Québec Electric: Montréal, Mutek and the global circuit

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Abstract

Montréal-based artists and organizations are significant and deliberate players in the global creation and exchange of electronic music and digital culture. My research will explore the conditions that continue to produce a concentration of future-looking industries, arts and culture. A yearly event in Montréal with branches in South America and global circulations, the Mutek festival provides an opportunity to study the unique and emerging relationship between niche and avant-garde festivals and their cities; new industries, music, art and technology; local/global interactions and networking; policy at all levels of government and new economic opportunities for culture in general. It provides an emerging model/cultural form of a 21st century art and music festival. I intend to show how governmental policy affects the festival and contribute to recent work that casts cities in new socio-cultural and economic roles, and as part of increasingly sophisticated international networks.

 Les artistes et organismes de Montréal sont des acteurs importants et impliqués à une échelle globale dans un circuit de création et d'échange des musiques électroniques et de la culture numérique. Mes recherches explorent les facteurs qui permettent de faciliter la mise en place continue d'une concentration d'industries innovantes, d'art et de culture. Le festival Mutek, qui se tient tous les ans à Montréal et est inscrit dans une dynamique globale d'échanges et de diffusion, avec de fortes connexions en en Amérique Latine latine notamment, offre la possibilité d'étudier les relations particulières et nouvelles entre les festivals de niche et d'avant-garde et les villes où ils prennent place, entre les industries innovantes, la musique, l'art et la technologie, les tissus locaux et internationaux de collaborations et interconnexions, les politiques à tous les niveaux de gouvernements et les nouvelles opportunités économiques pour la culture en général. Il incarne un modèle émergent, une forme culturelle nouvelle de festival artistique et musical du 21ème siècle. Mon travail démontrera comment les politiques gouvernementales peuvent affecter mais aussi contribuer à la dynamique récente qui donne aux villes un rôle socio-culturel et économique tout en les inscrivant dans un maillage international de plus en plus sophistiqué.

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> "MUTEK internationalized the city. Montréal could be a little Berlin."[1]

In 2005, *Spin* magazine published a galvanizing article declaring Montréal, "The Next Big Scene." Only the tiniest section of this article 'covered' the electronic corner of the city's music scene - a paragraph with the header, "Akufen/MUTEK." The article's disproportionate emphasis on pop and rock outfits belied the fact that Akufen, a Montréal based electronic music artist, had probably sold more records than half of the pop acts in the article combined, and that his influence runs much wider and deeper than most of the bands highlighted.[2] This lack of recognition and understanding of contemporary electronic music, not just in the pages of *Spin*, but also in Canada generally, remains a longstanding frustration of mine and this example brings many of my personal, professional and academic interests to the fore.

I have been an avid music fan, musician, record label owner, and radio producer. For 16 years I worked as the executive producer and host of a CBC Radio Two program called *Brave New Waves*, a late night, national new music and culture program based in Montréal, where it was my job to curate and present emergent cultural activity and new music. The program mandated itself to promote music of many niches and styles: metal, sound art, punk, jazz, indie rock, world music, improvised music, noise, and electronic music in all of its ever mutating varieties—from dance music to test tones.

In 2007, *Brave New Waves* came to an unceremonious end, replaced by a

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[1] I was quoted in the Spin magazine article.

[2] Akufen's 2001 album, *My Way*, stands as a major touchstone and influence for arty dance music producers all over the world and continues to be imitated.

computer-generated, non-hosted playlist running a shallow library of Canadian singer songwriters, adult-oriented indie-rock and excerpted movements from popular classical pieces. The audience numbers for this after-hours slot were deemed too insignificant to bother with any original programming at all. In my view, the CBC didn't just cancel the program, they actually cancelled a part of the fragile critical infrastructure that supported emergent and avant-garde creation in Canada, especially electronic music, and significantly diminished Montréal's presence on the national landscape of music making practices.[3] Aside from the odd specialty program on college radio, there are few places for the country's experimental or 'off' genre artists to be showcased and encouraged with anything like the reach and credibility that *Brave New Waves* offered. Avant-gardism of all types has virtually disappeared on the new CBC Radio 2, while the 'youth *targetted*' channel, CBC Radio 3, handles almost exclusively indie rock and folk. Any electronic music they play usually involves conventional song form and lyrics and is generally out of date.

In my capacity at the CBC, I had been collaborating with the Montréal based MUTEK festival since its inception. This collaboration usually entailed broadcasting and promoting relevant artists' music, doing interviews, recording and broadcasting concerts, moderating panels, and sometimes influencing festival programming. It was a fruitful relationship, both for the radio program, which received access to art and artists, and for the festival, which received coverage and exposure nationally and internationally.[4]

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[3]Most of the country's recent production of electronic and experimental music has emanated from Montréal, and the MUTEK festival became a hub for artists all over the country, many relocated here.

[4]A small national tour promoting the twentieth anniversary of *Brave New Waves*, and the fifth anniversary of MUTEK, involved taking Akufen to Vancouver where he performed on an incredibly mixed bill with indie rock star, Destroyer. In the contrasts of that lineup, I

I have now attended and/or participated in all eleven editions of the MUTEK festival. While my initial relationship with the festival was professional, I have since developed long-lasting personal relationships with many of the people, artists and arts workers in this scene. I have traveled with the festival to Mexico City, to Berlin, Seattle, Boulder and Krakow, as both tourist, and, more currently, as part of the MUTEK team. During the course of my studies at McGill, which I began a year after leaving the CBC--, I was invited by MUTEK director Alain Mongeau to join the curatorial group. The 2010 edition was the first I experienced from the 'inside.' Aside from curating work, including contacting artists and programming concert lineups, I also wrote artist bios, catalogue entries, contributed to portions of newsletters, produced the conference panels and interviews, and conducted interviews on behalf of the organization. In the months preceding the festival and afterwards, I also editted several features for the online magazine, *MUTEKmag*. There was no remuneration for these activities, other than some travel expenses and the great privilege of being involved in shaping the festival.

Even before I began my new involvement with the festival, my thesis project had already proposed a study of MUTEK as a way to examine some of the challenges that small, influential, progressive and contemporary cultural communities face and the ways they overcome them. I believe in what comes from the periphery of dominant culture. It is a place in which to find innovation, risk, challenge, new forms and new feelings. I also appreciate the MUTEK festival's commitment to the dynamism of contemporary musical practice in the realm of digital creativity and electronic music As a cultural worker for the past twenty years, I have keenly invested in what is contemporary in music and culture. Now, as a student, I am interested in the challenges of studying it.

was trying to make a point about genre mingling.

METHODOLOGY

The following thesis is an ethnographic survey of the MUTEK festival, its organization and actions. Data collection was done through participant observation and interviews, notably with festival director Alain Mongeau, with other information culled from my own writing and articles published elsewhere, both in the media and academically. During my time at the CBC, I accumulated a significant archive of recorded music, concerts, interviews, and press materials on the festival (internal and external). As I am interested in the ways the MUTEK festival circulates and networks, I have also been privy to various meetings and sessions involving internal staff and a network of festivals called International Cities of Advanced Sound (ICAS) for whom I have taken minutes. In assessing the festival critically, I have consulted theoretical writing on festivals, music scenes, cultural economy and networks in order to reveal a portrait of a festival, and a culture in motion.

As with Sarah Thornton's (1996), examination of "club cultures" which took a participant/observer stance to researching the post-rave cultures and electronic music developing in England in the early 90s, I find myself in a similarly dual/duel position. While ethnography is a method best suited to emphasizing the "diverse and the particular," (ibid., 105) this inside/outside perspective, while enriching, also creates potential tensions. One complication of her fieldwork, she wrote:

> Resulted from the fact that the two methods that make up ethnography – participation and observation – are not necessarily complementary. In fact, they often conflict. As a participating insider, one adopts the views of its social world by privileging what it *says.* As an observing outsider, one gives credence to what one *sees* (ibid.).

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Admittedly, in my case, toggling between worlds may sometimes create confusions about objectivity, but it also allows for a deeper more experiential knowledge. It is my hope that my inside/outside perspective on the festival's innerworkings, philosophy and manifestations enriches the descriptions and the insight I will provide in this paper.

On June 4, 2010, at about 9:00pm, along an urban corridor in downtown Montréal recently christened place des festivales, ten thousand people stood and danced in the drizzle, as an infamous German producer based in Santiago, wearing a tightly tailored suit, stood behind a laptop, while leading an eight piece band of South American and German musicians fronted by an Argentinean singer and former child pop star,[5] through covers of Kraftwerk and other popular tunes using a mix of software, electronics and Latin style jazz and big band arrangements.[6] The stage featured an impressive array of video, light effects and design that included projection screens at different levels and depths, creating a kind of bandstand effect on which all manner of fantastical filmic and graphical material was played. Behind the stage, the oval shaped UQAM pavilion had been turned into an interactive public art piece involving cell phones and manipulatable blocks of colour, while video projections covered the avenue ground and walls on the eastern exposure of the contemporary art museum. A combination of excited fans and unsuspecting passersby were treated to the first free outdoor event ever offered by MUTEK.[7]

This scene, which took place during the eleventh edition of the MUTEK festival in Montréal, features a literal coming together of many vectors, relations, associations and networks. All the complex ways that the festival relates to local place while also playing across continents is contained in the story of this particular show. The scene embodies the festival's relationship to the city, the world and whole series of social, musical and technological contexts.

The festival's "baptizing" of the place des festivales represented the culmination

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[5] Argenis Brito is a former Venezuelan child pop star, turned electronic producer, now based in Berlin and the singer for Señor Coconut.

[6] Señor Coconut's 2000 album *El Baile Alemán* rendered nine classic Kraftwerk singles in Latin styles, such as the Cha-Cha-Cha, Merengue, and Cumbia. The latest Señor Coconut album, *Around The World* (2008) delivered covers of Daft Punk, Eurythmics, Prince and others.

[7] The author's description of the events.

of many months of planning and negotiating with the quartier des spectacles, the city funded body overseeing the massive arts and culture redevelopment of the downtown core. The stage was 'borrowed' from the Francopholie festival that was setting up for their launch days after MUTEK, illustrating the inter-festival politics that MUTEK navigates every edition.[8] The sound, light, video and stage design mobilized a large contingent of local artists and technicians, tasked with the job of coordinating the biggest event ever mounted by MUTEK, and with the added pressure of having to provide an impressive and creative example of digital and immersive artistry in the context of a new and very public venue.

On a very tight budget and with very short notice, the festival presented a complicated mix of musicians from all over the world, led by Uwe Schmidt, one of electronic music's understated superstars, who is also a long time acolyte of the festival, having played the first and other editions. Schmidt's fees were 'rationalized' to adapt to the budget, as they almost always are when he performs at MUTEK. He has a personal and professional relationship with the festival director, Alain Mongeau that makes such negotiations possible. This relationship has benefits, as later this year, the Señor Coconut tour will go to Cervantino, in Mexico, where MUTEK curates the electronic and new media programming, and where audiences are substantially bigger, as is the pay.

The clash of Latin and Germanic sounds, along with the addresses of the musicians, highlights the internationalism of both the form of music (mix of old school German electronic with new school South American flair), and the festival's links to Europe and South America - Chile in particular, where the festival has mounted full

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[8] There are always concurrent and conflicting festival dates in Montréal, and various event organizers jostle for space and venues around the city.

editions, as it has in Mexico and Argentina. The repertoire, with its mix of popular and

avant-garde (pop tunes reconfigured by laptop and Latin jazz band) also speaks to the

musical and aesthetic peculiarities and conundrums of the MUTEK festival, which bills

itself as international festival of digital creativity and electronic music. The show, and the

public art works enveloping the area, provided an opportunity for a sometimes

marginalized and misunderstood arts organization to draw in unsuspecting and new

audiences, while showing off cutting edge new media and electronic music and culture.

The MUTEK festival has been the recent recipient of a prize for cultural tourism

and a Montréal council for the arts award,[9] which emphasizes a couple of MUTEK's

varied characteristics. It can be identified as an electronic music festival, a digital arts

festival and a tourist destination. One of more than a hundred festivals in Montréal, the

self-declared *city of festivals*, and a speck in the worldwide universe of festivals, it has

managed to distinguish itself outside of its immediate locale. It has notoriety abroad that

it doesn't have 'at home.' And yet, it is a city festival, melded with the municipality,

drawing on its character, its cultural history, mythology and policy.

An incredibly ambitious organization, MUTEK bridges the physical and cultural

geography of the hemispheres and circulates its perspective (expressed through its

curatorial choices, and programming emphasis on digital creativity and new forms) while

pursuing an agenda that exalts new technologies, new territories and the dissemination of

Canadian and Montréal-based points of view in electronic music and arts. Over eleven

editions, MUTEK has established itself in the global scene of electronic music and media

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[9]Winner of both the *Grands Prix du Tourisme Québécois* 2009 and the *Grand Prix du Conseil des arts de Montréal* (the first time awarded for digital arts and shared with Elektra festival). The prize is worth 25,000 dollars.

arts, as both a festival form, and a kind of reputable brand. The artistic director and founder calls the festival a vehicle, a development tool for electronic music and digital arts culture, an instrument to evolve innovation and encourage engagement with contemporary forms - in a human scale, non commercial way.

The *festival* as a form is definitely not an endangered species of event or social formation. There have never before been so many festivals.[10] Scholars of contemporary festival formation credit the explosion to a general and global cultural turn toward festivalization, and as a reaction to more negative aspects of globalization, namely feelings of alienation and the need to reassert identities in a diasporic, rapidly changing world (Fjell 2007, 130). The recent proliferation of festivals can also be explained as a symptom of a new approach to the arts and culture as resource, as an economic driver, and festival tourism as a force and growth area (Picard and Robinson 2006, 11). Festivals have been involved in the rejuvenation of many Western cities and their economies. All of these factors, in combination, have prompted a re-conceptualization of the festival as a useful strategy for the contemporary city to adopt in the attempt to reposition and differentiate itself in an increasingly competitive world (Quinn 2005, 4).

Festivals compete globally now. They are part of a global industry of culture. They represent destinations in special event tourism, also called festival or cultural tourism (Fjell 2007, 131). MUTEK attracts what the *New York Times* calls a 'techno tourist' (Day 2010), with more than half of the festival audience arriving from outside of Montréal.

The festivalization of culture, which has been happening in Montréal for at least

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[10] In the last 50-60 years the number of festivals in Europe for example, has escalated from about 400 to approximately 30,000 (Fjell 2007, 131).

30 years,[11] places MUTEK at the intersection of several contemporary forces and circumstances. Because of its innovative agenda and embrace of new technologies, MUTEK seems uniquely positioned to take advantage of new initiatives and policies at the municipal and provincial level that promote notions of the creative city, the new economy, and cultural tourism. Adopting a positive and productive view of globalization, helped along by the transnational character of the music and art that it espouses, the MUTEK festival uniquely travels the world and establishes branches. Seeking out new geographies while expanding the local music and art scene may be viewed as an adaptation to global circumstances and an appropriate survival response to a rapidly changing artistic milieu.

This thesis explores how the festival construct of MUTEK engages with contemporary life, particularly the new forms and expressions found in digital, electronic and new media art and culture; its aesthetics, culture, community and networks. The festival also participates in the transforming of city space both real and imagined, providing an opportunity to study the unique and emerging relationship between niche and avant-garde festivals and their cities; new industries, music, art and technology; local/global interactions and networking; policy at all levels of government and new economic opportunities for contemporary culture in general.

The first chapter offers an overview of MUTEK's history, structure and mandate as well as the development of other other MUTEK festivals. This section will examine general definitions and functions of the festival construct: their intensities and effects,

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[11]Montréal is festival crazed. The city identifies itself as 'the city of festivals'- from lobsters to spoons, jazz and comedy to rock and digital arts, it seems like every week in the summer, Montréal releases the confetti for another festival.

the way they create idealized space, perform boundary work (curation, critical discourse), and consider audience. As designed events, festivals express an ideology. Sometimes this is laid out in a mission statement, but it can be also observed in the way a festival operates. A festival's ideology is "a self-contained vision of how the festival itself, or a festival within different fields, is and should be" (Fjell 2007, 130). How, for example does MUTEK position itself? How is it perceived?

While festival literature addresses some genres of music festival specifically (country, rock, classical), there is very little academic research on the electronic music festival or even small avant-garde leaning arts festivals. Stanley Waterman's work on arts festivals and cultural politics confronts this lack of scholarly work:

> Despite the obvious ubiquity and cultural prominence of the arts festival, serious academic studies of it have been surprisingly neglected. For many, there appears to be little need for academic study to access the intellectual world of elites, as elites have traditionally exercised a virtual monopoly over the written record. This lack of concern is especially noticeable when compared with a preoccupation among anthropologists and sociologists and some cultural geographers with pop and folk festivals (Waterman 1998, 60).

The ways in which different categories of festivals might create different kinds of social relations will also be taken up. How do categories of festival relate to experience? Is there a relationship between the type of festival, what it deals in, and its form? What are the homologies between the MUTEK construct and the nature of electronic music and digital arts? I will explore how these genres of music and art - mobile, globetrotting forms, the festival's content, are both a help and hindrance to its success. Global mobility may be assured by genre, but avant-garde and niche categorizing limit the festival's wider appeal and its ability to be understood by funding bodies.

The second chapter delves into the myriad ways that the festival connects, moves

and expands its reach and influence. It can be understood as both a producer and product of multiple networks and network effects (Law, 2007) formal, informal, technological, political and affective ones. What is the MUTEK organization doing in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and China? These international relationships are working against conventional patterns of influence in popular music and their dominant centres, normally, New York or London. What is the relationship between these cultures and scenes in Europe, Latin America and Québec? Why have so many Montréal artists and producers left for Berlin?

