

# Sharing songs on Hirakata Square: On playlists and place attachment in contemporary music listening

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**Leonieke Bolderman**   
University of Groningen, The Netherlands

**Stijn Reijnders**  
Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

## Abstract

This article focuses on the relation between music and place. More particularly, it theorizes and investigates how music leads people to imagine places, sometimes resulting in a ‘musical topophilia’: the love for a place based on its association with a particular genre, musician or musical activity. This concept is explored through 17 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Dutch users of music streaming services. The analysis shows how these music listeners connect their love for music to places in four ways: through (1) sound, (2) texts and images, (3) musicians, and (4) places of music production, distribution or consumption. Based on these four mediations, music listening shapes affective geographies.

## Keywords

Holiday, imagination, memory, music, music streaming, place attachment, playlists, vacation

When I’m creating a playlist I see ... a beautiful scenery, the English roads, my window slightly opened, I’m stretched out on the back seat, the music is playing

*(Jaap, 35, call centre employee)*

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## Corresponding author:

Leonieke Bolderman, University of Groningen, Landleven 1, 9747 AD Groningen, The Netherlands.

Email: [s.l.bolderman@rug.nl](mailto:s.l.bolderman@rug.nl)

In this quote, Jaap describes what his mind's eye sees when he is selecting songs to take with him on holiday. For Jaap as for many others, music contributes to the imagining of place, from the mundane and familiar setting of everyday life to dreams of faraway tropical paradise. Prior studies have shown how, in many different settings and cultures, music is closely connected to a sense of place, sometimes even seen as the 'soul' of a landscape (Feld and Basso, 1996; Stokes, 1997).

The ways music and place are connected and imagined point towards a fundamental aspect of being engaged with music. As Connell and Gibson state in their seminal work on music and place: 'despite fabricated geographies and various elements of globalization, places continue to give meaning to people's lives and music' (Connell and Gibson, 2003: 70). However, at this moment, it is not clear how this process works exactly and what role music plays in it.

Research exploring the process of how music can lead to place attachments is scarce. In previous research, the focus has been on how notions of place are constructed *in* music or music-related texts and images, for example, through analysing lyrics, sleeve notes and album covers. Some research has been done that explores how musicians map out place and thereby discuss imaginations of the city (Cohen, 2014). In a study on the Canterbury Sound, Andy Bennett explores the role of the media in creating images of musical places, leading to what he calls 'musical mythscapes' (Bennett, 2002: 89).

Building on this work while going beyond the analysis of particular songs and specific local sounds, this research is concerned with music *listeners*. Moving away from an analysis of the music itself, we aim to explore the underlying process by which music audiences imagine musical places, and the meaning of these imagined places in their love of music. Thus, shifting the focus of research to audience imagining, the central question of this paper is: how do music listeners associate music with place, what do these associations consist of, and what meaning is attached to these associations?

To shed light on the process and meaning of musical place attachments, we conducted an explorative interview study involving 17 Dutch users of music streaming services.<sup>1</sup> Their holiday<sup>2</sup> playlists served as a starting point for conversations about symbolic associations between music and place. 'Holiday playlists' in this article are personal playlists generated by music streaming users to take with on or to commemorate a holiday. Rather than focusing on the technology of the playlists or the music itself, talking about playlists is used as a steppingstone to discuss the role and importance of holiday music and to bring the imaginative connections between music and place to the surface.

## Cultural meanings of place: musical mythscapes

How does music become attached to places, in a way that affective bonds between music and place are created, maintained or intensified? The concept of 'musical mythscapes', provided by Andy Bennett (2002) in a study on the Canterbury sound, provides a first idea. In that study, he explains how the city of Canterbury becomes an important point of reference for the translocal community of fans of the music style that is known as the 'Canterbury sound'. Based on Appadurai's (1996) work on how people manage to find anchors in a world that is characterized by flows of people and products, a musical mythscape is 'a space that is mythologized as in some way informing the essential spirit of a body of live and recorded music'.

Bennett states that the mythscape can be created entirely through the media, in a three-stage process. First, a physical location is appropriated by the media. The resulting representation in the media that circulates beyond the boundaries of the physical location becomes the primary means for an audience to build ideas about that location. In a second stage, the images and information circulating in the media are recontextualized by audiences into new ways of thinking about and imagining the place, with the mythscape as a result. Third, the mythscape then takes on a life of its own: stories, discussions and anecdotes are linked to a place entirely in relation to that place's representation as a mythscape (Bennett, 2002: 89).

