

Beats, bytes & bleeps inside the Arctic circle: An exploration into consumption and production in the electronic dance music scene of Tromsø, Norway between 1987 and 2001.

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## Abstract

The study is probably the first to focus on a music scene within the Arctic circle. It examines the flow of global culture and its influences on the music consumption and production of a small group of electronic dance music producers from the Norwegian municipality of Tromsø. The study focuses on the music community from the late eighties until the internationally recognised 'Bergen Wave' music scene in 2001. This thesis links to my professional practice with the Paper Recordings record label (Bidder, 1999: 265), and the production of a feature documentary exploring Norwegian electronic dance music titled 'Northern Disco Lights' (2016; Red Bull TV, 2018: online). The film created a set of data, including interviews and artefacts that are used to analyse the scene in this thesis. The Tromsø music community is explored as a music scene, according to academic frameworks, applying analysis in terms of location, technology, genre, flow, subcultural capital and networks. Initial findings indicate that key local actors developed a highly connected and effective network despite the scene being in such a remote location. The scene's participants engaged with global flows of culture that influenced music consumption and production among this small group, even before the internet allowed music scenes to connect globally.

*Keywords: music scene, geographic isolation, technology, genre, networks, flow, subcultural capital, consumption, music production*

## Introduction

This thesis explores an Arctic music scene based in the northern Norwegian municipality of Tromsø. The scene comprised a core group of musicians beginning their journey of cultural discovery around electronic music. My personal experience is relatable to the Tromsø producers featured in this thesis, regarding self-discovery and the consumption of music and culture as a young person. My first taste of popular music came from my parent's record collection in common with many teenagers. My passion for music led to a career in dance music with the launch of my Paper Recordings record label in 1994 (Bidder, 1999: 265; Penny-Barrow, 2019a). The label was established as a trusted conduit for Norwegian house music and is credited with introducing many Nordic house music producers to a broader international audience (Penny-Barrow, 2019b). Long-term working relationships with Norwegian producers led to the production of an award-winning documentary film *Northern Disco Lights* (2016)<sup>1</sup> with my business partner Ben Davis. The film celebrated Norway's electronic music producers, focusing on musicians and producers based in the three municipalities of Tromsø, Bergen and Oslo. As part of the film's research process, interviews were conducted with nine key Nordic producers and are available on the Paper Recordings website (Paper Recordings, 2013a: online). Extracts from these interviews are used throughout the thesis to support my analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Best Music Documentary Award from En Lefko Film Festival in Athens, Greece

The remoteness of Tromsø gave rise to my fascination with its music community, and it is this aspect that underpins the examination of the influences that impact the music consumption and production in the scene. For geographical context, the municipality has a population of approximately 77,000, is based 350 km inside the Arctic circle (Norway Statistics, 2020) and is over 1600km north of the Norwegian capital city Oslo. It is located on an island called Tromsøya, just off the mainland of Northern Norway. It has less than fifteen per cent of Manchester's (UK) population (Population UK, 2021; Norway Statistics, 2020), with the primary industries being fishing, Arctic research, tourism and the world's most northern university, with over ten thousand students. The music community of Tromsø addressed in this thesis is comprised of a small number of music producers that began making and performing music together. They travelled internationally, engaging with and consuming global culture while their international profile developed. The core group were all interlinked by their passion for electronic dance music production, collaborating in various aliases even after core members migrated to become part of the Bergen music scene. This thesis highlights the validity of this Arctic music scene and aims to expand the debate on remote global music scenes (Ballico, 2022). In the context of the scene's relationship to local and global musical consumption and production, the paper explores scholarly research, models and frameworks that focus on scene, as proposed by key academics including Will Straw (1991), Barry Shank (1994), Holly Kruse (2010), Andy Bennett (2004), John Connell and Chris Gibson (2002). Pierre Bourdieu (2010) and Sarah Thornton (1995) provide reference points for cultural capital, taste and subcultural capital. Franco Fabbri (1981) and Fabian Holt (2007) influence the discussion on genre, while Arjun Appadurai (1990) and Manuel Castells (2004; 2004) propose ideas

that support the debate on cultural flow. Nick Crossley's (2015) methods are used to inform the social network analysis. Contemporary debates on music scene are included in this discussion, including the work of Robert Knifton (2018: 144), who considers the importance of music heritage, and popular music's transmission across national boundaries. In the thesis, I am analysing the period between 1987 and 2001 from a historical perspective. I have not presented a separate literature review but have integrated analysis of scholarly works with evidence from the interviews and personal knowledge throughout the chapters. The themes emerging from the initial analysis are categorised as location, subcultural capital, technology, genre, flow and networks, are explored within the context of music scene. The thesis is structured around these themes, and aims to:

- Analyse the Tromsø music community from 1987 through to 2001.
- Explore and define the properties of subcultural capital within the core group of participants.
- Demonstrate the influence of a remote geographic location on a music scene
- Analyse evidence of cultural flow and networks in this Arctic location.
- Assess the influence of technology and media concerning the global flow of culture, music consumption and production.
- Show connectivity between the scene participants using social network analysis.
- Assess the scene in terms of music genre and a distinct Tromsø sound



This study focuses on the period referred to as pre/emerging internet, from 1987 until 2001. The period begins in 1987 marked by *Bel Canto's* first record release and ends in 2001 when the Bergen Wave music scene became a globally recognised music scene (Tenold, 2011; Mjøs, 2012). Norwegian musicologist Hans T, Zeiner-Henriksen (2013) corroborates my assessment of the formative group members by naming five of them and identifying the start date of the study.

We must go into the late eighties, early nineties before something really exciting happens and it came from Tromsø. It started with *Bel Canto* who were Geir Jenssen, Anneli Drecker, and Nils Johansen. Geir Jenssen went on to become *Biosphere*. There were a lot of artists and electronic music producers coming from Tromsø such as Rune Lindbæk and Bjørn Torske. It started the style of dance music that is famous today (Paper Recordings, 2013j: online).

The drivers of the scene include international renowned musicians and producers such as Torbjørn Brundtland (*Those Norwegians, Röyksopp*), Rune Lindbæk (*Those Norwegians*), Bjørn Torske, Per Martinsen (*Mental Overdrive*) and Geir Jenssen (*Bel Canto, Biosphere*). Figure 1 shows the core group of Tromsø producers, DJs, and performers in the context of a Norwegian electronic dance music scene that includes associated labels, radio, clubs, DJs and producers; the artwork was commissioned to promote the film, *Northern Disco Lights* (2016).

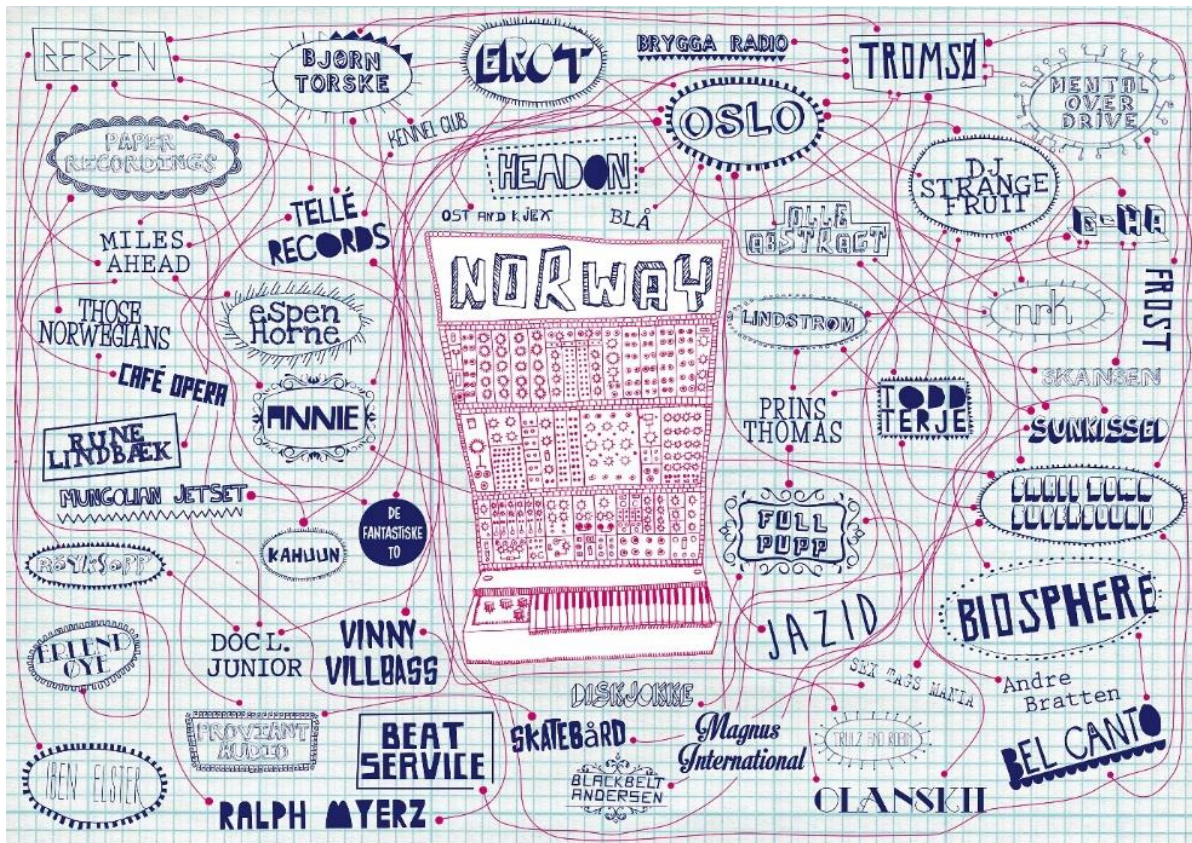


Figure 1: Northern Disco Lights 'Family Tree' poster. © Paper Vision Films

Data from: Published interviews, personal knowledge

Source: (Discogs, 2020; Paper Recordings, 2013b: online) [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

### The Enablers

Before analysing the scene, a core group of twelve producers were identified, which I term as 'enablers' in this thesis. The term enablers has no academic link to music scene, but I feel it most accurately describes the role of the individual members of this group compared to actors or key players. The twelve enablers outlined below, are defined as Tromsø based electronic dance music producers who played an essential role in the music community during the study period.

Aggie Peterson: Singer, songwriter and music producer. She writes and performs as *Frost*, and collaborates with Per Martinsen, her partner. Currently self-releasing music on her Frostworld label.

Anneli Drecker: Vocalist and founder of *Bel Canto*. Currently still composing, performing and releasing music.

Bjørn Torske: Recorded and produced music throughout the period mostly under his own name Bjørn Torske. He migrated from Tromsø to Bergen during the period. He still DJs internationally and releases music on various labels, including Smalltown Supersound.

Gaute Barlindhaug: Founder member of band *Aedena Cycle*, two of whom went on to form *Røyksopp*. Founder of Insomnia, Tromsø's internationally recognised music festival.

Geir Jenssen: Founder member of *Bel Canto*. He has recorded under the aliases *Bleep* and *Biosphere*. His 'Microgravity' track (Jenssen, 1991) was synchronised to a Levi jeans TV advert in the nineties bringing him global recognition. He set up his own mail order business Biophon, importing electronic music into Norway.

Kolbjørn Lyslo: Member of *Aedena Cycle* and prolific producer who records as *Doc L Junior*. He is currently remixing and producing music for a range of international record labels.

Nils Johansen: Founded *Bel Canto* in 1987 and released music on Belgium label Crammed Discs. Fellow band members were Anneli Drecker and Geir Jenssen.

Ole Johan Mjøs: Recorded as *Volcano* and *Those Norwegians* with Rune Lindbæk and Bjørn Torske. Currently Professor in Information Science and Media Studies at Bergen University.

Per Martinsen: Prolific producer recording under own name and *Mental Overdrive* monikers. Regularly performs and writes with partner Aggie Peterson as *Frost*. Per is a sonic artist working on academic sound projects.

Rune Lindbæk: Records under his name and has collaborated with most of the group in some form and recorded as *Volcano* and *Those Norwegians* with fellow core members. Still DJs internationally and releases music on various labels, including Paper Recordings.

Svein Berge: Founding member of *Røyksopp* with Torbjørn Brundtland. Migrated from Tromsø to Bergen during the period with other scene enablers.

Torbjørn Brundtland: Producer and collaborator with a number of the core group and their projects. Key acts were *Those Norwegians*, *Røyksopp*, *Alania* and *Blue Bikini*. He migrated from Tromsø to Bergen in the mid-1990s.

Vidar Hanssen: Hansen enabled the scene by releasing music productions from the other enablers on his Beatservice record label releases during the period. Additionally, he was essential to setting up and running local radio stations such as Beatservice and Brygga Radio. To note: Jon Strøm and Andy Swatland are also referred to as enablers throughout the discussion for their role in, respectively, managing the local record shop (Rockys Records) and disseminating new music to enablers in a social context in private spaces. However, they are not included in the social network analysis because they did not personally produce electronic dance music.

The first method of analysis used for this study draws on the interviews conducted with nine key electronic dance music practitioners, from the Tromsø music community that were active during the period (Paper Recordings, 2013a: online). Thematic analysis was applied to this qualitative content to give insights

that form the basis of the investigation. While the interviewees played a significant role in this Norwegian dance music scene, my label and film ventures connect my personal and professional journey to this thesis. The second method is a social network analysis using data from the key twelve enablers that participated in the scene from its inception. The social network analysis was informed by Nick Crossley's (2015) notion of networks using the interview data from producers and musicians. Further data was sourced and integrated using personal knowledge and the dance music database Discogs (2003: online)<sup>2</sup>. Discogs was used to ensure that the songwriter, music producer and performer information was correctly mapped to commercial record releases. Research sources used in the analysis including artefacts and photographs collected as part of the film production process, are now available, along with the nine interviews on the Paper Recordings website (2013a: online). As someone who has insight into this Arctic music community, I would argue that the data contains a rich and qualitative level of information to adequately support this investigation and analysis into the electronic dance music community of Tromsø.

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<sup>2</sup> Discogs is a crowdsourced database comprising audio recordings from commercial, promotional, bootleg and limited label releases.

## Chapter 1: Subcultural capital and music scenes

Reflecting on the technology and media available to me growing up during the 1970s and 80s. My family's 'sound system' consisted of a turntable, radio and the requisite double cassette deck to play and record, radio broadcasts and vinyl playback to produce mixes using the pause, play and record buttons. The same process was infamously implemented by *Grandmaster Flash* with his mixed cassette 'party tapes' in the late 1970s (Rogers, 2013). Later replicated by then Tromsø resident and electronic music producer Bjorn Torske (2013i: online) who in line with my experience, recounts using a double cassette deck in his early interactions with musical culture and technology. Another style of popular electronic music at the time was championed by US artists such as *Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force* with 'Planet Rock' (Baker, 1982) and *Grandmaster Flash's* 'Scorpio' (Glover, 1982). They were influenced by local and international electronic music production practices (Broughton & Brewster, 2018). My peer group played this music on a Hitachi TRK 'Ghettoblaster' and dreamt of being Radio Raheem from Spike Lee's seminal film of the era titled *Do the Right Thing* (1989). We fantasised about being members of the *Rock Steady Crew* (George, 2018) from the Bronx in NYC, wandering around our small (and safe) housing estate with a roll of 'lino' <sup>3</sup>(linoleum for breakdancing), attempting to moonwalk like *Jeffery Daniel* (2020)<sup>4</sup> while wearing a glorious nylon and leather mash up of Tacchini, Farah and Adidas Samba. My developing years were so distant from the social environment or conditions that might have spawned these

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<sup>3</sup> Rolls of linoleum were commonly used as mobile and outdoor breakdancing surfaces

<sup>4</sup> Jeffery Daniel was a US dancer who introduced the 'moonwalk' dance move into popular culture:  
<https://jeffreydaniel.com/>

movements in the US and European capitals. However, the consumption of cultural events, scenes, genres and trends was still possible due to exposure to TV, radio, printed press, music (cassettes, vinyl formats) and word of mouth within peer groups. Reflecting on my 30 years of experience as a professional, creating, producing and distributing for the music and film industries, my understanding of culture can loosely be defined as an artistic performance or creative body of work, which can be disseminated and interacted with across a spectrum of media and virtual environments. This discussion has the intention to support an understanding of the processes that influence music consumption, production and culture in music scenes, specifically Tromsø. An exploration into the perceived value and exchange of cultural capital within the community using scholarly work will form the basis of the analysis.

The interrogation of the influence of cultural capital is couched in the theory proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. No discussion concerning music consumption and production would be credible without the acknowledgement of his role in this academic field. Bourdieu is recognised for a range of publications that propose his key scholarly concepts, on habitus, field theory and capital (2010 [1984]; 1986; 1991). In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (2010 [1984]) defined the different forms of capital (social, economic and cultural) of which cultural capital is of most interest here, used to propose the existence of a link between taste and social structure. He identified three types of cultural capital: embodied, objectified and institutionalised (Bourdieu; 1986: 17-21). He proposed cultural capital as a value that works in similar ways to economic capital in that it gives people a certain kudos or cool. Thornton (1995) expanded Bourdieu's theories by introducing the concept of subcultural capital, and the value it can confer on scene participants is integral to this debate. However,

before the discussion progresses, this value derived from the consumption of music and production is to be explored in Bourdieu's terms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 2010[1984]). The analysis will highlight the elements considered relevant to the Tromsø group, which are the embodied and objectified types of cultural capital (1986: 17-21). Embodied cultural capital refers to personal taste in art or music and is acquired over time experientially, whether that be from school, friends, family, self-discovery or, in this case it might have been DJing on a radio show for example. Objectified cultural capital represents material objects or possessions that possess cultural significance and value, for example a synthesiser or rare imported vinyl (1986: 17-21). Initially Bourdieu (2010: 262) suggested that if a person has high economic capital, they will have high cultural capital, but developing this idea he distinguishes between people with high cultural capital and low economic capital as well as people who score highly in both or low in both. He identified a group that he terms 'the new petite bourgeois', commonly translated in academia, as the 'new cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu; 2010: 355). According to Lisa De Propriis and Samuel Mwaura (2013: 1), he 'employed the term to refer to new professions that helped reduce class distinctions by enhancing the consumption of [...] culture by the masses'. This can be considered a relevant cultural observation of the working and middle class professionals in media, advertising, and lifestyle industries. This aspect gives Bourdieu enduring credibility regarding the area of cultural capital. His cultural intermediaries are defined as 'taste-makers' who leverage their personal experiences into occupational resources to certain legitimate forms of culture (Bourdieu, 2010: 355). Mike Featherstone (2007) expands the concept, citing Diana Crane (1987), as those 'who rapidly circulate information between [formerly sealed-off] areas of culture, and the emergence



of new communication channels under conditions of intensified competition' (Featherstone, 2007: 26). Although these new channels (internet or online) were not established during the Tromsø scene, it is helpful to consider the scene in relation to Featherstone's ideas. With music consumption and production taking place in this scene, I suggest that the conditions pertained to competitiveness driven by cultural capital between group members. Bourdieu's analysis incorporates a diverse range of different social classes and professional 'factions' (Bourdieu, 2010: 355), demonstrating the complexity around the ideas of cultural capital, indicating that it cannot just be mapped directly to economic wealth. Class structure is complex, and as the Tromsø case shows it varies between nations and focusing on class as a measure of engagement in musical culture might lead to inaccurate assumptions. As outlined above, a person might not be particularly wealthy, but they could be recognised as having high cultural capital in relation to the three types of cultural capital he proposed (Bourdieu, 2010: 262; 1986). The common forms of employment in this northern municipality indicate familial integration into industries such as mining, energy or fishing. This access to resources (time and finance) to travel <sup>5</sup> (Statista, 2021; Statistics Norway, 2021), and travel to more developed music scenes, would potentially be perceived as middle class in the UK. These producers or DJs might be working class, but in the rural context of a Tromsø based Norwegian, this would mean something different to a DJ or producer based in the UK. This is a generalisation, but in this context, it is useful to consider that working class young people participating in a similar UK scene may find a way to fund their vinyl consumption. Although they might struggle to raise additional funds for air

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<sup>5</sup> The Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund is the largest on the planet and was realised after discovering and extracting oil reserves in 1969 in the North Sea. This has led to an average yearly salary of approximately £55,000. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1169745/average-monthly-salary-norway-by-industry/>

travel and translocal mobility realised from a high value national currency, such as the Norwegian Krone (NOK). This is evidenced in the translocal mobility discussed in the interviews, such as the travel to recording studios, labels and experiencing global subcultures. Some demographic information from the data shows that the enablers grew up together, attending the same school and generally had a working-class family upbringing. Hansen recalls his school years.

There was only one high school or college (three years from 16 to 18) called Kongsbakken where Kolbjørn Lyslo, Gaute Barlindhaug, Torbjørn and Svein Berge, Bjørn Torske went but after me. However, Per, Geir, Rune, Bjørn and I went to the same primary school. We were from working-class families, none of our parents was in the creative or performance industries (Paper Recordings, 2013g: online).

