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2020

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Localities on the Border: Toward a Consideration of Musicking in El Paso, Texas

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Music

by

Katherine Dahle Morics

Committee in charge:

Professor Scott Marcus, Chair

Professor Timothy Cooley

Professor Casey Walsh

June 2020

The thesis of Katherine Dahle Morics is approved.

Timothy Cooley

Casey Walsh

Scott Marcus, Chair

June 2020

Localities on the Border: Toward a Consideration of Music in El Paso, Texas

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Katherine Dahle Morics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee members for their thoughtful and helpful feedback, and for helping me get over the finish line.

Thank you to my music graduate student cohort, the “Coven” in particular, for their emotional support, academic advice, and general amazingness. My fellow students have been my most influential teachers at UCSB and their work has inspired and challenged me throughout my time here.

Thank you to the wildcat UC strikers for their inspiring shows of bravery in advocating for graduate students across the country.

Thank you to Opus for sitting on top of my computer to remind me to take a break every once in a while.

Finally, thank you to Sergio for being there whenever my faith in myself faltered.

ABSTRACT

Localities on the Border: Toward a Consideration of Musicking in El Paso, Texas

by

Katherine Dahle Morics

In this thesis, I offer a literature review addressing recent scholarship, largely in the field of ethnomusicology, on the concepts of local, locality, and localization. I first explore how authors have deployed the term local as an adjective to describe musical activities in terms of spatial scales of reference. I then turn to the concept of locality as a domain of social life that is reproduced through social interaction, focusing mainly on how contemporary scholars have used cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai's (1996) ideas within music studies. Finally, I address the term localization, often discussed in context of the related concept of globalization, to consider how authors have used the concept to address movements and adaptations of musical forms in various places. I further position this thesis as a point of entry into the case study of El Paso, Texas, combining this literature review with brief examples from my own observations and distance research on El Paso. I argue that a focus on locality as a quality produced through social activity can productively address the tensions inherent in El Paso's position as a city on the border of Mexico and the United States.

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Introduction: What does it mean to be local?

In June of 2018, a nonprofit organization called the El Paso International Music Foundation launched with an event called Locals Week, during which bands from El Paso, Texas and the neighboring cities of Las Cruces, New Mexico and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, performed at restaurants, bars, and performance venues throughout El Paso. The names of both the event and the organization initially sparked my interest and led me to some initial questions. What does it mean for an organization promoting local music to describe themselves as international? What does the term local mean in the context of El Paso, a city that exists on the borders of three states and two countries? I attended some of these Locals Weeks events and was struck by the variety of venues and artists featured. On Saturday night I was sipping a beer while listening to surf rock, cumbia, and jazz fusion in a renovated movie theater, and on Sunday I was eating a slice of pizza while listening to subdued acoustic folk music in a local pizza shop. As I listened to these performances, I began to consider the significance of the term local in the context of this event. The diversity of music presented suggested to me that the event was not meant to define local El Paso music in terms of one genre or style, and the inclusion of artists from Las Cruces and Ciudad Juárez challenged any simple definition of local El Paso music as simply music from within the city limits of El Paso.

My brief visit and attendance at this event led me to further question the use of the term local. The term is often deployed, within academic music scholarship and in popular discourse, without too much explanation or thought to how it is being used. In this thesis, I explore how music scholars have used the term local to analyze musicking through a review of some recent literature that considers relationships between musicking and the

interrelated concepts of the local, locality, and localization. I do not presume intimate knowledge of El Paso, having only brief field experiences in the area, so I position this thesis as a discussion of existing scholarship to open up questions about the incredibly complex issues that converge there.

The word local implies a spatial scale of reference. It is abundant in daily life, although little thought is usually given to its definition. Customers are urged to support local businesses with their patronage. Voters in the United States participate in local elections. Farmer's markets are seen as a way for shoppers to support local farmers by buying locally grown produce. In all of these examples, the term local implies another frame of reference that is, in some way, larger than the local. Supporting local businesses is an alternative to supporting large multinational conglomerates, the number of voters participating in a local election is smaller than those in state and federal elections, and buying locally grown produce means the geographical distance between the consumer and the farmer is smaller. When used to describe musicking, the term local is also used to reference spatial scales, albeit in contingent and relational ways. As the literature reviewed in this thesis demonstrates, the term local – and the related terms locality and localization – can be used to describe musicking in neighborhoods, in cities, in regions, and in countries. While often invoked as a frame of reference for ethnomusicological studies, the complexities of the concept of the local are not always explicitly explored in them.

I position this thesis, therefore, as an engagement with ongoing conversations and research within music studies regarding the concepts of local, locality, and localization. I draw specifically from research published in the last decade, as recent edited volumes in

the field of ethnomusicology have signaled a rising interest in scholarly engagements with the term local. These volumes, such as *The Routledge Companion to Local Musicking* by Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher (2018) and *Making Congregational Music Local in Christian Communities Worldwide* by Monique Ingalls, Muriel Reigersberg, and Zoe Sherinian (2018) draw from earlier works from ethnomusicologists such as Veit Erlmann (1998) as well as cultural theorists and social geographers such as Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Doreen Massey (1994; 1993; 2005) in order to engage with relationships between music and the negotiation of the local. As this thesis will demonstrate, the terms local, locality, and localization can be used in a multitude of ways to examine forms of musicking in different situations. Through a review of this recent literature, I aim to demonstrate the breadth of possible applicability of the complicated and multivalent terms local, locality, and localization can offer. As the variety of uses and treatments of local, locality, and localization demonstrated through the works reviewed in this thesis shows, these three terms may provide a strong theoretical point from which to approach musicking in the complicated place of El Paso. As I will discuss further in my conclusion, I view those uses of locality that draw on Arjun Appadurai's (1996) phenomenological understanding of the term to be the most potentially fruitful for future study because of their emphasis on human experience of place and space. However, I suggest that increased attention to the material dimension of Appadurai's arguments is needed to fully address the issues present in El Paso.

El Paso

The framework of local, locality, and localization can be a productive entry point into ethnographic studies of El Paso, particularly because of the specific yet nuanced

analysis the terms afford. In 1993, geographer Doreen Massey, who is often cited in recent ethnomusicological literature on notions of local, locality, and localization, suggested an understanding of the term locality that draws upon previous geographical treatments of place by foregrounding the relationships and links between places, arguing that “any serious understanding of any one place necessitates standing back, taking a broader view, and setting it in a wider context” (Massey 1993, 144). Massey therefore chooses to define a place in terms of its relationships to others, not simply in terms of what distinguishes it from others. In her analysis, Massey uses the terms place and locality as almost synonymous, but uses the term locality to draw attention to the relationships and processes she foregrounds in her analysis, placing stress “on the openness of localities, on their construction on the basis of links *to* the outside rather than demarcation *from* it” (Massey 1993, 148). In a city as complex as El Paso, due in part to its relationship with the United States-Mexico border, considering locality as Massey describes can allow for highly specific studies while acknowledging the international politics and economic patterns that affect El Paso. In the United States, the election of Donald Trump as President in November of 2016 has continued to render the border between the United States and Mexico highly visible and contested in popular discourse. In the words of El Paso journalist Robert Moore, “we [El Paso] are the focal point of a national debate over the border that often distorts the reality of border life.”¹ Perhaps a focus on understandings of the local in El Paso can clarify the realities that are distorted in these national debates.

¹ Moore, Robert, El Paso Matters February 14, 2020. “Why El Paso Matters Is Launching Here and Now.” *El Paso Matters* (blog), February 14, 2020. <https://elpasomatters.org/2020/02/14/why-el-paso-matters-is-launching-here-and-now/>.

As El Paso is a city on the border, it is a place of movement. While some may cross through El Paso as part of a journey to elsewhere in the United States, Mexico, or beyond, many crossing the border between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez do so as part of their regular lives as residents of the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez metropolitan area, crossing between the cities for shopping, entertainment, labor, or to visit loved ones.² While some ethnographic and journalistic work has pointed out the shared history and continued interaction between the two cities, they are in fact two separate cities. In a comparative study of “border towns” in Europe and North America, historian Paul Nugent suggests that using the term “sister cities” to describe settlements bisected by the US-Mexico border “obscures a history of conflict and ambivalence that both the Mexican and American border populations are only too well aware of” (2012, 560). Anthropologist Josiah Heyman, who lives in and studies the El Paso del Norte region, further suggests that “border people are basically correct in their impression that they occupy two very different spaces, culturally, socially, economically, and politically, even as they cross them frequently, even daily” (2012, 56). As these quotes suggest, treating the cities of Ciudad Juárez and El Paso as one ignores much of the history of the region and the continued, differentiated experiences of life in the two cities. Considering how the local is negotiated and understood through musicking in El Paso can acknowledge the

² The only available official data for border crossings in El Paso provides only the number of crossers and their method of transportation into the United States, so I am unable to give a firm number on the number of crossings that are done by residents of the area. News articles from various local and international news sources, such as a recent article from United Press International, make reference to cross-border mobility as a prevalent aspect of the lives of those residents who have the privilege to cross. “Cross-Border Life in Juárez, El Paso: Work, Family -- and Long Waits.” October 2018. UPI. Accessed September 13, 2019. https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/10/24/Cross-border-life-in-Jurez-El-Paso-Work-family-and-long-waits/7091540326157/.

connections between El Paso, Ciudad Juárez, and any other places in the world without ignoring the specific experiences of life in El Paso.

Methodologies and Personal Position

I first became interested in the city of El Paso, Texas after I drove through it on my way from Houston to Los Angeles in June of 2016. El Paso was the first city I had seen since San Antonio, which was almost eight hours behind me by the time I entered the El Paso city limits. After spending so long driving through the sparsely populated desert landscape of West Texas, I was struck by the combined visual impact of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez – which looked from a distance like one large city – framed between two mountain ranges and surrounded by seemingly empty desert. As I continued driving along the Interstate 10 freeway, I passed through the downtown area of El Paso, and came within a few hundred feet of the border fence. On the other side, I could see people in Mexico driving and walking down residential streets filled with houses. The cities may have looked like one from far away to me, but now I was looking at people in Ciudad Juárez through a fence that served as a visual reminder of the separation between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. My initial interest inspired me to visit for two short field trips, one of which, in June of 2018, was discussed at the beginning of this thesis. I will conclude the thesis with a brief discussion of the second field trip, which occurred in August of 2019. These trips represent my first exploratory steps into the field, so I treat the experiences I discuss at the beginning and the end of this thesis as provoking questions to be followed up in future, sustained fieldwork. The observations I make in this thesis are based on my interpretations of my own brief experiences in El Paso and my readings of El Paso artist and nonprofit groups' usage of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and

Reddit. However, these interpretations are not the focus of the thesis, which is an exploration of the terms local, locality, and localization in recent ethnomusicological scholarship. I add my own observations sparingly as a means of demonstrating the possible utility of the concepts of local, locality, and localization in future ethnographic work in El Paso.

