



Behr, A., Brennan, M., Cloonan, M. and Webster, E. (2021) Stop making census! Some experiential reflections on conducting a live music census. In: Osbourne, R. and Laing, D. (eds.) *Music by Numbers: The Use and Abuse of Statistics in the Music Industry*. Intellect Books: Bristol, UK ; Chicago, USA, pp. 104-120. ISBN 9781789382532.

This is the author's final accepted version.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/218578/>

Deposited on: 19 June 2020

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

<CN>Chapter 6

Stop Making Census! Some Experiential Reflections on Conducting a Live Music Census

<AU>Adam Behr, Matt Brennan, Martin Cloonan and Emma Webster

<NP>This chapter discusses the challenges and opportunities for researching live music through the method of a census. It draws on our experience of running the United Kingdom's first national Live Music Census (the project was named the UK Live Music Census) in March 2017 and falls into six parts: (1) the background to our work in live music research; (2) a review of previous censuses; (3) lessons learned from previous censuses; (4) the context for the UK Live Music Census; (5) experiences of running the census; and (6) issues for discussion arising from the census. Our conclusion suggests that such projects are likely to remain part of the research landscape for the foreseeable future, but also cautions that they are not for the faint hearted or the methodologically nervous.

<H1>Part one: Background

<NP>The origins of our census can be traced back to research conducted in Scotland in 2002, which, amongst other things, highlighted the importance of live music to the nation's music economy (Williamson et al. 2003). Subsequent work by Frith et al. (2010, 2013) as part of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded enquiry into the history of the United Kingdom's live music industry kick-started a series of related projects in academic live music research and knowledge exchange (Frith and Cloonan 2019). For us, it included the establishment in 2012 of the Live Music Exchange (Behr et al. 2019), which has since provided a focus for debates on

aspects of live music and acted as a *nom de guerre* for several projects, consultancies and reports to which we have contributed in various capacities.

This work has engendered increasingly close cooperation with parts of the live music industry, including two projects examining cultural value, both funded by the AHRC. The first involved working with the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh to examine the relationship between different promotional practices and the cultural value that audiences place on live music (Behr et al. 2016). The second investigated different models of venue funding in Glasgow, Leeds and Camden, working with industry-related bodies: PRS for Music, UK Music and the Musicians' Union (Behr et al. 2014). Although primarily qualitative work, this can be seen retrospectively to have carried the kernel of the later UK-wide census project in looking across cities as well as across venue types.

By 2015, then, we found ourselves amongst the vanguard of research into the United Kingdom's live music sector. However, we were also aware of other attempts to conduct such exercises and so to provide the context for our work there follows a brief overview of comparable exercises undertaken prior to our own census.

<H1>Part two: Previous work

<NP>Some previous surveys were linked to broader attempts to intervene in the local music industries, others arose from local campaigns and sometimes the two motives were combined. The biggest specific inspiration for our census, the 2012 Victorian Live Music Census, arose indirectly from local activism that began in 2010 and came to centre on the Save Live Australia's Music campaign ~~which that~~ yielded a commitment by local policy-makers to discover the true picture of the city's live music scene (Homan 2014). The subsequent census was undertaken on Saturday 13

Commented [SB1]: AU: Please specify whether this is 2016a or 2016b.

October 2012, when volunteers visited Melbourne’s venues, gathering information on such ~~things~~ ~~measures~~ as the maximum number of people expected to attend, the number of musicians (including DJs) and other staff employed on the night, and how the venue operated. Volunteers also distributed flyers containing links to online surveys for musicians and audiences, forming the second part of the data collection methodology. The report usefully includes the statistical assumptions that allowed the researchers to estimate annual figures for attendances and spend (Music Victoria/City of Melbourne 2012: 24–25). This provided a starting point for calculations for our pilot study in Edinburgh and thus a useful template for the UK Live Music Census. While the language of the Melbourne census report is often more informal than academic, its aspirations to be as methodologically rigorous, comprehensive and transparent as possible struck a chord.

Commented [MOU2]: I found measures not quite rightm, but struggled to think of a better word. Things seems to do it!

~~An alternative is provided by~~ ~~By way of contrast~~, the Austin Music Census (Titan Music Group 2015), ~~which~~ was a local survey with a wider remit. Part of the report deals specifically with live music in the form of ‘Music venues and nightlife establishments’ but the Austin Census is essentially a survey of local music industries personnel (Titan Music Group: 5). While this survey does not focus on live music per se, it does provide some useful ideas for those wishing to research their local music industries and some recommendations for policy-makers, for example ‘minimizing venue regulations’ while recognizing the need for a mixed economy of private sector, non-profit and public sector investment (Titan Music Group: 6). As the methodology lacks a dedicated live music census, the Austin report’s main influence on our work was in terms of rigour rather than methodology.

Commented [MOU3]: I changed this from “By way of contrast” as that seemd to suggest that Austin was NOT trying to be “methodologically rigorous, comprehensive” (see preceding sentence).

