

**Grassroots cultural globalisation**  
**in the east-central European**  
**nu jazz scene**

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## Introduction

Urban youth cultures that are centred around particular genres of popular music have been usually studied in their local contexts. The most common academic discourses of describing such sociocultural phenomena have been developing in the field of cultural studies, musicology and sociology. My ethnography is in a way grounded in the sociology of independent urban cultural production,<sup>1</sup> particularly Sharon Zukin's approach that traces the global inter-cultural exchange in the 'symbolic' or cultural economies of New York,<sup>2</sup> however I step beyond the geographical boundaries of a single city as the site of research, in order to gain a better understanding of the transnational organisation of cultural production.

Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz suggests that

'[w]orld cities are places in themselves, and also nodes in networks, their cultural organization involves local as well as transnational relationships.'<sup>3</sup>

However it is not just world cities; as James Clifford argues, even the remote villages are connected to the world along ties of travelling<sup>4</sup> - meaning both the physical movement of object and people, and the immaterially travelling signals of telecommunication and media. Clifford attempts to redefine the practice of anthropological fieldwork in a way that also takes into account the 'routes' where culture travels, besides the traditional approach of concentrating on its local 'roots'.

Following this lead, the aim of my multi-sited research is to trace how a specific marginal musical genre - nu jazz<sup>5</sup> - becomes accessible in different cities of a specific geographical region - east-central Europe - through the transnational grass-roots co-operation of cultural producers - DJs, producers, record store owners, promoters. In more general terms, my research will investigate independent urban cultural economies focusing on the transnational context, rather than the local.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example (Zukin, 2000)

<sup>2</sup> (Zukin, 1995: 153-258)

<sup>3</sup> (Hannerz, 1990:237)

<sup>4</sup> (Clifford, 1997)

<sup>5</sup> Nu jazz is a loosely defined term that includes a wide range of different styles and tempos. The genre has its roots in rare groove, acid jazz and underground electronic music and is best described as the fusion of acoustic and electronic, be it a mix of jazz and drum and bass or a blend of salsa and hip-hop. I will further describe the genre in the beginning of my actual ethnography.

This research goal also entails that I won't describe the particular urban scenes in terms of collective identity creation and problem solving,<sup>6</sup> cultural representation and citizenship,<sup>7</sup> or subcultural capital.<sup>8</sup> I will rather explain my research data against the broader theoretical framework of the globalisation of cultural processes. I will particularly focus on theories that suggest that certain communication technologies - particularly the Internet - enable social groups with limited resources to take part in the transnational grass-roots organisation of cultural production.

This grass-roots version of cultural globalisation deserves deeper observation, as it is a participative, bottom-up process that provides an alternative - more diversity in terms of locally available musical 'texts' - to the centralised and industrialised cultural production of the global corporate capitalism.

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<sup>6</sup> On youth subcultures and alternative problem solving see (Clarke; Hall; Jefferson; and Roberts, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> On youth cultures and cultural citizenship see (Blackman and France, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> On club cultures and subcultural capital see (Thornton, 1996)

## **1. Theoretical framework**

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the key concepts that I find relevant to my research. As a comprehensive critical discussion of the available literature on the following notions is far beyond the limitation of this paper, my intention is rather to create a coherent conceptual framework that will later help in explaining the empirical data. Such a framework is needed as there is no consensus on the meaning of the following concepts even within the discourse of social sciences. Conceptual coherence - or at least a clear indication of the angle from which a notion is used to explain the social reality of the field - is even more important as I will use an interdisciplinary approach to give a complex description of grass-roots cultural globalisation.

In the first section I will explore concepts of globalisation, cultural globalisation and grass-roots globalisation before defining what I mean by grass-roots cultural globalisation. In the second section I will argue that the Internet is the first communication technology that allows social groups with limited resources to engage in grass-roots organisation of cultural production on a global scale, then discuss the potentials arising from decentralised, non-hierarchical organisational principles.

## 1.1 Cultural globalisation from the bottom up

Both global processes and their theorisation have a long history, but the academic debate that focused explicitly on globalisation in social sciences has only started in the early 1980s.<sup>9</sup> Ever since then, globalisation has been studied and debated in various - and usually overlapping - contexts such as its relation to project of modernity, the post-modern condition,<sup>10</sup> and the question of cosmopolitanism.<sup>11</sup> However, none of the existing discourses gives a definite answer to what globalisation actually is. The reason is simple: globalisation is a conceptual framework to describe and explain the complexity of social reality, to link up a multitude of processes, events, objects and meanings that interrelate in the scholar's eye along the line of reaching beyond the boundaries of nation states. There are as many versions to this concept as scholars, but some share the common ground of explaining globalisation in terms of - material and immaterial - *global flows*. I find this way of imagining globalisation very useful, as it captures the dynamics of the process without being overtly speculative or philosophical. However, this approach has its limitations, as when authors try to closer identify these global flows, they come up with incompatible, overlapping models.

Scott Lash and John Urry, for example, build a sociological framework of global flows consisting of 'capital, labour, commodities, information and images'.<sup>12</sup> Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai creates a model of five imaginary landscapes corresponding of five different types of global flows: *ethnoscapes*; *mediascapes*; *technoscapes*; *financescapes* and *ideoscapes* meaning respectively conceptual plains for flows of people; technology; mediatised cultural products; money and ideas.<sup>13</sup> A comparison of these two overlapping models already shows that (1) there are many equally legitimate ways of selecting the flows that make up the complexity of globalisation; and (2) any model is necessarily reductive as it stresses the importance of certain aspects and ignores others completely. We also see that (3) the particular flows of both models are not independent, but in fact strongly interrelated systems. Even if we take as simple a model as Ulf Hannerz's that describes globalisation in terms of

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<sup>9</sup> (Robertson, 1992)

<sup>10</sup> As this more philosophical approach falls far from the focus of theoretical framework I use to explain the empirical data collected throughout my research, I won't discuss it in depth. For a good selection of essays on globalisation and (post)modernity see (Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Similarly, this discourse is beyond the focus of this paper, for an overview see (Cheah, and Robbins, 1998), (Hannerz, 1990) and (Morley, 2000)

<sup>12</sup> (Lash and Urry, 1994:12)

<sup>13</sup> (Appadurai, 1996:33-37)

flows of goods, people and meanings,<sup>14</sup> we see how these flows are impossible to separate from each other.

John Tomlinson sidesteps the problem of selecting the appropriate flows and describes globalisation instead as *complex connectivity*. This conceptual exploration focuses on ‘an empirical condition of the modern world’<sup>15</sup>: and refers to the increasing level of potential and actually existing interconnections between physically or conceptually distant locations, people, actions, processes, objects and concepts. So instead of trying to theoretically separate what is highly interrelated, Tomlinson focuses on the complex interconnections that models of flows necessarily have to put in the background. I also find complex connectivity a more flexible and illustrative conceptual tool in explaining time-space compression and disembedding, two concepts that are developed in discussions of modernity, but are strongly related to the process of globalisation as well.<sup>16</sup> I briefly discuss these concepts here, as they will be useful in interpreting my research data.

The conceptual framework of complex connectivity looks at the global flows from the point of the ever-growing complexity - in terms of the quantity and quality of both the connected nodes and the links between them - of networks that carry these flows. These networks, just like the flows, can be both imaginary like the social networks of business acquaintances, friendships or family ties; and material like the infrastructure of communication or transport. There has been a drastic acceleration in the development of these networks during the twentieth century<sup>17</sup> both in terms of their geographical extension - by now they are truly global - and the speed at which certain flows can travel between their nodes. *Time-space compression*<sup>18</sup> refers to the cognitive process that parallels the development of complex connectivity. Our imagination of temporality and spatiality radically changes with the decreasing duration of crossing geographical distances between places and also the new mediated ways of experiencing or interacting with the outside world far beyond our locality.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> (Hannerz, 1990:237)

<sup>15</sup> (Tomlinson, 1999:2)

<sup>16</sup> On a description of globalisation as the consequence of modernity, an idea originally proposed by Anthony Giddens, see (Tomlinson, 1999:47-60).

<sup>17</sup> I will further discuss this development in the next section.

<sup>18</sup> Although David Harvey developed this notion in the historical context of modernization (Harvey, 1990), this concept is equally valid in the context of globalisation, as these two processes are strongly interrelated.

<sup>19</sup> (Morley, 1992)

Anthony Giddens' concept of *disembedding*,<sup>20</sup> 'the lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space'<sup>21</sup> can also be interpreted in the context of complex connectivity. Giddens names two mechanisms as the main means of the disembedding process: symbolic tokens, and expert systems. Symbolic tokens are 'media of exchange which have standard value, and thus interchangeable across a plurality of contexts.'<sup>22</sup> It is not hard to see that the development of global symbolic tokens - such as money, English as *lingua franca* or for that matter, information in digital form - allows connectivity between previously independent or isolated individuals, objects, locations, concepts or technological systems. Expert systems of communication and transport 'through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them'<sup>23</sup> allow the use of these technologies for individuals who might completely lack the technical skills of the experts who have built these systems. This radical increase in the number and diversity of actors that are potentially connectable, create more complex networks of interaction.

The effects of the change described in the above paragraphs could be discussed in many different contexts, as globalisation is a multidimensional phenomenon. By *cultural globalisation* I mean the cultural dimension of globalisation. Of course the cultural cannot and should not be completely separated from other dimensions - such as the economic, the technological, the political - due to their strongly interrelated nature. Putting the cultural dimension in focus does not mean that it has determining role over any other.<sup>24</sup>

Due to its highly varying definitions in various academic discourses we also need to define what we mean by 'culture', before we further the discussion of cultural globalisation. In his comprehensive overview of the origins and existing meanings of this complex notion Raymond Williams identifies three 'broad active categories of modern usage' of culture:

'(i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development [...]; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general [...]; (iii) the

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<sup>20</sup> Similarly to time-space compression, the concept of disembedding was also developed in the context of modernity-postmodernity.

