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Understanding Local Jazz Ecology

An inquiry into what research is required to develop a comprehensive understanding of local jazz scenes

By

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Abstract:

This paper will examine the structure of local Jazz music economies and how the concepts of ecology (interaction between organisms and their environment) can apply to understanding and improving the health of this cultural sector. It will start by examining the academic knowledge in the related areas and then explore possible research methodology in order to better understand the economic situation of a local Jazz ecology. The methodology will then be presented in a framework for studying the Jazz ecology of Portland, Oregon. Once a research methodology has been developed, steps can be taken towards an informed understanding of local Jazz scenes. Communities will be able to effectively develop sustainable models based on the knowledge gained from researching the health of local Jazz.
Introduction

In the 21st century the concept of sustainability has become a well exercised approach in regards to solving many of humanities current issues. The principles of sustainability include preserving the well-being of the planet and quality of life as the global population grows, creates more waste, and consumes non-renewable natural resources. The same principals have also been applied to many topics beyond the scope of ecology. Some ethnomusicologists have argued that the sustainability trope has relevant applications in regards to music (Kevin F. McCarthy, 2007) (Titon, 2009). The concept of sustainable music and viewing the world as an ecosystem with different forms of music provides a basis for protecting the longevity of different musical traditions. The jazz tradition specifically, has been associated with the metaphor of ecology; however, much is still unknown about the inner workings of the jazz sector. This inquiry will define a methodology for researching the state of localized jazz sectors through an ecological perspective. Analysis will then focus on the relationship between musicians and their local community.

Since the mid 1940’s the musical tradition of Jazz has not entertained the same degree of public popularity as in its early years. That early time period represents a culture unique to a particular generation, and the development of an original American art form. However, as the style of the music changed following the Second World War, and the next generation of youth became interested in other music and forms of entertainment, the popularity of Jazz music changed (Gioia, 2011). In modern day America the music of Jazz is enjoyed by a minority of the population. There are venues and bars in many communities which continue to showcase Jazz
music on a regular basis and there are also hundreds of Jazz festivals across the United States each year. Jazz music is also part of the education system at a collegiate level, where one can receive degrees in jazz studies, as well as in many public middle, and high schools. Although the jazz tradition is not part of the mainstream culture in modern America, it is certainly still active in many cities across the country.

This study will address jazz ecology through the analysis of research relevant to the study of the jazz sector, and the procedures of the research. The aim is to develop an effective research method for studying local jazz ecosystems. With the knowledge gained from such a study, a given community could then make informed decisions about how to best develop and protect their jazz ecosystem.

Why is Jazz important?

“Jazz does not belong to one race or culture, but is a gift that America has given the world.”
— Ahmad Alaadeen (Johnson, 2011)

Jazz is not only an art form but a century long tradition of music, and an original segment of American culture which has important historically relevant events and periods of time. Although jazz has not been part of the mainstream culture in the United States since after the Second World War, it has lived on and changed dramatically through the years often inspiring other mediums of art and creating ripples in the evolution of music. The lineage of jazz is complex and diverse as it continues to evolve and change with every new generation. However,
perhaps one of the most important aspects of the jazz tradition is the generational overlap and handing down of the music from one generation to the next. What jazz represents is not only an artistic evolution, but an aspect of human culture which creates social groups unrestricted by generational barriers.

Consider the work of Theodor Adorno and his theories of music and sociology. In Adorno’s view, the act of human beings sharing and experiencing music creates social groups. He states that the, “compositional subject is no individual thing, but a collective one. All music, however individual or particular it may be stylistically, possesses an inalienable collective substance: every sound says ‘we’.” (Adorno, 1999). This phenomenon is not limited to links between separate generations. In its early years, Jazz became an international art form. It spread quickly with the movement of United States military forces across the globe during the Second World War. Jazz music now represents a population which transcends not only age, but also ethnic and national boundaries.

This phenomenon can certainly be claimed about other forms of music and artistic traditions. Adorno, in other words, was not speaking specifically of Jazz music when he wrote on his theories of music and sociology. In his essay, On Popular Music, Adorno differentiates between what he describes as “serious music,” and “popular music.” He explores the process of differentiating between styles of music and then examines the mental process of listening. In regards to listening to popular music he said, “The moment of recognition is that of effortless sensation.” (Adorno, 2002). In this way, popular music does not engage the same mental stimuli as “serious music”. However, when Adorno first published this particular essay in 1941, jazz at the time would have been considered within the realm of popular music. Through the following
decade new forms of Jazz would emerge and represent a musical development towards serious music.

