



Taking 'Underground' Seriously - The Scene Economy of the Berlin Techno Scene

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When researching community formations around youth culture from subcultural or post-subcultural perspectives, most attention has been paid to style, resistance, identity, authenticity, class, space and societal reactions (Williams 2007). However, economic aspects remain largely unresearched or exploratory (E.G. Hesmondhalgh 1998, Bürkner & Lange 2011). So far the economy of those formations has been mostly understood as being part of the cultural industries (or creative industries by now), or not even economic at all. Based on research in the Berlin music scene around 'underground' techno and house music, I have come to different conclusions: I found micro-globalized and small-entrepreneurial infrastructures of clubs, marketing and booking agencies, shops, media and distributors run by club owners, promoters, DJs, booker and agency/club staff. They have an own value creation chain rooted in a common subcultural aesthetic and *integral* music culture – a *scene economy*. By exerting various selective subcultural orientations (non-commerciality, familiarity, sell-out) these both cultural and economic actors perform a post-modern form of *aesthetic resistance*. Although the distinctions remain blurred, they thereby produce a subcultural hierarchy (Thornton 1995) and draw boundaries around their mode of cultural production (Strachan 2007) to preserve and distinguish their aesthetic forms from those contexts interpreted as too commercialized, mass-cultural or external to the scene. By employing Bourdieu's theory of the artistic field (2001) with autonomous and commercial poles of cultural production, this approach tries to go beyond antagonistic conceptualizations of subcultures and scenes. It offers a perspective to research different spheres of production within a music culture (scene economy and cultural industry), and also recommends to consider economic and organizational structures of music scenes as a subject to subcultural research. From here, an adapted youth cultural concept that profits from both subcultural and post-subcultural readings could arise: the *aesthetic subculture*.