How might my position as a non-local in El Paso shape my future research in the region? This question illuminates both the slipperiness and the continued relevance of the term local. In many social interactions, it matters whether someone identifies themselves as a local. The Visit El Paso website, run by the El Paso city department of tourism, invites visitors to the site to sign up for their email list to receive information in their inbox so they can “Explore El Paso like a local.” Public statements like this, as well as events like Locals Week, which initially sparked my interest in El Paso, suggest that the term local holds significance in the region. Because of this significance, I recognize that I am an outsider to the city – I cannot claim myself as local to El Paso, as I only have fleeting experience with the city. I also recognize the political implications inherent in my positionality as a white researcher who holds United States citizenship undergoing research in a politically fraught border region characterized by interpersonal and institutional racialized violence.

As Joshua Pilzer explains in the introduction to his work with Korean survivors of sexual slavery under the Japanese military, complicated differences in experience and power between researcher and subject are central to the ethnographic process:

The relationship between researcher and subject is neither an inconvenience to be minimized nor something to fetishize and celebrate. Rather it is a very fraught and

very hopeful thing. Fieldworkers struggle to understand and overcome the disparities of power inherent in this relationship not only out of ethical obligation, but also because such effort is the very condition of scholarly understanding.

(Pilzer 2012, xi)

Pilzer further suggests that a disjuncture of experience between researcher and subject can further compel the researcher to listen deeply and carefully to their subjects (Pilzer 2012, x). I consider this type of deep listening as an important part of the ethnomusicological fieldwork process, through which ethnomusicologist Michelle Kisliuk claims “we [the fieldworkers] are constantly in the process of defining ourselves, of modifying and deepening our identities in relation to others” (2008, 185). In approaching the “field” of El Paso, I aim to acknowledge the disparity of experience between myself and those who I meet, while remaining open to how my own identity may be shaped by my interactions with them.

Key Terms and Structure

This thesis is organized around the terms local, locality, and localization. The term local is present as a base for each of these terms, and will be a common theme throughout this thesis. However, I also include the terms locality and localization because they are often used in ways that are related to, but distinct from, the term local. For example, the term localization is usually used to emphasize processes by which music and musical activities are transformed and adapted as they travel from one place to another. Additionally, the term locality is often used to describe a phenomenological quality of life that is produced through communal activity. These definitions will be explored further in the following sections. While I separate these terms in the

organization of this thesis in order to highlight the differing uses of these terms, there is considerable overlap between them, as some scholars use them simultaneously or interchangeably. In my discussion of each piece of literature, I endeavor to highlight each author's specific use of each term. The purpose of this literature review is to demonstrate the breadth, complexity, and fluidity of these three terms, as well as the different, sometimes contradictory, ways in which they have been used in recent music scholarship, particularly in ethnomusicology.

Following the main body of work, which will review the literature on these three key terms in music studies, I include a brief discussion of ethnomusicological treatments of borders, and the United States-Mexico border specifically. As I will discuss further in the introduction to that section, there is a large body of scholarship on music in the United States-Mexico border that would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead of attempting to address all of this important scholarship, I discuss works whose authors look at musicking and the border in specific cities on the US-Mexico border. While not all of these authors explicitly theorize the term local in their analyses, I discuss them as examples of studies of the border that look at very specific locations along the almost two thousand-mile boundary.

I conclude the thesis with a return to El Paso, briefly discussing what has changed and what has remained the same in El Paso music in the roughly one year since I first visited for Locals Week in 2018. I focus specifically on one event titled "This is El Paso," which was a benefit concert meant to celebrate the city of El Paso and raise money for victims of a mass shooting that took place in an El Paso shopping center on August 3rd, 2019. These concluding examples are not meant to make any specific claims about El

Paso or its music, but merely to identify trends and raise questions informed by the scholarship discussed in the thesis.

Local

I begin with the term local, which forms the base of the other two key terms explored in this thesis. As this section will demonstrate, the term local is extraordinarily flexible. In the introduction to their recent edited volume *The Routledge Companion to Local Musicking*, ethnomusicologists Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher suggest that more scholarly attention be paid to the term local (2018, 1). They claim that

“Local” is a term frequently used to describe musical activities within a given place, but it is typically applied without much reflection on what constitutes the “local” or for whom or the process by which these activities became associated with this place. With this volume, we hope to encourage critical inquiry and continued study of the complex relationship between musicking, identity, and discourses of space, place, and community. (ibid.)

In this introduction, Reily and Brucher suggest that the term local, while commonly used by scholars, is a complex term that can be used in many different ways and position the term local as a point from which to critically examine relationships between space, place, and musicking. The term local can be used as an adjective or a noun, and the Oxford English Dictionary offers over ten definitions for its use as an adjective.³ Probably the most common definition – “of, relating to, inhabiting, or existing in a particular place or

³ "local, adj. and n.". OED Online. December 2019. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109549?rskey=zpEJAi&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed February 08, 2020).

region” – makes use of the similarly slippery term place. The places described or analyzed in the case studies discussed in this section refer to nations, cities, and neighborhoods within cities. My aim in this section is to highlight how each author defines the term local, and how they use the term in their analysis of musicking. I break this section into three subsections which represent common treatments of the term local. In the first subsection, I discuss how authors use the term local to describe the processes by which groups use musicking to foster and negotiate identities tied to places. In the second, I discuss works whose authors use the term local to describe relationships between musicking and urban environments. In the third, I discuss authors who present the concept of the local as an alternative to what they or their interlocutors view as the inappropriate privileging of national or global narratives and/or points of view.

Local Identities

Popular music scholar Holly Kruse (2010) demonstrates the continuing significance of the local as an identity for members of indie music scenes. She argues that senses of belonging to social networks embedded in the geography and economics of particular places are significant for musicians, particularly for those involved with the genres of indie rock and pop. Through archival research, participant observation, and interviews conducted with indie musicians in the college town of Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, Kruse considers how musicians identify themselves as part of local (referring to the town of Urbana-Champaign) music scenes. She uses these examples to challenge assumptions that local identifications have become less important in the context of the internet’s increasing prevalence in musical activities. Despite indie music’s declining reliance on physical spaces such as record shops, Kruse argues that indie music’s

historical definitions keep local identity at the forefront of many participants, suggesting that “indie music is largely defined in and by discourses of authenticity, and therefore the construction of situated local practices as authentic practices and the physical sites of local music remain important for scene participants despite the accessibility of music through the internet” (Kruse 2010, 631). As notions of authenticity remain important for participants in the indie music scene, defining oneself as a local artist to a specific city or region remains an effective means for musicians to define themselves as authentic.

Cultural studies scholar Ruth Adams (2019) uses the term local to focus on identities as they are expressed through musicking through the study of grime music in London. She argues that grime music is a way for young people in London produce their identities as Londoners – identities which have been inflected by the particular experiences of living in London as a young adult. Her analysis calls attention to how young people’s experiences and identifications with London take place, in part, through grime music. The term local in Adams’ analysis refers to the city of London, as she argues that

London is unquestionably a diverse society, but the mix of cultures is always in flux. Grime also vividly expresses socio-linguistic and cultural developments in the post-war, post-colonial, and arguably post-multicultural city. I want to argue here that it articulates new types of identity, novel manifestations of being a Londoner, of being English. It is indicative of an apparently paradoxical combination of often very restricted geographies and global cultural horizons. (Adams 2019, 438-9)

While Adams' focus is on her interlocutors' experiences of and identifications with the city of London, this quote demonstrates her understanding of how these experiences and identifications interact with their senses of being English and as members of larger global communities. Throughout her analysis, Adams illuminates the ways her interlocutors foreground their identities as Londoners through their stage names and song lyrics, demonstrating the complicated and multifaceted nature of identifying as local to a multicultural city.

Evandro Higa's (2018) study of identity in the context of international borders demonstrates an approach to the complex relationships between regional and national identities. He approaches this issue through what people in this border region call the "*alma guarani*" (Guarani soul). The Guarani is an indigenous group who have inhabited the area of what is now the border regions of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil for centuries, and the *alma guarani* remains an important identity symbol through which people claim an identity rooted in this border region (Higa 2018, 296). Following Doreen Massey (1993b), Higa characterizes the place of the border as provisional and in-process, claiming "the border is drawn as a line, but the banks of this line are a geographical space where territoriality is constantly built and rebuilt... The space of the [border] zone is the stage on which symbolic territorialities must coexist, and frictions between the identities prompt conflict, power struggles, meetings, and hybridizations that make the local unique" (Higa 2018, 297). He therefore uses the local to understand how a Guarani identity is constructed through the types of frictions and conflicts that occur where these international boundaries meet. He considers how four regional musical genres, Paraguayan polka and *guarânia*, the *chamamé* from Argentina, and the *rasqueado* from

Brazil, each can function as “an identity narrative (and/or identification) that is continuously negotiated between social actors, encompassing musicians, producers, and the publics” (Higa 2018, 299). While each genre performs different functions and identity narratives, Higa sees the *alma guarani* in each genre in their musical structure and performance styles, particularly in the rhythmic similarities between them. For Higa, the identity narratives enacted through these musical genres represent the possibility of being able to consider that “borders may not only be areas of conflict and power struggles but also places in which culture can be exchanged and identities and territorialities can be restructured” (Higa 2018, 304). Higa’s analysis illuminates the complex issues that surround musicking and identification in border areas.