The robustness of networks and connections, and their constant tending to, I will argue, is ultimately how the festival remains agile enough to survive constantly shifting environments to remain relevant and contemporary. The visibility and influence these networks, scenes and circuits ascribe to the festival, allow it to assert, not just its own ideology in the world, but also what Montréal and Québec represent. The festival uses its networks to extend and expand the local scene, plugging it into a global circuit of other MUTEK festivals, touring and curatorial projects abroad, helping to open the world to peripheral places and less culturally dominant nations, like Canada and Québec.

The final chapter investigates the ways in which MUTEK engages with the city, the creative economy paradigm, and policy initiatives specific to Montréal. I will examine these points of connection and assess their efficacy. A successful festival, argues Waterman, creates a "powerful but curious sense of place, which is local, but which often makes an appeal to a global culture in order to attract both participants and audiences" (Waterman 1998, 66). The MUTEK festival's content dovetails with various technologically oriented industries and digital initiatives being advanced by the city. I will also propose that MUTEK, the vision of its artistic director, Alain Mongeau,

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represents an example of *culturalpreneurship*, an act, and model of risk-taking that benefits the *innovation narrative* that informs both the city of Montréal's agenda, and a larger understanding of how avant-garde work enriches the ecology of art practice generally.

Most recent theoretical work on festivals has been concerned with economic studies and the degree to which they fit into the new economy or culture industry, which is then used to create policy. I will also assess other modes of valuation when considering small innovative arts festivals like MUTEK.

My objective is to reveal the MUTEK festival as a sophisticated medium through which all kinds of processes and interactions occur, and how, despite its relatively tiny size, it has been able to situate itself in the midst of a rapidly evolving global cultural scene, and assert not just a place, but a decidedly Canadian, Québec and Montréal influence.

CHAPTER 1

MIXED MODELLING:
HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF MUTEK

> To write insightfully and accurately about the festival is about the most difficult thing a scholar can do. The festival is the preeminent "total social fact": an aesthetic construction that is also a social contest, a political machine, an economic arrangement, a religious ritual, a work of lay social and cosmological theory, a nutritional delivery system, and surely other things I haven't yet figured out. It encompasses other genres: music, dance, oratory, material culture and visual art, architecture, ritual, gesture, foodways, storytelling and plenty of conversation. Authored but never finalized by a collectivity, it is eminently polycentric, multi-vocal, and emergent, quite ungraspable by a single participant observer; but contradictorily, when it succeeds, the participant often feels it as an objective and enduring whole, external to and independent of its actors. It can only be studied directly a few days a year (Dorothy Noyes 1997, 139).

The MUTEK festival is a fleeting entanglement as above, a "total social fact", a cultural framework, a mechanism, a medium and a sophisticated device for disseminating itself and its aesthetic, cultural and ideological concerns. Incredibly self aware, the festival is, in the words of MUTEK writer and editor, Dimitri Nasrallah, "more than just a Montréal festival, it's an organization that has taken it upon itself to brand the festival experience and take it global. It's an ideal of a festival in the 21st century in a global economy" (Garcia 2009). It seems incredibly fitting that the inaugural festival would arrive with the new century and in the popular 'science fiction famous' year, 2000. Serendipitously, a few months earlier, the NASDAQ, which tracks technology stocks, hit an all time high and a symbolic point, crossing the 5,000 mark, while the old industrial index, The DOW average fell below 10,000. These milestones can be seen to signpost a contextual shift in the global economy, with knowledge and technology-based commerce

gaining on the old manufacturing and materials-based one.

MUTEK was also born into a technological context representing a major shift in music production and performance, driven largely by leaps in processor speed, laptop based media practices and other new digital tools. The laptop along with the invention of real-time performance software were changing and invigorating both experimental audiovisual practices and dance music. The festival mandate, established in 2000, remains pertinent and fluid, able to accommodate the dynamism of its content, which is still continuously mutating:

> MUTEK is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the dissemination and development of digital creativity in sound, music, and audio-visual art. Its mandate is to provide a platform for the most original and visionary artists currently working in their fields, with the intent of providing an outlet of initiation and discovery for the audiences we seek to develop. This is a world of constant evolution and incessant refinement. The "MU" in MUTEK refers consciously to the notion of "mutation" (Mandate 2008).

Debuting June 7, 2000, and running over five days and nights, the MUTEK festival featured a program of digital creativity and electronic music that presented original works by 34 artists from half a dozen different countries.[12] This first edition, headquartered at the brand new Ex-Centris complex, a five story state-of-the-art new media production house, think tank and cultural complex for digital production on boulevard St. Laurent in Montréal, run by media guru Daniel Langlois, the founder of Soft Image,[13] attracted a public of about 2,000 people.[14] By the second edition, attendance had almost doubled and the international artist base grew to include a contingent of

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[12]With an emphasis on German, American, and Canadian artists.

[13]This was revolutionary software that created special effects for Indiana Jones movies, among others.

[14]Attendance is measured by tickets sold.

Chileans. The 2010 edition, featured 115 performers from 23 different countries with 17,000 participating in the regular program, 10,000 at the outdoor and free event, and an as yet unspecified number exposed to the public art projects in the city's core. By all accounts, except financially, it was another roaring success.

PREQUEL

MUTEK was actually incubated inside of a film festival, one with new media pretensions. For five years (1997-2001), the Festival international du nouveau cinéma et des nouveaux médias de Montréal (FCMM) sponsored a module of its programming called the *Media Lounge*, meant to explore the novel intersections between sound, music and new media. Functioning as the 'night cap' to the festival, the program, featuring predominantly new electronic music and sound art, was curated by Alain Mongeau.

The backstory of the festival is largely bound up in the biography of Mongeau, the festival's founder and artistic director. His will to fix new media and electronic music culture in place in Montréal extends back more than 20 years. His academic background is in communications and film. His PhD work began in 1988 in communications and he graduated with a thesis on the subject of interactivity. While studying, he also became interested in computer arts and animation. In 1992, Mongeau presented work at the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA) symposium in Australia. Founded in Holland, in 1990, ISEA is an international non-profit organization fostering interdisciplinary academic discourse and exchange among culturally diverse organizations and individuals working in the fields of art, science and technology.[15] Inspired by the encounter,

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[15]The symposium travels every other year in order to support the founding and maintenance of an international network of organizations and individuals active in the

Mongeau was soon chairing the organization and trying to establish an office of ISEA in

Montréal, where he was intent on reducing Montréal's isolation, increasing the exposure

of artists here, and plugging into the global circuit (Mongeau 2010).

In 1995, Mongeau was director of programming for the ISEA symposium held in

Montréal. The ensuing visitation by artists, scholars and performers resulted in some

tangible effects. In 1996 Mongeau helped to establish the Society for Arts and

Technology (SAT), along with Monique Savoie, Luc Courchesne[16] and Bruno Ricciardi-

Rigault,[17] as a gallery, performance venue and a permanent, stable space for local and

international new media development. The idea was to provide an anchor for ISEA and to

relocate the headquarters to Montréal. Unable to secure funding, however, Mongeau

eventually abandoned the organization.

While still at the SAT, he was hired in 1997 as the new media director at Ex-

Centris, eventually withdrawing from the SAT but maintaining close ties. At Ex-Centris,

half of his mandate was devoted to FCMM, the other to developing MUTEK. The launch

of MUTEK can be seen as part of an entire continuum. As Mongeau explains:

> Plusieurs des stratégies qui ont été déployées dans le cadre du Média Lounge
> développé dans le contexte du FCMM ont une incidence déterminante sur la
> naissance et le positionnement actuel de MUTEK (Mongeau 2004).

By 2000, the *Media Lounge* had petered out. The FCMM decided to forego the

new media part of their festival, claiming it was too expensive to develop further (ibid.).

The last year of the *Media Lounge* sounded a lot like the first year of MUTEK, which

was still able to go ahead, but only with support for one year and with the condition that

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field of the electronic arts. (ISEA website: www.isea-web.org)

[16]His immersive panoscope research and development dome will top the newly
renovated SAT when it opens in 2011.

[17]Now owner of tech-bar, Laika, he was the music programmer at SAT.

it find its own separate funding. Mongeau explains the context for establishing such a festival:

My goal with MUTEK when we started was really to establish something in North America, because there was something missing. Looking at what was happening in Europe, I felt there were the talent, the involvement, the curators here but no infrastructure and a bad perception of what electronic music is about. All disciplines seemed to be served by festivals – film, dance etc. So we wanted to provide electronic music/digital culture with a proper festival and know how (Hewings 2008, 8).

MODELLING.

A festival is a construct, a built event that is usually not spontaneous, but which requires lots of advanced planning and preparation. Festivals occur in delimited space and are intense compressed-time events, providing a polyphony of attractions through the sheer range and volume of performances on offer (Prentice and Andersen 2003, 19), but they are also ephemeral, and recurrent or cyclical (Picard and Robinson 2006, 7). MUTEK, like other festivals in its field, lasts for less than a week (five days and nights); it is a multi-day event with multiple shows per day in multiple locations and settings.

An ancient form that transcends cultures, histories and regimes (Seffrin 2006, 1), a festival is a positive designation, "generating a relatively upbeat critical awareness and reaction" (Waterman 1998, 55). It is the associated sense of joy or gaiety that distinguishes a festival from a 'spectacle,' which invites a much more sinister interpretation of the manipulative nature of public celebrations" (ibid., 57).

Georgia Seffrin, writing on boutique festivals in Australia insists that while the construct may be used in a variety of ways, "its raison d'être is always community" (Seffrin 2006, 3). This point is backed up by Falassi, who explains a festival, as "a recurrent social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of co-coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members

of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a world view" (Waterman 1998, 60). Through a variety of constructs, contemporary festivals encourage a cultural discussion about what community means (Seffrin 2006, 3). Festivals create opportunities for drawing on shared histories, shared cultural practices and ideals, as well as creating settings for social interactions. They also "engender local continuity, and constitute arenas where local knowledge is produced and reproduced, where the history, cultural inheritance and social structures, which distinguish one place from another, are revised, rejected or recreated" (Quinn 2005, 5). The contemporary arts festival here, is a cultural framework reflecting the worldview of a distinct socioeconomic section of modern society, while also providing a means for groups to maintain themselves culturally (Waterman 1998, 60).[18]

People attend festivals for aesthetic and social reasons, but it is also relevant to consider the extent that audiences 'make' festivals in the way they react to performances and spend money (Prentice and Andersen 2003, 8). The term "audience" seems inadequately passive as a way to describe such a fundamental component of the festival equation.[19]

TYPE

The music festival is a well-worn construction. The rock festival in particular, is a trope that has dominated the youth culture musical event landscape since the late sixties.

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[18] As an electronic music and digital art event, MUTEK certainly represents a niche market and a specialized community. The MUTEK audience consists of mobile, tech savvy amateurs and professionals found both locally and internationally, with the largest demographic existing between the ages of 18-34. (Daigle 2007, 16)

[19] "Attendee" or "festivalgoer" might suggest better and more accurate degrees of engagement in describing the participating public.

Richard Peterson investigates the dynamic, promising beginnings of the rock festival movement, identifying 1967-1971 as its golden period, before the rock festival form and its potential was 'killed' by gigantism and commercialism (Peterson 2009, 98).

There is however, very little published writing addressing the rise of the electronic, contemporary music festival. Sonar, in Barcelona, is the biggest and best known, having started in 1994. Running over three days and nights, it bills itself as a festival of "advanced music and multimedia art." The internationalism of the event is stressed. This year Sonar drew 85,000 attendees, at least four times what MUTEK attracts.[20] In many ways Sonar is *the* model of the contemporary electronic music festival: intimate, yet giant, adventurous and reassuring, its appeals are wide, and it is a festival deeply integrated with its city. The Ars Electronica festival in Linz, Austria, represents a well-known model for digital arts, and MUTEK finds itself compared or misidentified as a mini Sonar or Ars Electronica, depending on which predilection, music or media, people betray.

One of the oldest festival type events dedicated to electronic and dance music is The Winter Music Conference, a weeklong series of showcases, parties and trade shows held in Miami, aimed at DJs, labels, promoters, and the dance culture infrastructure. It is perhaps, the most commercial of all related gatherings. Like ISEA's traveling symposiums, The Winter Music Conference is not considered a festival. The Love Parade, the biggest of all electronic events is a one-day happening, started in Germany in 1989, capitalizing on the cultural momentum created by the reunification of Germany. Still, today, it proves electronic music is a 'normal' part of youth culture in Europe.

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[20] 60 percent of the audience is drawn from Spain, the rest from mostly the UK, France and Italy.

Boutique festivals in the mold or spirit of MUTEK started sprouting all over Europe in the mid-1990s, mixing contemporary art with electronic music, media and new ideas. In North America, the field is thin for non-commercial electronic music festivals. Detroit Electronic Music Festival (DEMF) is a year younger than MUTEK and has attracted a significant amount of corporate support. There is, surprisingly, no comparable festival in New York, a big centre for all kinds of other global cultural and musical activity.

Many electronic "festivals" (which are really commercial, weekend based, one off events) follow a "getaway" model. They leave cities and urban controlled areas for deserts, beaches and rural spots, away from social control. Site-specific style festivals like Glastonbury or Coachella are well known, as are brand festivals like Lollapalooza or All Tomorrow's Parties, which have no fixed city address and constantly roam the landscape.

MUTEK, a city festival (but which also roams both inside and outside of Montréal) adopts components and behaviours of a music festival model, mixing it with the seriousness of a contemporary arts festival. The electronic music, dance and media arts scenes overlap in a variety of ways as well. This partly explains the mixed model that MUTEK uses. As a result of this mixing, it is difficult for MUTEK to specify the content and category of its festival.

POSITIONING

"Positioning" has always been a point of contention for MUTEK, in terms of how it presents itself to both funding bodies and audience. It represents an emergent cultural

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form which poses challenges to the existing division of artistic disciplines within funding

policy; electronic music and media are often too narrowly defined as "dance music" by

the Canada Council for the Arts, or considered too "conceptual" for FACTOR[21] grants,

the traditional fund supporting recorded music. A recent city based report noted how all

three levels of government funding seem to randomly and arbitrarily designate the

festival as either media art or music, passing the festival back and forth between councils

(Groupe SCF, 2007). Mongeau is aware of these slippages between genres and between

popular and high art forms which the festival suffers from, he explains:

> We kind of perceived the festival as a digital culture festival. The way the festival
> was established was perceived as such a serious event. And I think that's a bit our
> fault - or it's actually an achievement, as we wanted to distinguish the festival
> from the club and the rave culture, so we had to give it kind of an envelope of
> being something that could be taken seriously. And we managed so well that
> actually we scared a lot of people away (van Veen 2009).

Locating MUTEK's spot on the highbrow/lowbrow continuum continues to be

problematic, for funding and media coverage. The curation of contemporary art is, by

nature, a field demarcated by flux and change. The festival constantly works to explain,

define and redefine what digital and electronic culture is, while acknowledging that it is

in constant motion, crossbreeding many interdisciplinary variants.[22] Establishing the

various forms as part of an avant-garde discourse fails to account for its more accessible

and popular elements, weighing on the festival's ability to win grants and vice versa.

Mongeau explains:

> We still have legitimacy issues on certain levels, […] at the arts councils. We still
> don't fit anywhere. When we're lucky we fall on someone who understands what
> we're about and will take some risk on us. We actually more often we run into
> obstacles (Mongeau, 2010).

[21]FACTOR is the Fund to Assist Canadian Talent on Record
[22]Such as: new media, dance, opera, visual art, and instillation work.

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In a letter to the Canada Council, attempting to explain the nature of the festival's business and the characteristics that might make the festival relevant to them, Mongeau argued for new criteria, for a new way of dealing with organizations working in extremely contemporaneous fields. Being the first festival of its ilk in Canada, MUTEK posed many funding conundrums for which Mongeau was asked to make some suggestions. Funding for example, is usually renewed on a short-term basis, never allowing for long term stability. Mongeau requested that MUTEK be valuated based on its relevance and influence, to assess how effective is has been realizing its mandate, and to examine it with a multiyear outlook rather than every six or twelve months, which contributes only to anxiety and not stability (Mongeau 2004).

THIS AIN'T NO DISCO

The festival's "positioning" is further complicated by its particular concerns with particular forms of electronic music and digital arts. The mix of music and technology emphasized by the festival has its beginnings with the birth of drum machines and synthesizers and then, later, the widespread use of computers. While there is a long tradition of avant-gardism in the field of electronic music and composition,[23] most of these machines and technologies have been created and used in the service of "dance music". Since the 1970s, from disco to present-day techno, each major genre variation can be identified with a particular technological development: Italo disco and the arpeggiation of the early synth, house and acid house on particular Roland drum machines. The introduction of musically savvy software and portable laptop computers as

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[23]See early works by John Cage, Erik Satie and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

instruments, revolutionized sound again. The experimental side of sound culture and now, digital visual cultures, also has its antecedents in technology used by dance music cultures.

Tackling the proliferation of genres and subgenres in the general field of electronic music, Kembrew McLeod uses "electronic/dance music" as an umbrella term to describe this "heterogeneous group of musics made with computers and electronic instruments, often for the purpose of dancing" -- but not exclusively (McLeod 2001, 60). "Club culture" is the expression Sarah Thornton (1996) used to designate the electronic music phenomenon she observed in the mid 1990s. It is a term with wide application, applying to dance clubs and raves while also referring to the culture's "symbolic axis and working social hub" (Thornton 1996, 3). It describes the community, the taste culture and the congregating that occurs around musical and artistic affinities. "Beat culture", "experimental sound culture" and "advanced music," are other terms in circulation that try, broadly, to address the kind of music and art being created.

