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Include 'em all?: Culture, politics and a local hardcore/punk scene in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

While focusing on the internal segmentation of a particular local scene, this article strives to make a conceptual contribution. At the same time, it adds itself to the available studies analyzing music scenes in East-Central Europe. It analyzes the local hardcore/punk scene in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, and demonstrates the differentiation processes at work within the scene. Basing its observations on qualitative research and long-term participant observation, the main contribution of this paper is a conceptual map of the scene's inner differentiations in relation to two main dimensions generally related to the study of subcultures—commercialization and political articulation. Our study shows how these two elements complement one another in various configurations (thus, ''including 'em all''), creating the scene's particular discursive spaces that relate in dissimilar ways to both general popular culture and politics. The main part of the paper maps out these configurations within the scene we are studying. In addition, we describe the specifics of the post-communist context characteristic of the Czech Republic and its possible implications for subcultural studies.

1. Introduction

The term ''subculture''—often implying a quasi-homogeneous social space surrounded by an adversarial mainstream society and engaged in against-the-mainstream political activities—no longer seems to capture the complex realties of contemporary cultural and political youth scenes. Our case study of one local hardcore/punk scene in the Czech Republic shows that even if we use an alternative term—''the scene''—it cannot be viewed as a compact unit with clear connections to the political activities of other social formations, such as social movements. Nor can it be

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characterized as a temporally defined expression of the cultural style and/or tastes of scene members, as some views of post-subcultural studies do. In fact, both the political and cultural elements complement one another in various configurations, thus creating a discursive space in which the characteristics and focus vary depending on the outside environment and circumstances in which the scene developed.

The goals of this article are threefold: (1) we show that the classification of a scene should reflect the geographic and social context in which heterogeneous scene networks work. This context shapes the scene's internal form and its relations towards other formations of society, including social movements. (2) We lay out the specific characteristics of the seldom-analyzed social environment of the Czech Republic.[1] We will focus on the development and changes of a particular scene since the 1990s, as well as the context in which it manifests itself. Through our case study of the local scene in the city of Brno, we will also describe the scene's varying attitudes towards political activity and its formal/informal civic participation (through non-governmental organizations—"NGOs"—or social movements). (3) Finally, we offer a conceptual map of this local scene according to two dimensions of commercialization and political articulation introduced in the theory part of the paper. To this, we add the closely related phenomenon of *do-it-yourself (DIY)* (Bennett, 2009; Dale, 2008; McKay, 1998)—the aim of which is "to combine party and protest, to blur the distinction between action and living" (McKay, 1998: 26–27). DIY refers to a particular ethics that informs activities striving for autonomy and independence from the dominant—consumer-oriented—society.[2]

The paper is organized as follows. First, we introduce the major theoretical concepts drawn upon in the article. Most importantly, we focus on the issues of commercialization and politicization in the subcultural scenes. Second, the concept of scene is discussed in particular detail. Third, we review our methodology. Fourth, we provide some background on the state of the hardcore scene in the Czech Republic and its specific post-communist context. Fifth, we track the major developments in the local scene of Brno, introduce our conceptual map, and discuss the particular sectors of our scene.

2. The scene and subcultural studies

When analyzing scenes, two particular issues stand out: scenes' relations to the mainstream consumer culture and their relation to political action (Bennett, 2004; Crossley, 2009; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Leach and Haunss, 2009; O'Connor, 2002; Shank, 1994; Straw, 1997, 2002). Concretely, the first issue concerns scenes' *commercialization and conversion of subcultural symbols*, the relations between mainstream culture and specific subcultures/scenes (Clarke et al., 1997; Hebdige, 1979; for punk/hardcore subculture, see Moore, 2005, 2007; O'Hara, 1999). Originally, this issue was particularly connected with the so-called Birmingham School of subcultural studies—the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which looked upon subculture as a "spectacular response" to the class-based subordination of the British working class, indirectly expressed in particular styles (Hebdige, 1979) and rituals

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[1] Most articles on scenes and/or DIY activism focus on Western Europe and North America. Works analyzing East European countries deal mainly with formal and organized participation and articulation not often present in informal scenes, so the informal and more diffuse ways of collective action developed in the region tend rather to drop out of the picture in the available research (but see McKay et al., 2009; Mitchell, 1996: 95–136; Szemere, 1996).

[2] As a result, "social criticism is combined with cultural creativity in what is both a utopian gesture and a practical display of resistance" (McKay, 1998: 27).

(Clarke et al., 1997). In this perspective, commercialization was the mechanism through which subcultures became co-opted by the mainstream. In his seminal work, Hebdige (1979: 96) argued that "as soon as the original innovations which signify subculture are translated into commodities and made generally available, they become frozen." The simple dichotomies, such as subculture vs. mainstream and alternative vs. commercial, that the Birmingham school adopted to describe subcultures later became the main target of criticism by the field of "post-subcultural studies" (Bennett, 1999; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004; Muggleton, 2002; Redhead et al., 1997; Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2003)—with the latter influenced by the works of Weber, Baudrillard and Maffesoli (Blackman, 2005). Post-subcultural studies criticized the CCCS's interpretation of subcultures, pointing to their heterogeneous, fluid, complex nature and "the numerous forms of 'osmotic' interaction between subcultural-related and other societal formations" (Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2003: 7).

However, others—such as Moore (2005: 233), in his study of Seattle and San Diego scenes—argued against the concept of fluidity: although "many scholars have demonstrated that the boundaries between subculture and mass culture are in reality more fluid than rigid. . .subcultural insiders do not see it this way. When music and style they believe to be 'underground' is commercialized and becomes available to a mass market, they experience a sense of alienation because they no longer own or control the culture they have produced and their expressions of rebellion are now consumed by the 'mainstream' audience they define themselves against." Although Moore raises an important point here, we can see a more diverse picture in our case of the hardcore scene in Brno and its different segments of insiders. Simply put, there are different ways through which scene members relate to commercial culture. Not all of them separate the mainstream and the subculture in the same way, and not all feel alienated whenever their scene approximates the former.

The second major issue related to the study of music scenes concerns *the degree and character of political articulation within them*. The "heroic" perspective[3] (Marchart, 2003: 85) of the CCCS understood subcultures as part of the broader context of class relations and employed the Gramscian notion of hegemony in order to explain their articulation practices. The CCCS claimed that subcultural resistance was able to secure for various youth subcultures autonomous spaces within the oppressive structure of class-based society. On the other hand, due to its imaginary character, subcultural resistance was unable to "alter the fundamentally class-based order of society" and remained restricted in terms of its real-world benefits (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004: 6). Subsequently, studies in post-subcultural theory have explicitly accepted the heterogeneous, fluid, and complex nature of recent subcultures whose identity could not be derived from a single class position. At the same time, however, post-subcultural theory has lost sight of the potentially political character of new youth (sub)cultures and has equated them with consumer choices in the postmodern "supermarket of styles." According to Redhead, old "social formations dissolved in the 1980s as the fixed identities and meanings of youth styles gave way to a supposed fluidity of positions, poses and desires and a much hailed (in some postmodernist circles) transitory, fleeting adherence to lifestyle. . ." (quoted in Martin, 2002: 77). With the change of theoretical framework came demands for a change in research perspective and terminology. The term "subculture" was now perceived as a concept that "overestimates the coherence and fixity of youth groups" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 24). Various notions such as "taste

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[3] Meaning, ". . .the romantic idea according to which the subordinate cultural groups act subversively or counter-hegemonically simply by virtue of their subordinate position" (Marchart, 2003: 85).

subcultures'' (Lewis, 1992: 141), ''neo-tribes'' (Maffesoli, 1996), and ''clubcultures'' (Redhead et al., 1997) have replaced the term subculture for the purpose of differentiating new collectivities from their class-based predecessors.