While the authors discussed so far use the term local to address how people communicate and produce their identities as they relate to places through musicking, anthropologists Sara Le Menestrel and Jacques Henry (2010) explore how music understood as local can be central to people’s understandings of the identity *of* a city. In their study of professional musicians in New Orleans, they demonstrate how music understood as “local” was interpreted as crucial to the construction (and reconstruction) of New Orleans after the devastating loss caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Amidst the rebuilding efforts, Menestrel and Jacques Henry describe “a widely shared sense that the future of New Orleans is inextricably tied to the return of the vibrant music scene that has been part of the city’s definition over the centuries” (Menestrel and Henry 2010, 180). Using interviews with fourteen professional musicians from the New Orleans area, Menestrel and Henry examine the important relationships between musicking and a sense of place in the city, both pre- and post-Katrina. They suggest that, in the minds of some

of their interlocutors, “the future of New Orleans music hinges on the ability of musicians to resume a meaningful practice through their involvement in networks of interactions more than on permanently returning to the city or being able to earn a living there” (Menestrel and Henry 2010, 197).

In this subsection, I have discussed authors who examine relationships between musicking and local identity. Holly Kruse considers how identifying as local to Urbana-Champaign helps artists maintain networks within the city and distinguish themselves as authentic. Ruth Adams uses the example of grime music in London to discuss how music can be used as a way for young people to explore their sense of identity in the context of a multicultural city. Evandro Higa locates the *alma guarani* in multiple genres from the border region of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay as a way of illuminating how music can be used to create local identities that exist in productive tension with national boundaries. Finally, through their analysis of New Orleans musicians post-Katrina, Sara Le Menestrel and Jacques Henry demonstrate how the identity of a city can be intimately tied with musicking understood as local to the city. In the next subsection, I discuss works whose authors foreground the city in their use of the term local.

The Urban Local

Recent works by contemporary music scholars, such as Reily and Brucher (2018), cite anthropologist Ruth Finnegan’s volume *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town* (1989) as one of the first book-length ethnographic studies of local music-making. Finnegan’s study focuses on any and all forms of music-making that occur in the town of Milton Keynes, paying attention to the activities of not just the musicians themselves, but individuals involved in any capacity, such as listeners or organizers. Her

focus on the way in which citizens of the town, not just the musical performers themselves, interact with and are affected by musical activities illuminates an interactive relationship between music-making and the city. *The Hidden Musicians* is a multi-genre analysis that also calls attention to the relationships between local music-making and the larger forms from which this local music-making is drawn. The works discussed in this section similarly foreground socially negotiated practices of musicking in cities, and use the term local to analyze these practices.

The local appears in recent ethnomusicological literature that focuses on music and sound in urban environments, even when it is not explicitly treated as a theoretical framework. For example, sociologist Christine Guillebaud's (2017) recent edited volume *Toward an Anthropology of Ambient Sound* includes a section titled "Sound Identity and Locality." While this section title is not explained or analyzed by the editors, the chapters included in this section offer various considerations of sound's role in the relationships between individuals and their immediate community. Chapters in the section consider sound's role in the infrastructural development of cities and neighborhoods (Sánchez 2017; Guiu 2017), and its role in how individuals relate to their physical, urban surroundings and their communities (Uimonen 2017; Battesti 2017). While the term locality is not problematized or analyzed in this volume, its invocation by the volume's editor implies its potential applicability to studies of music and sound in urban environments. In the introduction to their volume *Sounding Cities: Auditory Transformations in Berlin, Chicago, and Kolkata*, Sebastian Klotz, Philip Bohlman, and Lars-Christian Koch (2018) suggest that music should be considered as a way of "making of the city," as musical practice can be a way to anchor people's experiences to their local

circumstances (2-3). Although passing, the authors' use of the term local represents another example of how recent ethnomusicological literature is able to use the term in the context of urban ethnomusicology.

Scott Henderson studies identity, representation and popular culture in post-industrial cities through the lens of popular culture and film. In his studies (2014), he uses the idea of the "local" to call attention to the way in which the process of musical production is often intimately tied to the city in which it takes place, discussing the labor of local musicians within the context of the post-industrial economy of the French city of Saint-Étienne (Henderson 2014, 129). He uses the term "local music," and calls for sustained attention to local music practices, saying that "musicians do come from 'somewhere,' and the nature of the music industry is such that local connections remain significant to a great deal of music production despite the increasing pressures of globalization" (Henderson 2014, 116). His analysis of the local music industry of Saint-Étienne focuses on the relationship between the city's industrial past and post-industrial present, focusing, for example, on ways in which previously industrial spaces, such as coalmines, have been re-purposed for music production and consumption (Henderson 2014, 118). Such activities, Henderson suggests, are ways of situating identities that are felt to be unique to Saint-Étienne within the practices of music-making in the city. This local identity is articulated not only through references to the city's past, but also through its connections to (and definitions against) nearby cities (Henderson 2014, 122).

Henderson emphasizes the relationship between the post-industrial economy of Saint-Étienne and the music that is produced there through examples such as the album *NOW* by Saint-Étienne artist Angil and the Hiddentracks, who, in using a local venue that used

to be an industrial brewery as a recording location and publishing videos of the recording process, “fuse aspects of past and present within Saint-Étienne, tying the contemporary production of music to the historical production that was central to the city and its identity” (Henderson 2014, 129). The local, for Henderson, is enacted in these types of material connections to the city that are formed through musical production.

The economics of local urban music are explored in sociologist Diana L. Miller’s (2018) work, in which she suggests that artists who have “small-time” music careers – those that perform mostly in local venues and often happily combine income from these endeavors with that of their “day jobs” – are often overlooked in music industry scholarship as simply aspiring professionals (Miller 2018, 71). This framing assumes that a local musician’s career is temporary, which ignores those musicians that are happy to maintain long-time careers in these smaller, local circumstances. Using a comparative study of metal and folk musicians in Toronto, Canada, Miller describes the “mutually constitutive” relationship between the organization of local music scenes and the career trajectories of individual musicians (Miller 2018, 72). She introduces the term “sustainable semi-professionalism” to describe the careers of those musicians who “create music on a long-term basis without seeking a professional music career” (73). Her analysis problematizes assumed distinctions between definitions of “amateur” and “professional” in music industry studies while calling attention to the important role these semi-professional musicians play in maintaining networks that comprise a local music scene.

Local Cosmopolitanism

The term cosmopolitanism has a long history within the disciplines of ethnomusicology and anthropology that is beyond the scope of this thesis, but recent work in ethnomusicology has explicitly tied this idea to the concept of the local. Ethnomusicologists Ana Alonso-Minutti, Eduardo Herrera, and Alejandro Madrid (2018) approach the relationship between local and global through the concepts of cosmopolitanism and experimentalism. The authors use a conceptualization of the local to center their analysis on the embodied experience of fluid, transnational subjects rather than what they view as a tendency to view the “experimental” as merely a rejection of European “art” music’s conventions (Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018, 6). The authors prefer a more embodied, localized study of experimentalisms, pluralizing the term as a means of illustrating how the use of terms such as “experimental” and “avant-garde” have always been “highly localized, historically grounded, fluid, and full of inconsistencies and contradictions” (Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018, 6).

The authors also recognize the transnational character of experimentalisms, utilizing what they describe as a “descriptive cosmopolitanism” to address the simultaneously local and transnational character of experimentalism, understanding cosmopolitanism as a way of describing “shared experiences that create the conditions for specific choices people make” (Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018, 10). They contrast their descriptive cosmopolitanism with other treatments of cosmopolitanism that are more prescriptive, such as Kwame Anthony Appiah’s (2006) well-known moral conceptualization of the term, or Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty’s (2002) understanding of cosmopolitanism as

“something awaiting realization” (Pollock et al., 1; quoted in Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018, 10). They further argue that cosmopolitanism is “not something that happens in opposition to the local; instead, it is part of the local” (ibid.). In understanding the cosmopolitanism of the local, the authors use cosmopolitanism as a tool for “negotiating the delicate balance between generalizing universals and fragmented particulars” (Perman 2013, 389; quoted in Alonso-Minutti, Herrera, and Madrid 2018, 10), challenging conceptualizations of the local that ignore global senses of interconnectivity and experience.

Local Points of View as Alternative to National or Global

In the introduction to their edited volume on music in the first half of the nineteenth century in the Japanese city of Osaka, musicologist Hugh de Ferranti and Japanese Studies scholar Alison Tokita (2013) emphasize an explicitly local approach to studies of music in Japanese cities, an approach they argue has been conspicuously absent from existing scholarship. While “local” studies have proliferated throughout East Asian music studies, de Ferranti and Tokita suggest that most of these studies are preoccupied with considering only how local musical practices relate to established national canons, suggest that “the positioning of local musics within orthodox narratives of national music and performing arts histories has served to justify such locally framed research” (de Ferranti and Tokita 2013, 9). The editors position their volume as a corrective to this trend, as a collection that adopts a multi-genre approach to the development of modernity and locality in the city of Osaka. Their concern is not with how musical developments in Osaka relate to established national trends elsewhere, but in an effort to “understand effects of regional geography, demography, history and traditions on processes of

modernization in expressive culture” (de Ferranti and Tokita 2013, 10). The authors therefore use the term local to refer to the city of Osaka, defining “local” in relation to “national.”

Ethnomusicologist Richard K. Wolf positions his 2009 edited volume on music and the local in South Asia as an alternative to a trend he observed in 2000s scholarship in which the dominant theoretical framework of music scholarship was a focus on globalization and international flows. He asks

Do the increasing humanistic and social scientific emphases on the so-called forces of globalization, like the market’s search for music that transcends context, disguise and undermine the ongoing relevance of local music and local senses of music in the world? While it is inevitable that ethnomusicological research on South Asia will engage increasingly with issues of globalization, many of us do not view the globalization literature as offering the only pertinent framework or point of departure for ethnomusicological studies of South Asia. We use “theorizing the local” to signal the continued value of comparative microstudies that are not concerned primarily with the flow of capital and neoliberal politics, but which take forms of interconnection, within and beyond South Asia, very seriously. (Wolf 2009, 6)

Speaking from the perspective of South Asian area studies, Wolf suggests that, while forces of globalization are important and relevant to ethnomusicological studies of South Asia and elsewhere, the significance of local music should not be ignored. Wolf argues attention should be paid to local circumstances as an alternative, or at the very least an accompaniment to, studies of globalization and global connectivity.