To lay a marker in the context of this discussion around Bourdieu's framework, we can note that the enablers were working class but possessed high culture. This element of fluidity around social structure is evident in 'The space of social positions' (Bourdieu, 2010: 122-123) in Figure 2. The illustration maps professional and cultural groups or pastimes according to the level of social and economic capital they possess. The Tromsø producers challenge parts of this theoretical framework. The difficulty arises when mapping the core group onto this framework, precisely when Bourdieu points to the elite and well educated, in the main, having enhanced access to cultural and social capital in society. This raises the question of currency and the value of social capital in the context of the Tromsø municipality being geographically isolated and a fraction of the size of capital city, Oslo. This group created a situation where they could travel to London, live in 'hackney squats' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online) and learn about music and subculture from the participants of these more developed scenes. The enablers introduce the potential for the exchange of subcultural capital from the acquisition of vinyl from UK shopping trips into the scene. The

enablers were generally working-class but possessed a high level of cultural capital (Paper Recordings, 2013g: online; 2013f: online). In this case, we might argue that the distribution of capital within this group might contradict elements of Bourdieu's model. Thornton expands on his model when she notes the frictions between his presentation of the 'nouveau riche' or 'flash' groups (Thornton, 1995: 10). These people are rich in economic capital but poor in cultural capital, the opposite to artists or academics for example. This critique of Bourdieu is supported by Nick Prior, who adds that Bourdieu's high-low culture framework is insufficient to directly apply here because 'music itself and our encounters with it are far more complex than can be conveyed through the idea of social origins' (Prior, 2013: 101).

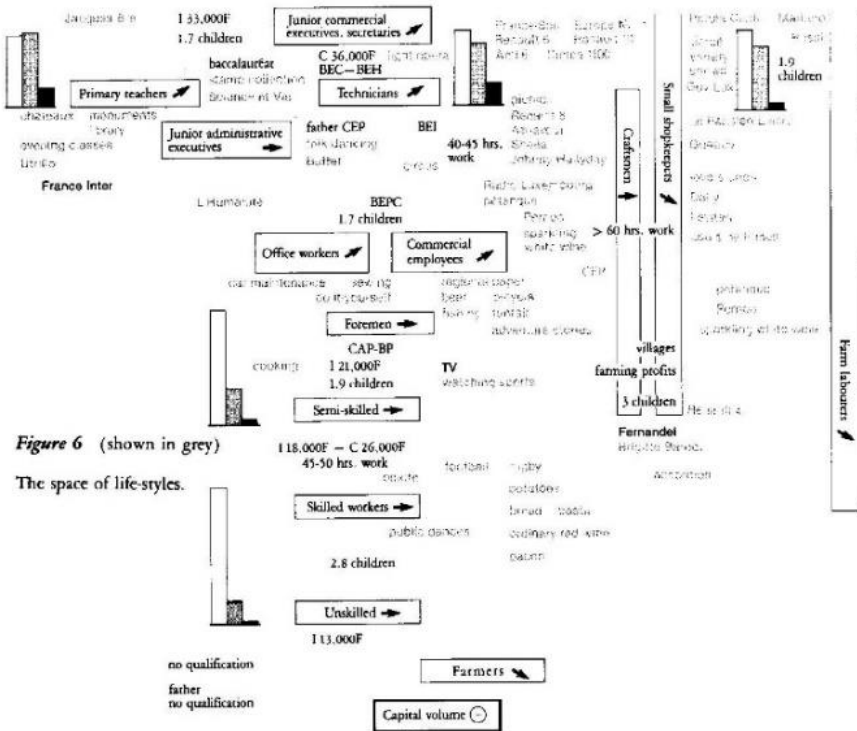
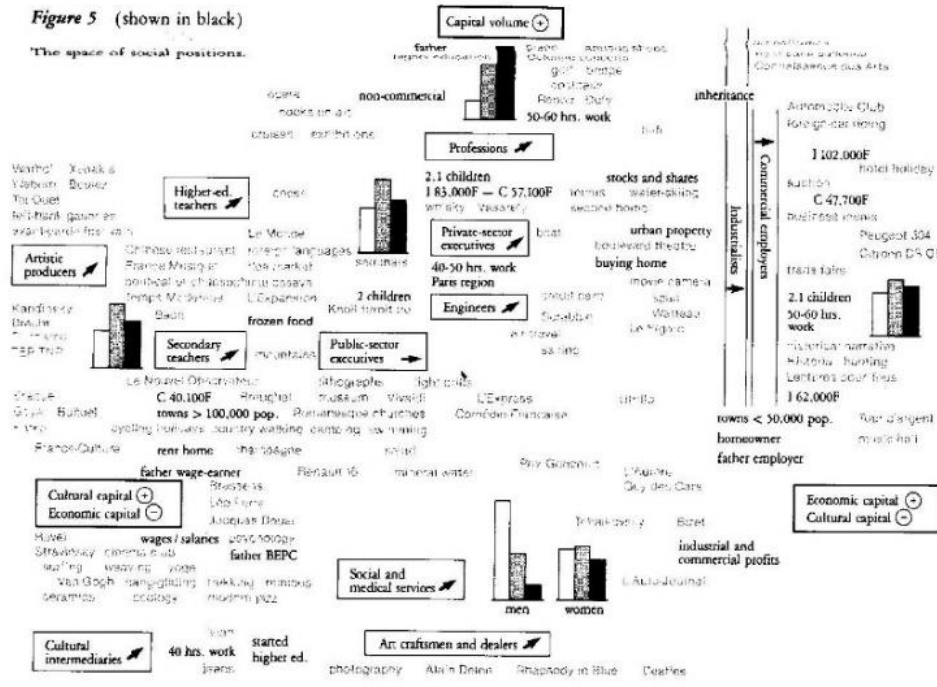


Figure 2: 'The space of social positions' - figures 5, 6 (Source: [adapted from] Bourdieu, 2010:122-123)

Expanding on the notion of social capital and informed by the work of James Coleman (1990), Crossley (2015: 42) explains that within a newly formed social network like-minded individuals create social capital, which the members draw upon to generate further associated projects. The Tromsø scene comprised a small close-knit group driven by their passion for music consumption and production, a potentially fertile situation for the exchange of cultural capital. Taking the example of Bjørn Torske being introduced to Vidar Hanssen, who managed the local radio station (Paper Recordings, 2013g: online). Hanssen would have recognised the cultural capital in Torske and saw the value or 'kudos' of having him present a show on Beatservice or Brygga Radio. Hanssen potentially saw that Torske had a cultural capital or cool that would benefit the radio station. Conversely, Torske saw cultural capital, and relating to Crossley (2015: 5) potentially recognised social capital in Hanssen, who managed the station programme and shows and could give Torske access to a show. However, most of all, this created a platform from which Torske could perform his new music productions and share the new vinyl imports that had arrived by mail order. Per Martinsen recounts another example when he talks about Jon Strøm who played a key role in expanding his and Geir Jenssen's subcultural knowledge and opportunities.

There was a guy called Jon Strøm (who was a couple of years older than me) who used to invite people like me and Geir Jenssen around his house on Fridays to drink beer and listen to the mail-order 'catch' of the week. It would be a very eclectic mix of punk, post-punk and pop and he would introduce us to records by Crass, Dead Kennedys along with ABC and Chic. I remember hearing "Last Night a DJ Saved My Life" by Indeep and "Warm Leatherette" by The Normal for the first time at Jon Strøms. He ordered some of his records from Rhythm Records on Portobello Rd in London but

not 100% sure. We ended up having eclectic influences such as electronic, punk, pop or experimental music. The music just had to have something special (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Strøm appears to recognise cultural capital in them both when he invites them to come to his house to listen to music. This invitation demonstrated that he was bestowing cultural capital on them. Strøm might have perceived a level of cool or contemporary music knowledge of value, in which he wanted to engage. In the same way, Jenssen and Martinsen recognised the cultural value in being invited to an older peer's house to listen to imported new vinyl and drink beer. An influence of technology in relation to music production and cultural capital can also be seen when Rune Lindbæk describes his feelings of awe when walking home past the house shared with Geir Jenssen (*Biosphere*).

The first thing I heard about a synthesiser which I thought was the 'coolest thing', but I didn't know anyone that had it, was that Geir Jenssen's *Biosphere*'s brother, who was in my class at school, had several of them at his home. They lived very close by, but I didn't know him because he was older, but I do remember walking past his house and thinking, 'he has synthesisers' (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online).

During the 1980s, owning such scarce music technology led to objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986: 17). Lindbæk was developing an interest in electronic music production and his response to being in such close proximity to a synthesiser was to bestow cultural capital onto Jenssen (Crossley, 2015: 5). We have explored the ideas of Bourdieu who introduced the concepts of cultural, economic and specifically social capital that are of interest here. In the words of Thornton, 'cultural capital' is defined by Bourdieu as 'knowledge accumulated through upbringing and education which confers social status' (Thornton, 1995: 10). Published over a decade after *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]), Thornton's (1995) *Club Cultures* by moving attention away from class and

expanding on his ideas around cultural capital. This removes any issues around Bourdieu's approach to class in relation to the Tromsø group. She proposes that it should be perceived differently, recommending that theorists revise the terminology around high and low culture. Thornton states that within a subculture the same systems exist regardless of class, as people that are experts in their field and are looked up to and have cultural capital bestowed upon them. They are perceived to have a high level of cultural capital e.g. they are 'connected' or 'in the know' (Thornton, 1995: 11-12). She is not rejecting Bourdieu's views but expanding on his ideas in the context of subculture. Thornton (1995: 11) introduces the term of 'subcultural capital', which can be applied to this research. Informed by Bourdieu's (1991: 94) essay 'Did you say Popular?' Thornton uses the term to describe groups of young people and their social environments, such as clubs. She argues that these spaces are refuges for youth 'where their rules hold sway and that, inside and to some extent outside these spaces, subcultural distinction have significant consequences' (Thornton, 1995: 11). Although Tromsø was a rural municipality they did have spaces, such as the local youth centre or 'Brygga Ungdommens Hus' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online), that would have acted the same way as the venues and social environments referred to by Thornton (1995: 11). She states that subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder, giving value to the cultural knowledge and commodities acquired by members of a subculture, raising their status and helping differentiate themselves from members of other groups (Thornton, 1995: 11). The earlier quotes from Per Martinsen, Vidar Hanssen and Rune Lindbæk should be considered here within Thornton's ideas around subcultural capital. We can apply this to the example of Strøm inviting Martinsen and Jenssen, to listen to music with him, and the

flow of subcultural capital between them. It is worth noting here, the high level of interconnectivity present in such a small rural music scene, all linked by school, locality, friends, family and acquaintances. The interview data shows how these interactions enabled these subcultural capital transactions within the context of the music community. Thornton's ideas describe my cohort more accurately than Bourdieu's class structure. Her discourse relates to how the enablers would objectify subcultural capital by playing and performing newly imported vinyl, from say Biophon (mail order store) or Rockys Records in Tromsø. They would disseminate the music via playback in a private space or DJ on a radio show to project their being 'in the know' and create value from the subcultural capital or 'hipness' of the music they chose to perform and produce (Thornton, 1995: 11). The interesting part here is not that they would play the imported vinyl but how other people saw these vinyl imports as new influences, because of the people that were playing them. Expanding on this, Straw (2005: 414) suggests that 'subcultural capital brings together the interpretive skills and hip credibility which people acquire through their involvement in particular subcultures'. The relevance of subcultural capital in this context is given additional weight when Thornton suggests that there may not have been any direct correlation between financial rewards and subcultural capital, although certain professions exist that can be developed to make a living as they become 'the masters of the scene' (Thornton, 1995: 12). This can be applied to an Arctic scene enabler like Geir Jensen, whose pioneering activities would have invited his peers to bestow subcultural capital on him. Thornton (1995: 14) highlights that Bourdieu's work lacked substance in regard to the role of the media (specifically TV). The level of media exposure determines the level or value of subcultural capital present in the form; in this case, the electronic dance music



produced by the Norwegian producers of Tromsø. Michael Gondry's (YouTube, 1996) use of *Biosphere's* 'Microgravity' (Jenssen, 1991) recording in a TV advert for global fashion brand 'Levi's', is an example of how Jenssen's music production engaged in international music markets. This knowledge would have been passed onto the group and wider developing scene. Building on the notion of the value of subcultural capital and how this might affect a music scene and the behaviour of its participants, Straw explains that:

Subcultural capital may draw on (and be inflected by) more traditional forms of cultural capital, as when locally based music acquires a knowing, cosmopolitan edge through the involvement of educated, mobile people within it (as has been the case, at different moments, in the music scenes of Austin, Texas, New York City or Seattle, Washington) (Straw, 2005: 415).

In this case, the mobility of enablers is linked to the accumulation of subcultural capital, mostly in vinyl form certainly adding in Straws terms, a 'knowing, cosmopolitan edge' (2005: 415) to the music community. Their UK record trips, Belgium recording studio sessions, and translocal networking and connectivity as their scene developed supports Straw's statement. The international travel, engagement with other developed scenes and their Nordic music productions gives them status. Linking this 'cosmopolitan edge' (Straw, 2005: 415) to the earlier discussion in terms of their social class, they were working class Norwegian, which meant they had the means to travel, consume culture and share with their group and scene. In this context, cultural capital might be recognised by others, in samples and re-edits from old disco, jazz, soul or funk tunes used in their music productions. For example 'Dom B. Sensi' by *Those Norwegians* (Lindbæk, et al., 1997b) sampling the track by seventies soul star *Leroy Hutson* (Who Sampled, 2021), or 'Eple' by *Røyksopp* who use a recording from jazz keyboardist, *Bob James* and eighties disco outfit *Skyy* (Who Sampled,

2021). Relevant to the discussion here is the integration of sound samples from existing recordings into the enablers music productions. This can be perceived as them adding an element of subcultural capital to the track such as sample, in this case, from a classic disco, funk or house track. Subcultural capital could be recognised in the Norwegian producers if listeners to the enablers radio shows knew where the original samples, they had used in their tracks were taken from (before we could Shazam<sup>6</sup> the track being played), intimating shared taste and cultures. Further research could consider the active process during the exchange of subcultural capital and the music producers conferring this onto the sample recording that contains embedded cultural properties during the composition.

To move the discussion on from Bourdieu and Thornton's theories on class and cultural capital it is necessary to share some ideas proposed around the relationship between taste, culture and consumption. Nick Crossley's (2015: 8) work states that taste can also be found as a culture which defines how it is distributed and shared. So far, we have established that the Tromsø group had eclectic tastes (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online; 2013f: online; 2013e: online) in musical genre and style but a common interest in electronic dance music that tied this together. Genre will be discussed later in this essay, but the musical taste of a person surely has an intangible, even fluid quality influenced by a myriad of factors such as location, social network, economic and of relevance here, social, cultural and subcultural capital. Using Crossley's (2015, p. 15) method, the core group were deemed to be interconnected by strong, meaningful ties facilitating a global flow of culture that influenced taste. As noted, the flow of global culture is derived from their translocal mobility, engagement in developed scenes and consumption and production of music.

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<sup>6</sup> Shazam: a mobile device based music identification application, <https://www.shazam.com/>

Crossley uses Scott Feld's (1981, p. 1017) work on the social organisation of friendship ties and interactions to explain how tastes can be shared, a situation that might be considered possible in the formative period of the scene. Crossley uses the relatable example of jazz fans who are based in a small town, where participants are likely to know one another because they attend or hang out in the same cultural spaces (Crossley, 2015: 8); in the case of Tromsø this would be in Rockys Records or the local Youth Center in Tromsø (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online; 2013e: online). When they do meet the chances of them creating a meaningful bond is probable as they have a shared interest of electronic dance music, and a shared identity through their eclectic contemporary music tastes. This bond is strengthened because they have previously seen each other at the local youth centre. Paraphrasing Crossley (2015: 9), when they converse, their identities as fans of electronic dance music and other related contemporary music will be mutually confirmed. He goes on to note that 'there is a growing body of literature suggesting both that tastes are formed within networks, as an effect of mutual influence, and that as a consequence, taste diffuses through networks' (Crossley, 2015: 6). Echoing the proverb 'birds of a feather flock together', Crossley (2015: 8) additionally notes that their shared interests and tastes with others in the core group come about because they shared these interests with them in the first place. In an objective sense, this core group can be perceived as a clique 'hanging' out and sharing tangible (cassettes), and for that matter intangible (a sense of cool, in the know or hipness (Thornton, 1995: 11) forms of subcultural capital. Building on the work of Erving Goffman (1974), Holly Kruse (2003: 129), notes that these social interactions happen within frames in different settings. Applying this idea to the Tromsø scene, the connectivity present between the core group members differed in impact

depending on the frames in which the interaction was taking place. For instance, the Rocky Platebar record store, Brygga radio station, bedroom studio, club or cabin. 'A frame is an identifiable situation that is governed by its own principles of organisation' (Goffman, 1974: 10). Kruse proposes that 'clubs, along with independent record stores, are perhaps the most visible sites of interaction' (2003: 129), with each providing a kind of frame for social interaction within independent [pop/rock] music scenes, with each providing a different frame for social interaction (2003: 129). This Arctic case study supports Goffman's theory of frames, in that there existed a range of settings which would provide the conditions for such contrasting social interactions to take place between small numbers of participants, for instance, mountain cabins, their home, Rocky Platebar record store, radio stations and shows and clubs (Paper Recordings; 2013g: online; 2013f: online; 2013h: online; 2013i: online).



Figure 3: Andy Swatland with Per Martinsen at Rockys Records, Tromsø circa 1988.

Source: (Paperecordings, 2013h: online), © Paper Vision Films [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

Bourdieu explored classical and jazz music, but to my knowledge did not explore popular music within his work, but he certainly adds gravitas to the role music plays in a social context when he states, 'nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music' (Bourdieu, 2010: 10). Building on this and linking to the ideas of Crossley (2015: 6, this study proposes that the tastes of these musicians and producers operating in northern Norway were influenced more by personal and mutual choice, access and availability rather than their social class in terms of Bourdieu's work in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 2010). The interview data points towards an eclectic range of musical tastes being consumed in the core group of Tromsø participant producers. Building on the diversity of musical tastes present in the group, Per Martinsen illustrates their mindset and appetite to consume music and culture in whatever form they could access.

We imported a lot of youth cultures such as post-punk, early German electronic experimental music, Freaks from the West Coast of the US and even bands like The Residents performed in Tromsø in the nineteen-eighties. Here we were, sitting on top of the world, looking out, trying to find things we thought interesting going on down there, where the other people were doing (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Building on this motivation to consume culture and their developing tastes, He eloquently sums up one of the most intriguing elements concerning the group consumption of musical culture and associated artefacts when he states, 'we ordered fanzines and music from the UK and Europe and the UK, and we had little import sharing 'factories' where one of us would order a record, we'd copy it onto cassette and distribute it around Tromsø' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). The exploration into the relationship that the enablers had with cultural capital is developed further by considering the works of Paul Widdop who proposed the notion of the 'cultural omnivore'. His analysis suggests that

'consuming physical forms of music is a [...] social act, socially learned and stimulated' (Widdop, 2015: 101). In the case of Tromsø, the physical forms include going to gigs, clubs, and more pertinent to the pre/emerging internet period, listening to music in social spaces such as cabins, record shops, and radio shows. It follows that a more varied and larger volume of music will be consumed within a more extensive network. The levels of consumption within the Tromsø scene would have been limited by the number of producers in the network and their connections. This would have potentially impacted the flow of global culture into the group and consequently the level of subcultural capital. Framing how consumption took place in this formative group by labelling the type of consumers as 'omnivores' or 'univores' is a perspective that can offer an alternative understanding for us here. Paul Widdop (2015: 89,101) deduces that omnivores tend to engage in a wide range of cultures and activities, whereas a univore relies on family and close friends in their limited network (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Most of those in the early scene had the financial means (Statista, 2021) to consume music and culture, for example, buying vinyl imports, record-buying trips to London, or sourcing music production equipment. Enabler Bjørn Torske (2013i:online) succinctly summarises his feelings when describing his hometown and demonstrates that cultural discovery and participation is universal wherever one might be located.

It's not a big place and was kind of boring because there wasn't much music culture in Tromsø, so we started listening to music that came from other places. A lot of the older people that we knew travelled to London and other European cities, picking up on the music and scenes that were happening there. I was 13 and at school when I started listening to hip hop music and early electro. We just copied and shared cassette tapes between us; we didn't buy vinyl records back then. (Paper Recordings, 2013i: online).

Of interest here is the age at which cultural exchange took place and the types of interaction between community members and social groups that Bjørn identifies. The significance of the young age at which they became aware of global culture should be noted here, with a reminder of the remoteness of their Arctic location. Of additional interest, is that even at the age of thirteen, Torske already appears to be creating embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2010 [1986]: 17-19). The drivers of this Arctic scene appear to act as both univores and omnivores (Widdop, 2015: 101), engaging in a social network that initiated music consumption and production, comprising close friends and others in groups and networks located in Belgium, London, Germany, and The Netherlands. Conversely, theorist Alan Warde (2007) challenges the notion of the cultural omnivore as a cultural actor, arguing that the most distinct participants (in terms of cultural engagement and knowledge) interviewed in his study were the professional, cultural intermediaries with a defined range of interest in popular culture (2007: 161-2). Warde confirms the omnivorousness behaviour of the group in respect of their eclectic production styles and a desire to collaborate and share. In summary, the theories around cultural capital, class and taste (Bourdieu, 2010[1984]), subcultural capital, cultural omnivores and networks can be applied to the Tromsø scene in the context of music consumption and production (Thornton, 1995; Warde, 2007; Widdop, 2015; Crossley, 2015). The musicians were influenced more by their own tastes and choices rather than their social standing. This might have fed into their practice and behaviour in regard their cultural consumption which appeared mainly omnivorous but with a small community and network. We have seen that the enablers were able to consume musical culture independently and apply it to

their practice giving grounds to explore the structure of music scenes in further depth.