Bennett's case of the Canterbury Sound shows how a 'sound' can be constructed in the media and by fans as a musical mythscape, before locals and the local music scene recognize and experience the music they make as such. 'Canterbury' becomes connected to the music in the imagination of the fans as 'standing for' something essential in the music, providing 'a point of reference' for sociability that functions as a unifying element for the fan community and a catalyst for channelling meanings attached to the music (both personal and collective). In a study on Ibiza fans, Cornel Sandvoss similarly argues that it is this fan community and engaging with the 'subjective discourses' circulating in a fan community that establishes the affective link to a musical place (Sandvoss, 2014). However, the processes by which fans and media alike connect music to Canterbury as a location remain unclear.

Moreover, two elements stand out about this theory. First of all, music itself is remarkably absent. Bennett shows the role of the media in creating a connection to an imagined 'Canterbury' and the power of such globally circulating imaginaries. How music as an intangible medium is part of this process, is, ironically, left to the imagination. Second, the question arises how these globally circulating imaginaries become affectively laden, how place meanings turn into place attachments. Place attachment refers to the bond people have with a meaningful space (Lewicka, 2011), their meaningful relations turning space into place (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Place attachment comprises a cognitive dimension, often consisting of cultural meanings attached to place that are shared among groups – for example, Bennett's musical mythscapes; emotional meanings, often relating to personal experiences; and particular behaviour, which strengthens the sense of place (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). The question arises how engaging with music connects the cognitive, imaginary aspects of place attachment with emotional meanings, and what elements of music play a role.

In this article, we argue that an answer to these questions can be found by looking more closely at the relation between music and imaginative practices. Imagining is a mental capacity, an action through which the world is made sense of and given meaning (McGinn, 2004). The imaginary capacities of human beings provide the world with 'an affective texture' (Lennon, 2014:18), offering patterns, images and forms to experience the world.

Listening to music is such an imaginative practice. According to Nicholas Cook (1990), music prompts the imagination in two ways. First of all, music gives rise to what he calls an 'interpretative position', which is comparable to the way literature induces imagining: readers fill in the gaps of meaning that exist between words, and in that sense create a full image of what it is they are reading. Cook argues that music offers this interpretative reading through its paratexts (cf. Genette, 1997), which can be linguistic (lyrics, sleeve notes, etcetera) or visual (music videos, album covers, etc.). Besides this interpretative position,

music also evokes a different kind of imagining: that of experience. According to Cook, most of the time, the listener is not concerned with music's interpretative meaning, but with its effect (Cook, 1990).

Where Cook does not explore this experiential dimension of imagining further, Walton (1994) offers a more detailed account by comparing music to the way novels and paintings stimulate the imagination. One of the differences Walton analyses is the way music and paintings portray space. According to Walton, listeners seem not to have spatial perspectives, even when musical worlds are often discussed through spatial metaphors in the sense that a melody can rise or fall. Therefore, listening to music does not involve imagining soundscapes in the same way as you would imagine seeing a visual image. When imagining a painting, the onlooker injects his or her self into the visual image through having the same perspective as the painting, a point of view, on the fictional world. Walton argues that in contrast, what the listener imagines when listening to music is the experience of mental states like feelings and emotions.

According to Walton, this difference is caused by the absence of a fictional world in music. The picture standing alone establishes a fictional world; there is what Walton calls a 'work world' and a world of 'the game of make-believe' – the image-world the picture shows and the world we imaginatively see based on that image. Walton argues that music has no work world, only the world of make-believe. This means that as opposed to painting and literature, the music itself is not the prop of imagining, but the experience when we listen to it is what sparks our imagination. In semiotic approaches to music, this has been observed as well: in Saussurian terms, music is not a system of signs, but a system of signifiers without signifieds (DeNora, 1986: 87; Turino, 2008).

Where Walton attributes music only with this experiential notion of imagining, in this article we return to the suggestions made by Cook and conceive of imagining as involving both an interpretative and experiential practice: imagining through music combines what one 'sees' based on music's paratexts, and how one 'feels' through listening to music. Moreover, when applied to imagining place, we propose that this process connects the cognitive, culturally shared dimensions of place explained by Bennett, with the affective dimensions of place meanings, creating place attachments. Thus, in order to explore the process of imagining place through music, both kinds of imagining – the interpretative and the experiential – have to be taken into account. In order to bring empirical flesh to this theoretical idea, we conducted an explorative interview study.

## *Methodology*

A grounded theory perspective (Charmaz, 2006) informed the design of the research project, which focused on music listening through music streaming services. Streaming services offer a range of music genres, and are a little less visually focused than, for example, video streaming platforms (Holt, 2011), making it more useful in researching several dimensions of imagining place.

