Beyond Bohemia: Geographies of everyday creativity for musicians in Toronto

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> Bohemia is a lifestyle with thematic elements that can be read through very practical instantiations in a range of urban contexts since its Parisian origins. Both the idea of Bohemia and its associated spatial practices have proven durable and portable, which is evident in cities throughout Europe and the United States. But as we will see, each bohemian eruption is both familiar and quite distinctive because of the material and spatial specificities that it encounters in a particular city at a particular time (Lloyd, 2006, 54).

Since it was first used to describe the lifestyle of eccentric artists in the 1830's the notion of bohemia has served to connote alternative living. Today studies suggest that the geography of bohemia is highly concentrated in large cities (Florida, 2002). Even as new bohemian neighborhoods unfold in a dynamic urban landscape, significant continuity is said to exist between these communities and their counterparts of the past (Lloyd, 2006, 69). Indeed, bohemian spaces continue to be characterized as cheap, gritty, dangerous and isolated, and these features help to attract traditional bohemians, including artists and musicians. As new technologies, techniques and communication networks facilitate creative practice in a growing range of sites, however, these highly concentrated pockets of creativity are spilling-over from downtowns to vernacular spaces in suburbs. In particular, there is evidence that the changing nature of independent music production is becoming increasingly difficult to reconcile with the romanticized milieu of bohemia.

In this chapter I argue that although creative activity largely remains clustered in the downtowns of cities and many artists still choose to pursue bohemian lifestyles, the employment conditions associated with independent music production have caused some musicians to reject bohemian spaces. More specifically, I demonstrate that in order to achieve the most favorable balance between the cost, location and characteristics of their life/work spaces, some musicians in Toronto are relocating from the bohemian enclaves in the downtown to 'everyday' locations in the inner and outer suburbs. In Toronto rings of automobile-dependent suburbs surround the downtown core. The inner suburbs were constructed between 1946 and 1980 and the outer suburbs have been constructed since 1980 (Noble, 2008). Located immediately outside the downtown, the inner suburbs have lower rents than the outer suburbs, although these, too, usually remain more affordable than the downtown. In particular, these vernacular spaces of creativity include ordinary, functional and 'square' houses, basement apartments, converted garages, churches, retail spaces and small recording studios. In addition, I argue that a growing range of push and pull factors such as the cost of living, competition for employment and local 'buzz' influence the spatial patterns of musicians. Moreover, I will show that some of the key features of bohemian living hinder the creative process. As a consequence, I suggest that by privileging downtown clusters as the only sites of creativity, existing academic studies and policy initiatives fail to recognize the increasingly important creative outputs emerging from everyday spaces outside of the core.

The findings presented in this chapter are drawn from 65 semi-structured interviews conducted with musicians and key informants in the music industry in Toronto, including executives at major and indie record labels, studio owners, managers, music professionals and government officials. To reflect diversity, the respondents include participants in Toronto's jazz, rock, punk, electronic, hip hop and classical scenes. Beyond genre and employment status, the musicians interviewed are also differentiated by stage of career, place of birth, age, gender, and level of education.

The chapter begins by reviewing the traditional connection between artists and bohemian spaces. This is followed by a section which outlines how recent changes to the music industry are affecting

the working lives and creative preferences of individual musicians. The next section explores some of the factors that serve to 'push' musicians out of Toronto's bohemian enclaves. The final, empirical section provides an analysis of the 'pull' factors currently attracting these displaced musicians to the suburbs. I conclude by considering the implications of this outward flow of creativity.

Artists and Allure of Bohemian Neighborhoods

The concept of bohemia emerged in the 1830's to describe the activities and lifestyles of artists and other eccentrics in the Parisian arcades. Over time subsequent bohemian communities have formed in North America in sites such as Greenwich Village and Soho in New York, Wicker Park in Chicago and Queen West in Toronto. Such bohemian spaces are often characterized as densely populated, rundown and dangerous and are often located in the most undesirable and isolated quarters of the city. By extension, it is the affordability, grittiness and isolated nature of bohemian neighborhoods, which attract artists, including musicians as well as visual artists, writers and dancers. Accounts of bohemia, for example, describe artists as embracing the creative stimulus associated with derelict and dangerous spaces and romanticize the notion of 'grit as glamour' (Lloyd, 2006). For the artists in Bain's study of Toronto, the violent backdrop of drunken street fights, homicides and prostitution represents a boundary that isolates artists from mainstream society (2003). More broadly, artists who live in these bohemian neighborhoods are often characterized as fearless urban pioneers whose courage, tenacity and practicality are celebrated as they carve out live/work spaces in these danger-filled battlegrounds. For instance, in his case study of New York's Lower East Side Smith also makes use of frontier imagery, describing bohemian spaces as a glamorized landscape of frontier danger and savage energy (1996,18).