Producing Locality

While the above works offer compelling analyses of local musical phenomena, the ambiguity of the term comes with potential pitfalls. In using the term local as an adjective, it is easy to attach to an artist, an event, or an idea without giving too much thought to its use. The concept of producing locality, in my opinion, addresses this shortcoming by providing the tools with which to address the question of how things *become* local. In this section, I discuss scholars who describe locality as something that can be “produced.” These authors borrow the concept of the production of locality from the final chapter of Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, in which he defines locality as a “structure of feelings” (1996, 178) formed through social interaction. Recently, ethnomusicologists Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher have suggested that this conception of locality can be used to discuss musicking, saying

For [Appadurai], a ‘locality,’ as a structure of feelings, is understood as a value that is realized in interactions, creating relationships between people and the spaces in which they move, whether these spaces are physical or imaginary. Musicking, we argue, is an effective technology of interactivity that is used throughout the world in mediating people’s relations to their localities, shaping their commitments to the locality and to the people with whom they interact within it. (Reily and Brucher 2018, 2)

They therefore position musicking as a vehicle for the types of interactions through which locality can be produced, a position from which the authors discussed in this

section (many of whom are included in Reily and Brucher's edited volume) approach their own studies of musicking and locality.

I break this section into three subsections. I begin by discussing works whose authors use the concept of locality to discuss the creation of shared knowledge, identities, or feelings through musicking, and how these processes interact with the spaces and places in which they occur. While the common thread connecting these works is their foregrounding of shared experience, the types of experiences examined vary, such as apprenticeship and Pentecostal worship. Following this section, I discuss works whose authors conceive of the production of locality as occurring through the work of the imagination, another concept borrowed from Appadurai (1996). Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion of Appadurai's work on locality in order to highlight the common theoretical threads that have been woven throughout the section.

Locality Produced Through Common Experience

Suzel Reily, drawing on Appadurai (1996), uses the concept of locality to consider how feelings generated by collective experience bind people to the places in which those experiences occur (Reily 2018, 186). In her analysis, Reily treats the concept of place in a similar way to how Appadurai defines a neighborhood – as a “situated community” (Appadurai 1996, 179) – and considers how feelings generated through musicking in places contribute to the connection between senses of locality and the physical space of the neighborhood. In focusing on the relationships between feelings and places, Reily emphasizes the affective nature of the link between localities and neighborhoods, an aspect of locality she claims is not sufficiently explored in Appadurai's model (Reily 2018, 185). To do so, she compares contemporary

ethnographic work with the Venda in South Africa to John Blacking's earlier work with the community to consider how the Venda community has adapted and changed to create contemporary structures of feelings and localities (2018, 186). She then compares the intimate linkage between musical activities and community in Blacking's analysis of the Venda in the 1970s with what she describes as a more diverse contemporary Venda musicscape to demonstrate how a tidy connection between neighborhoods and senses of locality can be interrupted by contemporary national and international politics (Reily 2018, 193).

Ethnomusicologist Theodore Konkouris (2018) focuses on the body as an important tool in the production of locality, emphasizing Appadurai's notion that the production of locality involves "complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies... [T]hey are ways to embody locality as well as to locate bodies in social and spatially defined communities" (Appadurai 1996, 179; quoted in Konkouris 2018, 200). Drawing from fieldwork with Malian Mande hunters, Konkouris suggests that hunters' ceremonies, initiation rites, and sacrifices are examples of techniques that inscribe locality onto the bodies of hunters through the acquisition and performance of local knowledge (Konkouris 2018, 200). Konkouris views apprenticeships as unique "due to the total immersion required from apprentices. They also integrate into professional and communal networks that are conceptual and ideological –consistent with Appadurai's conception of locality" (Konkouris 2018, 203). Music plays a role in this process by virtue of its presence in many of the rituals undergone by apprentices, as well as in performances where hunters present their embodied local knowledge (Konkouris 2018, 200). Konkouris' analysis emphasizes the role of the body in the production of local

subjectivities, and his study of the apprenticeship model illuminates how musical pedagogy can act as an element of the production of locality.

Socially defined values as they relate to senses of locality can also be interpreted through analyses of communal experience, as social anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Evanthia Patsiaoura (2018) suggests in her study of participatory Pentecostal worship among Nigerians in Athens, Greece. Drawing from Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Doreen Massey (Massey 1993), she describes Pentecostal worship in Place of Wonder, the congregation with whom she performed fieldwork, as creating a “dynamic locality: this is not a spatially bounded territory but rather a territory defined by shared experiences of transcendence, enabled by the inseparable practice of musicality and spirituality” (Patsiaoura 2018, 169). Patsiaoura describes services at Place of Wonder as inherently participatory events that feature music as a critical part of worship, through which she argues these dynamic localities are produced. This emphasis on participatory worship underscores Patsiaoura’s experiential understanding of spirituality:

I propose that we can think of spirituality as a skill or quality of experiencing the spiritual realm. Speaking from a phenomenological perspective, I employ the term ‘skill’ to account for the particular standpoint of Nigerian Pentecostals who believe that spirituality and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are achieved through the (inter)personal and constant practice of living a godly life and following particular norms of worship in and outside of the church environment. The term ‘quality,’ on the other hand, accounts for the variable ways and contexts in which individuals and communities may conceptualize and experience their spirituality. (Patsiaoura 174-175)

She connects this phenomenological understanding of spirituality with Appadurai's (1996, 178) definition of locality as a phenomenological quality and cultural geographer Doreen Massey's (1993) understanding of locality as relational and processual, defined by experience and sociality rather than simply by geography. While music and spirituality are inextricably linked in Patsiaoura's analysis of her specific case study, she gestures toward the usefulness of considering the transcendent nature of locality in situations that are not explicitly about worship or spirituality, suggesting that a renewed focus on the experiences generated by musicking can continue to point to the process of locality construction as "contextual, fluid and open to interpretation as much as music making" (Patsiaoura 2018, 178). In Patsiaoura's analysis, transcendence refers to the "inclusivity of extraordinary experience," (Patsiaoura 2018, 176) which is where she situates musical localities as they are produced through participatory Pentecostal worship.

Ethnomusicologist Sylvia Bruinders (2018) suggests that locality can be produced and performed through the creation of a distinct "local" sound, such as in her analysis of "Christmas bands" in Cape Town. Christmas bands are groups of amateur wind and stringed instrument players who perform a varied repertoire of hymns, carols, and Western classical music in parades and competitions, which Bruinders argues play important roles in binding together communities that have, in South Africa, historically been marginalized (Bruinders 2018, 91-92). Bruinders sees Christmas band activities as one way for these communities to challenge dominant stereotypes that arise as a result of this marginalization. This is achieved through the performance of globally familiar repertoire (such as Christmas carols) in a locally distinctive style, which Bruinders sees in the harmonies, rhythms, and timbre that come together through "the heightened social

interaction integral to the performance activity” (Bruinders 2018, 95). While the melodies of these carols and hymns may be familiar to most listeners, their harmonization and rhythm may be unfamiliar, as Cape Town arrangers may either not know the rules of common practice harmonization or simply prefer harmonic conventions that do not adhere to those rules, while inclusions of stylistic conventions such as the *ghoema* rhythm common to many musical genres on the Western Cape also reference the region in which these performances take place (Bruinders 2018, 94). Bruinders views these competitions and parades, as well as rehearsals and meetings, as “ritual spaces” that produce locality as a shared experience in a situated community as Appadurai describes as well as an opportunity to perform these senses of locality (Bruinders 2018, 97).

Locality Produced Through the Imagination

Brian Ekdale (2018), who studies global digital media communication, considers the local and global in conversation with one another by using Appadurai’s (1996) concept of “global imaginaries.” Ekdale suggests that the production of locality, as an emergent process shaped through global exchange, takes part largely through the work of the imagination (Ekdale 2018, 211). According to Appadurai, as a result of globalization, the imagination has become “an organized field of social practices, a form of work... and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (Appadurai 1996, 31). Ekdale draws from Appadurai’s concept of global imaginaries to suggest that, rather than approaching locality as created through cultural exchange between “geopolitical levels” such as local, national, and/or global (Ekdale 2018, 213), consideration should be given to how the “hybrid subjectivities” of local actors inform cultural production (ibid.). According to Ekdale, hybrid subjectivities are

formed through global imaginaries, “as people envision meaningful attachments to communities as broad as the human race and as divergent as religion, race, occupation, interest, and beyond... Thus, global imaginaries produce hybrid subjectivities, which, in turn, shape the social processes involved in the production of locality” (ibid.). Ekdale considers how friction – defined by Ana Tsing as ‘productive confusion’ (Tsing 2005, 247; quoted in Ekdale 2018, 224) – caused by the meeting of divergent global imaginaries affects the production and consumption of music videos in Kenya. Through interviews with DJs and music video directors, Ekdale argues that tensions that arise through the process of conceptualizing and producing music videos are results of divergent senses of belonging to different imagined global communities.

Appadurai and the Production of Locality

The works discussed in the previous subsection draw from cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) conceptualization of locality as a phenomenological quality that is “produced.” Locality forms an important part of Arjun Appadurai’s (1996) seminal work *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Appadurai suggests that a cultural study of globalization reveals a world characterized by deterritorialization (a term Appadurai borrows from Deleuze and Guattari 1987), “in which money, commodities, and persons are involved in ceaselessly chasing each other around the world” (Appadurai 1996, 38). He presents deterritorialization as a potential challenge to anthropology and the practice of ethnography, as the anthropological “object” of “tightly territorialized, spatially bounded” groups no longer exists (Appadurai 1996, 48). He proposes an approach based on locality as an answer to this problem, claiming that

what a new style of ethnography can do is to capture the impact of deterritorialization on the imaginative resources of lived, local experiences. Put another way, the task of ethnography now becomes the unraveling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality as a lived experience in a globalized, deterritorialized world? (Appadurai 1996, 52)

Part of Appadurai's analysis of this deterritorialization and its effects on the production of locality addresses what he views as the changing role of the nation-state, which he argues is under pressure because deterritorialization challenges the legitimacy of the geographical boundaries upon which the nation-state relies (Appadurai 1996, 188).