What connects both CCCS and the post-subcultural approaches, however, is the disavowal of the element of *direct political articulation* by subcultures. For the Birmingham School this kind of activity is reserved for the countercultures of the middle class (Clarke et al., 1997; Hebdige, 1979), in the second case, the political projects of subcultures are diffused into individual preferences of style and consumption. The CCCS's approach attributed the activity of subcultures to their inferior class position and their membership in a working class within the hegemonic *structures* of the society; activity manifested in the form of indirect, symbolic political and cultural action. Meanwhile post-subcultural studies, in the context of advancing globalization, pointed to the active *agency* of members of the subculture and to their musical genre and lifestyle choices (Bennett, 1999; Maffesoli, 1996; Redhead et al., 1997)—i.e., their individualism and consumerism (Blackman, 2005).

The *concept of scene* is one attempt to reformulate problematic parts of both class-based and post-subcultural analyses (for an alternative concept, see Marchart, 2003, 2004). It combines acknowledgement of the influence of external social *structures* that shape and define its members' actions, while at the same time pointing to an active role on the part of individuals and groups—their *agency* in the formation, construction, and interpretation of their specific phenomena and situations. The emphasis on the activities of individuals and their ability to act is balanced (and often limited) by an emphasis on the environment in which these scene activities take place. A focus on specific *locality*, instead of the identification of a few general subcultures based on musical genres or artistic genres in general, is another characteristic of the scene approach, to which we turn in the next section.

3. Setting the scenes

The term ''scene'' has recently become more widespread in the academic literature, but the concept is not entirely new. Polsky (1967) used this term as a descriptive label interchangeable with terms such as subculture or counterculture. The scene is also discussed in journalistic discourse as being similar to the social network of a great metropolis (Peterson and Bennett, 2004; Straw, 2002). In the 1970s, Irwin (1977: 278, quoting from Futrell et al., 2006: 278) saw it as ''collective activity that offers ongoing opportunities to plug into more complete, emotionally sustaining relationships.'' However, the real development of this concept came at the beginning of the 1990s, with the work of William Straw (1993, 1997), Shank (1994) and others. We find the term scene defined variously as ''informal assemblages'' (Peterson and Bennett, 2004: 4); a ''specific kind of urban cultural context and practice of spatial coding'' (Stahl, 2004: 53); the ''cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization'' (Straw, 1997: 494); ''the elements of social movement's culture that are explicitly organized around music and which participants regard as important for supporting movement ideas and activists identities'' (Futrell et al., 2006: 276); and ''places devoted to practices of meaning making through the pleasures of sociable consumption'' (Silver et al., 2010: 2297). Or, we can see it as ''a network of people who share a common identity and a common set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, values, norms, and convictions as well as a network of physical spaces where members of that group are known to congregate'' (Leach and Haunss, 2009: 259).

Despite these terminological differences, we find several common attributes attached to scenes. These refer to various characteristics, but may complement each other in some aspects. We can observe:

(1) *The interconnectedness of political and cultural activities.* This point often refers to the "transitive" character of scenic social networks within the framework of activities attributed to social movements, subcultures, and countercultures. Scenes *can* serve as an "intermediate sphere" where the elements of public political and cultural spheres meet, and they can shape the form of social movements in a given area (Leach and Haunss, 2009). The presence of diverse scenes can also lead to the appearance of a visible internal diversity that can "complicate any notion of a single determinant" (Stahl, 2004: 54).

As with social movement and subcultural studies, in our case, we too can identify "a variety of internal (movement) and external contextual processes associated with [*the scene's*] boundary demarcation" (Kaminski and Taylor, 2008: 47) and a "contextual and many layered" identity (Haenfler, 2004: 407), as well as several (often contradictory, in some respects) trends within scenes. This may lead to an unwillingness to identify oneself with the scene per se (i.e., in its currently dominant interpretation) precisely because of different interpretations that may in the end affect the attributed "sharing [of] a common identity" (Leach and Haunss, 2009: 259). As we will see, the way in which a given scene is operationalized by individual actors may vary greatly, and that can influence their participation and mobilization. In many cases, the scene is but a common denominator with variegated content. In other words, a given scene is *framed* from different perspectives (Gamson, 1992; Snow et al., 1986; Benford and Snow, 2000; Steinberg, 2002; Vicari, 2010). Individuals from various discursive poles inside the scene take part in active contention, and decide upon the implications, attributes and interpretations of a given scene or musical genre.

(2) *A link to a certain space (be it social, geographic or virtual).* This is the most significant feature, one that can strongly affect the form of social networks and power relations between actors (O'Connor, 2004: 177). As Waters (1981: 32, cited from Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004: 8–9) notes, "geographical specificity is a factor in subcultural studies that cannot be overlooked (and consequently) works need to tone down their stress on the universality of subcultures, and make a concerted effort to focus on …regional subcultures." This "emphasis on the specificities of local and regional cultures understood in a global setting, where spaces become sites fraught with competition, negotiation and accommodation occurring on multiple and intersecting planes, undermines any notion a single determinant, often cast in essentialist terms (class, ethnicity, age, gender)…" (Stahl, 2003: 28).

Therefore differences in the local environment and geographical specificities can significantly influence the final form of the relations within the scene and between the scene and its surroundings (see Baulch, 2002, 2003; McKay et al., 2009; O'Connor, 2002, 2003, 2004; Szemere, 1996). Scenes are often situated in larger urban metropolises, and the form of their social networks differs widely (Moore, 2005; O'Connor, 2002, 2003, 2004). In other words, ties to the local context are "perhaps the most distinctive feature of a scene…and the geographic aspect of scenes is expressed in the fact that they form around recognized scene locations—meeting places like bars, clubs, parks, street corners, and so on…in recognized parts of town—where being part of the scene can be physically experienced and the signifiers of membership can be enacted and validated" (Leach and Haunss, 2009: 260).