Australia has been at the forefront of several developments in live music policy, including the provision of a federal Live Music Office and the development of music industries strategies in major centres like Sydney and Melbourne (City of Melbourne 2014; City of Sydney 2014), as well as a survey of live music in South Australia (Live Music Office 2015). The Adelaide Live Music Census of May 2015 provides a snapshot of 'live music in licensed premises in greater Adelaide' (Music SA/Live Music Office 2015: 2). The methodology was relatively informal, with data gathered across the month from venue websites and social media, gig guides, word of mouth, phone calls and industry contacts. Overall this report provides some baseline information on what sorts of gigs took place where, and whether they had special licences. It largely consists of details of the venues rather than an analysis of income, trends, issues and so on. Thus, while it contains some useful information, there are also methodological limitations. The Adelaide methodology was largely replicated in 2016 with a follow-up that both covered a larger geographical spread and allowed for some comparative analysis, supported by the South Australia State Government's Music Development Office and the National Live Music Office. Alongside the existence of a city Live Music Action Plan (City of Adelaide 2017), this illustrates the potential – indeed, often the necessity – for communication with the policy-makers who are a key part of a city's live music ecology in the research process (Behr et al. 2016b).

The Live Music Office was also involved with research on the economic, social and cultural contribution of the Australian live music industry, which surveyed consumers nationwide alongside survey venues in Hobart, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney (Live Music Office 2014). The report contains a useful literature review of the social and cultural value of live music (Live Music Office

2014: 10–11) and discusses the various forms of live music capital (Live Music Office 2014: 34–38). However, as in Austin, the methodology did not contain a snapshot live music census and therefore did not provide a direct methodological model for our own census exercises.

Prior to our UK-wide census, we conducted the aforementioned Edinburgh pilot census on Saturday 6 June 2015. Our team visited 45 venues and collected information about the events taking place, with thirteen more venues added in afterwards via information gathered from various sources. Based on the Melbourne model, this was the first exercise of its kind in the United Kingdom. As with Melbourne, in addition to visiting venues on the night we conducted online surveys of venues and musicians in what became something of a blueprint for the later UK-wide census.

The Edinburgh report is the most ‘academic’ in tone of the ones reviewed here, in that it had the greatest awareness of other reports and the widest context within which the research was taking place. We erred on the side of caution with some of the figures, something also apparent in other surveys, such as in Melbourne and Adelaide. While we too produced a ‘big number’ on annual spend on live music, our findings were generally couched in terms of minimum numbers and somewhat qualified throughout (Behr et al. 2015: 39–40).

We argued in the Edinburgh report that such research is ‘an ongoing task’, acknowledging the need to refine our own methodology (Behr et al. 2015: 25). We also noted methodological differences across previous work and the updating of such methodologies within annual ~~publications such as reports like~~ UK Music’s *Measuring Music* reports (2018a) and those previously undertaken by PRS for Music (Page and Carey 2010, 2011). This pointed towards the importance of considering

Commented [MOU4]: This avoids having two “reports” in the same sentence and changes like (meaning: similar to) with such as (meaning: for example).

studies ‘in specific locations and by specific organisations [...] against their wider context’ (Behr et al. 2015: 11). While acknowledging the logistical constraints on providing comprehensive data about the city, we suggested that the findings still illustrated ‘the value of live music to Edinburgh and of the [...] Census approach to appraising it’ (Behr et al. 2015: 1).

Importantly, the Edinburgh Census fed into local policy. The impetus for it had partly emerged from a City of Edinburgh Council working ~~group~~ group which had been established in order to address concerns about venue closures and a clause in local licensing policy that amplified music should be ‘inaudible’ in neighbouring premises. Adam Behr and Matt Brennan were on the working group and suggested a live music census to assess the scale of the problem. Our eventual recommendation to amend the clause was adopted after lengthy and occasionally contentious consultation. The potential for such work to make a concrete difference boosted our plans for a UK-wide project.

As well as addressing the ‘inaudibility’ clause, we observed that a significant proportion of venues reported noise, planning or development issues with the local authority (Behr et al. 2015: 4), recommending that the city adopt the ‘agent of change’ principle and that the local authorities should ‘recognise the economic and cultural of live music to the city’ (Behr et al. 2015: 5).¹ Overall, our pilot study

¹ The Agent of Change principle is that the person or business responsible for any change (the ‘agent’) is responsible for managing its impact. Thus, for example, a developer building housing next to an existing venue becomes responsible for ensuring that the dwellings have sufficient soundproofing, whereas if a venue opens next to existing dwellings then the onus is on the venue to ensure the soundproofing. The growing body of evidence – including censuses – and sustained campaigning both locally and by industry bodies like UK Music and the Music Venue Trust has seen ‘Agent of Change’ become a political concern, and moves to place it into planning policy and legislation either adopted or planned in London and by the UK and devolved Parliaments (for a summary, see Music Venue Trust 2018).

offered an iterative refinement of the Melbourne approach, also helping to introduce the concept of a live music census to the United Kingdom.