Most ways of qualifying and theorizing dance or electronic music cultures are perpetually out of date, partly as a result of the speed at which the form moves – it is eternally emergent and dynamic. But, electronic music also suffers an "anti dance bias," easily traceable in mainstream music press and in the ways that notions about "authenticity" are constructed culturally. This bias against electronic music is historically based and almost always expressed through opposition and difference with rock music.

Electronic music is often automatically conflated with dance music, and then judged through the filter of very bad impressions left by disco music of the 1970s, especially in America. A recent history of the disco era frames the anti dance bias in

terms of homophobia and racism (as much as in relation to anything musical), with the music being, "attacked for being both too gay and too straight, too black and too white, oversexed and asexual, leisure-class as well as leisure-suited (loser) class" (Gavin 2010). Current day rave/techno/and house music is ridiculed and dismissed in similar terms.

Where the logic of rock music values career longevity and expressive song forms in which meaning and identity are language based, dance music has a high rate of turnover, and moves through styles quickly (Straw 1991, 370). The manner, in which electronic/dance music is consumed and then relatively quickly disposed of, illustrates an exemplary model of planned obsolescence, while the constant shuffling of genres and subgenres creates an inscrutability that repels those people without enough cultural capital (insider knowledge) to keep up (Mcleod 2001, 69). This stands in stark contrast to themes of universalism often portrayed in rock and pop songs.

The notion of the festival "headliner" is also very much associated with rock music culture. There are superstars of techno and electronic music, but "headliner," in the context of electronic culture doesn't have the same *featuring* function. In fact, electronic music might be a generally less vertical system than that of rock music, in terms of the performer's importance; the 'place' of the performer is often displaced in electronic music culture, where visuals often do the 'work' of providing a performance spectacle.

The 'machinic,' 'inhuman' nature of electronic music has also served as a pretext for dismissing it as 'not real' and equating it with artificiality. Techno and rave (and synth pop) embrace machines and even celebrate their 'inorganic' qualities, maintaining an uncompromising allegiance to technologically produced sounds, privileging the use of synthetic instruments, robotic rhythms, vastly varying tempos and futuristic sounds

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(Gibson 1999, 25). The music in electronic culture is often mixed (rather than 'played')

and presented as 'sets' rather than performances of individual tracks" (Gibson 1999, 25).

However, live, real time software and an ever-growing arsenal of new digital

interfaces and instruments have been changing ideas about performance and

'authenticity.'[24] Live performance, the backbone of MUTEK programming, goes some

way in lending new credibility to the form. 'Live,' traditionally presumes a relationship

between an instrument and a causal relationship between a human and the 'playing' of

said instrument. Kim Cascone, a composer and theoretician writing specifically about the

laptop, refers to this expectation as a 'gestural theatre'. Most people, he says, arrive at

electronic music through the cultural framework (and hence expectations) of a pop

culture that clings to the notion of that kind of music performance:

> I find it odd that people don't demand the same proof of causality from a piece of
> visual art but some of this has to do with the difference between temporal and
> spatial arts. We demand to see proof of causality when a piece is being performed
> real-time. We need proof that the work is not just a temporal displacement; i.e.
> playback of a stored "performance". I find this distrust and suspicion tied directly
> to the distrust of technology in general (Turner 2001).

Ben Frost, a composer and guitarist who makes dark ambient, very physical music

is often booked at electronic festivals, even though he falls into an experimental

composition category. "Space" is an instrument to him. His experience between worlds

and genres has led him to identify some key differences between forms:

> The thing I have come to realize that I like about dance music as opposed to
> "rock" music, I suppose, is the way in which the performance of dance music is
> much more experiential rather than a personal spectacle or a demonstration
> (Burns 2010).

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[24]Electronic music making, requires a different investment from the artist. It's not
plug and play like guitar, or as immediate as the drums. Learning the technology usually
requires some expertise in electronics and manual reading.

Electronic music genres must also contend with being dismissed as backdrops to hedonism (sex, drugs and dancing) and with issues around perceived class differences (i.e. rock as the music of the people, dance music as music for jet setters and 'euro trash'). The act of dancing is similarly disparaged and is "still frequently stigmatized as being uncritical and mindless to the extent that it can debase the music with which it is associated" (Thornton 1996, 71). Serious music is for listening, not dancing.

The novelties of the electronic music form tend to attract an audience/listener with curious tastes. The music forms part of an internationally constituted culture that values "the redirective and the novel over the stable and canonical" (which, in contrast, describes the logic of rock classicism) and "international circuits of influence over the mining of a locally stable heritage" (Straw 1991, 370). But challenges to the legitimacy of electronic forms also extend to the artier ends of contemporary electronic music, where there exists a kind of 'shock of the new' that can confuse and repel. Electronic/dance music then, elicits both an anti dance bias and a sort of technophobic anti-intellectualism.

SERIOUSLY

MUTEK is always working against bias and various culturally established perceptions by systematically attempting to neutralize them. When club based music styles are brought inside the frame of an arts festival, with its attendant 'serious' discourse, the meaning of the music and perceptions about dancing and the body shift. The risk inherent in the definitions used in funding applications means that, from Mongeau's perspective, the MUTEK festival must deal in 'cultivated music', not popular music (Waterman 1998, 57). This differentiation, between highbrow and lowbrow, is an important part of the cultural politics of being an arts festival. Seriousness, unfortunately,

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is still required in order for a festival to be taken seriously. This seriousness extends to

the level of managing the language of the festival's activities: curation and programming

are the modes, not booking or promoting. Curation is a way to create boundaries and

install a particular taste and MUTEK distinguishes itself by its 'picking'. The festival's

choice of content ensures that the event remains pertinent and fluid, relevant and

contemporary. Vincent Lemieux has been co-curating MUTEK with Mongeau for ten

years:

> We've been trying to open the spectrum of what we are doing and keep it in the
> original idea of the fest – being new, avant-garde music, but still trying to do it in
> the widest we can do it in the spectrum of electronic music and digital culture.
> Trying to make a statement, that if you check the festival program, you see what
> is happening at the moment, globally (Hewings 2008, 8).

Nowhere in the carefully written catalog do the words "dance music" or "rave"

appear. The style of writing betrays a kind of high art discourse, while being mindful of

the charge that these genres are impenetrable. The catalog and website try to strike a

balance between a style that invites, and one that informs a more formal discourse.

As a non-profit organization, MUTEK exists outside of commerciality,

confirming its status as serious -- for the art, not the money. The festival is not about

profit so much as it is about the accumulation of cultural capital. Festivals, like

magazines and niche websites, become part of the taste making complex that drives the

consumption of music and media. Cultivating the right kind of associations with media

partners and tastemakers is important to how the festival is perceived and received.[25]

Real, art world affiliations are also important links for the festival and MUTEK has

collaborated with the Montréal Museum of Contemporary Art, The Smithsonian and the

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[25] Affiliations with *Wire* magazine and *Artforum* help to leverage the festival's
seriousness.

Guggenheim Museum. This emphasis on cultural seriousness is evident in the festival's self-presentation at multiple levels. While the look and graphical representations of the festival have relaxed over time, the early days featured very typical computer-referencing imagery and graphic design. Recent campaigns have moved toward more 'human', 'organic', or cartoon style representations. Conferences and panels are also designed to enrich the discourse on the practice and general knowledge in the field, by considering aesthetics, technological developments, and production and distribution issues. The festival construct, then, with its careful curation, its panels and its presentations offer mechanisms through which content is legitimated. The programming of the festival gains credibility through the ways in which it is rendered 'official', formal and serious. In these ways, MUTEK can be seen to be behaving, according to Howard Becker as an artworld:

> When an innovation develops a network of people who can cooperate nationwide, perhaps even internationally, all that is left to do to create an art world is to convince the rest of the world that what is being done is art, and deserves the rights and privileges associated with that status. Work that aspires to be accepted as art usually must display a developed aesthetic apparatus and media through which critical discussions can take place. Likewise, aspirants to the status of art have to disassociate themselves from related crafts or commercial enterprises. Finally, aspirants construct histories, which tie the work their world produces to already accepted arts, and emphasize those elements of their pasts, which are most clearly artistic, while suppressing less desirable ancestors (Becker 2008, 339).

THE PROGRAM

The basic form, the spine of the MUTEK festival's programming, has remained the same from the beginning: an early evening program emphasizes the artier, more audio-visual-oriented works, and a later program that draws attention to performative electronic music styles, from pop, noise and experimental music to the latest permutations of club and rarified dance music. A daytime professional section, which

includes panel discussions, installations, and film screenings and workshops about production, creativity and technology, means to draw in and mix amateurs with professionals and advance the discourse. Workshops are a way to show off new gear and techniques, while panels and interview sessions are a way for the public to meet an often elusive and far flung cast of creators.

MUTEK's program palette includes electro acoustic works, experimental computer music of many shapes and sounds, electronically driven pop/rock, noise and drone, ambient, dub, experimental works including sound art, noise, and even more pop leaning expressions like electro pop or IDM. The choices made, the boundary work done (Bennett and Peterson 2004, 4), the curatorial decisions, all constitute ways in which MUTEK contributes to 'scenemaking'. These boundaries and choices shape how a given festival relates to local, translocal and virtual scenes and they often create change beyond their own borders. The festival context creates a "catalytic potential [that] stems from the intensity of such events" (Dowd 2004, 150).

MUTEK uses the festival context to collaborate with artists, and to have them collaborate with each other, inviting experimentation and acting as a kind of living laboratory, or a showcase for the latest version of work created by an artist (while also cultivating a creative social context by offering accomodations for the duration of the festival, encouraging mingling and encounters). In this it is like a film festival, which will present the most recent film and a novel director:

> What we try to do is to provide the ideal context for the artistic content to be exposed. And most of artists they live this as a challenge and when they play at MUTEK they try to outdo themselves and we try to nurture this. If we welcome these artists and present their work in the right context, and their show is better, then the audience gets a better experience of the whole thing. It's a win-win situation for all elements of the chain (Mongeau 2010).

The all-live, Ricardo Villalobos-led 'supergroup' of international masterminds of electronic music, Narod Niki (featuring, Dimbiman, Dandy Jack, Cabanne, Akufen, Luciano, Richie Hawtin, Daniel Bell, and Robert Henke), played for the first time at MUTEK 2003. Their computer networked, improvised live performance also demonstrated the versatility of Henke's Ableton Live software, now the standard for electronic and digital performance developments everywhere, now. Also, infamously, Richie Hawtin's Plastikman CTL project debuted in 2004, and while technically troubled and controversial, represents the sorts of risks and projects the festival takes on.[26]

While marquee artists like Atom TM, Ricardo Villalobos, Murcof and Fennesz regularly return to MUTEK, the introduction of emerging artists remains a central concern. An emphasis on premieres underlines the importance of discovery and introduction, and also serves to underline the festival's curatorial priorities:

> When we first started the festival it was so off in relationship to what Montréal was used to. We brought in so many people from outside that Montréal wasn't exposed to and we've had that function of premiering so many artists year after year, so I think we've raised the awareness in public here. We're at a point now where the public is more in phase with what MUTEK is about and has to offer. I think people recognize what the festival is about and they can relate to it. And we still have 1/2 our shows as premiers. So we still have that kind of function (Mongeau 2010).

EXPERIENCE THEATRE

Festival spaces are idealized spaces, liberation zones and transformation sites (Gibson 1999, 25).[27] The experiences they provide can be "otherworldly and spiritually

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[26] Hawtin controls all aspects of performance (light, sound, visuals) and toured everywhere in 2010 to rave reviews. It took 6 years to 'get it right'.

[27]"Hakim Bey uses the term Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) to delineate a dissenting radical politics in certain spatial locations, niches, enclaves: vacancies in

uplifting, even if the jollity and improvement are serious stuff" (Waterman 1998, 63).

Festivals take people away – physically and otherwise, relocating or dislocating them in new social configurations. They provide opportunities to try out new identities (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 6) that are literal and figurative. The MUTEK festival then, is experiential and transformative, "foremost a composite experiential product, an "experience theatre" through which people enter and through which they negotiate a physical and conceptual path" (Prentice and Andersen 2003, 19).

Kate Lesta is the artistic director of the Boulder based Communikey festival, part of the International Cities of Advanced Sound (ICAS) network and a collaborator with MUTEK on many projects, shares a philosophy of festival design:

> A lot of what we're trying to do is hold space for a lot of generative - and almost in a way - evolutionary processes to happen for people on an individual and on a community scale. What you can do with a festival is create a zone, where you and a group of people very much become a part of - you are the festival - along with artists, along with the spaces you're visiting. That begins to take on its own organic form (Schmidt 2010).

Lesta is also describing how audience 'makes' the festival and completes the equation, in both their presence and their feedback. This festival demands a certain investment. It demands commitment from attendees, as they "must be willing to immerse themselves in festival culture, as well as make arrangements for travel, vacation time and attendance fee" (Dowd 2004, 149). In return, music festivals like MUTEK tend to draw receptive and knowledge audiences" (ibid., 152). Notably, religious analogies abound:

> If we draw a religious analogy… the festival with the challenges involved in

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Western social fabric that hold the potential for escape from the panoptic controlling gaze of the State, and temporarily play host to alternative social formations and bands of radical activists. Bey's vision of the TAZ is decidedly romantic, with a strong emphasis on festival and play as political acts: The sixties-style 'tribal gathering', the forest enclave of eco-saboteurs, the idyllic Beltane of the neo-pagans" (Gibson 1999, 25).

participation, more closely resembles a pilgrimage destination. Also, as with a pilgrimage, the experience of being temporarily immersed in festival culture can profoundly transform attendees (ibid., 150).

Immersive experience is one of the signatures of the MUTEK program, on at least two different levels: in terms of space, acoustic environment, effects, lighting and sound, but also in the way the program is deliberately organized as a narrative arc, sensitive to the effects of accumulation, of an evolving experience of time, sensation and sociabilities. The scheduling is careful to avoid major conflicts between performances.[28] This festival is not a fair, where everything goes. Audiences are encouraged to have it all, to follow the festival from beginning to end. To attend one or two shows in isolation from the whole experience is to miss it. Designing such experience is part of the festival's boundary work, as well. Mongeau:

> This idea of 5 days - the people who live the festival usually come from outside of the city. Montréalers tend to cherry pick a few programs, but people who come from outside the province go to everything. They get the real experience of MUTEK. The metaphor for me is the film fests. I'd buy a pass and go see 30 films in 8 days – 3 to 5 films a day and be immersed. Then you experience so many states - and then you hit so many states in the festival mode. You're exposed to things you wouldn't normally see. I traveled so much by just seeing films from other places in the world. Our programs are so diverse it's meant to expand the experience range for our audience (Mongeau 2010).

Programming design with experiential considerations is definitely a philosophy that MUTEK's model has passed on. Kate Lesta who designs Communikey's arc explains:

> When a program is laid out so that you don't have overlap, you can really experience it as a group, from start to finish. There's a narrative that begins to be written in that process. You can see it happen at MUTEK and you can see it happen at Communikey. In the final days of the festival you can see people coalesce and begin to have this ecstatic shared experience, having gone through

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[28]Although during the 2010 edition, due to venue issues, concurrent events were scheduled.

all these certain ranges of emotions together. I think that's the goal that ecstatic moment could last forever. You'll always remember those times when all of your filters are down and you've experienced so much and you've done it with all these other people. It really starts to break down our standard perception of time, and what a shared experience can be (Schmidt 2010).

Presentation quality and style are key components in the dissemination of new media and electronic music. Well-realized sound is crucial to the aesthetic experience of the genre and culture:

> It thrives in a particular physical location, in time and space. Immersion doesn't just mean overpowering decibel levels, strobing lights and bone-rattling speaker pressure – it's something more subtle. The music demands an immersive environment; most minimal techno is boring, quite frankly, when listened to at home. Imagine listening to recordings from a sound installation on headphones in your room, instead of seeing the piece in its original context (Dayal 2010).

Since 2004, the MUTEK festival has managed to present an all night event meant to express some of the more epic and sublime qualities of the culture, to recreate in some ways, an ultimate club experience. Set and performance conventions for contemporary dance music have different temporal dimensions than rock. One hour is considered brief by dance standards. The all nighter provides an opportunity for an artist to go on for 3 - 6 hours, as has been the case for someone like Ricardo Villalobos. Mongeau recalls his first revelation about the genre:

> For me, this is an immersive culture about uncharted territories that evolve after 3 a.m. in the morning. It wasn't just the music, people were being creative and it was DIY. It was about re-inventing all the codes. Even the sound was never from stage to audience. Now we've kind of lost that. Rave culture went to clubs, and clubs broke that. But what interested me more was that it was a culture that begged for participation somehow (Hewings 2008, 8).

Festivals generate feelings and affective alliances among audience, artist and festival architects. The process of going through the festival, of living (or surviving it), leaves people in a different state than that in which they arrived: tired, possibly ecstatic,

and potentially enriched. The kind of bonding that occurs over the course of a festival,

through dancing or other sociabilities associated with this culture, lend a particularity to

the festival experience not found in other events. In this way, "festivals become vital

places both from a sense of shared purpose, identity, or interest among its members, but

also from the sense of difference that this engenders with what exists outside its

boundaries" (Janz 2008, 149). The meaning of a festival is "closely related to overt

values recognized by the community as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its

social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival. This is, ultimately,

what a festival celebrates" (Waterman 1998, 60).

Festival sociability is something that Mongeau understands, and seeks to

engineer, at least by providing contexts in which interactions may occur:

> I know from experience, there's so much happening during the festival. We
> enable things to happen, friendships continue. It goes from people meeting and
> getting married -- we have so many friends that got together at MUTEK events.
> We realize that the function serves a larger function: it's a meeting point, but also
> a recharge. It resets things, brings new people in to make connections (Mongeau
> 2010).