<sup>21</sup> As quoted by Tomlinson (1999:55). Throughout this paragraph I will use Tomlinson's account of Giddens' theory.

<sup>22</sup> (ibid:55)

<sup>23</sup> (ibid:55)

independent and abstract noun that describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.’<sup>25</sup>

As my research is focused on the transnational dissemination of a certain genre of music I will mostly use culture in the sense of the third category, although I am aware, that the consumption of music is related to certain issues - such as lifestyle choices or the negotiations of identities - that play out on the more general level of the second category.

The academic criticism against cultural globalisation is centred around two main lines of argument: the first one identifies cultural globalisation with *cultural homogenisation*, the second one sees it as the global spread of *consumerism*.<sup>26</sup> As globalisation is widely associated with the emerging global dominance of the capitalist mode of production and the freely floating multinational corporate capital,<sup>27</sup> the criticism against cultural globalisation is strongly rooted in the left wing - Marxist or neo-Marxist - critique of capitalism.

The arguments against a global consumer society are repeating earlier criticisms<sup>28</sup> against cultural production inside the capitalist system adding that with the emerging global dominance of the capitalist mode of production there will be no place left for uncommodified culture. According to this line of argument, capitalism turns culture into mere commodities<sup>29</sup> that sell, with no regard to any other ‘artistic value’ than the potential to maximise profit. Some left-wing critics<sup>30</sup> tend to see capitalism as a system that - mainly through advertising and mass media and popular culture - creates an illusionary dream world, a ‘false value’ around commodities that makes the ‘exploited masses’ believe that the only way to their happiness is the consumption of these goods; and this further conditions them to accept the capitalist mode of production. The functionalism and reductionism of this critique has been well pointed out by a number of theorists in the fields of sociology, anthropology, media studies and cultural studies.<sup>31</sup> These counter-arguments - instead of speaking of capitalism as a centrally controlled system that uses the cultural industries to impose meanings on the

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<sup>24</sup> (Tomlinson, 1999:23)

<sup>25</sup> (Williams, 1983:90)

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed review of literature see (Tomlinson, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> See for example (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> See for example the Frankfurt School’s critique of the ‘culture industry’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1993) or the French Situationists’ critique of consumer society as ‘society of the spectacle’ (Debord, 1994).

<sup>29</sup> On the history of commodity theory see (Appadurai, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> Again, see (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1993), (Debord, 1994) and a review of left-wing literature criticising cultural globalisation in (Tomlinson, 1999:79-97).

<sup>31</sup> See for a broad discussion of the debates surrounding consumer culture see (Featherstone, 1991) or (Tomlinson, 1991:102-137); on the changing theories of media consumption see (Morley, 1995).

passive 'masses' from above - draw a more complex picture and stress the importance of the diverse personal and social appreciations and uses of cultural products.

Cultural homogenisation refers to the homogenizing forces of global capitalism that work through 'advertising techniques, dominant languages, media formats and fashion trends'<sup>32</sup> and 'undeniably affect consciousness and culture in virtually every corner of the world.'<sup>33</sup> The most pessimistic accounts of cultural globalisation predict the emergence of a homogenised global culture produced entirely by corporations like Disney, McDonald's, Nike and Coca-Cola totally replacing traditional, local or national cultures.<sup>34</sup> This speculative approach fails to understand the complexity of globalisation - focusing only on centralized processes - and thus mistakes the global expansion of multinational corporations for the exclusive form of cultural globalisation. Hannerz argues for a more complex understanding of cultural globalisation:

'There is now a world culture, but we had better make sure we understand what this means: not a replication of uniformity but an organization of diversity, an increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as a development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any territory.'<sup>35</sup>

This account stresses the decentralised nature of globalisation - its complexity - that - through connectivity - offers possibilities to link up local cultural cultures globally, while also speaks about the emergence of new cultures - such as the business elite of multinational corporations and other highly mobile 'cosmopolitan' social groups - that spread around the globe. Hannerz here uses 'cultures' in the second sense<sup>36</sup> of Williams' above typology, however, this description of the complex process of cultural globalisation can be easily applied at the level of culture in the narrower third sense.<sup>37</sup> This application focuses on the global connectivity of alternative local cultural economies, while it also hints at the fact that the ubiquitous cultural forms that are created by multinational corporations are not anchored to any centre that could control their local appreciations, social uses and the cultural hybrids that stem for local incorporations of their elements.<sup>38</sup> Another important point of criticism against cultural

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<sup>32</sup> (Lull, 2000:41) This list is only to signal some forms of homogenising forces and is far from being complete.

<sup>33</sup> (ibid)

<sup>34</sup> See a detailed discussion of the Cultural Imperialism debate in (Tomlinson, 1991)

<sup>35</sup> (Hannerz, 1990:128)

<sup>36</sup> Culture as 'a particular way of life [...] of groups'. (Williams, 1983:90)

<sup>37</sup> Culture as 'the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (ibid).

<sup>38</sup> This approach is well developed in anthropology and media studies, see for example (Appadurai, 1996), (Lull, 2000; 2002), (Morley 1992; 2000), (Morley and Robins, 1995) and (Hannerz, 1996).

homogenisation theories challenges their imaginary of local cultures as homogenous and authentic cultural entities.<sup>39</sup>

As we have seen, the criticism against cultural homogenisation and consumerism arguments stresses the importance of subjective processes and symbolic interaction at the level of small groups and individuals. This approach tries to understand cultural globalisation from the bottom up by focusing on what is happening at the grass-roots level, however when defining 'grass-roots globalisation' I concentrate strictly - referring to the grass-roots social movements of the 60s and 70s - on alternative forms social organizations in the globalisation process.

Urban and community researchers Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith use the term *transnationalisation from below*<sup>40</sup> to describe decentralised collective practices in the life of transnational migrant communities - such as the creation of hybrid group identities or the development of transnational business networks of migrant entrepreneurs - that provide an alternative to hegemonic tendencies that are imposed upon them from above by institutions of the nation states or multinational capital. Guarnizo and Smith provide critical overview of theories that celebrate these practices as liberatory and - even though acknowledging their counter counter-hegemonic potential - state that they are by no means always self-consciously resistant or political.<sup>41</sup>

Appadurai uses *globalisation from below* or *grass-roots globalisation* to describe

'a world wide order of institutions' that has emerged '[w]hile global capital and the system of nation-states negotiate the terms of the emerging world order'<sup>42</sup>. The aim of these social forms - 'part networks, part organizations'<sup>43</sup> - 'to contest, interrogate and reverse'<sup>44</sup> the negative effects of globalisation<sup>45</sup> such as 'the increased inequalities both within and across societies, spiralling processes of ecological degradation and crisis, and unviable relations between finance and

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<sup>39</sup> See (Clifford, 1997) and (Rosaldo, 1989) and (Anderson, 1983).

<sup>40</sup> (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998)

<sup>41</sup> (ibid:5)

<sup>42</sup> (Appadurai, 2000:15)

<sup>43</sup> (ibid:15)

<sup>44</sup> (ibid:3)

<sup>45</sup> Understood by Appadurai in this text as 'a particular, contemporary configuration in the relationship between capital and the nation-state' (Appadurai, 15-16).

manufacturing capital, as well as between goods and the wealth required to purchase them.’<sup>46</sup>

Contrasted with Guarnizo and Smith’s broader concept, this definition is limiting grass-roots globalisation to the sphere of grass-roots political resistance that consciously counters the negative economic and ecological aspects of globalisation. Although this second definition falls further from the cultural dimension of globalisation, it is useful to investigate the changing concept of *resistance* in this international economic and political context, before we proceed to give a general definition of grass-roots cultural globalisation.

In their highly philosophical account, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri define Empire as the all embracing ‘global order, a new logic and structure of rule - in short, a new form of sovereignty’<sup>47</sup> that has emerged with the arrival of globalisation of economic and cultural exchanges after the fall of colonial regimes and the Soviet system. They conceive Empire as the global ‘political subject that governs these exchanges’<sup>48</sup> with no boundaries or territorial centre power that ‘effectively encompasses the spatial totality.’<sup>49</sup> However, they are far from being pessimistic about this change, and argue that the very emergence of Empire opens never-before-seen possibilities for resistance:

‘The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously construct a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges. The struggles that contest and subvert Empire, as well as those to construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself - indeed, such new struggles have already begun to emerge. Through these struggles and many more like them, the multitude will have to invent new democratic forms and constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire.’<sup>50</sup>

They argue that the all embracing constitution of Empire calls for new strategies of resistance, as ‘there is no longer an “outside” to power’<sup>51</sup> thus there is ‘no external point where the articulations of global power are vulnerable.’<sup>52</sup> The new forms of resistance, characterised by

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<sup>46</sup> (Appadurai, 2000:16)

<sup>47</sup> (Hardt and Negri, 2000:xi)

<sup>48</sup> (ibid:xi)

<sup>49</sup> (ibid:xiv)

<sup>50</sup> (ibid:xii)

<sup>51</sup> (ibid:58)

<sup>52</sup> (ibid:58)

autonomy, grass-roots organisation and global co-operation - just like the 'social forms' described by Appadurai above - contest the global economic and political system from the inside. By using the infrastructure that Empire provides - for example decentralised communication networks and the capitalist mode of production<sup>53</sup> - they can effectively promote, develop and sustain alternatives within the system. The question of whether these movements will be able to subvert Empire from within leads us to the field of speculation, but I agree with both Hardt and Negri and Appadurai that grass-roots movements have already opened new alternatives.