(3) *Ties to a given music or artistic genre* (Goshert, 2000; Kahn-Harris, 2004a,b; Weber, 1999; for a review, see Roy and Dowd, 2010). Geographic location and history of the scene still

have an influence here because, in its formational stage, the scene can be both internally and externally more inclusive, and it can include different social network/genres, than found in its later, established period. This development, however, cannot be seen as a linear process. Furthermore, scenes are not created solely around music or art—they can be identified, for example, in football hooliganism, business, or activist and protest fields (for descriptions of the German autonomous scene, see Leach and Haunss, 2009). We treat musical style not as a basic condition, but as a ''catalyst'' for the emergence of a social network in a certain geographic location, with a changeable character that stems from the temporary dominance of a particular genre. For example, in the case of football hooligans, a given music style supports the development of social ties and relationships between scene members. By attending particular music shows, performances and music clubs, or by listening to particular music bands and their lyrics, scene members ''bond together.'' However, an existing music style might not be a prerequisite for participation in such scenes.

In the case of a scene defined by its music genre/style—such as hardcore/punk—music obviously becomes a more important factor, but it is never the only factor, and its relevance depends on local characteristics: the inclusivity vs. exclusivity (or isolation vs. permeability) of social networks associated with musical styles/genres; the predominant patterns of informal political participation; and the scene's relations to social movements and other political activities. Hardcore music deals with a variety of political and social issues such as racism, environmentalism, vegan or vegetarian lifestyles, unemployment and alienation, and reworks them into particular local contexts; thus ''this transformation includes the reinscription of musical styles with local meanings'' (Bennett, 2004: 227).

In this paper, ''hardcore'' is the musical meta-genre (Fabbri, 1981; McLeod, 2001) to which the scene we study is attached. In relatively small scenes such as Brno, the hardcore/punk genre can overlap with other ''underground sub-genres''—i.e., crust, anarcho-punk, hardcore punk, grind-core, d-beat, fastcore, powerviolence, emo-violence, emo-core, straight-edge hardcore, etc. Even here, however, the closeness and/or openness of musical styles depend on specific local factors and relations between them. In Brno of the 1990s the connection among the aforementioned genres was expressed in the bands lyrics as well as by their political activities, which were often linked to the DIY phenomenon. Later on, other genres loosely connected to the hardcore genre started to form such as drum'n'bass, dubstep, breakbeat and free techno (see Section 6). Furthermore, there are other musical genres that contain the same word (''hardcore'') but are related to mostly electronic music—such as hardcore techno, digital hardcore, and UK hardcore—and they are not the main subject of this paper.

Drawing on the above debate and in line with much of the available studies, we define a scene as the *space of a specific (often urban) location formed by social networks of interacting individuals and groups with multilayered, but overlapping identity*. There is a complex interplay of interpretations that help to construct a scene's identity. The meaning of a scene is always the temporary result of endless conversations taking place within the collective and between its segments and other spheres of society.

4. Data and methodology

Our study is based on ethnographic methods (Grazian, 2004), involving participant observation, interviews and ''insider research'' (Hodkinson, 2005). Specifically, data were

collected, on the one hand, through long-term participant observation inside the Czech hardcore scene. This observation includes more than 13 years of attending music shows, protests and demonstrations; more than 10 years of promoting and organizing (more than 100) hardcore/punk shows, happenings and festivals in Brno (including the biggest DIY festival in Brno called "Protestfest"); participating in many scene activities such as Food not Bombs;[4] as well as long-time experience as an active musician playing in hardcore bands and several times touring Europe. It also involves five years of work for environmental and human rights organizations in Brno.

The insider method was important for us because it offered significant "benefits in terms of practical issues such as access and rapport, at the same time...constituting an additional resource that may be utilized to enhance the quality of the eventual understandings produced." (Hodkinson, 2005: 136) However, we were aware of the possible difficulties of this research strategy lying in the "dual identity" of researcher (Hodkinson, 2005); therefore, we did our best to balance carefully the "insider" and "researcher" elements. As only one of us received "insider status," we were better able to secure and reflect the benefits from both the initial proximity of the insider, and the necessary distance of the researcher.

Further data were collected, on the other hand, during 10 in-depth interviews (each approximately 90 min long). The interviews were conducted in the city of Brno with selected scene members. With one exception, all the interviews took place between the end of 2005 and 2006.[5] Given the issues of commercialization and politicization, the sample of scene participants was designed to be as diverse as possible. The sample is saturated, i.e., our last respondents did not bring any new information. Because of the long-term participant observation and the relatively small size of the hardcore scene in Brno, the sample was saturated with only 10 respondents. The respondents were selected on the basis of age, type of scene activity, and kind of involvement. The group consisted of scene participants between 20 and 35 years of age—8 men and 2 women—involved in several types of activities (organizers of concerts and protest activities, musicians, fans) and in different stages of involvement (newcomers, insiders, dropouts). The respondents' names were altered at their request. Interviews were conducted in different places (cafes, clubs, music shows, practice rooms and apartments) in order to guarantee maximum comfort to the respondent.

Using open coding, we manually coded for information on the respondent's activities, on his/her definition of the hardcore scene, DIY, the respondent's attitude towards active protest participation (or his/her conceptualization of active protest participation), and the possible participant's involvement in NGOs.

In order to find additional sources on the evolution of music scenes in the Czech Republic, and to collect material from important web pages and discussion boards/forums on the Internet, we have researched relevant, finally, web servers[6] and printed zines (Duncombe, 1997) that were

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[4] The Food Not Bombs collectives share free vegan and vegetarian meals with hungry (usually homeless) people (www.foodnotbombs.cz) in order to protest against war, poverty, and the destruction of the environment.

[5] Subsequently, we conducted one additional interview that focused on complementary information about the beginnings of the hardcore scene in the early 1990s.

[6] This includes Czech (czechcore.cz, freemusic.cz, diycore.net, diy.freetekno.cz), Slovak (www.prasopal.sk, sxehc.sk, www.hard-core.sk) and Polish (hard-core.pl) Internet sites.

published in the Czech (and Slovak) Republic between 1990 and 2006.[7] Similarly, we have included relevant articles about the Czech hardcore scene from Slovak, German, British, and US-based zines.[8]

5. Scenes and the post-communist environment of the Czech Republic

One of the key features of the situation in the Czech Republic is the region-specific legacy of Communism (the old Communist regimes in East-Central Europe collapsed in 1989). Although the demise of the old undemocratic regimes resulted in previously nonexistent opportunities for citizen engagement and participation, there generally remained a very low level of public involvement in post-Communist Europe (Howard, 2003). According to available studies, civil societies in post-Communist countries are underdeveloped, weak, and non-participatory in nature (Fagan, 2004, 2005; Howard, 2003; Mendelson and Glenn, 2002; for a critical interpretation, see Císař, 2010; Petrova and Tarrow, 2007).

In reaction to conditions under the previous regime, which did not respect it at all, the principle of private property is today more emphasized and relentlessly enforced. Any attempt at an alternative use of property—such as "squatting" (i.e., occupying a space that one does not own), which by definition goes against the private property principle—suffers from open public animosity. Moreover, these attempts very often have a "leftist" undertone that is likewise unwelcome in general public discourse (Císař and Vráblíková, 2010; Navrátil, 2010; Ost, 2000; Saxonberg, 2003). Even mildly left-oriented political activists are commonly framed as new Communists in disguise.[9] Our point becomes apparent when we compare the Czech case to the geographically and culturally close German case.