## Chapter 2: The Tromsø scene

Internationally, Tromsø is better known for being a prime place to see the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). Its planetary location also creates the Polar Night between November and January, where the region is plunged into 24-hour darkness each year. Then, from May through to July, the locals experience the Midnight Sun season during which the sun never goes down. The potential influence of these polar light seasons on the electronic dance music produced by the local participants is an interesting aspect to consider while reading this study, although a full investigation of this aspect will not be conducted here. As DJ Magazine editor, Carl Loben stated 'Norwegian music I first became aware of, probably through this guy called *Biosphere*, it was through him we got an inkling about Tromsø and these Norwegian places that seemed quite alien to me [...] at the time' (Northern Disco Lights, 2016). His view shows that the city was considered to be remote and otherworldly. However, remoteness did not appear to blunt their motivation to consume music. This interaction with the world appeared to help them realise the cultural value of performance, production and dissemination within their community via available media platforms including radio, clubs and mixtapes. This process appears to generate subcultural capital and the confidence to reach out and organise events with internationally recognised DJs such as Greg Wilson or DJ Harvey (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online). This then creates a flow of media and a mutual exchange of subcultural capital between the locality and the practitioners



(Thornton, 1995). Several comparable works exist based around peripheral scenes and networks in Australian land territories from researchers such as Andy Bennett (2004a; 2004b), John Connell and Chris Gibson (2002), which are used here to develop this aspect of the debate. Building on this Bennett and Rogers (2016) add 'that locations or municipalities with a smaller population density tend to result in underdeveloped support for live music and thus a more fluid notion of scene' (Bennett and Rogers, 2016: 96). Rebecca Anne Curtis (2012: 115) wrote about the process of creativity in remote places, specifically rural Australia, and how a local festival makes the connection in a translocal sense to culture. Although her work followed particular jobs such as graphic designer, filmmaker and sound engineer, there are commonalities here that can be drawn with Tromsø. Her research offers the belief that creativity plays an influential role in isolated locations compared to other musical or creative settings. Curtis (2012: 115) uses the term 'linkage' as an example of how peripheral music festivals connect with culture in her case, the Wangaratta Jazz Festival. In the case of Tromsø's development, the local music festival that played this role by connecting music and culture to a remote location was called *Insomnia* (Lindblad, 2014). It was co-founded by Tromsø enabler, Gaute Barlindhaug and hosted a wide range of contemporary artists, bands, and performers worldwide, such as *Franz Ferdinand*, *Simian Mobile Disco*, and local artists such as *Frost*, *Mental Overdrive*, and *Røyksopp*. Andy Bennett is informed by Ken Spring's (2004: 48) study into the 'Ruston' rave scene to highlight that this American dance club scene primarily relied 'on one person to draw on the resources and influence of other persons in the local community, and to gain their confidence in the economic value of his pursuits for the community, was crucial to the survival of the scene' (Bennett, 2004a: 228). This can be mapped to the

entrepreneurial skills of enablers, evidenced by Barlindhaug's Insomnia Festival, which staged performances from a majority of the enablers such as *Aedena Cycle* (Berge, Brundtland, Lyslo), *Mental Overdrive* (Martinsen) or *Biosphere* (Jenssen). This would have been a positive influence on the Tromsø music community but also in the context of the global flow of music consumption and culture into, and out of the location. In *Creativity in Peripheral Places*, Chris Gibson (2012) interrogates the link between remoteness and creativity. The anecdotal evidence from his interviews did not seem to provide proof of a quantifiable impact on creativity, aside from the additional cost of festival logistics and a reduction in connection to international networks, synonymous with remote locations. However, of interest here is that Gibson identifies the remoteness of location as a positive influence, which creates a sense of creative freedom from the metropolitan trends (Gibson, 2012: 31). His findings complement the view of geographical isolation extolled by Curtis (2012), that the Wangaratta Jazz festival connects its remote scene to culture in a translocal context. The following quote from a Darwin based musician, Kris Keogh, interviewed by Gibson support these claims about the cultural 'mash up' synonymous with the location.

You tend to interact with all sorts of people. Say if I was in Melbourne or Sydney and I was into electronic music, I could hang out with my electronic music friends, but there's just not the critical mass to do that here. So, I make weird electronic music, I'm in a rock band, a reggae band, and I play in a Gamelan ensemble (Gibson, et al., 2008: 634).

This maps to Per Martinsen's view of remoteness as he describes the creative process of producing music during the dark season, 'when we grew up, we had total freedom because we could just sample everything, put it into one big cauldron and start mashing it up' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). It can be

concluded from Gibson's (Gibson, et al., 2008: 634) research that there are signs that dwelling in 'peripheral places' does impact creativity; and the interview data provide evidence that supports this finding. For example, Rune Lindbæk alludes to the motivation behind his feelings of isolation living in Tromsø when he talks about Frode Holm, an eighties recording artist from Oslo. He outlines how motivations were driven by the need to engage and integrate with music and scenes comprising musicians and producers; Anderson's (2016) concept of an imagined community might be applied to this aspect of the Tromsø scene.

His best track 'Fotspor' from his 1981 album 'Holm CPU' (Holm, 1981) has fantastic production, great vocals and lyrics which tell a story about going out into the world and marking your mark. There might not be much going on in your local area, so you can go to LA, New York or San Francisco in North America. I can relate to these lyrics because in Tromsø until we started doing parties, I really wanted to be somewhere else. I can really relate to the feeling that you don't want to be stuck in the same place forever (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online).

Lindbæk expresses some of the frustration that is accepted as part of living in Tromsø. Conversely, this demonstrates that music and specifically dance music offered them an aspirational escape from their location. Conversely, Lyslo links to the freedom that remoteness brought, when he recounts 'we were very much on our own, there weren't many people our age into the same stuff. We didn't feel isolated, we were just into our own thing' (2013e: online), and Per Martinsen highlights an exciting impact of these conditions during the pre/emerging internet period.

When you are situated in Tromsø, you are three to four hours' drive from the nearest town, 2,000km from Oslo. It's all viewed as just the 'other place'. There was a lot of relevant parties and people in Oslo and other towns that I didn't know anything about until over twenty years later. It was more difficult to get information from around Norway than it was to

find out what was going on in Berlin and London (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

This small group engaged in the same music, subculture and media, based in an extremely remote location. It is a source of fascination the meticulous way that these small groups crafted their way through this subculture and connected with others before the internet, particularly given their remoteness. While acknowledging and accepting their remote location as part of their Norwegian lifestyle, the interviewees nonetheless express joy in sharing their music productions with a global audience. The Tromsø enablers released music commercially some years before the formation of the non-Artic, Bergen music scene, which was examined by Stig Tenold (2011), and referred to as the 'Bergen Wave'. This scene brought attention to Norwegian dance music and indirectly to the dance music that had previously originated from the Tromsø scene. The producers were arriving from this very remote location within the Arctic circle, leaving their boring and dull town behind (Paper Recordings, 2013i: online), driven by artistic and professional goals of producing, performing and sharing their music locally and internationally. Of interest here is that key enablers of the Tromsø scene later migrated to the larger and globally connected city of Bergen to play a vital role in the Bergen Wave phenomenon (Tenold, 2011).

Having contextualised the discussion in terms of cultural capital, consumption and location the notion of music scene can be interrogated using academic literature developed by a range of scholars over the last thirty years. It is useful to begin by recognising more recent debates on scene concerning the relationship between musical heritage and popular music. Robert Knifton (2018: 144) argues that UNESCO's recognition of popular music as a form of intangible heritage has changed the discourse on how music is consumed and travels

across borders; conversely, during the Tromsø case, the consumption of music and culture was very much material and tangential. This argument links to the work of John Storey (2003: 145) who notes that audiences of global culture are denied agency labelling them as passive recipients rather than active participants, which can be imagined in a pre/emerging internet era where music crossed borders as tangible heritage. This would happen where vinyl, cassettes and printed press became the translocal delivery mechanisms facilitating music consumption. However, it can be countered that technology has empowered these global passives to become active participants engaging in a diverse spectrum of popular music. To clarify then, this paper focuses on the period from the late 1980s, when music was consumed and produced in a remote music scene in very much a tangible form (Knifton, 2018: 144). David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (2002) state that 'the study of popular music was still, in other words, in search of a set of theoretical paradigms which would allow multidisciplinary dialogue. Gradually in the 1980s and early 1990s, a set of key themes and concepts crystallised' (Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002: 2). The themes and concepts relevant to this analysis begin with the notion of a music scene proposed in academic discourse by Will Straw (1991). He drew attention to the diversity of music practice within urban centres and local music cultures, arguing that a scene was determined by relations between social groups, as they coalesce around specific coalitions of musical style (Straw, 1991: 379). Ruth Finnegan's (1989) earlier study focused on the importance of local music, where she argued that it appears neither formless nor, as we might suppose, just the product of individual endeavour, but to be structured according to a series of cultural interventions and organised practices (Finnegan, 1989: 10). The personal characteristics, interventions and relationships between those that

participated in the local scene will undoubtedly have exerted a level of influence. Following Straw's paper (1991), the definition of the scene was developed by a range of authors who focused on scene and how they worked in practice where performers (producers/DJs, for example, in this case) and an engaged local audience (Figure 4) came together collectively to create music and social happenings for their enjoyment (Bennett & Peterson, 2004: 3).



Figure 4: Bjørn Torske and Rune Lindbæk jam with scene participants circa 1993.  
Source: (Northern Disco Lights, 2016), © Paper Vision Films [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

Marc Augé (1996) found that social cohesion can occur between people of various ages and origins who meet and find an aesthetic alibi for their presence together in the clash or juxtaposition of styles. It is evidenced that this social interaction played a vital role in the local music community and is apparent across the interview data, for example when enablers Per Martinsen and Geir Jessen went to the older acquaintance, Jon Strøm's, home on Fridays to listen to music, or Martinsen going to Jessen's mountain cabin to listen Kraftwerk even though Jessen was three to four years older than him (Paper Recordings,

2013f: online). The social cohesion between the core group of enablers is an important aspect that features throughout the analysis. Straw (2005: 412) proposes that ‘scenes emerge from the excesses of sociability that surround the pursuit of interests, or which fuel ongoing innovation and experimentation’. This motivation to further their skill set and knowledge is apparent from the interview with Per Martinsen, a key Tromsønian pioneer who recalls his desire to return home for breaks during his recording studio work in Ghent (for R & S Records). These connections led to meeting other local music producers (Lyslo and Torske) at parties and record stores such as Rocky Platebar, Tromsø (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online; 2013h: online). Dedication and fun are evident in the interview data, for instance, when Kolbjørn Lyslo (aka *Doc L Jnr*) recollects the first party within his social group.

We were very much on our own, and there weren't many people our age into the same stuff. We didn't feel isolated; we were just into our own thing. It was just the way things were, we were into electronic music, and it seemed nobody else was. I remember my first party on the 16th of May 1990, at a place called the Brygga Ungdommens Hus (Youth Centre), put on by Bjørn [Torske] & Per [Martinsen] (Figure 5). I guess it was the first dance party in Tromsø that a crowd of around 50 friends and locals attended (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online).

This recollection supports the case for Tromsø being recognised as a music scene in the scholarly sense: it's development was driven by a core number of members, comprising key performers and an engaged audience. Hence, a local scene in Bennett & Peterson's (2004: 8) sense would seem to have been in play. The Tromsø party flyer (Figure 5) held for an event at the local youth club is an excellent example of the DIY ethic exhibited by the enablers.

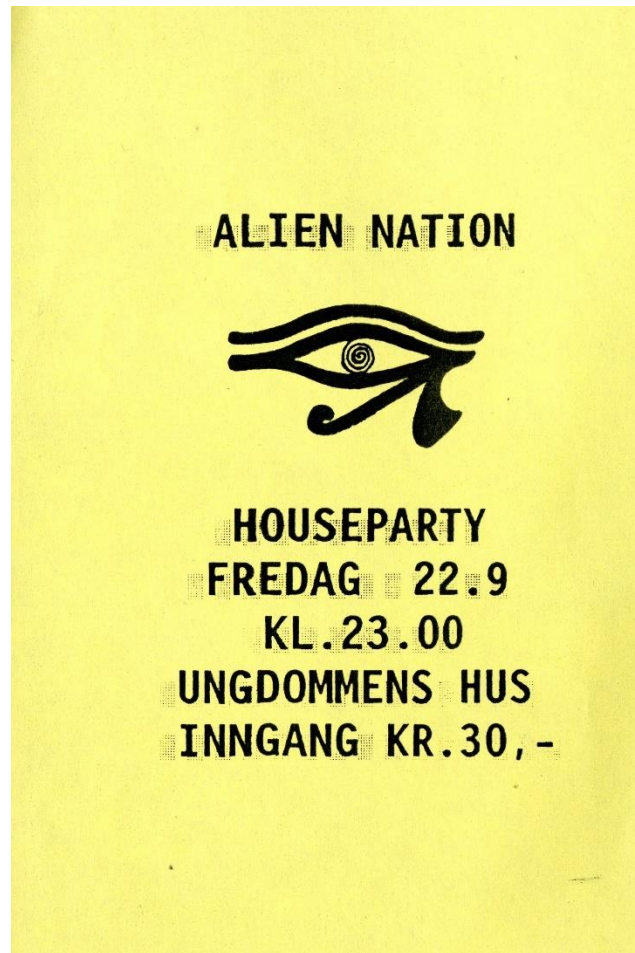


Figure 5: Alien Nation party flyer, circa 1990, the first Tromsø club night held by Per Martinsen and Bjørn Torske.

Source: (Paperecordings, 2013e: online), © Paper Vision Films [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

The building of local interactions when developing a scene is supported by Johnathon Wynn (2015) in his study on festivals and scenes in Austin, Texas. He notes that ‘group memberships and the cultural capital of knowledge, skills, and education reaps benefits within certain related spheres of social life’ (Wynn, 2015: 13). The shared benefit for our enablers is documented in *Northern Disco Lights* (2016), which charts the careers of many of the interviewees (Lee, 2019). Informed by Wynn (2015: 13) the benefits of membership of the Tromsø group are evidenced both tangibly with the sharing of new imported music recorded onto cassettes, and intangibly with information shared from magazines brought



back from trips abroad (Paper Recordings, 2013i: online; 2013d: online; 2013f: online). The connection with translocal scenes is of particular interest to the study; Lyslo recounts an example of this type of connectivity in practice.

We sent out a lot of demos in 1992, and one was sent to the Planet E (Detroit, USA) record label, and the owner Carl Craig called us. He wanted to put out the demo, but we didn't manage to finish it! The year after we sent some music with Geir Jenssen, who went down to see Renaat (R&S<sup>7</sup> Records owner) in Belgium. Renaat released it on Apollo Records in early 1994 (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online).

This demonstrates the motivation to develop and grow the scene translocally in that the enablers sought a Belgium record label to commercially release the music from Tromsø. They physically travelled over three thousand miles from the Arctic to make this happen<sup>8</sup>. Straw notes (2005: 413) that scenes are one of the city's infrastructures for exchange, interaction and instruction. This phenomenon is evident from Per Martinsen's recollection below of new producers coming to his studio to work with him on their music production, i.e. interact and exchange knowledge in the context of recording electronic music:

A handful of the younger producers came to our studio to produce their recordings. Some of these sessions were sent to SSR in Belgium and released as the 'TOS' EPs<sup>9</sup> and these were the first releases by Bjørn Torske, Ole Johan Mjøs joined by 'Per Syamese' (a recording alias of Per Martinsen) (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

This exchange of ideas between the producers in Tromsø is driven by excitement, natural curiosity and other aspects. We could argue that during the scene's development the enablers produced an enormous amount of cultural

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<sup>7</sup> R&S Records was an electronic dance music label, based in Ghent, Belgium.

<sup>8</sup> For comparison Lands End in Cornwall to John O'Groats in Scotland is only 900 miles.

<sup>9</sup> The TOS EP releases were on SSR Records in 1991, a label imprint of Crammed Discs based in Brussels, Belgium. TOS is the IATA airport code for Tromsø.

information and to quote Barry Shank in regard to scene members in terms of performativity.

Their effervescence from the sense that the 'information' produced within them is forever in excess of the productive ends to which it might be put, that the performativity characteristic of a scene involves the 'display of more than can be understood (Shank, 1994: 122).

The scene was embellished by relatable characteristics such as the presentation of radio shows (Brygga and Beatservice) and Tromsø dance club nights at the local Youth Club initiated by Martinsen and Torske (figure 5). This study does not intend on digging too deeply into the studies of performativity in music, but the research suggests a valid case for its inclusion in a discussion on music scenes. The related debate on musicology was expanded beyond critical music theory following the ideas of Joseph Kerman (1985; 1980), who called for a different approach to the analysis of music that considered additional associated aspects in addition to traditional musicology analysis. The emerging discourse incorporated synthesised elements such as the culture surrounding the composition and performance of a piece of music. According to some contemporary musicologists, music involves much more than the purely sonic aspect; the whole culture around the music is a constitutive part of the music. Richard Middleton (2012: 5) supports this view, stating, 'on this level, the new approaches all stand for the proposition that culture matters and that, therefore, any attempts to study music without situating it culturally are illegitimate'. These ideas focus on the culture around a piece of music, arguing that this is integral to our understanding and interpretation; that the culture around the music is indistinguishable from the music itself. In this case, the presence of performativity in music demands that we explore what is embodied, bringing to the fore the socio-cultural environments in which the performances

exist, such as production and DJing performance, playback on local radio stations and playback/performance at parties (Davidson, 2014: 179). Over thirty years ago, Sara Cohen (1991: 224); referred to the 'magic' that bands used as a boundary marker to identify themselves and their allegiance with others, reinforcing other elements bundled into a musical package or offer. This magic might have comprised a love of indie music, a specific attitude, dress code or a lyrical style which is relevant to the Tromsø music scene, and the subculture of electronic music associated with it. The general issue at hand is captured succinctly by Sruti Bala (2013: 19) who, informed by Davidson (2014:179), concludes that the use of performativity in the context of her study means that the social engagement between the participants created a gradual, compelling formation of acts that permitted them to experience the culture as an interactive process. Something similar occurs within the Tromsø scene, as evidenced by Martinsen when he talks about the interactive way the culture was consumed in the group, 'we collected everything into a big heap that we shared amongst us. We would import mail order records, fanzines and cassette tapes and copy the music onto tape to share and lend each other the literature to read' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Will Straw introduced the notion of scene to the academic narrative around music and location over thirty years ago. Although the impact of the internet on communication, technology, and mobility, relevant concepts are helpful to the debate. He asserts that scenes that developed around dance and disco music have been supported directly by the import, manufacture, selling and performance of 12" vinyl records in a social setting such as a nightclub or radio broadcast (Straw, 2005: 416). It seems that enablers such as Geir Jenssen, Per Martinsen or Bjørn Torske were all driven by their own 'restless, creative

quest for opportunity' (Straw, 2005: 418). The consumption and then dissemination (on radio, in social and private spaces) was made possible by an enabler, Andy Swatland, the manager of the only local record shop (Rockys Platebar) that imported electronic music. Their participation encouraged others to join and engage with them, which is demonstrated when Bjørn Torske and Rune Lindbæk are seen jamming their new music with participants from the scene from the early nineties in Figure 4 (Northern Disco Lights, 2016). This can be linked to Straw's suggestion (2005: 416) that a scene is in play wherever these kinds of collective creative energies find expression for an individual, enabling local cohesion with peers to create a scene. Straw (2005: 413) argued that the vertical relationship between the master and student is transformed into a spatial relationship of 'outside to inside' with a 'neophyte moving from the margins of a scene towards its centre' (2005: 413) using a range of cultural and urban media and artefacts, such as newspapers, to signpost and grant authenticity. For clarity, a neophyte is a person new to a subject, activity or in this case a scene. There is evidence from the data that this type of relationship existed in some form between the enablers during the formative development of the community due to its small population and isolated location. For example, Per Martinsen identified and talked about an older group member called Jon Strøm,

who used to invite people like me and Geir Jenssen around his house on Fridays to drink beer and listen to the mail-order 'catch of the week'. It would be a very eclectic mix of punk, post-punk and pop and he would introduce us to records by Crass, Dead Kennedys along with ABC and Chic. I remember hearing "Last Night a DJ Saved My Life" by Indeep and "Warm Leatherette" by The Normal for the first time at Jon Strøms (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Applying Straw's ideas (2005:413) there is a form of horizontal movement from the periphery to the scene's centre, if there is such a thing, between the enablers at their 'mail-order catch of the week' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). Using Martinsen's (2013f: online) recollection, that Strøm invited him and Jenssen to listen to music at his home; not a single individual (a 'student' to work alone with the master, in Straw's terms) but, instead, a range of people, which one imagines was an inner circle of some kind. Arguably Strøm provided a notional 'centre' here, toward which neophytes (peers and other enablers) could gravitate (Straw, 2005: 413). It could be argued that there was no centre of the Tromsø scene at this moment but a series of constantly changing nodes, a term used by Castells (2004: 23) and Crossley (2015: 14) whose studies are included in the discussion on flow and networks.

