

INVESTING DANCE CULTURE SCENE FORMATIONS

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I am talking about scenes and people; scenes are social formations in which people seek out particular music genres to participate and take drugs too, and if I do not play the music it is very hard for people to get some comprehension about why there is any difference. I am also going to discuss the importance of considering dance music scenes in the planning and implementation of future harm reduction initiatives; to really move away from a 'one approach fits all' and look much more at the formations that exist in local areas, and try to get campaigns to filter through and represent the formations that exist, reflecting the differences. I am going to introduce a social communication model, which is an extension of social marketing, almost like an extension of a situation analysis. It is specifically looking at scene formations and from my research three main themes have come up which will help people to assess the communication that is central to scenes and then hopefully consider how they can address specific areas to improve and enhance the way information is given to people.

My research has involved national and international fieldwork. Dance music scenes in London move across the world, specifically the UK garage. I think Mark Bellis put up a slide yesterday where he had a world and he had Cream, and it showed where Cream went. Well you could do very similar things with scene formations and you could see which countries they went to. UK garage in particular goes to Ayia Napa in Cypress, Faliraki in Greece, Ibiza in Spain and occasionally to Miami for the *Winter Music Conference* where a lot of the promoters organise future DJs and promotions.

In contrast to this, the underground techno-scene from the UK goes with the Technovilles, big unlicensed events which I will discuss later, which happen in France, Spain, Italy, Holland, Germany and Czechoslovakia during the summer. It also goes to Goa and to Australia. Quite a few people from the underground trance and techno scene come from Australia and New Zealand. In fact, looking at these flyers we have Chris Liberator, he is a main DJ on the underground trance and techno scene, he will be playing in Melbourne next week. We have 'Frantic', they are also a club night in the UK, and 'Lab 4' - they play on the underground trance and techno scene. It just illustrates the way these scenes move across, but they do not follow the same patterns at all.

My research has involved over one hundred visits to events but also to other areas like pirate radio stations, music studios etc. I define two different frameworks - the regulated and unlicensed framework. The regulated framework I suppose is the one we are here today talking about, the one that has guidelines developed for it. Those are dance events where licences are given and events can be put on, whereas the unlicensed framework are parties that happen with no licence agreement, which actually are put on contrary to licence agreement and are seen as a act of resistance to licensing, but we will discuss that later.

My research has involved 22 shared ethnographic experiences with people. Before interviewing them I would go out to a club or somewhere with them to develop a relationship with them, then I would interview them; later I would follow up. Because

in drugs research you are talking about very sensitive issues, I do not think you can come in straight away and try to find out detailed information about people's motivations to take drugs without building a relationship with them. It is almost like in a counselling situation, where you do not introduce detailed and challenging work in the first sessions but leave that until later. I adopted a similar sort of approach.

DJs, MCs, Rig Operators (which are sound systems) - they were the people I spoke to - pirate radio owners and also small and large-scale promoters. I tried to get a broad spectrum of people so that I would not just focus on the main players in the field, and also social and for-profit dealers. This is UK garage and I will play a sample of music (plays music sample). The MC is central to UK garage, it is really important, whereas in underground trance and techno there is not necessarily any MC involvement. In some underground trance and techno events there are some drum and base sound systems and they have an MC, but generally at techno events it is non-vocal.

So I am going to compare now with techno (plays music sample). One of the main things in the UK garage scene is an MC base culture, it is based in a regulated framework and it is based in clubs. The underground trance and techno scene in London has two dimensions. It is based in the regulated clubbing framework but it is also based in the unlicensed framework, so it has free parties, it goes to technovilles etc. So that is one of the most important things, the whole way communication is set up on the underground scene is very small network - information is provided by free party phone lines given on a one to one basis. So if you are not really connected to that scene you can almost think that it does not exist, and when I spoke to UK garage respondents they did not even know that there were unlicensed events. They kind of perceived that unlicensed events happened years ago in the rave stage of dance culture. Even people involved on the peripherals of the underground trance and techno scene in club events are sometimes unaware that there is a free party scene.

My main points are really to say that contemporary dance culture consists of inter-connected scene formations. They all come together to form our wider dance culture. And I use the term 'dance culture' - lots of people use different terms like 'scene' to talk about the wider formation - I specifically call it 'dance culture' to reduce confusion. Scene formations are social formations grouped around the consumptions of specific dance music. They all inter-connect to form our bigger structure. When I talk about communication, I talk about it in relation to drugs advice and information. This of course includes written, visual and verbal forms provided in traditional methods for your leaflets etc. but also in outreach dance safety, training and workshops.