More specifically, the choice was made to focus on the stories music streaming service users tell about creating their holiday playlists. Holiday playlists are defined as the collections of songs users of streaming services put together themselves to take with them on a holiday. The focus of the study is not which specific songs people put into their playlists; the research instead explores the stories users tell about their playlists. Playlist

making is both a way of archiving and a participatory practice (Kibby, 2009: 428) and therefore, holiday playlist making can be seen as a particular activity involving actively making music-place connections. The notion of ‘holiday’ implies going somewhere, either actual or virtual (Urry and Larssen, 2011). Talking about holiday playlists therefore foregrounds associations with place, and the stories the interviewees tell about these lists are a way of actively highlighting the connections between them.

As the interviews were aimed at exploring the imagination, a face-to face setting was deemed most ideal, as playlists could be shown easily and discussed, while rapport was easier to establish in a comfortable and more personal setting (Reijnders, 2015). Several streaming services were approached for user data, and based on the response of Spotify Netherlands the choice was made to focus on users of that streaming service (the data can be found in Appendix 1). Spotify has been operating in The Netherlands since 2010 and has acquired a dominant market share.

For this study, 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Dutch heavy users of streaming services, ‘heavy users’ meaning people who use streaming 5–7 days per week (Nylund Hagen, 2015). We chose to focus on heavy users as they are familiar with streaming and use it often, making it less likely that the interviews would become focused on discussing the technology of streaming. Interviewees were found using Twitter, Facebook, Dutch music streaming fan website [www.muzyiekstreamen.com](http://www.muzyiekstreamen.com), plus subsequent snowballing to achieve a level of variety (see Appendix 2 for an overview of the respondents). In order to check variety with respect to age and gender, we took into account the user data obtained from Spotify Netherlands.

The interviewees were not previously known to the interviewing researcher and ranged from 22 to 50 years of age, the average being 33. They were living in different cities, towns and villages geographically spread throughout the Netherlands. The interviewees were predominantly middle and upper class, as they had sufficient funds to travel, to buy streaming equipment and to subscribe to the streaming service. Their educational background ranged from not having finished secondary education to having obtained a university master’s degree; their occupations and music genre preferences were varied.

The interviews were seen as active interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 1999), in which knowledge is constructed in the conversation between interviewer and interviewee. This fits with the research aim to explore imaginative practices. Thus, the interviews were set up to stimulate the imagination, facilitating the interviewees to access their Spotify account and playlists. The interview design was semi-structured (Bryman, 2016) to ensure similar topics were discussed during each interview while taking care not to steer the interviewee into expressing predetermined concepts. The four main themes guiding the conversations were (1) the music taste of the interviewees; (2) the role of music in everyday life; (3) streaming and specifically holiday playlists, often leading into a discussion of (4) music and travelling habits and memories.

The interviews lasted on average 70 minutes and were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview. The analysis started with open coding (Charmaz, 2006), meaning that we read and re-read the transcript at hand to get a good feel for it, and then would proceed with attaching codes in Atlas.ti. We predominantly used gerunds in coding (‘feeling nostalgic’ instead of ‘nostalgia’) and coded line-by-line (Charmaz, 2006), which ensured the close fit with the data and kept the processual nature of social life at the forefront of our minds in the analysis.

After the initial open coding phase, a process of selective coding followed (Charmaz, 2006), through which connections between and within categories and subcategories were made. At this stage, some codes and subcategories ‘broke down’, while others emerged as more poignant across the transcripts. We then moved towards identifying preliminary theories and collapsing categories into overarching themes through an iterative process of moving back and forth between the data and the research questions, interview guide, observations and literature.

Because of the connection of music stories to personal identity, the interviews had elements of life stories in them, making it important to pay attention in the analysis to the interviews as narratives. A story is analysed not only on a thematic level, but also on use of language, character development, narrative structure and narrative space (Jahn, 2005). This means that besides to thematic coding, we paid attention to the language used in the interviews (metaphors, returning wordings or idioms, the place of certain remarks and utterances in the interview), and to the construction of narrative space, as this is especially interesting in relation to the research questions: how do interviewees describe space and place, what words do they choose to talk about this, and so forth.

## Analysis

The interviewees often associated music with places in a diffuse and meandering way. Making sense of the specific aspects of music that triggered these associations, we identify four ways of linking music to place. First, music was connected to place through sounds, for example instrumentation, voice and musical structure. Second, other aspects of music – such as lyrics and album covers – evoked associations with particular places. Third, locations were linked to the biography of the artist or musician. Fourth, music was associated with the places where it was produced, distributed and/or consumed.

In line with the way Bolter and Grusin (1999) conceptualize mediation, we will call these four ways in which aspects of music were linked to place ‘mediations’. Media, according to Bolter and Grusin, should not be seen as neutral carriers of meaning; the characteristics of the medium to audiences obscure or overemphasize the way the medium functions as mediator of cultural meanings. During the interviews, music served as such a mediator of meanings, and became either a *pars pro toto* for imaginings of place or a ‘hook’ to evoke place associations.