Peter Webb (2004: 81) discusses the themes of scene and narrative present in a city's subcultures. The merging of these various elements that he describes were evident within the biographical narratives which is relatable to the Tromsøian electronic dance music producer's interviews charting their musical development. Useful to the debate is Webb's (2004) study of Bristol, and the suggestion that members are educated in the group's systems informally (and formally) 'in-group', and that 'relevance' can exist at any given historical moment (Webb, 2004:81). Although over fifty years old, Alfred Schutz's (1970) work chimes with scholarly works on social groups within creative communities. Informed by Schutz's (1970) phenomenological framework, Webb (2004) identifies several strands present within the 'Bristol scene' such as the artists' environment, technology (devices) and musical genres and the process within a social group. Webb notes that 'within and at the heart of the field are the phenomenological selves of the individuals, their narratives

and histories constructed from interaction at the peculiarly local level and the more universal national or even global level' (Webb, 2016: 83). He likens this flow of subcultural capital, experiential knowledge and passion between the scene participants as a battle, not only with each other, but with the broader music industry. Imagine the situation when Geir Jenssen returned to Tromsø from one of his trips to Ghent to record at R&S, Bjørn Torske and Rune Lindbæk landing back at the airport after a record shop trip to London, or when Per Martinsen received a KISS FM<sup>10</sup> cassette recording from his 'Hackney squat' network in London (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). They would all have been desperate to recognise and share this 'new' objectified cultural capital within the core group (Bourdieu, 1986: 17). For the sake of relevance and to attempt to loosely map onto the Tromsø case study, let us use the example of electronic music production. The core group identified relevant strands typifying group membership such as a synthesiser, radio, and access to music (e.g. Geir Jenssen or Jon Strøm, Brygga Radio or Rocky Platebar), which became schemes for identification and orientation for music creativity and electronic dance music production. These then became the way to make and produce music 'in-group' or in the scene, and then after time, this would be challenged and 'relegated to last year's thing status' (Webb, 2004: 81). This is also relatable to the models and concepts proposed by Will Straw (2005: 413) and evident from the interview data source for this study. Webb (2004: 81) uses the notion of a group system where participants of a scene are 'educated' in its practices to advance Straw's (2005: 413) work on scene, which suggests that neophytes travel toward a notional scene centre. David Hesmondhalgh (2005: 21) placed 'scene' under the parent term 'musical collectivities', arguing that there is confusion around the

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<sup>10</sup> KISS FM was a radio station and brand based in New York, USA from the 1970s.

discourse on scene. He raises questions about the specificity of whether a scene is a 'bounded place' or a more complex construct that supports spatial music flows of affiliation, in the context of this study to mean electronic dance music (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 23). The isolated location of the Tromsø scene makes it more likely to behave as a type of bounded place in support of Straw's (1991) initial concept around scene. This idea is developed further when Hesmondhalgh (2005) cites Straw's (1991) and Shank's (1994) regarding comparisons between rock and dance music. Shank (1994) focuses on the individual and their local cohesion with peers to create a rock scene in Austin, Texas, whereas Straw recognises that external factors are integrated into any articulation of a scene in practice. This analysis supports Straw's (2005) recognition of external factors, such as isolation and technology in this case, as bearing influence on a scene. In contrast, Shank notes a more insular notion that a signifying community is produced 'based upon new enunciative possibilities within and among individual subjects' (Shank, 1994: 133). In addition, this Tromsø case supports elements of Straw's (2005) arguments, in that the community of creatives was small, stable and well connected through family and friends. However, in contrast to the North American 'heartland rock' example used by Straw (1991:27), the Tromsø enablers were also culturally connected internationally. This juxtaposition between the existence of a scene around a specific locality and the activity of an engaged and emboldened community against the relationship with external elements will continue to be a point of difference within scene analysis. Hesmondhalgh (2005: 28) argues that the constantly evolving nature of electronic dance music ensured the 'simultaneous existence of large numbers of local or regional styles', such as Detroit techno. This resulted in an interest in a cosmopolitan transcending of place that allowed

electronic dance music to bring together the dispossessed and the marginalised across many places (2005: 28). His argument can be seen in this case with the eclectic style of music production (ambient, techno, house and disco) and the bringing together of a group of people, living in the Arctic who shared interests in niche genres of music and culture. Karl Whitney (2019: 300) echoes this in his study of UK city scenes, where he argues that the 'sound of cities' were shaped by local scenes. He notes the number of acts that created a perceived city's scene varies in size, from the salience of individual bands such as *The Housemartins* from Hull or *10cc* and their recording studio based in Stockport up to large networks of groups and infrastructure (venues, journalists and photographers) in cities such as Liverpool in the sixties and Manchester in the eighties. However, what is of interest to this debate is the notion proposed by Connell and Gibson (2002) that the idea of 'a distinct musical sound were related to the contexts in which artists and audiences were able to interact (with appropriate infrastructure, receptive crowds, supportive venues and independent labels prepared to release unknown artists), and to ideas of remoteness from outside influences' (Connell & Gibson, 2002, p. 97). Additionally, Peter Webb's (2004: 66) discussion on the Bristol trip hop scene throws up more insights into the context of scene in Tromsø. He discusses venues in Bristol and their importance to the scene, however by contrast, infrastructure including clubs, concert venues were not so well established in rural Tromsø. The DJs and acts generally performed in internationally branded hotels such as the Radisson Hotel, where Andy Swatland worked (Paper Recordings, 2013h: online). In such a remote location and with such a small population, the live music industry was not significant in Tromsø during the formative years. Only those venues that existed within a corporate brand



situation, such as the Radisson hotel in Tromsø provided an option for live music. The local producers and musicians were responsible for the facilitation of live events as their scene, community, and translocal knowledge and confidence developed, unlike in Bristol, where there was an existing network of venues that could nurture a music community like the legendary Dug Out (Webb, 2004: 72) and Alien Nation even (figure 5). This offers credence to the notion that the electronic dance music being discovered, shared and produced in Tromsø transcends any obstacles on cultural flow that might have limited the ability of the enablers to support and share their passion for music consumption and production; this sustained and developed the scene. This is evident where the enablers travelled to European cities and engaged with cultural media and artefacts distributed physically via record shops, broadcasts on radio stations and 'mixtapes' shared and copied in social situations such as parties. This is evidenced by Geir Jenssen's desire to make music on a synthesiser in the late eighties, Per Martinsen's studio work in Belgium and London, and Bjørn Torske and Rune Lindbæk's record shop trips to London. The lack of access to music and culture in Tromsø fed their desire to engage, and this collective sphere of activities began the formation of the scene.

Geoff Harkness's study into Gangsta Rap (2013) discusses the symbiotic relationship between rappers and gangs in relation to their revenue, promotion and event security in Chicago, US. In doing so, he generates a new theoretical construct called a 'microscene', a scene within a scene.

A microscene is a distinct component of a music scene, located in a delimited space of mutual social activity—where certain clusters of scene members assemble and generate socio-cultural cohesion through collective ideologies, attitudes, preferences, practices, customs, and

memories that distinguish them from the larger scene." (Harkness, 2013: 151).

For clarity, the small scene in Tromsø is not strictly comparable with Harkness's notion of microscene, which gestures at a cluster of scene members in an urban setting with collective ideologies, attitudes, preferences, practices, customs, and memories that distinguish them from the larger scene (Harkness, 2013: 1). This Tromsø case links to the urban phenomenon that Harkness discusses in his research, with commonalities in the behaviour and recollections of scene members, such as their taste in music. The group produced music individually but linked to Harkness's ideas; they collectively record under aliases to commercially release a range of dance music. This is demonstrated in Tables 1-3, showing the collaborative connectivity of the group. Other theories and frameworks propose helpful ideas around the working processes evident within music scenes. For example, Straw (2005) intimates that a scene is difficult to classify but proposes an enduring framework that is valid and applicable in this case and concerns the formation and actuality of scenes.

A scene resists deciphering, in part, because it mobilises local energies and moves these energies in multiple directions – onwards, to later reiterations of itself; outwards, to more formal sorts of social or entrepreneurial activity; upwards, to the broader coalescing of cultural energies within which collective identities takes shape. (Straw, 2005, p. 412).

Linking to the movement of these activities and the forming of collective identities, Holly Kruse (2010) cites Connell & Gibson's claim in *Sound tracks* (2002, p. 107) that 'the spread of the internet has increased the flow of subcultural music and information across disparate localities thus helping to de-link the notion of scene from locality' (Kruse, 2010, p. 631). Kruse (2010: 631) applies Anderson's (2016: 55) concept of imagined community concept which

drives the facilitation of local and translocal connectivity, to the discussion on the music scene to demonstrate how the internet might impact or enable such a phenomenon. Building on Connell & Gibson's ideas Kruse (2010, p. 629) suggests that the internet enabled a sense of offline imagined community crucial for those involved in remote music scenes to free themselves of their limitations of geography (Anderson, 2016: 55). I would argue that this group's musical taste was heavily influenced by their consumption of diverse musical styles and genres before the impact of the internet. It could also be contended that the enablers were so geographically isolated that they too exhibited a level of imagined community, distinguishing themselves by their imagined style and perceptions even though there was a flow of global culture into their community. The record buying trips to London and studio sessions in Ghent, Belgium, made by individuals from Tromsø and facilitated by R&S Records, demonstrate an instance of this type of perceived community in play. Key participants of this emergent scene would share and disseminate their experiential knowledge garnered from these trips from other translocal and international scenes to the collective benefit of the Tromsø dance music community. In some measure, this supports Barry Shanks (1994: 133) argument that the production of a signifying community stems from the confidence of individuals within the scene to propose new ideas and strategies. In the introduction Bennett and Peterson (2004) discuss that Straw and Shank's approaches corresponded 'albeit in different ways, with particularised local sensibilities of the location or place' (2004: 7). They identified a disparate range of scenes investigated and nested in the trichotomy of local, translocal and virtual (Bennett and Peterson, 2004: 6; Bennett, 2004a: 226), against which the music consumption and production in the Tromsø group were comparable.

Bennett and Richardson (2004) defined a local scene as a focused social activity within a set location over a defined period where clusters of musicians and producers realise a shared taste in music (2004: 8). Bennett and Peterson's (2004: 223) notion of a scene as a cluster around a specific geographical nexus is relevant here. They suggest that not only does a scene revolve around a particular style of music (in the Tromsø case, ambient, electronic, house, pop and techno genres) but other lifestyle elements. They also suggest that local music scene participants share a motivation for cultural discovery and realise the perceived value of subcultural capital within their activities.

Bennett and Peterson (2004) built on the concept of the local music scene and put forward the idea of a 'translocal' scene. They define translocal scenes as those that are connected to groups of lifestyle peers either nationally or internationally (Bennett and Peterson, 2004: 8). The Tromsø music community can be identified with this translocal form as the enablers operate within the scene with both the local and, crucially, the international community. Operating a lively network of creativity that inspired a younger generation of producers and fans to engage in the local scene, Tromsø thrived in the nineties and early years of the 'noughties'. To give some cultural context and even perhaps credibility to the origins of the scene in Tromsø during this period, a band named *Bel Canto* are an excellent example. They were a synth-pop band formed in 1985 comprising Anneli Drecker (vocals), Nils Johansen (instrumentation) and Geir Jenssen (synthesiser and programming). The band arrived in the slipstream of Oslo's *A-ha*, who had formed three years earlier and had had international success with their album 'Hunting High and Low' (Waaktaar, 1985) in the same year as *Bel Canto*'s first release titled 'White-Out Conditions' (Drecker & Jenssen,

1987) on Brussels based record label, Crammed Discs<sup>11</sup>. Of specific interest to this study are the translocal connections and affiliations developed by these musicians and producers, some of the first electronic producers from Tromsø to have achieved any notable contemporary recognition nationally and internationally. Their single was broadcast by the DJ John Peel<sup>12</sup> on his BFBS Radio Show in August 1988 (John Peel Fandom, nd). It is helpful for us to consider the influence this recognition had in connecting the band members, and of particular interest here Geir Jenssen, to a translocal audience. He was integral to the scene's development, with his *Bel Canto* band and then his commercially successful alias *Biosphere*. Jenssen had been producing ambient techno music since 1980, and his primary music network of record labels included SSR<sup>13</sup> (Belgium) and Tokuma<sup>14</sup> (Japan). Translocal processes were present around the Tromsø based practitioners and were sustained by a 'flow of affinities across national and continental borders' (Laing, 1997: 130) that has continued to be a feature of the participants of this scene spanning both eras set out in this thesis. In some ways, his relationship with other enablers might provide us with an example of his role in the Tromsø scene. Per Martinsen recounts a memory that frames Jenssen's position in the hierarchy and illustrates the scene's personal, almost intimate nature. Consider the flow and consumption of subculture to understand how this knowledge might have been passed between the parties. Placing Jenssen at a notional centre of the scene, and informed by Straw's ideas (2005: 413), the following example might be construed as an example of the spatial relationship in action, with the neophyte moving from outside to inside the scene.

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<sup>11</sup> Crammed Discs is an independent record label based in Brussels, Belgium

<sup>12</sup> John Peel, was an English disc jockey, journalist and radio presenter

<sup>13</sup> SSR is an independent record label based in Brussels, Belgium

<sup>14</sup> Tokuma Records is a defunct record label based in Japan.

We met when I was 11 years old, and he was three or four years older than me. We shared a love of the great outdoors and met in a mountain cabin, and it was the first time I'd heard Kraftwerk's 'Man Machine' on a portable cassette deck' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Straw (2005: 413) however, expands his concept of horizontal and spatial movement to discuss the multi-directional movement of 'local energies' (2005: 412) within scenes. Although I would argue that the centre of a contemporary scene is fluid in size, span and location, to be contested between global influencers, tastemakers, recording artists and subcultural entities such as music festivals and movements.

Expanding the notion of music scene, Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson introduced the term 'virtual music scene' (2004: 6), the third classification in their model the 'virtual scene' which outlines a 'newly emergent formation' where a vast network of people can create a sense of scene via the internet. The virtual scene is not entirely contingent on the internet: fanzines and other pre-internet practices allowed virtual scenes to exist independently of the world wide web, but there can be no question that the internet dramatically increases the virtual element in relation to music scenes. A vital characteristic of the virtual scene is that its international participants come together in a single scene, making conversation via the internet (Bennett & Peterson, 2004: 10). Kruse (2010: 625) outlines another definition of a scene supporting the Tromsø case. She states that a scene is a geographical site of local practice and the economic and social networks in which the participants are involved. She continues by noting that 'in the age of the internet, looking at scenes in isolation makes even less sense, as the ability to connect with others across scenes and disseminate independent music has become easier than ever before' (Kruse, 2010: 629). Her remarks support the credibility of a concept labelled 'inter-local

identity', which stems from increased internet-based connectivity between practitioners worldwide (Kruse, 2010: 630). It might be recognised as a contributory factor to the small number of Tromsøians that played a key role in the Bergen Wave phenomenon (Tenold, 2011). Kruse's (2010) research supports the idea that scenes are entities primarily made up of small numbers of highly engaged participants at the scene's centre, typically who were 'there' at the scene's inception. Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers (2016) build on the conceptual parameters of Bennett and Peterson's (2004) trichotomy of scenes and propose a new category labelled an 'affective scene', expanding on the local, translocal and virtual scenes (Bennett & Peterson, 2004; Bennett & Rogers, 2016).

Affective scenes are underpinned by a knowingness on the part of isolated individuals that many others are listening to the same music, reading the same music literature, watching the same music-related films and documentaries and – above all – making a similar sort of sense out of what they are hearing, reading and watching, based upon their shared [...] cultural experience of that music (Bennett and Rogers, 2016: 93).

This can be related to the interview data and identifies a commonality in globally peripheral scenes where the participants attempted to synthesise the cultural media they were discovering and consuming during this time. They were emotionally attached to the music and their tightly bonded scene. Martinsen's relocation to a London based 'squat' evidences an affective bond that might have contributed to his translocal mobility. During his stay in the UK, he worked at a studio and became part of the Hackney scene in London (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). Of particular interest here is that Tromsø was considered peripheral regarding its geographical location. Isolation is an aspect that Bennett infers when explaining that his study involved looking at music scenes in a slightly looser context, 'particularly in peripheral cities [...] where a smaller

population density results in a smaller infrastructure for live music and thus a more fluid notion of scene' (Bennett and Rodgers, 2016: 96). There is an additional argument here that the 'affective scene' or dimension that he introduces is relatable to the work of 'new musicologist', Richard Middleton (2012). In the introduction to *The Cultural Study of Music* he considers the culture around music, expanding on the notion that music is more than just notes and that our interactions with it are complex (2012: 11). Our interaction with, and behaviours related to the consumption and production of music is a key concept that underpins this exploration of the music scene. This is relatable to the behaviour of the 'goths' in Paul Hodkinson's essay (2004), and also to Stan Hawkins' (2007a; 2007b) suggestion that the Tromsø dance outfit, *Those Norwegians*, possessed a determination to engage with international cultures and define the dance music they produced as culturally pan-national. This Arctic dance music community felt a need to engage and connect with similar scenes translocally across borders despite obstacles. To use a contemporary comparison here, a regional subgenre of 'Drill' called 'UK Drill' was identified as originating from Brixton, London. Participants of Drill Music can be found in small groups similar to the microscenes proposed by Geoff Harkness (2013:151). The increase of global cultural flow and interconnectivity across music networks, resulting from the internet, has produced the conditions for independent and autonomous microscenes. These scenes connect via the online music platforms SoundCloud, and YouTube created across a network of international locations, such as Brixton, London and South Side, Chicago where the drill genre originated (Thapar, 2017).

The acquisition of culture across borders is an important aspect to consider in regard the consumption and production of music in the municipality.



During the eighties, the vinyl record shops, parties, and radio were the key media outlets that directly disseminated audio culture. The local record store, Rocky Platebar became a focus for participants in the electronic dance music scene. It is useful here to draw attention to the international connectivity possessed by Andy Swatland (Paper Recordings, 2013h: online), the manager of Rocky Platebar and the influence that this might have had on the scene and its development. He was from the UK, and had travelled across Europe DJing during the eighties, marrying a Norwegian and moving to Tromsø to become a resident DJ at Club Jonas in the basement of the Radisson Hotel. He would import 12" vinyl from 'Streetbeat' (vinyl distributors) in Manchester, of popular releases from bands like Depeche Mode, Human League and Duran. In addition, he sourced niche genres such as techno and house for customers such as Per Martinsen and Rune Lindbæk, two key participants in this case study. Lindbæk explains the central role Rockys played in the scene.

A lot of DJs in Norway were buying vinyl from that shop because days or weeks after it has been released in America or England you could find it in Rocky. So lots of us were meeting in the import section of Rocky because you could find the latest international music on vinyl; Per Martinsen [Mental Overdrive] worked in that shop, it was very important to us (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online).

Geir Jenssen ordered his music direct from Europe, as did Swatland, progressing to set up his own vinyl mail-order company called Biophon. Even at the inception of the local scene, enablers were introducing influences that constructed the foundation from which the music community and scene developed. It is credible here to assume that small groups or clusters of creativity and industriousness could exist without the knowledge of each other in more significant urban areas. Still, in the case of Tromsø, there appeared a reversal of this notion where the isolated location brought a sense of empowerment as outlined by Martinsen,

'People are more fragmented in larger cultures because you have to choose your 'place' or 'position' in that scene or culture' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). The producers were in a small close-knit group yet acted individually, as pairs or small groups when connecting and networking with other scenes. The enablers that facilitated their international connections, support this notion with trips to London, Oslo, Ghent, Brussels, Amsterdam that all resulted in enhanced flow of musical culture back into the scene (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online; 2013f: online; 2013i: online). An example of the enablers developing interest in global culture is demonstrated with the first album project by one of the featured Tromsø electronic music producers, Rune Lindbæk, under his alias of *Those Norwegians*. As shown in Table 1, Lindbæk formed this band in 1997 with Ole Mjøs and Torbjørn Brundtland (who went on to create *Røyksopp* with Svein Berge) after several collaborations with the early scene participants. The relevance to this study is in the cultural connections that exist within the album project titled 'Kaminsky Park' (Lindbæk, et al., 1997c). In July 1979, as part of a promotion to increase crowd numbers to baseball games, a local Chicago DJ Steve Dahl announced that entry would be reduced to \$1 for any fans that attended the match between the Chicago White Sox and the Detroit Tigers, with a disco vinyl record which was to be put in crates and exploded on the pitch between games (Petridis, 2019). Although this radio promotional campaign appeared light-hearted on the surface, it was labelled racist and homophobic by many commentators and identified as a cultural happening (Frank, 2007). *Those Norwegians* titled their album as a textual play on the stadium name, signifying that they, too, had an opinion about the Disco Demolition (Petridis, 2019). The album name and artwork (Figure 6), which depicts a piece of burnt and warped vinyl (Lindbæk, et al., 1997) contributes to the statement that disco cannot just

be destroyed by burning and that it lives on through this album. This was an example of the band's attitude, a signal and a notice of intent to the rest of the world of their engagement with international culture. They were engaging with the rest of the world and demonstrating that, although they resided within the Arctic circle, they write and produce house music to standards accepted within the global scene and were fully aware of global societal issues such as homosexuality and race inequality discussed by in the article by Alexis Petridis (2019).