Modern jazz developed with such musicians as Charlie Parker and Dizzie Gilespie. This particular shift, from the popular music styles of swing to the now more virtuosic and embellished styles of Be-bop, marked the first major pivotal point for jazz as it became serious, or art music. The second major pivot could be considered Miles Davis’s release of the album *Kind of Blue* in 1959. The writer Richard Williams discussed the event at length in his book *The Blue Moment*, and describes the effect the album had on music. He stated that, “Like the ripples of a pebble dropped into an ever-expanding lagoon, the effect created by *Kind of Blue* spread far beyond its immediate environment.” (Williams, 2009). Jazz evolved swiftly and by the 1960’s the new styles hardly resembled the early musical traditions of swing and ragtime.

These new developments in jazz can certainly be described as “serious music.” The famous music critic Philip Larkin, who grew up in Britain before WWII enjoying the sounds of traditional Jazz and listening to records with his friends in their Oxford dormitories wrote disdainfully about the modern jazz sounds he heard after the war. “It wasn’t like listening to Jazz at all. Nearly every characteristic of the music had been neatly inverted.” (Larkin, 1996) However, later on in his account of the new music, he likens the new music of musicians such as Charlie Parker and Miles Davis to modern art, “How glibly I had talked of Jazz, and Parker was a modern Jazz player just as Picasso was a modern painter and Pound a modern poet. I hadn’t realized that Jazz had gone from Lascaux to Jackson Pollock in fifty years, but now I realized it relief came flooding in upon me after nearly two years’ despondency.” Larkin draws a clear connection between the development of jazz and its cultural value. For instance, if this modern culture has decided to value many forms of modern art then it should in fact find value in modern
Jazz has spread across the world. There are hundreds of annual jazz festivals. One can earn degrees at many different universities in jazz studies. All these things point to the fact that there is most certainly a modern cultural value for jazz.

Jazz Ecology

“The live music scene in any city is an ecosystem. Its health depends on a number of interrelated factors.” (McSweeney, 2013) The metaphoric linkage between the study of economics and ecology is not a new concept (Sui, 2009), but this metaphor is particularly relevant when discussing the economic structure of jazz ecosystems. Jazz is an art form which is primarily supported by live performance revenue (Thomson & Cook, 2012). Therefore the health of a local economy and audience will have an effect on jazz in that area, and on the overall health of the local jazz scene.

The concept of an ecosystem is not simply a supererogatory substitute for economics. That is to say that the jazz ecology does not simply mean the jazz economy. Understanding the ecology of a jazz scene means much more than studying the pure economics of the area. Consider the definition of ecology; it means the study of how a group of living organisms relate to their environment. In the jazz ecology, artists are the organisms whereas the audience and local economy make up the environment with which the artists interact with and rely upon. In order to understand the ecology of a jazz scene, one must research these three topics and then analyze how they interact within in context of their ecosystem.

Jazz music is inherently an art form which relies on the local population and place (Collier, 1996). Many forms of art and music in the 21st century economy can exist and thrive
entirely through large-scale commercial distribution and the internet. Jazz music does not lend itself to that sort of economic context; it is a live art. Whereas much modern pop music (particularly electronic based music) can be created in a studio located anywhere, by an individual and then be distributed to consumers across the world via the internet. Jazz music thrives in an environment with live musicians, patrons, and venues. It is an art which relies on a geographic community in which the artists are supported by the local economy. Musicians rely on their community and physical place in order to produce their art (Becker, 2004). Jazz cannot exist in its traditional sense without this local support.

Jazz ecology is therefore a micro analysis approach to researching jazz music and is aptly so, considering that jazz music is primarily local art. Research exists which has examined the music on a large, national scale. Studies also have been done which deal with jazz musicians, art economics, and jazz in relation to place but no research has focused on jazz ecology, or the dynamic relationship between jazz musicians and their environment (local communities).