First of all, the sounds of music were associated with particular places, such as specific music rhythms, structures, and vocal accents. Musical instruments were mentioned most frequently as evocative of places:

When I think of Lisbon, I have some sort of guitar in my head ... not because I experienced that, it's just a feeling that arises

(Ronald, 25, secretary)

As for the guitar for Ronald, musical sounds functioned as signs, as something that stands for something else. According to Turino (1999), music primarily consists of icons and indices, specific types of signs that give the listener the idea that the connection between music and meaning is natural. The interviewees likewise saw the way sound evoked associations with places as a natural connection, especially with respect to musical instruments. Musical instruments, when made from local materials, were seen by the

interviewees to embody a country, to possess in some way the ‘essential spirit’ of a landscape. This was especially the case when the interviewees discussed world music, played with traditional instruments; electric guitars, for example, were associated with specific places less often and less directly.

Second, the interviewees connected music to place through elements of music other than sound, such as language and images – music’s secondary sign systems (Turino, 1999). Language was overtly present in the form of lyrics or the title of a song:

The language. That’s why ... Paulo Conte sings in Italian, so that is why I immediately associate that music with Italy

(Martijn, 44, personal banker)

In this quote, the language of the lyrics denoted a country. Language was a very obvious connection to place to the interviewees, almost to the extent that they felt silly bringing it up. Lyrics or the song title pinpointed a song to more specific locations, which connects to the central role texts play in previous literature on the topic (e.g. in Connell and Gibson, 2003).

Next to linguistic triggers, images played an important role in making non-sonic connections between music and place. These were encountered, for example, in music videos and sleeve notes that interviewees found online. They referred particularly often to films, documentaries and series for place references, for example, when interviewees had seen a documentary about places that inspired artists. Frequently, the soundtrack of a movie provided a link between music and place:

My playlists are very much influenced by movies, I see it in front of me: the desert, cacti, long roads and ... just drive

(Camilla, 25, student)

Camilla in this quote referred to how watching movies and listening to their soundtracks created symbolic links for her between music and certain landscape elements. Thus, the connections between music and place can be seen as symbolic-geographical links: music or an aspect of music came to stand for a city, region or country, in which music served as a *pars pro toto* (similar to the way instruments represented place identity) or in which music served as a ‘hook’ to evoke these imaginations.

The third mediation was the biography of the composer or artist, and the interviewees experienced this as an especially powerful connection. Jaap, for example, explained how he selected music for his playlist for his holiday to Sweden:

I just look through my own [listening] history: what bands do I know from Sweden? It has to fit together to some extent ... because you’re putting it into one playlist ... when you have one beautiful acoustic song and after it you get some kind of ... heavy metal ... skull music ... nah

(Jaap, 35, call centre employee)

Jaap put music by Swedish bands in his playlist, and he associated different kinds of music with Sweden: ‘beautiful acoustic songs’ and ‘heavy metal’ music, which for him



did not go together into one list. Music therefore seemed to be able to tap into multiple place identities, but not at the same time.

The fourth mediation is associating music with places where the music was produced, distributed or consumed. Several of our respondents associated music with locations such as specific recording studios, record shops and concert venues:

There is a famous concert venue in Colorado in the USA, the Red Rocks, where they have great concerts, by excellent bands, and in a beautiful setting. I would be totally psyched if I got to see that one day

*(Paul, 50, marketing manager)*

I'm not someone to go like: 'oh there, this is the studio where ...' or well ... I do think that's cool, but it's not necessary to go there

*(Mayke, 29, psychologist)*

I'm going with my housemates Marcel and Bas, huge vinyl junkies, and we will visit a lot of famous Berlin record stores and do a lot of digging

*(Ronald, 25, secretary)*

The above-mentioned locations differ widely, but they have one thing in common: they were each seen as important geographical markers for engaging with music.

## **Musically imagining: a sense of place**

From having discussed the 'how', in this section we move to the precise content of these imaginations: what do people see when they listen to music? In an analysis of the Jimmy Buffet song Margaritaville, Bowen (1997) explains how the lyrics to the song lead fans to imagine Margaritaville. Some fans imagine Margaritaville as a tangible place somewhere in Key West, while others describe it as a more elusive state of mind, an intangible imaginary place removed from everyday life (Bowen, 1997: 106). In the interviews for this study, the imaginations talked about likewise ranged from concrete, visual images of music-related places, to non-visual, intuitive imaginings of place – a kind of atmosphere – evoked by music.