By *grass-roots cultural globalisation* I mean the aspect of cultural globalisation that is connected to the activities of decentred, non-hierarchical, autonomous and transnationally networked cultural economies. The term 'grass-roots' refers to both their 'bottom-up' way of social organization and also to their resistance in the sense that they create alternatives to the culture produced and distributed by multinational corporations. I am well aware that these alternative economies also operate within the capitalist system and that corporate capital immediately 'buys into' the alternative markets when they - due to the efforts of grass-roots entrepreneurs - grow beyond their previous 'marginal' status. However, if we look beyond the strongly reductive 'commodification' and 'corporate exploitation of culture' arguments, we see Hardt and Negri's concept of resistance at work: the flexible network of independent cultural producers produce and distribute cultural goods that the centralised corporate 'culture industry',<sup>54</sup> finds too marginal to market, and thus provide access to a diversity of alternative cultural products locally as well as globally. The fact that the corporations later potentially jump on the bandwagon and include these previously ignored 'product-lines' in their repertoire can also be interpreted as a minor victory of grass-roots globalisation: this is the point where grass-roots cultural 'resistance' actually subverts the Empire from the inside.

The aim of my research is to provide empirical insight into the process of cultural grass-roots globalisation through the case of a loose transnational network of cultural producers - DJs, producers, promoters, specialist record store owners - in east-central Europe. These cultural producers support a relatively marginal musical genre - nu jazz - through making available a

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<sup>53</sup> A good example of this is Naomi Klein who has published and marketed her book *No Logo* (Klein, 2000), a radical critique of global corporate capitalism, through a conventional publishing house that operates on the 'imperial terrain' of the corporate capitalist system.

<sup>54</sup> I am aware of the fact that in the last decades these corporations has also decentralised their production and distribution facilities; however, they still have a well recognisable, centralised structure of command as they outsource only instrumental tasks, but keep development and strategic decisions in the centre. This is by no means similar to loose networks of autonomous activity (Lash and Urry, 1994:111-144), (Klein, 2000).

wide range of musical texts in their specific urban locations that otherwise can't be accessed through the outlets of corporate music industry and mass media. They create an alternative network of cultural dissemination in a region that - due to the small size of the cities, the strongly limited buying power of local youth, the lack of physical distribution infrastructure or the easy accessibility of pirated CDs - is not a commercially profitable market for this kind of music.

It is obvious that such independent transnational music networks heavily depend on both communication and transportation networks. The physical travel of people and objects - the traditional way of cultural transmission - is now easily replaced by less expensive mediated experiences and the use of telecommunication. Besides the rise of Internet that offers relatively affordable long-distance communication and mediation, grass-roots organisational patterns also play a very important role in alternative forms of cultural globalisation. The independent dance music industry has been described<sup>55</sup> as a networked or rhizomatic<sup>56</sup> structure: a non-hierarchical, decentralised network of autonomous actors. The flexibility of this structure allows the system to function - maintain the circulation of the flows of musical<sup>57</sup> information - under circumstances that are unsuitable for sustaining centralised institutions.

In the next section, I will discuss the how Internet and non-hierarchical, decentralised forms of organisation support the grass-roots globalisation of culture.

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<sup>55</sup> By (Laing, 1997) and (Hesmondhalgh, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> See (Deleuze and Guattari, 2002:3-25).

<sup>57</sup> Both in terms of the actual musical products and the information about them.

## 1.2 Networks of self-organisation

The role of communication networks is crucial to globalisation, as they carry transnational flows of information and they are the main providers of global connectivity besides transportation networks. We shall not make the mistake of assigning a determining role to communication networks in the globalisation process, as the development of any technology is dependent on a complex set of economic, political and social needs and interests;<sup>58</sup> however, the technical characteristics of particular technologies do determine the potential spectrum of their social uses. In this section I will argue that the Internet is the first technology that allows for grass-roots social organization of cultural production and consumption on a global scale for cultural groups with limited economic resources by discussing its technical characteristics and the potential social uses they allow. Then I examine the main consequences arising from non-hierarchical system design to support the argument that the grass-roots organisation of cultural production and consumption allow the survival and development of marginal cultural genres in circumstances that are unsuitable for sustaining centralised institutions on the same field. Before proceeding to the actual discussion of my argument, I first briefly introduce the critical point that most relevantly questions any optimistic account that only sees the Internet as a liberating and democratising technology.

One of the most widely mentioned negative effects of the spread of the Internet that it creates new inequalities, dividing the society into information-rich - those who have access to the Internet - and information-poor - those who don't.<sup>59</sup> Of course this line of division converges with already existing social differences, as members of more deprived social strata are less likely to be able to afford the material means - phone line, computer, Internet access - and possess the skills - computer and Internet literacy - that are needed to get a valuable experience out of Internet-use. The reinforcement of already existing differences is also present in a global context as economically and technologically less developed countries lag behind in realising the potentials that Internet offers. Even though I have conducted my research in a region where the Internet was accessible and 'affordable' according to my - middle class - research subjects, I am aware that it is only so for certain strata of the local societies. The problem of the 'digital divide' is very real and extremely important, so my

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<sup>58</sup> (Castells, 1996:5)

<sup>59</sup> See Castell's detailed analysis of the 'digital divide' in the US and also in a global context. His account also summarizes recent research findings on the subject (Castells, 2001:247-274).

account of the Internet as an ideal technological tool for grass-roots social organisation is by no means celebratory: it is liberating or democratising for some, while others are excluded from its benefits.

Previously existing communication networks and technologies already featured most of the communication possibilities offered by the Internet: the television made possible one way communication of still and moving pictures and sounds, the telephone allowed for two-way real-time communication, answering machines and faxes provided the possibility of delayed communication of sounds and texts.<sup>60</sup> However, neither one of these technologies alone, nor their combination, could really support transnational grass-roots organization of social groups with limited economic resources. The cost of long-distance phone calls imposed a strong barrier on one-to-one communication. The ‘sender’ end of traditional broadcast - one-to-many - media was also difficult to access due to high costs of maintaining the studio and broadcast infrastructure as well as that of producing programs. The problem of the limited amount of available broadcast frequencies was successfully solved with the development of satellite and cable networks, however, the costs of producing programs or maintaining transnational media networks still remained beyond the reach of individuals and small groups.

The commercial development of the Internet from the middle of 1990s radically changed the distribution of power in the field of transnational communication as it created a possibility of

“potential integration of text, images and sounds in the same system, interacting from multiple points, in chosen time and space (real time or delayed) along a global network in conditions of open and affordable access.”<sup>61</sup>

The centralized broadcast structure of traditional mass media is now by-passed on a decentralised network that provides equal possibilities - indeed a participative model - for the users to take an active role in communicating their own messages. This democratisation of mediated cultural representation resulted in a global accessibility of information about previously ‘invisible’ - marginal or only locally available - cultures.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC), besides providing affordable access to alternative one-to-many media - mainly in the form of websites and e-mail based newsletters - also supports one-to-one and many-to-many interaction: e-mail, on-line chat applications,

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<sup>60</sup> (van Dijk, 1997:31-39)

<sup>61</sup> (Castells 1996: 328)

mailing lists and discussion-groups opened never-before-seen potentials in the maintenance and development of long-distance communication between individuals and within groups.

Manuel Castells describes these changes in *The Rise of Network Society* as the diversification of the previously homogenous mass media audiences<sup>62</sup> and the ‘rise of interactive society’. It is worth to note the change of focus between the first (1996) and the second (2000) edition of the book in Castell’s discussion of the interactive society, as it shows how theorization of the effects of CMC on culture and social interaction is still trying to come to terms with their emerging social uses. The earlier edition described interactive society in terms of expanding possibilities of interaction for the cultural elites in the terrains of work and leisure as well as the use of on-line services; and only mentioned virtual communities<sup>63</sup> in less than half a page by the end of the discussion, as one of the interesting aspects of the social uses of the new interactive technology.<sup>64</sup> In the second edition, the focus clearly shifts as Castells studies virtual communities at length as one of the central features of ‘interactive society’.

Howard Rheingold, the journalist and Internet expert who coined the term ‘virtual community’, successfully argues that the novelty of CMC lies in its potential to support a radically new way of social self-organisation:

‘[Y]ou can’t simply pick up a phone and ask to be connected with someone who wants to talk about Islamic art or California wine, or someone with a three-year-old daughter or a forty-year-old Hudson; you can, however, join a computer conference on any of these topics, then open a public or private correspondence with the previously unknown people you find there. Your chances of making friends are magnified by orders of magnitude over the old methods of finding a peer group.’<sup>65</sup>

As we can see from Castells’ summary,<sup>66</sup> the academic debates and researches that surround the issue of virtual communities are more concerned with the question of whether these social formations can be described as communities at all; whether participation in such virtual groups can nurture virtual identities; and whether participation in virtual communities

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<sup>62</sup> (ibid:337-342)

<sup>63</sup> Howard Rheingold defines virtual communities as ‘social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on [...] public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relations in cyberspace’ (Rheingold, 1995:5).

<sup>64</sup> (Castells, 1996:358-364)

<sup>65</sup> (Rheingold, 1995:27)

<sup>66</sup> (Castells, 2000:396-389)

increases the alienation from the local social context. These discussions tend to separate ‘physical’ and ‘virtual’ lives of individuals, however in many cases they are strongly interrelated. Although Castells mentions the embeddedness of virtual communities in their ‘physical’ social contexts,<sup>67</sup> he fails to link up the discussion of virtual communities with his following analysis of case studies that prove the ‘extraordinary potential of computer networks as instruments of grass-roots self-organisation and public debate at the local level’<sup>68</sup> and his consideration of the Internet as ‘an essential tool for disseminating information, organizing and mobilizing’ for ‘new trans-boarder social movements, rising to defend women’s causes, human rights, environmental preservation and political democracy.’<sup>69</sup>

Following Rheingold’s above argument, I consider virtual communities central to the process of transnational grass-roots social organization. Participation in virtual communities that cluster around shared interests on various Internet platforms can support the development of transnational social networks connecting agents who are active in their localities regardless of whether this common interest and activity is of political, economic, social or cultural nature.