Literature review

There is currently a limited amount of research concerning the micro economics of jazz music in the context of local scenes. Studies which have researched the relevant aspects of the jazz ecology will be examined based on their methodological relevance to the proposed research. Each of these studies was carried out with different goals in mind, and each represents separate approaches (sample methods, analytical models, etc) to researching the music sector.
The 2011 study by Kristin Thomason and Jean Cook, with the Future of Music Coalition (FMC), examined the revenue systems and sources of musicians in the United States (Thomson & Cook, 2012). Mykaell Riley and Dave Laing with the University of Westminster conducted a survey of the jazz sector in Great Britain in 2006 in an attempt to estimate the economic impact of the jazz scene in the UK and measure the value of jazz music in the country (Laing, 2006). They studied musicians and the economic aspects of the British jazz sector. Thirdly, Joan Jeffri with the Research Center for Arts and Culture (RCAC) published a study called Changing the Beat in 2003, which examined the jazz scenes of 4 major US cities and compared the findings from each metropolitan center (Jeffri, 2003). Her research was conducted by studying the musicians in these areas. The Jazz Arts Group of Columbus, Ohio conducted a nationwide survey of jazz audiences entitled The Jazz Audience Initiative (JAI) and analyzed their data by developing and applying typology models (Brown, 2013).

In order to develop a methodology for researching jazz ecology this review will consider the process of examining each aforementioned aspect relevant to the understanding of jazz ecology (the musicians, the audience, the local economy). In regards to the research of jazz musicians, the FMC, RCAC, and Value of Jazz in Britain studies will be considered; each of these used a different process for surveying and interviewing jazz musicians. Audience research from the British sector study and the Columbus, Ohio study will be compared to determine a suitable methodology for surveying jazz audiences. Finally the process with which the study of jazz in Britain assessed the jazz sector will be considered as a framework for reviewing the economic aspects of a jazz sector.

When discussing local economy, each of the primary economic aspects relevant to jazz (venues, education, etc) will be covered separately. It should be noted that these aspects, and the
process of studying each of these aspects, may not be consistent for all jazz ecosystems. The process should be tailored to the distinct and unique characteristics of the subject community.

**Researching the Musicians**

The primary piece of any artistic community is the artists. Jazz musicians represent the organisms in the jazz ecology trope. If correlations between the musicians and the environment are to be made, then a certain body of data needs to be collected on the musicians. Three studies being considered included survey research of jazz musicians; the methodologies and findings of those studies will be compared in order to outline an effective process for studying jazz musicians.

Jeffri’s research (Jeffri, 2003) as well as the study of jazz in Britain (Laing, 2006) focused on the jazz music sector whereas the Future of Music Coalition (FMC) study was concerned with musicians of all genres and professions. However, in regards to the FMC study, a large portion of the data sample identified themselves as jazz musicians, and in response the researchers published data dealing specifically with the jazz sector (Thomson & Cook, 2012). They reported demographic information, basic income figures, education, and income sources for both jazz musicians in the AFM (American Federation of Musicians union) as well as non-union musicians (Thomson & Cook, 2012). Thompson and Cook then compared their results to the data collected by Joan Jeffri nearly ten years prior. Although the FMC study was a national survey of all types of musicians, the methodology of the interviews and the online survey from both the FMC, and RCAC studies was similar enough that the data could effectively be compared in this way. Each
of these three studies reported data concerning the jazz sector, and used a combination of interviews and surveys in order to research individual musicians.

Aside from the fact that the FMC study was national, rather than dealing with any specific metropolitan area, and that it dealt with all musical professions, another primary difference between the two studies was the sampling methodology. The RCAC study utilized a Respondent-Driven Sampling (RDS) method (Jeffri, 2003). This process provides compensation to any interview subject who refers more subjects that successfully complete the survey. This process was designed as a technique for studying communities which involve networking, and which typically need to be infiltrated by a researcher. Utilizing a similar sampling method, known as snowball sampling, the FMC study asked for respondent referrals but did not provide any compensation due to more limited funding resources (Thomson & Cook, 2012). However, the method of snowball sampling relies on the same principle as the RDS method; having subjects who complete the interview process refer further subjects.

The effectiveness of either of these sample methods relies on the initial targeted sample. The research team will select a group of subjects based on their position in the community and if those initial subjects are not diverse, the resulting referrals may suffer overlap or may not represent key aspects of the community being studied. Developing a strong research sampling method is absolutely crucial in order for the study results to be generalized to the community being sampled, and therefore useful outside the scope of the research question. In other words, if the sample does not effectively represent the jazz community then the resulting data will not answer the research question and not provide relevant knowledge.
For example, consider if the research question was dealing with orchestral musicians and the research team selected only violinists for their initial round of interviews. They may consequently run the risk of missing vital aspects of the musical community in the research. The results would therefore not be suitable for generalization. In this example it would be more effective to ensure that the initial study sample included a few string musicians, as well as brass players, woodwinds, percussionists and even a conductor; in this fashion more of the orchestral professions are represented in the initial sample. It may also be ideal, depending on the research questions, to ensure that the target sample included musicians who were not union members, musicians who were not primary orchestral players (musicians on the substitute list for an orchestra in the case that musicians were unable to perform), and musicians who were not solely orchestral players but participated in different musical professions such as teaching, recording, or composing.