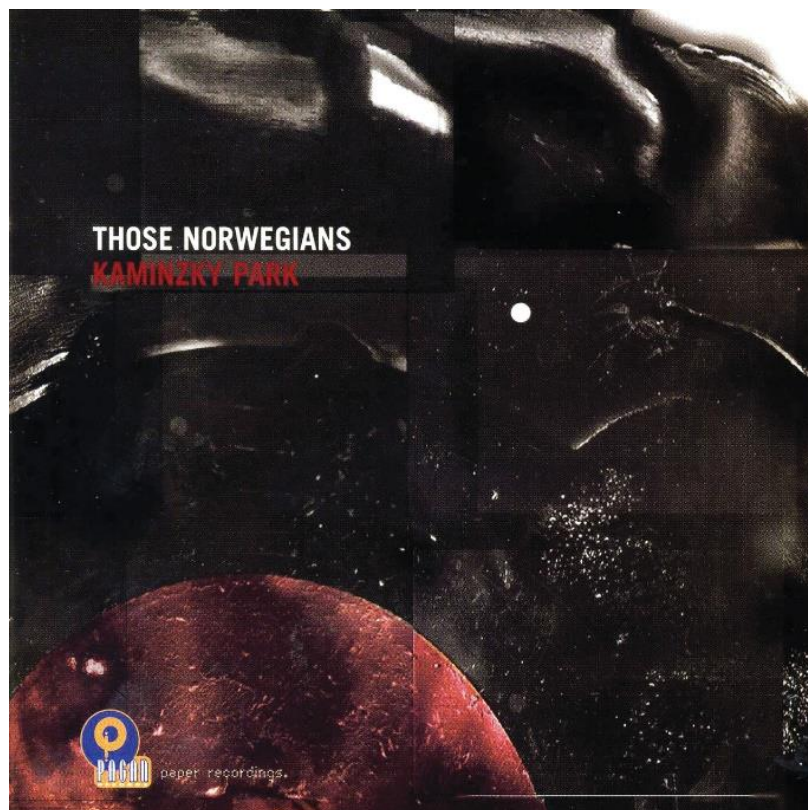


Figure 6: *Those Norwegians*, 'Kaminsky Park' album artwork, circa 1997c  
Source: (Paperecordings, 2013d: online), © Paper Recordings [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

Lindbæk gives an example of how the early scene participants were starting to connect with culture and practitioners and become translocal in their behaviour.

In the early nineties, I remember *Biosphere* was in *The Face* magazine, and we were like, wow! We started to get DJs and producers like the Idjut boys and Harvey. People that inspired us were coming here. We were digging their stuff, and they were digging our stuff, and that was really exciting; it felt like a recognition of what we were doing musically in Tromsø (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online).

Here he recounts the first instances of the Tromsø scene's engagement with established international practitioners from the global electronic dance music scene, leading to a demonstration of the impact of the popular media (in this case, *The Face Magazine*<sup>15</sup>). The DJs he refers to were London and Cambridge based producers and performers *The Idjut Boys* and *DJ Harvey*, who, along with Greg Wilson were some of the first UK DJs to travel and perform in Norway in the nineties. It was essential for the enablers to connect with similar music and associated communities, and this circuitry happened in a particular way that supported their musical knowledge and innovation. Tromsø had a limited number of participants and enablers, e.g. record labels, DJs, fans, radio stations, shops, audience and venues linked to the scene. This created agency as they became producers, performers, and the audience within their own local scene during the pre/emerging internet era. Enablers such as *Bel Canto*, *Doc L Jnr*, Geir Jenssen exhibited creative and commercial expression at a local and a translocal level (Bennett & Peterson, 2004). Their national profile began to build as seen in the music chart position for Per Martinsen's producer alias *Mental Overdrive* in the national publication *Dagbladet* from 1995 in Figure 7, noting the bands in positions 2 and 3) (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). This demonstrates the growing professional profiles of the Tromsø enablers, sharing the top of the national music pop charts with globally successful bands such as Oasis.

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<sup>15</sup> The Face was a music, fashion and culture magazine published between 1980 to 2004, relaunched in 2019.



Figure 7: Mental Overdrive chart position in national publication, Dagbladet: April 1995  
 Source: (Paperecordings, 2013f: online), © Paper Vision Films [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

They develop their network and connect their scene via record releases and studio production work to Mark Hollander of Crammed Discs and Renaat Vandepapeliere (founder of R&S Records and Apollo Records) from Belgium. As Tara Brabazon and Stephen Mallinder (2008: 64). state ‘DJs and producers not resident in [the] centres can “hide in the light”, developing a sound, skill base and experience without preliminary pressure’. Their findings demonstrate that these producers working in Arctic isolation were more than able to produce music that is commercially released in the global electronic music market. The enablers exhibit a lack of pressure to compete internationally during their development, perhaps again linking to the creative freedom that living in

Tromsø appeared to have instilled. They propose that DJs and producers on the periphery develop their sound by avoiding the attention that comes from being centrally involved in a scene (Brabazon and Mallinder, 2008: 64). In comparison, Björk and her indie guitar band, *The Sugarcubes*, operated in an Icelandic scene both locally and translocally connecting to the trip-hop happening from Bristol, with compositional influences from Indian musician Talvin Singh all 'synthesised into a wonderful concoction that sounded unique' (Inside Björk, 2003). Björk demonstrates an omnivorous (Widdop, 2015) in her consumption of music and culture that can be compared to the Tromsø group of producers. Another comparable isolated scene is the guitar-driven, alt-rock sound that came from Dunedin in New Zealand's South Island. The 'Dunedin Sound' is noted in John Connell and Chris Gibson's *Sound Tracks* (2002, p. 96), where the scene was recognised during the nineties. Compositionally and musically, there are no direct comparisons with a Tromsø sound, if one exists. The fact that it developed in very similar geographical and largely similar cultural boundaries justifies its inclusion in the discussion. The Dunedin scene had a sense of uniqueness, remoteness and distance from capital cities and centres of mainstream music production, central to the growth and mythology of a distinct sound (Connell and Gibson, 2002: 97). Rob Shields (1991) also draws attention to the element of physical distance in 'Places on the Margin' paper, noting that 'the main standard of isolation is distance from major cities' (Shields, 1991: 171) suggesting the undoubted effect this would have had on an electronic dance music community's ability to consume and produce music during pre/emerging internet period. In summary, the discussion shows that geographic isolation has played a role in igniting music scenes that have a wider translocal and even global influence. Of course, geographic isolation is not the same in Iceland,

Dunedin, Bristol and Tromsø: availability of performance venues, proximity to more extensive or influential cities and other factors vary across the case studies mentioned in this section. Although in these cases, geographic isolation has some bearing on a sense of identity and place among individuals and frames individuals' sense of their scene as part of a more comprehensive translocal and global music scene. The notion of musical identity in the context of music genre are now to be explored with an examination of genre.

### Chapter 3: Genre

Norwegian music is synonymous with the traditions of the Hardanger fiddle<sup>16</sup> and of course, the success of pop group *A-Ha* in the nineties. However, the style (or potential genre) of dance music we are interested has been referred to as cosmic disco (MacPherson, 2011) and this discussion will focus on whether the location led to a distinct Tromsø sound. The spaced-out beats of enabler Bjørn Torske have been a production reference point for Norwegian producers, up to and including the present wave of globally recognised Norwegian dance producers and performers including Hans-Peter Lindstrøm, Todd Terje and Prins Thomas (MacPherson, 2011). This section will investigate the scene in academic terms of music genre and a distinct Tromsø sound. The existence of specific sounds within the field of electronic dance music scenes or genres can be identified in academic or popular literature. Particular styles of electronic music created by the early electronic producers loosely fall under the ambient, electronic, house, pop, disco and techno categories. These specific styles of

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<sup>16</sup> A four stringed instrument, the Hardanger fiddle is considered to be a national instrument of Norway.

music would be synonymous with many other scenes at the time, such as those in Belgium supported by the release policies of R&S, SSR and Crammed Discs, where a lot of the music was produced, signed and released in the pre/emerging internet era of this study. As Connell and Gibson (2002) state it is important to search and identify local markers of style, establishing direct relationships between towns, cities, rural spaces, and the styles and influences that might coalesce around recognisable musical forms, instrumentation and lyrics (2002: 4). Martinsen sums up the Tromsø group's approach to consuming music succinctly when he explains, 'The crowd I grew up with really wanted to explore different soundscapes and scenes and were very curious about all forms of alternative music' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Thornton (1995: 71) identifies the relevance of the musical style 'what contemporary British youth call "dance music"', noting that it is more precisely designated as discotheque or club music. Rather than having an exclusive claim on dancing, the many genres and sub-genres coined obsessively under the rubric share this institutional home'. Rupa Huq (2002: 98) notes that the diversity of practice makes it impossible to see dance music culture as 'another subculture'. The fragmentation of 'acid house' and 'rave' into multiple sub-genres makes the notion of any collective response by dance music adherents to material inequality impossible. (Huq, 2002: 98). It is helpful to list the main dance music genre categories that are part of the electronic dance music scene in Tromsø: ambient, electronic, house, pop and techno. David Brackett (2002) gives a credible outline of the nature of musical genre drawing attention to the wide range of aspects that contribute to a genre: "Musical style" in this case refers to a bundle of characteristics that may be linked to a particular musician or recording and that participate in a socially recognized musical genre' (Brackett,



2002: 65). He states, that 'genres do not consist of essential, unvarying characteristics, but rather exist as a group of stylistic tendencies, codes, conventions, and expectations that become meaningful concerning one another at a particular moment in time' (Brackett, 2002:67). Lyslo effectively demonstrates below. The genre fluidity that existed in the formative scene, that exhibited no musical or genre loyalty, per se, but an attraction to the international, electronic and dance aspect of the music.

I started playing US house tracks early-on and I was pretty much the only one for a while. People played the 'harder' Chicago sound, but I played the Frankie Knuckles and Masters at Work productions from the early nineties. Bjørn Torske and Strangefruit started playing a lot of new tunes, but they preferred the harder style. I loved the old soulful and soft, American electronic music, but I do like Detroit techno (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online).

This demonstrates consumption of an eclectic range of musical tastes (genres) accessed by Lyslo's music community, impressive considering their remote location, although he also identifies some of the varied tastes in musical style enjoyed by the enablers. Even though Tromsø was a very small music scene Lyslo identifies the fragmentation in regard to preferred genre or styles. This again supports the lack of external pressure that might dictate cultural choice or production style. There are echoes here of Paul Hodkinson's study on goths (2004: 134), who felt they had more in common with other goths, hundreds or thousands of miles away than they did with most non-affiliated members of their immediate locality. Perhaps Lyslo felt a close affinity to producers he engaged with in external scenes or situations. Conversely, Anderson's concept of imagined community (2016: 55) which drives the facilitation of local and translocal connectivity with similar electronic producers and scenes is useful to consider here. The interview data did not identify a specific Tromsø sound but

does show that the group produced music with each other suggesting that further analysis around the music production and composition might reveal a distinct sound when they worked together.

Franco Fabbri (1981) first theorised the notion of genre in music when he presented his paper 'A theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications' at the *First International Conference on Popular Music Studies* in Amsterdam. He defines genre, as something 'that amalgamates complicated relations between composers, performers, audience, critics and organizers, each with their own particular rules' (Fabbri; 1981). Fabbri then continued to propose a set of rules that contributed to his definition of genre in his interpretation. His five rules were: formal and technical, semiotic, behaviour, social and ideology and economic. The following analysis, additionally drawing from Frith's (1996) interpretation of these rules, aims to simplify and map Fabbri's (1981) five rules to examples evident from this case study. Consider the first rule, 'formal and technical' which Fabbri relates to a trumpet player's interpretation of the same composition performed by an orchestra, compared to a rock band, noting that they will almost certainly be different. Similarly, the versions of a dance track created and performed by techno and Nordic house music producers would differ at several levels (style, sound palette and timbre) even if using the same musical hardware and software. Again, this rule relates to existing aural conventions and subjective interpretation. This study understands the second rule, semiotic, as relating to the diverse range of elements that surround and contribute to the whole musical piece such as dress, dance, emotion, volume, audience or environment; this notion can be linked to the ideas of Middleton (2012) discussed earlier. However, the music produced in Tromsø can also be connected to the influence of the geological landscape, language and the light

seasons of Norway. Oslo University musicologist Hans T. Zeiner Henriksen, notes below that their music production can link to the landscape but also acts semiotic component in terms of Fabbri's rules.

I feel there's a connection between the landscape and the music, we have album sleeves with photos of the landscape, so the connection is understood. You can kind of connect snow, cold ice with sounds that are similar. For example, if you have an echo, you can have a warm echo. If you add a lot of reverb to it, you create a sound that is a warm echo, but you can also have a cold echo, it's less reverb and the sound will be brighter (Paper Recordings, 2013j: online).

Building on this, Icelandic musician Björk, notes that the northern territories of planet Earth are physically affected by diverse meteorological conditions and landscapes that must influence the genre and style of composition. She notes that 'the biggest influence Iceland has had on my music is organic. This thing with 22 hour daylight in the summer and darkness in the winter is absolutely normal and icebergs and eruptions and no trees at all' (Inside Björk, 2003).

Although beyond the scope of this study, the 'behaviour' rule in Fabbri's framework (1981) concerns the fields of psychology and the various behavioural aspects employed by participants of the scene. In the Tromsø case, an example could be a niche 1960s US record label or artist that had been sampled on a new dance track. The most convincing explanation is from Frith (1996: 92), where he explains that behavioural rules also apply to audiences at live performances. He encourages the reader to compare the behaviour of the audiences attending a concert by the *Cocteau Twins* and *Nirvana*. Fabbri's (1981) rule concerning 'social & ideology' relates to the structures present within a community and the participants' adherence to this culture and framework. As noted by Fabbri, this rule is determined by each participant's ideology and understanding of what the genre stands for. This understanding appeared inherent in the genre as it

propagates and is similarly shared within communities. Sara Cohen's (1991: 224) study of the Liverpool Rock scene is relevant here when she notes that the scene participants 'expressed an ideology familiar throughout history [of rock] and to musicians and artists of different eras and genres. Martinsen, demonstrates how the Tromsø group were under no pressure to conform to any ideologies or genre based rules; they were empowered by their isolation, 'we could sit here and sample every kind of alternative or strange music from any global subculture and spit back our version; we didn't have to fit in anywhere' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). Fabbri's economic rule relates to the underlying business structure that might influence the development and existence of a genre. Fabbri also introduces music copyright (1981) into his analysis concerning musical performance; a commercial and legal element that is an essential part of this genre would be the legalities of copyright and performance within this territory and the use of samples in the composition and production of this electronic music. In this case, the primary genre is electronic dance music with a range of diverse sub-genres that are part of the whole community of musical styles: techno, disco, house, ambient, pop, and techno. A specific sub-genre that related published media have applied to Norwegian dance music is 'cosmic-disco' (MacPherson, 2011). Fabbri supplies this definition of a new (sub) genre which is relevant to this chapter.

A new genre is not born in an empty space but in a musical system that is already structured. Therefore, a considerable part of the rules that define it are common to other genres already existing within the system, those that individualize the new genre being relatively few. In this context it is understandable that the characteristic group of rules are formed through the codification of those which in the beginning are only transgressions to the rules of other genres (Fabbri, 1981: 6).

To assess the validity of a Tromsø sound in context of the ideas around a new genre we can explore musical styles that might have impacted on the group. The Tromsø electronic dance music community is comprised of a group of people that engaged in a mash up of musical styles and genres. The producers developed their taste and style from an amalgamation of other genres already present and predefined in the local and translocal musical community. An insight from Rune Lindbæk supported the approach to any inherent genre structure and rules when he discussed their adoption of styles that had been composed by UK producers ‘that merged house with disco, and we were really influenced by the way they used Jamaican [reggae] dub effects on disco; *Those Norwegians* made our own version of that’ (Lindbæk, et al., 1997). Bjørn Torske expands on this theme when explaining the styles that he consumed and was influenced by.

I was into the Chicago, Detroit and New York sound, but it was mostly house and techno, then I started hanging out with Paul Strangefruit whose disco tastes were an influence. I wasn't really into dub and reggae but then disco began absorbing sound and styles from the reggae and dub scene, all those François Kevorkian B-sides! This was the mid-nineties and my fascination with Kraftwerk drew to the likes of Neu! and Can and that led onto other types of progressive rock music. So, it's basically just a big stew of different musical styles. (Paper Recordings, 2013i: online).

Fabian Holt (2007) builds proposed how collectivities are organised around individual genres and he adopted the term ‘genre world’ to indicate that a popular music genre constitutes a distinct sphere with a “complex interplay of musicians, listeners, and mediating ideologues” (Frith, 1996: 88; Holt, 2007: 6). Kruse expands the discussion here by suggesting that the interplay of ‘overlapping networks in which genre, geography, position in the independent or alternative music industry, and other factors located subjects within one or

more social networks and were central in participants' processes of identity and identification' (Kruse, 2010: 629; 2003: 137). Holt recognises that genre is influenced by social aspects of music and rejects Hesmondhalgh's (2005: 28) proposition that the concept of scene should be replaced by genre (Holt, 2007: 117), arguing that the idea provides a local variation on a broader genre. Holt considers it to support the understanding of the generic categories across the musical stylistic spectrum. Here he effectively presents his knowledge of the relationship between scene and genre.

It represents the immediate social space and network in which music is experienced and articulated locally. Genres have their own local life, embodied in the clubs, artist and audiences that continue to bring the music alive and form a scene. There is also a translocal level of interaction between local scenes and scenes in other cities (Holt, 2007: 117).

The term cosmic-disco was a media label given to a subgenre of dance music that was linked to an electronic sound and style of house music with a trademark chug, jumping bass line and extended mixes that emerged from Norway at the turn of the millennium (Lee, 2019). We can apply Holt's (2007) thinking around genre and directly link it to the 'cosmic-disco' (Macpherson, 2011) style that a specific group of Norwegian electronic dance music producers are credited with creating. Focusing on the drawing together of this activity, Holt explains that 'these 'center collectivities [...] are clusters of specialised subjects that have given direction to the larger network' (Holt, 2007: 21). This aspect of his theory can be demonstrated by the range of musical styles and genres that comprised the scene in both periods. For instance, the electronic scene in Tromsø was formed with an eclectic 'mash up' of production and performance styles (Webb, 2004: 76) such as techno, disco, house, ambient and pop. Norwegian dance music is a cocktail of styles, and Stan Hawkins (2007a; 2007b) expands on this

notion. His analysis of a recording by a band comprising Tromsø enablers, *Those Norwegians* titled 'Da Kingue D'Mazda' (Lindbæk, et al., 1997a), is particularly relevant to this study. He describes this particular Norwegian house track as possessing an 'inventive use of sounds [that] capture a retro, deep house style through analogue -type samples and 'dry' reverb' (2007: 182). His study draws attention to many of the aspects that influence and constitute a music genre supporting new musicological models. The interview data gives insight into the discussion here, supporting the notion around a mash up of genre and styles to which the community were exposed. Vidar Hanssen describes the style of music produced at the time.

In the beginning, there was a lot of techno from the Tromsø artists, then we had this period where there was some techno but also some electronic and breakbeat stuff. As we approached the year 2000, people were starting to release a lot of house music from international labels, some on their own labels and some one-off stuff that they made themselves (Paper Recordings, 2013g: online).

Lyslo recalled that *Røyksopp* were writing and producing 'compositions rather than just samples over the top of beats. That was new in this genre of music' (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online). Geir Jenssen played a key role in both the pop (*Bel Canto*), in addition to the ambient and techno (*Biosphere*) genres. It is helpful to reference the nine main genres and their associated categories that Holt (2007) identifies to assess the credibility of 'cosmic-disco', as category of dance, or perhaps as a subgenre of disco. He categorises the genres as blues, jazz, country music, rock, soul/R & B, salsa, heavy metal, dance and hip-hop (Holt, 2007). The music productions emanating from Tromsø fall within the genre subcategories of disco, techno, house, trance and ambient (2007: 15). All except trance were synonymous with the record labels that released music from Tromsø producers including Paper Recordings (disco and house), R&S and SSR

(techno and ambient). The sounds of house, disco and techno were all component stylistic parts absorbed into what is now loosely described as cosmic-disco. Some claim that the cosmic-disco term given to the style of music originates back to an Italian dance DJ called Daniele Baldelli, who performed at a club called 'Cosmic' in Verona, Italy, from 1979 (Electronic Beats, 2016). It is not possible to substantiate the credibility of this claim; however, if it was appropriated by the music and cultural press to represent the sounds of Norwegian house music then it has some merit.