Accounts of bohemia also explain that artists need to isolate themselves from mainstream society because their temperaments and lifestyles, which include a desire for nonconventional sexual norms as well as liberal use of drugs and alcohol, are antithetical to bourgeois conventions. In particular, Lloyd notes that, "the rationalized organization of labour and commerce was anathema to Bohemian sensibilities" (2006, 60). The creative process, therefore, is portrayed as dependent on the stimulation from bohemian spaces and fundamentally incompatible with the banal, standard and 'square' aesthetics found in everyday suburban spaces.

Within these bohemian communities, artists are said to make extensive use of 'third spaces' such as coffee shops to develop creative ideas and network with other artists. As Lloyd notes, the 'Urbus Orbis' coffee shop in Wicker Park, Chicago enjoyed immediate patronage from the nascent arts community in the early 1990's, and provided a site for artists to just 'hang out' while awaiting the lighting bolts of inspiration to strike. (2006, 108). As these accounts emphasize the attraction to gritty spaces and the sites of networking we are left with the perception that artists in bohemian communities hang out in 'third spaces', sipping bottomless cups of coffee and going about the creative process in a relaxed state. As described, therefore, the bohemian lifestyle is seemingly devoid of the structure, professionalism and time constraints experienced by other members of the labour market. However, the following section demonstrates that, for some musicians, changing employment conditions are weakening the ties to the spaces and ideals of bohemia.

The Changing Nature of Employment for Musicians

Musicians are at the forefront of recent changes to the way cultural products are created, distributed and consumed. At the macro-scale, the music industry has been thrust into the digital age and forced to deal with the growing specter of internet piracy and the protection of copyrights and intellectual property. At the micro-scale, the employment structures for individual musicians have been radically altered by the rise of independent production. While many of the causes and consequences of this digital shift have been addressed in the literature (Leyshon, 2003; Leyshon et al, 2005; Power and Hallencreutz, 2005), the impacts on the working lives of individual musicians are less well understood. In particular, there is a need to consider how new employment structures have altered the employment trajectories and residential preferences of musicians and the extent to which bohemia is still a dominant feature of their lives.

In the wake of a technologically induced economic downturn, the major record labels have terminated many musicians' contracts and have reduced the services and resources available to those who remained signed. One respondent, who works for Universal Music Canada, for example, reported that the number of new contracts handed out by the major labels in Canada has been reduced to four new contracts per year. While the majority of the revenue generated from music is still attributed to the major labels, a majority of musicians now operate independently of these major firms. According to the Canadian Independent Recording Artist Association (CIRAA) less than 5% of the musicians in Canada are signed to recording contracts making the remaining 95% of musicians, by definition, independent. As one musician explains:

> In the early 1980s, being an independent musician was a choice, some people didn't want to work towards a major label deal because there were restrictions and conditions attached to that…Now very few artists can still get signed to major label deals, so the majority of artists end up on the independent side (indie Musician and Music Producer, July, 2008).

Consequently, independent or 'indie' music production has been transformed from a niche alternative to the dominant structure of employment. Independent musicians are now responsible for all of the creative, technical, managerial and business tasks individually and this has fundamentally altered the way musicians approach their careers. Under the 'indie' model, respondents reported the growing need to become more efficient and professional. Accordingly, creative tasks such as song writing and rehearsing constitute a shrinking fraction of a musician's day. Instead of lounging in coffee shops, independent musicians in Toronto work long hours performing non-creative tasks, as this musician and educator explained:

> If you actually want to make a living as an indie musician, it is a tough go. You've got to pretty much do it yourself all the way through. You have to be able to play your instruments well, write songs, but you also have to be able to get out of the basement and perform them…You also have to be a booking agent…you have to be a manager, setting up interviews and getting the word out…You also have to raise money and get financing together to do some recording, so that means grant applications, going to the bank and putting together business plans and proposals…Plus there are all the technical skills that you need. How to put together a home studio, how to get good recordings. What is involved with recording and mixing and mastering…If you are going to put out an actual CD then you need to have some kind of artwork with that as well. Marketing is another one, getting lists of

> media that you can approach, radio stations and magazines, fanzines that you can send your music to for review, all that kind of stuff and promotion. Merchandising, maybe it is just going to be T-shirts, but often it is much more than that now, and these are all things that would be done for you by various people in big organizations if you were signed to a label, but now you have to do all of these things yourself…So musicians are now responsible for the whole range of activities, technical, business, performance, musicianship, you have to have it all together (indie Musician and Educator, July, 2008).