The practice of putting together the playlist before actually going on holiday was an important drive for imaginative practices, as the quote by Jaap at the start of this article showed. According to Malpas (1999), visual imaginations are influenced by the experiences we have, they draw on our sensory input. Likewise, the interviewees drew largely on their own personal experiences to fill in visual images of music. Take, for example, this quote by Pascal, when he described what he imagined when he listened to particular music in his 'travelling' list:

What I go back to is not Japan the country. I go back to Hirkata, the little square in the park where I was talking with all those guys until dawn, drinking beers, talking about music. We were exchanging music. That is what I go back to, not the concept of Japan

*(Pascal, 30, account manager)*

Pascal saw a very specific scene in front of him. He described the moment during his gap year in Japan, when he connected to others through sharing music. The social dimension of



the holiday playlists in fact was never far off during the interviews. The lists contained music that was meaningful to the interviewees because of the connection the music created with other people. Music in this way functioned as a powerful hook evoking complex images in which time, place, and memories converged. In these visual imaginations, place was not the centre of attention – Pascal emphasized this as well – but place and music were part of an imagination that revolved around something else: social relations and memory.

Family and friends also exerted an important influence on evoking visual images of place in another manner. Images shown by family or friends, for instance, holiday snapshots, often created ‘inherited memories’ (Keightley and Pickering, 2012) connecting music to the place in the picture, even if the interviewee had never actually been there.

Besides ‘inheriting’ images from friends and family, the media were an important source of visual images. Already described as the second mediation, the interviews showed that mediated images filled in the gaps when music had no specific visual based on personal experience. When asked to try to make a diffuse sense of place more concrete, stereotypical associations were called upon to fill in the blanks, often with reference to a movie or famous image. Apparently, these mediated images did not just help in making a first link between music and place, but could become and remain rather dominant in the music-place association, especially when there was a void of other mediations.

From the interviews, it became clear that this connection between music and mediated image was not a neutral association. Through their connection with music, the images often became explicitly *nostalgic* icons of place. As Lisette explained,

Music sometimes gives me a nostalgic feeling ... it is a longing for the past, without the past ... I mentioned that when talking about Paris: I only know Paris the way it is now. But the way you see it in old movies, the way it is romanticised, it imprints a certain image in your head, and when I’m there, I search for some sort of recognition in those old images

*(Lisette, 26, student)*

In the imagination of the interviewees, nostalgia played an important role, as it was a frequent reference point for discussing music and place in the interviews. The interviewees had seen particular images repeatedly in the media, creating a sense of ‘returning’ to these places when it was their first actual visit, as Lisette described.

The way Lisette expressed nostalgia was through referring to a particular feeling. During the interviews, it became clear that visual images were not the most prominent way music stimulated the imagination. Mood was the single most important theme to emerge, evoking a sense of place. As has been pointed out in research on playlist making and listening, a predominant use of music streaming is to amplify or change mood (Avdeeff, 2012; Nylund Hagen, 2015). The interviewees saw holiday playlists as important tools for mood management when preparing for and during the holiday. When asked about the places people thought of when selecting music or listening to music on their playlists, they referred to a place based on one of the four mediations, for example, the country a music genre originated in (fourth mediation), and the sense of place it induced was explained through the mood it stimulated:

With some music you have a very strong visual image of a place, for example that album by Jewel we talked about. With Bachata and Salsa, it is more a feeling of a place, and less visual images

*(Naziha, 34, owner start-up)*

This feeling of place was non-specific in the sense of what the particular location looked like or what the specific situation was. As Naziha explained, it was about having a certain feeling towards a broader idea of place, for example, a city, region or country. This is also what Lisette mentioned when she described Paris: she described her feelings towards the city, combined with what she saw in her mind's eye.

What happened in these associations between music and place is that the interviewee imagined the experience of mental states associated with both that place and the music – it was the experiential aspect of imagining at play. Alice described this process very clearly:

I have listened to those artists ... and then I think to myself: 'would I listen to this when I feel really happy, or when I'm feeling lost?', some sort of mood stamp is what I put on it. What causes that is a lot of things: the lyrics, the feeling in the song ... that the song expresses to me anyway. Whether it is slow or fast, the rhythm, the type of sounds ... I put it in a certain box in my head, which has no name, it's more a feeling. And the place the music is from is a very nice and convenient way to link that, to put it all in the same drawer. So where the band comes from gets linked to the feeling the music evokes, and then that place also evokes that feeling in me

(Alice, 26, secretary)

The feeling or mood that listening to music evoked, was connected to place through one of the four mediations. In this example, it is where the band was from. This place then took on the characteristics that actually described the mood of the interviewee. During the interview, Alice continued to describe Scandinavian music as making her feel at ease, which created an idea of 'peaceful Scandinavia' in her mind. In the quote of Lisette, the association between music and place established the idea of 'nostalgic Paris'.