In the case of cultural interests and activates this form of grass-roots social organization both opens a global market and new ways of transnational co-operation among producers and consumers of cultural products, and thus offer better chances of survival and development of marginal cultural forms than the resources of their local cultural economies.

In the context of survival potentials, it is worth to note the similarity in the decentralised structure of grass-roots organizations and the physical network architecture of the Internet and consider some of the consequences of such organizational principles.

ARPANET - the predecessor of Internet - has been designed using Paul Baran’s concept of distributed networks - ones that have no central command or control point - to maintain functionality even if any one of its point is destroyed or malfunctions.<sup>70</sup> This rhizomatic structure<sup>71</sup> - developed to suit cold war military objectives - is also one of the reasons why the Internet is difficult, if not impossible to control and regulate.<sup>72</sup> In the context of grass-roots

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<sup>67</sup> ‘[Barry] Wellman’s key point is to remind us that “virtual communities” do not have to be opposed to “physical communities”: they are different forms of community, with specific rules and dynamics, which interact with other types of community.’ (ibid:387)

<sup>68</sup> (Castells, 2000:392)

<sup>69</sup> (ibid:392)

<sup>70</sup> (Slevin 2000)

<sup>71</sup> See a summary of Deleuze and Guattari’s the principles of the rhizome and their application to the context of the Internet in (Hamman, 1996).

<sup>72</sup> (Hardt and Negri, 2000:297-300)

cultural globalisation the power that stems from decentralization presents itself in the incapability of centralized institutions - of corporate capitalism or the nation state - to control the cultural flows that travel on alternative networks.

Another important consequence of the decentralised structure is the high level of flexibility of the organisation. Due to by-passing centralized decision-making processes and using 'grass-roots knowledge' of their environment, the single units have a better ability to rapidly adapt to complex, quickly changing circumstances. The transition from the centralized and hierarchical institutional structure of organized capitalism<sup>73</sup> to spatially dispersed, flexible, horizontally networked enterprises is strongly related to business goals of increasing flexibility and adaptability.<sup>74</sup> In the field of cultural production the flexibility and adaptability of decentralised and non-hierarchical organizational structure allows for the spread of marginal cultural forms in localities that are too small and changing markets to sustain centralized institutional structures for delivering the same cultural products.<sup>75</sup>

In this section, I have argued for the centrality of the Internet to the process of grass-roots cultural globalisation. Nevertheless, as Internet has not become the exclusive form of musical information dissemination, in my research I will give a fuller picture that also traces the role of physical travelling - of people and records - as well as traditional forms media - radio and music magazines - in the transnational spreading of marginal cultural forms.

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<sup>73</sup> (Lash and Urry, 1988)

<sup>74</sup> (Castells, 1996:167-173)

<sup>75</sup> See (Maughan and Smith, 1998) and (Hesmondhalgh, 1998).

## 2. Research methods

In this section I first present the research methods I have used to collect the data for this study; then I explain my methodological choices focusing on their problematic points and advantages.

I have conducted my research among DJs.<sup>76</sup> Some of them also promote events and produce their own music, one of them owns small specialist record shop. They are involved with the nu jazz scene in five cities - Sarajevo; Ljubljana; Trieste; Zagreb and Vienna - in five different countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina; Slovenia; Italy; Croatia and Austria - in the east-central European region. I relied on two specific ways of collecting data: in depth interviews<sup>77</sup> and participant observation. The interviews were conducted in English between the 15<sup>th</sup> of June and the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2002. The participant observation stretches long beyond the 2-5 days I have spent in each location conducting my interviews, as I have taken an active part in the formation of this grass-roots regional network of cultural producers in the last three years, as a DJ, producer and occasional promoter from Budapest, Hungary both through actual meetings on each location and through regularly exchanging e-mails with most of my interviewees. However, during the two weeks I spent in these cities I was consciously focusing on collecting data for my research through participating in the life of their local cultural economies - DJing on their clubnights; listening to their DJ sets; browsing through the local record stores and their personal record collections and having informal conversations with them and other people who play less central roles in the development of the particular local scenes, but regularly participate in nu jazz events.

I selected my interviewees mostly from amongst the people with whom I've already been in touch in the last few years. These people are both part of the loose regional network of cultural producers and influential in forming their particular local scenes. I didn't intend to make a definitive selection of all the people who are involved with nu jazz and regional co-operation in these locations, nor host a complete investigation of all the key actors active in each local scene. However, I occasionally interviewed a few people who are only involved with their local scenes; or are passive locally, but also engage in transnational networking, to control whether I'm missing anything I would find relevant to my research. These control

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<sup>76</sup> All of them are male, but it is very representative of the scene. As far as I know, there are no female DJs in the regional scene.

<sup>77</sup> The list of the main questions asked in each interview can be found in the Appendix.

interviews usually didn't reveal anything that could have been of use for my ethnography and thus ensured me that my method for selecting interviewees worked.

My ethnography has a double problematic, as it is based on a multi-sited research and it can also be considered an insider account. In the following I will discuss the benefits and limitations of first the insider perspective, then the multi-sited approach. Furthermore I will argue that a combination of these two methods is useful in researches that aim to trace global processes, as it actually reduces the limitations inherent in each particular way of producing empirical knowledge, rather than further increasing them.

Insider accounts were often considered 'unscientific' in sociological and anthropological ethnographies until about the late 1960s, when scholars - building on radical cultural theories<sup>78</sup> - started questioning the very possibility of objective knowledge and the existence of a single 'truth' that could be achieved scientific research.<sup>79</sup> 'Indigenous anthropologists' from outside the Western world,<sup>80</sup> and feminists<sup>81</sup> ultimately displaced the positivist paradigm of social sciences with pointing out the importance of the situatedness of the researcher and the necessarily partial nature of the knowledge she/he produces that stems from her/his situation. This reflexive turn of social science rendered insider accounts fully legitimate as long as the researcher is aware of her/his position and refers to it in the ethnography.<sup>82</sup>

The essentialising concept of 'insiderness' is problematic in itself, since it presupposes a homogeneity within the group. Although each group member differs in terms of the degree of personal involvement - a matter of identity - with multiple, overlapping communities of for example gender, 'birth, ethnicity, socialisation, education, political participation, residence,'<sup>83</sup> it would be a mistake to completely dismiss the concept of insiderness. However, it is more useful to think about it not as an absolute, but rather as a relational concept:<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> (Clifford, 1988:22). George E. Marcus mentions particularly 'the postwar hermeneutic, phenomenological and semiotic fashions of Continental philosophy' (Marcus, 1986b:166).

<sup>79</sup> For a detailed discussion of this process see (Rosaldo, 1989); (Clifford, 1986 and 1988)

<sup>80</sup> As referred to by (Haller, 2002) and (Clifford, 1986:9)

<sup>81</sup> For a feminist account stressing the importance of partial perspectives and situated knowledges see (Haraway, 1991).

<sup>82</sup> However, this paradigmatic change inside ethnography is far from being a finished project. As accounts of Dieter Haller (2002) and Virginian Caputo (2001) show, insider and native - ethnographers are still suspicious in academic circles, and continuously have to fight to legitimate themselves.

<sup>83</sup> (Rosaldo, 1989:194)

<sup>84</sup> Haller rightly argues that 'nativeness is neither primordial nor absolute, but created and contested' (Haller, 2002).

‘Although nobody is capable of fully capable of recognizing all identity positionings, desires, distastes and impacts of one’s own identities, it would be a failure not to reflect upon them, it would elucidate the perspectivity of knowledge, but also the power relations inherent in the production of knowledge’<sup>85</sup>

My perspective as a 26-year-old, middle-class, male, nu jazz DJ with an academic background is in many aspects more insider in Budapest<sup>86</sup> than any of the cities where I conducted research, however as a participant in the regional network of cultural producers I certainly enjoyed the advantages usually associated with the insider position.<sup>87</sup> I have already been in touch with most of my key informal informants and interviewees for years, so I didn’t have to establish the trust and rapport that are crucial elements of the fieldwork. I was also familiar with special layers of meanings in the spoken language of my informants and interviewees, as well as the technical terms they used. I possessed a knowledge - or a reasonable belief - of the local and regional contexts - agendas and problems - of their everyday practices, such as promoting events, obtaining records, using the Internet as a tool for transnational grass-roots organisation. I also knew most of the artists, records, labels they referred to, played or had in their collections. Being an insider also meant that I was familiar with the history of development of this regional network. These advantages undoubtedly helped me to consciously design the research in a way that it would reveal processes, conflicts and relations that might not surface through inquiries of an outsider who usually has access to a more limited set of data. The background knowledge also helped me to better contextualise the data I collected.

Of course my situatedness also makes the knowledge I produced partial, as my presumptions - beliefs and knowledges - about the scene were based on my personal experiences in Budapest, a number of previous personal meetings - usually DJ gigs served as the occasion for such - in both Budapest and the localities I researched, and e-mail communication. Being so closely involved with the development of the regional scene I could easily have developed data blindness, failing to recognise details that are ‘so commonplace, so normal, so everyday’<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> (ibid)

<sup>86</sup> I excluded Budapest from my research to avoid the difficulties in normalizing the data. My knowledge of my local scene is obviously much deeper and better detailed than that of the other cities in my research and thus it would have been quit problematic to develop an evenly aligned discussion in the writing process.

<sup>87</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the benefits and limitations of the insider perspective see (Edwards, 1992); (Haller, 2002); (Hammersley, 1992) and (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

<sup>88</sup> (Edwards, 1999:6)

that they don't seem to be worth observation for me, while outsiders might find them essentially important.

