

# **Music, Cities and Cultural Policy: A Brisbane Experience**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Popular Music, Creative Cities and the Night-Time Economy**



The current interest of policy makers in contemporary popular music should be seen as connected to the growing worldwide interest in development of the creative industries and creative cities.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the move away from the inner cities that characterised the post-WWII 'Fordist' era of capitalism, and its separation of the city into zones of urban production and suburban consumption (Badcock, 1984, 2002; Harvey, 1989, 1991), the period since the 1980s has seen a growing worldwide interest in the development of cities as sites for creativity and consumption. While this

has been driven in part by urban regeneration projects, termed gentrification or 'yuppification' by their critics (e.g. O'Connor, 1999, p. 84), it has also reflected a growing realisation that, in a creative economy (Howkins, 2001; Venturelli, 2002), the wealth of a city or region resides not only in its physical and human capital, but also in the less tangible networks of knowledge capital and social capital that lead to the clustering of creativity and innovation in particular geographical locations (Porter, 1998, 2001; Hall, 2000). Economic globalisation and the development of the knowledge-based economy (particularly the rapid growth of the Internet) has, perhaps paradoxically, placed a renewed focus upon why professionals in 'new economy' sectors choose to locate in some cities and regions in preference to others, and to remain in these locations if successful. It is apparent that access to unique forms of culture and experience has become the cake and not the icing, as culture, or more broadly, quality of life, has come to be recognised as the key element of the competitive advantage of cities (Pratt, 2000). In his account of the rise of the 'creative class', Richard Florida (2002) turns conventional economic geography on its head, arguing that new businesses seek to locate in places where clusters of creative people are, rather than assuming that skilled workers seek to locate in places where new businesses are.

The rise of the creative industries has been documented by a number of sources. The creative industries were estimated to have generated revenues of \$US2.2 trillion in 1999, and to account for 7.5 per cent of global Gross National Product (Howkins, 2001: 116). In the United States, creative industries were estimated to account for 7.75 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in 2001, and for 5.9 per cent of national employment, and \$88.97 billion in exports (Mitchell *et. al.*, 2003: 20). In the United

Kingdom, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) estimated that the creative industries generate revenue of £112.5 billion, or 9.2 per cent of GDP, and employed over 2 million people (DCMS, 2002). In creative industries ‘hot spots’ such as the City of London, creative industries now rival business services as the key economic sector, and over half a million Londoners work directly in the creative industries or in creative occupations in other industries (*London: Cultural Capital*, 2003: 42). Writers such as Charles Leadbeater have linked the rise of creative industries to ‘new economy’ dynamics, and particularly to the notion that new ideas and innovations emerge, not from large-scale distributing organizations, but from more localized clusters of creative people:

Creative industries, such as music, entertainment and fashion, are driven ... not by trained professionals but cultural entrepreneurs who make the most of other people’s talent and creativity. In creative industries, large organisations provide access to the market, through retailing and distribution, but creativity comes from a pool of independent content producers (Leadbeater 2000: 49).

In the context of new economy dynamics (c.f. Stroh, 1999; Flew, 2004 (forthcoming)), culture is understood as a central wealth-creating component of the new economy. Charles Landry (2000) has drawn attention to the significance of a  *creative milieu* to the development of creativity in modern cities and regions, which he defined as a combination of *hard infrastructure*, or the network of  ding and institutions that constitute a city or a region, and *soft infrastructure*, defined as ‘the system of associative structures and social networks, connections and human

interactions, that underpins and encourages the flow of ideas between individuals and institutions' (Landry 2000: 133).

While the creative economy is a global economy, it also promotes a new localism, as the geographical clustering of sources of competitive advantage and cultural distinctiveness become apparent to a wider range of people, particularly investors. The rise of *multinational enterprises* since the 1990s has been linked with the identification of sites where commercially valuable knowledge is locally-based and culturally specific, in the context of a global knowledge-based economy (Dunning, 2001). A central element of the cultural 'competitive advantage' of cities and regions in a global creative or knowledge-based economy is the significance, diversity and vibrancy of activities in the *night-time economy*. The night-time economy is a term that is used to describe the diverse range of service-related and creative industries associated with leisure, entertainment, hospitality and tourism, which cater to the 'liminal zone' between work and home for the local population, and activities related to travel and tourism for those visiting a city. Andy Lovatt and Justin O'Connor (1995) have provided a detailed discussion of the relationship between cities and the night-time economy, and the implications for both cultural policy and urban planning:

The festivals, the cultural initiatives aimed at bringing people back into the city, the office and residential developments that either incorporated or pointed to the cultural facilities of the centre, the promotion of the city as a culturally vibrant realm – all these explicitly or unconsciously incorporated the idea of the nightlife of the city, a realm of play, of socialization, of encounter and of evasion associated with the night-time. Yet as an object of cultural policy it has

been strangely marginalized. It seemed that this nightlife was not a legitimate object of attention other than as something to be regulated or contained ... it was primarily an object of attention for agencies concerned with licensing, health and safety, planning and policing. It was a heavily regulated zone of space and time; a location for transgression conceived in terms of social dysfunction. (Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995, p. 130).

### **Popular Music and Cultural Policy: The Odd Couple?**

Cultural policy developed in the post-WWII period both as a means of directing public funding to the arts and cultural sectors, and as a means of developing cultural citizenship and national identity in modern nation-states. Early forms of arts and cultural policy strictly demarcated between those forms of artistic practice deemed to be unique and worthy of public support, and those forms held to be commercialized and industrialized, and thus neither requiring nor deserving public assistance. In traditional arts policy models, governments supported the production and exhibition of art forms such as opera, orchestras, theatre, the visual arts, dance, and literature, on the basis of:

1. A discourse of *social improvement*, and a belief that such cultural forms have intrinsic worth to the community;
2. Systems of *public subsidy*, whereby government financial support was provided on the grounds that these forms were not otherwise commercially viable;

3. Promotion of *national culture*, and the belief that 'elite' arts could best represent national character and cultural aspirations, and bring people together as part of a national community.

Such models have never worked for the contemporary popular music sector.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, the sector receives very little government funding. Total Federal, State and local government funding to the music industry (excluding opera) amounted to \$40.2 million in 1996-97, or 1.1% of total cultural funding across all levels of government (MCA, 2001). The music industry has not been well served by traditional forms of arts and cultural policy, finding itself trapped in binary oppositions between arts and commerce, elite arts and mass entertainment, and publicly subsidised creativity and free market economics. Popular music performers have struggled to receive support from State and Federal arts funding bodies, as their work has not been seen as sufficiently 'worthy' or innovative, they are perceived as being in a 'free market' sector, or they lack the skills and access to networks that assist in applying for public funding.

Nonetheless, the 1990s saw a number of arguments that envisaged cultural policy as a way forward for developing strategic interventions into the popular music industry that could promote its long-term sustainability. Graeme Turner (1992) argued that, given the inherent difficulties involved in claiming particular musical forms to be local and hence unique, 'if we are going to deal with Australian music as a national form, the most defensible way to do so is through its industrial structures and practices' (Turner 1992, p. 14). Turner saw cultural policy as providing arguments for the maintenance of national cultural forms in the context of globalization that were

between the 'rock' of an exclusionary and backward-looking cultural nationalism, and the 'hard place' of global circuits of cultural production and distribution. Marcus Breen (1999) found in cultural policy studies a means by which advocacy for Australian popular music in a global industry dominated by multinational record companies could be undertaken, not through a sentimental cultural nationalism, but through an understanding of Australian music industry dynamics and the points through which policy leverage could be most effectively exercised. Breen proposed that policy should be seen as the mediating element in what he termed the *song-commodity*, between its exchange-value as a source of income and corporate profits, and its use-value as a source of personal pleasure and popular identification (Breen 1999, pp. 201-212). Cultural policy has thus presented itself as the mediator between both the global and the local, and the commercial and the more individually pleasurable elements of popular music.

The enlisting of the popular music industry to the cultural policy program, while a useful antidote to the 'art versus commerce' framework that has often shaped writing on popular music, has in practice possessed three significant problems. First, it has never been apparent that initiatives at the level of music policy have impacted upon the forms of performance and recording of popular music that actually occur. Australian Census data in 1996 identified 15,092 Australians who saw their primary occupation as being in the area of musicians and related professions; of this group, about half (7,615) were musicians (other occupations included music teachers, piano tuners, instrument sellers etc). These full-time musicians constitute only a fraction of those involved in music in Australia (Flew *et. al.*, 2001, pp. 19, 49). In 1998-99, the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Culture/Leisure Framework* estimated

that 346,200 people had been involved in music in a paid or unpaid capacity over the previous 12 months (ABS, 1998/99). This puts involvement with music alongside writing, arts, crafts, design, teaching cultural activities, and the organisation of festivals, fetes and arts & craft shows, as cultural activities where the vast majority of people involved are doing so in a limited-payment or unpaid capacity (Flew *et. al.*, pp. 19, 50). In the context of such a gulf between the number of officially classified musicians and those involved in music in a casual or unpaid capacity, the scope for cultural policy initiatives to reach the large latter group is, by necessity, likely to be limited.