CITY

MUTEK is a city festival and Montréal is more than just a backdrop. Festivals are

normally bound up with and to place, and have acquired characteristics of a destination in

their own right (Prentice and Andersen 2003, 19). "However, it is not culture that is

exclusively consumed; by just `being there', by experiencing a place through its festival,

the place, too, is consumed" (Waterman 1998, 62). In creating MUTEK, one of the things

Mongeau recognized early on was the significant and special role of the city. MUTEK

was conceived with Montréal in mind. The city's various appeals and strengths are

crucial elements of the festival's personality:

I know that Montréal has - from my previous involvements with the film festival and with ISEA, a special energy. Everybody that came loved the city; this would be a city they'd like to live in. People find this city to be very convivial. When we started MUTEK we kind of tapped into that kind of special energy. We were really aware of these special forces. I'd say we're still tapping on that (Mongeau 2010).

Another electronic music/city-festival was also part of the inspiration:

One of the models for MUTEK was definitely the 'idea' that I had of Sonar[29] before going to Sonar…but it took a few years before I went. I remember being aware that it was impossible to replicate something like Sonar because it was in Barcelona; it had the beach, the city, and the whole European community as the intended audience. After awhile I realized that Montréal had its own pool – in relation to the rest of North America, Montréal has its unique character and I think – we've always been really conscious of this – we gave a lot of care to nurture some of these qualities (Mongeau 2010).

The time of year, high spring, was chosen as much for symbolic as practical reasons. The festival season in Montréal really only gets underway after the city thaws out. Late spring may come with some unpredictable weather, but outdoor events make it possible to shift contextual expectations for electronic music, and show off the city. The dates also work in tandem with related festivals like Sonar and DEMF (Detroit Electronic Music Festival) to avoid conflicts, as there is a potential crossover audience of some significance to consider.

The occupation of city spaces matters, and, increasingly, so does interacting with sites across the urban landscape, allowing MUTEK to go beyond normal performance venues.[30] The old port and waterfront have been used for public art works, Parc Jean

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[29] Sonar has been running for 15 years, and considers itself on the border between the concept of a cultural festival and a big summer music event. It features a dense weeklong schedule of media art, avant-garde and rave sized performances.

[30] The main venues include the 800 capacity SAT the 600 seat theatre of the Monument National, and the Metropolis with its 2,500 capacity main room and 300 capacity side room, The Savoy. The Hydro Quebec room also at the Monument National, has a capacity of about 250. The outdoor Piknic Electronik events are held at the Expo 67

Drapeau for the afternoon outdoor events, and the new place des festivales for interactive

media art and other happenings. Reaching into new public zones is a recent expansion

technique that combines new forms with the potential for new audience.

> As a preliminary remark on MUTEK's ability to cross pollinate cultural niches and attract audiences from outside its established scene, the festival has increasingly expanded its public media arts installations and performances, generating a noticeable intervention within the urban fabric of the city with light and sound. In 2009, MUTEK's mark was left on the city in the form of public performances and projection (van Veen 2009, 11).

Everywhere, in the festival's recent visual materials, the city is represented. The

2010 poster animates Mont Royal as a cartoon being, with arms extending and embracing

the downtown area of the island, roughly where the quartier des spectacles has recently

been established, along with other iconic elements of the Montréal skyline.

OTHER CITIES

Unusually, MUTEK reproduces itself and extends itself to other cities. In 2002,

MUTEK launched its first events outside Canada, accepting an invitation to host a night

at Berlin's Club Transmediale and a two-day event in Sao Paulo. The next year, MUTEK

presented its first event in Chile, followed by a tour of Mexico that featured Canadian,

South American and Mexican artists. These first few forays into South America acted as

a kind of fieldwork: it was investigative, testing the possibilities, looking for

collaborators. The festival has now been represented in Valparaiso, Buenos Aires,

Santiago, Barcelona, Toronto, Detroit, New York, Vancouver, and Québec City. MUTEK

has traveled through the U.S., France, Norway, Italy, Estonia, Greece, Switzerland, and

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site on an island park with a spectacular view of the cityscape. In 2010 the festival inaugurated a new street venue as part of the new "quartier des spectacles," which encompasses a five block area in the heart of the city.

through China as well. MUTEK has held full, recurring, annual versions of its festival in Mexico, Argentina and Chile. In 2004, 3000 people come out for the Valparaiso based MUTEK Chile, which included concerts and performances presented over five days, bringing together some forty artists from Chile, the rest of South America, and across the globe.[31]

The fifth anniversaries of MUTEK Argentina and MUTEK Mexico passed in 2009 and 2008, respectively. The festivals abroad look and sound, in many respects, like MUTEK in Montréal. The artists are drawn from the same high caliber international pool that circulates through the global circuit of clubs, cities and festivals where electronic music and culture express themselves most explicitly. The visual component, lighting and presentations, so much a part of the synesthetic experience of electronic performance is often supplied by a cabal of video and graphic designers from Montréal. The same goes for the posters, flyers and general visual representation and documentation of the festival. What makes it a MUTEK event, no matter what country it's in, is the connection with the content: "ideally I'd like to say the same quality standards - the same ethical standards and the same interest in forward thinking forms of not just music, but digital art" (Mongeau 2010).

It is unusual for festivals to move like this; normally they are fixed events, tethered to their host city.[32] It is especially unusual that a festival would travel completely independent of corporate support, relying on unwritten codes of shared cultural conduct and a collective belief in the content, in the culture being propagated. In each of the cities

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[31]Supported by seed funding from the Daniel Langlois Foundation.

[32]Sonar "moves" mounting mini versions in a few American cities, but they team up with local promoters and rely on much more formal commercial arrangements, there is also no commitment to establishing any permanent infrastructure.

that MUTEK finds itself in, there are no contracts signed. Mongeau explains that this is partly because they have no money to offer, but, he points out, it is also a very contemporary way of being, in the same spirit as the music and culture: digital, creative culture has an open source soul:

> You can see it as open source, or open structure. There's no contracts signed, it's very grassroots. It's like franchising the identity. We gain from the exposure and progress that is being made on a global scale. If you talk about open source as a way of being, then MUTEK is very contemporary to this digital culture in the way it is being open (Mongeau 2010).

That full festivals are being mounted and not just single events is significant. A festival model is a stable structure that can establish lasting infrastructure. It provides a kind of legitimacy that can become a development tool for a culture. A festival like MUTEK projects itself as an artistic organization and there are ways to leverage institutional support with a festival construct like this. Going abroad and sharing the "code" and know-how grows the genre and audience while taking the festival and its culture into interesting new territories. MUTEK Spain launched in 2009, and while it may not mount a full festival in Barcelona (home of Sonar), plans for a foundational European branch have been in the works for some time. MUTEK also expanded its curatorial reach to the Mexican festival Cervantino. Having successfully programmed several Québec and Mexican electronic and digital artists, MUTEK signed a multi-year deal to continue in that capacity (MUTEK newsletter 2008).

The sheer number of involvements, both real and potential, that the festival continues to be involved in, resulted in a necessary structural adjustment. The MUTEK organization roughly divides the year into three seasons that correspond to specific geographic zones: a North American season from January to June, culminating in the

Montréal festival; a European season from July to September, based around a new festival that has yet to be defined; and a South American season from October to December, inaugurated with the launch of the Mexican edition of the MUTEK festival, followed by other programming activities in the Southern hemisphere, notably in Chile and Argentina (MUTEK history 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

MUTEK's mixed modeling works to straddle the worlds of high and low art, but this also poses challenges. Funding agencies and outsiders, potential audiences, and media, seem to be confused about what kind of festival it is. This festival is a way of catching the contemporary; it becomes a container, but also acts as a disseminator, exercising influence by making curatorial choices. MUTEK uses this power to nurture and extend the local scene, but also as a means to bridge hemispheres.

CHAPTER 2

THE CIRCUITRY:
GLOBAL NETWORKS AND SCENES

> "Montréal is outside of a regular circuit, even in North America, so
> we had to catch people's attention, we had to work even more to
> build the thing" (Mongeau 2010).

Festival models discussed in the first chapter inadequately account for the actions

of MUTEK: the ways it 'plugs in' to the world, how it engages with music scenes

globally and locally, proliferates in South America and elsewhere, and circulates outside

of regular festival time, as single events, as a curatorial brand, as a record label and

website, as well as socially, politically and ideologically. This festival is a perpetual

motion machine, operating in many places. It is multifaceted, highly networked, and

dependent on both formal and informal connections. Relationships and affective alliances

account for a significant portion of the festival's successes in connecting. MUTEK also

instigates networks and network structures with other festivals, artists, and locales.

The festival itself is a collection of relations and effects that involve the

simultaneous interaction of many people, things and ideas. In the way that they function

to provide the context for feedback between the production and consumption of culture,

festivals create a space-time matrix and a network (Waterman 1998, 66). In the sphere of

cultural production, Charles Kadushin explains a network as "a set of social objects onto

which is mapped a set of relationships or 'flows' not necessarily in a 1:1 fashion"

(Kadushin 1976, 770).

> Networks have been frequently identified with informal or what might be called
> emergent relations – those that are not formally instituted. Of course, role and
> status sets are also fit subjects for network analysis, for they too are networks.
> Nonetheless, in discussing the production of culture, I shall emphasize emergent
> networks because they are especially apt for this field. In addition, emergent

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networks tend to be less visible than formally instituted networks. Emergent networks in the area of culture production also tend to be interstitial – that is, tend to link different social units such as different universities, publishers, authors, and the like. These kinds of connections also seem more dramatic than, for example, clique relations within the same structure, although both are network phenomena (ibid.).

Like Kadushin, with his account of the emergent, invisible and interstitial qualities of networks, Howard Becker (2008) looks for the inconspicuous agents and things that help explain a sociology of art, but also how *things*, not just people, create what he calls 'the collective action'. The research question, he says, is "how they manage to coordinate their activity so as to produce whatever the result is" (Becker 2008, xi.). Becker reveals how a 'great' artist is actually the sum of many other people and their actions, none of which can exist independent of each other. There is no singular 'author' or hero; it is webs of cooperation that produce creativity. An artworld is an established network of cooperative links among participants (ibid., 36).

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is a material-semiotic approach that also posits that, "all actions are the result of relational effects and that everything in the social and natural worlds is a continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located" (Law 2007, 28). ANT carefully accounts for the role of nonhumans in the creation of the social and makes no distinctions between humans and nonhumans. ANT critiques what it sees as a "shortsightedness in social theory: its ignoring of the "material practices that generate the social: ships, sailors, currents. Where sociology is concerned with the whys of the social, ANT explores the hows" (ibid., 9). ANT proposes that any organization (to which I would add: artworld or music scene) can be understood as:

Networks of heterogeneous actors—social, technical, textual, naturally occurring etc—brought together into more or less stable associations or alliances. The term 'actor' can therefore be used to refer to a person, a plant, a machine, a weather system or a germ. ANT's commitment to 'radical symmetry' involves viewing the power of humans and non-humans as equally uncertain, ambiguous and disputable. No agental priority is accorded to the institutional, conceptual, natural or material. A machine can therefore be thought of as having, in principle, the same degree of agency as a person (Whittle and Spicer 2008, 612).

Ultimately, ANT aims to understand what creates and contributes to stability in the actor-network and to explain how power relations are constructed (Whittle and Spicer 2008, 612). Studies look for the stabilizing factors and forces that keep actor-networks going. A well engineered network is one that is relatively stable, its architecture reasonably sound (Law 2007, 9). Networks can be strengthened by overlaps, and sustained through constant "faithfulness" and maintenance, but they are also always in flux, constantly being made and remade as opposed to existing 'out there' with inherent properties and characteristics (Whittle and Spicer 2008, 613). The realities generated by actor-networks are always precarious (Law 2007, 9); if one part stops working a whole series of changes (or problems) can arise (Whittle and Spicer 2008, 613).

A critique of ANT suggests, however, that because it cannot account for motivation or intent, and only provides detailed descriptions of chains of associations, it is poorly equipped to address some of the key questions that would enable a critical account of organization (ibid., 623).

Networks, alliances and circuits used for the distribution of goods and ideas and people are central to how *scenes* construct themselves across geographically dispersed regions. The festival belongs to literal and conceptual, discursive, material, social and virtual networks. It is a product of a 'network effect' (Law 2007, 9) and is constantly in flux because the network is always changing.

The next section will investigate how MUTEK 'holds itself together', formally and informally, socially, economically, culturally and technologically. What follows is an analysis of the ways the festival moves, circulates, connects, maintains, and extends itself.

CIRCUIT/SCENE

Electronic music has fallen outside the regular circuits of mass media distribution and exposure, save for its uses within advertising and the occasional soundtrack. Instead, it utilizes emergent social, aesthetic and technological avenues and networks. These include the Internet, alternative radio, festival circuits, artistic diasporas and 'word of mouth.'

The circuits to which Mongeau referred, in the quote that opens this chapter, are many. They include touring circuits, circuits of influence, and pathways for the circulation of people and goods. He is referring, as well, to the ways in which Québec and Montréal fall outside of many regular circuits of a linguistic, cultural, and geographic character. There are places and geographies important to the circuit and the scene, but as with networks, there is no identifiable centre. Over the last decade, MUTEK has managed to join many circuits, insinuate itself into networks and establish itself as part of an internationally constituted music scene.

If there is a centre or a 'soul' to the contemporary electronic music scene, it is Berlin, which serves as the most important point in the exchange of electronic music, both in its dance-oriented and more experimental modes (and as the source of much of

the technology and software).[33] In this respect, MUTEK's ties to Berlin have been critical. The festival has been connecting to the city and its artistry (and its foreign consulates) for more than a decade, through artist and curatorial exchange, physical visits, networking and through ICAS (International Cities of Advanced Sound) initiatives.[34]

The momentum created in German and European club culture as a result of the fall of the Berlin wall has been propelling a number of new forms and technologies, constantly attracting musical and artistic talent to Berlin. Many North Americans have relocated to the city to take advantage of a critical mass of audience members, a culture predisposed to dancing and club culture, and the opportunity to make a very decent living. Berlin's 24-hour cycle of cultural activities and endless supply of young artists and audiences from all over Europe have contributed to creating a healthy economy for art, music and culture. A large contingent of Montréal's electronic music scene has relocated there. This extends the earlier move, to Montréal, of individuals from Québec and other points in Canada and the world, attracted by MUTEK's scene making abilities in the early part of the decade.[35] In many ways, even if this recent movement to Berlin might be viewed as a 'brain drain', Mongeau sees it as proof of success:

[33] "From the Weimar Republic, through West Berlin's defiant isolation, the city thrived on decadent nightlife; electronic experimental music was the lifeblood of the German underground from Stockhausen onwards, and come the simultaneous fall of the Wall and rise of acid house, the two combined into a techno culture that is rooted in the fabric of the city. The Berghain club and its panorama bar have been acting as a living laboratory setting the tone for much of what circulates globally"(Muggs 2010).

[34] It goes both ways - Goethe institute cultural exchanges, including recently an event in Montréal marking the fall of the wall.

[35] Guillaume and Gabriel Coutu-Dumont, Mike Shannon, Colin de Laplante, Ernesto Ferrerya, Scott Monteith, Jon Berry, and Myriam Lavoie, Paulina Borda - who run a booking agency - representing other Canadians in Berlin. Other Canadian expats include: Adam Marshall, Mathew and Nathan Jonson, Richie Hawtin, Jeremy Caulfield, Daniel Gardner, Sheldon Thompson, Jake Fairley, Marc Houle and many more.

I think it has worked. The field work that we've been doing: first by bringing international artists into the festival content then by going abroad with some of the artists from here – and having them discover Mexico, Chile and Argentina. At the moment, the whole Montréal scene that moved to Berlin, they're actually living in Berlin in French and Spanish and English more than German, because they've merged with the South American scene that also moved to Berlin (Mongeau 2010).

The concept of a *scene* has proven both versatile and vague as a model for understanding the processes of production, performance and reception of music in relation to space and locale. A local scene is clustered around a specific geographic focus. A translocal scene is organized around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle that can be found in locales globally. A third category is the virtual scene, which describes people gathering across great physical spaces via fanzines and the Internet (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 6).

Electronic/dance culture would seem to combine all of these levels. This 'scene', which exists locally in many cities, also extends around the world and does so in both virtual and real ways. Electronic/dance music is already predisposed to circulate globally; as a musical Esperanto of sorts, it is not considered to be the sound of any particular city or any definite social group, but rather, is heard as a "celebration of rootlessness" (Thornton 1996, 76). The mobility of the culture includes physical movement of people as well; the community and the artists often travel together.[36] As Mongeau says:

A few years ago we had a panel discussion – is electronic music the soundtrack to globalization? And I think it is in a sense. You can see it in the image of the Narod Niki performance where you had French, Chilean, American, Canadian, and Germans, all jamming together with the same instruments, in the same language - so to speak (Mongeau 2010).

Electronic music, like that promoted through MUTEK, escapes language, even

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[36]This travel is fuelled literally by budget airlines like Easyjet, which make it possible to go to festivals and events in Paris or Barcelona one night, Berlin the next.

when it contains words or singing, because the form accommodates and absorbs a polyglot of styles and tongues. Thus, it moves more fluidly across borders than rock or pop music, transcending localizing forces that might keep it in 'a place'. The message of electronic music is rarely contained in lyrics; this is one reason why MUTEK can move through and occupy so many linguistically varied geographies. In part as a result of its relationship to language, dance music offers "highly useful examples with which to think conceptually about issues of transnational circulation in popular musical culture":

> Dance-music culture is highly polycentric, in that it is characterized by the simultaneous existence of large numbers of local or regional styles – Detroit 'techno' music, Miami 'bass' styles, Los Angeles 'swingbeat', etc. Other regional centres – like New York or London – will be significant, less as places of emergence of styles one could call indigenous, than because they occupy positions of centrality as sites for the reworking and transformation of styles originating elsewhere (Straw 2008, 381).