It appears an imprecise task to define a genre, although Fabbri (1981: 3) notes 'that a record buying adolescent of today has clearer ideas on musical genres than the majority of musicologists who have made such a fuss about them'. This supports the notion that those engaged in a scene, consuming and producing music collectively could credibly label their Nordic production style, 'cosmic-disco'. Baldelli performed an eclectic mix, or as this study has referred a mash up, of genres such as rhythm & blues, reggae, punk, disco and African genres and styles (Webb, 2016: 76; Electronic Beats, 2016). Remembering a DJ set performed by Norwegian DJ Todd Terje, MacPherson (2011) describes his performance as 'a trip of electric piano stabs, gobbling bass, anthemic disco vocal samples and grand, ever-rising chord sequences. At the half-hour mark, they detour into riotous house piano madness and shamanistic chants' (MacPherson, 2011); the genre of progressive rock has also been compared to Norwegian house production. The musical and compositional terms linked to cosmic-disco are extended (disco) mixes, chugging beats and bass driven rhythmic timbre of the tracks (Penny-Barrow, 2019b; Lee, 2019). Frith (1996: 88) notes that 'Deejays' have perhaps been more influential than journalists when discovering new markets and points to the influence of the fans, audiences,



writers, producers and DJs, who collude to invent a new label, or genre (house, techno, grunge or trap) that is loosely agreed and disseminated via the scene (Frith, 1996: 88). Building on this, Holt (2007: 19) applies the term genre culture as a concept to represent the overall identity of the cultural formations in which a genre is constituted. He also noted that the style of music does not just identify genres alone. It is useful here to identify the link between genre and culture and consider the additional layers that constitute the makeup of music. Identifying that the culture surrounding music contributed to the experience of those engaging with it. Keith Negus (1999: 26) questions how genres are defined, in how they are heard or how they sound noting that these characteristics might be determined by the source of the discussion and framing of the genre, in his example 'the music industry and media, or do we need to listen more carefully in the (other) right places?' (Negus, 1999: 26). In the case of the 'cosmic-disco' label given by the media to Norwegian house music (Macpherson, 2011), the producers do not consciously attach themselves to this genre category in the interview data. It is hard to define this musical style or genre, but it is clear that the Tromsø scene gives greater freedom to the enablers to continue to work in this style and dance genre. Per Martinsen describes the creative freedom he felt living in Tromsø.

It's hard to analyse your own or my contemporaries' music. You do what you do, and you put it out there and see what reflects as other people's opinions. I don't need to be shaped by what surrounds me and that is the freedom you get growing up in Tromsø, we could sit here and sample every kind of alternative or strange music from any global subculture and spit back our version; we didn't have to fit in anywhere (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

This observation confirms the empowerment he gets from being isolated and free to follow his own creative pathway, consuming and producing music

independently from external factors. Presently, there is a constant stream of new cultural styles, production techniques and learned experiences available remotely via the internet used by journalists and members of a scene. This consumption of culture by the participants in the form of music, printed press and broadcast, enables endless revision, updating and progression of a scene and supports the belief that a genre exists as a fluid construct in virtual form. We would think that genres during the Tromsø scene would have been less fluid and more structured. However, Negus (1999: 26) notes 'for those actively involved in day-to-day musical activity, genres are often experienced as dynamic and changing rather than rule-bound and static'.

Lena & Peterson (2008) defined genre as a conceptual tool and framework commonly used to classify varieties of cultural products, particularly in fields of visual art, popular culture, video games, film, literature and music. They present their idea by noting that within a genres proximal environment, there are other genres that compete for the same resources, such as fans, capital, media and recognition (Lena and Peterson, 2008: 699). Their framework classifies four types of musical styles (avant-garde, scene-based, industry-based and traditionalist). They discovered that over time the four music communities began as an Avant-garde genre, became Scene-based, then Industry-based, and finally Traditionalist, a trajectory they abbreviated as AgSIT in Figure 8 (2008: 708). As shown in Figure 8 they identify that house, disco and techno music are part of the main musical genres of avant-garde, scene based and in the case of disco, which emerged from commercially driven, 'industry based' genre classified labels like Motown, as per Figure 8.

	Avant-Garde	Scene-Based	Industry- Based	Traditionalist
BeBop Jazz	x	x	x	x
Bluegrass	x	x	x	x
Chicago Jazz	x	x	x	x
Folk Revival	x	x	x	x
Folk Rock	x	x	x	x
Gospel	x	x	x	x
Heavy Metal	x	x	x	x
Hillbilly	x	x	x	x
Honky Tonk	x	x	x	x
Old-School Rap	x	x	x	x
Punk Rock	x	x	x	x
Rockabilly	x	x	x	x
Rock-n-Roll	x	x	x	x
Salsa	x	x	x	x
Urban Blues	x	x	x	x
Western Swing	x	x	x	x
Alternative Country	x	x	x	
Disco	x	x	x	
East Coast Gangsta Rap	x	x	x	
Grunge Rock	x	x	x	
Jazz Fusion	x	x	x	
Jump Blues	x	x	x	
Psychedelic Rock	x	x	x	
Thrash Metal	x	x	x	
West Coast Gangsta Rap	x	x	x	
Delta Blues	x	x		x
DooWop	x	x		x
New Orleans Jazz	x	x		x
Black Metal	x	x		
Country Boogie	x	x		
Death Metal	x	x		
Free Jazz	x	x		
Garage	x	x		
Grindcore	x	x		
Hard Bop	x	x		
House	x	x		
Jungle	x	x		
South Texas Polka	x	x		
Techno	x	x		
Laurel Canyon	x			

Figure 8: AgSIT Genre Trajectories-Table 2 (Source: [adapted from] Lena & Peterson, 2008: 708)

This framework can explain the trajectory of the Norwegian genre ‘cosmic-disco’ (Macpherson, 2011) from the late 1990s, whose formation stemmed from the genres produced in Tromsø from the late eighties. To support understanding of a link between Tromsø and the eventual growth of ‘cosmic-disco’, I find the ideas outlined around genre identification and classification proposed by Phillip Ennis (1992), and adopted by Lena and Peterson (2008: 699) to be both insightful and helpful in contextualising my discussion. Although the

geographical location of this group might have been an empty space in urban terms (Fabbri, 1981: 6), there was no consistent musical dance style evident. Hesmondhalgh and Negus (2002: 4) provide a helpful summary of genre in relation to dance music when they propose that 'dance music culture includes a very broad set of music, tastes and social groups, and cannot be seen as a single entity' (Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002: 88). The enablers in the Arctic music community travelled the world, engaging and experiencing new genres and musical styles that were translated into practice and the culture of local practice.

## Chapter 4: Technology

This Tromsø case presents an exciting opportunity to investigate a remote arctic music scene before the internet became ubiquitous. For example, consider the online music sharing network SoundCloud, which develops an effective sense of community with their electronic dance musicians and audience by reflecting shared genre values and practices (Hesmondhalgh, 2019: 3). Compare this to the community that exists in and around the local record shops such as Rockys where core group members Per Martinsen and Rune Lindbæk bought records and interacted in a social context (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online; 2013f: online; 2013h: online). The influence of technology on media formats that are used to distribute music, such as vinyl and cassette tapes, is now explored in relation to the flow of culture within the scene on social networks. Per Martinsen notes amusingly that 'technology was an aeroplane, not a computer' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online), thus, the printed press and radio were dominant during his formative years, not the internet. Local radio stations were of vital importance to this community, and it is worth noting that existing

technology limited the distribution of music, knowledge and style. A radio station did 'not have the geographical reach available to even a small independent record label, which [could] reach national and international audiences through independent distribution and mail order' (Kruse, 2003: 79) during this period. The fact is that much of the technology that we assume has always been available was not accessible or, in most cases, developed during the formation of the pre/emerging internet music community of northern Norway. The internet and websites as we know them today, did not even start to have significance in business and media until 1994. The digital transfer of media across borders and social online environments were limited by geography, accessibility, and financial means for several years after that. The distribution of creative culture such as music and information in the contemporary situation is vastly different to the travel of cultural artefacts, such as cassette tapes and magazines, that had such impact in this pre/emerging internet case.

The application of technology to facilitate communication between creative communities is an important consideration. Internet technology began to develop during the mid-nineties (Dewey, 2014), with internet chat rooms leading the way to the music file-sharing explosion and the emergence of Napster to come. With Talkomatic's PLATO, CompuServe's "CB Simulator", AOL's Instant Messenger, MySpace and then Facebook<sup>17</sup>, the master, student (Straw, 1991: 416) and then fans and the audience (Shank, 1994: 131) were able to connect directly and globally towards the end of the nineties. There was no internet or technological impact on the connectivity between the key participants in the Tromsø scene during the eighties. The only modes of personal communication technology available to general society relevant to this study

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<sup>17</sup> Talkomatic-PLATO, CompuServe's "CB Simulator", AOL's Instant Messenger, Napster, MySpace and Facebook were all successful digital communication platforms from 1973.

were limited to 'face to face' meets, verbal communication via telephone, printed or broadcast media (radio). As noted by Webb (2004) Technology expands their manipulatory sphere at an individual (practitioner) level, linking them more effectively from the local to the translocal musicians, scenes, and existing infrastructure (Webb, 2004: 81). The enablers would have pre-selected the source of their influences, for example they chose to go record shopping to London but not Birmingham for example, they controlled this aspect of their consumption. While the remoteness could have restricted vinyl distribution and the emergence of Tromsø based record labels. These remote conditions were challenging for creative enterprise, and progression to the manufacture and distribution of vinyl formats of their music production was challenging. As Martinsen explains below, producing the music was more than possible for himself and his peers. Still, the progression to manufacturing and distribution of their music production vinyl versions was logistically prohibitive.

We were up in the Arctic, and just to get somebody to transport a pressing of 500 seven inch vinyl up to Tromsø would [be] very expensive and could ruin you. Also, when they arrived, they would just sit in your basement, and it was hard to get them back out into the world because we were so far away [geographically] in Tromsø (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

From personal experience operating a record label business since the early 1990s, the manufacture and pressing of vinyl records was an inexact science. As an independent label, an order is placed at the pressing plant without any firm indication of total sales. If a track gained traction in the clubs or radio, this would guarantee further demand; however, if the pressing plant turnaround on a repress was delayed or the distribution network was interrupted, this demand could just evaporate. This outcome left many record labels with paid for over stocks where the audience attention had moved onto the next club tune. A few boxes of unsold 12" vinyl singles and albums still exist manufactured by Paper

Recordings gathering dust after a combination of over optimistic ordering and media feedback promising more than it ever delivered in sales over the counter. Per Martinsen demonstrated an understandable frustration at the logistical difficulties of manufacturing vinyl in the Arctic. It is helpful to note that during this period, vinyl pressing plants were based around major cities such as Voices in Berlin, Germany or Zavody in Lodenice, Czech Republic. Any vinyl order would have needed to travel a considerable distance for initial delivery and reach audiences across Scandinavia. Music consumption, production and distribution among the Tromsø community relied on the cassette tape, DAT <sup>18</sup> and vinyl formats, supported by local student radio and a limited number of live events giving opportunity for broadcast and performance (Paper Recordings, 2013f:online; 2013h:online). This could have impacted on the scene by slowing the rate of music consumption and production if compared to the contemporary situation, where access to digital music is immediate and influenced by data transfer speeds and not by the logistical processes that are part of manufacture and distribution of physical formats. Furthermore, the financial considerations arising from pressing and distributing vinyl from a Tromsø based delivery hub would have been challenging. This points to a potential reason why the Tromsø scene never established an electronic dance music record label in the same way that Telle Records did when it played a key role in the Bergen Wave, the music scene based in Bergen and subject of Stig Tenold's study (2011); and the vinyl label Tellé Records <sup>19</sup> was synonymous with the scene. Music emanating from the Tromsø was pressed onto vinyl via the translocal networks established by the practitioners involved in the early music community, such as Belgium based

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<sup>18</sup> DAT (Digital Audio Tape) was a signal recording and playback medium developed by Sony and introduced in 1987.

<sup>19</sup> Tellé Records is a dance record label that started in Bergen in 1998 with a release by Bjørn Torske

R&S Records and Crammed Discs. Enabler Geir Jenssen's alias *Biosphere* illustrates how location impacted on vinyl manufacture and distribution. Origo Sound was a Norwegian label that commercially released Geir Jenssen's *Biosphere*, 'Microgravity' (Jenssen, 1991) in 1990 but only on the CD format. It wasn't until 1992 when it was released on vinyl by Belgium based Apollo Records, a subsidiary of R&S Records. There is a 'time lag' between music being produced and then commercial distributed into other translocal scenes; in the Arctic circle, the manufacture and distribution of even a small vinyl run was a commercial risk (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

It will be helpful here to contextualise the impact of technology on the communication between the core group because in Tromsø, spaces where meetings could take place were limited. Those identified were the Youth Club, radio studios, record shops or other private spaces such as cabins, where friends would go to share experiences, cultural or otherwise. As evidenced by Martinsen and Jenssen, they listened to new music in a mountain cabin (2013f: online). Of course, the participants would also have had access to the landline telephone at the family residence. Still, in contrast to contemporary society, societal penetration of the mobile phone today can hardly be compared to the old-fashioned telephone in terms of telecommunication technology. Unfortunately, this investigation does not have sufficient space to analyse the ever-growing body of academic literature that discusses mobile technology's universal impact; still, it is fair to say the mobile phone has vastly influenced the consumption, distribution and exchange of music. During the eighties and nineties, the pre/emerging internet era of this study, mobile communication use was limited to the military, but by 1999, nearly half of the UK public had a mobile phone (Wray, 2010). Penetration of mobile telecommunications in Norway was similar,



if not higher, in the same period, with 20% of young people owning a mobile, with 44.4% of these being 20 year olds (Nordsveen, 2005). This shows that during the study period mobile communication was limited but the enablers interacted and engaged with each other, and their external contacts effectively as shown in the collaborations and label connectivity data tables 1-3. This could have been influenced by the small size of the scene, their close geographical proximity, age or a shared ideology or taste. Similarly, possessing a portable and separate DAT or CD player allowed a select few to record and playback tapes to facilitate releases and related commercial activity such as parties, nightclub events, radio shows and collaborations. An example of this could Per Martinsen recalling listening to demo recordings in Café Opera<sup>20</sup> in Bergen in the mid-nineties (2013f: online).

The ability of the enablers to sustain the creative development of its members is what makes the development of the Tromsø music community so distinct. They had a good level of cultural control, choosing the cultural influences in which they engaged or accessed; in the contemporary situation there is no limit on the sphere of cultural influence. An earlier quote from Lindbæk about Geir Jenssen's possession of a synthesiser, in the discussion on subcultural capital revealed an insight that can also be used to show the influence of technology on the music scene. Jenssen is considered a musical pioneer in Norway, especially in Tromsø, so the excitement exhibited by Lindbæk that a synthesiser existed in his hometown hints at his passion for music and culture, in this case music production technology (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online). The example is a good illustration of how cultural news was shared in the scene, but also how technology has increased the speed of

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<sup>20</sup> Café Opera is a café, bar come nightclub in Bergen, Norway.

information sharing over time. Consider how the news about synths might have flowed via mobile device apps in comparison to physical or verbal communications on landlines. Technology is a key influence on the flow of culture within a music scene and its participants and as we have discussed. To summarise this section, it can be claimed that technology has transformed various possibilities and options for music-makers and consumers. The technology for reproducing music on vinyl discs posed a very different set of problems for the Tromsø scene and created the opportunity for pre/emerging internet networking and connections which started commercial recording relationships with a range of European labels for the enablers. Technology created a foundation that supported the increased consumption and production in this music scene in a range of ways, ways. The flow of culture between individuals, labels and other similar groups influenced by these technologies will now be analysed using theoretical models and ideas such as time-space compression (Harvey, 1990) and the five dimensions of flow, termed as scapes (Appadurai, 1990).



Figure 9: Vidar Hanssen's Beatservice promotes an event with *Biosphere* April 1990  
 Source: (Paper Recordings, 2013g: online) © Paper Vision Films [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

## Chapter 5: Flow

The music community exhibited a heightened interest in global culture, which is supported by Tromsø based musician and producer Per Martinsen when he states, 'This was before the internet, we could just sit up here and monitor the world, we could sit here and watch what the humans were up to in other parts

of the world' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online) The acknowledgement of feeling like an outsider to the global creative community is insightful and he exhibits excitement at his involvement in facilitating a music scene in such a remote location before online, global connectivity. An example of the enablers ability to facilitate cultural activity is evidenced in Figure 9, with Vidar Hanssen's 'Beatservice' event flyer that includes Geir Jenssen performing as *Biosphere*. We can see that during this period the flow of musical subculture is supported by the close connections between the core group, and that the global flow of culture is shared and consumed via their interconnected local, national and international network.

David Harvey's (1990) introduction of the term, time-space compression advances the debate on consumption of culture, describing how technological progress accelerates this process in society. We have hinted at the relationship between technology and flow, but Harvey (1990: 240) proposes credible theories we can apply in this case. He focuses on the impact that industrial and technological processes had brought about and how these enable culture to flow more swiftly. Technology hastens the spread of culture, and specifically in this case, music within the scene. In the Tromsø case there is no internet, and the impact of technology is evident through physical mobility, music production technology and radio broadcast. An example of the speed of global cultural flow through physical artefacts during this period is illustrated by Lyslo when he discusses the integration of technology while growing up.

We had a local radio that played a lot of new stuff that people in this country had never heard. I remember I was about nine, and an older sister of a friend of mine gave me a tape with Depeche Mode on one side and The Cure on the other side. And this kind of started the whole electronic music thing for me. I was 10 when I bought my first synthesiser; it was Poly 800, Korg (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online).

Harvey's post-modern theory (1990) can be expanded on here by comparing Tromsø to the contemporary situation. The Lyslo example identifies three forms of technology (radio, synthesiser and cassette tape) and the way it supports a global flow of culture into the local scene. Now, consider the speed of this flow of musical culture from radio, the sharing of cassettes and the purchase and production integration of a synthesiser into a studio. This flow would have taken time. A live radio broadcast is instantaneous, but the process involved with the cassette and synthesiser would have been slow. The Brygga Radio station was based at the local Youth Club in Tromsø with a reach of just over 30 miles. Compare this to a contemporary DAB or internet radio station or even a mobile device application (app) such as Radio Garden<sup>21</sup>, which enables the operator to tune into any radio station on the planet. Conversely, enabler Geir Jenssen's perception of speed, challenges that this notion of fast flow of culture only occurring post-internet when he talks about the movement of his music productions.

I can sit here and send a fax when I finish a track. And a freight company come and pick up a DAT, this little cassette I have here. That cassette is in Europe the next day and can be released a couple of days after that. Things move very fast now (Paper Recordings, 2013c: online).

This example of the distribution of his production being carried on a DAT tape to the R&S record label in Belgium was perceived by those involved as virtually instantaneous, perhaps mirroring the same feeling as a contemporary producer sending music online? Currently, our perception of time is compressed by an infinitely faster flow of global culture platformed and enabled by technological advances, specifically those online. As early as the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan (2011: 36) forecast that electronic media would proliferate through society

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<sup>21</sup> Radiogarden is a mobile device application which enables access to a global network of online radio stations

replacing visual culture with sonic culture reference. He was correct that sound would become the agent of cultural dissemination, but it can be contended that tangible elements such as the artwork or graphic design travelled as its companion. Even where there might have just been a sticker on the cassette shell or the print on vinyl sleeve art. In Tromsø, during the pre/emerging internet period, the consumption and production of music was still mostly analogue with consumption driven by the consumption of vinyl, synthesisers and radio broadcast. With his earnest attempts to connect with the outside world and in this context, global culture, Lindbæk demonstrates the desire to engage and consume while listening to the sounds from the rest of the world.

I started checking out AM Radio and built an AM receiver in my bedroom that had a 20-metre cable running out of my window to our neighbour's tree, just to try and listen to music from Radio Luxembourg. Nowadays you can have all the songs in the world in seconds. (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online).

The Tromsø groups behaviour links to my own experience growing up, listening to music predominantly produced in the USA and broadcast on Radio Luxembourg (RTL Group, 2001). These sounds and influences were 'scribbled' down enthusiastically, and vinyl 'imports' to be subsequently ordered from the local record shop, this compares to the efforts of Lindbæk in trying to create cultural flow when attempting to erect a radio antenna on his neighbours tree. The formation of the scene involved, from its inception onwards, exposure to diverse musical sounds, some of which were not of an electronic type, such as punk and disco. However, this merging of musical styles reached the planet's extremities driven by the consumption of music and subculture platformed by emerging technologies such as radio broadcast, cassette and fax machines. This is evidenced by Haugland (2013b: online) when he gives us an understanding of

the perception speed at which the commercial process of releasing a vinyl record was taking place in Tromsø.

They were sitting at home in Tromsø, the north of Norway, making music, sending faxes and DAT tapes to R&S Records in Brussels, Belgium. They finally got their music released on R&S Records and distributed to the world. So they had international careers, and that was incredibly inspiring to me (Paper Recordings, 2013b: online).

This process is evident when we consider the role of Andy Swatland and Rocky Platebar, the local vinyl record shop. This consumption process would have been longer compared to today's global interconnectivity that enables instantaneous sharing of media files. In the Arctic case, the scene participant would first have to hear a piece of music, then identify how to obtain this music (copy, mail-order or record shop trip to the UK, and only then could it be disseminated into the scene. Even the wait for Rocky Platebar to serve up new recordings on vinyl would have reinforced the participant's desire to consume this music with time to change their mind. Today, we are used to everything being readily available at the click of a button. The effect of time-space compression on the flow of artefacts that accompany any inherent subcultural capital is present in the Tromsø group during the scene's formation. The cassette tape can be referenced here as a cultural artefact that was shared between translocal scenes. Building on the notion of musical culture travelling trans locally, enabler Rune Lindbæk notes when he identifies the origins of sound recording samples used in commercially released tracks and some of the copied cassette tapes.

We also brought back from London cassette recordings of pirate radio shows, which were then copied and shared around everyone in Tromsø. If you listen to the first *Biosphere* album 'Microgravity', it's actually breakbeats from those tapes. *Biosphere* had a radio show on Sunday nights and this imported music must have clicked with him because if you listen to his radio show you can actually hear elements of 'Microgravity'.

