

Popular Music Heritage, Cultural Justice and the Deindustrialising City 1**1 Introduction**

In the past several decades, industrial decline has contributed to substantial economic, social and cultural transformations for many local communities in Western countries. Beginning in the 1960s, the process of deindustrialisation refers to deep economic shifts relating to the delocalisation of manufacturing labour to cheaper markets (Bell, 1999). Historically, deindustrialising cities have faced significant problems with urban decay, unemployment and poverty. To combat the deleterious effects of deindustrialisation, many cities have looked to arts, culture and heritage for urban revitalisation and economic diversification. To this end, ‘creative city’ strategies have been adopted by many local governments seeking to attract investment in creative industries, expand a city’s cultural offer, strengthen the service economy and reorient their urban identity (see Barnes et al., 2006; Goldberg-Miller, 2019; Waitt & Gibson, 2009). In some cases, such strategies have involved placing a significant emphasis on popular music to the extent that they brand themselves as ‘music cities’ (Ballico & Watson, 2020). This trend encompasses promoting contemporary live music scenes as well as looking to the past through popular music heritage initiatives.

Popular music heritage broadly refers to the preservation and celebration of places, materials, practices, events, memories and stories related to the production and consumption of popular music in the recent past. This Element explores the relationship between practices of popular music heritage and popular music’s communities of interest in cities impacted by deindustrialisation. In particular, our attention is drawn to the potentials of popular music heritage to enact cultural justice by way of, for instance, showcasing the histories of socially marginalised groups, reworking cultural narratives around place and urban identity, conserving material remnants of heritage and bringing diverse groups together to advance understandings of popular music’s past and its connections to the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of cities. Focusing on the deindustrialising cities of Birmingham (West Midlands, England), Detroit (Michigan, USA) and Wollongong (New South Wales, Australia), we explore examples of popular music heritage practice related to collection, preservation and archiving; curation, storytelling and heritage interpretation; and the mobilising of communities for collective action. Our analysis of popular music heritage initiatives reveals how they can variously *resist* and/or *reinforce* cultural injustices in the deindustrialising city.

Popular music heritage discourse is conceptualised by Roberts and Cohen (2014) as situated on a continuum: unauthorised, self-authorised and officially authorised. Unauthorised popular music heritage initiatives often exist ‘without

even an awareness that [they *are*] heritage’ (Roberts & Cohen, 2014, p. 257, original emphasis); their archiving is unintentional and the emphasis is on everyday practices and individual and collective memory. Self-authorized initiatives, on the other hand, are intentional in their heritage practice and make ‘claims to (or solicitations of) some form of official status’ in terms of their development, operations and sustainability (Roberts & Cohen, 2014, p. 248). These initiatives tend to be characterised by precarious funding and a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos with an emphasis on ‘localised or vernacular popular music heritage discourses’ (Roberts & Cohen, 2014, p. 248). Officially authorised initiatives constitute ‘big H’ heritage in the sense that they have substantial funding streams and are sanctioned by government bodies, giving them a degree of legitimacy not afforded to self-authorized or unauthorised popular music heritage. In this Element, we look at a range of practices along the continuum, but especially self-authorized initiatives which take ‘a DIY approach to heritage’ (Baker, 2018). However, we acknowledge that heritage initiatives are not fixed in their discourse or practice but can move along the continuum in both directions. As such, the self-authorized initiatives we analyse also engage in partnerships with officially authorised institutions and connect with unauthorised heritage practice through the crowdsourcing of archival materials.

The target audience for this Element is heritage practitioners, as well as scholars of popular music, heritage studies and urban studies. While the focus is on popular music as a cultural form, with its setting being the deindustrialising city, the conceptual lens of cultural justice has broader relevance beyond these contexts. Consequently, the Element will be of interest to a wider audience than the title suggests. It is also important to note that the heritage initiatives we discuss are not intended to be exemplars of best practice for cultural justice; rather, they provide useful case studies for critically examining how the quest for cultural justice can unfold, to varying degrees of success and while facing obstacles. Analysing the case studies through a cultural justice lens offers valuable lessons in how more culturally just approaches to heritage can be undertaken in the future. In this opening section, we posit our contextual and conceptual framework to identify the potential for cultural justice within practices of popular music heritage. The section introduces the three case study cities, offering an overview of these in relation to processes of deindustrialisation and their credentials as places of interest in terms of popular music heritage. We then provide a brief outline of our research methods, introduce our key participants and reflect on researcher positionality. To begin, however, we explore some of the issues that have recently been noted about culture, which further highlights the need for the concept of cultural justice.