The second problem was that there is little or no evidence, at least in the Australian context, of any relationship between policy initiatives and the types of music produced and distributed. Despite Breen's energetic advocacy of a small group of Melbourne-based policy entrepreneurs as shapers of Australian music policy, it is far from clear that they made a lasting impact upon either overall government policy, or the cultural policy framework of the Australian Labor Party, as their chosen site of policy interventions. Given the massively diffused nature of the sector noted above, there was little likelihood that a musical form could be seen as being derived from a policy initiative. There is no popular music equivalent (the 'Ausmusic sound'???) of what have been termed 'AFC-genre' or '10BA-genre' films (Dermody and Jacka, 1987; Jacka, 1988) in sectors such as Australian film production, where the interaction between Federal funding initiatives and cultural production has been much closer.

The third problem is not that the contemporary popular music sector does not receive much public funding, but that those in the sector are deeply suspicious of public funding. As people working in an archetypal 'micro-business' creative industries sector, musicians have been opposed to policy mechanisms that would involve supporting the 'wrong' artists, or making the sector too dependent upon bureaucratic decision-making that is remote from the music community. Our study of the music industry in Brisbane identified significant doubts about the Brisbane City Council, or any level of government, to deliver outcomes for the sector, based on the following concerns:

- Concerns about governments claiming credit for initiatives developed at a grassroots level;
- Concerns that participation in government-supported initiatives may be time-consuming and too bound up in administrative 'red tape';
- The danger that government initiatives, rather than draw players together, may distance industry players if activities and initiatives are tagged as being 'from the government', and only attract 'fringe hobbyists' and not serious artists and contributors;
- The potential that government intervention will be detrimental to the success of an industry that, according to its own perceptions, has grown organically and without government support (Flew *et. al.*, 2001, p. 14).

Such concerns that success in the music industry happens despite, rather than because of, the support of local government, has been stated most explicitly by Tony Wilson,

former owner of the Hacienda night club in Manchester, and manager of Factory Records and bands such as New Order and the Happy Mondays:

You know, it's very difficult to put money into this kind of industry – how do you help? ... There's very little you can do. It's like this building a municipal rehearsal room, you know – fuck it! The argument being, if you can decide which ten bands out of the one thousand deserve the rehearsal room, don't be a Councillor be a fucking record company because you'd be a millionaire. Because, you know, the whole point of music is that everybody does it, everybody does it, and therefore it's impossible really to do anything (quoted in Brown *et. al.*, 2000, p. 447).

### **Popular Music in Brisbane: Dark Past, Bright Future?**

Our study of the popular music industry in Brisbane was shaped by work done in UK cities such as Manchester, Sheffield and Liverpool (Frith, 1993, Brown *et. al.*, 2000), work undertaken in Scotland (Laing, 2000). It has developed alongside work done in other Australian cities such as Sydney (Homan and Johnson, 2002; Homan, 2003) and Adelaide ( ...). It was also shaped in no small way by the question of how policy understandings of the popular music sector related to both Brisbane's recent past and its potential future. In terms of the regional and national music industry circuits, Brisbane is central to the Queensland music industry, particularly in activities related to the production, distribution and marketing of music, although it exists alongside strong music centres in other parts of the state, such as the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Cairns and Townsville. At the same time, Brisbane is a 'semi-peripheral' area

in the Australian national music industry, which is reflected in the relative absence of those involved in ‘mid-level’ activities in the music industry value chain (i.e. those located between content creation/production and exhibition/distribution). An indicator of the relative gap in producer and distribution services in Brisbane as compared to cities such as Sydney and Melbourne is provided below:

**Table 1**

**Producer and Distribution Services for Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane**

	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane
Accounting & Business Services	13	9	2
Consultants & Specialist Services	18	7	2
Legal Representatives	16	10	2
Manufacturing & Mastering	19	9	1
Merchandising & Printing	13	3	1
Music Video Producers & Directors	9	12	1
Promoters	8	5	2
Publicity & Promotion	21	13	4
Recording Companies & Distributors	53	45	12

Source: Australian Music Industry Directory, 2001.