At around the same time parts of Tromsø got satellite television and the daytime sci-fi programmes; all the sounds on this album are sounds I recognise from those shows! (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online).

It is interesting to note here that Lindbæk counters McLuhan's (2011: 36) ideas around electronic media replacing visual media by evidencing the consumption of a combination of media formats. Doreen Massey (1994) expands on Harvey's theory (1990: 240) around global cultural flows and communication speed and applies it to a 'global sense of place' that might exist within a social community (Massey, 1994: 121). Even though the community was so remote, the global flow of culture in which they engaged, enabled them to perceive their global position in relation to music and culture. The group shared their understanding of how their remote location was influenced by the global flow of culture across borders. As demonstrated by Martinsen when relating his feelings on music culture when he was growing up, 'The British music papers were very much in demand up here as we tried to follow what was going on in the underground music scenes around the world' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). The engagement with artefacts such as contemporary music publications bolsters the argument that there was a collective desire amongst the group to acquire the subcultural capital that cultural news and media might yield. Understanding the global flow of culture is a key factor in enhancing the understanding how it is consumed within the scene and across the network. Arjun Appadurai (1990: 296) contributed to the debate on cultural flow by likening the new global cultural economy to a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order. Expanding on this, and to paraphrase Adam Brown (2000), globalisation points to the rise of a global marketplace where the weakening or dissolution of distinct national markets or self-contained economies are penetrated and absorbed by



multinational companies and their structures and systems (Brown, et al., 2000: 438).

Appadurai (1990: 296) proposes a valuable framework of five dimensions to help understand global cultural flow. He refers to this as the landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world (Appadurai, 1996: 33). His concept of scapes brings another perspective to the thesis that gives insight into how the core group might have consumed and produced music. Appadurai argues that these dimensions frame the global flow of culture and reflect subculture in their fluid nature. He extends Benedict Anderson's (2016) 'imagined communities' concept, which placed these constructs within a national framework by relating his concept of 'scapes' to represent 'imagined worlds' that were global (Anderson, 2016). Appadurai explains that 'many persons on the globe live in such imagined 'worlds' and not just in imagined communities, and thus can contest and sometimes even subvert the 'imagined worlds' of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them' (Appadurai, 1990, p.297; 1996, p. 33). We will now map the data to Appadurai's (1990: 296 scapes to identify flow of culture in the Arctic circle). The 'techno', 'ethno' and 'media' scapes are considered relevant to this discussion, whereas the finance and idea scapes are not relevant. To explain, finance did not seem a primary concern within this Tromsø group. According to the interview data, a music synchronisation placement of a *Biosphere* track on a Levi's jeans TV advert (Jenssen, 1994) and the saving and spending of money in the relation vinyl consumption (Paper Recordings, 2013d: online) were the only instances where money and finance were cited.

Appadurai's technoscape (1990: 296) concerns the flow of informational technology influencing the consumption of music and production. In the contemporary period, there has been an exponential increase post-internet with social media platforms, websites, and more recently, mobile devices have become the info-tech conduit of choice. Compared with the pre/emerging internet period in this technological context the flow of culture, fuelled by international travel initiating person to person informational flow, telephonic calls, postal mail and more common in this case, the broadcast of local radio shows such as Brygga Radio and Beatservice on Norwegian 'Student Radeon'. This notion of technoscape is conjured by enabler Bjørn Torske as he outlines his relationship with technology, music and subculture:

We were listening to the local radio stations which were doing the same thing with the music and mixing; certain shows were picking up the music and, in some cases, buying it on import; especially Vidar Hanssen who runs Beatservice Records and his radio show was by the same name (2013i: online).

This is a good example of informational technology flow and a relationship with core group members. The facilitation of DAT and cassette tapes, recording studio and radio broadcast technology supports this flow and consequently their consumption of culture. In this context, Hanssen is acting as an enabler, being responsible for the flow of culture via his popular and contemporary radio show during the period called 'Beatservice'.



Figure 10: Vidar Hanssen presenting his Beatservice radio show circa 1988

Source: (Paper Recordings, 2013g: online), © Paper Vision Films [Accessed on 10th October 2021]

Beatservice Radio ran from the late eighties on basic broadcast technology, but in the 1990s, music software such as Cubase<sup>22</sup> and basic equipment drove the capability of this group to produce and consume more music and culture. Bjørn Torske recounts the moment when he began making music using what is now considered a rudimentary process of production.

We got access to tape recorders, four-track cassette recorders so we could develop our pause button remixing ideas. We started to make remixes and mega mixes for our own shows splicing tape and other techniques. Before we knew it, we had our own sound, started playing around and programming and eventually began making our own tracks (Paper Recordings, 2013i: online).

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<sup>22</sup> Cubase was a digital audio workstation (DAW) developed by Steinberg for music and MIDI recording which ran on the Atari ST computer from 1989

This recollection from Bjørn Torske, demonstrates the importance of the flow of technology to this group of early adopters and their music consumption and production. The scarcity of technology within the group might have facilitated more collaborative production and consumption of music linking to key themes that are integrated throughout the discussion on location, small size of scene and pre internet. The second of Appadurai's 'scapes' is what he termed as the ethnoscape (1990: 297), which describes the flow of people, such as immigrants, workers, and tourists. The interview data demonstrates that performers, tourists, and workers stayed and participated in the music community. For example, Andy Swatland, who managed the Rocky Platebar record shop in Tromsø, was from the UK, as were the Idjut Boys, Harvey and Greg Wilson who all DJed as workers and tourists; they all played an essential role in the flow of music and culture across borders during this time. Of specific interest here is a significant migratory flow between Tromsø and the Bergen municipalities during the pre/emerging internet period, of some core group members (Berge, Torske, Brundtland and Mjøs). A visualisation of this flow and connectivity between important elements of the scene is shown in Figures 11 and 12. As stated in the section on scene, this group travelled to Bergen and were integral to the development of the 'Bergen Wave' phenomenon (Tenold, 2011). Lyslo, a core member of the group who stayed in Tromsø, recalls this type of migratory flow.

I was in Bergen a lot during the mid-nineties, and I was in the middle of the Bergen Wave. I met Erlend [Sellevold] (aka 'Ralph Myerz') at the time and we produced some music together. I did some work with Bjørn [Torske], Torbjørn [Brundtland] and Svein [Berge] in their studio. For me it was just something that evolved, it just happened organically as certain people met each other. Røyksopp started out when Torbjørn [Brundtland] moved to Bergen he was then joined by Svein [Berge] and they started producing music (Paper Recordings, 2013e: online).

Martinsen (2013f: online), recounts an example of this migration and how the consumption and production of music and culture flow when he recalls a situation involving the first electronic band from Tromsø, *Bel Canto* and the soon to be one half of Röyksopp, Torbjørn Brundtland.

Torbjørn moved to Oslo to work with *Bel Canto* on one of their later studio albums. They were in the next-door studio, so we spent some time together listening to each other's music. Then he started playing me a lot of his own music and it was fantastic; really good. This was pre-Röyksopp and there was probably some of the tracks that were released on the *Those Norwegians* album [on Paper Recordings], but it was via Torbjørn's cassette and DAT, tapes that I heard what was going on with that crowd (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online).

Appadurai's (1990: 297) third scape relates to the mediascape's global cultural flow of electronic and printed media. He uses this aspect to frame the fluidity of this type of culture, and we can identify a range of elements that influence the consumption and production of music across borders. The data evidences a range of examples that support this concept, such as a Face interview with *Biosphere* [Geir Jessen], or the dissemination of Kiss FM cassette mix tapes being listened to and then distributed amongst the community. There appeared two stages of dissemination of this flow of media they connected. For example, they consume new music (vinyl records) after hearing them on a radio show, DAT and cassette tape or reading about it in a magazine article, and then in the second stage, they share the music with the group. Bjørn Torske worked with Tore Kroknes, aka *Erot*<sup>23</sup>, in Bergen after he migrated from Tromsø and became an enabler of the Bergen Wave phenomenon during the pre/emerging internet period. This interconnectedness and flow across the scenes enhanced the links

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<sup>23</sup> Tore Kroknes aka Erot was a music producer from Bergen during the Bergen Wave phenomenon.

with reciprocal drivers of the scene, helping to facilitate the Bergen Wave (Tenold, 2011).

The contemporary period has witnessed such fast development of the mediascape that it is difficult to draw any direct comparison with the Arctic scene. Although, as a researcher, I understand DAT and cassette tapes as elements of both 'scapes'. They are part of the technoscape as this was new technology at the time being utilised in the scene, I would consider it also part of the mediascape as it is recorded data, which is embodied within audio tape. However, it can be argued that although the cultural flow of musical culture in the form of cassette or DAT tapes is not instantaneous as it is on SoundCloud or similar platforms, the quality of flow is a higher level and more effective. I would contend that meeting someone in person and listening or dancing to music can produce a higher quality flow of subculture in that instance compared to sharing download links online into an inbox or mobile app. An example from my experience managing the Paper Recordings record label is the higher chance of a music review being published on a blog or printed media occurs when a tangible form of the music, such as vinyl or cassette is sent to journalist; or even better is to put it into their hand (Bohns, 2017). The notion of perceived quality of flow in relation to the distribution, exchange or transfer of media is of interest, yet still invites clarity. For instance the type of flow identified is considered of higher quality, in-person, by mail or as is the norm currently by sharing a file is linked directly to the perception of those involved in the exchange. An example of flow and the consumption of music and subculture is recalled by Torske when he explains how Todd Terje, a globally recognised Norwegian DJ and producer, was introduced to 'new' music. Terje's elder sister listened to music produced by the core group on cassette during his upbringing.

Todd Terje is currently to add some context here. Torske explains that his 'big sister was a friend of Erot, so Todd will have heard the music on those tapes when he was 10 to 12 years old' (2013i: online). It demonstrates the generational familial mobility of music across generations which can be linked to Harvey's (1990) concept of time-space compression when considering the speed at which the cassette tape and its music had travelled across time (from brother to sister). Additionally, this identifies an instance of the flow of music and culture consumption within a broader scene connecting with the earlier discussion on the role of technology in the scene. In this context, the perception or compression of time and space is experiential and dependent on the participant and the scene to which they belong. The time-space compression effect is perhaps less 'local-to-local' and now more 'local-to-global'. For example, the perceived speed that a DAT tape could travel from the Arctic to a Belgium record label (Paper Recordings, 2013c: online), compared with the digital distribution and file sharing capabilities of the contemporary creative industries. Now that we have explored the concept of cultural flow, we can expand the discussion by investigating the connectivity between the core group in terms of a network.

## Chapter 6: Networks

This section uses network theory to explore and connect the twelve enablers and how their interconnectedness influenced the flow of culture. Culture still flows within this network, and to visualise this, we use a form of social network analysis (Crossley, 2015) applied to data tables 1-3. It is useful to understand the

network concept shown in Figure 1, which displays, not only the connectedness of the enablers but also fellow producers, DJs, and performers participating in a national context.

Manuel Castells (2000; 2004) argues that technology plays a key role in creating a network that connects production, power and cultures. He expands on the notion that a network society is one that was driven by communication and technology, generally using the terms ICT (information communications technology) or micro-electronics-based information and communications technologies (Castells, 2004a: 23). A concept we can use here is 'personal communities' which are defined by Wellman and Gulia (1999: 331) as 'an individual's social network of informal and personal ties [...] both group communities and personal communities online as well as off-line'. Castells (2004: 387) develops this concept by proposing that 'virtual communities' do not have to be contrary to physical communities; they are different but still behave similarly with rules and interactions. Castells (2004b) proposed that 'multimodal' connectivity is facilitated by technology and the internet; and that if all cultures represented a node in a networked system of cultural dialogue, then these nodes would freely allow reciprocal learning and experience (Castells, 2004a: 42; 2004b), noting that communication systems for collaboration could exist. He believes a network comprises a set of interconnected nodes with their importance determined by the application of knowledge.

A node is the point where the curve intersects itself. A network has no center, just nodes. Nodes may be of varying relevance for the network. Nodes increase their importance for the network by absorbing more relevant information and processing it more efficiently. The relative importance of a node does not stem from its specific features but from its ability to contribute to the network's goals. However, all nodes of a



network are necessary for the network's performance (Castells; 2004b: 23).

There is evidence supporting the type of connections between the group and cultural structures and organisations, e.g. venues, radio, and private spaces such as home studios (Paper Recordings, 2013a: online). There was no choice for the Tromsø group but to work and collaborate with each other whereas contemporary internet platforms, such as Splice <sup>24</sup> connect producers and musicians online enabling them to write and produce music collaboratively. Castells' (2004: 23) ideas around nodes and networks inform my use social network analysis as a method to understand how the scene worked in relation the connectivity between the enablers. The enablers would have created a network capable of supporting a cultural flow within the location even before the improved connectivity enabled by technological developments such as mobile communications and the internet.

By analysing data extracted from the core Tromsø group I have used the methods of Nick Crossley (2015) to examine this group in more depth. This close-knit community encouraged collaboration, and this analysis of the connectivity between the enablers aims to guide us towards an enhanced understanding of the scene. Informed by his ideas, this data presents a visualisation of the Tromsø network to demonstrate the levels of connectivity between this group. He proposes the concept and role of nodes in the context of Social Network Analysis (Crossley, 2015); his definition helps to analyse the research data) and is an effective way to frame this network and music community. In contrast to Castells (2004: 23) assertion that technology is key in powering a network,

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<sup>24</sup> Splice is a cloud based music studio collaboration tool for musicians and producers: <https://splice.com/>,

Crossley's methods focus on the dyadic and individual roles of the people within a network and present a method to analyse this group.

Cohesive understanding of music in a social context is achieved by viewing it as a "collective action" coordinated within a "network" [...] that the production and circulation of music require interaction between multiple actors who each make a different contribution (Crossley, 2008: 90).

When he uses the term 'circulation', I read this as the flow and consumption of music and associated subcultural artefacts such as cassettes or magazines. He uses the term 'musicking' in relation to networks in the introduction, which can be applied when considering the behaviour of the practitioners between the pre and post-internet periods. Pre-internet 'musicking' would have relied on a collective of participants (Crossley, 2015: 3), an analysis of the data points towards a high level of collaboration and connectivity within this group (Tables 1-3). Crossley (2015: 1,4,5) built on the notion of 'music worlds' when he claimed that networks played an important role in their structure and related processes. He suggests that a 'social network' is a more organic construction, where analysis of interconnection, whether between the musicians, promoters, managers or DJs can be potentially free of conflict, competition or other conventions. He also notes that "There is a growing body of literature suggesting both that tastes are formed within networks, as an effect of mutual influence, and that as a consequence, taste diffuses through networks" (Crossley, 2015: 6). As noted earlier some of the core group connected with other non-producer enablers, such as Jon Strøm, who influenced the development of musical tastes within their network. Specifically the Friday nights where Martinson and Jenssen were invited to his house to listen to new music on Fridays, or when they went to listen to music in each other's mountain retreats or spaces (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). Steering his theorising towards the concept of a local music scene proposed in Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson's theories (Bennett & Peterson,

2004; Bennett, 2004a), Crossley contends that a scene entails a network of actors [enablers in this case] who belong to and participate in it, as the musical 'family trees' common in journalistic representations of scene suggest (2008: 90).

My analysis develops this sense of networks, and their importance, drawing upon a more academic version of Figure 1. This informed the analysis and helps visualise the close interconnectedness between the participants and other important entities such as venues or radio stations. The high level of music production and collaboration within this small group indicates that the connections between the enablers are potentially meaningful, or as Crossley would term, 'strong' (Crossley, 2008: 92). To explore the data academically, a form of analysis was designed using parts of Crossley's social network definitions and Castells network ideas (Castells, 2004a; 2004b). This social network analysis aims to identify the levels of connectivity within this group as an indicative measure of flow and consumption. Crossley (2015: 14) expands on Castell's (2004b: 3) ideas around nodes and suggests that a social network can comprise two basic elements, nodes and ties, that can be used to analyse data to indicate connectivity. To paraphrase Crossley, I am curious about the impact of connections within this specific group of participants focusing on those producing and performing music together (Crossley, 2008: 90). The primary aim of this section is to show that a highly functioning and effective level of connectivity was still possible with this small group in such a remote location and during pre/emerging internet period. The analysis is not going to be used as a comparison to a contemporary situation but to explore Tromsø scene's growth and development from its inception until the Bergen music scene was globally established down the coast. My analysis will use the 'whole network' property

of network data (Crossley, 2015: 17) extracting two basic elements, the nodes and ties. I use tables and graphs created from the first and third of Crossley's five network properties, the Whole Network (1<sup>st</sup> property) and the individual nodes (3<sup>rd</sup> property) within it, of which there were twelve. Initially, I analysed the first, the whole network using the properties of order and density (Crossley, 2015: 20). To analyse the third, the individual nodes, I look at the node's degree, which represents the number of ties within the whole network (Crossley, 2015: 25). The two essential elements here are 'nodes' and 'ties'. The 'ties' are referred to in my analysis as 'connections', and these connections exist between the recording artists, alias or band, plus any remix, production, performance or song writing participation. Here, a node will be defined as one of the twelve enablers, active in the electronic dance music scene or community as in Table 3. To simplify the data analysis, a node represents an individual from the core group of producers, termed here as enablers, who are music producers or band members. We are interested in the data around nodes and their degree of centrality, which could be simplified to mean the producers with the most connections. Crossley (2015: 25) expands on this theory and introduces the concept of ego-net density as another measure applied to nodes. Ego-net density analyses node connectivity to a greater level by assessing the concentration of connections between nodes in a network and is of interest for potential further research in this case. A connection between nodes is considered viable if meaningful in the context of the research (Crossley, 2015: 15). In this case, if a producer is in a band or produces music with another then the connection is considered 'meaningful'. To derive a measure of connectivity and intensity from the data the most degree central node will be identified from the data. Crossley's (2015: 16) study of social network analysis investigates at a

deeper level than is being applied to the data here. For instance, he notes that the nodes (producers, participants) can behave positively and negatively, influenced by personal relationships and motives.

### *The Whole Network*

The graphs produced are two-dimensional and represent a linear connection between the producers and their aliases (nodes). There are forms of social network analysis that assume a multi-layered structure between the networks that considers musical hardware, software, equipment and infrastructure such as physical spaces or organisation such as venues or radio stations (Crossley, 2008: 91).

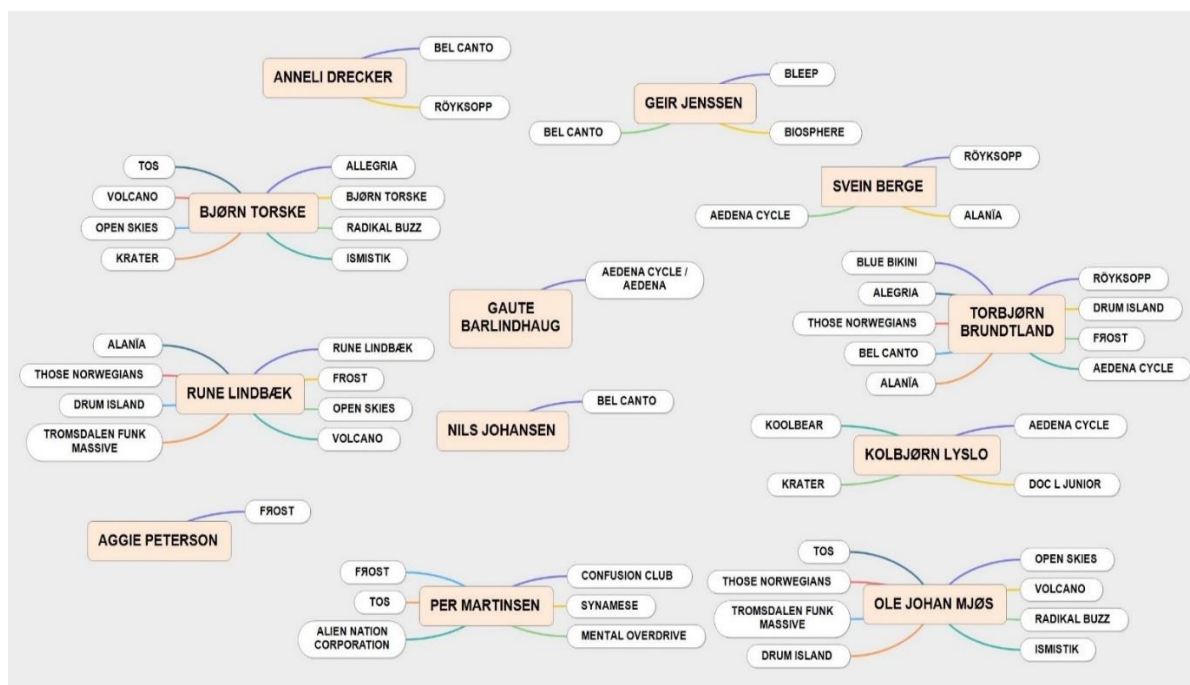


Figure 11: Whole Network, a hypothetical network graph based on the data in Table 1 that includes the 12 nodes and their bands and recording artist aliases  
Data from: Published interviews, personal knowledge, (Discogs, 2020)

For clarity, my analysis focuses on the nodes (core group participants and producers) and their connections to each other. To be clear, the time frame of the social network analysis is the twelve years between 1987 and 2001,

defined as the pre/emerging period in this study. The properties of the network will be analysed at a basic level taking into consideration the order and density of the network according to Nick Crossley's (2015: 20) framework of analysis. I began by charting connected production aliases and during the time frame of the 12 chosen nodes to define what Crossley terms as the 'order'. This meant that the 'order' equated to the core group of Arctic producers and musicians. The band names are listed in chronological order. It can be seen visually that there is a lower level of collaboration and connection between the producers at the start of the analysis. In the analysis, it is understood that a commercial (meaning that a 'recording' has been released into the marketplace in this context) recording artist name, alias or band represent 'nodes' so that we can create connections to assess connectivity in the scene. This is suggested by Crossley (2015: 15) when he states that 'anything can count as a node if it is meaningful in the context of the study thus allowing us to quantify the scene using his ideas.