Appadurai devotes the final chapter of *Modernity at Large* to define his understanding of locality. To do so, he focuses on the changing relationship between the "neighborhood" and "locality." Neighborhoods, in Appadurai's analysis, are "situated communities characterized by their actuality, whether spatial or virtual, and their potential for social reproduction" (Appadurai 1996, 179). These neighborhoods provide the context for the production of locality, which Appadurai defines as "primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial," as a "phenomenological quality, which expresses itself in certain kinds of agency" (Appadurai 1996, 178). While both neighborhoods and localities are socially produced, Appadurai views locality as "a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community" (Appadurai 1996, 189). Historically, according to Appadurai, the relationship between the production of localities and neighborhoods has been a dialectical one, as neighborhoods could not be produced without the local subjects whose localized knowledge make such work possible (Appadurai 1996, 181). However, in a globalized

context, Appadurai sees this relationship between localities and neighborhoods as increasingly strained, as the local subjectivities produced in neighborhoods are challenged by the nation-state's attempts to re-inscribe them as national, not local, subjects as a response to globalization's increased challenges to the permanency of its boundaries (Appadurai 1996, 191-192). I will return to the relationship between neighborhoods and locality in the conclusion of this thesis.

Performing Locality and the Local

The authors whose works are reviewed in this section focus on performance, using the concept of locality and the local to explore how places, and identities tied to those places, can be performed in various ways. The works discussed in this section each foreground performance, both in the titles of their works and in their theoretical focus. I place the terms local and locality together in this section title to draw attention to the similar ways in which the two terms are used in the following works. The overlapping uses of these terms in this section demonstrates the fluidity and cross-pollination between the three terms – local, locality, and localization – around which this thesis is organized. In what follows, I consider how each term is used to examine performance.

Ethnomusicologist Maria Mendonça (2018, 335) examines locality as performed and produced through Javanese gamelan performance in Britain. She suggests that musical performance, even when the music is “from elsewhere” (Mendonça 2018, 339), can be a crucial part of the creation and performance of locality. Through its evocation of an “imaginary” Java, Mendonça claims that gamelan performance and instruction at the Southbank Centre in London performs a supposed local Java that interacts with senses of locality in London (Mendonça 2018, 344). Through their sonic and material presence,

Mendonça suggests that the gamelan instruments are “embodying and transmitting aspects of Javanese culture,” and participants and audience members in London are able to identify with these aspects of Javanese culture as part of their own senses of locality (Mendonça 2018, 336). The relationships that make the gamelan program possible reflect ties between local (London), national (England), and international (Java) institutions, and Mendonça interprets these connections as an integral part of producing locality in London (Mendonça 2018, 339). In Mendonça’s analysis, the connections that produce locality in London and perform Javanese culture in London come together through performance, as participants of the gamelan program “perform locality by drawing on their encounters with the instruments in their group formations, weaving in and out of larger-scale institutional imaginaries, guided by their motivations and experiences” (Mendonça 2018, 340). Performing locality in Mendonça’s analysis means enacting senses of belonging to both local institutions and global communities.

Ray Casserly (2018) also demonstrates how locality can be performed through specific musical and performance styles in his study of brass bands in Northern Ireland and their performances of complex embodiments of nationality and identity. Casserly presents the local and the national as existing along a spectrum rather than being diametrically opposed (Casserly 2018, 429), and uses ethnographic examples to suggest that in Northern Irish brass band practices, local and national identities are performed simultaneously. Performances, particularly parades, according to Casserly, are “an overt claim to national identity, the performances also enact and articulate discourses essential to the local communities and their immediate concerns” (Casserly 2018, 431). These discourses are evident in the names brass bands choose for themselves, which often

reflect a combination of local identity and associations with a larger imagined national or religious identity (Casserly 2018, 431). Part of Casserly's insistence on the positioning of local and national along a spectrum is a destabilization of categories, particularly in discourses of nationalism, as brass band performances are sometimes used as "a means to compete for an acceptance of their version of British-ness" (Casserly 2018, 433). To perform the local in Casserly's analysis of brass bands means to enact an identity that is informed by participants' experiences as both local residents and British citizens.

Ethnomusicologist Joanna Heath (2018) uses the case study of funeral singing in Northeast India to consider how locality can be used to analyze how identities tied to specific places are performed. She focuses on the Mizo (residents of the state of Mizoram in Northeast India) Christian community's practice of *zaikhâwm*, in which members of the community gather in the home of the bereaved family for several days to sing together (Heath 2018, 155). She proposes that these communal experiences can act as ways of solidifying group identity tied to specific *vengs*, administrative units within towns and cities which Heath suggests can be understood in the same way as Appadurai's "neighborhoods" (Heath 2018, 155). Heath argues that musical practice offers a unique opportunity for the collective experience of grief, while allowing for a wide spectrum of emotional responses (Heath 2018, 157). Therefore, for members of a *veng* not intimately connected to the deceased, intimate funeral singing practices can act as moments of "intensification of belonging" to a particular *veng*, as well as opportunities for newer residents to "self-select themselves as members" of the community by volunteering to enter the house of the bereaved, as no invitation is necessary to participate in the singing practice (Heath 2018, 157-158). Heath argues that through the choice of repertoire and

instruments that are associated with particular *vengs*, the local Mizo community “is able to perform itself and reinforce its sense of local identity” (Heath 2018, 164). The sonic choices the groups make in performing certain songs, as well as the practice of singing together, produce locality in the sense of a group identity tied to local communities.

Distinctiveness Through Local and Locality

In this section, I review works whose authors call attention to the use of the term local or locality as a term to describe or distinguish musical activity. Some of these scholars use radio programming to explore how the terms local and locality are chosen as values that set certain stations apart from others. The terms can also be used to discuss how members of musical communities in peripheral places can use the idea of being local to cultivate a distinct sense of group identity. I bring together local and locality in this section because, while the two terms can be used differently, the authors in this section use them very similarly. While in the previous section (“Performing the Local and Locality”) the two terms are treated as nouns – as things that can be produced and performed – in this section they are both treated as adjectives. In this section, I highlight how these authors understand the adjectival use of the terms local and localization in the musical activities of those they study.

Kirsty Lohman (2019) examines how local identity can be a way for members of a community to distinguish the music scene in their individual city. Lohman compares the punk scene in the Dutch city of Groningen to that of other cities in the Netherlands, arguing that

Unlike many Dutch punks who do not feel connected to notions of the “local,” those in the north actively construct a discourse of difference and locality

represented in part through their desire to maintain and support the *local* scene. However, this process is intertwined with their negotiations in terms of positioning themselves within national and international scenes, largely absent from the former and highly connected with the latter... The Groningen punks emphasize their locality whilst simultaneously discussing the importance of their transnational connections; the two are not at odds with each other. The specific manifestations of their locality (e.g. the desire to support their own scene) feed into their position as globally well connected (their strong scene produces high quality touring bands and venues which others wish to visit); the global and the local are inextricably linked. (Lohman 2019, 64)

In this quote, Lohman uses locality as an adjective describing an identity that Groningen punks actively maintain and promote – it is something that they can *emphasize*, to use Lohman’s word, through various discursive practices. This locality is used as a distinguishing feature that distances the Groningen punk scene from others in the Netherlands while emphasizing its connections to other cities within a global punk network.

Ethnomusicologist Andrew Mall (2018) presents a unique treatment of territoriality and locality that does not rely on explicitly spatial boundaries through a discussion of a local radio station in Chicago. Using his experience as a DJ and member of the board of directors for the Chicago Independent Radio Project (CHIRP), Mall explains how the online broadcast of the station has used locality as a defining feature through various policies, such as a requirement that DJs play a certain number of songs by artists that are local to Chicago in every set. Mall contrasts the online-only CHIRP

station against “terrestrial” stations, so-called because they broadcast using a ground-based AM or FM transmitter, the strength of which demarcates its listening audience, in terms of their relationship to locality, saying “even though its status as an Internet station does not technologically enforce locality as a terrestrial broadcast would, CHIRP has chosen locality as a defining feature” (Mall 2018, 144). Mall’s analysis of a radio station that chooses to define itself in terms of locality even as the station is accessible to anyone with an internet connection, regardless of their proximity to Chicago, suggests the continued relevance of local identifications in popular music. Mall emphasizes the communal and participatory nature of radio listening (Mall 2018, 143), which suggests that the marketing of an online-only radio station as “local” is not simply an institutional decision that listeners passively accept, but is instead the result of a community “of shared social and ethical values” of which radio listeners are an active part (Mall 2018, 150).

Localization

In this section, I discuss uses of the term “localization.” One literal definition of the term, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is “the action or fact of making something local in character, or of adapting something for a local audience or market.”⁴ In keeping with this definition, the authors discussed in this section address the processes by which musical activities are adapted for local circumstances. As I will demonstrate in this section, however, what is meant by “local circumstances” is highly contextual. Some

⁴ "localization, n.". OED Online. December 2019. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109559?redirectedFrom=localization> (accessed February 08, 2020).

authors use the term to examine the adaptation of musical activities at the national level, others use the term to draw attention to cities and smaller communities. What these works have in common is a focus on the process by which a musical activity that did not originate in a given place becomes a part of the musical lives of those who live in that place. I break this section into two subsections. In the first, I discuss authors who use the term localization to examine how local actors adapt music and musical activities so that they become locally meaningful. In the second, I discuss authors who understand localization as a dialogic process and focus on how processes of localization fit within global networks.