Another difficulty arising from my insider position was managing the formally conducted interviews, as I had to switch the usual friendly, informal way of communication between myself and my interviewees by putting a minidisc recorder and microphone on the table and asking questions in thematic groups. However, it was usually more problematic for me than them, as I felt uncomfortable with changing the situation and asking questions that I had already been told about in previous informal conversations, in order to keep my interview data recorded in a normalized and organized way. I also had to ask questions that I thought were very awkward as they addressed seemingly commonplace issues, but were necessary to reveal my potential 'blind spots' and false presumptions that might have stemmed from the situatedness of the knowledge I had collected during my pre-research participation. However, my interviewees quickly adapted to the situation and were eager to answer even those questions, and that also made me feel more at ease with the interview situation.

I have no reason to believe to believe that my interviewees consciously held information back or misled me due to my temporarily changing roles from being a friend and colleague to being a researcher, as there were no sensitive issues involved - even discussing financial issues wasn't a problem since there is only very moderate amount of money to be earned with their activities -, and what they said in these formal situations completely matched with the information I gathered through participant observation.

Multi-sited ethnography is a method that has been developed within anthropology in the last decade<sup>89</sup> to provide empirical knowledge about transnational processes that reach beyond the boundaries of the traditional ethnographic 'field' consisting of a single location. Before this methodological innovation

'[t]he descriptive space of ethnographies itself has not seemed an appropriate context for working through conceptual problems of this larger order. The world of larger systems and events has thus often been seen as externally impinging on and bounding little worlds, but not as integral to them.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> On the emergence of multi-sited ethnography see for example (Marcus, 1995), (Hannerz, 1998) and (Clifford, 1997).

<sup>90</sup> (Marcus, 1986:166)

Multi-sited ethnography breaks with the above top-down logic of ‘high theory’<sup>91</sup> and investigates the global-local interrelation focusing on social practices in several local contexts in order to understand these global processes from the ‘bottom up’. As the aim of my research was to provide empirical knowledge of grass-roots cultural globalisation, I carried out research in five local music scenes - each of them representing a different stage of development and a specific economic and social context - to give an account that shows the various ways of active engagement in a particularly complex transnational processes.

In his now-classic article<sup>92</sup> anthropologist George E. Marcus provides several different approaches in constructing the multi-sited field: (1) *following migrating social groups* and investigating their sociocultural practices, belongings and situation in different local contexts; (2) *following* transnationally circulating *objects* and investigate the context of their local uses, appreciations and understandings; (3) *following* signs, symbols and *metaphors* through different realms of discourse; (4) *tracing similar narratives*, ‘myths’ - the way people make sense of everyday situations - in different local settings; (5) *following the life of one specific person* as ‘a strategy of developing more systematic analysis generalized from the story of a particular individuals life’;<sup>93</sup> (6) *following the same social conflict* in several spheres of contemporary societies.

My research could be explained as following objects - recordings of a certain genre of music -, but that would be misleading as sometimes musical recordings travel in immaterial form over the Internet. Instead of focusing on their local appreciations and understandings I am more concerned with the routes they travel and the forms of co-operation among the people who have the biggest influence on their spread in their respective localities. It is more exact to describe the approach of my ethnography as following transnational flows of a certain cultural form. In constructing my multi-sited field I’m focusing on nodes - cultural producers - of the social network that is central in the circulation of these flows; and investigate their activities in the local context of their particular urban cultural economies.

The main criticism against multi-sited ethnography is that - as the researcher’s attention, available research time and financing is divided among multiple fields - it cannot produce as complete, well grounded knowledge as traditional, single-sited research. I agree with

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<sup>91</sup> (ibid:166)

<sup>92</sup> This article (Marcus, 1995) is quoted in almost all available sources on multi-sited research as a central text that has laid down the theoretical foundation of multi-sited research.

<sup>93</sup> (ibid:109)

Hannerz<sup>94</sup> when he dismisses these claims on the grounds that (1) the notion of a ‘complete ethnography’ is ‘dubious’;<sup>95</sup> (2) transnational research doesn’t necessarily mean investigation of large-scale units as it is usually focused on relatively small local groups and not the whole local population; and (3) the traditional methodology of fieldwork is today broadened with new technical possibilities - phone or e-mail - of maintaining long distance research relations with informants. Furthermore, as we have seen, single-sited research has very limited abilities in producing well grounded knowledge of transnational processes.<sup>96</sup>

We shall not dismiss the very realistic claim that strictly limited fieldwork time and budget can decrease the chances of producing a credible ethnographic text, as I had to face this problem too. However, as in my case, ‘insider’ knowledge can help in spending time and money very effectively and producing well-grounded descriptions of transnational processes under such circumstances. The loose network of nu jazz DJs has many nodes all over Europe - from the UK to Russia - but even in urban areas of Japan, the USA and Canada. I chose cities in the east-central European region for two reasons: their geographic proximity made the travelling between sites relatively cheap and fast; as Budapest also belongs to this region, I had far better knowledge of the activities of cultural producers in these places than more remote locations.

Likewise, multi-sited research also covers for limitations of the ‘insider’ perspective: as the ethnographer experiences a number of different perspectives in different locations, she/he becomes both more aware of her/his own situatedness and thus can correct biases arising from the initial blind spots in her/his ‘vision.’<sup>97</sup> However, all the different perspectives I came across through my research are situated in this specific region and my ethnography clearly is partial because of this. Previous DJ tours in various parts of Europe, e-mail communication and personal meetings with nu jazz DJs from other regions might have allowed me a more reflexive angle, as well as the last nine months I spent living participating in the life of the nu jazz scene in London.

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<sup>94</sup> (Hannerz, 1998:248-249)

<sup>95</sup> See my earlier discussion of the situated of ethnographic accounts.

<sup>96</sup> See Csilla Kalocsai’s discussion of Marcus’ argument in defence of the ability of multi-sited research to produce thick descriptions (Kalocsai, 2000).

<sup>97</sup> See (Marcus, 1995:113-114) and (Kalocsai, 2000).

### 3. The nu jazz scene in east-central Europe

#### 3.1 What is nu jazz?

Nu jazz is a loosely defined term that is used to describe a wide range of different styles and tempos. The genre has its roots in rare groove, acid jazz and underground electronic dance music and is best defined as the fusion of acoustic and electronic; be it a mix of jazz and drum and bass or a blend of salsa and hip-hop. This of course makes the whole genre very fluid, as even nu jazz DJs wouldn't describe the same salsa-based hip-hop tune as 'nu jazz' in a strictly hip-hop mix. What matters then, is more an eclectic attitude to selection than a set of well defined musical characteristics. Many would prefer the term 'eclectic' to 'nu jazz' as it is more inclusive and also refers to the classic jazz, funk, soul, Brazilian and afrobeat tunes from the 1960s and 1970s that are often included in DJ mixes. However, as not all of my interviewees shares a deep interest in the old sounds that serve as the source of inspiration for new productions, I use 'nu jazz' as it describes the common ground that binds us - DJs, producers, record store owners, promoters - together in this regional scene. Selections and preferred styles may vary, but we feel comfortable with this diversity and have a sense of belonging to the same musical movement.

There is no centrally set rules for nu jazz, but it is worth mentioning London-based *Straight No Chaser*, as the music magazine, that plays a central role in articulating the agenda for the nu jazz scene; in fact a multitude of autonomous local scenes each having its own producers, DJs, and in many cases independent record labels that stretches now around the world from Kyoto to Helsinki. If there is a single key figure within the nu jazz scene, it is Gilles Peterson from London, a veteran DJ of the scene; founder of record labels *Acid Jazz* and, later, *Talking Loud*. His radio show *Worldwide* is now broadcast weekly on BBC 1 and 16 other radio stations around the world.<sup>98</sup>

However, with the global spread of the scene, by now London has lost its once - about a decade ago - central role. As I have mentioned earlier, there are well established autonomous local and regional scenes outside the UK as well - for example in France, Germany and Japan - and there are many more still in formation.

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<sup>98</sup> From Vienna and Budapest to Tokyo and Singapore. Source: <http://216.239.51.100/search?q=cache:hMwG7F7msd4C:www.heart913.org.sg/gilles.html+%2B%22gilles+peter+son%22+%2B%22worldwide%22+%2Bsyndicated&hl=en&ie=UTF-8>. Last accessed 19/08/2002.

### 3.2 Local scenes

The local scenes in east-central Europe - with the exception of Vienna - have only emerged in the last two-three years and are not very well developed scenes in terms of the number of missing links from the full spectrum of cultural enterprises that make up an autonomous scene - local record labels, specialist record stores, booking agencies, recording studios, clubs and radio shows. The huge difference in the scale of development between the Viennese scene and the others investigated can be explained with the more than decade-long involvement with jazz-based club sounds<sup>99</sup> and the fact that with over 1.6 million people<sup>100</sup> this city has by far the largest population among them. Another important factor would be its superior economic performance, being the capital of Austria, but I don't imply that there is a linear model of development. There are further factors as well as actors that influence the development of the very different particular scenes.

Vienna is the home of Soul Seduction - one of Europe's most important independent record distribution companies - eight independent nu jazz related record labels - *Klein, Sunshine, Twentysomething Tunes, Fabrique, Parfum Noire, Couch, G-Stone, Ecco Chamber* - and three bigger specialist stores that offer a strong selection of independent nu jazz releases. The demand for this sort of music is well signalled by the fact that even the Virgin Megastore offers a reasonable selection of nu jazz on CD and vinyl. There are four-five clubs that regularly host nu jazz related events and further ten-fifteen temporarily available venues where one-off events are held every now and then. The number of people who have an interest in attending such events is estimated between 1,000 and 2,500 by local DJs, but the number of simultaneous events and the ever-changing nature of the scene makes it very difficult to come up with more precise numbers. There is also a well-recognisable diversification,<sup>101</sup> that leads to a development of distinct scenes within the scene, that make it

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<sup>99</sup> Nu jazz is a relatively new term to describe the same eclectic approach. By the late eighties in Vienna, sample heavy hip-hop and the original records that have been sampled were the musical backbone of the emerging alternative club scene.