The question of whether Brisbane has been able to develop a sustainable music industry over time can be only partly understood through value-chain and cluster

analysis. It is also, at a deeper level, a question of the history and culture of the city. The National Party-led government of Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen ruled the state of Queensland from 1968 to 1989, on the basis of its popularity in regions outside of Brisbane, and a gerrymandered electoral system which gave undue weight to voters in these more conservative regional areas. Glover and Cunningham (2003) observe that what resulted for the arts and creative communities in Brisbane was the perception that the city was 'cultural wasteland' and a 'joke', and that this self-perception was matched by the view of Brisbane and Queensland held in the rest of Australia. During the period of the Bjelke-Petersen Government in Queensland in the 1970s and 1980s, many creative people felt alienated from a government that, in their view, saw them more as a social and political problem than as an economic asset. Documentary filmmaker Debra Beattie, who has recently completed an online history of Queensland in the 1970s and 1980s, has described the sense of marginalisation that creative people felt in Brisbane at that time:

In Queensland, people in the arts were lumped in with socialists or communists, made to feel like criminals because they opposed what Joh thought. There was all this exciting change in the rest of the world, yet if you wanted to be part of it, you were somehow seen as morally corrupt. But you had these pockets of youth who weren't going to be crushed by what was happening, who were still trying to maintain their artistic impulses. It was like "You've made us into a fringe, so we're going to celebrate being a fringe." You either did that or you left (quoted in Courier-Mail, 19 May, 2001).

The music sector during this period was part of the night-time economy and, as such, was often entangled with the criminal economy. One of the distinctive features of popular music in Brisbane is its relative geographical concentration in an area of the city known as Fortitude Valley. Fortitude Valley is the major site for the consumption of live and recorded music in Brisbane, and one of the reasons why was that it was also the centre of illegal brothels and casinos, that operated with tacit police and government support during the Bjelke-Petersen years. A fascinating description of Brisbane, and Fortitude Valley, was provided by Peter Walsh, who established the Livid Festival in 1988, which has since become one of Australia's major live music festivals:

I lived in the Valley for a lot of that time [the 1980s]. I was in a warehouse in the Valley ... and one time you had Russ Hinze, who was the Minister for Everything, saying there were no illegal casinos in Queensland, and that very day they'd shut three lanes of Ann Street down so a crane could lift a roulette wheel, in the middle of the day, into an illegal casino – but there's no illegal casinos in Queensland, yeah... (quoted in Flew *et. al.*, 2001, p. 16).

Brisbane had a reputation for producing bands of an international standard. Bands as diverse as *The Bee Gees* (AOR-disco) and *The Saints* (punk rock) had their origins in Brisbane, but most successful Brisbane-based performers in the 1970s and 1980s left for opportunities that were more readily available in Sydney or Melbourne, or broke up, ground down by police harassment and the pessimism of the times.

Four factors can be identified as contributing to the change that occurred in the 1990s. First, there was success of festivals such as *Livid*, which commenced in 1988 as a 'Back to Brisbane' event for expatriate bands, and which both pioneered the idea of multi-band events as part of a touring circuit, and has showcased Brisbane performers to large audiences alongside major international artists (c.f. Gibson, 2001). Second, the national networking in 1990 of Triple J, the youth-based radio station run through the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australia's public broadcasting service, enabled Brisbane-based musicians – and, indeed, musicians in many of Australia's regional centres – to reach a national audience more readily. Third, the decisions made in the 1990s by successful Brisbane bands such as *Powderfinger*, *Regurgitator* and *Savage Garden* to continue to record, rehearse, perform and locate themselves in Brisbane after they had achieved initial success provided a counter to the historical pattern of Brisbane bands relocating to Sydney or Melbourne when they became successful, and encouraged a belief among younger musicians that they could have a national profile yet remain in Brisbane. Finally, the exposure of corruption in the National Party government through the Fitzgerald Inquiry, and its electoral defeat in 1989, led to changes in the social and political climate of the city of Brisbane and the state of Queensland that made it more hospitable to musicians, other artists and young people.

In contrast to the dark days of the recent past, popular music is now seen as a part of Brisbane's future as a creative city, that would be 'creative - not only in arts and culture, but also in business, commerce, government and society. Creativity means not only making new things, but also finding new ways of applying what already exists' (BCC, 2003). The question arising was the extent to which the advances in the

contemporary popular music sector in Brisbane since the early 1990s could be sustained, with particular issues in need of address including the future of live venues and local music industry networks, and the need for the sector to better manage itself at both the policy and business levels.