The final local census before our own UK-wide one was the Bristol Live Music Census, based on a survey night of Thursday 22 October 2015 and seeking to explore ‘the live music ecosystem in Bristol’ (Bucks New University/UK Music 2016: 5). It gathered information from 23 venues on the night and included online surveys of venue operators, musicians and audiences (Bucks New University/UK Music 2016: 16). The economic analysis and production of a ‘big number’ for live music revenue (Bucks New University/UK Music 2016: 5) were carried out by Oxford Economics, the consultants who worked on UK Music’s *Wish You Were Here* reports (2017). Nearly a quarter of the report is taken up with the economic methodology and the obvious complexity involved suggests that the search for a big number quantifying the value of music can be a major issue for censuses, as well as for policy-makers and the media. It is simply easier to digest a number ~~such as this~~ than to process qualitative data on the lived experiences of those working in the industries. Problems caused by planning regulations were also noted – and adoption of Agent of Change recommended – along with the lack of comparative UK data (Bucks New University/UK Music 2016: 15), something we hoped to address in our own work.

<H1>Part three: Reporting the reports

<NP>The reports covered above provided a number of lessons that informed our work. One key issue was the choice of the census night. One of the methodological matters we negotiated in Edinburgh was the paradoxical nature of a live music

census itself, in that it cannot take place on a 'non-typical' night for live music but also 'there is no such thing as a "typical" night of live music activity' (Behr et al. 2015: 23). For example, the Melbourne and Edinburgh snapshots took place on a Saturday night. This bears upon the outcome, Saturdays often being the busiest night of the week for live music. The Bristol census was on a Thursday, while Adelaide opted for a survey over a month. Our choice of a Thursday for the UK Live Music Census was an attempt to avoid extremes, while also capturing part of any 'the weekend starts here' feeling.² Furthermore, any census night will be affected by such factors as whether the local arena/stadium (should they exist) is hosting a music event, what competing events there might be (for example, a big sporting match), time of year and so on. It is possible to raise legitimate concerns about the choice of any particular night and all the responsible researcher can do is to justify their choice, try to take into account any mitigating factors that might affect the outcome and highlight these in the final report.

<TEXT>This typicality (or not) of the snapshot census date for live music means that such censuses tend to err on the side of caution for any economic analysis, particularly those which gross up to annual estimates of spend from one 24-hour period. In Melbourne, for example, readers are told that while 'the findings associated with the Census [...] are the most comprehensive and authoritative estimates so far reported [...] [t]he figures should be viewed with obvious caution' (Music Victoria/City of Melbourne 2012: 7, 16). Given these challenges, it is unsurprising that the census reports we reviewed (and our own) came laden with

² The choice of a Thursday was partly informed by the Bristol Live Music Census and followed a series of focus groups with our project partners (UK Music, the Music Venue Trust and the Musicians' Union) and other concerned parties, from industry bodies to music-related charities.

such caveats, generally along the lines of ‘we have tried to be as accurate and comprehensive as possible but it’s really rather complicated’.

In addition to their differing methodologies, a number of other factors warrant mention regarding previous live music surveys to the UK Live Music Census. The first is that, as noted above, they are often the result of local issues that have attracted political attention, often via activist campaigns. This was certainly the case in Melbourne and became so in our work in Edinburgh and UK-wide. As such, music census findings have sometimes informed the development of cities’ music strategies that can have important impacts on their live music scenes. Consequently, a census has the potential to be politically controversial, while also serving to raise questions about the status of live music within a city.

It is important, then, that those undertaking a census realize that research does not take place in abstraction but in material realities shaped by several factors, including the researchers’ own backgrounds and politics, the prevailing economic and political climate (both in their widest senses) and relationships with (and the current health of) the contemporary music industries. If negotiating such contextual factors can be time consuming, not negotiating them can be the kiss of death: the text of any census means little outside its wider context.

<H1>Part four: The context for the UK Live Music Census

*<NP>*With the above in mind we set out to design and fundraise for a live music census that would maintain the local/regional micro level focus of previous censuses but also combine it with national data to obtain a broader, macro level understanding of the state of live music across the country. The UK Live Music

Census was made possible by a grant from the AHRC, the project running from September 2016 to February 2018. Our work began at a time when the United Kingdom's live music sector was facing something of a dichotomy. On the one hand, there were reports of a live music 'boom' as the sector continued to out-perform the previously dominant recording sector, which was still adjusting to the impact of digitization. Successive reports from 2009 onwards showed the value of the live music sector exceeding that of the recorded sector and that the gap was growing (Page and Carey 2010, 2011; UK Music 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018a). This was apparent in both sets of reports, despite the different definitions adopted and methodologies utilized within them, including the fact that they account for overall value differently across recorded and live music such as, in some cases, calculating gross value to an area to include hotel nights, travel and other ancillary spend. On the other hand, however, if such reports suggested a healthy live sector at a macro level, then other accounts indicated that our research was taking place at a challenging time at the micro level, particularly for small venues and clubs (Davyd 2016).