Beyond requiring musicians to combine their creative talents with new technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, independent production in the digital age also requires high degrees of professionalism, efficiency and organization. However, as these traits and behaviors run counter to the alternative ethos of bohemia, to survive some musicians are being forced to adopt the square, self reliant, standardized and sterile lifestyles closely associated with Whyte's 'organization man' (1956). In particular, the example of networking illustrates this shift as encounters between musicians have become less organic and now tend to be more structured, with specific schedules and agendas. More specifically, my research indicates that the relationships between musicians and other 'creatives', including fashion designers, photographers and web designers, have moved beyond the barter exchanges commonly found between artists in bohemia and now resemble business transactions between firms. With hectic schedules, 24-7 connectivity and blackberries in hand 'indie' musicians are losing the luxury of bohemia, no longer able to reconcile the demands of independent music production with hanging out in a romanticized milieu.

In addition to these structural changes, technology has also afforded individual musicians unprecedented geographic mobility. No longer tied to the major labels and established sites of music production such as Los Angeles, New York and Nashville, independent musicians are now free to live and work wherever they choose. While the majority of musicians still choose to locate in major cities, technology allows music production to take place almost anywhere. Being in a central location within the city is no longer essential. As one musician put it:

> Proximity is not paramount, you can be in the arctic or anywhere with a wireless connection and conduct your business (Multi-Instrument Musician, May, 2007).

With independent production, the working lives of musicians have become more professionalized and distant from those of traditional bohemian artists. Consequently, a growing number of musicians now resemble business-minded entrepreneurs who make calculated decisions about their careers, where they live and how they use neighborhood spaces. Instead of articulating a common penchant for bohemian living, the musicians interviewed in Toronto based their career and life decisions on different criteria, including demographics, experience, preference, values and life-cycle attributes. As one musician explained:

> Years ago there was more homogeneity in how you defined life as a musician. But these days each of us puts things together in such a particular way that our checklists for living and working are very different (Guitarist, September, 2008).

Grit as Grit: The Decline of Bohemia

My interviews with musicians confirm that vibrant bohemian quarters still exist in the downtown core of Toronto and that many musicians and artists still prefer to live in these neighborhoods. Increasingly, however, the decision to locate in the core is being made for lifestyle considerations rather than employment or creative requirements. As one musician put it, it is no longer crucial to live in the downtown to be a musician:

> I think living in the city is a personal choice. It is not for music, although seeing shows is good. So there is a distinction between lifestyle and what you actually need to be effective as a musician. So living in the suburbs would not hinder anything musically, but I would be bored (Singer, May, 2007).

In particular two groups of individuals prefer to live downtown. The first include very young musicians, often from smaller urban settings, who are trying to plug into networks, learn the ropes and make a name for themselves. For these individuals sacrificing space in favor of proximity is regarded as a necessary trade-off to succeed in their musical careers. This musician, for example, spoke of the importance of connecting to the downtown scenes:

> At the beginning stage of a band I think it is really important. Until you meet people and have people working for you it is really important to be seen and make your mark and solidify yourself (Guitarist and Singer, September, 2007).

The second group comes from the other end of the spectrum, namely, older more established musicians who have learned to successfully manage the risks of independent music production. For these individuals the preference for downtown living, however, is not predicated on the local buzz or nightlife, but rather proximity to their customary sites of work and collaborators. Moreover, many of these musicians secured affordable and artist-friendly space before Toronto's real-estate prices skyrocketed Despite living in Kensington Market, one of Toronto's most identifiable bohemian enclaves in the city, the locational choice of this musician was based on proximity rather than any connection to bohemia itself:

> I'm an older guy and a privileged guy who owns a house and I have a partner who's got a steady job and between the two of us we were able to buy a house... It's huge. I need that. I need a place to store my equipment, to be able to play, to be able to record, and then be able to get my gigs easily...So this location works for me for my work. My steady gigs are downtown, most of my club gigs and most of my corporate gigs are downtown. When I teach, I teach in my house. Most of the recording I do is either at my house or at somebody else's studio, which is usually close to here. For the work that I do it's much easier for me to do it here (Guitarist, September, 2008).