The RCAC study also utilized a process which allowed them to estimate the population of jazz musicians in each study city. This data is helpful when developing an understanding of an area’s jazz ecology in that it represents the size of the area’s artistic community. The process entails mathematically comparing data values from the union (AFM) based survey and general musician community using a “capture-recapture” methodology in each metropolitan center. “In order to calculate the universe of jazz musicians in each city, the number of jazz artists identified in the union study (capture) is divided by the proportion of jazz artists who are determined to be union members based on the RDS survey results (recapture).” (Jeffri, 2003)

An example of this process is in that RCAC’s study found the proportion of musicians in New York who identified themselves as jazz musicians was .701 (415 jazz musicians out of 592 union-survey respondents). This means that if there are 10,499 AMF union musicians in New
York at the time of the study then there should be 7,360 union jazz musicians in New York (10,499 x .701) (Thomson & Cook, 2012). This is the capture portion of the estimation and represents an estimate of the number of self-identifying jazz musicians who are members of the AMF in New York. The recapture methodology relies on the data collected during the RDS interview survey of jazz musicians in New York. During the interview RCAC would ask the musician if they were a member of the AMF and then that data would be combined with the number found in the capture analysis.

The formula looks like this: \[ PA = \frac{(Sba \times Nb)}{(Sba \times Nb + Sab \times Na)} \]

PA represents the proportion of union members in New York

Na is the mean network size of union members (298.2)

Nb is the mean network size of nonunion members (175.2)

Sab is the proportion of nonunion members recruited by union members (.512)

Sba is the proportion of union members recruited by nonunion members (.252)

The resulting PA, or proportion of union members among the musicians in New York at the time of the study, is .22301 (which means that for every 100 musicians 22.301 of those are union members). Finally when one divides the number of union jazz musicians (7,360) by this proportion (.22301) then the resulting number is an estimate of the number of total jazz musicians in the city. 7,360/.223 = 33,003. Using this process Jeffri estimated 18,733 jazz musicians in San Francisco, 1,723 in New Orleans and as stated before 33,003 in New York (Thomson & Cook, 2012).
Thomason and Cook also conducted a case study segment of their research in which they analyzed financial reports from individual artists of various professions (Thomson & Cook, 2012). This case study analysis provided quantifiable data showing how individual artists made their revenue. FMC published two jazz related financial case studies; one case studied examined the records of a jazz bandleader/composer and the second of a sideman/bandleader. The bandleader/composer’s finances from 2006-2011 were analyzed; during this time he made 77.8% of his income from live performance revenue. However, the research showed that 80% of his total revenue over this period was spent on music business related expenses. In contrast the sideman/bandleader, studied from 2004-2010, made 70% of his revenue between work as a teacher, administration work, and as a sideman. He effectively subsidized his limited creative work as a bandleader by working as a sideman. During this period he reported working with 81 different ensembles in order to sustain the amount of gig-work he needed to survive. His business related expenses take up about 50% of his gross revenue and are primarily attributed to touring costs (hotels, transportation, etc) and fees paid to sidemen.

This process was utilized in order to balance out certain limitations of studying revenue streams via interviews and surveys. In an interview the researcher cannot ask about expenses, income, or actual amounts of money due to research ethics. However, in the confidential case study analysis they can analyze this data in depth and look at the numbers. The major limitation of utilizing these case studies is that without extensive resources it is impossible to analyze a large number of the reports due to the nature of this type of research. Financial records for self-employed musicians are likely complex and extensive based on the nature of their revenue streams (Thomson & Cook, 2012). A case study of this nature is also more effective if it shows data collected from multiple years and tracked over time. Furthermore, only analyzing a few
individuals in this manner means dealing with the limitations associated with a small sample size, including a low degree of representation of the study area. This data can’t be generalized and applied to the common jazz artist. Its relevance is only in relation to the specific subjects it represents.

Conducting case-studies, surveys, and interviews in tandem produces a more complete and structured picture of the jazz ecology. The Future of Music Coalition utilized all three of these processes in their study for this very reason. Whether or not the limitations are such that the data cannot be generalized to the rest of the music community, is still a concern. If future case studies of this nature were conducted in the context of another study, it would be prudent to compare the findings to examples of the FMC research. This could consequently strengthen the validity of this body of research.