Recent years have seen numerous media reports of British music venues closing due to factors such as property development and the gentrification of once lively musical neighbourhoods, including the Boardwalk in Sheffield, which closed in 2010, and the Cockpit in Leeds, which closed in 2014. Working with the consultancies Nordicity and Sound Diplomacy, the Mayor of London's Music Venues Taskforce found similar problems in the UK capital (2015). Closures are due not only to diminishing audiences and the conversion or even demolition of some venues, but also development around venues and the ensuing noise complaints from new residential neighbours. Such accounts suggested that it was becoming ever

more difficult to make the provision of live music economically viable in certain places.

In undertaking the UK Live Music Census we were determined to get behind these stories of 'boom and bust' to provide insight into the actual situation. We went in believing that the potential benefits of a live music census apply not just to academic researchers but also in terms of the potential impact on how policy-makers – local, national and international – understand, value and ultimately encourage live music in cities to flourish.

To mitigate the politically sensitive nature of the work, we knew we had to get major players from the United Kingdom's music industries on board with the research. This entailed getting relevant letters of support for our funding bid.³ We were aided here by having previously worked with UK Music (the UK music industries' representative and lobbying body) and the Musicians' Union, both of whom were formal partners on the project alongside the campaign group for 'grassroots' music venues, the Music Venue Trust. We also secured the participation of groups such as Julie's Bicycle (an environmental advisory group for the creative industries), Attitude Is Everything (lobbyists for access to live music for the Deaf and disabled) and PRS for Music (the UK collecting agency for songwriters and composers).

Seeking such support had some practical implications. For example, when consulting about online questionnaires we were often asked to include questions relating to representatives' particular interests, such as access to venues or environmental policies. This was entirely understandable, yet also jarred with the

³ The presence of non-academic partners is, anyway and increasingly, a key assessment criterion for research funders in the United Kingdom.

necessity to keep the length of the questionnaires to a minimum. There were additional complications surrounding UK Music's scheme for working with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), its Music Academic Partners (MAPs) (UK Music 2019). As part of our collaboration with UK Music, we wrote MAPs (and consequently their cities) into the project's consultation process and as ancillary/satellite censuses that could add to the dataset should those HEIs be able to conduct a snapshot within the project timeframe, some of which did so. In sum, while working with music industries' organizations can be extremely worthwhile, it can also lead to demands with important methodological and time implications. Support from the music industries for the census was vital, however, and, if nothing else, shows the potential for common interests between researchers who value impartiality and organizations that need to promote their own interests (Williamson et al. 2011).

Commented [SB5]: AU: Edit ok?

<H1>Part five: The UK Live Music Census in practice

<NP>Following consultations with focus groups comprising key music industries stakeholders, we developed a five-part methodology consisting of:

1. Mapping local live music ecologies via desk research of event listings and venues' websites and social media
2. Snapshot censuses over a 24-hour period in three cities carried out by the central research team, plus further censuses carried out by MAPs
3. Nationwide online surveys targeting musicians, venues, promoters and audiences.

4. Shorter follow-up venue surveys.
5. Semi-structured profile interviews with venues, promoters and musicians to provide narrative for the final report.

A detailed breakdown of what was done – or rather an idealized version of what we recommend *should* be done – is available in the open source toolkit on the project website, with a ‘how to’ guide for others wishing to carry out a census (Webster et al. 2018b). This was produced as part of the project’s goal of providing a replicable methodology and, hopefully, encouraging data gathering to allow for the possibility of more longitudinal and geographically comparative work. An outline of the methodology follows.

We mapped local live music ecologies by constructing venue lists in each snapshot city, taking care to include those spaces used for live music that are not ‘venues’ per se, and also lists of events taking place on the snapshot census date. This was a particularly time-consuming aspect of the research, involving scraping event listings sites using web-based tools, checking venues’ social media pages and trawling the Internet for information. Nevertheless, the lists proved invaluable for planning the snapshot censuses and later allowed for analysis of local live music ecologies in terms of the number and spread of venue types.

Snapshot censuses were coordinated by members of the central research team in the primary case-study cities of Glasgow, Newcastle-Gateshead and Oxford, with affiliate censuses of varying scale coordinated by members of MAP institutions in Brighton, Leeds, Liverpool and Southampton. Working in shifts, volunteers visited venues hosting live music over one 24-hour period in March 2017 (and June in Liverpool). The volunteers completed short surveys comprising of: (a) audience

interviews with questions about spend, motivation for attendance and frequency of attendance; and (b) venue observations, wherein volunteers estimated the number of patrons in the venue at the time, genre of music playing and the maximum number of patrons expected (obtained from speaking to members of staff). From identifying which venues were hosting live music on the census date to recruiting and training volunteers, to actually running the census on the night, this was the most resource-intensive section of the project.