In between these groups a growing number of musicians reported being disenchanted with bohemian living. For these musicians, the allure of inhabiting decaying urban frontiers had worn off and the grit, danger and isolation of bohemian spaces were cited as 'push' factors. Crucially, these aesthetics were also described as counter-productive to the creative process and career paths of musicians. As the following sections will demonstrate, the changing nature of employment and increased mobility afforded by technology has caused many musicians in Toronto to rethink their

residential and work choices. More specifically, rising rents, overcrowding, competition and the negative externalities associated with local buzz are pushing some musicians out of Toronto's downtown core and into the city's inner and outer suburbs.

The Pursuit of Practicality

The artistic requirements of affordable, flexible and centrally located live/work spaces provided the original impetus for the conversion of derelict industrial 'loft' spaces (Zukin, 1982). Indeed, interviews with musicians, who originally migrated to Toronto in the mid-1990's, confirm the attraction to affordable space in bohemian quarters and suggest that, for those willing to sacrifice, such space was available within the downtown core.

> The reason why I moved (to this house) was because I got a room, … like a pantry, it had no heat or a window… my rent was $150 (a month) for a long time. But yeah, if I had to pay $800 rent I would have been on the street in two seconds or have had to move back home with my parents in Guelph (Multi-Instrument Musician, May, 2007).

As the city's real-estate market has taken off, however, the artistic enclaves located in the downtown core have been increasingly threatened. Consequently some musicians have been priced out of the market. As this musician explains, gentrification in her neighborhood forced her to relocate from the downtown to the inner suburbs:

> I lived in a very roomy apartment for 24 years and it was so spacious, and had a great view, and really cheap rent, but we finally had to leave that and move into this tiny house because the owners decided that they wanted to renovate and raise the price (Pianist, July, 2008).

Despite his desire for a central location, this musician explained that as prices continue to rise, finding suitable and affordable space is very difficult:

> I have always wanted to live as close to the action as possible but in the mid-90's it just became too expensive to live downtown so I moved out to the west end, which back then was the wild wild west…I realize that living centrally is kind of a luxury (Musician and Music Programmer, November, 2007).

Beyond proximity to performing venues, however, few participants spoke positively about other quintessential features of bohemia and several musicians commented that they prefer safe and clean spaces in the inner and outer suburbs to the gritty and dangerous bohemian enclaves:

> You can live in suburbia or the outer parts of the city, because downtown Toronto is pretty dirty, there are too many bums and crack-heads. The rent is ridiculous, and it is quieter outside of the city (Guitarist, May, 2007).

As another musician put it:

> I would rather live in a safer or nicer area than right where the scene is if it's really run down or dangerous (Drummer, March 2007).

Earlier, I argued that the demands of independent production have forced some musicians to adopt professional traits and practices associated with mainstream corporate culture. The musicians rejected the alternative ethos in favor of 'square' business practices to survive. The quotes above further suggest that some musicians prefer 'square' aesthetics and lifestyles to those of bohemia. In particular, quieter, safer and cleaner spaces found in the 'everyday' suburbs are more attractive than bohemian spaces and lifestyles.

The Limits of Local Buzz

Some musicians are also rejecting the benefits of co-locating in densely populated creative communities. Counter to the logic found in the economic geography literature on the importance of 'local buzz' (Bathelt and Malmberg et al, 2004) and 'being there' (Gertler, 1995) the overpopulation of musicians in Toronto's downtown core has resulted in a series of negative consequences. My research suggests that Toronto's live music scenes have surpassed a sustainable threshold and the consumer market is no longer large enough to support the number of musicians working in the city. Competition for the few well-paying employment opportunities is intensifying and many musicians, who already earn low incomes, are being forced to either play for free or worse, pay the venue owners to get on stage (The 2001 Canadian census reports that musicians earned average annual incomes of $16,090, or 75% less than the national average). These conditions are exacerbated by changes to the revenue structure of the music industry at the macro-scale, where declining sales of recorded music in physical (CD) and digital formats (MP3) have placed an increased importance on the revenue derived from live performances. As the following musician points out, low barriers to entry are allowing musicians to flood the market for live music in Toronto and as a result finding steady and decent paying gigs is increasingly difficult:

> It is common to not get paid or to have to pay to play, which of course makes no sense at all. Now (after three years) we are getting paid more consistently but it is a maximum of $50 or $60 dollars divided amongst the members in the band. That does not even really cover the cost of equipment and rehearsal time. Usually it will buy you dinner for that night, and maybe the gas to get to the show (Drummer, March 2007).