Leach and Haunss (2009), who focus on Berlin and Hamburg, show a strong presence of autonomously occupied buildings/zones—AJZs (Autonomes Jugendzentrums)—and squats, such as Rote Flora and Köpi in both cities. The very limited supply of such spaces, which provide a relatively stable background and space for the functioning of social networks and activities (concerts, workshops, discussions, preparing protests, Food not Bombs, etc.) is one of the prominent perceivable differences between the Czech Republic and Germany.

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[7] "Zines" are grassroots produced texts, sometimes also described as "fanzines." The Czech and Slovak zines are: *Kontra* 3/2005; *Ace Ventura* 1/2001, 2/2003; *Bakteria* 1/2003, 2/2004; *Biosfere* 5/2002; *Buryzone* 11/2005; *Cabaret Voltaire* 22/2003; *Defender* 3/2000; *Different Life* 9/1995, 6/1995; *Doom's Day* 1/2000, 5/2003; *Euthanasia* 7/ 1997, 8/ 1997; *Express Your Feelings* 7/1998; *Fragile* 3/2002, 4/2003, 6/2005; *Hluboká Orba* 17/ 1999, 18/1999, 19/2000, 20/ 2000, 21/2001, 22/2001, 23/2002; *Hogo Fogo* 1/1996; *Choroba mysli* 3/2004; *Impregnate* 5/1998, 9/2000, 10/2001, 12/ 2003; *Just Do It Yourself* 1/2003, 2/2003, 3/2004, 4/2004; *K.A.Z/Express Your Feelings* 5/10/2001, 6/11/2004; *Killed by Noise newsletter; Kompost* 1/2003; *Komunikace* 4/2001, 6/2002, 7–8/2004; *Levantate* 3/ 2001, 4/2003; *Limo Kid* 1/2001; *Malárie* 4/1992, 5/1993, 7/1997; *Minority* 1/1996, 2/1996, 5/1996, 8/1997; *Move Your Ass* 7/2004, 8/2004, 10/2005, 11/ 2005, 12/2006; *Nobody F**** Jesus* 1/2000, 2/2000; *Rescator* 2/1999; *Samba* 3/2001, 4/2002; *Sami sobě* 9/2003, 10/ 2003, 11/2004; *Sluníčko/Doom's Day* 2/4/2002; *Příští Vrahžda; Vrahžda šest*/2002; *XenslavementX* 2/2001, 3/2002; *XtemplettonX* 2/2001; *Ya Basta* 5/2002, 6/2003.

[8] The zines from other countries are: *Abolishing Borders From Below* 12/2003, 18/2005, 21/2005, 22/2005; *Harbinger* 1, 4 (printed version); *Heartattack* 22, 23, 27, 35; *Inside Front* 9/1996, 10/1997, 11/1998, 12/1999, 13/2003; *Maximum Rock'n'roll* 196/1999, 221/2001, 225/2002, 235/2002, 251/2004, 262/2005, 267/2005; *Profane Existence* 27/1996, 36/ 1998, 41/2003, 42/ 2003, 43/2003, 45/2004, 46/2004, 47/2005; *Reason to Believe* 3/2001, 4/2001, 5/2002, 6/2002.

[9] Although "scenes are not necessarily political, and when they are political, their orientation is not necessarily left-leaning" (Leach and Haunss, 2009: 258), political segments of the Czech hardcore/punk scene have indeed been attached to social movements generally considered "leftist"—such as the environmental, autonomous, anarchist, and animal rights movements.

One of our respondents comments on this when asked to compare the Czech and German situations:

> You can't really compare the two. There was West Germany, where they were there since the '60s, the radical left-wing movements, then squatting, and hardcore-punk since the '70s. In the Czech Republic there was nowhere to take up from after the revolution of '89...Here they had to start from nothing. They had the great advantage of tradition in West Germany. That's one thing. Also, the atmosphere there is much more tolerant. It's at least possible to question private property there. Here it's a God. So the idea of squatting doesn't really stand a chance here, because you'd be trespassing on private land, private property. The general atmosphere we were living in, which is even worse now I think about it, just didn't favor it. (Interview: Pavel, 6.5.2006)

Currently, there are no spaces in the Czech Republic that we can call "a squat." Most of the remaining occupied buildings have been evicted since 2002; the last such space—the Milada Villa in Prague—was evicted by force in July 2009. The situation in Brno after 1989 was even more restricted, partly because of faster reactions by the city authorities and police. Squats in Brno lasted no longer than a month before being evicted. Any time a squat began to undertake more visible public activities, its existence became threatened, and it was usually shut down shortly afterwards.[10]

The absence of squats, independent art spaces, and AJZs can shape the form of the networks that constitute a scene. In comparison with commercial clubs, most of these places have internal rules of conduct that are shared by their inhabitants, often including specific conditions of cooperation with other entities. Around these nerve centers of the hardcore/punk scene, groups are formed with clearly stated agendas that preclude broader cooperation outside the scene. However, due to instability, short duration, and the constant changing of the scene's location in the Czech context, local social networks are *often heterogeneous and able to absorb different types of actors* (subcultural, countercultural, movement, non-movement; see also Leach and Haunss, 2009), who can cooperate on common projects even though their opinions may vary.

In the following part of the article, we focus on the Brno local scene and describe its development, internal differentiation, and the character of its connections to the various social movements and NGOs. We also pay close attention to demarcations on the cultural level—in the form of concerts, benefits, happenings, expositions, and performances that project the political articulation of the scene. These two—cultural and political—spheres are connected by the concept of *do-it-yourself (DIY)*.

6. The hardcore scene in Brno: a conceptual map

Although we deal mainly with the period after 1989, the hardcore scene in the region of South Moravia—the epicenter of which is in Brno, its capital and the region's largest city—was born

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[10] Also, as the fight against extremism (and after 2001, the war against terrorism) grows more intense, scenes—and especially the parts that are engaged in protest activities and non-conventional political participation—find themselves working within a very limited structure of opportunities. Practically, this also means that it is still harder to establish institutions (squats, autonomous centers) that constitute the important infrastructure for a scene's activities. A similar trend is perceptible in Western Europe. These restrictions can be traced to the changes in the political opportunity structure (Meyer, 2004; Tarrow, 1998) set off by the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001 and subsequent counter-terrorism legislative measures. These were, in some cases, used as a means of restricting or closing down autonomous zones in Denmark, Germany and Italy in an attempt to restrict/eliminate the activities of the global justice movement.

out of a background that had taken form even before that.[11] The focal point for the scene was the local youth center on Krenova Street in Brno, where concerts took place that were attended mostly by visitors from Brno and surrounding region.[12] Other important venues for the emerging hardcore scene were the ''Machina club'' on the university campus Pod Palackeho vrchem (Fall 1990–1992), and the rock café ''U Labute'' (by the same promoters as the Machina club, 1992–1993). However, for that period we cannot speak of a clearly profiled hardcore scene, but only common locations around which groups formed based on personal acquaintance and friendship. Although these places provided space for then-kindred subcultural manifestations (punk rock, skinheads), they were not owned and operated by individuals from the scene, and they did not have the status of autonomous centers, as was often the case for such places in Western Europe. This changed with creation of Seda litina (1995–1996), a club that took up after Krenova; it was operated by people from the scene, and provided support for the further growth of the hardcore scene in Brno. The delimitation and differentiation of social networks began.