The *online surveys* contained a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions asking the four types of respondent for a variety of data around economic, social and cultural value. The majority of the research team has backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities and so perhaps the most difficult issue facing us was how to deal with the sector's economic value. There is a particular pressure on researchers to come up with a definitive figure for economic value – the aforementioned industry- and media-friendly 'big number' – something that is, in fact, methodologically complex. This partly emanates from political and media pressure to have easily digestible, bite size chunks of knowledge. The result of this is often to downplay complexity and nuance and to highlight the big number, often used to both publicize the overarching value of music, and lobby for supportive measures.⁴ Realizing, nevertheless, the importance of such figures, we employed a consultant statistician, Professor Jake Ansell, on the project whose role evolved into more of a co-investigative than purely consultative one because of the complexities of these issues.

⁴ See, for example, the announcement of UK Music's 2018 *Measuring Music* report (UK Music 2018b), where the headline figure for the value of the 'UK music industry' is displayed much more prominently than the link to the report on which this is based.

To calculate economic value and in order to be able to estimate Gross Value Added (GVA), we attempted to collect data via the survey on venues' and promoters' annual income and expenditure, as a possible alternative to the method used in the Edinburgh Census, which only examined audience spend. However, income and expenditure data were unfortunately not always forthcoming, summed up best in this response to the question from a venue: 'We are not sharing financial info with people we don't even know'. Reluctance to give such data appears to be a sector-wide issue. We therefore had to use a method of calculating economic value based on audience spend, using data from the snapshot census date combined with venue data about average audience attendance on the snapshot census date, average frequency of venue opening per week and a ratio for seasonal behaviour (explained in full in our report [Webster et al. 2018c] and the toolkit [Webster et al. 2018b]). We have since refined the questions about financial data in the venue and promoter surveys to match more closely those used by the Europe-wide group Live DMA, to hopefully increase the response rate in any future censuses.

Unlike previous studies, one of our aims was to provide a more holistic understanding of the value of live music in the United Kingdom. To better understand the social and cultural value of live music, then, we included various quantitative and qualitative questions in all four surveys. For example, we asked both audiences and musicians to name a significant venue and give reasons for its importance to them, yielding data that was probably the richest (and most enjoyable) to analyse. The venue and promoter surveys asked tickbox questions about respondents' 'cultural activities' such as charity work and formal/informal links with educational communities, as well as asking what respondents believe that

they bring to their locale.⁵ While time consuming to analyse, and sensitive to researchers' own subjectivities, the data from such qualitative questions enabled us to identify broad themes about the social and cultural value of live music. However, there remains the wider question of whether a survey-based approach is the most appropriate for understanding notions of social and culture value, particularly since these are slippery and difficult to categorize neatly into tickbox categories. As Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett have argued, 'a "toolkit approach" to arts impact assessment [...] demands excessive simplifications' (2010: 121). Nevertheless, we believe that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages in this context and have mitigated such simplification by using both tickbox and open-ended questions.

Because of the issues apparently facing venues in the United Kingdom, it was imperative that we obtained enough venue data to be able to draw reasonable conclusions. Completing surveys, however, is rarely a priority for venue staff and so the fourth component of the methodology had to be deployed. In addition to the online surveys, then, we also conducted *venue follow-up surveys* either by phoning venues or visiting them in person.

Finally, we conducted eighteen semi-structured *profile interviews* to provide some detailed narrative and examples of best practice alongside the drier, more statistical parts of the report. The interviews also allowed us to fill some of the gaps in our research data, most glaringly a smaller return from Northern Ireland and Wales than we had hoped for, as well as data from BAME groups and from genres such as grime and hip-hop.

⁵ The list of 'cultural activities' was adapted from work on small venues by the Music Venue Trust (2014: 21–25).

The main findings were that music has significant economic, social and cultural value. We also found that venues often played much wider roles than hosting live music, such as being sites of volunteering, charity and educational work. We highlighted the importance of policy-makers valuing venues, especially smaller ones, and made calculations of the value of live music in each city (based on seven categories of spending) and of the employment that live music sustains in each city (drawing on UK Music 2017b) (Webster et al. 2018c: 14–16). In addition we noted a number of ongoing issues, making recommendations to various levels of government (local authority, devolved institutions and **United Kingdom**) about the best way forward. In sum an enormous amount of information, of the sort that should provide food for thought for lobbyists and policy-makers alike, was produced via a methodology that had the support of representatives from major players within the United Kingdom’s music industries.

