urban life is perhaps more famously advocated by Richard Florida, an urban studies theorist who argues that cities should strive to attract a new class of person, the 'creative class,' composed of white collar professionals, technology workers, and creatives who not only consume cultural products for leisure, but more importantly, signal to adjacent industries and other members of the creative class that urban areas are worth investing in (Florida 2003). Florida's 'creative class' concept unquestionably makes clear that creativity and culture should be directed to serve economic development. Put more succinctly, the process of cultural consumption, and the larger economic benefit it brings, captures the way that "culture is more and more the business of cities – the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge" (Zukin 1996, 350).

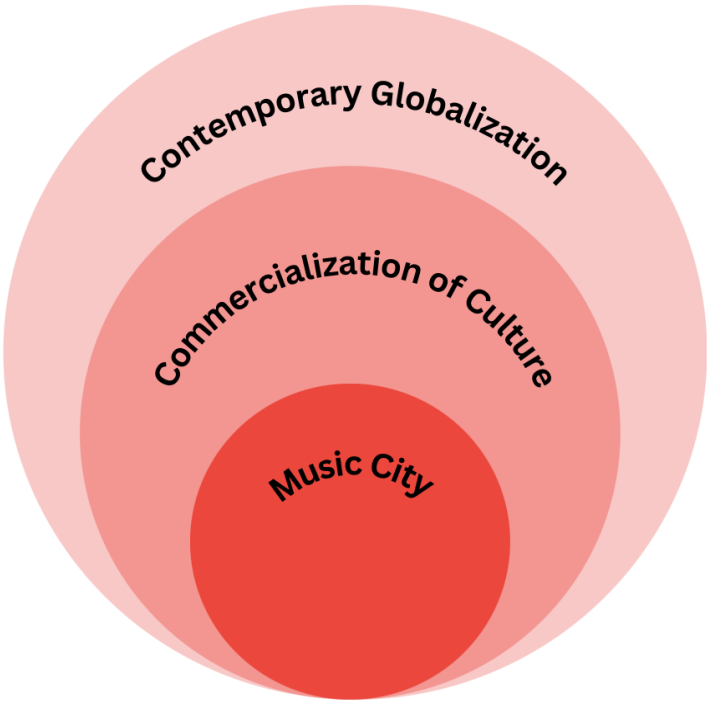
Think Music! Music Cities and the Night-Time Economy

The development of Music Cities present a salient example of the way cities capitalize on local culture to advertise to a global audience of investors. Modeled after private sector corporate branding, urban branding aims to provide a specific consumable image of the city to heighten economic competitiveness (Greenberg 2009). It is a tactic used by entrepreneurial cities to signal to corporations, who are looking for a more profitable and desirable place to land, that they are worth investing in as a site for establishment (Greenberg 2009; Swyngedouw and Kaïka 2003). Often achieved through the selective commodification and development of desirable cultural components, urban branding can take many forms, but tends to highlight a sanitized, idyllic, and profitable version of the culture it is capitalizing on. City branding then, is an intentional effort to recruit a different type of person than already exists there, otherwise, the need to globally market

a specific image would not be necessary. As I will discuss throughout my work, the effects of this branding lead to the homogenization of culture as much as they do the homogenization of space (Swyngedouw and Kaïka 2003).

'Music city' is a self-appointed designation which generally describes localities that have a vibrant music scene and network of infrastructure to support music making, including recording studios and rehearsal spaces, as well as venues and captive audiences (Homan 2019; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019). More than highlighting the presence of a vibrant music ecology, the moniker of 'music city' is tactfully employed to signal to powerful cultural producers and consumers the existence of a vibrant music economy (Music Canada 2015), marking the enclosure, or commodification of this culture. The following quote, taken from the industry report notes: "The Mastering of a Music City" spotlights this branding as a deliberate strategy to appeal to a very specific and elite audience: "Are you looking to draw tourists to your city? Attract tech firms and the bright, young people they employ? Build your city's brand? Think music!" (Music Canada 2015). The underlying premise of this quote, much like Florida's creative class (Florida 2003), is that creative and cultural hubs should primarily serve economic development.

Figure 1: Contemporary global processes result in the commercialization of culture, of which the branding of Music Cities is an example.



The emphasis of economic development placed on branding strategies based on music culture can be further understood in conjunction with local night-time economies. Put simply, the night-time economy involves any economic activity that takes place after regular business hours (Diplomacy and Seijas 2017). This activity is generally profit motivated and involves "leisure, entertainment, and drinking spaces [which are] increasingly corporatized and monopolized" (Gallan 2015, 556). Because live music venues provide evening entertainment and often depend on alcohol sales to pay their overhead (Carah et al. 2021; Homan 2019), they are increasingly crucial components to any night-time economy, especially in those areas which have adopted the moniker "Music City" (Music Canada 2015; Homan 2019). By aiming to bolster the nighttime economy, localities ensure that the built environment is almost constantly economically productive. Part of the appeal of the world's most competitive and high profile cities such as New York, London, or Tokyo is that they are economically active 24 hours a day, switching

between their day and night time economies to maximize the use of their space and resources, reinforcing the notion that in order to participate in the global market, cities must prioritize economic expansion (Amin and Graham 1997; Amin and Thrift 2007; Gibson and Homan 2004; Sassen 2001). One consequence of these efforts to bolster the night-time economy through branding is that they increasingly corporatize and monopolize the cultural institutions that comprise the night-time economy. As such, they tend to have a homogenizing effect both in the built environment as different cultural and entertainment spaces begin to look the same, and culturally, as they begin to offer the same type of experience (Ballico and Carter 2018; Carah et al. 2021; Gallan and Gibson 2013). I turn to an example to capture this process in more detail.

In 2006, a Special Entertainment Precinct (SEP) was created in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia as an effort to ensure the longevity of live music venues in the area (Carah et al. 2021). This was most notably accomplished through policy changes which allow the amplification of live music within an area containing a high density of venues, bars, and clubs (Carah et al. 2021). Such policies are significant because generally, noise emanating from venues or nightclubs is considered a nuisance to surrounding residential areas, and complaints about noise have the potential to lead to the closure of venues if they are not able to upgrade their infrastructure to continue operating under noise restrictions (Behr et al. 2020; Carah et al. 2021; Green 2018; Pan and Pafka 2021). New and existing establishments recognized the precinct designation and its lax noise restrictions as a guarantee of the area's longevity as an entertainment district, and responded by further investing in the precinct through the opening of new clubs and venues, or the expansion of existing venues to cater to a wider audience (Carah et al. 2021).

Although well meaning, the SEP designation opened the door to hyper-commercialization and the consequent homogenization of venues and establishments located in the district. As the

precinct grew “denser and more consolidated around late-night trade” (Carah et al. 2021), visits to the area centered on experiencing the precinct as a whole, rather than orienting around going to a niche or scene specific venue. Consequently, the new venues and clubs that moved in or expanded, began catering to the brand or identity of the entire precinct, rather than trying to claim a unique space and role within the precinct’s cultural and physical landscape (Carah et al. 2021). Venue owners and promoters began catering to the wider precinct audience by booking DJ’s after original live music performances in effort to diversify audiences, sell more drinks, and become part of the wider precinct brand (Carah et al. 2021). These operating decisions not only blurred the distinction between live music venue and nightclub, but also maximized the hours of operation towards a greater profit (Carah et al. 2021), much in the same way that localities invest in their night-time economies to stretch hours of productive economic activity.

The above example serves to highlight the ways in which municipalities and private cultural establishments are intertwined in the commodification of culture towards expansion. Originally developed to ensure the viability of predominantly scene-oriented venues (Carah et al. 2021), the SEP transformed the precinct into a ‘city-as-museum,’ a phrase used to describe how globalized corporate cities have become nothing but ‘commodified spectacles’ based in consumption (Swyngedouw and Kaïka 2003). This is seen in the way patrons began viewing the SEP as the desired experience and destination, rather than a place where unique venues and clubs are located (Carah et al. 2021). Not limited to the SEP in Brisbane, this pattern can be observed in music and entertainment venues more widely, highlighting the prevalence of the homogenization and commodification of musical cultural establishments: Bourbon Street in New Orleans, Broadway in Nashville, or 6th Street in Austin.

The development of designated entertainment districts is tied to 'music city' branding strategies in that they both make claims on the types of cultures, images, and communities that are allowed to exist. Referred to as the symbolic economy, this growth of cultural commodification and consumption dictates not only how localities should look and feel, but also how they should be consumed and by whom (Zukin 1996). In other words, cities are where culture is produced for those participating in leisure and the consumption of goods, networks, services, amenities, and spaces that fuel economic growth at all scales (Amin and Graham 1997). This sort of hegemonic restructuring, a combined effort between real estate developers, local governments, chambers of commerce, and tourism boards, corrals unique cultural communities and organizations into commodifying practices, often threatening their demise if they do not participate within these structures of urban growth (Carah et al. 2021; Johnson 2017).

David Harvey reflects on such hegemonic practices in "The Right to the City" (2012), where he describes the built environment as a reflection of the type of people we want to be, and by extension, the type of world we want to live in. For Harvey, a right to the city includes agency or "shaping power over the process of urbanization" (Harvey 2012, 2). But if cities, as I have shown, are shaped by contemporary global processes and function predominantly as spaces of consumption catering to the needs of the economically powerful, then this agency, or right, is not generally exercised except by those wielding such power. However, as the following section describes, certain types of music venues, predominantly local small-scale ones, operate as sites of meaningful cultural production and exercise their own right to the city.

Music Venues as Meaningful Sites

Up to this point I have described the interplay between the profit driven influences of the global circulation of culture on cities and their music ecologies. Specifically, I have focused on the ways in which a desire to compete as a global city manifests in the commercialization of culture, using music ecologies and entertainment districts as examples. However, utilizing cultural and creative hubs as an anchor for urban branding to appeal to tourists, new residents, and industry investment neglects the needs and desires of the very communities which build the cultural depth being enclosed, and actually threatens them (Carah et al. 2021; Greenberg 2009; Hudson 2006; Zukin 1996). Despite this lack of acknowledgment, there is a simultaneous local counter narrative which focuses not on the commodification of music venues, but on the ways that they function as meaningful sites of cultural production and community ties. I turn now to this second narrative and provide an overview of how music venues add meaning to people's lives.

Undoubtedly, live music venues serve as establishments for leisure and entertainment, which as described above, is in part what makes them susceptible to market enclosure. But more than "neutral containers"(Green 2018, 88), live music venues are host to a number of qualities which make them meaningful in ways not acknowledged in their commodification. Venues function as "gathering sites that assist in fostering a collective identity, and in which shared interests, concerns and goals are emphasized" (Green 2018, 88). They are places for community and identity formation, self-expression, and belonging (Gallan 2015; Gallan and Gibson 2013; Green 2018; Behr et al. 2014), emotional attachment and collective memory formation (Bennett and Rogers 2016). Research on the Oxford Tavern in Wollongong, NSW, Australia, captures how venues serve as sites of diverse night life experiences for youth transitions during rites of passage

(Gallan 2015), in addition to providing consistent performance opportunities for local bands who otherwise would not be given the chance to play elsewhere (Gallan 2012). Similarly, research on the punk scene in Vancouver, BC, Canada, reveals the ways in which venues garner a sense of community ownership by providing niche countercultural spaces for communities that exist outside of the musical and nightlife mainstream (Green 2018).