Both the RCAC and FMC studies were able to provide an informative, although different, representation of the current status of individual jazz artists and, in the case of Jeffri’s study, a relationship between the musician’s data and their geographic location (Jeffri, 2003). The study also provided some qualitative insight into what action the jazz artists believed would help the growth and health of the jazz sector but, Changing the Beat did not examine the state of the micro economic environment of New Orleans, San Francisco, or New York jazz. Although we have an informed knowledge as to the demographic income, education, and support system data for the individual jazz musician in these areas, FMC and RCAC did not provide any quantifiable data concerning the economy of these cities. Understanding the economy is part of understanding the area’s ecology.
Riley and Laing also studied jazz musicians in a similar fashion. Conducting interviews and a survey distributed by mail was part of their attempt at defining the impact and value of jazz music in Britain. They sent the questionnaire to about 3,200 UK jazz artists for their survey and had a respondent rate of 30%. Based on the data collected they were able to outline certain demographic information about the musicians (Laing, 2006). This data included the percentage of total musicians located in each region with more than half of the respondents reporting that they lived in London or South-East England. According to the report, UK jazz musicians also gain the highest percentages of their income from live performances (49.1%) and teaching (20%). Riley and Laing also reported data concerning the average income of the UK jazz musician: “the majority of jazz musicians continued to be paid less than the nation average wage of £22,248 (about $30,364) in 2005… only 21% received more than £20,000 (about $27,296) in 2004 with over half (53%) earning under £10,000 (about $13,648)” (Laing, 2006). Their income research also reported that 33.9% of respondents earned less than £5,000. Demographic data showed percentages based on primary instrument, gender, ethnicity and age group. 14% of respondents were under 36 years of age with 86% above (Laing, 2006). This generation gap depicts a possible decline in the future of UK jazz.

Similar to the previous studies, Riley and Laing differentiated their survey groups between AMF union members and non-union jazz musicians. They sent out 2,000 postal questionnaires to general jazz musicians and 1,200 questionnaires to union members. Since there would be unavoidable crossover, and some musicians would receive two questionnaires, Riley and Laing included a reminder to only submit one response in the
union questionnaires; this limited double submission. Response crossover is a particularly troublesome issue in research since it results in convoluted data.

The postal survey also contains many of the same limitations as the online surveys conducted in the previous studies, but Riley and Laing did not conduct interviews or financial case studies on musicians. Their interviews focused on other prominent figures in the British Jazz ecosystem such as promoters, educators, media publishers, etc (Laing, 2006). Financial case studies were aimed at providing an understanding of the economic impact of certain sub-sectors of the jazz scene such as higher education institutions, festivals, and funding agencies, both government and private. This left their data at a higher risk of effect from the research limitations associated with surveying. However, Riley and Laing presented a more comprehensive understanding of their jazz ecosystem based on the fact that their research was not focused completely on the study of the musicians.

It is important, for the purpose of understanding the interactions between musicians and their local environment that the data collected from researching musicians be as detailed and reliable as possible. Researching and understanding the artists of a local jazz ecosystem represents half of jazz ecology, the environment being the other half.

Researching the audience

The audience for jazz music makes up a significant and important portion of the environment in a jazz ecosystem. A reliable audience is critical to the success of jazz musicians since the majority of their income is derived from revenue collected at live performances (Thomson & Cook, 2012), (Jeffri, 2003). Research conducted by FMC and Jeffri focused mainly
on artists rather than audiences and neither study reported any relevant data concerning audiences. Riley and Laing, alternatively, did represent an understanding of UK jazz audiences. However, they did not conduct their own research of jazz audiences. Instead, they compiled, analyzed, and summarized previously existing data from other surveys regarding jazz audiences. The nature of this data ranged depending on the survey, but many of the studies included data such as: percentage of event-goers attending a jazz-related event in the past 12 months, age groups at any given jazz event compared to the general population, gender demographics, and number of jazz events attended (Laing, 2006). Riley and Laing also tracked data between studies and therefore were able to show changes in jazz audiences over time.