### **Sustainability Factors in the Brisbane Music Industry**

A strong picture emerged in our study of a music culture in Brisbane that was dynamic, vibrant, diverse, and growing in local strength and national profile. It identified strong elements of what Landry has termed ‘soft infrastructure’ development in the Fortitude Valley area of Brisbane, including a commitment to collaboration, a self-reliant, ‘Do-it-Yourself’ ethic in the local music sector, diversity of types of music and performance, and a sense of history and continuity among participants in the local music scene. Drawing upon the work undertaken by Brown *et. al.* on music scenes in UK cities, we observed that the music industry in Brisbane is not simply its collection of live venues, recording studios, dance clubs etc., but also the ‘complex series of networks, milieus, scenes, cultures’ (Brown *et. al.*, 2000, p. 445) that constitute the bedrock of a successful local music industry.

Comments from participants in the Brisbane music industry drew attention to the national significance of what had developed over the course of a decade in the city:

Awesome, it’s awesome in Brisbane. It’s incredible in Brisbane, it’s just a shame that it’s taken so long for other people to realise and pick up on that. Because it’s really been happening here for a while it’s just unfortunate that a

while ago we went through this big drama with venues closing down and strip clubs opening up etc... So long as venues remain open there's always places for bands and DJs to go. I think Brisbane will just keep getting bigger and better cause there's heaps of talent here (Maree Stirling, Producer, A&B Music program, Briz 31 community television station).

There's definitely a thriving scene. There has been for 10 years. There's a lot of clubs and a lot of variation – Brisbane's always had massive variation in its music scene, from folk to rock to jazz (Dave Atkins, musician with *Resin Dogs*).

There's been a big focus on the Brisbane music scene of late. Brisbane has always had lots of great bands. There's a perception that something is going on in Brisbane (Shane Nicholson, musician with *Pretty Violet Stain*).

Brisbane was considered a backwater 10 years ago. The broader industry is now taking notice. (Costa Zouliou, On-air presenter, Triple J national radio station)

(all quotes from Flew *et. al.*, 2001, p. 29).

Nonetheless, the Brisbane music industry possesses significant elements of vulnerability in terms of its sustainability over time.<sup>3</sup> The status of the city as a 'satellite' in national and international music industry circuits continues to impact upon the viability of support services for Brisbane-based musicians, as well as access to large-scale music distributors. While Brisbane has a thriving music street press, with three free papers distributed around the city that provide information on artists, events etc., the community radio station 4ZZZ has been in a parlous financial

situation for some time, and does not have the hold upon younger audiences that it once had. For much of the 1970s and 1980s, 4ZZZ was a crucial lifeline for young people, with its oppositional politics and commitment to local music meshing well in an environment that many found alienating and hostile. In the 1990s, however, a perception has emerged that the station had lost its way, losing audiences to Triple J and commercial radio, and having a less clearly defined place in a more benign political climate, which had in turn affected its ability to make money from market days and subscription drives.

The concentration of live music venues in the Fortitude Valley area, in the context of a massive redevelopment of inner Brisbane as a medium-density residential area for middle-to-high income earners, was by far the biggest issue arising for local music industry sustainability. Interest in the future of live music on the part of the Brisbane City Council was triggered in part by the 'Save the Music' campaign in 1999, where 20,000 signatures were collected in a petition calling on Council to safeguard live music in the Fortitude Valley area, as it appeared possible that the Empire Hotel would be closed down after noise complaints from a single tenant in the newly developed Sun Apartments next door. The formation of the Valley Music Council in 2000 saw more sustained attention being given to developing alliances with organisations such as the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, Clubs Queensland, the Queensland Hotels Association, the Australian Performing Rights Association, and the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, and developing joint submissions to the Brisbane City Council about ordinances such as the Draft Code of Practice for Noise (Flew *et. al.*, 2001, p. 36).

The detail of these concerns is less important than what they imply about the process through which such codes are drafted. If development of ‘night-time economy’ industries is important to the future development of Brisbane as a creative city, a strong argument exists for the inclusion of representatives of the leisure, hospitality, entertainment and tourism industries in the drafting of such codes, as opposed to the current practice where they are required to respond at length to drafts that are developed without such consultation, and are considered to be ‘in the dock’ in terms of noise complaints. The experience of Sydney – where a once thriving inner-city live music scene has largely disappeared as a consequence of resident complaints about noise or related problems – should be noted. For those managing clubs and hotels, the cost of compliance with noise regulations is too great, resulting in the loss of live music sites in favour of poker machines (Homan, 2003).