Additionally, venues are sites for relationality and reciprocity between audience members, artists, and venue staff (DeChaine 2002; Ingold 2009; Kuchar 2021), providing opportunities for the creation of affective and novel experiences. They are some of the only spaces where performer and audience are intentionally and simultaneously in the same physical location together for the common goal of creating and experiencing live music (DeChaine 2002; Swarbrick et al. 2018). If we understand that the product of any live musical performance is singular to that instance and co-created between all the people in the room at that moment, then the relational potential of venues is further heightened. Any piece of music played live will be singular to that room, that night, that audience, because the nature of live performance is such that performers and audience members respond to each other making each performance a meaningful interaction between audience and performer.

Yet, despite these qualities which exist outside of economic qualifiers and arguably comprise a large portion of what it means to experience live music, it is notoriously challenging to measure to what degree music venues contribute to feelings of belonging, or community ownership (Behr et al. 2020; Carah et al. 2021; Whiting 2021). This is due to the fact that there is no set standard or unit with which to measure such feelings, nor do they mean the same thing to everyone who experiences them. It is for this reason that some have suggested that rather than try to quantify such qualities, it is better to collect people's experiences as “self-evidential”

(Parkinson et al. 2015). The concept of "value as meaningful action" further establishes this point and posits that "value is determined by people's actions, which both reveal and confer meaning" (Taylor 2017, 191). Understanding these experiences and characteristics of engaging with live music venues as meaningful in and of themselves then reveals a mode of creating value not exclusively based on economic qualifiers. It states that there is value in the co-creation of live music performance between audience and artist, or finding community in music scenes outside of the mainstream, even despite the difficulty of measuring and packaging these experiences as consumable products.

The tension created between the ways in which live music venues are used toward city branding and economic expansion, and the ways in which they are meaningful to their participants and communities, is the central focus of my research. My case study references the same urban strategies which dictate a specific use of space when discussing Harvard Square's identity founded on historical culture, and the way in which Club Passim, as a local and historical folk venue is entangled in this culture. Specifically, I address what these tensions tell us about the different types of value ascribed to live music venues by different stakeholders, and how these values manifest into claims on the built environment. Before understanding this dissonance as realized through my data, I briefly discuss them as they appear in the literature below.

Threats

Given the various ways in which venues are more than "neutral containers," there is specific concern regarding the threats to those venues which do not prioritize reshaping themselves to cater to the commodification of music culture. As previously described, this

commodification is set in place by global processes which promote a specific type of cultural consumption and urban branding tactics which aspire to meet this standard, resulting in a sterile and homogenized cultural landscape. As localities shift to accommodate the new 'creative class' and further engage in specific branding tactics, venues are faced with a choice to cater to experiences which are more easily commodified, or risk closure, leading to the loss of meaningful and unique establishments (Carah et al. 2021; Green 2018; Johnson 2017; Whiting 2021). This section highlights how this tension manifests in specific decisions venues must make, and the ways in which venues where profit is secondary to their social and cultural characteristics, are particularly threatened.

Venues that don't cater to market demands face specific financial pressures both directly through rising rents, and more indirectly through regulatory frameworks. Affordability becomes an increasing challenge as gentrification, brought on by urban branding practices and the arrival of new investment, becomes more prevalent leading to higher overhead costs (Ballico and Carter 2018; Behr et al. 2014, 2020; Green 2018). Obstacles around regulatory frameworks primarily involve the amplification of sound (Behr et al. 2014; Parkinson et al. 2015; Webster et al. 2018) and the serving of alcohol (Gibson and Homan 2004; Homan 2019; Music Canada 2015), both of which require prior city approval and involve permitting processes. This predicament becomes especially troubling for venues when new residents of recently gentrified neighborhoods file official complaints against them for violating noise restrictions, and encouraging public disturbance caused by alcohol consumption at venues (Homan 2019). Subsequently, the onus falls on venues to address these complaints by upgrading their sound-proofing infrastructure to regulate noise levels (Homan 2019), hiring security guards to manage unruly behavior (Carah et

al. 2021), or restricting alcohol sales to regulate the consumption of alcohol, all of which have financial consequences for venues (Carah et al. 2021; Whiting 2021).

Detailing these challenges highlights that they are more pronounced for small-scale or independent music venues, and serves to illustrate globalization's homogenizing effects as unique venues which don't have the financial capacity to adapt to market and regulatory demands without sacrificing their cultural integrity, face closure as corporate venues expand. For instance, a small venue which prioritizes supporting local developing artists is less likely to have available funds for costly sound proofing upgrades than a venue which books musicians based on their capacity for ticket sales (Johnson 2017). In this example, the smaller venue is choosing not to maximize profit, and instead focusing on supporting their local network of musicians, while the venue which prioritizes ticket sales is operating towards making a large profit. Additionally, because the number of ticket sales is tied to the capacity of a venue, that is, how many people can physically fit in the space, larger venues tend to focus their energies on increasing ticket sales (Green 2018; Whiting 2021). Since operating costs tend not to differ greatly from venue to venue (Live DMA 2020), larger venues have more at stake if their audience is not as close to capacity as possible. In other words, being at 75% capacity is markedly different for a venue which holds 100 people, than for a venue which holds 3,000.

In short, large venues are not as threatened by the challenges that come with the commercialization of live music *because* they directly participate in this profit motivated commercialization, and therefore have the financial capacity to adapt. Those venues which choose not to participate struggle to exist in a market-driven context without actually participating in the commodification of music venues (Behr et al. 2014; Parkinson et al. 2015; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019). Consequently, we see the homogenization of the built

environment and loss of unique cultural spaces as large venues, with the ability to adapt and expand, overtake more meaningful and culturally relevant venues. These threats culminate to pose specific challenges to smaller venues more oriented around meaning making, rather than maximizing profit, and result in the loss of unique niche establishments as venues either alter their programming to cater to commercial interests, and in the process, gain financial flexibility, or risk closure.

My theoretical framework has presented two distinct narratives situated in the context of the global circulation of culture, for how to approach the valuation of music venues. The first brings to light the ways in which venues are enclosed and used as a means towards city branding and economic gain, while the second narrative focuses on how venues are important in and of themselves for the ways in which they contribute to social and cultural meaning making. In outlining these two narratives, the question about how live music venues are valued by different stakeholders becomes apparent, and serves as the basis for understanding my research, which specifically addresses the different types of value ascribed to venues, and presents a platform to discuss the implications of these different values.

METHODS

Positionality

This research is particularly meaningful to me not only because I enjoy participating in the creation of live music and spending time in live music venues, but also because Club Passim, the focus of my case study, is personally important. It is a venue through which I formed close professional and personal connections, found a musical community, and rekindled my love for live music as an adult. I have attended many of their concerts, taken multiple classes at their

community school of music, and was eventually employed there as a performance manager. These experiences provide me with first-hand knowledge in many of the topics I engage with throughout this paper, and allow me to have more intimate and personal conversations with my participants.

Methods

Using data gathered through interviews and document analysis, my research follows a qualitative mixed methods approach centered around a single case study to offer insight on the meanings and values different stakeholders ascribe to live music venues. Using Club Passim in Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts as my case study, research participants include those stakeholders involved with the live music venue. Given the small scale of the venue, I used Creswell and Poth's maximum variation approach to select interview participants because it prioritizes differences among selected participants (2007). By intentionally differentiating selecting criteria, I better ensure a diverse range of perspectives and a more comprehensive picture of my case study (Creswell and Poth 2007). A total of 7 semi-structured, face-to-face and virtual interviews were conducted between 2022 and 2023 with a variety of participants ranging from audience members, staff, performers, patrons, and former employees of Club Passim, in addition to representatives from the Harvard Square Business Association. Attempts to interview and include perspectives from the City of Cambridge and Harvard Real Estate, did not receive any response. In accordance with university policy, I went through the IRB approval process to ensure ethical treatment of my human subjects.

Given my familiarity with the venue as a former employee, audience member, and school of music student, my first round of interviews was conducted with participants with whom I had

a pre-established relationship. For this reason, I sought to keep these interviews conversational, informal, and spacious enough to be participant driven. I maintained a more formal tone for the interviews in which I did not already know the participants, and utilized the snowball sampling method to identify and recruit new participants based on the recommendation of existing participants (Creswell and Poth 2007).

Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately one hour, and depending on the participant, followed a different interview script. For those participants who are, or have been directly involved with Club Passim (staff, performer, patron, or audience member), I used three loose categories to guide the interview: the participant's thoughts and experiences with live music in general; the participants's thoughts and experiences with Club Passim; and the participant's thoughts and experience as they pertain to Harvard Square. Those participants who are not involved with the immediate functions of Club Passim, but are considered stakeholders for the ways in which their respective organizations and institutions interact with Club Passim, were asked about the role of live music venues in the city of Cambridge and Harvard Square, the value they ascribe to the different organizations in the city of Cambridge and Harvard Square, and the type of community they aim to foster in the city of Cambridge and Harvard Square.

Table 1: A list of interview participants and interview date used in my case study.

Interview Participants		Interview Date
1	Passim Audience Member	8/1/22
2	Passim Booking Agent	8/2/22
3	Passim Club Manager	8/2/22
4	Passim Executive Director	12/6/22
5	Representative of Harvard Square Business Association	1/25/23

Interview Participants		Interview Date
1	Passim Audience Member	8/1/22
2	Passim Booking Agent	8/2/22
3	Passim Club Manager	8/2/22
6	Performer and Passim Staff	11/11/22
7	Former Passim Staff	1/31/23
8	City of Cambridge	Attempted
9	Harvard Square Real Estate	Attempted

Although the majority of my data comes from the case study and semi-structured interviews, contextual research includes an analysis of seven industry reports, released by a variety of public and private organizations. These reports were selected through key terms searches and snowballing, and are included in my research process as a way to ground the case study in a wider context, and to understand how live music venue stakeholders in 'global' cities understand and define the value of live music and live music venues. By understanding this perspective, I am able to capture a more nuanced understanding of the role of live music venues at different levels of involvement and compare them to information gathered from the interviews. Since part of my aim is to highlight the diverse forms of valuing live music venues, it is important to include stakeholders who have different audiences in varied capacities which speak to both the dynamics of global processes as previously described, and more local music ecologies. Generally speaking, the industry reports cater to larger audiences who wield more decision making power, and place the value of live music in connection to global concerns, whereas the case study captures a specific and local perspective. The information gathered from these reports is not presented in one specific section of this paper, but rather is found throughout and used to support the theoretical framework as well as the context and discussion of my data.