The use of data compiled from separate survey studies results in unreliable data sets due to varying methodologies and research questions. In other words, the data which was compiled by Riley and Laing could contain mix-matched results as a result of the different methodologies from the various studies included. On the other hand, compiling existing data in this fashion is the most efficient process for seeking out trends and changes over time, because it does not require conducting any new survey research. The Jazz Audience Initiative (JAI), a more in depth audience survey conducted by The Jazz Arts Group of Columbus, utilized two surveys in order to create segmentation models for jazz ticket buyers and prospective ticket buyers (Brown, 2013). These segmentation models organized the audience survey respondents into groups based on their data, and allowed the researchers to classify the jazz audience. The first survey was targeted at jazz event-goers nationwide through a series of different types of event spaces, festivals, and venues. The second half of the research investigated “music lovers” in Columbus, Ohio who do not attend jazz events. This type of survey requires far more resources than the approach used by Riley and Laing, although it provides a more detailed and comprehensive
picture of the jazz audience. However, there is no way to show changes over time unless data is collected at different periods of time, this process provides a snapshot.

The data presented by Riley and Laing in regards to audiences showed the percentage of adults attending jazz concerts in England grew from 5% in a 2001 survey to 7.5% in a 2005 survey, which equates to 3.1 million adults attending jazz concerts (Laing, 2006). However they also reported from a study in 2003 that 54% of jazz audience members had only attended one jazz concert that year; 20% had attended 2 concerts, 16% attended 3-5, 6% attended 6-10 and only 4% attending 11 or more. This meant nearly three-quarters of the jazz audience attended only one or two concerts. The resulting percentage (26%) of adult audience members would be considered the regularly-attending audience. Therefore, 1.6% of the entire population is considered regularly-attending, about 500,000 adults (Laing, 2006). Riley and Laing did not only attempt to measure the size of the jazz audience, but also provided a basic context with which to classify the jazz event-goers. They did this based on the number of events the subjects had reported attending the year of the study.

Both reports provide limited data concerning jazz in relation to locality. They are, in other words, a macro level analysis of the jazz audience. In order to understand a local jazz ecosystem the data would need to be in relation to a particular metropolitan area. Mentioned before was Riley and Laing’s data which illuminated the location of jazz musicians across the United Kingdom. It showed that 30% of jazz musicians were located in London, 20% in South East England, and 12% in South West England (Laing, 2006). There is the possibility that a correlation exists between the concentration of jazz musicians and jazz audiences, but such a conclusion cannot be made since the data on musicians cannot be generalized to audiences. It would be informative to analyze the audiences in London and perhaps South East England.
separately from the rest of the country to see if this correlation exists. Whatever the result this
data would prove applicable in the scope of the research.

The Jazz Audience Initiative event-goers survey was sent to ticket-buyers from a range of
different events, festivals, university performance programs, and jazz venues nationwide (Brown,
2013). The data represents audience types with some correlation to place but only to the sources
used, not the local scenes as a whole. Furthermore, the data collected from the university
samples was combined and represented a portion of the study sample as a whole, rather than
differentiating based on location. Although the data was collected from different local jazz
scenes around the country, it did not demonstrate a relationship to location. The research is still
relevant in that it thoroughly describes the jazz audience from a national perspective, although it
is not as applicable in regards to local ecosystems.

The Columbus study had 4,855 respondents from a sample of 37,614 nationwide (Brown,
2013). The researchers then applied a cluster-analysis segmentation model which categorized
the event-goers based on different criteria into six different typologies. The typologies include:
knowledgeable musicians (14%), jazz-centered omnivores (17%), urban-culture dabblers (17%),
standard-fare partners (19%), social butterflies (20%), and comfort seekers (12%). Data from the
respondents was then analyzed to show how qualities compared between these different
typologies. This sort of analysis would be extremely useful in a local study, however do to a
small sample size of any one scene, this six-typology model of data analysis would not work.
The large sample collected by JAI allowed for a diverse analysis with large numbers of
respondents fitting each typology accordingly. With a smaller sample the strength of the model
is less certain, and therefore possibly uncharacteristic of the greater jazz audience. Depending on
the sample size drawn from the local scene, it could be possible to organize the findings into
fewer typologies. However, the JAI researchers noted that cluster analysis with fewer typologies was, “not able to provide enough discretion to represent the diversity of jazz buyers within this composite sample”. (Brown, 2013) This model is therefore not appropriate for the type of localized research intended.

If the methodologies utilized between these studies were applied in the context of a community-specific survey, the information gathered could prove particularly relevant in terms of building an understanding of local jazz ecology. With a small study sample it would not be possible to apply the typology model utilized in the JAI study, however it would be possible to compare the data collected to that of the JAI study and analyze based on the already developed typology model. In this way, the data collected in Portland, even if it is from a small sample, could illuminate a more detailed understanding of the Portland jazz audience. The result would be a reflection of Portland’s jazz audience typologies, and the analysis would be based off of the model developed from a much larger audience sample.