<sup>100</sup> Austrian official estimate (1999) Available on the Internet: <http://www.travel-guide.com/data/aut/aut10.asp>, Last accessed 15/08/2002.

<sup>101</sup> I've seen a similar process of diversification during the development of the Budapest underground club scene. As a well-grounded explanation would have to be based on more research, I can only offer a few qualified guesses for the potential underlying reasons: (1) the DJs develop their styles under a number of years; (2) as the scene develops, the bigger market size allows record shop owners to offer a wider selection even within sub-genres that support such specialization; (3) the difficulties of the first years make co-operation necessary even among people with different musical interest in order to organise club events; and (4) as the number of producers and size of potential audiences rises, there is both a need and a possibility for a more distinctive 'market positioning' in order to stay well recognisable in the competition.

very difficult to speak about the Viennese nu jazz scene as such. There is now little space left for all-inclusive, eclectic selections.

The number of DJs who are active within this fragmented scene is also very hard to estimate; my informants didn't even dare to give rough approximations. However, this might give us an idea about the difference between Vienna and the four other cities where the scenes are so small and unstratified that all the DJs know the others who play similar music. Making a living out of only DJing in Vienna is the privilege of a few top names - who usually earn a big proportion of their income by touring abroad - but as this kind of music is far from the 'mainstream' or 'popular' taste, this is usually the case all over the world. DJs usually have 'regular' day jobs, or juggle multiple, music-related jobs, such as working for record stores, record labels, booking agencies or promoting events.

A more detailed discussion is beyond the limitations of this paper, but what I have outlined so far shall be enough to serve as a point of reference to understand the different situation of cultural producers involved with the nu jazz scene of Zagreb, Trieste, Sarajevo and Ljubljana.

Zagreb is the capital of Croatia and with its 770,000 inhabitants<sup>102</sup> is the second largest city out of the five. It has neither local record labels, nor specialist stores that would sell vinyl. It has a few CD shops that offer a moderate selection of nu jazz.

We could date the formation of the nu jazz scene from April 1999, when three local DJs - Eddy, Dus and Alen - started a weekly clubnight called *Kontrapunkt* in the club *Aquarius*. At that time they were mainly focusing on acid jazz and quality house with jazz-based or soulful harmonies, but soon they took a more eclectic approach that was well represented by the international line-up of their first *Kontrapunkt Future Jazz Festival* in April 2000. Ever since then, they regularly invite international guest DJs - from Kyoto to Atlanta - to their weekly nights and yearly festivals to represent different takes on nu jazz. They also host a weekly radio show on Zagreb-based *Radio 101*. The name *Kontrapunkt* was to signal that they played completely different music from everybody else in Zagreb; however, by now there is a new generation of approximately ten younger DJs who play similar eclectic selections from mp3s, CDs and vinyl in seven to eight bars and smaller clubs in the city. The size of the audience that is really interested in this music is again, hard to estimate, as many people come to such events to socialise, and some only like certain styles of the eclectic mix. Based on the experience of his clubnights, Eddy thinks they have a core audience of 150-200 people.

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<sup>102</sup> Data provided by the Croatian National Tourist Board on the Internet: <http://www.croatia.hr/about>. Last accessed 15/08/2002.

However, they have usually between 200 and 500 people on their weekly nights and their festivals can attract up to 1,500 visitors. Even the top DJs of this not-very-competitive local scene have to promote their own events, do radio or studio work (Dus is an arranger, sound engineer and writes music for advertisements for example) to make a living. Eddy and Dus also produce their own music and do remixes - released on foreign record labels - and are well recognised producers in the international nu jazz scene.

Sarajevo, a city of about 434,000<sup>103</sup> people, used to be one of the most important cultural centres of Yugoslavia before the war. Now it is the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is still recovering from the four years spent under siege. The multinational major record companies have no local branches here, and besides the generally difficult economic situation of the country, the main reason is the absolute lack of copyright enforcement. When we cross the Croatian - Bosnian border by car after midnight, the first thing we passed was a stand offering supposedly Serbian<sup>104</sup> manufactured pirated CDs for as cheap as six Bosnian marks (about two pounds). Small stands with similar material form a usual part of the Sarajevo street scenery. It comes as no surprise that the city has no specialist record store that would sell any type of music on vinyl. However, DJs still operate in Sarajevo. Hard house and even harder techno attracts thousands in suburban sports halls, while the four-five DJs who are unto eclectic/nu jazz sounds organise one off events or weekly clubnights in three to five more central bars or small clubs. Only a few of these places have built in sound systems and even if they have, DJs always have to carry turntables and mixers that they usually borrow from other, more affluent DJs with mainstream interests, as these are extremely expensive<sup>105</sup> luxury items here. Even so, regular clubnights usually stop after about a few months as most bar and club owners usually have a shady way of doing business, and don't really mind if DJs get fed up with not being treated and paid fairly.

For me, the most influential DJs, promoters and think tanks of the local nu jazz scene seem to be Enes and his brother Emir, the founders of *Radio 3*, a broadcast project that has been developing in the last two years using the airtime and studio infrastructure of various stations that already had broadcast licences. After a history of unfortunate partnerships, now they cooperate with *Radio Grad (City Radio)*, a small local station that - in exchange for their investments in studio equipment and renovation - lets Radio 3 take over the night

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<sup>103</sup> Estimation from 2002. Available on the Internet: [http://www.countrywatch.com/cw\\_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=22](http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=22). Last accessed 19/08/2002.

<sup>104</sup> Most of the street peddlers are Serbian.

programming. Radio 3 is the only station in Sarajevo that supports nu jazz and broadcasting Enes and Emir's weekly program *HiFi Hotel*, and nine other regular syndicated eclectic shows from around the world. *Radio 3* also organises one-off events and the yearly *HiFi Hotel Nu Jazz Festival* with international DJ guests. When asked about the local nu jazz scene, Enes confronts the idea of a musically conscious, well defined audience:

'Since we actually deal with quality tunes, then there is a certain scene that is into quality tunes. If you think more like into broken beat<sup>106</sup>, nu jazz or similar eclectic stuff, than I wouldn't say that there is a proper scene, because the scene is only made up of people who trust our names, trust our events. [...] We have a scene that's into this new and quality approach.'

Events with 'quality tunes' attract a few hundred people, depending on the size of the venue. Enes estimates the number who listens to their shows or similar music at home to be between 1,500-2,000. This scale is supported by the surprisingly wide and up-to-date selection of pirated nu jazz related CDs offered by almost any of the street vendors.

Due to the difficulties of obtaining records - it involves either travelling or high shipment costs - and very small DJ fees, DJing is rather an expensive hobby than a form making money.

The economic situation of Slovenia<sup>107</sup> is by far the best out of the post-Yugoslavian states, however, the small size of its capital, Ljubljana - approximately 270,000 inhabitants<sup>108</sup> - make the situation of its cultural producers of less mainstream tastes difficult. There are two rivalling DJ collectives - *Radyoyo* and *CodeEP*, including about three-four DJs each - in this city promoting occasional nu jazz related nights, as well as strictly breakbeat and drum'n'bass events. *CodeEP* started its operation in the summer of 1999, while *Radyoyo* - already well established by then - was the first to organise the first nu jazz event by the autumn of the same year. Both collectives have occasional access to the local *Student Radio*,<sup>109</sup> so international guest DJs can usually play sets there to promote the night before they go on to the club, but

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<sup>105</sup> In fact about 50% more expensive than in Vienna due to high transportation costs, customs, and almost no competition among the few retailers. And of course the average income level is much lower than in Vienna.

<sup>106</sup> A relatively new genre that finds its way to nu jazz mixes as well. Also known as 'west London sound', this genre builds on the musical heritage of Roy Ayers, the so called boogie disco sound: off-beat rhythms and heavy synth arrangements.

<sup>107</sup> This is common sense knowledge in the region, and the proportion of new and expensive cars on the streets, the prices in shops and cafés, and the number of up-market multinational brands that are present in the country, seem to validate this.

<sup>108</sup> Data from 1998. Available on the Internet: <http://www.travel-guide.com/data/svn/svn10.asp>, Last accessed 15/08/2002.

<sup>109</sup> Looking back on 30 years history, this is Europe's longest running college radio.

neither of these local DJ collectives have regular shows. DJ Borca, member of the *CodeEP* collective, also produces his own music. His first track will be released on a Viennese record label by September 2002.

There are two 'real' clubs in Ljubljana, but there are 8-10 other venues available for nu jazz events; however, DJs usually have to bring the sound system, turntables and DJ mixer to these places.

There are two specialist stores mostly catering for the interest of house, trance and techno DJs; and a huge CD store in a shopping mall that also has a small, but nice, selection of jazz, soul and hip-hop on vinyl. Local CD stores usually offer nu jazz-related CDs.

Nu jazz events attract about 200-300 people regularly, but as Ozren, the DJ most engaged with nu jazz in the *CodeEP* crew mentions: 'a lot of people come to our parties because they now us [personally]' and not necessarily because they are into the music. Even more mainstream DJs rely on other sources of income in Ljubljana, the money earned by DJing nu jazz covers a part of the costs of buying records.

Although similar to Ljubljana in terms of population size - approximately 248,000 inhabitants<sup>110</sup> - the potential interest in marginal forms of youth culture in Trieste is much lower, as this Italian town has the oldest urban population in Europe, with the quarter of its population being over 65 years old.<sup>111</sup> The most club-like venue in Trieste has a capacity of about a 1000 people and usually hosts live concerts, or nights with punk rock or commercial music. *Electrosacher*, the only local DJ collective supporting nu jazz, organises its weekly clubnights in a café during the colder seasons and by an open air bar by the sea during the summers, inviting foreign DJs every now and then. Their first event was held about two years ago, and now the *Electrosacher* nights attract between 200-300 people. The six DJs involved with the collective also host a radio show on a local station and take turns in playing in the 'chill out' room of an 8 room discotheque in a nearby town once a week.