The wider issue raised is the viability of the Valley as a mixed use commercial/residential area, and whether urban redevelopment in the area has an inexorable tendency to drive out live music venues, either through the impact of noise restrictions and other resident concerns, or the tendency for rising property values to drive out the very activities (such as a thriving live music scene) that were initial points of attraction to the area. This trend was also identified in the analyses of local music policy undertaken in Britain:

At a local level the relationship between the cultural industries and urban regeneration interests around property development is clearly fraught with tensions. A hands-off approach can ultimately allow a property market to price

out small-scale cultural producers. This may not just impact on a particular area but on the ecosystem of the city as a whole (Brown *et. al.* 2000, p. 448).

The need for sustained involvement with the Brisbane City Council, and the development of alliances with other service industry organizations around complex policy issues, raised the question of the quality of music industry representation, and the related question of developing business and other networking skills in the sector. The principal body representing the contemporary popular music sector in Brisbane, and in Queensland, is *Q-Music*. Q-Music was established in 1994 as a non-profit organisation whose role is to service, promote and develop the music industry in Queensland across sectors and at all levels. It provides information and advice to musicians and others in the industry, assists with funding applications, supports new musicians with live performance opportunities, lobbies State and local governments on behalf of the music industry, and provides input into policy development in areas such as planning, zoning and noise regulation.

What became apparent to the project team in the course of this study is that, while Q-Music was well regarded in the Brisbane music sector, the funding it received through Arts Queensland was insufficient for the tasks it needed to perform, particularly as it has an obligation to operate at a State-wide and not just a city-based level. While it has been able to rely upon voluntary assistance in these areas to some extent, the report uncovered a need for ongoing professional representation for the Brisbane music sector in a range of policy initiatives, ranging from noise regulation to urban renewal, and the linkage of contemporary music to industries such as leisure, entertainment, hospitality and tourism. There is also a need for such a representative

body to have a role in the development of business skills in the music industry, as well as the capacity to develop national networks and linkages around areas of common interest and concern. One of the outcomes of our study was the establishment of a Music Business Advisory Service, which could help to develop the missing ‘middle ground’ of producer and distribution services in Queensland. This could perhaps also contribute to meeting the need for what we termed ‘third level’ music industry representation, that could go beyond direct services to members and responding to crises, and towards a more sustained role in developing industry networks to facilitate strategic planning of sectoral development at local, state and national levels.

### **Further Issues on Music, Cities and Cultural Policy**

Although this study has been principally about the Brisbane contemporary popular music industry and music culture, it raises wider issues about the relationship between music, cities and cultural policy that warrant further consideration. The first is that the renewed focus of local governments on developing policies to support popular music challenges the hegemony of national-level analysis in cultural policy discourse. Cultural policy studies, whether arising out of UNESCO-sponsored initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s, or the more recent Foucault-inspired work on governmentality and citizen formation (e.g. Bennett, 1998), has tended to understand the national level of government as the principal generator of cultural policy strategies. This is despite the fact that, in more and more parts of the world, it is *sub-national levels of government* – whether state, regional or city authorities – that principally fund cultural policy initiatives. Mark Schuster has drawn attention to the rise of sub-national cultural

policy in the United States, observing its links to the decentralization of decision-making (especially in areas of service provision) to local levels of government, the links that local authorities make between cultural policy and other areas of government activity (economic development, tourism, youth policy), and the ways in which local authorities bring quite different understandings of 'culture' to bear upon their policy initiatives (Schuster, 2002). In this respect, Brisbane proves to be a particularly interesting case study, as the Brisbane City Council is Australia's largest city council, with administrative responsibility for almost 900,000 residents, and with a revenue base the size of the Tasmanian state government. It thus has considerable scope to go beyond the traditional 'rents, rates and rubbish' focus of city councils, and to take pro-active initiatives in areas such as cultural policy.

