



Sound and the City: Drum'n'Bass in Mannheim

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Since their first emergence about 30 years ago, the diverse genres of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) have evolved, proliferated and flourished in close entanglement with their, mostly urban, contexts. This intense engagement of music and locations has led to the characteristic features of many EDM styles and sounds to be closely connected to particular cities, such as Berlin and Detroit Techno or Chicago House. At the same time, EDM is characterized by remarkable mobility: new styles and genres keep emerging at an extraordinary pace all over the world and by now, EDM is produced, exchanged and consumed globally.

This specific music-place connection, this oscillation between locality and translocality, resonates in discourses of the EDM-genre of Drum'n'Bass; it is undoubtedly representative for this special mixture of connectivity and mobility that is so typical for EDM.

Drum'n'Bass emerged in very close interaction with the specific political and socio-cultural circumstances of London's post-industrial underground in the early 1990s. Very quickly, it became popular in other cities of the world, for example in Mannheim, which is by now said to be the first German city accommodating a vibrant Drum'n'Bass-scene from the early 1990s onwards.

Based on fieldwork in Mannheim, in this paper I aim at exploring specific aspects of (musical) mobility and local connectivity in Mannheim's Drum'n'Bass-scene. How do participants connect aspects of musical style, sound and aesthetics to the city of Mannheim? How are ideas about the city negotiated musically and how does this negotiation relate to translocal movements of the music? How do participants perceive other local scenes (for example in London) in relation to their own? Against the backdrop of these issues, aspects of musical fluctuation and (spatially informed?) ideals and aesthetics will be discussed.