Musicians also reported that too much 'buzz' was, in fact, a hindrance to productivity and the creative process. In the new era of independent production the free time once available to experiment creatively and indulge in the 'rock star' lifestyle has been lost. As a consequence, dedicated indie musicians in Toronto spoke of the danger of being sucked into projects and lifestyles that, in such a competitive climate, might derail their career goals. This musician, for example, saw his fledgling music career thwarted by a 'rock-star fantasy' and cocaine addiction:

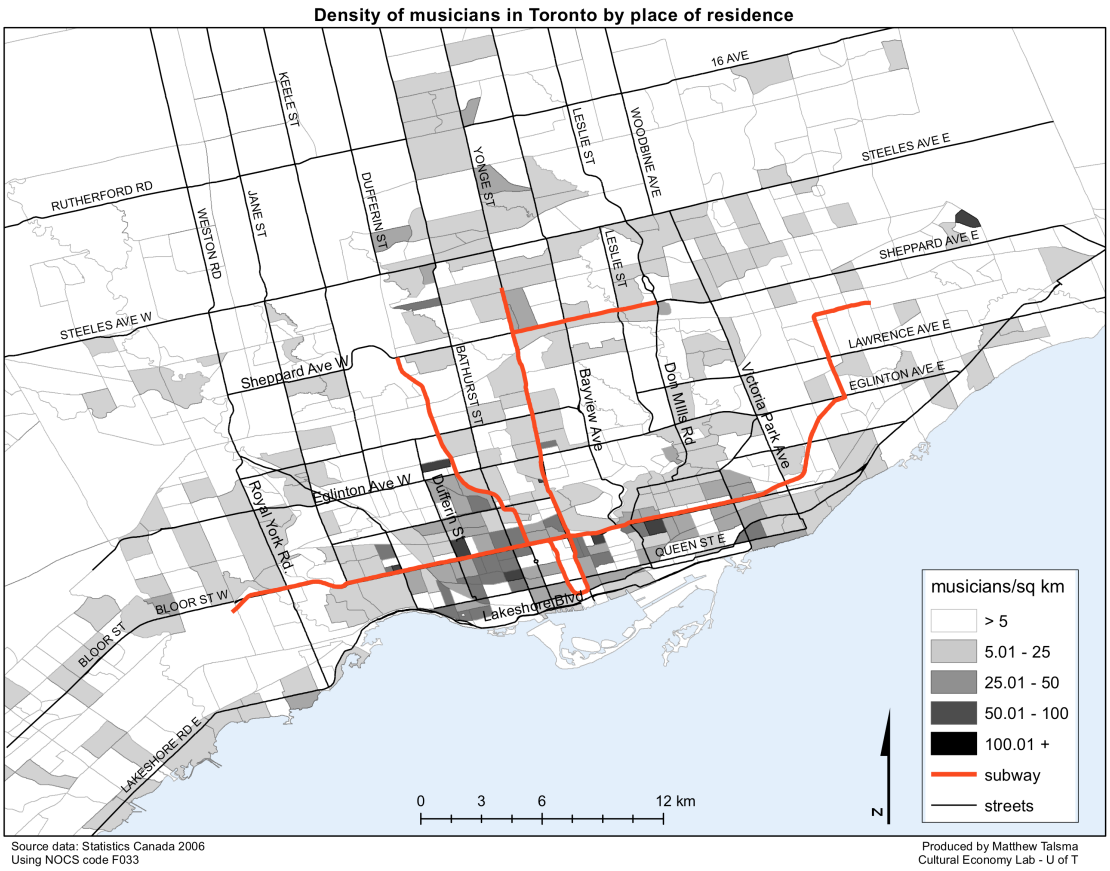
> There is a partying lifestyle that comes with being a musician in a band…There is late night stuff, drinking, drugs…you can get sucked into the party atmosphere as an entertainer…I fell victim to it (Drummer, April, 2007).