Stuart Hall writing about culture, globalization and ethnicity (the 'local') identifies two main characteristics of global mass culture that can be extrapolated to characterize this form of music and culture, which, despite its niche appeals, utilizes the same global pathways. His first point has to do with the ways in which global mass culture remains centred in the west, where there is a concentration of capital, techniques and advanced labor, (technology), and where English, the international language, speaks a variety of broken forms because it cannot exclude the 'other' (Hall 1997, 178). More importantly, Hall suggests that this mass culture "is enormously absorptive" (of the other): it is a new form of capital that recognizes that it can only rule through other local capitals, alongside and in partnership with other economic and political elites" (ibid., 179).

Hall favours global forms that are visual, televisual or graphic in his analysis,

forms that "speak across languages in an immediate way" (ibid., 179). Electronic/dance music belies language (for the most part), and accepts broken or other languages into its absorptive body and framework. In this respect, it is an incredibly syncretic form. Within the digital arts, new media or instillation works, abstract imagery and narrative defy localizing impulses, are relieved of the task of communicating through language. There is also a common language of 'technology,' in the sense that the same tools and techniques are shared across such varied geographical and cultural spaces. Mongeau and his various staff members also communicate across a variety of linguistic spaces, speaking French, English, Spanish and some German.

The festival emphasizes its internationalism at multiple levels. During its first year, the festival lineup featured thirty-five artists from eight countries and the numbers of artists and nations represented have been steadily climbing; the 2010 festival included more than one hundred artists from more than twenty-three countries. Nationalities are closely tracked and indexed in dance music. The mark of a proper electronic music festival is one that incorporates a wide swath of international DJs and producers. The genre is a global form that does not simply highlight the addresses of its producers and artists. Nationality is routinely 'read' into the music, perhaps as a way of tracking influence, of fixing things in some place.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

The music festival is a special sort of translocal scene (Bennett, Peterson 2004, 9). While most such scenes involve the interconnection of several local scenes, festivals "periodically bring together scene devotees from far and wide in one place, where they can enjoy their kind of music and briefly live the lifestyle associated with it...." (ibid.,

10). It is in the context of the festival's translocality that the local Montréal (and Canadian) scene has been nurtured and extended. Here, the festival becomes a powerful scene-making device for incubating, launching and circulating local and Canadian talent. Mongeau explains that, "what MUTEK did was crystallize a context for a community" (Perez 2005, 61). MUTEK intensified attention on the music being made in Montréal and insinuated artists into a scene, composed not only of artists and audiences, but also of festivals. There is a festival circuit and network that extends around the world, offering benefits not only to electronic/dance artists but also to more experimental, multimedia ones as well. A glance at the line-ups of festivals within MUTEK's milieu reveals a disproportionate preponderance, not only of Canadian artists, but also of those from Montréal. These include Artificiel, Skoltz, Kolgen, The User, and Messier and Bernier, all of them Montréal based.

MicroMUTEKs, which are local events outside of regular festival time, showcases abroad, and MUTEK branded tours, also work to keep the content and concerns of the festival circulating, while extending the local scene.[37] Curatorial work is proving to be a powerful circulation device too. MUTEK branded or programmed events and showcases have been happening since the earliest days of the festival. Often mounted inside other festivals, or commissioned by cultural institutions, these offer another way for the festival to exercise and express its tastes. MUTEK appeared this summer as a curatorial partner at the Biennial of the Americas in Denver Colorado, where ICAS member and festival director, Kate Lesta from Communikey, was in charge of live

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[37]The MUTEK team organizes tours for Canadian and local artists, conceiving and writing grant applications, using the solid foundation of the festival to leverage funding. They do this without taking any percentage of any potential revenue. The idea is to build artistry and audience. In the long run, this benefits the entire culture.

programming. She drew on her transnational contacts and networks to bring the contemporary sights, sounds and creativity of artists from Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Canada and America, to Denver. MUTEK's director, Alain Mongeau was instrumental in helping program some of the showcases, since, as Lesta points out, "MUTEK has already done a lot of this 'bridging the hemispheres' work in the last ten years" (Schmidt 2010).

Following a successful program that brought together Québec-based electronic music and new media practices and those of associated international artists, MUTEK signed a formal agreement with Mexico's Cervantino festival to continue to curate their digital arts program for years to come. This underlines both MUTEK's curatorial prowess and international impressions concerning Québec's proficiencies in the area of digital arts.[38]

MUTEK's prior presence and activities in Mexico had almost certainly facilitated the relationship with Cervantino. Mongeau says that while traveling and presenting ISEA activities around the world, he realized that Mexico and South America was in "our own backyard" (Mongeau 2010). He was watching European organizations realize new connections with the east when the Berlin wall came down, as electronic music and arts networks were expanding quickly (ibid.). These missions abroad fall outside of the 'regular' circuits and channels of power and influence. South America, for example is not known to be rich with electronic or digital culture, or the kind of audiences it attracts. The continent still carries many stigmas of the "third" world, and emerging economies, something Mongeau concedes:

All of these seeds in South America have yielded different kinds of fruit with

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[38]The Cervantino Festival in Guanajuato, Mexico, has also just signed a similar agreement with the Edinburgh International Festival.

different kinds of successes. But mainly, also running into the same kind of problems everywhere; which is funding, lack of support, even lack of context for things to develop themselves quickly enough (Mongeau 2010).

In developing a festival scene in South America, beginning in Chile, MUTEK took care to avoid "cultural colonization or invasion" (Mongeau 2004) and to help establish a lasting network to help counteract patterns of artistic migration. The mission is:

> To build a permanent local structure for organizing the festival's future editions in Chile and an enabling environment for sustainable development for artists from South America to evolve in their hemisphere. Indeed, the exodus of talent to the North (whether to America or the EU) is a recurring problem in recent years there has been a systematic exodus of artists who feel the need to go into exile (ibid.).

The MUTEK organization in Montréal provides logistical help and advice. This has been the model for every MUTEK initiative, and there are now MUTEK chapters in Mexico, Argentina and Brazil. The MUTEK team in Montréal spends a lot of time working with their collaborators. In these collaborations, the festival strives to uphold its standards of quality in programming and presentation, along with its signature look and scheduling philosophy. Since there are no contracts and not much money circulating, however, it is hard to impose conditions:

> The only thing you hope for is that they respect the code of honour, the unwritten code that exists. I think what we probably should have is documents where everything that we think – they can sign and refer to. But even us, we're a small under funded organization and don't have time. I recognize it's not an ideal situation. A festival is a lot of work and you need pretty crazy people to dedicate themselves to it if you want it to evolve into something. You need different sets of know how, of craftsmanship, of dedication; a challenge in itself (Mongeau 2010).

A great deal of the work of setting up new branches occurred through relationships with artists with roots in Chile who were already a part of the MUTEK network. Ricardo Villalobos and Martin Schopf (Dandy Jack), both accomplished and

well-regarded artists are part of the Chilean diaspora who scattered to Europe during Pinochet's reign. Raised in exile, they have still maintained connections with home, acting as brokers between continents.[39] There was another personal connection: as a child, Mongeau spent a year in Chile with his family, going to school, learning Spanish.[40]

> That's the personal connection with Chile that triggered the idea of what I was looking for. An organization that only has one festival as its main anchor cannot run all year round. So you need more activities. My idea was to have a second edition of the festival every year; and at that point the idea was to alternate; Montréal – Chile; Montréal – Berlin, Montréal - Chile. So we started out with Chile. The idea was to bridge the continents; the north with the south, and the south with Europe (Mongeau 2010).

The artists that move through the various MUTEKs are drawn from the same international pool that circulates through the global circuit of clubs, cities and festivals. Each MUTEK abroad runs its own myspace page, delivers to its own audience, and books its own local artists. Abroad, the MUTEK model becomes a development tool for the local, a unique platform for the genre in Latin America, and a way to encourage and expand the world of digital arts. However, the 2008 edition of MUTEK in Mexico City exposed some of the difficulties of transplanting a culture and festival with decidedly middle class appeal into a place where middle class youth culture might be more fragile. The economic crisis and a thirty percent decline in the value of the peso three weeks before the festival meant that operations were troubled. Attendance was down significantly, and tens of thousands of dollars were lost, personally, by MUTEK Mexico director Damian Romero. Despite the setbacks, Mongeau remains optimistic about the project and MUTEK Mexico has continued to present events under that banner.

Several longterm highly productive working relationships have resulted from

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[39] Many Chileans play a prominent role in the creation of techno music in Berlin.
[40] The family was in Santiago during the coup d'etat in 1973.

MUTEK's branching into other countries. The Argentinean MUTEK festival just celebrated a 5th anniversary and there are new outposts in Barcelona, as well as consideration of future destinations and forays into the Asia Pacific region. While China, in particular, is not part of the global club culture circuit, MUTEK has gone there as well – not to mount a full festival, but as part of a three-city tour featuring a cast of Montréal artists. Along with performances, workshops and discussions were held, all in the service of education and exchange. This press release also reveals that previous relationships and networking were the impetus for that excursion:

> While we were always interested in Asia, we were just waiting for the right opening," said festival director Alain Mongeau. That opportunity came via Francis Acquarone and his Beijing-based promotions agency, [010] Productions, who, along with the Canadian Embassy, presented the festival. Acquarone's personal involvement in MUTEK China began when he was invited — in his former role as Cultural Affairs Officer at the Canadian Embassy in Beijing — to speak on a panel at last year's event (MUTEK newletter, 2008).

RECORD LABEL

MUTEK also operates a record label, MUTEK_REC. The label is another means of moving the festival and artists around the world. The label used to put out compilations promoting the festival, but also released more rarified audio art from Montréal audio/visual duo Skoltz-Kolgen, ambient instillation works by Marc Leclair (aka Akufen), and full-length albums from artists associated with their international network. The record label functions to extend and realize MUTEK's transcontinental mandate, which includes the dissemination of indigenous talent. In order to maximize impact and consolidate operations, MUTEK_REC merged in 2007 with Musiquee Risquee, the label co-founded by Marc Leclair and Vincent Lemieux that also features a roster of artists intimately tied up with the MUTEK festival. Some years earlier, Lemieux

operated a record store in the same building as Laika. The store was called, appropriately, The Hub, explicitly declaring its intentions toward connectedness:

> We became the festival's music label extension but it's kind of artsy/craftsy. It's not a big structure; it's something we do because we think it's a good way of promoting the artist from here and artists we really like. It's about joining forces. It's to have all the capacity of MUTEK, the network, and we share the same networks (Hewings 2008, 8).

The annual promotional compilations are still important circulation devices, but they are now digitally distributed, there is no longer a physical 'hardcopy.' Podcasting has become by far the most effective new mode for MUTEK to disseminate its music and publicity. In 2006, MUTEK began releasing live sets from past editions. Podcasting, declared *The Guardian* a few weeks ago, is the new rave, a new online dancefloor and a new circulatory system for electronic/dance music with the power to change social relations in the culture (Matos 2010). Web-only mixes have become the main means of keeping a global audience connected and informed. Live sets from particular clubs are now part of the site-specific imaginary of these clubs. They point to a more communal form of listening. However, some artists have complained that they become ways of 'being at the party, without being at the party,' and that people no longer show up at events themselves (Dayal 2010). Technology occupies a central role in the creation of this culture's art, expression and dissemination. It represents a variety of different non-human actors holding the MUTEK network together. The festival makes connections with the actual designers of the technology,[41] presenting them as part of workshops and demonstrations during the festival. The Internet is a major component in MUTEK's

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[41] Workshops and focus groups with all major software innovators happen during the conference part of the festival every year (Roland, Ableton, and Serato all presented their wares at recent editions).

communications and promotions strategies, as well a primary means of distributing the

music and art, and connecting with its community, it is also an important portal to the

festival for potential visitors from far away. The festival's website forms an important

multimedia base for archives of concerts, and, through webcasting, offers a window on

what is happening at the festival in Montreal and it's manifestations elsewhere. MUTEK

has participated in a number of virtual hookups and live streaming events over the

Internet.

The festival uses the Internet and its website as a support mechanism for activities

in real space. MUTEK's audience are solicited on the web, and more than half of its 'hits'

come from referring sites like Resident Advisor, a popular electronic music and culture

site. All of this illustrates a natural alignment of culture and technology:

> The Internet has been a central tool in the social construction of space within this
> mostly electronic music culture, fulfilling many functions: as a notice board of
> clues to the location of future events; as an open space for the creative expression
> of composers and visual artists; as an uncensored outlet for discussions of
> concerns about their 'scene'; as a shared virtual photo album of past events; and
> as an embodiment of the left-anarchist ideals of the Temporary Autonomous Zone
> (Gibson 1999, 27).

VIRTUOUS CYCLES

The extending of the local scene thus far described, and MUTEK's cultivation

and encouragement of local talent, may, in some respects, have been too effective. In

2007, having already benefited from various tours and associations with the festival and

other events across the globe, a cadre of MUTEK associated artists, relocated, almost en

masse, to Berlin. They were already on international labels and had already toured the

planet. The reasons for relocation had much to do with the lack of critical mass of

audience members, not only in Montréal and closer regions, but North America

generally, where distances between gigs can be vast. Berlin remains the epicentre for emerging styles and technologies, but, once one is there, the market is really all of Europe. Careers with this sort of access are difficult to build in North America and, as a result, many Americans (and South Americans) are in Berlin too. Moving to Berlin is part of a broader pattern of migration for artists interested in keeping up and participating in vibrant contemporary culture and its forms.

However, a certain "Montréalness" now circulates through Berlin clubs. There may not be an easily identifiable Montréal sound in the music of the diaspora, but as a broad sensibility, "it's certainly a contribution" (Mongeau 2010). "Scenes extend the spatialization of city cultures through the grafting of tastes or affinities to physical locations" (Straw 2001, 255). This group of producers and artists represents a cultural diaspora with the potential to create a "virtuous cycle of feedback effects" (Kuznetsov 2007, 9). Canadian artists associated with the city and the MUTEK festival, circulate in Europe, and then come home, bringing with them skills, perspectives, experience and knowledge.

CITIES OF ADVANCED SOUND

Twenty of the world's most innovative electronic and digital festivals, from cities across Eastern and Western Europe, South America and North America, convened during MUTEK 2008, in Montréal. Various European festivals had already come together as ECAS (European Cities of Advanced Sound), not only in order to develop networks, but for the purpose of applying for European Union cultural funding.[42] The result was the

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[42]Transnational cultural funding and projects is a less developed realm of policy in North American than in Europe.

formation of ICAS (International Cities of Advanced Sound), a new network of

international not-for-profit events and festivals dedicated to promoting emerging forms of

media to new audiences and regions. ICAS is very much in keeping with open source

ideas. The network is conceived as:

> …[An] open structure that welcomes the participation of new members. It seeks to realize the value of shared experience and knowledge, to develop collectively. Its greater aim is to support its members in the building up sustainable infrastructures to support, promote and sponsor experimental and critical sound cultures within their specific localities and contexts (MUTEK ICAS Network 2008).

The mandate articulates a broad cultural mission and ideological stance. Unlike

the mainstream music business, ICAS members adopt an alternative set of criteria to

measure the success of their endeavours, which favours quality, critical reflection,

innovation and exchange over profit. It means to actively engage in building bridges

between art disciplines, cultural fields, scenes and genres with an eye on fostering

exchange between academic musical traditions, experimental music and pop

(sub)cultures, and between the arts and technology (ibid.).

ICAS will help member festivals with such things as best practices and

negotiating artist's fees, which have become extreme and prohibitive in recent years.

The network is a way for members to vouch collectively for each other's integrity, a

way of booking quality artists without going bankrupt, a way of sharing and growing a

culture outside of commerciality. Mongeau recognizes that many festivals, especially in

North America, are barely hanging on, and that there are elements of the struggle that

could be better addressed collectively and by sharing knowledge:

> One of the reasons I was willing to lend MUTEK's name in South America was actually to help some people jump start things – so they didn't have to go through the same startup. Two years ago, I decided to pay more attention to what was

happening in North America. I went to Vancouver – New Forms and to Decibel in Seattle. I ran into a lot of people who've been to MUTEK, who've come up year after year, and I realized there's lot of people who are working in isolation, with the same legitimacy problems as we have. I came back with a renewed sense of purpose, and that I thought MUTEK had a responsibility to affirm its leadership – or to take a certain leadership, to connect the dots (Mongeau 2010).

ICAS member organizations have been cooperative and proactive with each other. Dozens of exchanges, showcases and collaborations have already happened, while several others are being planned. Polish festival Unsound set up in New York this past February for ten days of performances. A massive undertaking, this event combined the curatorial personalities of the Krakow festival with Brooklyn and Manhattan-based performance venues and programmers.[43] The festival relied on collaboration between foreign embassies, with the Polish consulate especially committed to showing off eastern European innovation and avant-gardism in New York City. An old cold war era fund, *The Trust for Mutual Understanding*, set up to foster exchange between the United States and eastern European countries, was tapped for the affair. The recent and seemingly incongruous, cultural exchange between the Dis-Patch festival based in Belgrade, Serbia and the Boulder, Colorado-based Communikey festival, which was realized as the ViceVerse tour and visited fifteen North American, featuring more than thirty artists, stands as another successful example. This project had its genesis in Montréal at the inaugural meeting of the ICAS network, two years ago. A working group was created to explore collaborative projects between festival organizations, and this idea was hatched between the respective festival directors. A European leg was set to begin right after the 9th edition of Dis-patch, in mid-October, 2010, and to continue throughout Slovenia,

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[43] Brian Kasenic and The Bunker, an associate member of ICAS, and programmers at Lincoln Centre and other venues were engaged to produce Unsound NY.