Second, an interest on the part of local government authorities in contemporary popular music in cities, as part of their economic development and not just cultural development strategies, marks out an instance where responsibility for cultural planning, cultural development and the promotion of creativity is becoming increasingly become incorporated into *whole-of-government* approaches to policy-making. The Queensland State government's 2002 *Creative Queensland* cultural policy statement exemplifies this trend, with its cross-sectoral and cross-portfolio approach to community development and creative industries, around the themes of 'people', 'communities', 'places, collections and traditions', and 'creative enterprise' (Arts Queensland, 2002; c.f. Glover and Cunningham, 2003). In the creative cities literature, this approach is twinned with the relationship that is proposed between the cultural dynamism of a city or region and its scope for 'new economy' industry development. The Brisbane City Council has itself moved from promoting Brisbane

as a 'Livable City', as it did in the 1990s, to being a 'Creative City', for fear that 'livable' could be taken as synonymous with 'a bit boring', and hence not attractive to new industries and qualified professionals. Tom O'Regan has described the 'whole-of-government' approach in relation to creative industries developments in the following terms:

The example of the creative industries shows that, even in the domain of 'creativity', the close attribute of the 'arts', policy-making is no longer being carried out by arts-based cultural policy institutions but by other actors and agents. Cultural policy ideas are now likely to be taken up as part of wider national, state, city or regional development programs and translated into these. Even 'creativity' seemed too important to be left up to cultural policy institutions and frameworks (O'Regan, 2002, p. 20).

Third, this study has been supportive of notions of the *enabling state* (Mulgan and Wilkinson, 1992; Botsman and Latham, 2001) is less that of a provider, manager or even provider of funds for creative and cultural activities, and acts more as a supporter of initiatives that happen independently of its juridical authority. The problem with applying traditional cultural policy models to a sector as diffuse and often subterranean as popular music is not only that conventional cultural policy instruments, such as grants and subsidies, cannot reach most participants, but that those in the sector are innately suspicious of the grant-driven route to supporting their activities. It came up at several points in our study of Brisbane popular music that the last thing people in the sector wanted was the Lord Mayor's Band of the Month competition, or the Brisbane City Council buying up live music venues or building

recording studios. Moreover, the actions of the Brisbane City Council that mattered most to music industry participants were not within the cultural development portfolio at all; they were in areas such as noise abatement ordinances, liquor licencing laws, urban planning, and residential zoning. The potential impact of the Draft Code of Practice for Noise could have a far more adverse impact on the future of live music in Brisbane than could ever be redressed through specific forms of council support for local music production and distribution. It is in this sense, as Lovatt and O'Connor (1995) observe, that the urban authorities need to get beyond either the 'deviance' paradigm that has been attached to night-time activities and those involved with them, and a related desire to 'sanitise' complex urban spaces, but to live and work with the messiness and fluidity characteristic of cultural places that develop in unplanned, more-or-less spontaneous ways.

Fourth, these developments throw up new and distinct challenges for the popular music industry. As a sector, the music industry has historically tended to disavow involvement with government agencies, partly out of an often justifiable suspicion of the views of government authorities about their activities,<sup>4</sup> but also from a sense that being a 'cultural technician' (Bennett, 1992, p. 406) engaged with the policy process and government lobbying, has not presented itself as an attractive option to many in the music industry. This is in contrast to sectors such as film, television and publishing, where an ongoing policy dialogue has existed for some time between representatives of creative artists and other producers, industry organizations, and relevant agencies of government (Flew, 2003). The question of whether representative organizations able to develop some leadership in the community over questions that impact upon the music sector but are not central to it, such as the various forms of

urban governance discussed above, and whether these organizations will be resourced adequately to play such a brokering role between government agencies, service and entertainment industries and local communities remains to be seen.

Fifth, this study has proposed that there is value in understanding music as a creative industry. It fits many aspects of the creative industries template, as it is associated with creativity, innovation, risk-taking, new businesses and start-ups, people with limited tangible assets, and the creative applications of new technologies. The creative industries template is also useful to sectors such as the music industry, which have been marginalized in cultural policy/cultural development frameworks, as it provides a hook for advocates to link the sector's well-being to the overall economic and creative dynamism of a city or region. At the same time, there is a duality in how music is understood as a creative industry: it is presented as being both an important part of the overall cultural and social infrastructure of cities and regions, and as an important industry in its own right. While the latter is at some level true, how true it is remains hard to gauge, as it is not an industry known for having particularly detailed records of its contribution in terms of employment, wealth-generation, exports, or the other indicators that policy-makers seek when considering whether to promote an industry sector. As we found in our study, keeping economic development agencies interested in the Brisbane music industry, when opportunities exist to promote activities such as high-budget offshore film production, whose economic impacts are more tangible, or promoting the electronic games industry, which can appear more sexy and contemporary, can be a challenge. If people involved in the interface between music and policy want to maintain the momentum that has emerged in recent

years for the sector to be supported on the basis of its contribution as a creative industry, such issues will need to be addressed in a more systematic fashion.