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1.1 The Problem with Culture

In accounts of music audiences (e.g. DeNora, 2000; Hennion, 2007), music is understood as an instrument of self-realisation via mediating everyday experiences through embodied interactions. Such work implicitly poses music as inherently ‘good’, with its meaning constructed through the uses and affects of those who enjoy it. Such work disregards how music intersects with broader social forces and how its production, distribution and consumption is constrained by systemic inequalities. As Hesmondhalgh (2008, p. 330) suggests, scholarly work focused on individuals’ listening practices presents an overly positive perspective on music that is ‘somehow independent of negative social and historical processes’. For example, in their recent critical work, *Culture is bad for you*, Brook and colleagues (2020) highlight intensifying issues of inequality in the cultural industries, focusing their attention on access to and exclusion from cultural production based on class, race and gender. One of their key findings is the overreliance of cultural production on free labour and, therefore, on the exploitation of creative workers, especially those from working-class backgrounds (Brook et al., 2020). Such inequalities ‘limit the potential value and impact of culture’ (Brook et al., 2020, p. 44). Critical interventions by scholars like Hesmondhalgh (2008) and Brook and colleagues (2020) serve to reinscribe how culture is tied to structural economic and social conditions.

Heritage has also been framed in terms of its positive benefits on individuals and communities, having been linked to an increased sense of well-being and improved health outcomes (see Pennington et al., 2019). However, beyond the boosterist discourse, heritage can also be connected to experiences of distress and trauma. When heritage is threatened or damaged, or its value is not recognised and respected, then individual and community well-being can be negatively impacted (Taçon & Baker, 2019). An uncritical celebration of heritage – in policy, institutions and scholarship – can mask its capacity for reproducing suffering or injustice, as evident in work on heritage and decoloniality (Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019) and human rights (Logan, 2012). Looking specifically at popular music heritage, Fairchild (2021, p. 24) argues that museums are institutions that ‘continue to be imbued with an aura of democratic optimism and empowerment’. Fairchild (2021, p. 224) rejects the notion that popular music museums’ primary missions are to preserve, celebrate and educate about popular music’s past, asserting that they may use vast amounts of ‘public resources . . . to serve the highly specific, private interests of the real estate and tourism industries’. He contends that readings of popular music as democratic ignore how its production and consumption are intrinsically located within ideological and hierarchical fields of power (Fairchild, 2021).

The critical lens of the scholars cited in the opening paragraphs of Section 1.1 contributes to contemporary debates about structural issues with cultural and music production and its effects on the social and cultural value of music. In doing so, their work is situated against a somewhat taken-for-granted notion that culture is ‘good’ and produces ‘good effects’. While previous research accounts for some of the symptoms associated with contemporary cultural production and distribution, more clarity is needed as to the tools that musicians, heritage practitioners or cultural workers might deploy and develop to resist the reproduction of societal injustices through culture. We suggest that a concept such as cultural justice offers the potential to disrupt a flawed and unequal field of cultural production with possibilities for heritage practitioners, enthusiasts, musicians and listeners to intervene on, or even seize, the meaning of popular music by way of heritage *and* the meaning of local heritage by way of popular music. Put simply, we do not situate our perspective in relation to contemporary conversations about whether culture is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, or if heritage ‘makes you happy’ (Historic England, 2014). Instead, we acknowledge the structural issues related to cultural production and seek to conceptualise how the tools of cultural justice *potentially* empower different actors to address those issues in ways that might generate more positive outcomes from engaging in cultural practices broadly and heritage practices specifically. We approach this task with a critical eye, recognising that the quest for cultural justice is challenging and has the capacity to reinforce injustices or even introduce other forms of injustice.