Researching the Local Economy

The second half of the environment in a jazz ecosystem is the local economy. The economy could be understood to involve a number of different aspects which interact with the jazz sector. Much like the status, size, and structure of musicians and audiences in a community, the local economy will be different from one ecosystem to another.

Riley and Laing researched numerous aspects within the UK jazz sector aside from just the musicians and the audience. These included live festivals and events, public subsidy for jazz
promoters, recording and composition publishing, media coverage of jazz, as well as the support and structure for jazz education (Laing, 2006). The UK survey was a large-scale nationally focused study and some of these aspects, for example publishing data, would be considered part of the large scale economy and difficult to study in the scope of a local ecology.

A questionnaire was sent out to jazz promoters in the UK who were listed on the Jazz Services database. This allowed Riley and Laing to collect data on the events which the promoters were involved with. They found that about 200 festivals are held annually in the UK and over 50% of those festivals have an audience size of over 1000 patrons (Laing, 2006). They also collected data in relation to non-festival “gigs” such as: number of jazz gig promoters organized annually, percentages of promoters in relation to an average audience sizes, the percentages of promoters in relation to the price of admission to their average event, percentage of promoters in relation to the types of venues used, venue type in relation to the number of jazz events held, type of venue in relation to average audience size, and promoters in relation to subsidy sponsorship they received for the events. Apart from the promoter’s questionnaire, Riley and Laing also reviewed the Jazz Services national publication which lists events and compared data from 2003 and 2004. They found that the number of events grew from 439 in 2003 to 519 in 2004. They also found that the average audience size, average ticket price, and average band fee also grew in 2004 (Laing, 2006).

Researching event data is of vital importance for understanding the status of a local economy and its opportunity for the jazz artists in the area. This data represents how many performance opportunities are available in the local environment. The amount of event sponsorship and presence of festivals is also important to the ecology. Festivals often bring musical acts from other locations and provide a significant amount of public visibility for the
jazz scene due to increased media coverage and attention. According to the data collected in the Jazz Audience Initiative, festivals can also attract audience members who are more likely to attend large festivals than small independent jazz events (Brown, 2013).

In order to study the media coverage of the jazz sector Riley and Laing conducted a content analysis of all British print and broadcast media over two separate 4-week periods (Laing, 2006). They noted any coverage of jazz and catalogued the frequency. They also utilized the analysis as a means to analyze their list of jazz venues in order to check the frequency with which live events occurred. Based on this analysis they attempted to estimate the number of venues and events in the UK every year. Riley and Laing describe three different types of live jazz venues/events: at least 550 residencies where the same band plays on a regular basis, at least 350 venues which hold regular jazz events (nightly, weekly, monthly, etc.) and finally a small number of venues, about 100, which offer jazz within a broader program of music (theaters, arts centers, symphonies, etc). Based on this process, Riley and Laing estimated at least 45,000 jazz events in Britain annually (Laing, 2006).

This sort of media analysis is likely unreliable considering that many rural or smaller venues may not be listed. Many of the residencies are located at restaurants, hotels and lounges which may not be advertising their live events since the music is for atmospheric purposes. The estimation was back-checked, however, by comparing it to an estimate constructed from the musician survey. In other words, within the survey, musicians were asked to indicate the number of live jazz events they participated in every year and an event estimate was calculated by averaging the number of events per musician and combining that average with the estimated number of musicians. A hurdle in the data, if this was applied to a local study, could arise in that many musicians tour, and the number of gigs estimated from the media could be skewed by
events from out of town artists and conversely with local artists reporting gigs they performed elsewhere. Furthermore another limitation in the media based estimate arises based on the fact that there may be a higher concentration of jazz events at different points in the year such as during holiday seasons or during local jazz festivals. Based on these limitations it is difficult to effectively estimate the number of jazz events per year, but it is still an important piece of the ecology to understand. Back-checking (or supporting) the data through multiple methodologies is crucial for supporting an estimated figure.