Table 2: Inspired and adapted from Hoeven and Hitters 2020, this table displays the different industry reports used to inform my research.

Professional Industry Reports			
Title	Year of publication	Geographical Scope	Contributors
The Mastering of a Music City: Key Elements, Effective Strategies and Why it's Worth Pursuing	2015	Global	Presented by IFPI (International Federation of Phonographic Industry) and Music Canada in association with Midem
Understanding Small Music Venues: A report By the Music Venue Trust	2015	United Kingdom	Commissioned by the Music Venue Trust with; The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance; Arts Council England; Independent Venue Week; Music Venues Alliance ; UK Music; The Southbank Center
Valuing Live Music: The UK Live Music Census 2017 report	2018	United Kingdom	Authors: Emma Webster, Matt Brennan, Adam Behr and Martin Cloonan with Jake Ansell; In association with: Musicians' Union; UK Music; the Music VenueTrust
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Music Venues and Clubs in Europe	2021	Europe	Live DMA; Creative Europe Program of the European Union
A Guide to Managing Your Night Time Economy	2017	Global	Sound Diplomacy and Andreina Seijas
The Cultural Value of Live Music From the Pub to the Stadium: Getting Beyond the Numbers	2014	United Kingdom	Authors: Dr Adam Behr, Dr Matt Brennan & Professor Martin Cloonan; In association with: Arts and Humanities Research Council; UK Music; Musicians' Union; PRS for Music

Professional Industry Reports			
The Survey: Live Music Venues & Clubs in Europe- Facts and Figures	2020	Europe	Live DMA; Creative Europe Program of the European Union

Both interview data and industry reports were analyzed using an inductive approach where a pattern of meaning is established from the ground up rather than from a predetermined theory or framework (Creswell and Poth 2007). This process consisted of reading over both interview scripts and industry reports in search of patterns and emergent themes. After establishing these themes, the data from both interviews and industry reports were analyzed and used to compile a list of five specific value categories ascribed to venues: 1) Aesthetic & Material; 2) Social & Cultural; 3) Experiential; 4) Historical; and 5) Economic. My data analysis and discussion takes these themes and captures the nuance of what it means to value live music venues, specifically focusing on the tension that is found within overlapping value frameworks.

Values Based Approach

Categorizing different forms of value allows for a systematic comparison of value-based significance across various stakeholders, that is having value categories and understanding how different stakeholders engage with these categories allows for a way to examine the importance of each category to a specific stakeholder. It also allows for a discussion on how more intrinsic forms of value, namely the social and cultural merits of live music venues, relate to instrumental value, or get exchanged for a different type of value (Whiting 2021), and highlights the difficulty of describing and measuring intrinsic forms of value that are arguably more meaningful for venue participants (Behr et al. 2014; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019, 2020). Covering a broad

range of values provides an in-depth and nuanced understanding of why music venues are meaningful to their participants. Furthermore, it both reveals a choice for venues to decide what values they want to prioritize, giving them agency for how far they lean into commodifying practices, and provides a lens through which to view claims on the built environment made by different stakeholders.

CONTEXT

Case Selection and Capacity: Small Live Music Venues

With the exception of live streaming that took off during the COVID-19 pandemic due to gathering restrictions, live musical performance primarily occurs in designated physical spaces. Varying to many degrees, music venues can be found in small and independent establishments (Bennett and Rogers 2016), large corporate owned spaces (Carah et al. 2021; Gallan 2015), national chains such as the House of Blues, unofficial venues which double as residential basements and back yards (Green 2018; Johnson 2017), stadiums (Behr et al. 2014), temporary stages like those found at festival grounds (Hiller 2014; Emma Webster and McKay 2016), bars and pubs (Carah et al. 2021), dedicated art buildings (Escher and Rempe 2021), and hotels (Gibson and Homan 2004), along with many other iterations. In addition to providing infrastructure for live music performances to take place, venues also act as physical anchors for music scenes. Genre specific venues become epicenters for both musicians and audience alike (Green 2018), oftentimes forming part of a larger circuit of venues serving as crucial infrastructure for touring musicians (Miller and Schofield 2016).

Despite the variety of morphologies of music venues listed above, venues are often categorized based on their capacity, specifically when in reference to their size. Considering fire

safety and emergency exits, and accounting for the number of employees working during any given shift, this number generally equates to the maximum number of tickets which can be sold every night, or the number of bodies needed to have a sold-out show. Although the physical capacity of a venue is a straightforward metric to define the size of a venue, the range of what capacity differentiates between a small, medium, or large venue is inconsistent and not agreed upon. A small capacity venue has been defined as less than 500 (Whiting 2021), 30-100 (Johnson 2017), and under 350 (Webster et al. 2018). The same trend of inconsistency can also be seen for medium and large venues. More important than these inconsistencies, the concept of capacity fails to capture the experience of what it *feels* like to be in these different sized venues. Because my research focuses on what is often considered a small-scale venue and seeks to capture the nuances of what makes small-scale venues meaningful, and because small-scale venues are the most vulnerable to urban pressures, it is important to discuss what is meant by small-scale, and how various definitions of "small" lead to distinct interpretations of value.

Oftentimes, small-scale venues are niche and genre specific, with hyper-focused music communities (e.g. Passim and the folk scene, or the Punk community in Green 2018) that contribute to the cultural diversity and social capital of their region (Green 2018; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019). Additionally, because they often feature developing musicians, small-scale venues are seen as crucial for their role in talent development and serve as stepping stones to larger venues, as artists and musicians go on to become national and international successes. However, this misses the point that these venues are valuable in and of themselves, not just because they serve a crucial role within the greater music ecology, but because they provide an inherently different experience. To have a meaningful discussion about the various social and cultural benefits of small-scale music venues, I detail how small venues differ from larger ones,

not just in terms of their capacity to sell tickets but also how the experience of participating in live performances in small venues is intrinsically different from larger ones (Parkinson et al. 2015).

Bigger venues harbor greater anonymity due to the fact that they have the capacity for more people. With a larger crowd there is less opportunity for intimate interactions between the many participants. For example, artists who play arena concerts often rely on large screens to make sure that all audience members can see them. Compare this to a club with a 100-person capacity, where audience members are close enough to see how musicians play their instruments or cue each other, and where musicians can make eye contact with the audience. This directly ties into the more meaningful aspects of venues as previously described in the second narrative of my theoretical framework, and which I will later build upon when I discuss why participants of Club Passim enjoy live music.

Qualitatively, small venues look, feel, and operate differently than larger venues. There is a particular history and economy which affects the performativity of live music in small-scale venues which prioritize their given music scene and the cultural relations that are formed through them (Carah et al. 2021). Perhaps most importantly, smaller venues are places where musicians and audiences repeatedly go back to, thus creating a sense of belonging and familiarity between participants (Gallan 2012; Green 2018). Large venues only attract concert-goers who are there to see a specific act, whereas small venues are frequented for their scene and community. In this way, because small venues provide a different, and more meaningful experience for their participants, they exercise a different right to the city (Harvey 2003), than do larger venues. Recalling the notion of value as meaningful action (Taylor 2017), the repeated engagement with

smaller scene-oriented venues for their intrinsic social and cultural qualities, underscores the difference between small venues and larger ones.

A final distinction between large and small venues is found in their organizational structures. Corporate venues such as The House of Blues (international), The Observatory (regional to Southern California), and City Winery (national), tend to have multiple locations and iterations across a more expansive geographical reach, and exist under large multimillion dollar parent companies, such as The House of Blues and The Observatory, which are housed under Live Nation Entertainments, currently the world's largest live entertainment company (Live Nation). Thus, when speaking about large venues, I am primarily referring to for-profit corporate venues. It is the scale of these larger venues and their corporate structure that allows them to continue despite the challenges that exist for all live music establishments.

Club Passim was selected as a case study for this project because it is emblematic of small music venues as described above. It is considered a small venue not just because of its audience capacity of 104 people, but also for the ways in which it serves as an anchor for the New England folk community. Briefly, Passim is a historically significant venue which has seen notable folk acts perform on its stage throughout the decades beginning during the folk revival in the 60s. It has been the starting place of notable acts such as Joan Baez and Lake Street Dive, and continues to be recognized as a venue which supports developing artists as they build a following and contribute to the vibrancy of the folk scene. Furthermore, it is the only notable folk venue in the greater Boston area, and as such comprises a stop in the national folk circuit for national and international artists tying it into the larger folk community. More locally, Passim can be thought of as a venue steeped in community, where audience members, artists, and staff know

each other and interact with one another on a frequent basis forming a collective identity centered around folk music.

Additionally, Club Passim was selected because of its proximity to other venues and attractions, underscoring its importance as a unique cultural site despite being surrounded by other cultural institutions, and for its location in Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This location is particularly significant because it is representative of the gentrification and redevelopment practices discussed in my theoretical framework, which have transformed the neighborhood into a commercial center catering to high income tourists and student populations. Club Passim, as I will later show in more detail, sits in contrast to these predominantly profit driven practices for the way that it still caters to local residents, and has a continued focus on serving its community, rather than attracting tourists. In short, when understood within its surrounding context, Club Passim makes for an impactful study because it is an emblematic case which captures the dissonance between cultural commodification and meaning making presented in my theoretical framework. The juxtaposition between Passim and Harvard Square allows for a continued discussion of the tensions between the different values ascribed to venues. The remainder of this section gives a detailed overview of both Harvard Square and Passim.

Harvard Square

Situated in the middle of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard Square is recognized for its historical charm and as the location of the esteemed Harvard University, which serves as its main landmark. Brick-lined sidewalks wrap around brick buildings, interpretative signs display short accounts of the area's history, and numerous cafes and restaurants invite passersby to stop in. Predominantly a commercial hub, Harvard Square is composed of dozens of retail businesses and

services which, over time, and through various waves of redevelopment, have turned over from local establishments to luxury office spaces, high-end shops and cafes, and national retail chains. These changes have come about through different waves of development as the city of Cambridge and surrounding neighborhoods undergo gentrification.

A metropolitan city located directly northwest of Boston, Cambridge contains five commercial centers locally referred to as 'squares.' These squares include Kendall Square, Central Square, Porter Square, Inman Square, and Harvard Square. Of these five squares, Harvard Square is perhaps the most notable, and is generally considered the economic and symbolic center of Cambridge, and serves as a main tourist destination for the greater Boston area. Additionally, Cambridge is home to a number of prestigious institutions of higher learning including Harvard University, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Lesley University, and the Longy School of Music of Bard College. The presence of these commercial centers and institutions of higher education are worth noting in that they help depict Cambridge as a wealthy and highly educated city, the center of which is Harvard Square. This is significant because it provides additional context to understanding the types of communities Club Passim is surrounded by.