Finally, what makes these issues so pressing is not simply the value of the music industry in its own right – whether that value is principally measured in cultural or economic terms – but how its presence as part of the cultural life of a city intersects with the dynamics of urban property markets. The redevelopment of the Fortitude Valley area in Brisbane from a centre for illegal activities, but also for live music, to a cultural hub emerged in the first instance out of a mix of conscious State and local government ‘urban renewal’ strategies, and the existence of what geographers term the ‘*rent gap*’, where run-down urban areas were seen as being under-capitalized and hence amenable to profitable redevelopment opportunities (Badcock, 2002, pp. 157-159). According to the ‘rent gap’ thesis, creative activities such as music took place in these inner-urban areas as low rents made it possible for artists earning low incomes to live and work in these areas, but the subsequent process of gentrification places pressure on these people and activities to move out, as higher-income professionals move into the area and higher-yield activities are sought from land that is zoned for commercial use. Yet the ‘rent gap’ thesis has been criticized for being one-sided in its focus on what motivates investors to develop an urban area, rather than what motivates residents to move into it (Hamnett, 2003), and it is here that the tension arises with inner-urban areas that are centres for music and other forms of live entertainment.

The danger that emerges, which is of growing interest to city councils and others pursuing creative cities strategies, is that gentrification will kill the golden goose that

is culture, and take what might be called the ‘edge’ off the area, turning it into another middle-class suburb. As tolerance, diversity and bohemianism are identified as wellsprings of creativity in a global creative economy, and as the existence of such creativity is linked to new investments and industry innovation, local authorities are increasingly walking on a knife-edge, conscious of the possibility of urban property market dynamics destroying those distinctive elements of a dynamic urban culture. A recurring theme of our study into the Brisbane popular music industry was that the way to develop was not that of Sydney, where, it was widely felt, the popular music industry had been largely killed off through the cumulative impact of gentrification, property speculation, and inner-urban over-development. For a ‘second tier’ city such as Brisbane, that remains structurally distant from the centres of the global music industry circuit, urban authorities are interested in intervening in order to blunt this particular hard edge to urban property markets, in the interests of maintaining an diverse creative ecology and a degree of cultural distinctiveness to the city.

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<sup>1</sup> This study draws upon a report undertaken for the Brisbane City Council in 2001 through the Creative Industries Research and Applications Centre (CIRAC) at the Queensland University of Technology. The report was titled *Music Industry Development and Brisbane's Future as a Creative City*, and was jointly authored by Gillian Ching, Andrew Stafford, Jo Tacchi and myself. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my co-authors to the arguments developed in this work. I'd also like to acknowledge the 49 participants who agreed to interviews as a part of the study, both in Brisbane and on other Australian cities. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge the contribution of Helene Merrilees, Senior Program Officer, Economic Development, Brisbane City Council, and Sturrt Watters, Network Co-ordinator of Q-Music, for their extensive contributions to the final report.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'contemporary popular music' is used to identify those forms that are primarily concerned with the production and performance of original music composition, and which are intended to reach large audiences by whatever means possible (live performances, sales of packaged music, airplay on radio and television etc.). Popular, or 'pop', music is not being identified as a genre (as opposed to rock, blues, jazz etc.), but rather as music that largely circulates in the marketplace, whose production and distribution is supported exclusively or primarily through record sales, audience attendances, performance fees and artist royalties, rather than through forms of direct government funding. The 'contemporary' focus differentiates such music from most forms of orchestral or choral music, as well as stage musicals, although there are clearly some blurred lines between 'original;' and 'copied' music (eg. the status of 'covers' bands, use of 'sampling' of older music by DJs and performers). Similarly, in some contemporary music cultures, most notably the electronic music scene, artists may both receive

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direct government support for some performances (eg. performances at publicly-funded music festivals), while also operating in the commercial sector as DJs, or in 'raves' or 'happenings'.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the Report was commissioned through the Emerging Industries section of the Economic Development division of the Brisbane City Council, so it had a strong focus upon questions of economic sustainability.

<sup>4</sup> To take one of many examples, the 'night-time economy' of Manchester associated with clubs such as the Hacienda was also clearly associated with the consumption of illegal drugs, particularly Ecstasy, with which the 'Madchester' scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s became synonymous.