The cultural activities in Brno dwindled when Seda litina club was closed.[13] Places like the THClub on Spolkova Street, with partial personal connections to Seda litina, and the ''U Alberta'' pub were partly still working, but activity stagnated on the hardcore scene at the end of the millennium. Furthermore, in the late 1990s, a split appeared within the scene that included different elements, from skinhead groups to alternative art circles. The skinhead subculture grew more and more distinctive: more apolitical and fashion oriented, with an interest in street fights, and the so-called working class spirit; but its activities became less and less tolerated in the hardcore/punk part of the scene. Conflicts of opinion became more and more frequent. As a result, separate activities and places were established, and this division had become permanent by 2001. This was also manifested by the differentiation of musical genres.

Except for the skinhead subculture, there was a strong accent on political activities and political correctness in the hardcore scene not only in Brno, but also in other cities in the 1990s. However, around the end of the decade, the social networks associated with the sub-genres of classic 77-punk and street punk began to diversify. This was, in part, because a generation change had slowly begun to take place and, in part, because of the perceived commercial potential of (mostly English) punk bands. For the younger punk generation (as well as for the skinhead subculture), the accent on political activity associated with the hardcore scene was no longer appealing; as a result, bigger (i.e., ''more commercial'') punk shows made the scene more accessible for newcomers from the mainstream. Later on, the sub-genres of pop-punk, metalcore, and emo followed the same trend; although, even here, we can find examples of bands known on the hardcore scene for the political messages in their lyrics and DIY ethics.

The recent revitalization of Brno's concerts and bands could be seen in the search for alternative spaces (like the HANGAR 16 center on the university premises on Kravi hora) and became fully apparent towards the end of 2003, when a stable space for concerts was found in the music club YACHT (2003-present). Its relatively long existence and availability to the hardcore

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[11] Punk and hardcore concerts were first organized at the Krenova club around 1987.

[12] The first Southmoravian punk/hardcore bands such as INSANIA, ZEMĚŽLUČ, VZOR 60, S.R.K. performed here. The club was closed in 1990 as it changed owners and was re-opened in 1992, then closed again. It was again opened in 1994–1995, when the club enjoyed its heyday and became a regular stop for foreign bands such as OI POLLOI, NAUSEA, FLEAS AND LICE and many others on their European tours.

[13] The closing provoked several demonstrations and protest marches in 1996. These places were shut down mostly because of problems with the neighbors in the area (as with Seda litina). Neighbors usually disliked activities of this kind, or even the appearance of the people going to the concerts, exhibitions and lectures.

scene provided room for an increasing number of new bands, promoters and concerts. But after 2002, with some notable exceptions (see below), the connections between protest and political activism have weakened, and a decrease in political articulation/activity has been apparent on Brno's hardcore scene.

Various activities have taken place within the scene, both cultural and political. And although we cannot completely separate one from the other—political articulation can be an inherent part of cultural (artistic) expression—we can identify several discursive fields in the Brno hardcore/punk scene that constitute the profile and participation of an individual within the scene. Contention over definition of the scene, its framing, demands on the processes that take place within it, and demands on the character of its output all create the discursive terrain in which the form of the scene crystallizes. These differences, or discursive fields, then provide rough outlines of the inner structure of given local scene. Both these "frames" of the scene and relations between them are changing over time.

We follow the inner constitution of the scene in terms of two main issues that have been intertwined with it from the beginning, constituting the two main axes of differentiation, and reflecting political and cultural aspects of the scene. The first is the axis of commodification, and the second is the axis of politicization. The "debates" that define the exact meaning of the hardcore scene to its members are continuously going on within this field, and they also determine the relationship of scene members to other social spheres, including the spheres of politics and popular culture. Their relationship also shows specific connections to a phenomenon closely tied to the hardcore/punk scene—*DIY.*

6.1. The axis of commodification

The issue of commercialization (or "selling out") is discussed not only in subcultural studies but on the scene itself, partly because the inner boundaries that separate the scene "from the inauthentic and commercial are understood as porous and permeable, requiring constant policing through the ongoing process of classifying and reclassifying certain 'tastes' as legitimate" (Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2003: 10). In the Czech Republic, the so-called "commercialization" debate started right away at the beginning of the 1990s, and mirrored similar debates abroad. But over time, several shifts in the dominant poles of the discussion occurred.

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Brno hardcore scene was formed by a tight friendship network closed off the mainstream. As one of our respondents said:

> I think that [the period of the first half of the 1990s and 2006] just cannot be compared. Nowadays it is completely different, there is a bunch of variously connected people capable of arranging things, locations where you can make a show. These opportunities did not exist before. It used to be impossible to organize events without the help of acquaintances, and so if you did not know anybody, it was hard to do anything. (Interview: Kristina, Brno, 1.4. 2006)

The gradual expansion of the scene, however, weakened the originally strong social ties that were constitutive of Czech hardcore in the first half of the 1990s. This was related to two interconnected developments. One, a part of the scene has been gradually commercialized and has opened up to new external influences. Secondly, the use of the Internet has changed the communication infrastructure of the scene. It is now the major source of information on hardcore music and bands, and likewise on grass-root demonstrations and protests, as well as for booking

and organizing shows, festivals, meetings, happenings or demonstrations. According to one respondent, the Internet has clearly helped to broaden the group of active scene members:

> . . .it used to be just the selected few that were able to organize concerts because they had contact with the band or had its phone number. Now you can find tour dates on the website and it is possible to contact the group or the booking agency, etc. (Interview: Ivan, Brno, 21.12.2005)

The use of the Internet has not only opened up the Czech hardcore scene to external influences coming from the West, but it has also doubled down on the commercialization and commodification in the scene. While these processes are resented by some scene participants, they are accepted by others. In line with Moore's (2005) observations, we can say that the younger generation of Internet users is closer to the commercial mainstream than the ''older'' generation of scene participants. In this new ''Internet'' generation, ''newcomers seem to embody more conventional forms of sensibility and behavior that the insiders had consciously indentified themselves against since they were teenagers'' (Moore, 2005: 247).

One of the main questions on hardcore scenes, then, is whether it is legitimate to accept musical recordings that are musically and/or lyrically similar to recordings produced in a DIY fashion associated with hardcore/punk, but that are actually products of the major record labels owned by large corporations or of the subsidiaries of big companies that used to be independent but have been co-opted by the major labels to scout potentially interesting and successful groups. Other controversial issues are whether to accept sponsorship, meet the high financial demands of individual artists, or make exchange agreements with them in the case of underground concerts and festivals.