## Interconnectedness of the whole network

Active from	Recording artist, alias or band name	Enabler (Node)	Enabler (Node)	Enabler (Node)	Enabler (Node)	Record label location
1987	Bel Canto	Geir Jenssen	Nils Johansen	Anneli Drecker		Brussels, Belgium
1989	Tsunematsu Matsui	Anneli Drecker				Brussels, Belgium
1989	Bleep	Geir Jenssen				Brussels, Belgium
1990	Mental Overdrive	Per Martinsen				Ghent, Belgium
1990	Synamese	Per Martinsen				Brussels, Belgium
1991	Biosphere	Geir Jenssen				Ghent, Belgium / Oslo, Norway
1991	Confusion Club	Per Martinsen				Ghent, Belgium
1991	Alien Nation Corporation	Per Martinsen				Brussels, Belgium
1991	Alegria	Bjørn Torske	Torbjørn Brundtland			Brussels, Belgium
1991	Radikal Buzz	Bjørn Torske	Ole Johan Mjøs			Brussels, Belgium
1991	TOS	Per Martinsen	Bjørn Torske	Ole Johan Mjøs		Brussels, Belgium
1991	Ismistik	Bjørn Torske	Ole Johan Mjøs			Eindhoven, Netherlands
1992	Krater	Bjørn Torske	Kolbjørn Lyslo			Tromsø, Norway
1992	Open Skies	Bjørn Torske	Rune Lindbæk	Ole Johan Mjøs		London, UK
1993	Volcano	Bjørn Torske	Rune Lindbæk	Ole Johan Mjøs		Liverpool, UK
1994	Aedena Cycle	Kolbjørn Lyslo	Svein Berge	Gaute Barlindhaug	Torbjørn Brundtland	Brussels, Belgium
1994	Tromsdalen Funk Massive	Rune Lindbæk	Ole Johan Mjøs			Brussels, Belgium
1996	Alaña	Rune Lindbæk	Svein Berge	Torbjørn Brundtland		Tromsø, Norway
1996	Blue Bikini	Torbjørn Brundtland				Tromsø, Norway
1997	Drum Island	Rune Lindbæk	Torbjørn Brundtland	Ole Johan Mjøs		Brussels, Belgium
1997	Those Norwegians	Rune Lindbæk	Torbjørn Brundtland	Ole Johan Mjøs	Kolbjørn Lyslo	Manchester, UK
1997	FJOST	Per Martinsen	Aggie Peterson	Rune Lindbæk	Torbjørn Brundtland	Tromsø, Norway
1998	Bjørn Torske	Bjørn Torske				Berlin, Germany
1998	Koolbear	Kolbjørn Lyslo				Oslo, Norway
1998	Rune Lindbæk	Rune Lindbæk				Tromsø, Norway
1999	Doc L Junior	Kolbjørn Lyslo				London, UK
1999	Røyksopp	Svein Berge	Torbjørn Brundtland			Bergen, Norway

Table 1: Interconnectedness of whole network. Showing collaborative connections between nodes (enablers)  
Data from: Published interviews, personal knowledge, (Discogs, 2020)

Table 1 indicates that there were fewer collaborative productions within the group during the formative years. The elements that are potential influences have been discussed throughout the essay, but those to consider here are the remote Arctic location, access to communication technology, recording studio and radio station equipment, access to suitable spaces and that the early scene participants were acting in their small groups unaware that other kindred spirits were active in the location. Compare this to the contemporary situation we have global connectivity, sharing music on platforms such as SoundCloud or collaborating on platforms such as Splice. This initial finding shines a light on the network that existed between the participants. We can develop this analysis by looking at the order (Crossly, 2015: 17), which represents the number of nodes (producers and musicians) with density summing the number of connections in

the ‘whole network’ graph in Figure 11. To unearth further detail, I apply a form of social network analysis, by noting when enablers worked on music production together as a direct ‘connection’ (tie). This collaborative connection might have been in the guise of remix, production, performance or song writing participation. As recognition of depth that can be applied to this form of social network analysis, the paths and their lengths are a set of data that could be generated from additionally targeted interviews, potentially as part of a further study of this group (Crossley, 2015: 21).

### *Enabler collaborative connections*

ENABLER (NODE) Member of core study group and collaboration alias	CONNECTION e.g. remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer #1	CONNECTION e.g. remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer #2	CONNECTION e.g. remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer #3	CONNECTION e.g. remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer #4	CONNECTION e.g. remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer #5	CONNECTION e.g. remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer #6
Nils Johansen (Bel Canto)	Anneli Drecker 'Tundra'					
Anneli Drecker (Bel Canto)	Bleep 'In Your System & 'Fading Dream'	Alania 'A'	Mental Overdrive 'Coming For Your Love'	Røyksopp 'Sparks'	Mental Overdrive 'My House'	
Aggie Peterson (Frost)	Mental Overdrive 'Deliverance'					
Gaute Barlindhaug (Aedena Cycle)	Biosphere 'Novelty Waves'					
Geir Jenssen (Bleep/Biosphere)	Bel Canto 'Dreaming Girl'	Alegria 'Danger'				
Kolbjørn Lyslo (Adeana Cycle/Dr Lyslo Jr, Doc L Jnr)	Biosphere 'Novelty Waves'	Those Norwegians - Hurdy Burdy				
Svein Berge (Røyksopp)	Frost 'Endless Love'	Anneli Drecker 'Sexy Love'				
Per Martinsen (Mental Overdrive)	Bel Canto 'Shimmering Warm and Bright'	Bel Canto 'Unicorn'	Volcano 'Let Your Body be Free'	Frost 'Amygdala'		
Torbjørn Brundtland (Alania/Røyksopp/Bluc Bikini)	Biosphere 'Insomnia' 1997	Bel Canto 'Images' 1998	Frost 'Endless Love' 1999	Anneli Drecker 'Sexy Love'		
Bjørn Torske (Volcano/Bjørn Torske)	Tronsdalen Funk Massive 'I Believe'	Biosphere 'Novelty Waves'	Blue Bikini 'So Strong'	Røyksopp 'Eple'	Frost 'Amygdala'	
Rune Lindbæk (Volcano/Those Norwegians)	Tronsdalen Funk Massive 'I Believe'	Biosphere 'Novelty Waves'	Frost 'Hope You'll Be There'	Røyksopp '40 Years Back/Come'	Røyksopp 'A Higher Place'	Mental Overdrive 'My House'
Ole Johan Mjos (Volcano/Those Norwegians)	Tronsdalen Funk Massive 'I Believe'	Biosphere 'Novelty Waves'	Røyksopp 'A Higher Place'			

Table 2: Enabler collaborative connections. Data showing node connectivity and degree centrality.

Data from: Published interviews, personal knowledge, (Discogs, 2020)

Table 2 maps the direct connection between the order, the twelve nodes and direct music production connections generated between them: these enabler connections, total thirty six (36). It was felt that collaboration, whether playing



the triangle, remixing, singing or producing, is an essential element that connects this community.

### *Enablers and the intensity of their connections*

<b>ENABLER (NODE): Member of core study group and collaborative artist/producer alias</b>	<b>Connection (ties) as recording artist, alias or band member</b>	<b>Connection (ties) as a remixer, instrumentalist, vocalist, producer or engineer</b>	<b>Degree and node centrality</b>	<b>Connection to record labels locations</b>
NILS JOHANSEN	1	1	2	1
AGGIE PETERSON	1	1	2	1
GAUTE BARLINDHAUG	1	1	2	1
ANNELI DRECKER	2	5	7	1
SVEIN BERGE	2	2	4	2
GEIR JENSSEN	3	2	5	3
KOLBJØRN LYSLO	5	2	7	5
PER MARTINSEN	6	4	10	3
TORBJØRN BRUNDTLAND	8	4	12	5
BJØRN TORSKE	8	5	13	6
RUNE LINDBÆK	8	6	14	5
OLE JOHAN MJØS	8	3	11	5
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>38</b>

Table 3: Enablers and the intensity of their connections  
Data from: Published interviews, personal knowledge, (Discogs, 2020)

This measure of connectedness can be added to sum of direct connections derived from Table 3, which tables the number of bands and aliases across the whole network, totalling fifty-three (53). A summary of the twelve nodes and their connections can be found in Table 3. We can work out the density of this network by calculating the potential number of connections as per Crossley's (2015: 37), note 7 to be  $12 \times 11$ , which equals 132. Using table 3, we can sum the direct connections within the whole network to show a total connection of 89. Density is the total number of connections across the 'whole network' as a proportion of the potential number of connections possible; in this case  $(89/132) = 0.68$ . The closer the resulting value is to one (1.0), the higher the density and more connected the network. A value of one (1.0) would mean that

all possible connections were complete. In this case, the value of 0.68 indicates that the network is well connected and that the nodes work together effectively. The final column also supports the assertion that the producers who started making music earlier in the scene had a smaller network of record labels (potentially relating to the geographic location) that released their music. This might have been an impact of the remoteness and the increased music consumption over time due to technology interventions and increased global flow of culture. From the data in Table 3 we can deduce that Rune Lindbæk has the highest degree of connectivity and, therefore he is the degree central node of the network. Applying this to existing knowledge from the scene indicates that the producers (Torbjørn Brundtland and Bjørn Torske) are also close to Rune in degree centrality. These producers were part of a notional second wave of slightly younger producers in the scene. This shows that once the scene had been platformed by this first wave of producer pioneers, this might have led to more effective connectivity and enhanced collaborative opportunity between the second wave (Bjørn Torske, *Those Norwegians* and *Røyksopp*).

## Whole Network Connectivity

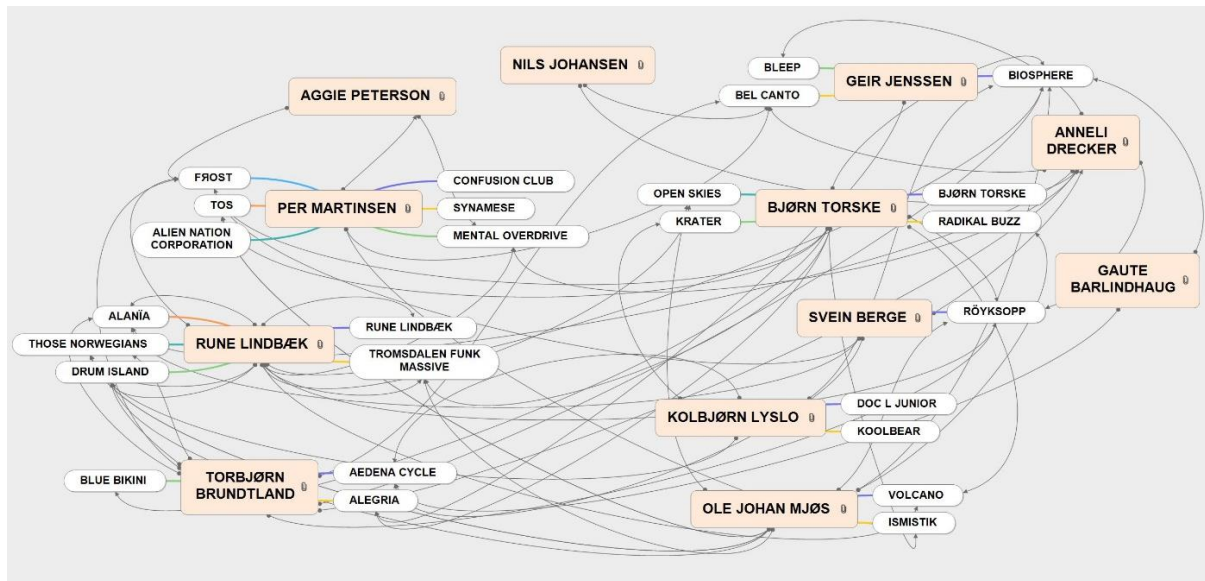


Figure 12: Whole network connectivity, a hypothetical node degree & centrality graph based on the data in Tables 1-3. Data from: Published interviews, personal knowledge, (Discogs, 2020)

Figure 12 visually evidences the connectedness of the network identifying the enablers in the core group and their collaborative relationships in the context of music production leading to commercial record releases. It shows the high level of connections evident in the Tromsø group of enablers during the study time period, of 1987 to 2001. The density score of 0.68 is supported by the high number of connections visible between the nodes. It has been identified that the network was more effective over time, perhaps as the scene developed and recruited more members. Stig Tenold (2011) states that the 'Bergen Wave' increased music consumption and production due to increased international recognition of the Norwegian house genre. The Tromsø scene had high levels of connectivity once more producers had become members, and the scene had developed, specifically between 1991 to 1997, see Tables 2 and 3. In a contemporary situation we would expect a higher network density score due to

the influence of technology on flow and networks, potentially meaning a network density of closer to 1.0.

Reflecting the connectivity of contemporary networks, the pre/emerging internet participants behaved as omnivorous consumers and contributed to their network's flow of subcultural capital. According to Paul Widdop (2015: 101), an 'individual with omnivorous behaviour [...] would have a larger diverse friendship network', whereas 'the univores were more reliant on family networks as opposed to friendship networks'. In the Tromsø case, those forming the early core group (Johansen, Drecker, Jenssen) developed a pan-national network with their *Bel Canto* band. Yet, collaboratively those involved at the formative stage of the scene had lower levels of connectivity than those joining the scene when it was more established from the early to mid-1990s. Conversely, Per Martinsen released his music translocally on several record labels based in European cities (Table 1) yet, was close in centrality to the degree central node, Lindbæk; Martinsen exhibited behaviour of both omnivore and univore consumer. The human appetite to consume culture is at the heart of this study and this theme is a constant throughout this debate.

## Conclusion

As far as can be determined, this is the first published study seeking to document and analyse the electronic dance music scene in a remote Arctic location such as Tromsø in Norway. Exploring this music community in such detail has been an exercise that has enhanced my understanding of the local people and their music. It was a privilege to have access to the recollections of the protagonists

of this vibrant music scene that began, just as the internet emerged as a dominant influence on the cultures around music consumption and production. However, as acknowledged in the debate, music is not just a set of notes on a song sheet; it stands for so much more in the context of culture. I focused on subcultural capital, location, genre, technology, flow and networks to provide a deeper contextual insight into the emergence of this geographically isolated music scene.

Applying the ideas of Benedict Anderson (2016), it became clear from my data that a group of enablers created their own imagined community of electronic dance music producers. There was no specific starting point, no unique genre linked to the formative scene or obvious definition of a scene, but I found that the scene members engaged and connected with the local and, more pertinently, the international community, which confirmed Tromsø as a local music scene according to a framework proposed by Bennett and Peterson (2004). The enablers had been effective in engaging with and participating in the international dance music community. The remote community would have given producers confidence, a sense of belonging and helped support their efforts to connect across borders to others with shared values and tastes. This cohesion was enhanced by the exchange of subcultural capital realised from record-buying trips, studio work and other international experiences. One of the most striking issues taken from the data was the gender imbalance within the scene, with only two female enablers (Anneli Drecker and Aggie Peterson) in what was found to be a male dominated scene. A deeper analysis could be produced using interviews and perspectives from these females and others linked to the location to explore and correct the gender imbalance. Building on access to official demographic data from the municipality could also allow for a

more accurate analysis of the scene in relation to the youth population at the time. The study found that a small number of the group migrated to Bergen and applied their artistic and professional skillset to the development of a connected music scene, the 'Bergen Wave' in the mid to late 1990s. This might indicate that the Tromsø scene naturally reached its capacity due to its relatively small size and remote location. However, the notion of scene capacity could be further investigated in combination with comparative analysis on other small remote scenes.

Despite the remote location, Tromsø's music producers showed an awareness of cultural 'happenings' around the world, describing how Tromsøians enjoyed their 'lofty' position in the Arctic circle giving them freedom while 'watching what the humans were up to' (Paper Recordings, 2013f: online). I warm to this perspective, which appeared to allow cultural independence, to inspire their music production and cultural practice. The study found that their tastes were formed, unconstrained by societal upbringing or pressures an urban setting might exert. They displayed an independent spirit that gave them freedom to make their own cultural choices. The isolation of rural life in Tromsø created challenges for these young producers, but it was evident that this did not hinder the flow and consumption of global culture into their community. On reflection it could be that the scarcity and difficulty of engagement with international culture increased the perceived value of music and its associated culture and artefacts. This was evidenced in the data by the enablers voracious appetite for musical culture and artefacts. It appears they used their remoteness to reach out, engage and consume an eclectic array of musical styles and genres via radio, cassette or vinyl, driven by their understanding of the cultural value in these artefacts within their scene. Perhaps

Tromsø was just too remote for a similar level of international attention that Björk and *The Sugarcubes* attracted to Reykjavík's music scene, at the same time as *Bel Canto's* emergence. However, further investigation into the trajectory of the networks of the bands, *Bel Canto* and *The Sugarcubes* might reveal comparative insight into their music scenes. The Arctic location was found to have positive influences such as freedom of choice, however it was apparent that it would have also placed limits on the group's music consumption and production. An example that illustrates this effect could be the vinyl records consumed via mail-order as not all wholesale companies would ship vinyl to Tromsø, also these shipments would invariably have been in very small quantities. These restrictions would have increased the level of music sharing within the group; evident in Per Martinsen's cultural sharing factories with his friends. In Tromsø the flow of culture was limited to a series of conduits. For instance, there was no bar and club circuit to consume music or perform as DJs or clusters of record shops. They did have a youth centre, radio station and private spaces to meet and play new productions, imported vinyl and pirated cassettes. These spaces and resources generated sufficient connectivity, perceived value and potential for the participants to reach out and engage with others. I found that, although the internet was not facilitating global cultural flow, this did not limit the group's music consumption or production behaviours. Relating this to Paul Widdop's theory (2015) it was evident that key players behaved as both omnivore and univore in relation to their cultural consumption. This created a strong community and network that had impressive internationally connectivity which was confirmed by social network analysis.

Although there were no direct influences found in relation to the music production, the Norwegian landscape and geographic isolation were

undoubtedly a creative touchstone for these musicians. My research found that genres don't always develop in the same way within isolated locations which allowed for the development of a range of production styles and sounds, born of a mashup of influences, tastes, and styles. The majority of enablers were in bands with each other, which we could expect to have influenced a specific Tromsø sound. However, it was found that the 'cosmic disco' genre was not credible in academic terms, but exists in practice, as a journalistic label given to electronic dance music produced in Norway. An opportunity to develop this aspect of the research would be to examine the producer's family upbringing. For instance, whether they learnt an instrument, attend concerts or listen to music in their family environment; and how this might have influenced their tastes, production and consumption of music in the context of genre.

I believe the twelve music producers identified as the formative group created a valuable data set, although a larger sample size could produce more extensive findings. Nick Crossley's (2015) work on social network analysis was used as a methodological reference point, informing a number of tables and graphs produced to visualise the data. Initial findings showed that the density of the network was 0.68, which indicated good connectivity; A value of 1.0 would show full connectivity. My analysis revealed that the first phase of enablers had a lower intensity of collaboration, whereas those slightly younger, coming into the scene as a notional second wave, collaborated to a much higher level. This was evidenced by Rune Lindbæk being identified as the producer with the highest degree centrality, indicating that he was most effectively connected to the rest of the group. The social network analysis could be expanded by looking in more depth at the relationships between the group. For instance, there will have been other determinant factors that influenced cultural flow within the network, such



as whether they worked on a radio show, shared equipment or studio space, or were friends with the record shop manager. These factors would have made their relationship more meaningful in Crossley's terms. Research in this area could be expanded by conducting a comparative analysis from a new data set produced from the three main Norwegian hubs of electronic dance music based in Tromsø, Bergen and Oslo. Further analysis using Crossley's two basic elements, nodes and connections could produce a body of analytical work representing the whole Norwegian network of dance music producers.

As a positive bookend to my essay, and of interest to continued research in the area of music scene, a number of the Tromsø enablers are still producing music. They are also active as mentors to an emerging cohort of producers and DJs; over 30 years after they formed the Tromsø scene <sup>25</sup>. The role of the enablers in the formation, development and sustainability of this scene has potential for further longitudinal research. The tracking of their interaction and continued engagement in the scene could give credibility and a deeper meaning to the legacy of these established members. The strong social connectivity between this core group creates a coherent thread that weaves throughout the discourse of this thesis; demonstrating that an effective music scene will develop no matter how remote or restricted the flow of culture. The passion for subcultural exchange, to produce and consume music, combined with a desire for social interaction, initiated and sustained a music scene, despite and because of, Tromsø's unique geographical and cultural position.

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<sup>25</sup> Enablers mentor younger producers such as Third Attempt and Runther in addition to Vidar Hanssen releasing new Tromsø electronic dance music on his 'Prima Norsk' compilation series on Beatservice Records.

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**THE END**