Localization as Process by Which Music is Made Locally Meaningful

In the introduction to their recent edited volume on congregational music, Monique Ingalls, Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg, and Zoe C. Sherinian (2018) introduce the concept of “musical localization” as the volume’s dominant framework. They employ the term to describe “the process whereby Christian communities take a variety of musical practices... and make them locally meaningful and useful in the construction of Christian beliefs, theology, practice, and identity” (Ingalls, Reigersberg, and Sherinian 2018a, 3). The authors see this framework as a way of addressing the difficulty of accounting for diverse and locally rooted musical experiences while simultaneously acknowledging the connections forged between these communities through a common Christian faith (ibid.). They claim other terms have been used to consider how Christian practices become locally meaningful in studies of Christianity – including indigenization, contextualization, and inculturation – but that each of these terms comes with its own unproductive assumptions that are avoided by using the term

localization. They therefore consider localization, which they relate to Appadurai's (1996) production of locality, as a way of considering not simply how widely-disseminated musical and religious practices are adopted by a local community, but the "means whereby diverse Christian communities define, perform, shape, and re-shape what it means to be 'local'" (Ingalls, Reigersberg, and Sherinian 2018, 13). They therefore frame their volume both as a way of considering how music and musical activities are adapted for local circumstances, and how they become meaningful parts of local life.

Media scholar Mervi Tervo (2014) understands localization as one of three processes, along with appropriation and hybridization, through which hip-hop has traveled from the United States to Finland. Tervo understands the localization of rap in Finland as happening primarily through Finnish hip-hop artists' choices to rap in Finnish, suggesting that

It is in fact rapping in one's native language that is typically the starting point for hip hop's re-territorialization to new locations. Vernacular language gives the possibility of bringing in local expressions and dialects and creating links with the native audience. It also makes it easier to take into consideration local issues, problems, and related critique. (Tervo 2014, 177)

The process of localization through language doesn't simply happen through the translation of English to Finnish, but through the connections that such translation allows artists to make with their audience. In Tervo's analysis, this linguistic localization is accompanied by processes of appropriation, through which Finnish artists copy aspects of American hip-hop culture, such as clothing, and hybridization, which happens through

the sampling of popular Finnish music. Thus, localization for Tervo happens as one of multiple simultaneous processes through which music travels across the world and becomes embedded in different places.

Others have considered how various musical practices are “localized” in different contexts, such as in the study of brass band practices as they manifest in different places around the world. In the introduction to their edited volume on brass bands, Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher (2013) focus on “localizing forces that transformed a transnational prototype into a range of local music worlds” (Reily and Brucher 2013, 4). They analyze these localizing forces, which include political, social, and economic factors, through the lenses of “place making” and “community musicking” (ibid.). Using their understanding of Michel de Certeau’s (1984) distinction between place and space, they suggest that “if place is identified by what is located in it, space takes shape through what is *done* in it” (Reily and Brucher 2013, 18), and consider brass band practices, particularly their use in public events, as ways of creating spaces and places. They further consider localization as occurring through brass bands’ sense of social obligation to their community, as the global prototype of the brass band is used as a vehicle through which relationships are formed between band members and between bands and communities (Reily and Brucher 2013, 27). Their theoretical focus is on the relationship between local circumstances and the wider musical form of the brass band.

Localization and Globalization

Recent work, particularly in Russ Bestley, Mike Dines, Alastair Gordon, and Paula Guerra’s (2019) edited volume *The Punk Reader: Research Transmissions from the Local and the Global*, emphasizes the complicated relationship between the local and the

global in terms of musicking. In their analysis of punk music and its global spread, the editors of this volume observe “globalization and localization simultaneously in a complex web of network flows” (12) as they consider the roles of local punk scenes within this network. The works reviewed in this subsection similarly focus on the relationships between the processes of globalization and localization and how this dialogic relationship affects musicking in multiple places.

Media scholar and ethnomusicologist Kai Khiun Liew and Shzr Ee Tan (2013) treat localization as a politically fraught process in their examination of indie music in Singapore, which they view as “an appropriated western cultural practice that is neither adequately localized nor sufficiently reglobalized” (Liew and Tan 2013, 116). As Singaporean artists largely draw from British indie musical styles, Liew and Tan suggest that the incorporation of specific local symbolic content into the music is relatively uncommon, meaning that indie music in Singapore is not easily distinguished from indie music in Britain in terms of its sonic characteristics (Liew and Tan 2013, 116). This de-emphasis on local particularities in Singaporean indie music represents for the authors disjointed processes of localization and globalization: the sonic similarities between British and Singaporean indie music have not led to Singaporean indie groups being recognized by those in the British indie scene, while Singaporean indie music is mainly consumed and produced by a niche audience of English-speaking “Anglicized” subcultural groups in Singapore (Liew and Tan 2013, 120). Indie music, for Liew and Tan, provided these subcultural groups the opportunity to push back against Singaporean state-imposed narratives of postcolonial development and modernization while simultaneously rejecting more mainstream musical styles such as Mandopop (Liew and

Tan 2013, 122). Liew and Tan's case study is an exploration of the fraught processes of localization in a complicated postcolonial political context.

Anthropologist Brent Luvaas (2009), focuses on a process of localization through which not only musical styles are transformed, but local contexts as well. He cautions against treating "the 'local' as if it were a kind of default mode of resistance against the hegemonic forces of global capitalism" (Luvaas 2009, 248). In his study of indie bands in Indonesia, Luvaas suggests that such bands do not merely adapt globalized musical aesthetics to local circumstances but "use transnational aesthetics to challenge existing constructions of locality, supplanting the 'local' of the national and colonial past with a chosen, empowering positionality grounded in a dialectical relationship with the global" (Luvaas 2009, 248-249). The local employed by Indonesian indie artists, in Luvaas' analysis, is "a 'local' about place, but not bounded by place, a term of participation in global culture" (Luvaas 2009, 265). In describing the local in this way, Luvaas challenges discourses of localization that assume the local and the global as preexisting, static, spatially bounded entities.

While the works discussed here offer illuminating examples of how music moves across distance and is made meaningful in new contexts, I understand two potential shortcomings in its utility in the case study of El Paso. First, the term "localization" as a verb implies an ending – a possible point at which something becomes fully localized. While some scholars discussed in this section emphasize the open-ended nature of localization processes (Liew and Tan 2013), others, as in Reily and Brucher's (2013) suggestion that specific musical forms can be tools through which musical genres are localized, imply a completeness to this process. Second, while many authors discussed in

this section push back against understandings of the local and global as static and separate (Luvaas 2009, Bestley et al., 2019), El Paso, as a city on the border, further complicates distinctions between global and local. How should we understand something as “localized” in a city that is such an important part of a network of global flows of people, capital, labor, and materials (see Ortíz-González 2004)?

Locality and the United States-Mexico Border

Ethnomusicologist Alejandro Madrid (2011, 1) contends that music has historically played a large role in cultural studies of the United States-Mexico border, pointing to Américo Paredes’ study of *corridos* in his landmark *With His Piston in His Hand* (1958) as one of the earliest works in the scholarly field of border studies. Madrid positions his edited volume *Transnational Encounters* as a way of “redefining border studies beyond the North/South and American/Mexican dichotomies” (Madrid 2011, 2) through an explicitly transnational approach to various musical practices along the United States/Mexico border. Some of the chapters in *Transnational Encounters* make use of localized case studies on the U.S.-Mexico border, such as Luis Alvarez’s (2011) study of reggae in cities such as El Paso and Tijuana. Madrid concisely describes the history of theorization of the U.S.-Mexico border as generally utilizing two understandings of the term “border.” The first, inspired by scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Renato Rosaldo (1989), and Néstor García Canclini (2005), takes an approach that emphasizes the

recognition of agency among marginal, subaltern border subjects... This focus on individuals allowed border theory to surpass the geographic location of the U.S.-Mexico border as it came to be applied to many situations involving limits,

cultural contact zones, or even the diasporic body as an epistemological border.”
(Madrid 2011, 7)

The second use of the border concept, according to Madrid, is “deeply territorialized,” privileging ethnographic studies of specific places along the U.S.-Mexico border (Madrid 2011, 7-8). In their edited volume on the United States-Mexico border, anthropologists Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez and Josiah Heyman (2017) advocate for studies of the United States-Mexico border that are historically, theoretically, and geographically grounded. The contributors to this volume demonstrate “how we can develop concepts based on deep engagement with place and, relatedly, how we can understand places as unfolding over historical time through the interplay of differentiated peoples and ecologies” (Heyman 2017, 7). In this section, I focus on some of these “deeply territorialized” studies as a way of connecting the ideas discussed in the previous sections on local, locality, and localization to future specific studies of the border city of El Paso.

In Alejandro Madrid’s *Nor-tec Rifa!: Electronic Dance Music From Tijuana to the World* (2008) he examines the Tijuana-based musical genre Nor-tec as both a manifestation of the fluidity that characterizes border life and a “border zone in itself, a place where these contradictions collide and are resolved in its production, consumption, distribution, and performance” (Madrid 2008, 5). Madrid foregrounds the city of Tijuana in his analysis, utilizing Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of reterritorialization to examine the interactions between the city and the ways in which Nor-tec musicians use it in their music (Madrid 2008, 22). For Nor-tec musicians, this reterritorialization happens through the re-appropriation of myths and stereotypes about Tijuana (Madrid 2008, 115). This reterritorialization can be physical, as in the case of the Nortec Collective’s

performance in the city's largest venue traditionally used for live performance of traditional music such as *norteño* and *banda* (Madrid 2008, 122). Reterritorialization can also happen symbolically, as in a song by Bostich, a Nortec Collective DJ, whose song "Tijuana Bass" rearticulates stereotypes about Tijuana through its title and musical contents. The title is a reference to Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, whose music helped create musical stereotypes about Tijuana, while the musical content, full of polyrhythms and conflicting harmonies, continually defies the listener's expectations and shows that "Tijuana cannot be understood through the representations that stereotype it" (Madrid 2008, 135-136). The content of this music is therefore related to the specifics of the border location in which it was written but does not necessarily rely on lyrics to express that meaning.

Alejandro Madrid (2005) has also considered the relationship between Nor-tec and identity formation. Madrid interprets Nor-tec as a way for *tijuanenses* (people from Tijuana) to negotiate the "contradictory circumstances living at the United States-Mexico border" (Madrid 2005, 597). Madrid claims that through the appropriation of discourses about and representations of Tijuana as a city of vice, violence, and excess, *tijuanenses* who consume and produce Nor-tec are able to "question alienating discourses from within, transforming these discourses into sites that allow them to position *tijuanenses* individually and collectively. In this form, Nor-tec culture works as an institution that challenges dominant discourses of national and local identity, and therefore, notions of center and periphery" (Madrid 2005, 599). In Madrid's analysis, Nor-tec becomes a site through which traditionally marginalized subjects can negotiate their identities and

“reinvent themselves” (Madrid 2005, 615). The local identities described by Madrid here are highly informed by experiences as residents of a border city.