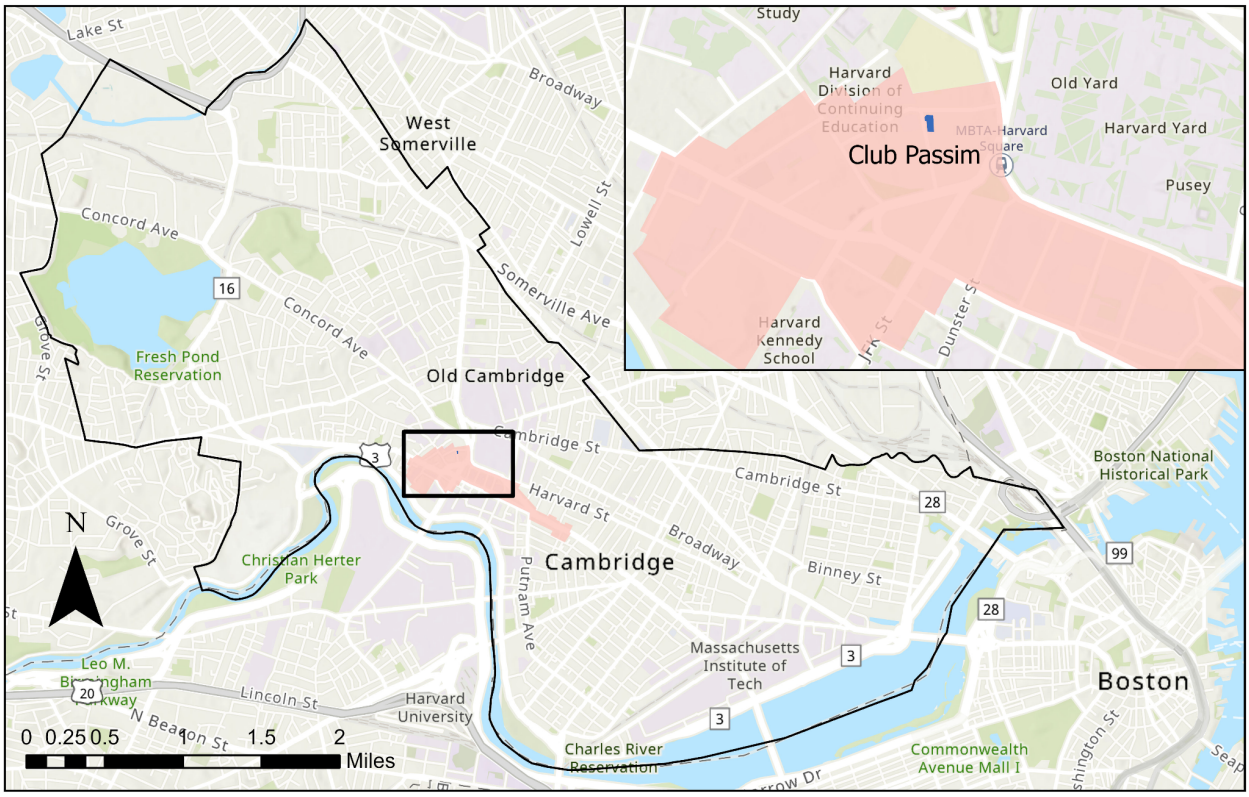


Figure 2: This location map of Cambridge, Massachusetts provides context for where Harvard Square and Club Passim are situated. The pink shading indicates the extent of Harvard Square, and the blue shading locates Club Passim within Harvard.

Dictated by the same forces which produce music cities, the changes in Harvard Square aim to cater to an elite population of wealthy students, tourists, and new investment. However, because these changes physically and symbolically alter the fabric of the neighborhood – store fronts change, and who they appeal to shifts – it becomes necessary for Harvard Square to retain a culturally cohesive identity, especially one based in history and longevity, since the main appeal of the area is its historical character. To achieve this, Harvard Square heavily depends on its few remaining long-standing businesses, like Club Passim, to help anchor its identity in this history. An interview with a representative of the Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA), an organization which works to "advance the commercial, industrial and public interests of Harvard Square" (Harvard Square Business Association), speaks to the commercial and cultural

changes in the square, and demonstrates how Harvard Square relies on its long-standing establishments to retain its local character, as is captured by the following quotes:

> People will say, 'Well, Harvard Square has become a mall. It's got so many national chains here. What can I get here that I couldn't get before someplace else, or at the mall'… But we like to highlight our special mom and pop organizations that have been here for a long time, some in excess of 100 years doing business in the square. (Interview 6, 1/25/23)

> There is so much love for the places that have been there so long. They provide a sense of continuity, and a sense of familiarity. So you have places like Levitt and Pierce, which has been around for over a 100 years. You have Passim. You have places like the Coop. Sometimes these places aren't making the most money, but if they left would cause the most fervor right within the community, because people have such an emotional attachment to them being there. Even when people are not shopping or going to these places, they just like to know [they're] there. (Interview 6, 1/25/23)

These quotes underscore the tension and balance that is present in Harvard Square's landscape as the simultaneous desire of expanding as a commercial center to appeal to new investment and audiences, anchors into the necessity of retaining a unique and local character to set it apart from more generic places like 'the mall.' It is stating that despite these changes, the character of Harvard Square is still recognizable because of a few key long-standing businesses that are associated with Harvard Square. The second quote is especially significant in that it directly acknowledges the purpose of Harvard Square's long-standing businesses as symbolic for contributing to the 'emotional attachment' of a place rather than directly bringing in revenue, but that if it were not for these businesses, visitors would be less enticed to frequent the area as consumers of retail. The symbolic value of these business is further acknowledged by Passim as one participant described during an interview: "As far as Harvard Square is concerned we are a bit of a landmark, because we've been around for so long and so much of Harvard Square has changed in the last decade that we're one of the few things that haven't. So when people are talking about the heart of Harvard Square we get brought up" (Interview 3, 8/2/22).

The effort towards a consumable quaintness defines Harvard Square and positions it as an integral cultural attraction for Cambridge and the greater Boston area much in the same way that music cities are used in cultural branding practices to appeal to cultural consumers and investors. The importance of Harvard Square as a cultural and economic anchor for the greater Boston area is emphasized in my interview with a representative of the HSBA who states, "When you come to Cambridge [or] Boston on vacation, or for business…if you're going to go someplace else, or you want to branch off a little bit, Harvard's going to be the place to go" (Interview 6, 1/25/23), highlighting the way that Harvard Square serves to bolster the economic interests of Cambridge and Boston at large.

In short, much like music cities, Harvard Square uses culture – in this case its history – as a specific way to brand itself as a unique locality. In doing so, it participates in the commodification of culture toward economic ends, dictating how culture should be consumed and by whom. As one of the few long-standing businesses in the area, Passim factors into this cultural commodification precisely for the way in which its own history as a notable folk venue fits into and elevates the cultural history of Harvard Square, inextricably linking the two. As one participant succinctly put it, "There is so much history here. The history of a place like Passim I think fits into the cultural history of our community" (Interview 6, 1/25/23).

Club Passim

Tucked away in a basement down an alley in the middle of Harvard Square, Club Passim is almost invisible to those who don't already know where it is. A small flight of stairs leads down to the front door which opens into a small entryway containing both the box office and the merch table. A door to the right of the foyer opens directly into the brick walled listening room

where the sound booth sits facing the many rows of tables and chairs, arranged and oriented to direct the audience's full attention to the stage. Directly opposite the listening room, a long hallway passes the beer taps and kitchen, leading down to two bathrooms, and the coveted cozy green room where artists hang out before and after performances. Overall, the venue is compact and efficient, with all of its components thoughtfully working towards providing the best show for everyone involved.

Figures 3 & 4: The top image depicts the front entrance to Club Passim. Aside from its name painted on the brick, there is little else indicating the venue's entrance. The bottom image depicts Passim's main listening room with seats and stage set up for a performance. Top image taken by author, bottom image courtesy of Passim.

Although unassuming and hidden, Club Passim serves as a pillar for the greater New England Folk community, and has for decades. Originally started as a blues and jazz club in 1958, the historic venue, known then as Club 47, expanded into the folk scene as it became host to a number of notable folk artists such as Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Joan Baez – who saw her start at the venue (Passim). Afterwards, in 1969 it transformed into Passim, and in 1994 took on its more current iteration as a non-profit, changing its name to Club Passim.

Currently, Passim's status as a non-profit allows the organization to structure itself in a way which prioritizes its mission "to provide truly exceptional and interactive live musical experiences for both performers and audiences, to nurture artists at all stages of their career, and to build a vibrant, inclusive music community" (Passim). Their programming, which includes but is not limited to: their school of music, a community music school open for enrollment to

adults wanting to learn folk music through various traditions and instruments; The Iguana Music Fund, an annual grant program awarding local artists grant money to support their artistic goals; The Discovery Series, a monthly showcase of developing artists; and The Folk Collective, a program established to provide a platform of collaboration between different artists, supports this mission by providing financial support for artists, engaging with the broader community through music education, and putting artists into conversation with each other towards collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

Table 3: A list of Club Passim's various mission-driven programs and brief description of each.

Club Passim: Programming		
Program		Program Description
1	School of Music	Affordable community-based school of music for adults
2	Annual Festivals	Campfire Festival and Boston Celtic Musical Fest organized and presented by Passim
3	Iguana Music Fund	Annual grant program for individual local artists
4	The Folk Collective	A gathering of diverse artists to creatively collaborate on events focused on inclusivity
5	Tiered Memberships	Community financed support through tiered memberships
6	Discovery Series	Monthly event showcasing new and developing artists to Passim's community
7	Card to culture	Increase accessibility to local cultural institutions for locals experiencing financial barriers

FINDING VALUE

Thus far, I have captured the various ways in which music venues are places of meaningful cultural production. I have also shown how they function as sites of cultural commodification for localities to promote a particular urban image centered around this culture,

targeting tourism and business. Specifically, I have outlined how cities use music venues and musical culture as a tool for city branding, revealing a strategy for economic growth, the underlying premise being that creative and cultural hubs should primarily serve economic development. In describing the above, I have captured two distinct narratives surrounding the valuation of music venues in urban contexts. One which focuses on cultural commodification, and the other which captures the ways in which venues are intrinsically meaningful to their participants. This section takes the above as a lens through which to understand the values ascribed to Club Passim by its different stakeholders as defined and described below.

In compiling a list of values ascribed to venues by different stakeholders, I not only capture what makes Passim meaningful to its participants, but I'm also able to more precisely show where the dissonance between meaning making and cultural commodification lies. The categorization of values allows for a systematic comparison of what is important to various stakeholders. It provides a nuanced understanding of why music venues are meaningful to their participants and allows for a discussion of how certain values shape the claims made on the built environment, as I will discuss in my analysis through David Harvey's "Right to the City" (2003).

The following list outlines the five categories of value ascribed to live music, as gathered through my research. Because these value categories have been formed inductively, that is established during and after conducting my interviews and content analysis, rather than from a predetermined framework, they are not so easily separated and delineated from each other. I present them here in categories, as I see fit, while retaining, as much as possible, their context based on how participants discussed them.

Table 4: List of values and a brief definition of each as gathered through interviews and industry reports.