Those who argue in favor of accepting major labels (or higher financial demands by bands, or sponsoring) can claim that these record labels (money) provide bands with better conditions for creative work, and often better financial conditions (resources for the development of music production). These advocates of major labels do not fear the commercialization of hardcore; on the contrary, they see it as a way of improving the quality of production and professionalization of the *product* (music). Major labels are also able to make the final product widely available on the international market.

> It's relative. That's what it's really about, the professional and nonprofessional activism and professionalization of music. I think you can make clever use of both, and it's more or less up to the personal decision of those involved whether they choose the nonprofessional DIY level or move on. I really wouldn't condemn a band that comes out of this background but works with some major label now, not doing everything themselves, getting paid for it etc. (Interview: Vladimir, Brno, 20.2.2006)

Critics of big-money contracts with major labels emphasize the *process* and the context of the concert (or record, or festival) and their wider consequences:

> . . .for me it is important to do it myself without contracts, because it is based on trust between the group and the organizer. The principle is important for me. It is equally important for me that there is no money involved in it. It would not suit me to organize bigger concerts. . . (Interview: Ivan, Brno, 21. 12. 2005)

To sum up, the first division line in this field can be understood as a continuum where the two extremes are formed by divergent conceptions of the quality of a music recording—the conception of quality *as a product* (the stress is put on sound and design) and the conception of

identity

Sector I:

Hardcore as a Style,
Music, Entertainment

Sector II:

Hardcore as a "Subculture",
Alternative Lifestyle

product ← → process

Sector III:

Hardcore as a Recruitment
Base for Instrumentally-
Oriented Activism

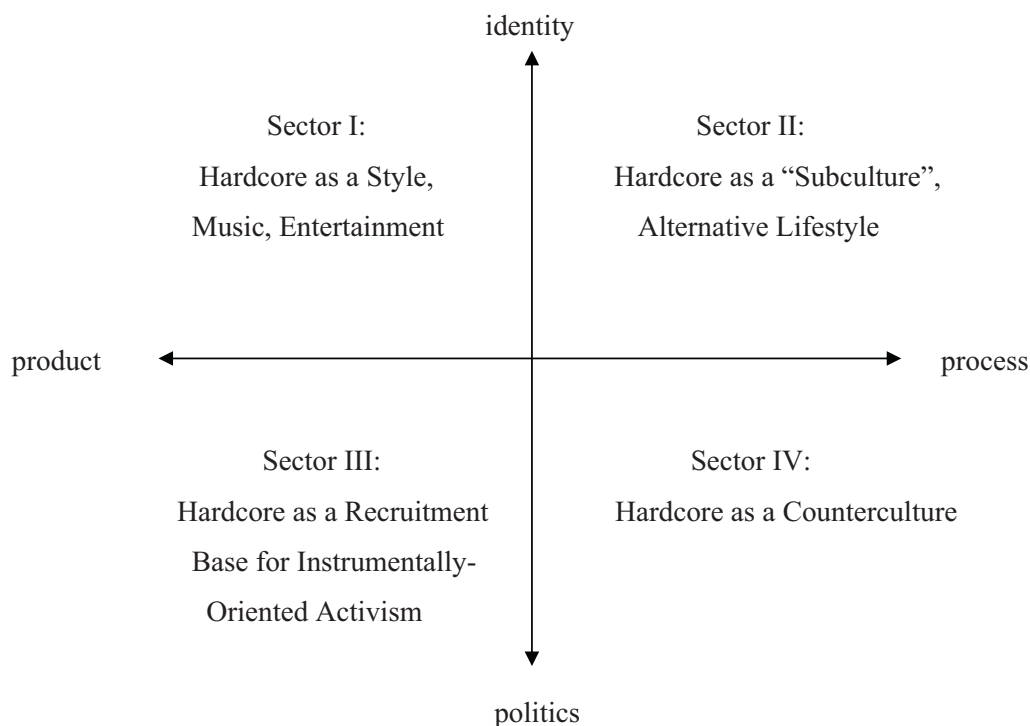Sector IV:

Hardcore as a Counterculture

politics

Fig. 1. The conceptual map of the hardcore/punk scene in Brno, Czech Republic.

quality *as a process of creation* (the stress is primarily put on the underground dimension of production and DIY ethics). The product-process axis of commercialization in Fig. 1 depicts this division line. There is, however, another axis of criteria for the acceptance of bands (or other products) by major labels or their branches. Instead of the quality of the music, the focus is on the (political) message of the authors, as well as on the channels via which it can be spread. This brings us to the second important dividing axis in this scene—the axis of politicization.

6.2. The axis of politicization

This internal division—the axis of politicization—on the scene is depicted in instrumental and non-instrumental understandings of music production expressed along the line of *identity* (i.e., the emotional and personal understanding of music) and *politics*, (i.e., instrumental and public understanding). The *instrumental understanding* is demonstrated by one of our respondents, an active member of a hardcore band and an organizer of INPEG (the antiglobalization organization that coordinated protests against the joint meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (IMF/WB) in Prague in 2000), who claims:

> ...I think that this group on a major label that sings a song, the name I don't remember, about challenging gender roles, might in a way be more political and can have a much bigger political impact than a DIY hardcore group. (Interview: Vladimir, Brno, 20.2.2006)

The *identity-based understanding* is briefly illustrated by an organizer of DIY concerts in Brno who describes his activities as follows:

> I'm doing it (the concerts) in my own way, but I'm not saying it's political... For me, it's about not giving a damn about well-established rules and conventions. (Interview: Ivan, Brno, 21.12.2005)

However, the ties of the hardcore scene with political activities have also been changing since 1989. In the 1990s, the connection between the hardcore scene and protest or political activities was very strong in Brno. New organizations were founded, and the scene began to establish contacts abroad. This connection was also strengthened by the fact that the protest activities were of a participatory nature. There was an aspiration to mobilize important segments of civil society; the focus was on direct political participation. According to our respondents (Filip, Eva, Adam), this cooperation (cultural but also political) peaked in Brno in the mid-1990s, when individuals from the hardcore scene commonly participated in political or protest activities, groups and organizations. Filip adds:

> Those people were under this kind of pressure—if you want to be a punk or hardcore you have to take part in the demonstrations, you have to become involved somehow. So, many people were pushed into this. Maybe some of them weren't really convinced but didn't want to look stupid. . .All those who came to the concerts also came to the demonstrations because..well it was what you had to do. (Interview: Filip, 28.8.2009)