Luis Alvarez (2011) analyzes how musicians in various border cities negotiate transnational ethnic identities that are explicitly tied to local experience through reggae music. Alvarez interprets the presence of reggae scenes in multiple locations along the US-Mexico border as a response to what he describes as the “dehumanizing” local effects of globalization in cities along the border, as border reggae artists use the global Afro-Caribbean musical style of reggae to articulate their own highly localized experiences (Alvarez 2011, 20). In one example, Alvarez describes how El Paso-based reggae groups Border Roots and Radio La Chusma evoke the lived realities of their border position through song lyrics as well as visual references to El Paso and Ciudad Juárez through album cover art (Alvarez 2011, 27). Through examples like this, Alvarez demonstrates how border identities are “deeply rooted, deeply territorialized, and deeply placed in local relationships, cultural politics, and efforts for social transformation” (Alvarez 2011, 21). He considers reggae music a way for border residents to articulate their own identities tied to specific places along the US-Mexico border.

El Paso, Texas

To conclude, I briefly offer a review of some ethnographic research that has already been undertaken in El Paso. While some of the works within music studies addressed in this thesis have touched on El Paso, the most extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the area comes from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology (Vila 2003; 2000; Campbell 2015) and global studies (Ortíz-González 2004). In the interest of space, I begin this introduction with a brief acknowledgment and discussion of these

works as a way of opening up questions that can be addressed through future fieldwork and suggest how a locality framework can be used to examine the complex field site of El Paso and the musicking that occurs there. Following this brief introduction, I return to El Paso through an examination of an event that happened almost exactly one year after the first Locals Week event – a benefit concert which took place on August 18, 2019 for the victims of the mass shooting that occurred three weeks earlier, on August 3rd. I end this thesis with this example not in order to offer any conclusions about the event or about El Paso, but to suggest that focusing on notions of the local in examining this event and others in El Paso can be a productive way of discussing the complicated place of El Paso.

Existing Work on El Paso

Sociologist Pablo Vila, using hundreds of group interviews conducted in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, focuses on identity construction in his examination of the area. While these interviews were conducted in the 1990s, and much has changed since then, Vila's discussion of narrative identities is useful in that he considers localized experience in the El Paso del Norte region (see below) rather than a homogenous "border identity" (Vila 2000, 6). For Vila, identity is discursively constructed, through a "complex interplay of categories, metaphors, and narrative identities about ourselves and 'others' over time" (Vila 2000, 14). These "narrative identities" result from what Vila describes as the tendency for people to imagine "themselves as protagonists in stories," and therefore identity can be understood as making use of literary techniques such as metaphors and tropes (ibid.). For Vila, "narrative is an epistemological category" rather than simply a literary form (Vila 2000, 235). Within this formulation, metaphors function as a way for individuals to organize their experiences in a meaningful way (Vila 2000, 15). According

to Vila, the border presents a unique and productive place from which to interrogate processes of narrative identity construction because of the ways in which multiple different classification systems intersect and often clash at the border, where “similarities and differences meet” (Vila 2000, 14-15).

Vila argues that, while El Paso and Ciudad Juárez began as one settlement called El Paso del Norte, “the treaty [of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848] did not divide the economic and social relationships between both cities in the same way” (Vila 2000, 16). The connection between the two cities has given birth to what Vila calls the “sister cities” metaphor that is used to construct an idea of closeness between residents in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso (Vila 2000, 10). However, much of Vila’s analysis revealed divisions in identity constructions in the area that show that El Paso and Ciudad Juárez might not really be “sisters” – “or at least not sisters of a family without internal conflict” (Vila 2000, 2). According to Vila, closeness is constructed, mostly by middle-class people living in Ciudad Juárez, through an emphasis on the shared language and culture of Mexicans living on both sides of the border, the familial connections between inhabitants of both cities, and a shared “fronterizo” identity (Vila 2000, 65-67). Vila emphasizes the role of this metaphor in the construction of identity amongst middle-class Juárez residents but notes that this metaphor is largely absent from his interviews with residents of El Paso, Mexican Americans included (Vila 2000, 63). Vila suggests a possible reason for this absence is the fact that construction of a “fronterizo” identity as distinct from the rest of Mexico and the United States is more important for residents of Ciudad Juárez (Vila 2000, 8, 63), because of what Vila interprets as a sense that proximity to a “first world

country” such as the United States is a way of “upgrading” one’s social identity (Vila 2000, 8).

Howard Campbell approaches identity in the context of the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez area not by emphasizing how difference is accentuated through the meeting of one or more categories of difference by considering the border as a place where individuals can “escape” pre-existing identities. Campbell positions this approach as a corrective to what he views as the “unduly celebratory” framing of the border as necessarily characterized by cultural hybridity, where two or more cultural identities meet and are blended (Campbell 2015, 296-297). Campbell pays particular attention to how “particular individuals and groups may desire to suppress or shed pre-existing identities (or at least fantasize and imagine that they have) through mobility, experimentation, and cultural transformation, even though fully escaping such identities is seldom achievable” (Campbell 2015, 297). According to Campbell, border cities are fruitful places from which to analyze the phenomenon of identity escapists due to the “anonymous” and “transitory” nature of international borders, and El Paso and Ciudad Juárez are particularly fruitful due to the cities’ isolation, “spatially and culturally, from mainstream society (e.g. ‘Middle America’ or ‘Deep Mexico’)” (Campbell 2015, 298). Campbell interprets his escaping identity framework as falling between what he describes as the “two poles” of analysis that characterize US-Mexico border studies – the reinforcement of national identities and borders on the one hand, and the hybridity/border-crossing paradigm on the other (Campbell 2015, 308).

As demonstrated in the brief discussion above, much existing ethnographic work in the El Paso area deals with the relationship between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. What

might the framework of locality tell us about how performers and listeners experience what they consider “local” El Paso music? As the literature reviewed here demonstrates, localities can transcend geopolitical boundaries, so when are artists from Ciudad Juárez considered “local” El Paso musicians, for example? This tension between the “sister cities” narrative as outlined by Vila (2000) and the actuality of the structural, physical, and political barriers between the two cities could be a fruitful area for further research on locality in El Paso, as the production of locality depends in part on relationships between cities, and a locality-based approach can potentially open up discussions of the complicated relationship between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Approaches to El Paso through the frame of locality, I suggest, can productively engage with perspectives of scholars who see interactions across the border as “a chain of intersocial, intercultural connections. Important segments on each end are divided and separated from each other, even as they are closely related” (Heyman 2012, 59).

“This is El Paso”

On August 3rd, 2019, a man drove from a Dallas suburb to El Paso and opened fire with an assault rifle in a crowded Walmart, killing twenty-two people. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, it became clear that the shooter targeted El Paso specifically because of its location on the US-Mexico border and the large population of Hispanic and Latino/a/x residents who call the El Paso metropolitan area home. This act of violence, motivated by white supremacist, anti-migrant ideologies,⁵ placed El Paso in the national

⁵ I lack the space here to fully address this event, but I recognize the shooting as part of a larger system of racialized violence in the United States. Chicana/o scholar Roberto D. Hernández (2018) provides a robust analysis of a mass shooting in a McDonalds restaurant in the border city of San Ysidro, California in 1989, in which I see a number of similarities to the El Paso shooting. Hernández specifically interprets the San Ysidro shooter’s specific targeting of Mexicans, his position as an outsider to the border community,

spotlight for the second time in recent months. In February of 2019, in his State of the Union Address, United States President Donald Trump attempted to use El Paso as an example of why increased border militarization was necessary, suggesting that it was one of the most violent cities in the United States before border fencing was installed. This claim, of course, was patently false, and many El Paso residents, including the Republican mayor of El Paso, Dee Margo, publicly challenged Trump's mischaracterization of the city as violent and dangerous. I begin this conclusion with these events to demonstrate some of the political stakes of the production of locality in El Paso, and to gesture towards the contexts that may have informed musicking in the city since my initial visit to the city for the 2018 Locals Week event.

A few weeks after the shooting, an event titled "This is El Paso" took place at the Plaza Theater in Downtown El Paso. The free event featured twenty-seven musical artists on three stages – one inside the theater, one in the courtyard outside, and a late-night set at a nearby bar called B17 Bombers. The following is the description of the event as it appears on the Facebook event page:

Our beautiful community has been shaken by recent events. But they have not broken our spirit. El Paso and our loving sister cities of Las Cruces and Juarez [sic] have come together to help each other and the families of the victims. Together we have risen not only to mourn, but to support each other and to continue walking forward with our heads held high and with our hearts renewed with love for our city and its people.

"This is El Paso" is a community taking back its identity. It is El Paso telling the world who we are and what we stand for. With the help of a collective of El Paso musicians, artists, comedians, etc., we have put together an event to celebrate the wonderful qualities that make El Paso what it is. It is LOVE, PEACE, RESILIENCE, STRENGTH, FAMILY, HOME.

Please join us at three different venues this Sunday, August 18th. There will be

and the significance of McDonalds as a symbolic Western/corporate brand (Hernández 2018, 102) as part of wider processes of coloniality and violence that underpin the United States-Mexico border.

concessions, live painting, comedians, music, and love.

“This Is El Paso” is a project put together by a collective of El Paso music organizations and arts organizations to help celebrate the beauty of our community with the arts, and raise funds for the victims and families of the El Paso Walmart shooting on August 3rd.⁶

The members of the collective mentioned in this description include the El Paso International Music Foundation (who organized Locals Week), the El Paso Symphony, and El Paso Live, which is the organization in charge of management for all performance venues owned by the city of El Paso. An extended analysis of this event is beyond the scope of this thesis, so in this conclusion I merely want to briefly reflect on what it might mean to use music to declare that “*this* is El Paso,” and how this question relates to the literature on the concepts of local, locality, and localization discussed in this thesis.