Values	Definitions
Aesthetic & Material	matters of beauty, taste, quality of sound, programming, and the physical space.
Social & Cultural	the beliefs and practices surrounding the creation of live music which contribute to meaning making, attachment to place, and freedom in creative expression.
Experiential	the enjoyment or benefit gained from engaging with the experience of live music in a venue, including embodied feelings, proximity to artists, and appreciation for the novelty and fleeting nature of live music.
Historical	a venue's cultural history as it pertains to place, including past notable acts and performances.
Economic	both the direct amount of money exchanged on consuming live music through tickets sales, and overhead venue costs, as well as the indirect economic benefits to localities.

Aesthetic & Material Value

Aesthetic and material characteristics most immediately shape the experience of being in a venue, helping define their atmosphere and appearance. Specifically, aesthetic value concerns matters of beauty, taste, and quality, and in the context of music venues, includes the specialization of genre, the consistency of programming, as well as physical decor and appearance (Escher and Rempe 2021; Gallan and Gibson 2013; Miller and Schofield 2016). Material value, meanwhile, more concretely involves the aspects of music venues which deal with the quality of the physical space itself. This includes the layout of the venue, whether or not there is good seating or visibility, and accessibility of and to the venue (Webster et al. 2018).

Together, aesthetic and material characteristics not only shape the experience of being in a venue, but also differentiate venue experiences from each other based on people's preferences. For some participants, it's about being in a comfortable and beautiful room, with good acoustics (Interview 3, 8/2/22), while for others the experience hinges around the aesthetic preference for the sound of live music (Interview 7, 1/31/23). When asked to compare Passim to other venues, interview participants discussed the comfort of being in a venue as a deciding factor in going to a concert there. This sentiment is highlighted in the following quote, which compares the layout of Passim to that of a neighboring venue.

> It really comes down to the orientation of the venue and the seating situation. People at Passim really like Passim and the way it's laid out with seating. It's ticketed [to not have standing room]. Whereas, the Sinclair is mostly standing. There are some seated options, but they're not great. Personally, I get really claustrophobic in the Sinclair because it's all black, and people can get packed in pretty tightly. (Interview 4, 11/11/22)

The criticism that this participant has of certain venues directly speaks to their material set-up and captures how decisions made by venues around their layout to increase capacity and by extension profitability, impact audience experience.

A similar sentiment is echoed by another participant who remarks that the Sinclair "doesn't feel genuine at all, it looks like a place that got refurbished to look like a factory or a loft, and everyone is crammed in there" (Interview 1, 8/1/22). In addition to reinforcing the relationship between comfort and layout, this quote highlights the way aesthetic design decisions surrounding choice of material and decor play into personal notions of authenticity. It implies that Passim is not attempting to evoke some sort of curated aesthetic, whether it be deliberately rustic and worn, or intentionally quaint to match the heritage materiality of Harvard Square.

Rather, the spatial choices of Club Passim manifest into a genre specific folk venue that prioritizes the sonic, and as I will elaborate on later, social quality of each performance,

reflecting their commitment to experiential and social values. Because the majority of the shows at Passim are acoustic, and the layout of the relatively small room is such that all the seating, lighting, and sound work to bring the audience's attention to the acoustic performance, Passim is often considered a listening room — a type of venue which encourages active listening and undivided attention to the live performance (Interview 2, 8/2/22). Thus, the shape, texture, and resonance of the materials in the room culminate in a sound specific to Passim; the materiality of the space is inseparable from the production of the music, and as the next section highlights, also ties into Passim's social and cultural values.

Social & Cultural Value

The social and cultural merits of live music venues address the ways in which they contribute to meaning making and attachment to place through various beliefs and practices. These beliefs and practices encompass the incubation of original music and artist development, affective artist-audience interactions in the creation of live music, and the creation of social ties facilitated through the specific layout of the venue.

The contribution of original music and artist development to a venue's broader music ecology is often cited as a main benefit of local music venues for the way they add to the cultural vibrancy of a place (Gallan 2012, 2015; Johnson 2017; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019, 2020; Whiting 2021). This is particularly true of Passim for two reasons: 1) they make a conscious effort to open their stage to lesser-known acts and new musicians to develop their performance skills in front of an attentive audience; and 2) they encourage artistic freedom through experimentation in performance and creation of original music. This appreciation for artistic freedom is captured in a remark made by a frequent Passim performer during an interview where

they state: “I like to use [performing] as a way to test things out, especially in a venue that I know really well, or where the people know me really well. I love to try new things” (Interview 4, 11/11/22). The significance of this quote, in addition to highlighting the importance of artistic freedom in performance, is found in the notion that musical experimentation is heightened in a social and intimate context. It hints at a trust between performer and audience, where the performer is turning to the audience and asking them to reflect on new material.

Together, these two practices — supporting developing artists, and encouraging original content and experimentation — not only introduce new music and artists to local, and potentially national, audiences as they grow in popularity, but also solidify Passim’s place in the venue ladder as a stepping stone for artists to work towards playing larger or more notable venues. Being able to trace an artist’s development back to Club Passim reinforces its reputation as an important venue with an ear for developing up and coming musicians, thus creating a positive feedback loop where musicians and audiences want to go to Passim because of significant acts who have grown out of there. The following quote captures this sentiment as it highlights the product of allowing lesser known artists to start out at Passim: “Look at Anais Mitchell, look at Lake Street Dive, look at all these people who have really come up through the ranks, they started at Passim, and so many of them acknowledged that, which is really cool” (Interview 4, 11/11/22). It captures how artist development helps sustain the venue by continuing to keep it relevant for its cultural contributions, but also how it reinforces attachment to place, as artists acknowledge the importance of Passim in their own careers.

In addition to fostering the creation of original content and supporting developing artists, Passim also serves as a site for meaningful social experiences. The following quote, which describes the distinctions between experiencing live music in different contexts, including

streamed online during the COVID shutdowns, speaks to how important having people in the room is to the social experience of live music:

> In a live show, there is that energy that having people in a room… feels different. When a band plays to an empty room, they don't feel the same because there aren't people here. I missed the part of live music that was knowing that my being here affected the show. When you are just watching online… I mean I can type 'clapping' in the chat box, but it doesn't feel the same. You don't hear the clapping, and it's delayed by 30 seconds, and they may or may not be watching the chat box, and they have to stop the show to go look at the tiny screen. (Interview 3, 8/2/22)

This quote points to the affective experience of co-creation born out of the artist-audience interaction that happens when all participants are in the same room. Furthermore, it speaks to the importance of immediacy between these interactions, such as giving and receiving applause, which are difficult to replicate without physical presence in the same space.

Figure 5: A photo of Zachariah Hickman's annual "Power Outage" Concert Party. A concert series organized and performed by Hickaman featuring no microphones, lights, or sound system. Hickman rearranges the room to make a more intimate setting and invites a number of musicians to collaborate on performances during each night of the series. It is challenging to distinguish between audience and performer as everyone occupies the same space and attentively engages in the creation of the performance. Image courtesy of Passim.

These instances illustrate how being present during a live music performance, whether as artist, venue staff, or audience, is more than just witnessing the performance — it's about being integral to the creation of live music (see figure 5 above). As one participant succinctly put it: Passim is for "people that enjoy that more intimate concert experience. Where you feel like you are a part of something, in a way that you are not going to feel as much at a stadium show. Some people prefer stadium shows, and that's fine, and some people prefer feeling like they are connected to an artist" (Interview 2, 8/2/22). These statements really capture how Passim, and small venues, qualitatively feel differently because of how they contribute to feelings of social bonding and intimacy compared to larger venues which don't. This makes Passim unique and valuable to its participants.

In addition to its importance in enabling affective interactions, Passim's physical organization facilitates social occurrences between artists, audiences, and staff in other ways. For instance, due to its small size and layout —the sound booth sits right next to the only entrance to the listening room, the merch table is sandwiched between the box office and main entrance, and the green room doubles as the stage manager's office— there are ample opportunities for people to get to know one another and form relationships as they navigate these small spaces. Artists who have never met before get the opportunity to network and potentially collaborate in the green room (see figure 6), frequent attendees get to meet the various sound engineers as they pass the sound booth to their seats, and concert goers and box office staff have the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with artists at the merch table (Interview 4, 11/11/22).

Figure 6: A photo of Club Passim's green room with performers hanging out before a show. Its small size makes it an especially intimate social space. Image courtesy of Passim.

All of these cultural and social components come together to make Passim relevant both in the larger landscape of Boston's music ecology, and in people's lives. Passim forms part of the local venue ladder and culturally contributes to the music scene by supporting developing artists and encouraging artistic freedom. It also functions as a site for social and participatory

experiences. These experiences often become meaningful moments that are formative to people's lives, shaping their identities. This can include discovering a favorite artist or developing one's personal musical taste, but also forming long term personal and professional relationships.

Experiential Value

Experiential value concerns the enjoyment or benefit gained from engaging with the experience of live music in a venue. It is largely personal and includes embodied feelings, proximity to artists, and appreciation for the novelty and fleeting nature of live music.

Embodied feelings are deeply subjective and capture the way in which people experience events through their bodies and senses. For live music experiences, this can mean physically feeling reverberations of sound waves as they hit the body, or the excitement one feels in the pit of their stomach while waiting in anticipation for the music to begin (DeChaine 2002). It could also include rhythmic synchronizations between music and body movements like head nodding (Swarbrick et al. 2018) or foot tapping, or more abstractly, ethereal feelings of joy as captured by a participant who described enjoying live music for the way "you feel that sort of chest opening experience, [with] the warmth just spreading all over your body, that only live music can bring" (Interview 7, 1/21/23).

In addition to embodied experiences, live music is often appreciated because it places audience members in close proximity to artists. For performers, this can be impactful because it gives them an opportunity to emotionally affect the audience with their performance. As one participant highlighted during an interview, it makes them know that their music and art is meaningful to others and that there is a reaction to their music which would otherwise not be known if both artist and audience were not present in the same room (Interview 4, 11/11/22). For audience members, proximity to artists can be meaningful because it allows them to learn more

intimate details about the artist. For instance, during an interview, one participant remarked: “I don’t just want to listen to recordings of them, I want to be around them. I want to know them as people, I want to see what they say in between songs, I want to see their smile…what they wear, or who they bring with them” (Interview 1, 8/1/22). Both of these examples highlight that there is certain information that can only be gathered through the experience of live music, and more specifically the fact that artist and audience are together in the same space.

The second experiential component I will focus on is the novelty of live music (Miller and Schofield 2016; Swarbrick et al. 2018). As I have shown, audiences and performers both participate in the making of live music through the ways in which they respond to each other. One could say that the product of any live musical performance is singular to that instance and co-created between all the people in the room at that moment. Any piece of music played live will be unique to that room, that night, that audience, because the nature of live performance is such that performers and audience members respond to each other. This fleetingness is highlighted by a participant as one of the main reasons for their enjoyment of live music: “I like the uniqueness of [live music]. Recorded music is great to listen to in any number of settings, but the live music element…there’s something of the ephemeral nature of performance in that it happens in a moment and it's gone. To share that with a group of people I think is an incredible bonding” (Interview 2, 8/2/22). In addition to commenting on the fleeting nature of live music, this statement also highlights the added social bond that comes from experiencing the ‘ephemeral nature’ of live music with other people. In this way, experiential value and social value come together to craft a meaningful experience.