The linguistic analysis of the interviews supports this idea. 'Peaceful Scandinavia' and 'nostalgic Paris' are specific types of metonym, called *hypallage*. A hypallage means that the adjective projects a characteristic that refers to the speaker onto the noun.<sup>3</sup> In this case, the mood experienced by the music listener was projected onto the place, effectively becoming part of the place identity for the listener. Music listening therefore turned place identity into place attachment for the interviewees.

As the interviewees emphasized repeatedly throughout the interviews, making playlists around moods associated with places was not something they began doing when they started using the streaming service. It merely allowed the interviewees to make this musical imagination tangible more easily than it had been before.

## Creating attachments to place: towards a musical topophilia

So far we have seen how connections between music and place are made and what these musical imaginations actually look like. Finally, an important theme in the stories of the interviews was the way music created a link to the multiple layers of place meaning. An example is how the interviewees discussed music scenes or the 'sound' of a place:

If you look at it rationally you could have that music right here, but it is also about the scene around it, and the ambiance. It is not just the music ... but also the experience, of the people,

the mood ... the energy. The music is in some way 'pure' over there, even though I know that's an illusion ... I would like to find out if it's really that different from here, or if it's just stories

(David, 32, marketeer)

David in this quote described how the vibe of a place, the local developments in the music style, and the live performances of music in the place a genre or style emerged from, all added up to making experiencing music in that place special. To him, places of origin somehow added something to the music itself, making music – in his words – 'pure'.

As David also alluded to, even when the interviewees were aware of the relativity of this idea, and acknowledged that music originates from many places, that a genre can travel, or can be from different places, still the idea of a particular local spirit, expressed in a local sound, was held on to. For the interviewees, music played an important role in tapping into the identity of places. The interviewees in this sense seemed to follow in the footsteps of the 19th century Romantic traveller, connecting to the landscape through tuning in to the perceived essence, or *genius loci*, of place. As Mayke describes,

It's the idea of the modern pilgrimage, because you have a purpose. Whether that is because you're a fan of the music, or you have an entire world in your mind ... you want to go there. Because it's a nice goal to have. When you do a roadtrip, it's more about combining the experience with the music, to complete that experience as it were

(Mayke, 29, psychologist)

Mayke in this quote described how music helped her to fantasize about locations, which could turn into detailed imaginary worlds that subsequently stimulated a need to explore them physically. In this way, the stories of the interviewees showed what Scannell and Gifford (2010) call 'proximity-maintaining behaviours'; practices to maintain and build an emotional connection to place. As theorized by Bolderman (2020), these practices are central to the process and popularity of contemporary music tourism.

At the same time, music helped Mayke to connect to the landscape while on the road, showing how the perceived essence of a place for her was not found in one specific spot, but was present in the totality of the landscape. As recounted by Mayke and other interviewees, traversing through that landscape while listening to music made the experience complete. For some interviewees, standing in and experiencing a landscape evoked imagining hearing music that fitted the moment. This experience of 'involuntary musical imagery' has also been observed in research on music tourism (Bolderman and Reijnders, 2017).

What contributed to this analysis is that the interviews were conducted in Dutch, and in the Dutch language the notion of attuning to the landscape manifested itself in the repeated use of the words 'stemming' (personal mood, feeling) and 'sfeer' (atmosphere of a space, ambiance) in relation to holiday playlists:

That the feeling I have about the music, matches with the ambiance of the location ... that confirms to me in a way: oh right, yes

(Alice, 26, secretary)

Alice in this quote discussed ‘depressed music’, explaining her choice of words (again a hypallage) through which she connected her mood with particular music and with her stay in England. This way, she tried to bridge the distance between herself and the places she moved through: she matched the mood of the music she listened to with the atmosphere of the place. In this sense, music served as a symbolical tool to explore and bridge the perceived boundaries between perception and imagination.

It also worked the other way around, when music served to allow interviewees to disconnect from place and social interaction, through retreating into a personal music bubble. This is what happened when interviewees, for example, listened to music on holiday in the way they did at home, moving from one holiday location to a different holiday location, or back home listening to the holiday playlist on the morning commute. Music still connected to an imagined world, in these cases, however, it was different to that which the interviewee physically inhabited.