Lloyd (2006) indicates that musicians in Wicker Park, Chicago exhibited a strong connection to the drinking, drugs and partying that make up the 'rock star' lifestyle. The comments of this musician and others I spoke with, however, further illustrate that to succeed in the reconfigured landscape of independent music production bohemian lifestyles, which are devoid of structure, responsibility, hard work and self-restraint, must be abandoned. The next section will demonstrate that the flight

of musicians from the spaces of bohemia is not random, that a range of pull factors including more affordable and artist-friendly space, better employment opportunities, greater control over their work/life balance and isolation from career sabotaging temptations are attracting musicians to everyday spaces in the inner and outer suburbs of Toronto.

Creativity in Everyday Spaces

Just as the quest for cheap space helped to establish Toronto's original bohemian enclaves, as real-estate values in the downtown core continue to rise affordable space is now attracting low-income musicians to the inner and outer suburbs. In Figure I, which shows the density of musicians in Toronto by place of residence for example, it is clear that musicians are not exclusively clustered in the downtown core and can be found in many neighborhoods throughout the city.



As many of my participants complained about the costs of independent production and paying for equipment and advertising, finding cheap or even free space emerged as the most prominent pull factor for musicians. Moreover, as some of these musicians leave Toronto on tour for long stretches during the year a further goal was to avoid paying high rents for unused space. The strategy of this musician was to move out of the bohemian inner city neighborhood of Queen West in Toronto and relocate to Oakville, a suburban community of within easy commuting range of Toronto.

> I used to live in Queen West, but in January I moved home with my parents, because I spend most of January and February on the road. I'm going to be gone for most of May, so I need to save money and stuff like that. So I've been commuting back and forth from Toronto to Oakville (Singer Songwriter and Guitarist, March, 2008).

This musician, who lives in a suburban community with no connection to hip hop culture demonstrates that even hip hop artists, who are described in the literature (Forman, 2000) as having the strongest connection to locally rooted scenes, value the affordability of space over its location:

> I think a lot of musicians…are working 9-5, so they're maybe living in an apartment or a lot of times living at their parents homes. It's like they're just trying to survive. But it's also funny because if you think of a lot of New York rappers, a lot of them don't live in Brooklyn and Queens like they say on their songs. Most of them live in New Jersey because that is where you are going to be able to afford a house. I'm up in the 'burbs', but I can still access the city by going to Scarborough (Hip Hop Artist, April, 2008).

Once again unlike the bohemian notion of living and working within isolated artistic communities we see that, as with networking, what really matters is the ability to access specific spaces in a 'just in time' fashion. Musicians can live anywhere as long as they can still get to their gigs, meetings and secondary jobs. In terms of accessibility the best locations are described as being centrally located, often in the inner suburbs with good access to public transit:

> (After moving out of the downtown) we chose this site because it was the cheapest house we could get within the city limits. I didn't want to move to Whitby (outer suburb), because I would have spent too much time traveling, ...Sometimes, however, there are a lot more work opportunities in the suburbs then there is in the downtown area of Toronto. There is so much competition, and they are fighting for fewer and fewer jobs. All the weddings, they are all in the suburbs anyway, banquet halls and golf courses.. So as long as we can still access places like the Drake and the Rex (venues in downtown Toronto) that is all that matters. I think places like Mississauga and North York (inner suburbs) might be better places to live and work (Pianist, July, 2008).

These quotes indicate the decision making process of musicians and highlight the importance of finding affordable and accessible space. Musicians also reported being attracted to everyday suburban spaces because the built form is flexible and therefore, more conducive to the creative process. In addition to needing enough space to store their equipment and hold rehearsals, for example, musicians also need to be able to make noise, often outside of the 9-5-work day. Interestingly, musicians also require silence to create and recharge from their hectic schedules. For these reasons some musicians prefer larger more isolated spaces in the suburbs to small, crowded apartments in the city with sleeping neighbors next door. Indeed, this musician, moved to the outer suburb of Keswick after twenty years of living in downtown Toronto in order to make noise and concentrate on the creative process in complete silence:

> This is the twist, as a musician I make a lot of noise, which is bad enough, but I also need to live somewhere where there isn't a lot of noise, because I can't deal with that noise. I can't be

> creative with that noise. I need that silence to be effective and to focus on what I'm doing. I also need the peace and quiet just to rejuvenate myself from the stress of my working life (Flute Player and Manager, July, 2008).