In the description quoted above, the event is described as a reclamation of identity, and as a way to “show the world” what El Paso is. The phrase “taking back its identity” suggests that recent events such as the shooting have threatened to take a sense of identity away from El Pasoans, and that this identity is something that can be reclaimed through music and the arts. The event title “This is El Paso” evokes a strong sense of identification with the city, and the event can perhaps be thought of as performing locality in a similar way to Joanna Heath’s (2018) analysis of the practice of funeral singing in North India as a way for groups to enact and perform identities tied to their specific neighborhoods. It could also be a way for participants to produce a “structure of feelings” through communal activities that solidify bonds to the place of El Paso, as

⁶ This is El Paso Facebook Page, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/events/2410746959210485/>

Suzel Reily (2018) describes in her analysis of the Venda. It could also be possible to interpret the event as a way to produce a “dynamic locality” in the way that Evanthia Patsiaoura (2018) describes – as a space created by communal experience. I revisit these works not to draw equivalencies between This is El Paso and the case studies discussed elsewhere in this thesis, but to illuminate how the use of music to solidify, enact, create, and negotiate experiences of – and identities related to – place have been studied, and how these studies might inform analyses of events like This is El Paso.

If, as the title of the event suggests, the aim of This is El Paso was to showcase El Paso through music, the lineup of musicians showcased highlights the diversity of music that the organizers considered emblematic of the city. Figure 1 shows the lineup of artists featured.⁷



Figure 1. The artist lineup for the August 18, 2019 "This is El Paso" event. The acronyms represent the Youth Opera of El Paso, the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, and the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra.

The artists featured here span many different genres and types of music. There are Western classical symphony orchestras, performances by youth groups such as the

⁷ This is El Paso Facebook Page, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/events/2410746959210485/>

GreatShapes dance troupe, mariachi, folk rock, reggae-cumbia fusion, surf rock, jazz, hip-hop, and others. All of the artists, with the exception of Estereomance, who are from Ciudad Juárez, claim the city of El Paso as their home (although in the case of the larger ensembles there is no way of knowing how many participants live in different cities). What these diverse musical artists share in common is a connection to the city of El Paso, which signals the importance of place and local identifications for this particular event.

One of the activities and installations at This is El Paso was the presence of large wooden block letters that spell out El Paso, built and painted black by a local artist. Attendees were given metallic sharpies and invited to sign their names or write a message on the letters. The members of Dusty Low, one of the bands performing at This is El Paso, signed their name and had someone take a picture of them in front of the El Paso sign. The band now uses this picture to promote their live events through platforms such

as Facebook and Instagram. Figure 2 shows a screenshot of one such post.⁸



Figure 2. Screenshot of a Facebook post by Dusty Low. The photograph was taken at "This is El Paso" on August 18, 2019.

This photograph highlights the connections being made between artists, venues, and organizations through events such as This is El Paso. The screenshot above is promoting a regular gathering of singer-songwriters to work on their craft at a local restaurant and bar called the Riviera. This particular image illuminates how local identifications not only underpin events such as This is El Paso, but also the continued maintenance of local relationships that maintain local music communities. Dusty Low's continued use of this photograph, particularly to advertise an event that calls for community participation, suggests the importance of El Paso to their identity as a musical group. So, while music

⁸ Dusty Low Facebook Page, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Dusty-Low-142710212456907/>.

can be used to declare that *this* is El Paso through specific, targeted events like the one discussed here, it can also be used in processes of self-identification and self-branding that feature the city of El Paso. Dusty Low's continued use of this photograph represents connections between artists, cities, and audiences that extend beyond single events.

I include *This is El Paso* in this thesis because I believe it highlights the potential of further studies that critically examine the concept of the local. Events like Locals Week and *This is El Paso* suggest that local identifications remain important in the musical activities of some residents in the city. While these local identifications remain important, the circumstances and political stakes of these identifications continually shift. What it actually means to identify with or express pride in being local, as the literature reviewed in this thesis suggests, is always shifting and is always dependent on specific circumstances. What it means to identify something as local, the spatial scale upon which locality is produced, where music becomes localized – these are all context-dependent, meaning there is no universal, agreed-upon definition for the terms local, locality, or localization as they are used to analyze musicking. The complexity, ambiguity, and fluidity of these three terms implies their relevance for study in El Paso, a place which itself is complex, ambiguous, and fluid. By paying attention to how the term local (and its derivations locality and localization) is used, and taking care to define it in each specific case, it is possible to productively illuminate the enduring importance of place in musicking while acknowledging its constantly shifting nature. However, in the following concluding section I suggest that this attention to ambiguity should not overlook material realities of the city which may not be experienced as fluid by those who live there. The fencing that lines the Rio Grande is not meant to symbolize ambiguity or fluidity.

Anthropologists Margaret Dorsey and Miguel Díaz-Barriga, for example, suggest that the US-Mexico border wall is designed to “[notify] the mainly Mexican-descendent population of the borderlands that they, not only migrants and smugglers, are potential subjects of exclusion” (2017, 72). However, as Josiah Heyman suggests, “the border region, then, is still in the midst of an emergence, requiring analyses of struggles over possible paths and arrangements, rather than a static portrait of structure” (2017, 49). In the following concluding section, I suggest that Appadurai’s (1996) concept of the production of locality, and the more recent works which draw from it, can productively address the struggles to which Heyman alludes with a clearer focus on the neighborhood as an interpretive site from which to address the production of locality.

Conclusions and Questions

Appadurai constructs a dialectical relationship between the neighborhood – the situated community – and locality as a domain of social life, arguing that “locality is always emergent from the practices of local subjects in specific neighborhoods” (1996, 198). Much of Appadurai’s chapter is focused on the dual nature of neighborhoods: they are the contexts in which social activities occur, but often depend upon other, external contexts in order to define themselves against other neighborhoods (Appadurai 1996, 184-185). In other words, as neighborhoods are produced within given historical and social contexts, they also create new contexts for the production of locality:

As local subjects carry on the continuing task of reproducing their neighborhood, the contingencies of history, environment, and imagination contain the potential for new contexts (material, social, and imaginative) to be produced. In this way, through the vagaries of social action by local subjects, neighborhood as context

produces the context of neighborhood. Over time, this dialectic changes the conditions of the production of locality as such. (Appadurai 1996, 185)

In setting out this dialectic nature of the neighborhood, Appadurai lays the foundation for considering locality as a fragile social production that emerges out of the interactions that create these neighborhoods. While most of the works reviewed in this thesis that draw from Appadurai focus on his conceptualization of locality as a phenomenological quality, domain of social life, and/or structure of feelings (Reily 2018, Konkouris 2018, Patsiaoura 2018) there is a relative lack of attention paid to Appadurai's treatment of the neighborhood – a fact that is surprising given the substantial amount of space Appadurai devotes to the concept in *Modernity at Large*. In this concluding section, I interpret a specific effort by local actors to revitalize the downtown area of El Paso as an example of the type of social practices Appadurai describes through which the material organization of neighborhoods and the production of locality is achieved. In doing so, I suggest that a conceptualization of locality that foregrounds the relationship between the production of neighborhoods and the production of locality is the most productive position from which to begin to address the complicated place of El Paso.

As part of larger efforts to revitalize the downtown area of El Paso,⁹ the city invested in a new streetcar line serving the area. The city had an established streetcar line from 1881 until 1974, when the line closed and the trains were taken to the desert, where they sat until they were restored, new tracks were laid, and the streetcar line reopened in

⁹ These efforts include the construction of urban parks and a new baseball stadium, as well as large-scale renovation of public places in the downtown area. See Steuteville, Robert. 2018. "Building a Healthier Downtown and Region." *CNU*, March 8, 2018. <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2018/03/08/building-healthier-downtown-and-region>.

November of 2018.¹⁰ In May of 2019, the El Paso International Music Foundation launched, in collaboration with the streetcar and the downtown district, a concert series called Trolley Tracks on the last Thursday of each month. These concerts took place on board the trolley as local musicians performed shows for riders as the streetcar completed its route. A promotional flyer for one such performance posted on the EPIMF Facebook page illustrates the connections between organizations and municipal players that presented these concerts:



Figure 3. Promotional image for a Trolley Tracks performance by the group Nalgadas. Posted on El Paso International Music Foundation’s Facebook page,

¹⁰ Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority website, n.d. Accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.crrma.org/streetcar>.

October 24, 2019. Accessed March 21, 2020,
<https://www.facebook.com/EPIMF/photos/a.254735018429431/557940618108868/?type=3&theater>

The institutions listed as partners for this concert series are the City of El Paso, the Museums and Cultural Affairs Department (MCAD), the EPIMF, and Fusion Magazine, a bilingual arts and culture magazine based in El Paso. The Trolley Tracks concert series represents a fascinating convergence of institutions that come together to create spatially meaningful musical practice amidst the restructuring of locality and local music scenes. As local musicians are literally embedded in the city's infrastructure through events like this, live performance becomes part of revitalization efforts, directly including them in conversations about what El Paso might look like in the future.

A complete examination of this concert series is beyond the scope of this thesis, and because I was not able to physically attend these performances, I offer only my own interpretation of these promotional materials as a way of concluding with what I view as the most productive future way in which to approach research on music in El Paso. I see Trolley Tracks as one example of the production of new contexts Appadurai describes in his work on the production of locality. In its explicit use of the physical infrastructure of the El Paso Streetcar, the Trolley Tracks event suggests new material contexts for the downtown area of El Paso and for the music scene in the city. While the uses of locality that draw attention to its phenomenological quality discussed in this thesis do important work in challenging and destabilizing assumed connections between people and the places they inhabit, I suggest that a focus on the fragile and emergent quality of locality as Appadurai defines it risks ignoring the material conditions in which this quality is produced. An analysis of events like Trolley Tracks that focused primarily on the

structure of feelings created through these performances without addressing its place within larger discourses of the re-organization of the downtown El Paso area would be incomplete. I understand the value of Appadurai's conceptualization of locality to be the productive tension he sets up between the neighborhood and locality by addressing the role of space and place as they are experienced by human beings *without* closing off the possibility that these spaces and places can be changed – in other words, that new contexts for the production of locality can be created. As El Paso's revitalization efforts continue, and as global politics continue to shape the organization of the United States-Mexico border region, sustained fieldwork in the area will need to be attentive of these new contexts as they are created, and what role music plays in their construction.

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