Croatia, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.

The European coalition ECAS, which preceded ICAS, successfully applied for European union cultural funds earlier this year. An application was accepted for a 5-year plan worth 1.6 million euros. Stipulations in the grant require matching dollars, but the EU is unconcerned with where that money comes from, so this is a way for partners outside of the application to collaborate. Already plans are underway to develop transnational cultural projects in the realm of contemporary music and art practice including: commissions, special collaborations, and residencies all meant to highlight international exchange.

CONCLUSIONS

MUTEK is made of networks, is a node in a network and exists inside a larger network of festivals, itself located inside a network of international cities. Relationships, informal agreements, and arrangements of multiple sorts are an important part of what formed and now hold MUTEK's international franchises together. Professional and personal relationships with certain artists facilitate bookings and circulation, while political connections leverage support and influence. "Networks and associations of people" create reputation, according to Becker (2008, 359). Reputations circulate. What artists and audiences experience and articulate about a festival is of great importance. The opinion of audiences, and the recounting of enthusiastic first hand experiences through word of mouth become powerful recommendations (Fjell 2007, 137). The affective alliances that result, based on shared feelings, tastes and reputation are part of what binds a community together. They are part, as well, of how music scenes behave.

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> The cosmopolitan character of certain kinds of musical activity – their attentiveness to change occurring elsewhere – may endow them with a unity of purpose and sense of participating in 'affective alliances' (Grossberg, 1984) just as powerful as those normally observed within practices which appear to be more organically grounded in local circumstances (Straw 1991, 374).

Montréal-based and MUTEK-associated artists have taken full advantage of the network of MUTEKs and its allies. The movement of Canadian artists through this international network has expanded the Montréal scene around the world. As a consequence, Montréal has developed a reputation as a centre of electronic music and art. Having already lost several artists to Berlin, however, the festival remains mindful of nurturing the next generation, aware of the need to seed the local scene.

Networks are learning systems; they are about the accumulation and storage of knowledge about music, technology, best practices and organization. Mongeau's experience across multiple networks over the years has led him to pursue them as active strategies for growth and improvement. The lessons learned several years ago, when he was running ISEA, had much to do with networks. MUTEK's first moves into the arena of talent booking and plugging into the international circuit were probably made smoother by the experience and knowledge gleaned from previous network activities.

Networking is an explicit function of most festivals already. A festival is a place to meet a concentration of artists, a usually committed audience, and professionals and other producers of culture. "Networking, which enhances the prospects of inclusion or strengthens the probability of exclusion for the artist, is obviously important for the success of many festivals" (Waterman 1998, 68). Curators and directors regularly attend MUTEK from the global circuit of festivals, along with bookers, labels, and agents from all across North America and Europe. The festival provides an environment in which to

network with industry professionals from around the globe. However, the importance of networking seems lost on the current federal government. Recent cuts to PromArts, the promotion of Canadian talent abroad, have taken a significant bite out of MUTEK's plans and possibilities for the next year. The grants allowed festivals to sponsor cultural exchange by bringing in industry professionals from the international community to take part in events and discover participating homegrown talent. The festival's response to these cuts:

> The proposed cuts will therefore have a direct impact on the international diffusion of those Canadian artists whose work we present and whose talents we acknowledge and support, as well as on the continued development of MUTEK activities outside Canada (MUTEK newsletter 2008).

A consequence of building and maintaining your own networks is you can decide what to put in them. This has allowed for a Canadian ascension and presence in the global circuit. The global music scene in which MUTEK is involved, with its liberation from linguistic constraints, its absorptive international character, and through the speed with which is circulates, creates the conditions under which less musically or culturally dominant nations and places, like Canada, and Québec (or Chile) may rise.[44] The other MUTEKs have helped to set up infrastructure and connect to 'off places' like Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and now, Uruguay. The ICAS network in South America has begun to expand. If cultural institutions there are paying attention, this is partly an effect of the legitimating function of the network, which bestows a kind of credibility on local branches that can be used to leverage support from governments.

Everywhere there are political networks. Waterman argues that arts festivals

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[44] Richie Hawtin and Ricardo Villalobos trade off number one and two spots in end of year polls – a Canadian, and Chilean, respectively.

cannot escape from participating in cultural politics. MUTEK interacts with members of arts councils, politicians, embassies, other festivals and the city. Pointed lobbying is behind the Regroupment, a formal network of local, small and progressive Montréal festivals. Together the network hopes to have their specific concerns heard by major political forces in the city. The festival's board of directors is a political and a practical body. The competencies of the governing members and their networks become resources for leveraging support and advancing the festival through formal and informal lobbying.

While there is exceptional fluidity to this scene, there are hindrances. The relative obscurity and lack of 'mainstream' outlets for the music and art confine its circulation to specific circuits and geographies. Electronic/dance music and digital art has low cultural capital in North America, in part as a result of the lingering biases towards dance music discussed in the first chapter. At the same time, the health and stability of networks require constant maintenance. The actor network is only stable so long as all human and non-human actors remain faithful to the network (Law 2007, 11). Circulation – staying in touch, maintaining relationships – is one way to keep networks active. Mongeau circulates continuously. Regular travel through Europe and the Americas still constantly informs the director and colleagues who travel with him: meeting, evaluating, and networking.

Money and other resources have the power to stabilize networks. Basic funding from year to year is never guaranteed, and the result is anxiety and economic instability. The staffing of the festival is always fragile and tentative, dependent, due to a lack of funds, on short-term contracts. A recent city based report of three small arts organizations identified the funding situation, and the reliance on the singularity of the director as

precarious situation. A new strategic plan, to be undertaken in the next year will ask similar questions about the organization's sustainability.

Mongeau is aware that he harbours a concentration of the knowledge; passing that on to networks and sharing the "code" has been a strong survival impulse. Perhaps in treating networks as learning systems, and further developing them, internally and externally, this festival can outlive its director.

CHAPTER 3

INNOVATION NATION:
POLICY AND MYTHOS IN MONTRÉAL

> "So my parents decided to make a vacation, and they took all the
> kids to Expo, in Montréal, an exhibition on futurism - architecture,
> technology. For a kid it was like Disney! And these big
> installations, big exhibition halls...! That had to be the impactful
> thing that pushed me toward the future and space travel."
> (Jeff Mills in *Walmsley*, 2009)

One of the originators of Detroit techno,[45] a fundamental root genre in

contemporary electronic music, Jeff Mills' musical inspiration has at least some of its

genesis in Montréal. Escaping the riots and marshal law in Detroit in the summer of

1967, Mills and his family went to Expo 67, the world's fair in Montréal. The waterfront

around the old port brimmed with sculpture, architectural poses and technologies of

tomorrow, while a monorail whipped passengers around the expansive multi-island site,

which resembled a living vision of ultra modernism from an as yet to be realized future.

The fair also marked the Canadian centennial.[46] Fifty million people visited Montréal

over the course of the exposition.

As if following the fortunes of the city's economic decline and political turmoil in

the following decades, the old exposition site and its installations, its amulets of high

technology, fell into disrepair. By the eighties, the site lay in space-age ruins: fire had

destroyed the outer skin of the Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome, while various

pavilions were collapsing and were dismantled. Alexander Calder's 65' x 83' x 53'

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[45]His particular expressions have been called futuristic and motorik.

[46]The federal government was not initially a supporter of the project. Montréal
Mayor Jean Drapeau insisted that the fair come to Montréal, stubbornly forging ahead
despite the skeptics.

stainless steel, monumental stabile stood silently as a memorial to imagination. This

backdrop became a popular spot in which to recreate the "apocalypses of futures past."[47]

Reopened as Parc Jean Drapeau in 2000, it remains a symbolic and mythical locus in the

consciousness of the city and province.[48] The Calder statute has been recuperated as the

iconic centrepiece of regular, outdoor, Sunday electronic music events,[49] creating a kind

of ritualistic link between technologies and aspirations of yesterday, and now.

A mix of artistic and technology oriented activity, which may have had its spark

during the world's fair, forms part of the background from which MUTEK arises, and

contributes to an "innovation narrative" that weaves through the last several decades in

Québec, appearing in cultural and economic policy as well as the mythos of the city. This

chapter explores the confluence of economic reorientation, city branding and policy

initiatives that intersect with the MUTEK festival. While small and economically

insignificant to the city in terms of impact, the festival may be one of the best examples

of a confluence of new policy and economic orientations, globalization and forward

looking innovation that the city has to offer, combining the innovations of technology in

the fields of music and visual art practice with a fierce sense of place, while capitalizing

on the movement and circulations offered by the forces of cultural globalization, like

cultural tourism. Here, I will examine definitions of the creative city and cultural

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[47]Scenes for Robert Altman's post-apocalyptic ice age film Quintet were shot on site, as was the "Greetings from Earth" episode of Battlestar Galactica, which portrayed it as the ruins of a city left behind after a biological attack.

[48]The baseball team was the Montréal Expos, whose headquarters happened to be at the Olympic Stadium, the city's other major play on the world stage, which also expressed a kind of futurism in its architecture and orientation.

[49]Piknic Elektronik, promoters of the Sunday event, and MUTEK share office space and personnel and collaborate on some programming. The symbolic significance of the site is not lost on the organizers.

economy, examine the funding structure of MUTEK and offer a critique of the festivalization of culture and policy at the municipal and other levels.

PREQUEL

In the years leading up to, and following Expo 67, Québec developed a concentration of space age industries and companies in the areas of aerospace/aeronautics engineering, telecommunications, transportation and software (Cohendet, Simon, and Grandadam 2009, 7). The last couple of decades have also seen the growth of many Montréal-based groups, organizations and institutions dedicated to sound, music and image that are technology driven, encompassing electronic dance culture, experimental electronic music, multimedia and cutting-edge digital arts. The Daniel Langlois Foundation, the Moment Factory, the Elektra festival, Piknik Elektronic, The Society for Art and Technology, Hexagram, the Cirque du Soleil, Geodezik, and Ubisoft represent a few, among a wide variety of institutions and groups based in Montréal.

Distinct cultural and socio/political circumstances in the province have led to some unique orientations toward arts and culture and a tradition of avant-gardism and artistic life. Culture in particular has a proven to be a serious political wedge between the province and the current federal government, as citizens in Québec accept culture as a crucial part of daily existence. Some of the province's self determination, particularly insofar as language and cultural life is concerned, might be traced to "Le manifeste du refus global:"

> A manifesto protesting against the alienation of French-Canadian culture, issued in 1948 by a small group of artist lead by Paul-Émile Borduas played a defining role in promoting freedom of expression and creation as a key to assert Québecers' identity. This seed grew along the "Quiet Revolution" (La Révolution Tranquille), the socio-political and economic emancipation movement of Québec

society in the fifties and sixties (ibid.).

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB), still based in Montréal, became a powerhouse of innovation and artistic achievement in the 1950s, and the province began to develop its own culture industries in film, television production, and music. There is already a long history of experimental music in the Montréal, and the province. One of the longest running new music and improvisational festivals on the continent takes places annually in the small Québec town of Victoriaville. Festivale International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville (FIMAV) has been showcasing the provinces electroacoustic and musique actuelle[50] communities for more than twenty years. Electroacoustic music programs are part of the university curriculum throughout the province, and small avant-garde arts organizations proliferate. Even early Norman Mclaren films with their electronic tone soundtracks are considered by many to feature some of the first experimental electronic music.

The music scene in Montréal has been enjoying a media cultivated next big thing moment since *Spin* and the *New York Times* drew attention to various ascendant Anglophone rock bands and artists in the middle of the decade. Geoff Stahl has been writing extensively on the Montréal music scene and examines how "mythographies of place" (Stahl 2006, 141) contribute to a bohemian atmosphere that encourages not just musicmaking but all manner of artistic and cultural life. Mythographies are feelings of place conveyed in and through art forms that create an aura of place and they form, "the imaginative infrastructure underpinning the city's creative milieus" (Stahl 2006, 145).

Having been declared both a 'Vegas' and a 'Paris of the North' over the years,

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[50]An improvised music originating in Quebec in the late 1970s, that combines electroacoustic, contemporary jazz, rock and folk modes.

Montréal exudes a reputation for both its permissive nightlife culture and its European

character.[51] Writing in the Montréal Gazette on some of the more esoteric notions that

contribute to a city's overall readiness for a shift to more 'creative' based economics,

Richard Florida declared:

> Montréal is part of an open to experience region. Like New York and San
> Francisco, it craves new experiences. Such regions are the springboards for
> human creativity. They are magnets for those who may not fit into more
> conventional surroundings, but want to express themselves and try new things.
> Open to experience cities have higher rates of innovation and new business
> formation than their rivals (Florida 2008).

CITY CASTING

Throughout history the city has been the centre of creativity and commerce, but

recent global economic shifts have been transforming Western cities into "phoenixes

born out of the ashes of traditional manufacturing" (Costa, Seixas and Oliveira 2009, 27).

To accommodate the so-called 'knowledge', 'creative' or 'cultural' economy that has

risen in its place, cities have been adapting zoning laws to refurbish old industrial

facilities, creating policy that encourages culture as an economic activity, and marketing

and projecting themselves as "sophisticated cosmopolitan centres, competing on a global

scale for prestige, investment and tourists" (Quinn 2005, 10).

The United Nations[52] has even taken up the issue, bestowing titles on cities that

pass their application process. Montréal, like many cities in the world, appears obsessed

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[51]Montréal's dancing culture is well known; the city was also a major centre for
the production and consumption of disco in the 1970s--a precondition that certainly
benefits contemporary electronic music and MUTEK.

[52]Launched in 2004, The Creative Cities Network connects cities who want to
share experiences, ideas and best practices for cultural, social and economic
development. Cities may apply to be endorsed by the network and join the program to
ensure their continued role as centres of excellence and to support other cities,
particularly those in developing countries, in nurturing their own creative economy.

with connecting to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization) initiatives. In 2005, Montréal was the UNESCO world book capital, in

2006, a UNESCO city of design.[53] Work and diplomacy is underway to expand

Montréal's designations into music, food and interculturalism. These titles serve to

promote a city's image as a commodity, to encourage cultural tourism, and promote local

policies that encourage the 'creative industries' in the newly recast 'creative city,' a term

with contentious usage and definition among scholars of the cultural turn in economics.

    "Creativity", itself a vague indicator, "becomes a driver of growth and economic

development, a key factor for the development and creation of value in contemporary

economies, transversal to all activities and social practices" (Costa, Seixas and Oliveira

2009, 27). Concepts and measures of what constitutes a creative economy, creative city,

cultural industry, and cultural workforce have been contested (Markusen, Wassall,

DeNatale and Cohen 2008, 8) and Richard Florida's definition of 'creative class' has

been refuted as "crude and politically repugnant."[54]

    Well before Florida popularized his "creative class" theories and began espousing

ideas about urban planning, other scholars were already investigating the cultural

economies of regions (ibid., 19) and advocating for new zoning and policy orientations.

This research used ideas like 'creative cluster' to describe enterprises and individuals in

both the commercial and non-profit sectors that produced cultural products. A creative

workforce was identified as one that includes thinkers and skilled labour in both arts and

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[53]The SAT (Society for Arts and Technology) was included in a short list of
relevant institutions and museums representing 'today's art'.

[54]In Florida's usage, the creative class boils down to those who have received
higher education, whether or not they are actually doing creative work and excludes all
creative workers without degrees (Markusen, Wassall, DeNatale and Cohen 2008, 19).

culture and other industries. Employment metrics were developed to distinguish between various sorts of workers in the 'creative sector,' in order to make policy and planning easier (ibid.). Cultural industries for example, are said to comprise six broad categories: museums and collections; performing arts; visual arts and photography; film, radio, and TV; design and publishing, including advertising; and arts schools and services (ibid., 22).

Some scholars do not conflate the 'creative economy' with the 'cultural economy' because others using this term, including Florida, include science, engineering, computing, and education sectors in the former (ibid., 10). Florida argues that innovation in science and education creates spillover effects in arts and culture, which is why he includes the metric in his creative cluster (Costa, Seixas and Oliveira 2009, 14). However, this conceptual and definitional confusion goes some way in explaining how the "creative economy" and "knowledge economy" commingle in the discourse.

> The need for definitional clarity has become increasingly acute as applications of the creative economy concept have become more widespread. Although the creative economy notion has focused welcome attention on connections between commercial, nonprofit, and individual creative enterprise, it has resulted in significant confusion when researchers and advocates use inconsistent definitions and measures. Without a shared framework in which to examine cultural economic processes and relationships, there is no way to evaluate the contentions of individual assessments or reliably inform the development of public policy" (Markusen, Wassall, DeNatale and Cohen 2008, 4).

The City of Montréal's various governance and policy strategies conflate the terms without clearly defining what constitutes the boundaries of its economy. Everywhere in the literature, high tech industries are combined with arts and culture: "Creativity in Montréal is strongly characterized by intercultural, interdisciplinary and international exchanges, and by projects linking art and technology" (Bonneau 2007, 15).

Plagued by political and economic uncertainties and recession over the last twenty years, the economy in Montréal has been the subject of much debate. Once a major manufacturing hub, the city has been compelled like many western states and cities, to adapt to new global realities and shift its priorities to knowledge and creativity based enterprise. In 2002, the city and various cultural players embarked on the Montréal, Cultural Metropolis project. It takes as its fundamental point, that culture is the flagship of Montréal's international reputation (Bonneau 2007, 32). The project lays out a ten year action plan (2005-2015), that would promote, among other things, greater access to culture, investments in cultural infrastructures, more varied funding of arts and culture, and the building up of Montréal's national and international image:

> Arts and culture constitute a key development driver for cities in the 21st century. With the business environment, knowledge and innovation, quality of life, and openness to the world, culture constitutes one of the five positioning areas, of the 2005-2010 Strategy for Economic Development of the Ville de Montréal (ibid., 32).