In terms of the creative process itself, scholars including Jane Jacobs (1961) and Richard Florida (2002) have long argued that the high population density, short blocks and pedestrian access found in the downtown helps to facilitate the interactions that support creativity, and that in contrast, postwar suburbs are the very definition of poor and uncreative urban form. Moreover, there is an assumption that the everyday spaces found in the suburbs lack the inspiration and 'authenticity' found in the downtown core. As this musician explains, however, the banal nature of suburbia itself served as creative inspiration:

> The title of our first album, *Parking Lot*, that sums it up right there…The fact that I come from a place where there is nothing to do and a place where there is no music and where people are against what we are doing is my muse, it is the reason I write and started playing music in the first place…I didn't belong so I invented my own thing to do, purely influenced by my surroundings (Guitarist and Singer, May, 2007).

Furthermore, another musician balked at the assumption that creative or original music could not be produced in the suburbs and gave evidence of local bands in the outer suburb of Keswick creating meaningful new musical forms:

> We are a Keswick band and there is definitely a Keswick sound…There is this whole thing of art rock being mixed in with emo music in Keswick, that is sort of the sound which is coming out of there right now. Which is really kind of interesting (Drummer, February, 2006).

Despite vernacular and apparently sterile aesthetics, therefore, suburbs such as Keswick can, in their own way, act as intersections of new ideas, styles and creativity. Perhaps even more important than the ability to facilitate the creative process and provide affordable and flexible space, Toronto's suburbs allow struggling musicians to sustain their creative passions by providing better employment opportunities. Although Toronto's downtown core is saturated with an oversupply of musicians, which is limiting the amount of paid employment, the markets for live music in many outer suburbs remain untapped. For example, this musician explained that playing shows in the outer suburbs and smaller towns in the periphery often generates better fan attendance and paychecks precisely because the market is not saturated with musicians and other entertainment alternatives:

> The music scene in the slightly less populated areas, north of the city is getting to be really good…In the Northern areas, the kids have less to do, there are fewer entertainment options for them, in Toronto there are one million things to do, so if there is a live band, those kids are gonna go, so you can sell tickets easier. The highest turnouts to any of our shows have all been in Newmarket and Keswick (both outer suburbs of Toronto) (Drummer, February, 2006).

As these findings suggest musicians make spatial choices based on their own unique set of criteria, with the goal of achieving the optimum balance between a range of factors. Most notably, these include the affordability, accessibility and artist-friendliness of the physical space and crucially the

availability of paid work.

Conclusion

The existing accounts characterize bohemia as both highly concentrated and uniform across time and space. More broadly the literature constructs a stark dichotomy between the downtown core and the surrounding suburbs. The core, which is said to radiate 'authentic', 'alternative' and stimulating energy, is regarded as the spiritual home of the creative process and thus the domain of artists, musicians and other bohemians. In contrast, the suburbs are depicted as sterile, banal and vernacular spaces populated by 'square' professionals who are anything but creative. As I have argued, however, the demands of independent production in the digital era are forcing some musicians to abandon bohemia. I have demonstrated that the lifestyles of indie musicians are moving closer to those of mainstream professionals and that a range of push and pull factors, including the quest for affordable space and employment opportunities, have resulted in some musicians leaving the core and relocating to spaces in the inner and outer suburbs. These everyday suburban spaces, parents' houses and basement apartments, for example, are far more than cheap containers of creative activity and serve to support and catalyze the creative process in their own right. To recapitulate, I presented examples of musicians drawing inspiration from the ordinary routines found in suburbia and reworking these conventions in creative ways. Moreover, I discussed how musicians in the outer suburb of Keswick are appropriating, recombining and infusing sonic styles from the downtown core with their own ideas to create new, hybrid forms of music. While it is clear that some musicians are being forced to abandon bohemia, others are making this transition of their own free will. As the trends toward making spaces of creativity in everyday realms and adopting 'square' lifestyles accelerate, important questions about the true nature of creativity and what it means to be an artist in the digital age are raised. The results of this micro-scale case study lend further credence to the mounting criticism directed at academic inquiry and government policies which privilege the visible clusters of creative activity in the downtowns of cities and neglect their invisible counterparts in everyday and vernacular spaces.

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