The focus was on animal rights, human rights (especially anti-fascism), and there was an anarchistic undertone. As early as 1991, the group/organization Brnenska vrtule was founded, based on a punk/hardcore background, and organized campaigns against fur-coats, including direct action as well as protests and lectures.[14] In 1993, Brnenska vrtule was transformed into Action for Animals (AFA). For example the AFA organized demonstrations against circuses, the fur industry, and McDonald's.[15] Brno is also the home of one of the biggest environmentalist organizations in Czech Republic—Hnuti Duha (Friends of the Earth Czech Republic), which in cooperation with AFA founded the Special Group for Animal Rights (by Friends of the Earth Czech Republic). This group continued in its demonstrations and confrontational activities throughout the 1990s,[16] which in turn created tensions within Hnuti Duha, part of which wanted to maintain a less contentious profile. After several attempts to expel these people from Hnuti Duha, they left on their own and established NESEhnuti (Independent Social Environmental Movement, 1997)—a non-governmental organization, with many individuals from Brno's hardcore scene involved in the founding (see also Císař, 2010; Fagan, 2004).[17]

The connection between the hardcore scene and the NGOs began to weaken with (1) the standardization of security techniques, crowd control, and police surveillance in response to the wave of violent demonstrations and direct action in the middle of the 1990s, and (2) the tendency towards professionalization of the NGOs brought by the influx of foreign donors and funds. Political activities received another blow in the aftermath of the hostilities at the IMF/WB meeting in Prague in 2000, and later with strengthened policies against terrorism after September 11th, 2001. Although the scene in Brno has managed to secure a stable background in functioning places like clubs (see above), and has broadened its cultural activities, the lack of opportunities to participate in local protests and the professionalization of NGOs have even further weakened the

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[14] In 1992, the related Anarchistic federation (Anarchistická federace) was active in Brno.

[15] In 1993, came one of the first violent conflicts, after a McDonald's franchise was opened in Brno, at first only against members of McDonald's security; eventually the police got involved. The conflict carried on into the late evening after a hardcore concert at the Svatoboj club.

[16] For example, there was a several-hour-long blockade of a Shell gas station on the anniversary of the murder of Ken Saro Wiva in 1996.

[17] Individuals from the hardcore scene are involved in other NGOs as well; in some cases they are even among the founding members (Vera, Hlas Zeme).

connection between hardcore and political activities.[18] All this influenced the organization of protest activities and to the same extent limited possibilities for the creation of new *autonomous* spaces in the Czech Republic that would serve as a background for cultural and, most importantly, political activities.

However, even under current circumstances, there have been important attempts at relating DIY, hardcore and politics in Brno. An annual series of events, originally inspired by the tradition of street parties of the late 1990s, was launched in Brno under the name Protestfest in 2004. Protestfest culminates every year in a day-long musical and multicultural festival with happenings, performances, and music stages with hardcore/punk bands and various DJs. The festival enjoys strong support from Brno's hardcore scene, and it has become the second largest festival in the Czech Republic[19] directly and explicitly connecting DIY with cultural and political activities. Its annual topics so far dealt with antimilitarism (2007, 2009),[20] global climate change (2008), the society of fear (2010), and public space (2011). Protestfest is based on DIY principles, not on a particular music style; it connects artists (and music stages) from hardcore/punk or grindcore bands to techno, drum'n'bass and dubstep DJs.

The combination of the axis of commercialization and the axis of politicization gives us a rough conceptual map of the discursive field of the Brno hardcore scene (see Fig. 1). Our map shows four quadrants; two of them—sectors II and IV—relate to the concept of DIY, which thus contains both political and cultural elements. *Sector I* is close to the logic of so-called neotribalism and temporal choice in "a supermarket of styles," and depicts a commercialized subcultural segment of society that does not provide any specific platform for political mobilization. *Sector II* corresponds to the logic of so-called subcultural action, where the individual's ties to a scene are of longer and deeper duration compared to those in Sector I. *Sector III* is related to the logic of instrumentally oriented activism, and *sector IV* to a counterculture. The scene is by nature very heterogeneous and contains several diverse elements, each of which can be considered an inherent trait of subcultures or scenes. Now for a more detailed description of individual sectors.

7. The sectors of the scene

Sector I is formed by those individuals who emphasize product and identity, which means that they identify themselves with the scene first and foremost through musical style and informal networks formed around cultural activities such as concerts, journals, festivals. There is almost no room for politically motivated messages. These individuals are not striving very eagerly to differentiate themselves from the mainstream. For them, the division between underground and mainstream is a thing of the past:

> . . .all those people who are interested in punk and hardcore and who speculate on why this band is on a major label and that one is not, and who are trying to define what DIY is and

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[18] One respondent says, ". . .when you manage to get some stable place to perform, it elevates the scene considerably. But. . .it isn't so political anymore" (Interview: Filip, 28.8.2009).

[19] In the last three years, the largest similar festival in the Czech Republic is the MayDay Festival in Prague organized by (Czech) Antifascist Action, with approximately 7000–10,000 attending every year.

[20] It targeted one of the world's largest defense technology fairs, the International Exhibition of Defense and Security Technologies (IDET), which takes place in Brno. In 2007 Protestfest's clown army (KLAunska Armada—KLARA) organized a successful direct action during which generals and foreign army exhibitors were confronted directly at the Brno City Hall (www.protestfest.cz).

what it is not—I would like to tell them that they are stuck in history.. (Interview: Adam, Brno, 1.4.2006)

Their identity is based on a particular musical style and broader friendship networks "attached" to the scene. But they do not view the scene itself as a "bridge" to other (political) activities. Individuals in this sector do not base their activities on DIY principles and are open to a dialogue with mainstream society and, as a result, their pattern of activities closely resembles that of the rest of society. The scene is framed only as a cultural or music space.

Sector III is formed by individuals whose relationship to the hardcore scene is instead instrumentally oriented. Their motivation for politically oriented activities and civic participation comes primarily from areas (such as various movements—environment, peace, anarchism, or global justice) that are more or less indirectly related to the hardcore/punk scene. The sector also includes activists that organize political protests and demonstrations, and who are broadly connected to the hardcore scene. For them, the scene is a potential recruitment base for political activism. The position of individuals in the social networks of a scene is not guided by the lines of musical taste. The style of music is not as important to them as the message it might contain. The center of activities in this sector lies in political involvement and the chance to spread the given political message within the scene:

> The way I see it, there's a group of hardcore people who are connected through the music and do-it-yourself. There's also lot of people who just like the music and what is it about, and that's it for them. They might support some action by coming, but there's no real cooperation between these hardcores and protest movement. I really see no connection there. When I'm at the concert half of the people there have a mohawk, but that's it. It's more of a matter of image…And then there are folks who are involved in the protest movement somehow. They might, for example, help organize concerts, which opens new avenues for the movement. You can speak there, screen something, hand out flyers, advertise your activities…and you get the support from organizers. But I'm not talking about just pushing your thing somewhere, like a disco, and just hand out your flyers there. No, that's no cooperation. (Interview: Michael, 19.2.2006)

To continue with the example of music records and major labels, these scene members deem it acceptable for a band to go commercial in an attempt to address a wider audience and thus enhance its political impact. According to one respondent, Vladimír:

> The DIY principle is probably important, but it is not crucial for me…(T)hat band from Sweden is thoroughly political, they are throwing in the word capitalism in every second song. And I accept their argument that on a major label they would have the chance to address more people. Bands that say that DIY is crucial for them and that they would never go for a major label are "clean" in their message, but, at the same time, they enclose themselves and forego additional opportunities to disseminate their attitudes. (Interview: Vladimir, Brno, 20.2.2006)

All in all, the product (in this case—political mobilization, demonstration, benefit show, happening, etc.) is more important than the avenue of production, be it DIY or not. Likewise, musical taste and style are not as crucial as the chance to spread their opinions.