According to recent numbers published in *La Presse,* culture produces an overall impact of twelve billion dollars annually in the Montréal region, or to put it in some context, culture is bigger than the construction industry with nearly 100,000 jobs (Cloutier 2009).[55] Florida's research also shows that:

> More than one-third of the Montréal area workforce comes from the creative class – scientists, technology workers, entertainers, artist and designers, as well as managers and financial types – putting it in the top 10 percent of all regions in North America, and a global leader. Nearly one fifth of the region's workforce forms a super creative core made up of the techies and cultural and entertainment types (Florida 2008).

 Responding to an historic concentration of firms in the fields of aerospace/aeronautics, telecommunications, software development, advertising,

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[55] With an eight billion dollar direct impact, or six percent of GDP.

pharmaceuticals, and in the cultural and clothing/fashion industries, Montréal began

rethinking local policies. In the early 1990s a kind of 'techno optimism' swept the

province, helping to establish the 'multi-media city', a zone set up in Old Montréal, to

encourage new media investment and the video game industry (Leslie and Rantisi 2000:

8). A number of studies have begun to examine links between Montréal's high tech

industries, and smaller non-commercial artistic groups and practices. Cohendet and

Simon have identified these units of commercial activity in the 'creative city' as

Knowledge Intensive Firms (KI). The 'creativity' in a KI firm can be traced to

'communities of practice' (COPS), that form a maze of creative communities of different

sizes and scopes, a "hidden architecture of creativity which starts from the different

elementary communities of specialists" (Cohendet and Simon 2006, 17). Explaining the

ecology of creativity, they focus on the way fashion companies thrive in Paris and Milan,

or movie companies flourish in Los Angeles, examples of how a city can interact and

nurture the economy:

> Creative cities tend to favour a specific "ecology of knowledge" where some
> major KI firms tend to emerge and grow through a specific form of co-evolution
> with that of the city: the city nurtures the KI firm with flows of specialized
> knowledge and creativity, and in turn the main KI firms nourish the creative soil
> of the city through a flagship or anchor role (ibid., 1).

Ecology is an apt metaphor, and well used to describe the interdependence of

activities and industries in a metropolitan area:

> Cities have often been likened to ecological systems, in which a diverse array of
> organisms in close quarters interact with one another in complex ways –
> sometimes competitively, sometimes cooperatively, but always with "spillover"
> consequences for one another (Gertler 2004, 5).

The city of Montréal has identified digital arts and new media as a major sector of

its policy. Because of the concentration of companies working in cutting edge media

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(Geodezik, Moment Factory, Cirque du Soleil), there is now a joint action committee

specifically dedicated to digital arts. Cyberculture is the slightly awkward expression

used in recent city literature to describe and acknowledge this reality. The city of

Montréal, from their 2007 Cultural Metropolis update explains:

> Cyberculture is not a passing fad. Today's world rests on social and economic
> foundations that did not even exist a few years ago. In an era where interaction
> between the arts and new technologies marks the world's new artistic and cultural
> frontier, Montréal can pride itself on being one of the world capitals of
> cyberculture – the artistic and social expression of the penetration by digital
> technology of nearly every human activity. Its media arts centres and products,
> the remarkable contribution of its universities, the diversity and renown of its
> cybercultural thinkers, the ingenuity of its researchers, and the number and quality
> of its e-magazines, have bestowed on Montréal an enviable international
> reputation in the world of cyberculture. Moreover, a high percentage of the
> world's animation and special effects software are produced by local firms or
> companies firmly established in Montréal (Bonneau 2007, 14).

THE FESTIVAL TURN

Every year Montréal hosts some one hundred different festivals, and is a self

declared "city of festivals." Festivals are acknowledged sites and engines of this city's

economy, reputation and cultural life,[56] and have been an expanding part of Montréal's

economy for thirty years. The annual Jazz festival is one of the largest in the world,

claiming 2.5 million visitors annually.[57] The festival scene in Montréal is a competitive

ecosystem, and at the top of the food and funding chain are the juggernaut festivals like

The Montréal International Jazz Festival and Just for Laughs. Even in MUTEK's milieu

there is local competition. The Elektra and Montréal Electronic Groove (MEG) are two

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[56]During the Rendezvous 07, all partners discussed the role of festivals as a major
platform of cultural dissemination in Montréal and abroad. As a result, a commitment to
elaborate and draft a long-term development plan for festivals and cultural events was
included in the Action Plan 2007-2017.
    [57]In contrast, MUTEK's numbers hover around 20,000.

local festivals with crossover audience with a focus on technology, art and music.[58]

MUTEK's funding comes from a mix of governmental sources.[59] But only recently has the festival been identified in the city's strategy. Part of the problem is the competition for scarce dollars from all levels of government, not to mention, the fierce competition among festival organizations themselves. The bigger players have aligned themselves behind an effective lobby group[60] obscuring the existence, and the needs of the smaller festivals and organizations. Smaller festivals consistently get lost in the shadows of the city's big iconic players, who can always argue their immediate economic benefits. Revenue has been the bottom line when it comes to proving relevance when government funding is involved. This poses some problems for MUTEK:

> We barely register on the government radars. A few years ago, the Ministry of Heritage announced there was thirty million for festivals. She wanted to spend more of that money on mid and smaller scale events. The big festivals regrouped right away. And in the end, when they finally announced how they would dispose of it, Just For Laughs and the Jazz festival got a million, our raise was sixty-five hundred dollars. We really have to develop our own arguments about ecology (Mongeau 2010).

The big festivals have been controlling the city and federal agenda. The biggest festivals fall under the funding supervision of the Federal Ministry of Industry,[61]

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[58]They are all very different though Elektra tends toward more explicitly highbrow and academic derived artists and works. MEG features much more popular and urban styles and has merged with the Osheaga festival.

[59]Le Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, le Ministère du Tourisme du Québec, le Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, Musicaction, le Ministère de la Culture, des communications et de la condition féminine du Québec, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, le Conseil des arts de Montréal, the City of Montréal, and Tourisme Montréal.

[60]REMI (le Regroupement des événements majeurs internationaux) includes the Just for Laughs and the Montréal International Jazz Festival.

[61]The Marquee Tourism Events Program is one of several tourism-related programs announced in Canada's Economic Action Plan. These programs provide

considered industries themselves. To maximize their own impact on the economy, the big

players have proposed turning the city into a full festival all at once, with everything

happening in July, as a strategy to capitalize on tourism in the manner of the Edinburgh

festival. Because all the funding and attention goes to the big festivals, Mongeau has

recently spearheaded another initiative, to conceive and create a lobby group for the

smaller niche festivals in the city: The Regroupement:

> We starting talking with the Fringe, MEG and Pop Montréal, a few of the new
> generation festivals to refine and define our own discourse. We are all doing the
> same kind of work. We are all struggling. And we are all part of the same city.
> What we are doing now is creating our own network. At our own scale;
> developing what we need for our own scale, to get a certain response (Mongeau
> 2010).

MUTEK was part of a recent "quartier des spectacles study"[62] that evaluated the

festival for its 'chain of value'. This included the festivals' ability to identify and

incorporate expertise in digital creativity, to bring attention to local and Canadian artists

and to attract audience from outside of the city. It was determined that local partners and

government should support the festival more, as it contributed enormously to establishing

Montréal as a digital arts capital.[63]

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measures to support Canada's economy and stimulate the growth of tourism. They
include the following: one hundred and fifty million over two years for national parks and
historic sites; and forty million over two years to the Canadian Tourism Commission for
domestic and international marketing. Smaller festivals are overseen by the department of
Canadian Heritage.

[62]Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles, Direction des industries culturelles de la
Ville de Montréal, Caisse de la Culture et le Fondaction.

[63]Montréalais, groupe de travail sur l'art et l'industrie du spectacle. "Trois Études
De Cas Relatives À L'art Et À L'industrie Du Spectacle À Montréal: MUTEK,
Foufounes Electriques, Tangente." Montréal: Groupe SCF, October 2007.
And to the "innovation narrative."

CULTURAL TOURISM

The festival has made recent links with Tourism Montréal, and a relationship has developed: "there's a resonance between what we represent and the city" (Mongeau 2010), while awards acknowledging the festival's success with attracting visitors to the city, have also been won. Mongeau has come to see MUTEK as more like a European than a North American festival, something that works in his favour; "especially nowadays, with the cost of travel. When people become more eco-aware, then Montréal and MUTEK will offer an alternative to going all the way to Europe, so I think we need to maintain that kind of difference in North America" (ibid.). Cultural tourism has become a dominant force, the cultural metropolis a new factor in economies of the twenty first century:

> Ten years ago too, tourism was feted by advocates and academics, set to become the largest global industry by the new millennium, fuelled, literally, by commercial aerospace and transport growth, and also by conflating urban 'visitor' activity and flows which had previously been hidden from the tourist gaze (and statistics). Cities become the destination and the sites of intense cultural exchange and experience (Evans 2007, 11).

Cultural tourism forms a huge component of cities' marketing and economic plans these days and festivals are major bait. Studying the relationship between arts festival and their cities, Bernadette Quinn puts festivals in the same procedural category as tourism. Festivals are both global economic phenomena and parts of an industry, albeit one driven by culture. Both, however, are:

> Limited by space and time, and thereby offer a possibility to expand horizons through an intense process of rituality and performance. The market value of this is obvious, and both festivals and tourism cooperate in a joint effort towards the same objective, the objective being a local/regional/national urge to utilize the events and create attractiveness of "the otherness" (Quinn, 2005 6).

Montréal's marketing strategies are keen to exploit the city's unique mythologies,

to trade on its socio-cultural 'otherness,' especially in North America. A festival becomes a way of performing a 'place'. Just as festivals of Irish culture perform something called 'Irishness,' so MUTEK can be seen to be performing Montréal. "In its modern context, the festival has similarly been deployed as either a means of celebrating a sense of local community, or embraced by governments as a symbol of sophisticated cosmopolitanism" (Seffrin 2006, 1). Festivals are destinations in their own right (Prentice and Andersen 2003, 34) and "have been absorbed into the expansive stock of 'products' that tourists desire" (Picard and Robinson 2006, 9). "Selling the place to the wider world or selling the festival as an inseparable part of the place rapidly becomes a significant facet of most festivals. If the selling is successful, then the festival becomes an important image-maker in its own right" (Waterman 1998, 60). MUTEK and Montréal certainly benefit from reinforcing images and practices of innovation.

Promoting and developing cultural tourism is a key platform of Montréal's Cultural Metropolis plan and MUTEK has been actively cultivating this connection to the city in an effort to acquire more provincial support:

> The main success we have lately is in this cultural tourism context. Last year a survey indicated fifty-four percent of the public was tourists – fifteen hundred people. We do surveys every year, but this year we had to hire an outside firm - because of the Tourism Québec grant money. They started supporting the festival last year and part of the requirements for the ongoing support is to have an external firm do a survey. It cost six thousand dollars (Mongeau 2010).

Numbers for 2010 are not yet calculated, but are expected to continue upwards with more than half of the audience arriving from elsewhere. It is a trend that started in 2001, when the festival first noted that more than thirty percent of its audience came from outside of Montréal.

THE TOURIST

The cultural tourist has been identified as a particular animal, "signaling the burst of the passive tourist bubble by 'cosmopolitan engagement'; cultural tourists are insiders, creative business tourists, well educated and employed, often working or studying in the arts, and are cultural aficionados (Evans 2007, 14). Cultural tourists are part of an increasingly mobile class looking for experiential holidays (Quinn 2005, 11), and are seekers of novelty, pathfinders on a new 'creative tourism trail', supported by mainstream and specialist press and media who cater to a 'global elite of culture vultures' (Quinn 2005, 11). According to Waterman's study of the arts festival construct, MUTEK would qualify as a "carnival for elites," attracting only those who have the 'cultural capital' necessary to participate. The *New York Times* recently covered MUTEK's status as a destination on a circuit of electronic music festivals frequented by the 'techno tourist.' It is a global map that includes the major cities in Europe, many with marquee electronic music festivals, like Barcelona, London and Berlin, also Ibiza, along with some new American stops in Seattle, Boston, Miami and even Boulder where there also exist festivals that draw.

Attracting the tourist is plotted into the rollout of every new edition of MUTEK. Thirty percent of the festival's passes are sold in the opening few weeks after the initial program is revealed. New York, Toronto and Boston are the major markets MUTEK pulls from, but it's not unusual for people to arrive from even farther flung places. People traveling the 'techno circuit' are also considered in MUTEK's plans, as it is not unusual for people to attend the DEMF in Detroit a week before MUTEK, and then go on to Sonar in Barcelona a couple of weeks later.

CULTURAL BUSINESS

A recent study of Berlin, and its new professional scenes, has identified another new force in the creative economy. The *culturepreneur* describes a hybrid of artist and entrepreneur, someone who has made a "skillful transition to self-employment in cultural production" (Lange 2005, 79). Culturepreneurs are generally people able to adapt to new forms of collaboration. Impressive projects often emerge from the visionary leadership of individuals or small groups of artists (ibid., 91). Even before committing to a decade directing MUTEK, Alain Mongeau had been driven to network: "I was managing a whole international organization and a network. I guess I took everything – conclusions of what didn't really work at ISEA and kind of applied them. Instead of looking for consensus – I learned to just go and do things" (Mongeau 2010). His work establishing ISEA in Montréal, the realization of the SAT, the building of a living and working context around MUTEK in Montréal, and his sharing of skills and knowledge at the global level qualify Mongeau for such a title.

Most of MUTEK's substantial debt has been carried, until just weeks ago, as Mongeau's personal debt. A recent grant has stabilized the festival's bottom-line. But this sort of singular individual responsibility for the finances of the festival shows how projects like MUTEK are really small entrepreneurial cultural businesses.

As a non-profit arts organization, MUTEK and its festival arm don't make money, and can apply to the government for funding, much of which comes with stringent conditions. Other revenue comes from sponsorships usually with technologically appropriate companies, while other services are exchanged (advertising, transportation, hotels). The budget for the first MUTEK festival was under two hundred thousand

dollars; for the last several years, it has hovered around five hundred thousand in cash, with another two hundred and fifty thousand or so added through exchange of services and sponsorships (Groupe SCF 2007).

As a non-profit arts organization, MUTEK is able to apply to various levels of government for funds. Non-profit arts organizations receive funding in part as a way of distributing funds to artists and every MUTEK festival depends on grants related to local and national artists. In this way, the festival operates like an artist-run centre, filtering the distribution of monies to artists. This kind of peer and colleague based distribution method is meant to help ensure quality, as opposed to funding artists individually. In this way, MUTEK functions to nurture and present indigenous talent. The festival must also adopt a formal governance structure with a board of directors, who oversee and approve budgets. A well-chosen board can lend credibility to a funding application, and lobby on behalf of the festival. MUTEK's board has been assembled with these things in mind. A strong board features people with business acumen and appropriate cultural and political connections.[64] They meet four times a year to discuss budgets and other business related to the festival organization. MUTEK's current board will elect a new president later this year.

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[64] MUTEK Board: Mr. David Moss, President of Board (President, ZicatelARTS Arts Management Inc.), Mr. Pierre Bellerose, Vice-President of Board (Vice-President of Research, Public Relations and Product Development for Tourism Montréal), Mr. Pascal Lefebvre, Secretary Treasurer of Board (Founder and President Director, Piknic Electronik), Mr. Jean-Robert Bisaillon, Administrator (Vice-President, Iconoclaste Musique Inc), Mr. Dean Chenoy, Administrator (Entertainment Lawyer, Heenan Blaikie Law Firm), Mr. Philippe Gervais, Administrator (Senior Councillor, Capital Hill Group), Mr. Tim Hecker, Administrator (Musician and Composer)Mr. Alain Mongeau, Administrator (Founder, General and Artistic Director, MUTEK), Mr. Julien Roy, Administrator (Musician and Composer, member of the creative-and-digital-arts collective Artificiel)

Alain Mongeau has been the one constant through many impermanent staffing configurations. The festival runs on three full time salaries, augmented during festival season by dozens of short-term contracts. A recent merging with Piknik Electronik has allowed for the sharing of resources and production. The first programs were curated and designed along with Eric Mattson, and, later, Vincent Lemieux. Like many small festivals, MUTEK relies on a small army of volunteers and interns to run merchandizing booths, errands, and provide artist pick up and other services. Its personnel situation is unstable and ever shifting. A lot of the business of the festival depends on Mongeau's personal credibility, his social and cultural capital. In some ways he has had to be a politician for the festival, especially since the content and form have the potential to cause consternation with funding agencies. In high risk or new territory, personal credibility is crucial:

> When credibility is not yet developed. When little else is available or can be trusted, these people become key institutions. They make connections, ameliorate skepticism and propose project ideas. They move the process forward against all odds. Usually such champions combine their commitment as an individual with a high position in a formal hierarchy: they use resources and organizational 'weight' to initiate the process" (Kuznetsov 2007, 17).