Historical Value

Referring to a venue's cultural history, historical value contributes to both the cultural and economic significance of music venues and includes the way in which venues shape collective memories to maintain a notion of a specific past and define the character of a neighborhood (Green 2018; Bennett and Rogers 2016; Hudson 2006; van der Hoeven and Hitters 2019). Heritage status is often granted to venues which hold historical importance for past contributions to their local music ecology, for hosting performances by notable artists, or both. Officially granting a venue heritage status marks it as a culturally relevant landmark, protecting it from closure spurred by development (Music Canada 2015; Parkinson et al. 2015). Although not all historically notable venues are officially designated as historical sites, they are still valued for their historical cultural contributions. In this section, I will discuss how Passim is valued by the neighborhood at large not only for the way in which it helps preserve a specific idea of Harvard Square, but also for its past notable music acts.

As previously described, Passim's historical notoriety outside of the folk community derives from the fact that it is one of the last few long-standing businesses in Harvard Square. As such, Passim aids in maintaining the cultural cohesion of the area by serving as a long term physical reminder, or landmark of Harvard Square's local character, thus contributing to the collective memory of what Harvard Square was. The following quote, gathered from an interview with a staff member at Passim, captures Passim's role in maintaining Harvard's symbolic character: "[Passim] is an important part of Cambridge at large, and Harvard square in particular, because it's been here forever. It's a last bastion of any sort of permanence in Harvard Square, apart from Harvard [University]. There's not a lot else that's been around for a long time. It's Harvard, us, the Brattle Theater, Cardulos" (Interview 2, 8/2/22). The role Passim plays is important for the area because in order for Harvard to use historical charm in its branding to

attract business and tourism, it needs to continue to emanate quaintness, even if many of its businesses are relatively new.

More specifically for audiences and music fans, Passim is a symbolic venue representing the heyday of the folk revival movement that took place in the 60s and 70s. It's known for having hosted performances by folk icons such as Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Joan Baez. This history, much like Passim's presence in the square as one of the last long-standing businesses, keeps Passim alive in the collective memory of people who are familiar with Passim.

Summarizing the above examples, we can say that Passim's historical value is pertinent in two ways: 1) That it lends a sense of continuity and enduring character to Harvard Square's sense of place, and 2) That people may also experience that sense of continuity when attending live performances—experiencing themselves as actors in an unfolding history. Although this second point is complicated by the fact that those who remember Passim for its performances from decades ago may not be actively engaged with Passim today. However, this second point does hold true for patrons and artists who continue to be drawn to Passim because of its notable acts, as is captured by the following quote: "For people that are still just finding out about the club, a lot of times it is through the artist who have grown up out of here, like Lake Street Drive, Anais Mitchell, or the Weepies, or some act that has gotten to a much larger audience and they find that their origin story involves us, and they come here [for that]" (Interview 2, 8/2/22).

Economic Value

Often cited as the primary benefit of live music ecologies and music venues, the economic merits of venues take center stage in many of the industry reports researched for this project (Music Canada 2015; Diplomacy and Seijas 2017; Live DMA 2020; Parkinson et al.

2015; Webster et al. 2018). Economic value includes both the direct amount of money exchanged on consuming live music through tickets sales and overhead venue costs, as well as the "relevance of live music for cities in monetary terms" including revenue from music tourism and job growth through supporting industries (van der Hoeven and Hitters 2020, 155).

Acknowledging this process of cultural consumption, my interview with the HSBA detailed more specifically the ways in which cultural organizations, including Club Passim, serve to heighten the local Harvard Square economy:

> Having those arts organizations brings people in…some of them drive here, so they're going to be parking their cars in parking garages. They're going to go out and grab a bite to eat before they go to the show. They're going to go have a cocktail after the show. They are going to go buy a book at the Harvard bookstore before… I feel very strongly about the impact that these live music venues, and entertainment and arts organizations have on our retail and our restaurants, and our parking and our hotels," later adding that Harvard Square has, "all of these other things to entice people to stay and to spend their money and enjoy themselves. (Interview 6, 1/25/23)

These remarks make clear that to the HSBA, Passim and other cultural institutions in the area primarily serve to bolster Harvard Square as a commercial hub, with the purpose of drawing visitors to the square so that they can stay and spend money at surrounding businesses.

Representatives for Club Passim echo the same understanding of their role as a cultural establishment in Cambridge, and hint at the tension that exists between the contrasting forms of value held by different stakeholders: "A city can tend to be a little bit like a corporation where they look at value differently, as tourist dollars and things like that, what we [as a venue] are bringing into the city that wouldn't be there" (Interview 2, 8/2/22). The implication is that cities, like corporations, are profit driven, and based on the earlier discussion on city branding, we know this to be true. This participant acknowledges Passim's role in the square as primarily

commercial, but simultaneously separates the way they perceive Passim's value by stating that it is different from cities or corporations.

This separation makes a claim which says that Passim does not necessarily prioritize profit, and that outside of the need for sufficient revenue to function as a business, they are not profit driven, which is true for many small-scale venues with non-economic priorities (Whiting 2021). Instead, their priority centers on the social, cultural, and experiential aspects of live music venues as described earlier— those qualities which are often thought of as intrinsic to small-scale live music venues and are perhaps the most difficult to capture because of their subjectivity, but which add meaning to people's lives (Carah et al. 2021; Webster et al. 2018). This non-economic valuation is underscored by the following quote which states: "When you look at things from a purely financial perspective, it doesn't make a lot of sense. It's not something you're going to get rich doing; presenting music in small venues, but there's a higher calling to it" (Interview 2, 8/2/22), reiterating the notion that there is a separation between how the benefits of venues are perceived. If measured solely through a financial lens, small venues are not entirely justifiable because they do not maximize profit, but if assessed through their cultural contributions or social networks, then they are worthwhile.

However, the prioritization of social and cultural value is crucial to Passim's financial status as a non-profit organization, as it allows them access to tax benefits not granted to for-profit venues, and gives them permission to accept donations from community members who want to support Passim for the social and cultural work they do. Thus, somewhat ironically, Passim's prioritization of those values which are not directly profit motivated secures the financial viability of their organization, further highlighting the nuance of assessing value

structures attached to venues. The following section more closely examines such tensions and discusses how they manifest in the built environment as specific claims on space.

DISSONANCE: A DISCUSSION

My initial goal in compiling a list of values ascribed to venues was to capture the ways in which venues are important or meaningful to their different stakeholders. The previous section focused on categorizing and detailing the different ways of valuing music venues. This section takes these value categories and highlights certain dissonance between them to capture how the same object can be valued differently. After discussing these tensions, I turn to David Harvey's "Right to the City" which describes the collective right to change ourselves by changing the urban process (Harvey 2003), to understand how the prioritization of different values shapes urban spaces. I continue to use Passim and its urban context in Harvard Square as a case study to illustrate how value-driven decisions relate to claims on urban space.

To best discuss the apparent dissonances between different forms of value, I will focus on two examples that pull from value categories and descriptions found in the previous section. The first analyzes Passim's historical value and underscores how the same value category can be at odds with different stakeholders, and the second compares experiential value to economic value by discussing for-profit venues.

As previously described, Passim's history is valued because it adds to the continuity of Harvard Square's local character, but also because past performances by notable artists contribute to its local fame as a venue, furthering its symbolic weight. However, as the following quote captures, this history also serves to keep Passim tethered to a former version of itself:

> It feels like it's more about nostalgia honestly. There's many times where I'll be here and see people walk by who say 'oh there's Passim, I went there in the 70s once and it's really cool,' but we are still here. We are still here and doing new

> music every single night! I think if we left this space people would walk by and [be sad that we are gone], but have they been to a show here in 50 years? No. So, I think the worth is not current. (Interview 3, 8/2/22)

The significance of this remark is found in the way in which it acknowledges the historical value of Passim to certain stakeholders in the broader Harvard Square community, but simultaneously rejects it for the way it detracts from Passim's current iteration. Thus, historical value, although keeping Passim alive in the collective memory of those who knew a past Harvard Square, often impedes potential audiences from engaging with their current performers and programming. The tension here is found in the way that Harvard Square depends on Passim and its cultural history to help define the area, but that Passim itself does not engage with this form of valuation in the same way.

This tension and separation between Passim and the surrounding Harvard Square is underscored by a second quote which reads: "Maybe two other places in Harvard Square have been here for as long as we have. It's always fun to be one of those spots that has a legacy and a history to it, but I can't say otherwise that we're too affected by what's been going on in Harvard Square. It's sad to see some of the funky or cooler stores be replaced by Patagonia and Ray-Ban" (Interview 5, 12/6/22). The 'changes' mentioned above refer to the recent development which has brought luxury retail stores in an effort to elevate Harvard Square as an elite commercial hub. This quote is notable because in highlighting a separation between Harvard Square and Passim, it reveals a different type of engagement with the city. If Passim is unaffected by the greater changes in Harvard Square, then the implication is that it operates differently with different motivations. As I discuss below, these disparate motivations stem from contrasting valuations around profit.

Throughout the various interviews conducted for this research, it was often reiterated that Passim is not profit motivated. As discussed above in the "Economic Value" section, this rejection of profit motivation reflects Passim's prioritization of an alternative set of values based around meaningful experiences encompassing the social, cultural, and experiential value categories. More specifically, participants discussed this prioritization of value by delineating how Passim is different from profit-motivated venues. For example, when describing Passim's goals as a venue, one participant excitedly remarked:

> Our goal is not how much money we can make every night. We have to think about making enough to meet our overhead, pay our staff, and make sure that the band walks out of here with a check. We're never going to have a two drink minimum. We just don't think like that. And so I think that corporate places really take their artists for granted and see them as a way to make more money. Our whole focus is on making a good show, and to make a good show you have to take care of your artists. When they walk in, they have to feel like we all have the same goal, and in a lot of corporate places an artist walks in and they are a commodity. (Interview 3, 8/2/22)

This quote highlights the way Passim distinguishes itself from profit-motivated venues by calling attention to strategies used by for-profit venues to maximize profit, like the setting of drink minimums, contrasting them with Passim's focus of prioritizing a 'good show,' which depends on supporting artists rather than exploiting them. However, this quote also captures that Passim is not emancipated from the financial demands of operating as a small business, capturing the need for balance between netting enough revenue to cover operating costs and prioritizing largely non-economic values.