Members of the *Electrosacher* collective also produce their own music, and plan to release it through their own record label - Elsa- that they want to start up by the autumn of 2002.

One of the *Electrosacher* DJs owns the only specialist store that offers a small, but carefully picked and quickly changing selection of nu jazz relate CDs and vinyl. There are a few mainstream CD shops, and two other DJ stores that sell mostly house, techno and pop music.

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<sup>110</sup> Data provided by the Research Department of the Chamber of Commerce of Trieste. Available on the Internet: <http://www.ts.cmcom.it/english/tsincifre.htm>. Last accessed 15/08/2002.

Besides the *Electrosacher* boys, there is about four more DJs spinning similar sounds occasionally. DJing in nu jazz in Trieste, of course, won't earn one a substantial proportion of living costs.

This quick overview of the particular scenes shows that apart from Vienna, these cities don't provide a very welcoming environment for strictly profit-oriented multinational enterprises that would focus on retailing nu jazz records or organising nu jazz events in the region. The small local audiences make it also unlikely that any multinational TV or radio corporation would develop a regional network catering at least in part for the nu jazz audience. The cost of maintaining and co-ordinating local offices and paying fixed salaries for employees is completely missing or internalised in the case of these independent cultural economies, however they don't really make substantial profit<sup>112</sup>.

Through the example of Zagreb, Sarajevo, Ljubljana and Trieste we see how this grass-roots form of cultural globalisation supports alternatives to the culture provided by corporate globalisation and offers more diversity in the local cultures of cities.

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<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the number of pensioners is higher than workers here (Hundley, 2000).

<sup>112</sup> It is well shown by the fact that both the Kontrapunkt and the CodeEp promoted Loungebox nu jazz clubnights will feature significantly less international guests in the next season, due to the huge losses made in the last six months. Tony also closed his record shop in Trieste and went for a beach guard job for the summer. He now considers a final close down of his business.

### 3.3 Routes of music

The practice of nu jazz DJing is of course dependent on the networks that distribute the musical recordings. Although there have been a couple of corporate buy outs of small independent record companies as well as remix projects that build on the back catalogues of classic jazz labels that are now owned by major record companies, the vast majority of nu jazz related recordings are released by independent labels and distributed through independent distributors that are the gate-keepers to specialist record stores.<sup>113</sup> Vinyl is the traditional format for DJing is usually only obtainable in these shops,<sup>114</sup> and as we have seen, the lack of these outlets in certain location leads to DJs using alternative formats - CDs and mp3s - as well looking for alternative channels of distribution.

Ordering records from on-line specialist stores was also mentioned in a number of cases, however, DJs who live in locations where postage costs are high - particularly in Bosnia - almost never do that.

Most of my interviewees also receive promos for their radio shows from independent labels they contacted via e-mail.

Where the official channels of distribution fail - like in Sarajevo- the alternative network of the pirate industry steps in and creates a pricing model that builds on what people can actually afford based on their local salaries.<sup>115</sup> The bootleg vendors work with only a limited stock<sup>116</sup> and when placing their next order - that they send to their suppliers - they use their knowledge of the ‘grass-roots’: only buying things that already sell, or what people ask for. Just like the owners of small, specialist record stores, they also keep a close watch on what artists and record labels are popular and quickly start stocking their whole back catalogue<sup>117</sup>. Their *modus operandi* is extremely effective, by the time I visited Sarajevo, the vendors had nu jazz CDs that were officially released less than two weeks before.

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<sup>113</sup> Even the above mentioned “corporate” nu jazz records are often promoted and distributed through independent companies.

<sup>114</sup> With the exception of well developed DJ markets, like Vienna, where even chain-stores have vinyl sections.

<sup>115</sup> Enes was right when he mentioned that all over eastern Europe where the majors have outlets, they sell CDs for the same price that they charge in Western Europe but they have much lower costs for maintaining the local offices and are only willing to pay salaries that match the local levels.

<sup>116</sup> This refrains the Just-in-Time logistic method of networked, post-Fordist corporations.

<sup>117</sup> Often on a single CD, in mp3 form.

Peer-2-peer mp3 file-sharing software<sup>118</sup> were also used by those few of my interviewees who had broadband Internet connections - mostly at their workplaces - but usually only for pre-listening reasons. As the quality of mp3s is not good enough, their playing on louder sound systems is usually avoided. Some of the DJs even had certain songs in mp3 format long before their official release dates, probably ripped off from the already circulating promotional copies.

All my interviewees have stressed the importance of travelling abroad in obtaining records, and those who were not living in there, all mentioned Vienna as their most usual destination for record shopping journeys<sup>119</sup>.

The DJ mixes and personal record collections of the DJs reflected both the decentralised nature of these independent distribution networks - where different people in different localities have access to different channels - the high number of independent nu jazz related releases and the role of personal tastes: I came across overlapping, but highly diverse selections. This form of grass-roots cultural globalisation can't be seen as 'niche market' cultural homogenisation; even if we used the term 'homogenisation' and debated the existence or importance of personal appreciations and uses.

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<sup>118</sup> The one that usually referred to, as it - by the time of my research - provided access to the widest selection of nu jazz was SoulSeek and was downloadable from <http://www.slsk.org>. Last accessed 19/08/2002.

<sup>119</sup> This fact is echoed by Vienna based DJ Tom Wieland who described Austria's capital as follows: 'It's supposed to be the gate to the East, especially with the developments that are now coming up with the European Community.'

### 3.4 Routes of information

As the amount of nu jazz releases is overwhelming and they are released in a highly decentralised institutional structure, there is no single department - like in major record companies - that organises world wide media and marketing campaign around each release. As the case of Vienna shows, better developed scenes offer more chances for obtaining information about nu jazz, such as visiting multiple specialist stores and browsing through the 'new arrivals' shelves on a daily basis; meetings personally - in shops, clubs and the street - and exchanging information with a high number of other DJs who are active in the same field is. In Vienna, the nationwide *ORF FM4* strongly supports the genre and a number of available specialist magazines such as *Straight No Chaser* or the German *Groove* provide further sources of information.

As we have seen, if there are local nu jazz radio shows in the cities with less-developed scenes are run by the DJs themselves. However, in order to keep up their activities, they strongly rely on information about the available and upcoming nu jazz releases.

When a DJ from Sarajevo enters a shop in Vienna after 10 hours of driving, shortly before closing time, he has no time to go through the thousands of available titles, of which he probably might only buy twenty. The situation is similar when ordering from on-line stores, even if they have listening facilities. As specialist magazines are usually not available in cities with less developed scenes, all of my interviewees use the Internet to obtain information about records and artists. As reviewers most often lag behind the pace of releases, the most up-to-date resources on new and up-coming releases are the websites of independent record labels and the charts, club and radio playlists of other nu jazz DJs. These are usually published through the DJs websites, posted on nu jazz-themed online discussion groups,<sup>120</sup> or in forms of e-mail based newsletters out of enthusiasm, as a way of self-promotion and because the political economy of independent promotion. This is a way of showing all the record companies who send promotional records, that their efforts are not wasted, as their music is played and talked about.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Such as the Acid Jazz Mailing List and the Nu Jazz Warriors Forum (<http://www.cmd.uu.se/AcidJazz/> and <http://pluto.beseen.com/boardroom/t/51176/> both of them accessed last 19/08/2002).

<sup>121</sup> As Enes puts it: 'I went for the smaller labels. And then they were all sending music. I had no problem, but I didn't know where to send or how to write it. I had to learn all that by myself. I had no problems with that. [I had m]ore problem with some kind of vacuum that [was] created later when I couldn't produce playlists and a website. So they sent it once and than they were like "We've sent our things to Sarajevo and it's cool. This guy said thanks, but then we didn't get any feedback." But in time we are becoming better and better. You are

On-line radio shows are another important source of information, but are usually listened to by the few DJs, who have broadband connections at work. In Sarajevo, a city with very slow Internet connections and expensive telephony, the syndicated radio shows on Radio 3 play a similar role.

We have seen that the Internet plays a key role for obtaining information about a marginal cultural form in cities without strong, well developed scenes. The centrality of the Internet in the everyday practices of nu jazz DJs is well shown by the fact that all my interviewees used it for acquiring musical information or sending and replying e-mails in music related matters at least an hour daily on the average.<sup>122</sup>

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building a relationship with the label, so they are like: “I trust you. I see your playlists.” It works. But it’s something you should always keep doing.’

<sup>122</sup> The shortest use was between 30 minutes and an hour, but a DJ who works at an Internet related company in a managerial position admitted up to 3-4 hours daily. It might sound extreme, but as I have a similar work and DJ history, I can certainly testify: it is possible, I did it myself at a time.

### 3.5 Networking

Most of the transnational communication of nu jazz DJs even within the regional network happens through e-mails, mostly because its a lot cheaper than making phone calls. However, as Eddy mentions, it has several other advantages:

‘You drop a mail to some person. You are writing. When he replies, he is writing. It’s very clear. When you speak on the phone, some words could be lost or misunderstood. [...] You write things when you wanna write, you answer things when you wanna answer.’

E-mail communication is used when contacting record labels for promotional records and sending them charts, playlists and direct feedback about the particular records received. It is also a common way of negotiating contracts when one releases his own music through independent record companies that are based abroad, as well as the main medium of organising of DJ tours<sup>123</sup> abroad and inviting foreign guest DJs. All interviewees agree that without keeping up a certain level of e-mail communication - most of them check their accounts at least once a day, always answering urgent letters immediately - one soon falls out of the international network: labels and artists stop sending promotional records, and the number of invitations for doing DJ gigs abroad soon declines, as does the chance of receiving further contact e-mail addresses.