Music in this sense was used as a tool to literally tune into or out of a landscape. At moments during the interviews, self and landscape even converged entirely. Not coincidentally, this happened when the interviewees talked about musical memories of meaningful holidays. Holiday music frequently conjured up vivid memories that were described into a remarkable amount of visual detail. These were very emotional moments, or played an important role in the life story of the interviewee. Pascal explained this in relation to his memories of Hirakata Square:

Music is a way of sharing with people. Music defines who I am. What I listen to, is who I am. It’s the way in which I can present myself to others, by telling what music I like and what I listen to and what I can recommend. I do that at home, it contributes to my life, my well being, to my enjoyment. But it also works like that in Japan ... the moment you recommend a band, and he recommends something to you, and you listen to it and you think it is awesome. That was there, there in Japan, in that square, in that moment. But you only experience that with things that really speak to you

(Pascal, 30, account manager)

Sharing songs in Hirakata Square became symbolic for the important formative trip made by Pascal; it was his year away from home in a different culture, and as he realized during the interview, the trip has come to mean something special for him. Other interviewees mentioned music-place memories of their last holiday together as a family before a divorce, the first holiday alone without parents, and the first holiday after a bad break-up. These memories show how places functioned as a narrative element in telling the story of self (DeNora, 1999), the landscape becoming the setting for personal memory. In line with what DeNora calls a process of introjection, songs that were played often, either as a local hit or because they were on the holiday playlist during that trip, have become symbolic for that stage of the interviewees’ life. What this study shows is that these songs continue to evoke a specific *spatialized* memory. The memory is a moment in which place identity, music and personal identity meet, imbuing both place and music with personal meaning. This creates a music-related form of what Tuan calls ‘topophilia’: the emotional attachment to place that is central to human experience (Tuan, 1974).

## Conclusion

Based on a series of 17 in-depth interviews, this study has shown how associations between music and place came about, what these associations consisted of and finally, the meaning of these associations in everyday life. The analysis has shown how music was associated with place in several, often meandering ways. Analysing the specific elements of music that evoke imaginations, four mediations between music and place have been distinguished. First, musical sounds and structures were connected to places; second, secondary sign systems such as lyrics and images found in documentaries, movies and online music videos established a connection to place; third, music was connected to important geographical markers in the history of a specific band or the biography of the artist; and fourth, music linked to places of production, distribution and consumption, such as record stores and concert halls.

The analysis further showed that in this process, music functioned as a hook and as a symbol of what made particular places special to the interviewees. More specifically, the interviewees discussed how they projected their feelings of listening to music onto place identities. The linguistic analysis supported this idea, by identifying the frequent use of *hypallage* in the transcripts, a type of metonym that was shown to be especially efficient in expressing the transfer of music listening and feeling to place and vice versa. This is how interviewees gave their rather ephemeral musical 'sense of place' meaning.

This potentially created a musical *topophilia*: the attachment to place, based on its association with a particular genre, musician, or musical activity. For the interviewees, playlist making was a way to externalize their associations. Using playlist making as a prompt for interviewing therefore proved to be a useful tool to analyse the process of imagining place.

This analysis contributes to existing research in several ways. First of all, Bennett's (2002) black box of fan narratives surrounding musical mythscapes has been opened up. Fan narratives are varied and ideas of places have multiple facets. Still, this research has added structure to their analysis by showing the four mediations that were used and more importantly, the meaning of these connections to a specific music audience.

Second, this research introduces the notion of the musical imagination, which combines interpretative and experiential sides of imagining. Where previous research mainly focuses on the visual, interpretive aspects of imagining places (e.g. Reijnders, 2015), this research shows how non-visual aspects of experience influence the imagination. This elucidates further how visual and auditory cultures illuminate each other, rather than seeing them as distinct realms of research (cf. Keightley and Pickering, 2006).

Finally, this research shows how processes of place attachment work in everyday listening practices. This conclusion is based on research done in the context of travel, which presupposes a symbolic prominence of place. However, from the interviews it emerged that music and streaming in everyday life were inextricably entwined with mobility. The single most important moment music was listened to by the interviewees, both on holiday and at home, was while in transit: commuting to and from work or school, en route to visit friends and family; traversing the spaces of everyday life.

Thus, talking about holidays brings into the spotlight a musical imagining of places that is firmly rooted within the everyday. Where Michael Bull states that devices such as the iPod make listeners retreat in their own music bubble (Bull, 2007), their own imaginary musical worlds, this research showed a more complex role of music listening while on the move for interviewees. Looking into the 'ultimate ephemerality' (Graves-Brown,

2009) of music through the lens of musical topophilia shows its opposite: place as a symbolic construct retains value, literally as an organizing principle of playlists, but also as a mnemonic-symbolic tool to engage with or retreat from the landscapes travelled through.

These conclusions should be seen in the context of Western culture. It would be relevant to explore the role of place in music practices embedded in non-Western cultures, with traditions of thinking about sound and image that are other than the way these notions are reproduced and negotiated in the narratives of the Dutch interviewees. This way, the conclusions drawn about the role of music in engaging with and retreating from everyday reality can be critically explored.