Furthermore, when discussing for-profit venues, participants point to how these venues not only operate differently from Passim as described above, but also feel, look, and sound differently. The two quotes below speak to these differences, and interestingly both refer to

corporate retail chains to help describe these experiential differences in materiality and aesthetics:

> "When people are opening a chain of venues like a City Winery, you walk in and it's like, 'Are we at a music venue, or are we in an Olive Garden?' You know it's hard to tell, and no shade to those types of venues, because that's what we have, but the warmth of the room is gone." (Interview 6, 1/31/23)

> "[Corporate venues are] cookie cutter versions of themselves, and they don't sound good because they're using cheap wood, and all that… It's like a Pier 1 Imports gone bananas." (Interview 4, 11/11/22)

The significance of these remarks is found in how they capture the loss of certain qualities like 'warmth of the room' which can be translated to mean social intimacy, and quality sound, both of which have been described as important and defining characteristics of Passim. Additionally, in likening for-profit music venues to other corporate retail chains, these comments speak to the homogenization of space and culture that occurs in for-profit venues as they become 'cookie cutter versions of themselves.' The effects of profit making strategies employed by more corporate venues become problematic because they lead to the commodification and homogenization of live music venues.

Furthermore, it is this distinction between profit motivation, and the positioning of profit as secondary to other values, that distinguishes Harvard Square from Passim. Much like the 'cookie-cutter' venues described above, Harvard Square strives towards economic growth. This is evidenced by how it has gentrified and shifted over the years to bolster its role as a commercial and tourist destination. However, Passim's claim that it is unaffected by these changes illustrates that it is not dictated by surplus value, otherwise it would be striving to appeal to a new type of consumer in the same way Harvard Square does, and it would be engaging in similar practices that corporate venues use to maximize profit. Instead, Passim focuses on providing a meaningful space for the community it has, and for those who are interested in what it has to offer. This

notion is captured in the following quote pulled from an interview with one of Passim's performance managers who states: "We are not usually a tourist destination, unless somebody has heard about us and is into folk music. We're not working hard to get the tourist market. The tourist market is the bar downtown with the cover bands. We are our own destination" (Interview 2, 8/2/22). The sentiment that Passim is its own destination separate from Harvard Square, or other tourist spots like downtown Boston, is significant in that it spotlights the way that Passim makes a different claim on space, and thus provides a different type of experience in an urban setting which increasingly encroaches on difference. The final section of my paper discusses the implications of this claim on space.

Right to a Space

Thus far, I have captured two distinct narratives surrounding the valuation of music venues: one which focuses on the commodification of live music culture, and one which looks at venues as sites of meaning making. These narratives, as reflected through my findings on the valuation of Club Passim, are simultaneously present and are often intertwined in opposing ways. Knowing that there are multiple ways to appreciate the same object, these values can be used to understand the different claims made on space and how these claims manifest in the built environment. In this section, I discuss the significance of this dissonance and its implications through David Harvey's "Right to the City" (2003).

Harvey defines the right to the city as both a right of "access to what already exists" and "a right to change it to our heart's desire" (2003, 939). If we take 'what already exists' to mean the urban built environment, then this right involves agency to engage with the environment as one desires. Furthermore, it posits that in shaping the city, we change ourselves, because the city

is reflective of "what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of daily life we desire, what kinds of technologies we deem appropriate, what aesthetic values we hold" (Harvey 2012, 4). Essentially, the right to the city says that the urban built environment should both reflect and shape one's values.

Extending this meaning to my case study, I argue that Passim exercises its right to the city, or 'right to a space,' for the ways in which it intentionally serves the needs and desires of its community based on a specific set of values. These values guide Passim to carve out a very specific type of space in Harvard Square— one that centers on social ties, cultural production, and the experience of participating in the creation of live music. Simultaneously, but guided by a different set of values centered on economic expansion and the commodification of historical culture, Harvard Square makes a different claim on the built environment, shaping it to serve their interests as a commercial and tourist destination. Together, Passim and Harvard Square illustrate how different rights to the city are exercised by different stakeholders to different ends, and motivated by different value frameworks. In short, if the guiding value is economic growth, then you bring in the most profitable businesses, but if the guiding value is social and cultural ties, then you establish a local small-scale music venue that serves its community.

The nuance is that Passim's claim to space sits counter to, but entangled in, Harvard Square's assertion on the built environment. As I have illustrated, Harvard Square depends on Passim to maintain its historical cultural identity, and while Passim acknowledges this, it is less invested in this specific form of valuation. This is to say that both of their claims to space are legitimate, but because "our society is dominated by the accumulation of capital through market exchange" (Harvey 2003, 940), the grasp of Harvard Square's claim is stronger. As mentioned, Harvard Square is a commercial shopping center, and as such its control of the built environment

is reserved for "social groups possessing economic value as consumers or producers" (Amin and Graham 1997, 421). In this way, Passim is important to Harvard Square because it is an economically valuable cultural producer. Passim's right to a space, however, does not aim to serve Harvard Square's economic interests. Because it is guided by a different set of values, the nature of its claim to space is different, and instead transforms Harvard Square into a rightful location for participating in the creation of live folk music.

Harvey states that "we have been made and re-made without knowing exactly why, how, wherefore and to what end" (2003, 939), and shuns the neoliberal "inalienable right to make a profit" which leads to inequity, and instead calls for a different right to the city (2003, 941). If Harvard Square, and music cities are extensions of this right to make a profit, then Passim is illustrative of how to exercise a different right. Passim invites people to be a part of Harvard Square not as economically valuable consumers, but as social and creative participants who possess agency to shape their environment and "better exercise a right to the city" (2003, 939). Specifically, through their programming (see table 3), Passim invites people to spend time in Harvard Square for socially and culturally meaningful reasons, making it possible for their participants to engage in place-making practices in an urban context that is predominantly not equipped for this. I discuss three examples below.

Passim's Discovery Series program showcases developing artists on a monthly basis, giving them an important reason to visit Harvard Square. By intentionally prioritizing the inclusion of emerging artists, Passim signals that Harvard Square is a place where musicians of different levels are welcome. Their School of Music, both affordable and open to any adult wanting to learn how to play music, allows people who are not professional musicians to have relationships with and learn from professional musicians trained at some of the country's elite

institutions of higher learning (e.g. Berklee, New England Conservatory, Boston Conservatory, Longy of Bard College). Passim's Iguana Fund, a program which awards grants to local artists, not only indicates that these artists are important to their community and worth financially supporting, but makes it directly possible for artists to sustain themselves in an area well known for its high cost of living.

All three programs speak to the ways in which Passim engages with a different type of stakeholder than the rest of Harvard Square. If not for Passim, and its value-guided efforts to provide "truly exceptional and interactive live musical experiences for both performers and audiences, [and] to nurture artists at all stages of their career" (Passim), its staff, artists, students, and audience members would have no reason to spend time in Harvard Square other than as consumers.

Musically speaking, dissonance can be described as the tension between notes which sonically clash, and which don't necessarily have a pleasing harmony. However, dissonance is what makes music interesting to listen to, it creates variety within music and keeps listeners engaged. If we draw a similar parallel to the built environment, then the tension formed between different ways of valuing Club Passim, and other venues is crucial to a thriving urban environment. It indicates that the needs and desires of different communities and stakeholders are being expressed, even if they are not aligned. My research highlights how Club Passim simultaneously clashes with and supports the dominating cultural fabric of Harvard Square, securing a place for itself and its community. The significance of Passim, then, is not just that it continually strives to support its community in better and more innovative ways, but that it does so in the context of a place like Harvard Square, in a city like Cambridge, Massachusetts.

CONCLUSION

My research sought to answer two questions: 1) What values and meanings are ascribed to live music venues by various stakeholders, and 2) What are the implications of these values on the built environment? I explored the answers to these questions predominantly through a case study approach focusing on Club Passim as a music venue emblematic of the tensions which exist between the commercialization and commodification of live music and meaning making based in social, cultural, and experiential values.

By highlighting these tensions, I captured the different ways that venues are simultaneously appreciated through contradicting and overlapping value structures. In analyzing them, it became evident that some are market driven while others are not, and that there is intrinsic value to culture and art, which capital works to enclose and cultural institutions, like Passim, work to contest. This cycle helps explain why small-scale music venues are particularly threatened and vulnerable to forces which tend towards commercialization. Because small-scale venues, such as Passim, prioritize a set of values which do not directly aim to serve the market, they are less able to financially adapt to higher costs without sacrificing the very qualities which make them meaningful to their participants — a pressure partially relieved through Passim's adoption of an alternative financial structure as a non-profit supported by voluntary community subscription.

Furthermore, my research emphasizes that if values capture different ways of appreciating the same object and have the potential to dictate the way the built environment is shaped, and if each stakeholder has the right to shape the city to their 'heart's desire,' then urban areas should be representative of different values and their dissonances. In other words, stakeholders, and their varying claims to space, should be present in the built environment.

Passim is notable because it is illustrative of this. It is a venue which both serves the profit-motivated interests of Harvard Square, but more importantly carves a space in Harvard Square to foster and sustain a community which would otherwise not be welcome in a commercial and tourist center. In the context of hyper-commercialization, Passim provides a space with ample opportunities for people to engage in place-making through a multitude of ways, including participating in the affective experience of co-creating live music, finding belonging and sense of community ownership through a niche space of cultural production, learning how to play an instrument in community, having enough financial support to finish recording an album, or discovering a new favorite artist. In these ways Passim exercises its right to the city, and provides a space that is reflective of a world that its participants want to live in.

More practically, this work can inform live music venue stakeholders on how to support small local venues such as Passim. To start, venues wanting to resist the tendencies of hyper-commercialization can take stock of their programming to dissect what values are being prioritized, and whom they benefit. Since hyper-commercialization tends towards cultural exploitation, taking note of their practices allows venues to understand to what extent they are reflecting the needs and desires of their community of artists, audiences, and other skilled members of the live music industry. Furthermore, since small venues are especially prized for their social and cultural components, venues can make an effort to 1) create intimate spaces and interactions where artists feel comfortable to share new material; 2) showcase and involve developing artists; 3) create programing which engages the broader music community and promotes a sense of ownership through a diversity of opportunities around education, volunteering, or financial contribution through donations; 4) incorporate others types of functional spaces necessary for a strong music ecology such as rehearsal spaces, studio spaces, or

educational opportunities; and 5) provide opportunities for live music communities to gain skills in music related capacities like teaching, or sound engineering. Additionally, because Passim's non-profit structure allows it to access various forms of funding both through their community in the form of donations and memberships, and through grants opportunities and tax benefits, small venues which aim to prioritize social, cultural, and experiential values may benefit from a similar organization designation and structure. Lastly, venues can form supportive networks with regulatory bodies so that local governments are aware of the social and cultural attributes of small venues.

Localities can make an effort to appreciate that not all venues are economically motivated in the same way. By understanding that some venues are guided by social and cultural values, over economic ones, local governments can craft policies to support such venues. Because small venues are particularly threatened by financial challenges, policies to allow for access to funding or tax benefits can alleviate financial pressures and prevent meaningful venues from closing or commodifying. Furthermore, recognition of the cultural and social value of small venues has the potential to reduce pressures towards commercialization because it recognizes their value as they are and for the services they provide.