The most usual solution to the problem of maintaining regular communication with the ever-increasing number of other cultural producers one is in touch with is sending e-mail based newsletters<sup>124</sup> on a regular - usually weekly - basis. The list of recipients usually includes all the other cultural producers - DJs, producers, labels, - in one’s own personal network, as well as local and international fans and nu jazz-themed mailing lists and discussion groups. Mailing lists and discussion groups are the platforms of communication for the international ‘virtual communities’, so newsletters sent here - besides reaching further 500-1,500 people who share a similar interest - maintains visibility in the public channels of transnational communication and debate focused on nu jazz. Besides posting newsletters to these places, not many of my interviewees participates in the life of these virtual communities, but these forums still play an important role in the formation of regional and international networks

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<sup>123</sup> I have organised my research trip/DJ tour from London in about a week’s time only using e-mails, without making any phone calls at all.

<sup>124</sup> The particular newsletters all differ in terms of their content and style, but most usually they are in English and include radio playlists, charts as well as information on upcoming local events and international tour dates.

among cultural producers. When looking for specific contact addresses<sup>125</sup>, search engines often point to old newsletters in the web-based archives of these forums<sup>126</sup>.

The complex connectivity among spatially dispersed cultural producers allows for the development of new forms of co-operation such as the case of Radio 3 that broadcasts nine radio shows from around the world<sup>127</sup> in Sarajevo. Enes first asked other DJs who have already been in touch with him for one-off mixes that he could introduce as a special feature on Radio 3; and they soon started sending him regular shows. This co-operation makes an extraordinary selection of nu jazz available in a less developed scene with very limited resources, but also supports the DJs who send the shows, as they can include in their newsletters - portfolios - , that they have regular shows on the air in Sarajevo, which heightens their credibility and importance in the eyes of their audience and the record labels that are thus more likely to support them with pre-release and promotional records.

Another interesting feature arising from the international networking of nu jazz DJs is the phenomenon that the more affluent DJs from the western part of Europe started organising their holidays so that they visit these more remote, for them 'exotic' locations - as they have local friends there - and play gigs there for very low fees or for free.<sup>128</sup>

While the first steps of developing international connections almost always depend on the Internet in one form or another, the first phase in the development of the east-central

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<sup>125</sup> Looking for contacts in Budapest, running the search query '+nu jazz' +Budapest +DJs' on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) will get results.

<sup>126</sup> It is very easy to describe the newsletter phenomenon in Sharon Zukin's terms as 'creating a buzz' on a transnational level. Zukin describes buzz in the context of the symbolic economy of cities as being 'comprised of publicity, gossip and anticipation [...]'. In part, the importance of buzz reflects the priority that has been placed since the late nineteenth century on the commercial application of technological innovation. Partly, too, buzz reflects the importance of media - newspapers, glossy magazines, cable television, websites and chat rooms - in diffusing knowledge about commodities and celebrities. [...] Buzz also plays a key role in the careers of cultural producers. Buzz intensifies the tendency to organise credentials in terms of "portfolios" that telescope producers' track records for creativity [...] Moreover, buzz is a major medium of communication among the interconnected networks of cultural producers, employers, clients and patrons who circulate among the city's consumption spaces and cultural institutions.' (Zukin, 2000:261)

<sup>127</sup> From London, Hamburg, New York City, Vienna, Munich among other cities. For a detailed list of shows, playlists and listening to the radio, see <http://www.radio3.ba/news.htm>.

<sup>128</sup> Enes, with probably the most difficult situation in the region - the highest flight costs combined with the lowest average entrance fees - tells how he still manages to have international guest DJs: 'I contact artists for promos. They check out our website and ask if they can come and play here. People don't come to Sarajevo, because it has a big club scene or it's famous for quality tunes and big DJ fees. It's not a DJ Mecca. People I contact are into music, so they are into adventures. Checking out places. Hanging out with people. Going to places that sound distant or strange. That's why most of them come for free. They want to have a reason to come. Some of them even pay their [flight] tickets'

European regional network relied on a combination of virtual encounters<sup>129</sup> as well as real ones.<sup>130</sup>

Regional co-operation among local cultural producers in the form of lining up several DJ gigs and thus sharing the flight costs of international DJs is rare. Due to limited local interests, organising nu jazz events is limited to the weekends in these cities, and a fast in-and-out gigs connected with hours of train or car journeys are uncomfortable for guest DJs and don't allow for relaxed, friendly chats, thus reduce chances of building more personal ties and exchanging information between the local cultural producers and them. However, mutual visits are usual among the DJs in the region, both in on the occasion of doing guest DJ gigs and going to other cultural events - such as film festivals and concerts - together. These personal meetings serve as further - besides CMC - occasions for the most usual form of co-operation: sharing information about music, and contacts as well as exchanging know-how about organising events, producing music and survival in the independent music business.

Exchanging CD-Rs with pre-release music<sup>131</sup> is a very important activity during such meetings, as it ensures that even DJs who have only limited access to new music in their localities can keep their selections up-to-date - and keep their scenes in synchrony with the international nu jazz scene - in the next few months.

This last example of transnational grass-roots co-operation - like a number of previous ones - could be explained in terms of *time-space compression*. The spread of new music has speeded up as a result of CMC, and non-hierarchical, networked forms of organising cultural production. This shrinking of time reduces the relevance of local situatedness in terms of access to marginal cultural forms:

‘With this Internet thing I really feel, you know... that it’s like a global thing. So when things are happening.. you know... when Gilles is spinning the new tunes, you get to hear it immediately. So basically for me in a way it’s not such a big difference living in Ljubljana or living in London. Of course the parties are another thing. You get the vibe from live acts and from parties, so it’s not the same as the Internet. Still regarding the information. It doesn’t matter.’

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<sup>129</sup> E-mails to contacts addresses that were either found on the web or were passed on by other nu jazz DJs in the region.

<sup>130</sup> Personal meetings at the Kontrapunkt Future Jazz Festivals, that besides providing entertainment also serves as an informal conference of regional and international nu jazz DJs.

<sup>131</sup> These CDs are also referred to as ‘Hush Hush’. This practice is blossoming in even the very best developed scenes and among the most prominent nu jazz DJs. As access to still unreleased music is the privilege of

We could also explain this change in the conceptual framework of *disembedding*. Providing access to music and information beyond what is on offer locally, as well as possibilities for transnational co-operation among cultural producers, Internet is clearly an *expert system*, and English language a *symbolic token* that lifts the social relations of cultural producers out of their 'local contexts of interaction' and restructures them 'across indefinite spans of time-space'<sup>132</sup>.

However, Ozren's example of the unavailability of a wide spectrum of 'real' live events, or the practical difficulties with cost-sharing projects clearly show that time and space still matters. Furthermore, the activates of maintaining their local cultural economies also roots an important part of social relations of individual cultural producers in their local, urban contexts.

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important and trusted DJs - as giving out such information involves the risk of mass bootlegging both in material formats and mp3s - the hunger for new music is both fuelled by status aspirations and the love of music.  
<sup>132</sup> As quoted by Tomlinson (1999:55). Throughout this paragraph I will use Tomlinson's account of Giddens' theory.

## Conclusion

I have discussed grass-roots cultural globalisation in the context of a particular form of cultural production, and argued that it can create alternatives to the culture provided by corporate capitalism. I have proven (1) the importance of the Internet to transnational grass-roots organisation of cultural production and (2) that computer mediated communication combined with non-hierarchical and decentralised forms of organisation can effectively support the development and survival of marginal cultural forms in localities that are commercially not exploitable markets for such.

However, it would be a mistake to think that of the above outlined new potentials for the organisation of cultural production only present themselves in independent music networks. I have used culture in a sense of

‘the independent and abstract noun that describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.’<sup>133</sup>

If we, along the line of this definition, start thinking about similar forms of grass-roots organisation in other fields of intellectual activity, such as academic work or political activism, we soon find similar transnational networks of social organisation. Further studying these new, emerging social forms is crucial to understanding the redistribution of power within societies, and also provides a deeper insight to the transformation of the cultures of cities.

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<sup>133</sup> (Williams, 1983:90)

## **Appendix: Interview data sheet**

Interviews conducted between: 15/06/02 – 1/08/02

Locations: Sarajevo, Vienna, Ljubljana, Trieste, Zagreb

Number of interviews: 10 (2 in each location)

Starting questions for the in depth interviews:

### **1. The local nu jazz scene**

- How many nu jazz DJs are active in your city?
- How many people do you think are interested in in nu jazz in your city?
- How many people attend nu jazz events? Do you think they come for the music?
- Tell me about how the history of the scene.
- Can one make a living out of DJing only in your city? If not, what else do you work?

### **2. The local 'infrastructure' for nu jazz**

- Does nu jazz get any local media (radio, magazine, websites) support in your city?
- What are your most important sources for information on up-coming nu jazz releases, labels and artists?
- Are there any appropriate venues for organising nu jazz events?
- Do these venues/clubs have built in sound systems/turntables?
- What is the average entrance fee for nu jazz events?
- Are there any record stores where you can buy nu jazz in this city? If yes, are you satisfied with their selection of nu jazz?
- Are there any local nu jazz related record labels?

### **3. The local scene in global and regional context**

- Do foreign DJs give discounts that take into account your difficulties?

- Do you co-operate with other promoters in the region in organising smaller tours for foreign DJs, sharing their flight costs?
- What other forms of regional co-operation do you participate in?
- Do you buy records abroad? Where?
- Do you think your access to new music is limited compared to cities in the West?
- If you feel that you are behind what's happening in the international nu jazz scene in terms of new record, is this lag a matter of days, weeks or months?
- Do you DJ abroad? Where?
- Are there any producers/DJs in your city who are recognised internationally?
- Do you get promotional records and information from record labels from abroad?
- What are the means of your international communication (phone/the Internet/fax/postal letters)?

#### **4. Uses of the Internet**

- Where do you have access to the Internet (home/work)?
- How much time do you spend with music related browsing/e-mailing daily/weekly?
- What kind of web based platforms do you use regularly (websites/discussion groups/...)?
- Do you order records from on-line stores?

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