MAKING SPACE

Despite strides and promises to recognize innovation, technology, and the new forces at work in the cultural landscape, and by extension, the economy, funding for arts groups and smaller festivals in Montréal has lagged. Very recently, The Montréal Chamber of Commerce called for more money from the private sector, which already contributes twenty-one percent to the total arts and culture budget of the city, while wages earned by cultural workers are well below national averages; the sector is fragile. (Cloutier 2009) The Québec Minister of Culture and Communications suggests that one

solution is to increase funding for small cultural organizations. Earlier in 2010, the mayor reiterated that he would follow through on its election commitment to index the fees the City pays artists, a measure that would cost 2.7 million dollars over four years; and the budget of the Montréal Arts Council was to increase to 12.5 million over the same period (ibid).

Urban regeneration policy in many cities has been able to support smaller, niche and avant-garde organizations, and stimulate the cultural economy by helping them secure spaces. Once derelict spaces and warehouses in the former East Berlin have been recuperated for small music, media and tech businesses. Manchester has been remade through its rezoning and nighttime cultural policies (Brown, O'Connor and Cohen 2000, 438). Montréal has already allocated spaces: the multimedia city rejuvenated the old port more than ten years ago, supporting high-tech and new media companies, where more than 6000 employees now work (Cohendet and Simon 2006, 4); the province of Québec profited massively from the success of Le Cirque du Soleil, who were awarded a substantial site to develop their practice; The SAT is an example closer to the MUTEK story, a lab for digital and new media creations; it first occupied an abandoned former bank in the heart of the red light district and near museums and after hours clubs. The brand new "quartier des spectacles" is a newer way to give space to creative activities, and MUTEK has made sure to have a relationship there. In their study of KI firms and 'communities of practice' Cohendet and Simon, argue for the creation such spaces so groups can practice creativity: "spaces" would become "places" – "playgrounds for creativity", where projects can arise from experimentation, and where communities can perform, showcase their talents and share with other communities (Cohendet and Simon

2006, 14). Other "places" they call for include cafes, restaurant and shops, informal places where knowledge and sociability are exchanged (ibid., 13). Having a location for activities is a key to nurturing innovative and new COPS.

MUTEK has been nomadic since disassociating from the Ex-Centris complex. Spectra, the organization that operates the Jazz Festival have been awarded space in the new *quartier des spectacles*, and Mongeau has been considering real estate as another way to stabilize the organization and provide a hub for artistic and cultural development. As Waterman points out: "The temporal character of the festival form, means, that unless there is a permanent mark on the landscape, such as the building of a concert hall, most festivals are destined to leave only their name and the memories held by the participants and audiences" (Waterman 1998, 58).

CRITIQUE

Specifically studying arts festivals and their cities, Quinn concludes that the outcomes of cities' engagement with arts festivals remains little understood, particularly in social and cultural terms (Quinn 2005, 4). The social value of festivals tend to be disregarded in favour of construing them simply as vehicles of economic generation or as 'quick fix' solutions to city image problems (ibid.). Generally, festivals are judged and evaluated by their economic impact on a region and their attendance numbers. This poses difficulties for a festival the size of MUTEK. Economic impact studies are costly and normally undertaken only by organizations that can make significant claims about these things. The tension between festivals as social and cultural affairs and as forms of commerce has provoked a split in federal funding policy. The Marquee Tourism Program run by Industry Canada does not recognize social or cultural value, treating festivals as

businesses. Heritage Canada and the Canada Council take a broader, less economically-based view and fund smaller organizations.

The industrial view of culture remains contentious for many critics and scholars, highlighting the tensions between arts' more esoteric, intrinsic, spiritual side and the commercial, quantitative and popular. Cultural industries produce cultural products, which in the language of capitalism and market ideology, reduces them to the indignity of commodities, measured only by their success and failure in the market place.

The festivalization of culture may also include a quashing of creativity and the encouraging of only a 'safe' art that attracts only commercial sponsors and large audiences (Waterman 1998, 66).

> Prestige projects and place marketing do not necessarily contribute to cultural regeneration and are more inclined to benefit the local middle class and cultural tourists. It is undoubtedly easier to find funding for an evening of 'classical pops' in the open air, appealing to large numbers, than a concert of avant-garde music with limited interest in a small hall (ibid.).

While it has garnered attention for the large percentage of audience that arrives from elsewhere, the effectiveness of MUTEK's argumentation for funding still largely hinges on quantitative data. Goff and Jenkins in their overview of Canadian cultural policy in stimulating or supporting the emergent or 'avant-garde' arts, acknowledge that emphasizing economic indicators in determining policy always hurts art that is on the margins:

> The emphasis on economic goals and indicators also means that some of the most innovative forms of culture making are passed over. Art that is on the margins, that involves social criticism, or that is produced by emerging artists may be overlooked to allow more mainstreams, high profile projects that will pull in the numbers necessary to meet economic targets. Artists and venue managers complain that measuring cultural impact in this way encourages only commercial, mainstream cultural production and discourages innovation and dissent (Goff and Jenkins 2006, 190).

A recent Canada Council action plan makes room for risk and innovation in its policy formation (Canada Council for the Arts 2008), but there exists a disconnect between what the Council advocates and what the government pays for. Most money reaches artists through various non-profit organizations,[65] including some festivals. Non-profit groups tend to be the main sites in which art at the edges incubates. One of the ways this is mitigated is through the dispersal of risk through organizational structures, rather than leaving it to individual artists themselves.[66] Festivals like MUTEK still have an important role not unlike that of artist centres. They are the recipients of funds and are thus compelled to make sure that these filter down, that talent is chosen and curated, and that careers are nurtured.

MUTEK has been able to forge increasingly beneficial associations with its home province and city. Mongeau has been refining his discourse and argumentation, and connections have been made. They are, maybe not surprisingly, based on personal interactions and relationships:

> In the history of the grants we've been getting - one of the first was through the Québec ministry for Montréal as a metropolis. There's someone there who believed in MUTEK and put money in us. That was the third year – twenty-five thousand dollars, which is a lot. Someone had a vision and faith in us. It was risky in a sense, but because of the successes we've been having, they like us. We've become a model of a risk that actually paid off and they feel able to make good decisions and help others. Lots of organizations use MUTEK as an example now (Mongeau 2010).

One of the most vocal advocates for culture and rethinking the role of cities in

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[65] Also known as the third sector that includes all sorts of civic as well as artistic groups.

[66] It is considered unusual to fund artists individually, but in the 2008-09 budget, the Canada Council announced a new initiative of almost five million dollars, targeting individual artists.

promoting and nurturing it, is Simon Brault, vice-chair of the Canada Council, chairman

of Culture Montréal, and the author of the book, *Le Facteur C*, which has been translated

as *No Culture, No Future*. Brault has been incredibly vocal about the role of culture and

new policy orientations. He insists:

> Regular and constant contact with the arts and culture contributes to cultivating
> the components of creativity, which are a critical sense, the ability to stimulate the
> imagination, transcending rigid thinking, the ability to dream, emotive distancing,
> the capacity for transposition, and being able to move away from conventional,
> predictable intellectual and physical behaviours (Himelfarb 2010).

Arts festivals have the potential to "animate communities, celebrate diversity and

improve quality of life" (Quinn 2005, 4). Quinn argues that arts festivals need to be

conceived in a more holistic way by urban managers. There is more to a festival and a

city than hard data and cash flow (ibid., 3). Cities, as recent research around creativity

and policy reveals, have special qualities that make a place:

> The cultural city perspective posits that as, or more important than the physical
> and social city, is the intangible city: the fictional and imagined city, the city of
> dreams and emotions. The wealth of the city is and will be the memory of its
> residents and their eternal reliving and re-transformation within a perspective of
> above all, emotional living experiences (Costa, Seixas and Oliveira 2009, 20).

The relationship between the MUTEK festival and the city Montréal may be seen

as one of mutual advantage and exploitation. Attendance statistics continue to encourage

the relationship with Tourism Montréal while the festival continues to engage with the

physical spaces of the city and expand its reach at both the international and local levels.

A convergence of goals is achieved in their relationship. Each projects itself into the

world, onto the international stage, and both trade on each other's reputations. MUTEK

fits with the city's image of itself as a globally connected, sophisticated, innovative,

contemporary, and sensual place. Innovation, creativity and experimentation have

become buzzwords in the discourse around the new economy, something that bodes well for art and practice at the edges. Risk leads to new ideas, and new ideas are the roots of the so-called knowledge economy. Waterman says that highbrow arts festivals, through their ability to be less influenced by fashion and to engage in innovation are seen as setting directions for the development of culture (Waterman 1998, 63). This is another point of connection between the festival and the city. Mongeau explains:

> We've been adopted by different players in the city. Montréal wants to position itself as an avant-garde city - content wise, a creative city with lots of avant-garde artists, and MUTEK seems to fit into that perception and image that they want to project (Mongeau 2010).

Technologies and art forms that transverse languages have been successful exports in Québec, overcoming the provinces' relative linguistic isolation in North America. The city of Montréal continues to assert that culture is a key driver of its development, economic vitality, and future prosperity. Richard Florida has identified the region's "unique capacity to blend arts and culture with engineering and technology, and to combine that with street level creative energy." He also suggests that Montréal "capitalize on the region's growing music scene and audio identity." MUTEK fits with this. Just as innovation and creativity are among the defining characteristics of electronic/ dance culture (Mcleod 2001, 71), MUTEK personifies the innovation and artistic narratives that are an important part of the city's mythos.

CONCLUSION

> The festival succeeds through its intensity, excellence and
> reputation, not that it is unique (Prentice and Andersen 2003, 20).

There are currently no types or templates covered in the scholarly literature that address a contemporary festival that moves and operates like MUTEK. With scant resources, but enormous ambition, the festival has managed to establish itself in South America, not normally a continent associated with contemporary electronic music or digital artistry, while circulating constantly outside of festival time in myriad other ways. Global sized visions about global participation are what make MUTEK stand out in a very crowded field of festivals. MUTEK has adopted a mixed model that slides between music festival and art event, understandings of club cultures and artworlds, playing on the tensions between the high art discourse around electronic arts and music and more popular, sensual expressions of the culture, like dancing.

The festival mandate expresses openness to new forms, always committed to the evolution and flux of technologically derived art and music, and it contains directives to network and circulate, to seek out new territories and new audiences. The festival reflects and engenders the nature of the global electronic/dance music scenes, and contemporary festival practices. It serves as an illustrative case of contemporary art and new economy meeting. I would argue that its content and aesthetic concerns reciprocally affect its form and movement: transnational, technologically driven, open and dynamic. In order to survive, most festivals, at least to some extent, have to adjust to structures in the global world (Fjell 2007, 138) and the festival has done that in a number of ways. First, by recognizing the situation

Globalization is a process. There's a lot of negativity that goes towards it. And

part of the efforts, part of my discourse in Latin America is to say that we're trying to pour more positive value into globalization. It's an ongoing and irreversible process, so we might as well accommodate ourselves to it, and try to do something positive in the exchange (Mongeau 2010).

Kadushin's theory of networks and circles, designed to account for cultural production systems, looked for homologies between social structure and the content and style of ideas. He also called this inquiry, the "the most vexing problem of the sociology of knowledge," determining that the relationship of social structure to the content and style of ideas still lacks an adequate theory to account for it (Kadushin 1976, 781).

The open model/shared code practices between MUTEK branches, and with ICAS members creates movement and encourages fluid exchanges. Openness is a development tool, an expansion technique that allows for an unrestricted flow of goods and knowledge, different approaches and exchange. However, while a lack of restrictions and obstacles, like money and contracts, may allow for greater productivity and the ability to 'get things done,' this open approach can be problematic. The festival's reputation is always at stake. Openness might also be seen as a logical response to an accelerating process of exchange and interaction in an increasingly speedy world: "the patterns we see in the development of festivals are consistent with that of a strategy for entering the global community (Fjell 2007, 137). A tiny player in Montréal's festival landscape, and even smaller one, globally, MUTEK has achieved remarkable reach and mobility.

The festival is both produced and sustained through webs of relations and networks, while it also facilitates the making of new social and artistic relations between artists and audience, technology and art practices. MUTEK utilizes both emergent and established avenues to survive and prosper: social, aesthetic and technological avenues,

as well as the Internet, festival circuits, artistic diaspora, and 'word of mouth'.

Festivals impact the landscape (human, cultural, environmental, and economic). The city and the festival are physically, politically, artistically and symbolically linked. In the absence of profit or economic impact studies, reputation becomes an important index of progress. Not always accurately though, Mongeau concedes: "we have a reputation; everybody loves MUTEK although they've never been to it. We're a reference point that people fill with what they want to" (Mongeau 2010). Prizes and distinctions of the sort MUTEK has been collecting for the last few years, lend prestige to nascent or non-profit cultural organizations. As part of general legitimacy strategies, these successes can be leveraged with government funding agencies and arts supporters, foreign agencies and foreign governments. MUTEK does not make money, but it creates cultural capital. "The publicity that festivals and events can generate for a community does not only have a cumulative impact on the destination, but also feeds into the image and identity of the community and assists with creating an appealing authenticity" (Fjell 2007, 140).

Québec-based and MUTEK bred artists have become significant and deliberate players in the global creation and exchange of electronic music and digital culture. A Montréal influence and presence can be verified in the press, social media, and in the way the festival proliferates, leaving traces and infrastructure. Provincial and municipal policy, along with MUTEK and its various initiatives have played a major role in that development. MUTEK has plugged into the global circuit. The festival has helped extend the local scene; so successfully that many key artists have moved to Berlin and Canadian artists working in this realm play across continents, which partly explains their relative obscurity at home (they aren't 'here'). Operations abroad continue to shift and change.

New contacts and outposts are developing in Uruguay, with the Cervantino festival in Mexico, and places in Europe, including Barcelona. MUTEK Chile has been on 'hold' for several months now, it's unclear what will happen to the spark there or whether these expansions serve the organization.

SUSTAINABILITY

The festival has been operating from a five-year business and strategic plan, an internal diagnostic document that is about to expire. This plan has been a useful checklist insofar as the festival's infrastructure, intentions and challenges are concerned. Plans are underway to initiate a new blueprint for the next five years. Significantly, because the festival calendar is so crowded, the festival may be forced to change dates for its next edition.[67] Trying to find a landing spot that would maximize its impact in the city during warm weeks, and capitalize on the rhythms of the electronic music festival season are two criteria the festival is working with.

Attendance, number of artists, reach around the world and into the city, continue to expand, and in many respects the organization is thriving. Despite all the experience, infrastructure and successes, the future of the festival is not guaranteed, realities remain precarious. MUTEK has been operating from deficit to deficit. Its challenges are the challenges facing all small non-profit arts organizations – capital is scarce, government subsidies seem to be always shrinking, and such festivals must play cultural politics to survive (Waterman 1998, 68).

Discussions about the festival's future without its founding director have not lead

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[67]The Formula One's return to Montréal during the same weeks as MUTEK means, no hotels and other services are available.

to any conclusions about how to 'pass it on'. Formalizing structures and operations go some way to stabilizing the organization, as would more regular funding. All progressive, entrepreneurial festivals seem to be tied to strong personalities and directors. Montréal is such a hotbed of festivals, that UQAM now offers a tourism management certificate for festival directors. If a recent posting for the directorship of a Montréal literary festival is any indication, the job requires a high degree of specialization and extensive cultural knowledge.[68]

LIFECYCLE

Perhaps festivals all eventually expire. Festivals, like scenes, are "necessarily temporally limited by the fact that they can become stale, or lose their creative drive. They become this way as they "adopt aspects of coherence, stability and predictability" (Janz 2008, 150). Kadushin's cultural networks and movement circles have life cycles: they start out casual and eventually harden and become established or institutionalized over time. Studying the case of a Norwegian non-profit music festival, Lennart Fjell also sees festivals as 'mortal'; they always lead to the same end. They begin modestly, driven by ideologies and idealism, but eventually succumb to the forces of professionalism in order to be considered credible to granting agencies, or they "sell out" and commercialize their operations (Fjell 2007, 133). Reflecting on the milestone of the festival's 10th

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[68]Blue Metropolis director job description: "a dynamic individual with superior management, leadership, entrepreneurial and communication skills. He or she will be recognized for his or her vision, a strategic and a team-oriented leadership and management style together with a personal commitment and experience related to cultural programming and activities. A university degree in an appropriate discipline or the equivalent, as well as broad experience in management, whether in not-for-profit organizations, educational and governmental institutions, or the private sector are required as is fluency in French and English" (Burnett 2010).

anniversary in 2009, Mongeau reveals his sense of cycles and evolution:

> Two years ago we came very close to stopping everything at MUTEK because we had a lot of financial problems. I think it goes even further... there's seems to be a cycle for an organization where you go from somewhere and then you reach a certain peak, you wonder what's next, how to evolve. We hit that wall or a ceiling somehow, about two years ago and it's taken two years to get over it: we've restructured, changed the board, added a board of administration and moved (to new offices). A whole process nobody sees but we've been undergoing - while also preparing for the ten-year anniversary and trying to see things for the next ten years. We don't want to repeat the last ten years, we want to continue, to stay relevant, reinvent, to reinforce our ties with the different funding bodies. We realize MUTEK doesn't belong to us, it belongs to Montréal and there are certain responsibility to the scene, to the arts. That's all ongoing. I have intuition about different things we've been seeding. The team, how we work, why we moved here, some of the collaborations and interconnections that exists and links we are making (Mongeau 2010).

The preceding chapters have attempted to provide a framework and explanation for a rapidly evolving, globally adaptive contemporary culture and an attendant festival. Much of MUTEK's mobility and success connecting around the world is the result of its generosity, its willingness to work openly in local, and foreign environments and with new people. The goal is to express a culture, develop an artistic practice and lifestyle; a value system, a shared experience, and, to ultimately offer change by that experience. In the absence of profit, this is what seems to keep the festival alive. Links and synergies with the City of Montréal, and global conditions like cultural tourism feed these goals. MUTEK provides an example of a 21st century festival: mobile and contemporary in both form and content.

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