If live music venues are valued as cultural establishments, then it must be examined in what ways and to what end. We must consider what communities they serve, how they contribute to the overall cultural fabric of their locations, and what values motivate them to exercise a particular right to the city. The implications of these assessments are crucial not just for the longevity of all types of venues, but also for the ever-changing processes of urbanization. Only by considering this can we evaluate the role that we want venues to have in city-making.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"About the Harvard Square Business Association (HSBA)." 2018. Harvard Square. Harvard Square Business Association. June 7, 2018. https://www.harvardsquare.com/about-hsba/.

Amin, Ash, and Stephen Graham. 1997. "The Ordinary City." *Transactions* 22 (4): 411–29.

Amin, Ash, and Nigel Thrift. 2007. "Cultural-Economy and Cities." *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (2): 143–61.

Ballico, Christina, and Dave Carter. 2018. "A State of Constant Prodding: Live Music, Precarity and Regulation." *Cultural Trends* 27 (3): 203–17.

Behr, A., M. Brennan, and M. Cloonan. 2014. "The Cultural Value of Live Music from the Pub to the Stadium: Getting beyond the Numbers." *Live Music Exchange*. https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/files/16546029/The_Cultural_Value_of_Liv.

Behr, Adam, Emma Webster, Matt Brennan, Martin Cloonan, and Jake Ansell. 2020. "Making Live Music Count: The UK Live Music Census." *Popular Music and Society* 43 (5): 501–22.

Bennett, Andy, and Ian Rogers. 2016. "In the Scattered Fields of Memory: Unofficial Live Music Venues, Intangible Heritage, and the Recreation of the Musical Past." *Space and Culture* 19 (4): 490–501.

Biebuyck, W., and J. Meltzer. 2017. "Cultural Political Economy." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-140.

Brennan-Horley, Chris, and Chris Gibson. 2009. "Where Is Creativity in the City? Integrating Qualitative and GIS Methods." *Environment & Planning A* 41 (11): 2595–2614.

Carah, Nicholas, Scott Regan, Lachlan Goold, Lillian Rangiah, Peter Miller, and Jason Ferris. 2021. "Original Live Music Venues in Hyper-Commercialised Nightlife Precincts: Exploring How Venue Owners and Managers Navigate Cultural, Commercial and Regulatory Forces." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 27 (5): 621–35.

Cresswell, John W., and C. N. Poth. 2007. "Qualitative Inquiry and Research Method: Choosing among Five Approaches." Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DeChaine, D. Robert. 2002. "Affect and Embodied Understanding in Musical Experience." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 22 (2): 79–98.

Diplomacy, S., and A. Seijas. 2017. "A Guide to Managing Your Night Time Economy." *Sound Diplomacy: London, UK*.

Escher, Cornelia, and Martin Rempe. 2021. "The Making of Music Venues: Inquiries into Global Urban History." *Journal of Urban History* 47 (5): 955–62.

"Experience Passim." n.d. Passim. Accessed June 12, 2023. https://www.passim.org/live-music/experience-passim/.

Florida, Richard. 2003. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. Hazard Press.

Fürnkranz, Magdalena. 2021. "Creative Crisis? Performing Artists in Vienna's Live Music Scene in the Age of COVID-19." *IASPM Journal* 11 (1): 22–37.

Gallan, Ben. 2012. "Gatekeeping Night Spaces: The Role of Booking Agents in Creating 'local' Live Music Venues and Scenes." *The Australian Geographer* 43 (1): 35–50.

———. 2015. "Night Lives: Heterotopia, Youth Transitions and Cultural Infrastructure in the Urban Night." *Urban Studies* 52 (3): 555–70.

Gallan, Ben, and Chris Gibson. 2013. "Mild-Mannered Bistro by Day, Eclectic Freak-Land at

Night: Memories of an Australian Music Venue." *Australian Journal of French Studies* 37 (2): 174–93.
Gibson, Chris, and Shane Homan. 2004. "URBAN REDEVELOPMENT, LIVE MUSIC AND PUBLIC SPACE." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10 (1): 67–84.
Greenberg, Miriam. 2009. *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World*. Routledge.
Green, Katie Victoria. 2018. "Trying to Have Fun in 'No Fun City': Legal and Illegal Strategies for Creating Punk Spaces in Vancouver, British Columbia." *Punk & Post Punk* 7 (1): 75–92.
Harvey, D. 1995. "Globalization in Question." *Rethinking Marxism*. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08935699508685463?casa_token=72UmHgKgWmMAAAAA:-0fSeA_-SW1jsdj1VsrouIH_CCIFuI4OmTVa3RsZkQuxh2vnGKkA6GGa_qsJbFkWRqpakCiBdtE.
Harvey, David. 1978. "The Urban Process under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2 (1-3): 101–31.
———. 2003. "The Right to the City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27 (4): 939–41.
———. 2012. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso Books.
Hiller, R. Scott. 2014. "Exclusive Dealing and Its Effects: The Impact of Large Music Festivals on Local Music Venues." *Review of Industrial Organization* 45 (2): 153–75.
Hoeven, Arno van der, and Erik Hitters. 2019. "The Social and Cultural Values of Live Music: Sustaining Urban Live Music Ecologies." *Cities* 90 (July): 263–71.
———. 2020. "The Spatial Value of Live Music: Performing, (re)developing and Narrating Urban Spaces." *Geoforum; Journal of Physical, Human, and Regional Geosciences* 117 (December): 154–64.
Homan, Shane. 2019. "'Lockout' Laws or 'Rock Out' Laws? Governing Sydney's Night-Time Economy and Implications for the 'music City.'" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 25 (4): 500–514.
"Home." n.d. Live Nation Entertainment. Accessed June 12, 2023. https://www.livenationentertainment.com/.
Hudson, Ray. 1995. "Making Music Work? Alternative Regeneration Strategies in a Deindustrialized Locality: The Case of Derwentside." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20 (4): 460–73.
———. 2006. "Regions and Place: Music, Identity and Place." *Progress in Human Geography* 30 (5): 626–34.
Ingold, Tim. 2009. "The Textility of Making." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34 (1): 91–102.
Johnson, Whitney. 2017. "Weird Music: Tension and Reconciliation in Cultural-Economic Knowledge." *Cultural Sociology* 11 (1): 44–59.
Kong, Lily. 1995. "Popular Music in Geographical Analyses." *Progress in Human Geography* 19 (2): 183–98.
Kuchar, Robin. 2021. "Music venues in transition: States of autonomy, dependence and subcultural institutionalization." *Todas as Artes* 3 (2). http://aleph.letras.up.pt/index.php/taa/article/view/10250.
Lefebvre, Henri. 2003. *The Urban Revolution*. U of Minnesota Press.
Live, D. M. A. 2020. "THE SURVEY LIVE MUSIC VENUES & CLUBS IN EUROPE - FACTS & FIGURES."
Miller, Dan, and John Schofield. 2016. "The 'Toilet Circuit': Cultural Production, Fandom and

Heritage in England's Small Music Venues." *Heritage & Society* 9 (2): 137–67.
Music Canada, Ifpi/music. 2015. "The Mastering of a Music City: Key Elements, Effective Strategies and Why It's Worth Pursuing." IFPI and Music Canada with MIDEM London.
"Our Mission." n.d. Passim. Accessed June 12, 2023. https://www.passim.org/mission/.
Pan, Ran, and Elek Pafka. 2021. "Mapping the 'beat': The Urban Morphologies of Melbourne's Evolving Live Music Clusters." *Journal of Urban Design* 26 (3): 265–78.
Parkinson, Tom, Mark Hunter, Kimberly Campanello, Mike Dines, and Gareth Dylan Smith. 2015. "Understanding Small Music Venues: A Report by the Music Venues Trust," March, 67.
Peters, Jeremy. 2020. "Cultural and Social Mecca: Entrepreneurial Action and Venue Agglomeration in Detroit's Paradise Valley and Black Bottom Neighborhoods." *Artivate* 9 (1): 20–41.
Roberts, Rosie, and Sam Whiting. 2021. "The Impact of COVID-19 on Music Venues in Regional South Australia: A Case Study." *Perfect Beat* 21 (1): 25–32.
Sassen, S. 2001. "'The Impact of the New Technologies and Globalization on Cities': From Arie Graafland and Deborah Hauptmann, Eds., Cities in Transition." *The City Reader*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261732-72/impact-new-technologies-globalization-cities-saskia-sassen.
Sassen, Saskia. 1996. "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims." *Public Culture* 8 (2): 205–23.
———. 2015. "The Impact of the New Technologies and Globalization on Cities." In *The City Reader*, 706–14. Routledge.
Soja, Edward W. 1999. "In Different Spaces: The Cultural Turn in Urban and Regional Political Economy." *European Planning Studies* 7 (1): 65–75.
Swarbrick, Dana, Dan Bosnyak, Steven R. Livingstone, Jotthi Bansal, Susan Marsh-Rollo, Matthew H. Woolhouse, and Laurel J. Trainor. 2018. "How Live Music Moves Us: Head Movement Differences in Audiences to Live Versus Recorded Music." *Frontiers in Psychology* 9: 2682.
Swyngedouw, Erik, and Maria Kaïka. 2003. "The Making of 'Glocal' Urban Modernities." *Cityscape* 7 (1): 5–21.
Taylor, Iain A., Sarah Raine, and Craig Hamilton. 2020. "COVID-19 and the UK Live Music Industry: A Crisis of Spatial Materiality." *The Journal of Media Art Study and Theory* 1 (2): 219–41.
Taylor, T. D. 2017. "Valuing Music." *Music in the World: Selected Essays*.
Waitt, Gordon, and Chris Gibson. 2009. "Creative Small Cities: Rethinking the Creative Economy in Place." *Urban Studies* 46 (5-6): 1223–46.
Wang, Xueqi, and Zhichong Zou. 2021. "Open Data Based Urban For-Profit Music Venues Spatial Layout Pattern Discovery." *Sustainability: Science Practice and Policy* 13 (11): 6226.
Webster, E., M. Brennan, A. Behr, M. Cloonan, and J. Ansell. 2018. "Valuing Live Music: The UK Live Music Census 2017 Report." https://eprints.ncl.ac.uk/file_store/production/247959/FB952B84-8B8F-43C8-A3ED-4C3F08D73EEE.pdf.
Webster, Emma, and George McKay. 2016. *From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: The Impact of British Music Festivals*. Humanities Research Council.
Whiting, Sam. 2021. "The Value of Small Live Music Venues: Alternative Forms of Capital and

Niche Spaces of Cultural Production." *Cultural Sociology* 15 (4): 558–78.
Yassai, Afsar. Location Map of Cambridge and Club Passim. [Map]. Data from: City of Cambridge GIS. Using: ArcGIS [GIS software]. Redlands, CA: Environmental Systems Research Institute.
Zukin, Sharon. n.d. "Whose Culture? Whose City?" *The Cultural Geography Reader*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203931950-71/whose-culture-whose-city-sharon-zukin.
Zukin, Sharon. 1996. *The Cultures of Cities*. Wiley.