Another vital piece of a jazz ecosystem’s environment is the availability of education for jazz musicians. Jazz education takes many different forms (private, public school, collegiate, etc) and also serves beginners through advanced musicians. Riley and Laing studied the education system in the UK through many aspects of their research. They were able to estimate the number of private instructors based on the survey, which found that 43% of professional jazz musicians taught private students. Based on this survey they were also able to estimate the number of musicians who taught in schools (17.5%), higher education (15%), who did outreach work (6.5%), or who participated in adjudicating student ensemble competitions (4.5%) (Laing, 2006). Surveys were not the only method Riley and Laing utilized for researching the education sector; they also analyzed the higher education system by examining public records from institutions and by examining the different programs available in the UK. They then estimated the number of undergraduates in the UK studying jazz and also calculated the total amount of funding administered to various institutions in order to represent the economic impact of the education economy.
Researching the jazz ecology of Portland, Oregon

An understanding of jazz ecology relies on the research of both the musicians and the environment of a particular scene, as well as the analysis of how the different aspects within these areas interact with each other. In order to format a research method, the important factors of these areas need to be considered and weighed against the limitations of the study. The researchers will likely be dealing with small survey sample sizes from the Portland area. This is due to the relatively smaller population of the city, in comparison to many larger metropolitan areas nationwide.

Musician Interviews

The interviews will operate using a snowball sampling method. There will be two levels of referral and the target sample will contain individuals of different age groups, instruments, primary professions, etc. The goal of the interviews will be to identify key aspects of the Portland jazz ecosystem which should be investigated during the survey, as well as later portions of the research process.

Musician Survey

An online survey would be distributed to union and non-union musicians separately. The survey will ask the musician whether or not they identify as a jazz artist and allow any musician
to complete the entire survey without discrimination. Upon analysis the data will later be sorted depending on whether or not the musician identified a jazz artist. The survey will also allow the musician to indicate the amount of jazz related music they perform in relation to other musical styles. The survey will be investigating general demographics of the musicians (age, gender, race, etc), musical background (where they were from, level of education, etc), and their artist revenue streams (where and how they make their living).

Audience Survey

Surveys will be distributed via mailing lists from various jazz venues, festivals, radio stations, and programs. The survey would gather demographic information, estimated number of jazz events attended in a year, and general type of events attended (festivals, concerts, music in bars, etc). The survey would also include questions relating to the reason the respondent enjoys listening to live jazz, and whether or not they listen to jazz recordings. Audience data (such as size, estimated age, etc) would be collected in person from different types of events around the city such as bar shows, restaurant gigs, public performances, recitals, and concerts. Audience data would include by event cost and location.

Researching the Local Economy

General information about the Portland economy would be collected such as: the average cost of living, and the average annual income of a Portlander. The economic research would then focus on the Portland jazz venues, media coverage, number of Jazz events, festivals,
funding for jazz, and the education infrastructure for jazz. Interviews with venue owners, educators, frequent event sponsors, journalists, and jazz festival coordinators would investigate the inner-workings of these areas. Public financial records would also be reviewed where possible.

Data Analysis

Considering that the goal of this study is to investigate the interactions between these different aspects of jazz ecology, the analytical process of this data is vital. The data collected concerning musicians will undergo a catch and release analysis in order to estimate the current number of professional jazz musicians living in Portland, Oregon. The data will also be compared to the similar artist related studies in the United States in order to gauge the status of the Portland jazz musicians in comparison to the national figures. The artist revenue streams data will be organized in a similar fashion to the FMC study, and compared accordingly, so that the Portland jazz musician can be compared to the national average.

The audience data will be analyzed in regards to the typology model developed by the Jazz Arts Group of Columbus study. In this fashion the audience data from Portland can be compared to the national average. Utilizing the typology model will provide a more coherent and descriptive understanding of the nature of the Portland jazz audience.

The results of the research concerning the local environment will be compiled in a descriptive fashion in order to illustrate the status of the Portland music economy. Certain aspects of this data will be compared and analyzed in regards to the data collected on Portland musicians and the audience. For example, comparing the average cost of living in Portland with
the average jazz musician’s annual income could provide an insight into how easy it is for Portland musicians make an adequate living. Also information about events, venues, and festivals will be contrasted with the musician survey results in order to back-check the number of gig opportunities which exist in Portland and what percentage of musicians get the opportunity to play those events.

Conclusion

Researching the jazz scene of Portland from an ecological perspective will provide an understanding of how musicians interact with their community and the local environment. It will also provide a basis for investigating new methods of applying the principles of sustainability to the jazz scene. By utilizing these principles, a vitalization of the jazz scene could be possible as well as creating a more stable and lasting jazz tradition in Portland, Oregon. This method of research and analysis could be adapted for studying jazz in other metropolitan areas as well as other similar performance art sectors.

Bibliography