This certainly would be interesting in light of the ‘rapid pace of globalization’ (Cohen, 2007) as different traditions and ways of thinking about music potentially become intertwined. Playlist making and streaming are practices that give access to rich imaginative worlds that reflect and shape ways to feel at home in the world. In the context of globalization and digitalisation, these imaginative worlds evoked by music serve some to escape from changing reality, while others create ways to engage with it.

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### ORCID iD

Leonieke Bolderman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4411-9292>

### Notes

1. ‘Music streaming’ refers to delivering audio over the Internet. A music streaming service offers music on demand, allowing the user to choose and play a track right away. Examples of current music streaming services are Spotify, Apple Music and Tidal.
2. With ‘holiday’ we refer to the meaning of the word in British English, which would be a ‘vacation’ in American English.
3. The definition of a hypallage according to the Oxford Dictionary of English: ‘the transposition of natural relations of two elements in a proposition’. An example of a hypallage is ‘a sleepless night’. The combination of words refers to a person that did not sleep during the night, without explicitly mentioning that person. The word that describes the speaker is attached to the word that describes the time of day, ‘night’. The interchanged combination of words creates the hypallage ‘sleepless night’.

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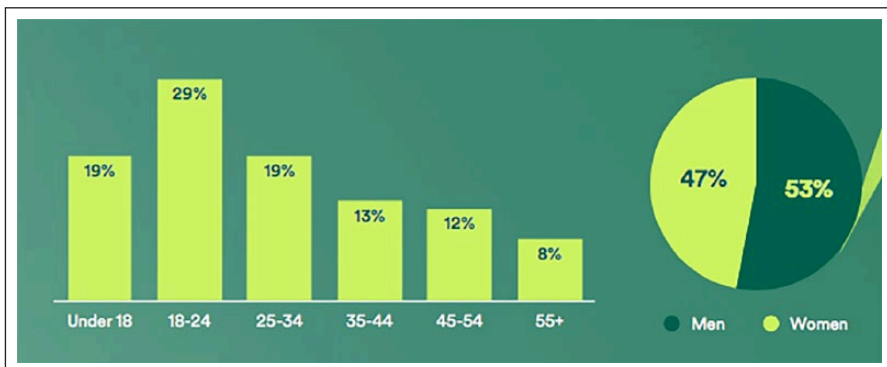
## Biographical notes

Leonieke Bolderman is Assistant Professor of Cultural Geography and Tourism Geography and Planning at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. In 2018, she successfully defended her PhD Dissertation ‘Musical Topophilia. A Critical Analysis of Contemporary Music Tourism’ at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her current research concerns the role and meaning of music heritage and tourism in urban and regional development.

Stijn Reijnders is Professor of Cultural Heritage, in Particular in Relation to Tourism and Popular Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam. In 2011, he published the monograph ‘*Places of the imagination. Media, tourism, fan culture*’. In 2015, he received an ERC Consolidator grant to start a research project focussing on global film tourism, called ‘Worlds of Imagination’. His research interests revolve around the role of media culture in everyday life.

## Appendix 1

Spotify Netherlands utilizes age categories, ranging from 13 years old (the minimum age to get an account) to ‘55 +’, with the eldest user in their 80s (personal communication).



## Appendix 2

### Overview of interviewees

Name (fe/male)	Age	Place	Education	Work
Jaap (m)	35	NL/Groningen	Vocational education	Quality analyst call centre
Sander (m)	34	NL/Leeuwarden	BA	Employee call centre, former opera singer
Paul (m)	50	NL/Amersfoort	BA	Marketing manager large company
Naziha (f)	34	NL/The Hague	MA	Start-up owner
Mayke (f)	29	NL/Amsterdam	MA	Psychologist, and student at art academy
Alice (f)	26	NL/Amsterdam	MA	Secretary at a high school
Pascal (m)	30	NL/Amsterdam	Business Studies (BA or MA)	Account manager Benelux at international start-up
Marlies (f)	32	NL/Haarlem	MA	Procurement officer
Ronald (m)	25	NL/Amsterdam	BA	Secretary
Camilla (f)	25	NL/Amsterdam	BA	Student MA
Nicky (f)	26	NL/Utrecht	BA	Journalist
Lisette (f)	26	NL/Utrecht	BA	Student MA
Martijn (m)	44	NL/Pijnacker	MA	Personal banker
Angelo (m)	24	NL/Amsterdam	Vocational education	Student BA
Tim (m)	23	NL/Rotterdam	MA	Student REMA
Luna (f)	22	NL/Rotterdam	BA	Student MA
David (m)	32	NL/Rotterdam	MA	Marketeer music venue