<H1>Part six: Issues and discussion

*<NP>*After completing our report of findings for the UK Live Music Census, we identified seven key issues that warrant further discussion: (1) our cross-genre approach; (2) defining live music; (3) defining venue types; (4) survey length; (5) local versus national issues; (6) nomenclature issues; and (7) the quest for a ‘big number’. At over 100 pages in length, it is not possible to reproduce our report findings within this book chapter. However, we recommend reading the discussion below alongside the report itself, which is freely available on the project website (Webster et al. 2018c).

<TEXT>While previous censuses in Australia and the United States focused on popular music, the UK Live Music Census, like the Edinburgh pilot study, attempted to capture data *across all genres and venue types*. The advantages of this approach were that we avoided the criticism of 'ignoring' forms of music such as classical, folk and jazz, that we did not have to negotiate definitions of what counts as 'popular music' for the purposes of the census and that we were able to include as many forms of live music practice as possible. The disadvantage was that by attempting to address all forms of practice, we risked homogenizing what is a very diverse sector and therefore making generalizations across 'art worlds' (Becker 1982) that perhaps face different issues. However, by examining the United Kingdom's live music sector as a whole we have attempted to understand issues that appear to be affecting multiple art worlds, like the lack of suitable venues and the prevalence of musicians working for free. But defining genres was not straightforward. While we developed a list of 21 genres that we believed covered most broad types of music, the 'other – please specify' option was well used by respondents for whom our categories did not suffice.

Defining what counts as live music was also complicated. For our purposes, a live music event is one at which musicians (including named DJs) provide music for audiences and dancers gathering in public places where the music is the *principal purpose* of that gathering. Even this was not clear-cut, however, as questions arose as to whether a dance workshop accompanied by a live band counted as a live music event (answer: no) or whether a ballet performance fitted the description (answer: no).

Furthermore, as we found with the Edinburgh study, *defining venue types* was also difficult because many spaces for live music have more than one function.

Although a glossary of venue-type definitions was provided for the census, it is clear that respondents' own definitions did not always tally with our own. The use of 'small music venue' by respondents, for example, did not necessarily equate either with our definition or with the Music Venue Trust's definition of a 'grassroots music venue' (Mayor of London's Music Venues Taskforce 2015: 34–37), but was instead broader and more inconsistent. In Edinburgh we had included an 'other' category for venues like student unions and social clubs but the 2017 census highlighted the significance of such venue types as distinct categories, and so the venue typology has since been modified and increased to nineteen categories (Webster et al. 2018a). Other survey questions have been similarly tweaked following the 2017 Census, as some were in use for the first time and have now been improved. As our review of prior reports showed, census taking and the development of an appropriate methodology is an iterative process. As this was the first attempt to run a national live music census, the methodology will doubtless be developed and refined over time.

As noted above, one challenge was to try to keep the *length of the surveys* to a minimum. However, it is apparent from the number of respondents who did not complete their survey – for example, only 141 completed promoter surveys out of 367 started – that our surveys may have been too extensive and thorough for some. With this in mind, we have published the full-length updated surveys in our toolkit but suggest that future live music census coordinators may wish exclude those questions that are not relevant to their area, particularly those identified as 'additional'.⁶

⁶ We note, however, that using similar sets of survey questions allows for more substantive comparisons across censuses.

There is also the question of whether a UK-wide census is appropriate and, particularly, how a national overview works in relation to local censuses. Previous censuses have been mostly local or regional and this was the first time in the world, we believe, that an attempt had been made to combine a local and national live music census exercise in this way. The advantage of undertaking a local live music census is that it can galvanize, or be galvanized by, the locale in which it takes place, particularly if, as with the examples above, there is a local issue that needs addressing, as was the case with noise control in Edinburgh. The disadvantage is, of course, its locality, in the sense that it can only offer a local perspective rather than a national one, and hence is of less interest to national policy-makers. The advantage of undertaking a *national* census is that it garners national interest, including national media attention. However, one corresponding disadvantage is that the local focus can get diluted.

There is also the issue of *nomenclature*. The advantage of the word 'census' is that for most adults, a census is something of which they have experience, and they understand that it involves counting and data. However, in statistical terms, a census means that everyone in the population is included, which was obviously not the case here. Indeed, and particularly with the audience surveys, there will always be an element of self-selection regarding participation in this type of project.

Finally, we were always conscious of the desire for a 'big number', which politicians, policy-makers and the media can easily digest and use as a barometer for the health of any sector. We did not wish to produce a figure for the value of live music across the United Kingdom – such figures are produced annually by UK Music – but we did want to do so for the three census cities, which was part of the reason for engaging a statistician. We are aware of the pros and cons of producing such

figures, but also conscious that the interest of the parties mentioned earlier might be limited without them.