Initiatives that consider scene formations, specifically in those areas where scene formations exist and are prominent, exist in London and cities in the UK. In those settings, initiatives that consider scenes as potential key audiences will be more effective than a broad approach that really does not acknowledge such diversity.

To enhance the provision in the dance environment, we need to look at the key technological, cultural and geographical aspects of communication associated with local scene formations. And if we apply the following scene communication model, when you are just trying to assess communication in these formations, we can start to see where cultural knowledge is produced and circulated and where it is going to be

regarded as central. That is the most important thing. Most of the discussions yesterday were talking about peer education and that there is a need to make sure that it comes from credible sources, so this is just a method to help you make some sort of assessment of where the most credible sources are. Identifying existing and potential areas of communication development can lead to the formation of what I consider to be profiles of dance culture audiences in different local contexts. So you can start to map out different areas and then start to see whether or not provision is directed to all of the scenes within an existing area. It may well be that they are not or it may well be that there is an agency working in one area that could share their expertise with that scene when it travels to different countries.

So we have an inter-related model here (refers to screen) with three areas and I am going to discuss each of them. The main thing at the top is you have a target audience. You have drug users, and drug users will differ in scene formations because people use different drugs. You also have cultural intermediaries, people who intercept between the consumption and production of dance music. You have sites of consumption - the principle sites, the clubs that they go to, and also the supporting sites, that is the framework of environments which support the cultural development of that scene. And then you have layers of media, which Thornton divides into mass, niche and micro, and when you make an assessment of the layers of media in relation to scenes, you can see there are differences.

So if we apply this model. If we look firstly at drug use - the UK garage has a high level of alcohol and cocaine consumption, that is one of its defining factors. They also use Ecstasy – there is a general assumption that people do not use Ecstasy at UK garage events, but that is nonsense. It is just that sometimes more people report that they use cocaine, but you specifically have cocaine and crack spliffs in this environment. And I do not mean crack as in people smoking rocks, although you may occasionally get people doing that in the toilet, but people will generally put a line of cocaine in the spliff or they will crush a rock and smoke it. In the underground trance and techno scene you have high levels of Ecstasy, ketamine and psychedelic drug use, but particularly on the unlicensed dimension of the scene you have high levels of ketamine use.

In terms of target audiences, cultural intermediaries, they refer to individuals occupying positions between producers and consumers who play an active role in the production, distribution and social consumption of popular music. And this notion shares features with the metaphor of the gatekeeper. Those involved in the regulated framework are usually associated with health initiatives. All the guidelines have involved people who come from clubs, and they have not necessarily involved the underground scene. They have not involved consultations with the sound systems etc. And a lot of the guidelines at the moment concentrate on clubs and we are actually finding that the free party scene is left out in the loop. Though when you make an assessment of a scene, you cannot ignore where provision should be aimed at.

In terms of cultural intermediaries, UK garage has pirate radios. In London there are 73 pirate radios and 37 of them play UK garage. It is central to that scene, all the information about parties comes out through the pirate radios, and they are not involved in any form of health provision. And again as I said, sound systems on the underground scene are not either.

Layers of media - one of the important rules constraining the reception of adverts concerns their original place of display, and understanding the media characteristics of scenes is likely to enhance the receptions of drugs information contained within specific layers of media. Mass media does not apply to either formation; in fact moral panics have happened about UK garage in the mass media, associating it with gun crime etc. so there is a lot of distrust from that source.

Niche media - although niche media is used in health campaigns, MixMag for example feature very big adverts for public health campaigns. A survey of people in relation to their drug use only indicated 0.6% of their readership listen to UK garage, so I would question whether or not it is addressing those people. And also underground trance and techno has a lower presence in those kinds of forms of media. Micro media instead is quite central. With UK garage, you have pirate radios, scenezines (which are like fanzines), flyers, but also in London you have fly posters. On the underground trance and techno scene you have a free party phone line, you have to ring at 10.30 and it gives you the destination of the party. Also the Internet is central here. It is not central to the UK garage scene, possibly because they have pirate radios.

In terms of principle and supporting sites, there are different destinations that people go to. If you outline and understand the destinations that people go to, services should be able to link in with those destinations and have joint work, share practice and have interagency relationships between drug services, instead of treating everything like 'it is in my back yard', and then when the scene moves away there is no follow through.

In relation to supporting sites where sometimes the information is distributed, there are 44 record shops in London that support the UK garage scene, 22 that support underground trance and techno, and just 5 that cater for both, just illustrating the separation.

Concluding point – dance culture scene members are likely to gain a greater sense of ownership if health provision emanates from central mechanisms of communication associated with these formations, involves key cultural intermediaries regardless of their clandestine or legitimate status, and is located in their authentic sites of consumption.

Thank you.