The process of creation (and DIY) is an important element for individuals belonging to *sector II* and *sector IV.* Both of these sectors are based on DIY principles, as opposed to the product principles typical of sector I (where the product is a record, festival or gig, i.e., *culture*) and sector

III (where the product is a demonstration, direct action, happening or another political action, i.e., *politics*). The main difference between sector II and sector IV, however, is to be found in their concept of DIY. In sector IV, the meaning of DIY (the process of creation) is given by its concrete political impact. DIY has a political meaning; it is understood to be part of political activity, and it is framed in ideological language. Hardcore is therefore one form of *struggle*, which is part of the animal rights movement, and the anarchist, autonomous, environmental, and anti-fascist movements, as well as squatting, etc. In contrast, in sector II DIY is rather about participants' lifestyle choices and personal identity. In this sector, DIY ethics have little political meaning; they have impact only on a personal and emotional level.

Our respondents' involvement in protest activities illustrates well the difference between the two sectors. Individuals located in sector II typically participate in protests and demonstrations that are already planned and organized. They provide logistical support, i.e., they support activities such as transportation or preparation and distribution of materials.[21] Individuals in sector II prefer the kind of repertoire of action that does not call for long-term involvement in a concrete organization or network of activists. Participation is thus highly individualized and focused on the participant's personal need to demonstrate a positive attitude towards protest activities. Respondents in sector IV, in contrast, are actively engaged in organization and mobilization of particular projects, and they are fully involved in concrete political and social activities such as the organization of demonstrations and the building of community groups.

The differences between these sectors are also identifiable in their attitudes towards participation in NGOs as a vehicle for political activism and mobilization. Respondents in sector II express uneasiness with organized membership in NGOs. The most important reasons for their non-involvement are the excessively complex way of decision-making typical of NGOs, and the fear of losing their voice amidst such complicated structures. One of them (a 27 year-old organizer of hardcore shows in Brno) added:

> I started attending the meetings [of one NGO] and saw that they consisted of three-hour long quarrels over complete crap, and then I realized that it was going nowhere and that my priorities were somewhere else, not in spending three hours every day this way. (Interview: Ivan, Brno, 21.12.2005)

Other respondents expressed similar views:

> I did not participate in these organizations because I did not agree with some concrete individuals, even though I was sympathetic to the overall conception of the particular NGO; also, I did not like all that labeling and organizing. All this simply did not appeal to me; it was important for me to work with people whom I knew and who were my friends. (Interview: Boris, Brno, 21.3.2006)

Our research revealed that individuals in this sector shared a rather negative view of participation in NGOs. At most they have been willing to support NGO campaigns and projects; but they have never gotten involved as an active organizational cadre.

Respondents located in sector IV take a different stance. In the Czech Republic there have been several cases when the local hardcore scene in a particular city or a town has created a local branch of an NGO. For example, the local chapters of the environmental organization NESEhnuti

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[21] As one respondent put it: "For example, I participated in the production of banners for a demonstration...in general, I've been involved in the technical support of such events" (Interview: Ivan, Brno, 21.12.2005).

(Independent Social Environmental Movement, see above) also had branches in Boskovice and Napajedla (smaller cities near Brno) and ere closely linked to the local hardcore scene. But as we have said, DIY activism is much more compatible with various forms of protest participation and direct action. As a result, for the last ten years DIY activism in the Czech Republic has been growing away from NGO-based activism, which on the contrary, gradually became institutionalized and professionalized throughout this period, and has largely become part of standard political business. Currently there are some individuals from the hardcore scene who work in non-governmental organizations. However, because of the way the non-profit sector has developed, the basis of their involvement lies in the employee-employer relationship rather than support for the ideas of the given NGO (although this sentiment can be present as well).

The positions of the particular segments within the hardcore scene have changed in Brno since 1989. While in the 1990s, sectors III and IV were much more visible, these now have a much lower profile given the context of changes within the NGO sector, the consequences of the war against terrorism after 2001, the availability of new technologies, and the continuing commercialization of the scene. Sector IV, in particular, has much less influence on the local hardcore scene than it did in the 1990s. The opportunity to develop further cultural activities in Brno has mainly helped sectors I and II, which over time have become the most characteristic elements on the local scene.

8. Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to examine the transformations on the hardcore/punk local scene in Brno, and the scene's backdrop in Czech Republic, and thus to set forth a possible conceptual frameworks for the scene and its analysis. Several conclusions emerge from this research.

The Brno scene is a phenomenon with numerous internal permutations. Based on the issues of commercialization and politicization, different segments compete to define it. Some scene members are part of a standard consumer culture (sector I) and do not see any connection between the scene and political articulation; on the other hand there are some scene members who fiercely resist such a culture and define the scene in a political context, which in this case often includes the concept of DIY (sector IV). Some scene members stress intra-group interaction and identity (sector II); while others pursue instrumental policy goals in the sphere of standard politics (sector III). Thus, we can identify the "counterculture" segments of the scene, as well as segments of a "subcultural," "neo-tribal" character. We cannot say that this scene implies only political struggle or that it is closer to some social movement; nor can it be described simply as a subcultural non-movement scene, or a subcultural movement scene, or a countercultural scene (like Leach and Haunss, 2009). In fact, all these elements are present. To put it differently, the scene includes them all, although they constantly struggle for its meaning.

Furthermore, if we include the time-line and history of our scene in the analysis, we discover that the predominant interpretation—i.e., the scene's focus changes over time and is thus, not surprisingly, dependent on the context and environment. This very inclusive social formation— which immediately after 1989, consisted of many independent groups (skinheads, punks, hardcore, indie, underground) united by their resentment of the previous establishment—became more and more differentiated as time went by. On the other hand, the mid-1990s were the heyday of the hardcore scene, as it became interconnected with political activities in form of demonstrations, protests, blockades, and involvement in NGOs. This involvement consequently

led to close ties with the animal rights movement, the environmental movement, the antifascism movement (the only aspect that has continued almost unchanged until today), squatting, and other protest movements. However, the shape of the scene in the 1990s began to change after the turn of the century due to new outside pressures. Besides the penetration of the hardcore/punk scene by the Internet, these are the most likely possible candidates: (1) the escalation of the fight against extremism and terrorism; new procedures that complicate the organization of direct action and hamper squatting activities, which have a very negative image in society anyway due to the country's specific post-Communist discourse; and (2) the NGOs' retreat from confrontational activities and protests, their tendency towards professionalization and institutionalization, and the increasing complexity of project management that often places severe limitations on their continued existence and the acquisition of needed resources. These pressures have resulted in certain depoliticization on the hardcore scene, and its withdrawal from political activities and the social movements.

Acknowledgements

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