<H1>Conclusion

*<NP>*As we can attest, a live music census is a time-consuming, resource-intensive project. Added complexities arise from its reliance on volunteers to collect the data and members of the public to fill out the surveys. Furthermore, venue staff and promoters are busy people and not always inclined towards filling out survey forms. There is also the related matter of 'survey fatigue' in which surveys are so commonplace that overall participation declines.⁷

*<TEXT>*Data collection for a live music census involves a substantial amount of preparation and follow-up work, which requires a dedicated local census coordinator with sufficient time and resources. Another consideration is whether data from one night of the year can be grossed up to represent the whole year. In truth, one would need resources beyond what are realistically available to conduct a census that was able to collect all listings data about a locale, to send sufficient volunteers to every single venue on the snapshot census date, and to collect detailed data on every musician, venue and promoter after the event. Our results are therefore, and necessarily, conservative rather than overly optimistic since we obviously could not collect data from every audience member, venue, musician or promoter who was active on the snapshot census date. As with previous census

⁷ Indeed, while our venue surveys were still open, another survey was sent to venues by one of our project partners, and researchers at one of the affiliate census institutions conducted a survey around audiences' musical participation around the same time as the city's own live music census.

exercises, then, we too have to say that we have done the best we can, given the time and resources available.

To conclude, our experience of live music censuses is wide-ranging, from reviewing other efforts to conducting our own projects across multiple cities and, for the first time, working to combine these into a national picture. As will be evident from this chapter, the process is far from straightforward. Attempting to balance geographical, sectorial and – perhaps above all – definitional concerns makes live music census taking something of a differential equation, with co-dependent parameters often in flux. Logistical considerations mix with political considerations both internal to the sector (the live music industry) and related to its context (local councils or national cultural policy, for example). It is, however, this last aspect that, while in some respects the most potentially fraught, offers a key incentive. Few, if any, researchers want their work to take place in a vacuum. And while there are potential qualms about the plethora of live music censuses constituting a trend or fashion, there is a concomitant potential illustrated, for example, in Melbourne and Edinburgh – and, we hope, by the UK-wide census – for these exercises to make a real difference to the material conditions of producing live music.

Fashion or not, policy-makers are familiar with – reliant on, even – the language of censuses. They therefore provide a useful way for researchers to insert themselves into the policy process. This inevitably means ‘getting ones hands dirty’ and potentially fingers burnt. But it also affords the chance to marry qualitative and quantitative data in a way that aligns industry and policy engagement with primary research. Like the census reports it describes, our account is replete with caveats and cautionary notes. Bearing these in mind, though, we would still affirm the

overall value – as researchers and supporters of live music – of standing up and being counted.

<H1>References

Becker, Howard (1982), *Art Worlds*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Behr, Adam, Brennan, Matt and Cloonan, Martin (2014), *The Cultural Value of Live Music from the Pub to the Stadium*, Edinburgh: Live Music Exchange,

<http://livemusicexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Cultural-Value-of-Live-Music-Pub-to-Stadium-report.pdf>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

Behr, Adam, Webster, Emma, and Brennan, Matt (2015), *Edinburgh Live Music Census 2015: Pilot Study*, Edinburgh: Live Music Exchange,

<http://livemusicexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/Edinburgh-Live-Music-Census-Report.pdf>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

Behr, Adam, Brennan, Matt, and Cloonan, Martin (2016a), 'Cultural value and cultural policy: Some evidence from the world of live music', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 22:3, pp. 403–18.

Behr, Adam, Brennan, Matt, Cloonan, Martin, Frith, Simon and Webster, Emma (2016b), 'Live concert performance: An ecological approach', *Rock Music Studies*, 3:1, pp. 5–23.

____ (2019), *Live Music Exchange*, <http://livemusicexchange.org/about/>. Accessed 5 April 2019.

Belfiore, Eleanora and Bennett, Oliver (2010), 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14:2, pp. 121–42.

Bucks New University/UK Music (2016), *Bristol Live Music Census*, London: UK Music, [www.ukmusic.org/assets/general/Bristol Live Music Report.pdf](http://www.ukmusic.org/assets/general/Bristol_Live_Music_Report.pdf). Accessed 31 October 2018.

City of Adelaide (2014), *Live Music Action Plan 2014–2016*. Adelaide: City of Adelaide.

_____. (2017). *Live Music Action Plan 2014–2016 Final Report*. Adelaide: City of Adelaide.

http://dmzweb.adelaidecitycouncil.com/agendasminutes/files08/Attachments/Council_27_June_2017_Item_12.9_Link_5.pdf. Accessed 31 October 2018.

City of Melbourne (2014), *Music Strategy: Supporting and Growing the City's Music industry*, Melbourne: City of Melbourne.

City of Sydney (2014), *Live Music and Performance Action Plan*, Sydney: City of Sydney.

Davyd, Mark (2016), 'We need to protect the UK's music venues before it's too late', *Metro*, 10 November, <http://metro.co.uk/2016/11/10/we-need-to-protect-the-uks-music-venues-before-its-too-late-6249168/>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

Frith, Simon and Cloonan, Martin (2019), 'Live Music Project', University of Glasgow, <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/cca/research/music/projectsandnetworks/livemusproject/>. Accessed 5 April 2019.

Frith, Simon, Brennan, Matt, Cloonan, Martin and Webster, Emma (2010), '[Analysing live music in the UK: Findings one year into a three-year research project](#)', www.iaspmjournal.net/index.php/IASPM_Journal/index. Accessed 31 October 2018.

_____. (2013), *The History of Live Music in Britain, Volume 1: 1950–1967: From The Dance Hall to the 100 Club*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Homan, Shane (2014), 'Livability and creativity: The case for Melbourne music precincts', *City Culture and Society*, 5:3, pp. 149–55.

Live Music Office (2014), *The Economic and Cultural Value of Live Music in Australia 2014*, Sydney: Live Music Office, <http://livemusicoffice.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/LiveMusic-report-FINAL.pdf>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

_____ (2015), 'Hosting live music in South Australia', 26 June, <http://livemusicoffice.com.au/hosting-live-music-in-south-australia/>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

Mayor of London's Music Venues Taskforce (2015), *London's Grassroots Music Venues Rescue Plan*, London: Greater London Authority, https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/londons_grassroots_music_venues_-_rescue_plan_-_october_2015.pdf. Accessed 31 October 2018.

Music SA/Live Music Office (2015), *Adelaide Live Music Census 2015*, <http://www.livemusicoffice.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Adelaide-Live-Music-Census-2015.pdf>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

_____ (2016), *Adelaide Live Music Census 2016*, <http://livemusicoffice.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-Adelaide-Live-Music-Census.pdf>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

Music Venue Trust (2014), *Understanding Small Music Venues: A Report by the Music Venue Trust*, London: Music Venue Trust, <http://musicvenuetrust.com/2015/03/understanding-small-music-venues-a-report-by-the-music-venue-trust/>. Accessed 31 October 2018.

_____ (2019), 'After 4-year campaign agent of change is here', <http://musicvenuetrust.com/2018/08/4-year-campaign-agent-change/>. Accessed 5 April 2019.

Music Victoria/City of Melbourne (2012), *Victorian Live Music Census 2012*,
Melbourne: Music Victoria/City of Melbourne,
[http://www.musicvictoria.com.au/assets/Documents/Victorian Live Music Census
2012.pdf](http://www.musicvictoria.com.au/assets/Documents/Victorian_Live_Music_Census_2012.pdf). Accessed 31 October 2018.

Page, Will and Carey, Chris (2010), *Adding Up the UK Music Industry for 2009*,
London: PRS for Music.

_____ (2011), *Adding Up the Music Industry for 2010*, London: PRS for Music.

Titan Music Group (2015), *The Austin Music Census*, Austin: City of Austin
Development Department, [www.austintexas.gov/department/atxmusic-census-
and-needs-assessment-survey](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/atxmusic-census-and-needs-assessment-survey). Accessed 31 October 2018.

[UK Music](http://www.ukmusic.org) (2015), *Measuring Music: 2015 Report*,
<https://www.ukmusic.org/research/measuring-music-2015/>. Accessed 4 June
2019.

_____ (2016), *Measuring Music: 2016 Report*,
<https://www.ukmusic.org/research/measuring-music-2016/>. Accessed 4 June
2019.

_____ (2017a), *Measuring Music: 2017 Report*,
<https://www.ukmusic.org/research/measuring-music-2017/>. Accessed 26 January
2019.

_____ (2017b), *Wish You Were Here 2017: Music Tourism's Contribution to the UK
Economy*, London: UK Music.

_____ (2018a), *Measuring Music: 2018 Report*,
<https://www.ukmusic.org/research/measuring-music-2018/>. Accessed 26 January
2019.

- _____ (2018b), 'News: Measuring music 2018', <https://www.ukmusic.org/news/measuring-music-2018>. Accessed 5 April 2019.
- _____ (2019), 'Music academic partnership: MAP', <https://www.ukmusic.org/skills-academy/music-academic-partnership/>. Accessed 5 April 2019.
- Webster, Emma, Brennan, Matt, Behr, Adam and Cloonan Martin (2018a), 'Glossary', *UK Live Music Census*, <http://uklivemusiccensus.org/#glossary>. Accessed 5 April 2019.
- _____ (2018b), 'Toolkit', *UK Live Music Census*, <http://uklivemusiccensus.org/#toolkit>. Accessed 5 April 2019.
- Webster, Emma, Brennan, Matt, Behr, Adam, Cloonan Martin, with Ansell, Jake (2018c), *Valuing Live Music: The UK Live Music Census 2017 Report*, Live Music Exchange/University of Edinburgh/Newcastle University/University of Turku, <http://uklivemusiccensus.org/#report>. Accessed 31 October 2018.
- Williamson, John, Cloonan, Martin and Frith, Simon (2003), *The Music Industry in Scotland*, Glasgow: Scottish Enterprise.
- _____ (2011), 'Having an impact? Academics, the music industries and the problem of knowledge', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 15:5, pp. 459–47.