1.2 Intersections of Justice and Heritage

Since the 2000s, there has been an observable ‘justice turn’ within heritage, museum and archival studies. This justice turn has been nurtured by work in critical heritage studies, community archives and new museology scholarship that addresses issues of power and inequality. Smith (2006) posits that institutional heritage practice in the West has long been shaped by an authorised heritage discourse which emphasises materiality, ‘age, monumentality and/or aesthetics’ (p. 3) in the assessment of heritage value and takes these qualities to be ‘innate and immutable cultural values’ (p. 4). Work in the field of heritage studies has questioned these assumptions, highlighting the intangibility, dynamism and constructedness of heritage – as a present interpretation or performance of the past – and drawing attention to the power relations that underpin it. These concerns are obvious in research on heritage and social change (Byrne, 2008; Chynoweth et al., 2021), activism (Flinn, 2011; Janes & Sandell, 2019), decoloniality (Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019; Vawda, 2019) and different forms of justice. We discuss concepts of social justice and cultural justice more in-depth

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in Sections 1.2 and 1.2.1, but it is also important to note the emergence and development of ideas such as restorative justice (Simpson, 2009), transitional justice (Burch-Brown, 2020) and heritage justice (Joy, 2020).

Most of the literature on the interface between heritage and justice focuses on *social* justice. Duff and colleagues (2013), writing on archives, outline that social justice can encompass the distribution of power and resources; issues of recognition, disrespect, marginalisation, participation, exclusion and repatriation; and resistance against systems of domination and inequality. Similarly, Punzalan and Caswell (2016, p. 27) note the importance of issues including ‘Inclusion of underrepresented and marginalized sectors of society’; ‘Development of community archives’; and ‘Efforts to document human rights violations’. Baird (2014, p. 12) details other key questions underpinning the social justice approach: ‘how is heritage mobilized in knowledge claims and identity creation? Are specific discourses or practices privileged in the name of safeguarding heritage? Are certain voices included and/or silenced?’ In terms of how social justice values are reflected in heritage practice, the literature stresses the importance of public access and participation, addressing gaps or silences in collections, and taking community-led or collaborative approaches to documenting history (Baird, 2014; Duff et al., 2013; Johnston & Marwood, 2017; Punzalan & Caswell, 2016).

For heritage practitioners, there are ongoing challenges in attempting to embed social justice values within conventional collecting and preservation objectives (Witcomb & Buckley, 2013). For example, Janes and Sandell (2019, p. 8) observe that museum professionals face ‘persistent anxiety’ and structural constraints to pursuing activism and social justice, including institutional agendas that prioritise digitisation projects and audience development, as well as pressures to strive for neutrality and avoid ‘alienat[ing] government and private funders’. These challenges mirror those discussed in Section 1.1 in relation to problems faced in the cultural industries more broadly.

1.2.1 Cultural Justice

While references to social justice are increasingly common in critical heritage studies and allied fields, engagements with the idea of *cultural* justice remain limited. We turn to scholarly work from other fields like critical theory, cultural history and critical cultural studies to address this absence. Cultural justice is borne out of the concept of social justice – it acknowledges issues of power and inequalities while introducing a broadly defined variable of ‘culture’ (Ross, 1998, p. 194). We propose that cultural justice ‘offers a more precise lens

through which to consider the cultural dimensions of injustice’ (Cantillon et al., 2021a, p. 75). Cultural justice accounts for social inequalities that may be constructed or reproduced through culture – for example, the privileging of certain identities and narratives in cultural representations.

Fraser (1995, p. 71, emphasis added) defines cultural injustices as:

rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include *cultural domination* (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one’s own); *nonrecognition* (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one’s culture); and *disrespect* (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions).

In the context of our research on deindustrialising cities, Fraser’s (1995, p. 69) work is instructive in that it acknowledges how cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect are inevitably ‘entwined with’ and supported by economic disadvantage. In Fraser’s reckoning (1995, pp. 72–3), ‘economic disadvantage impedes equal participation in the making of culture’. Although economic and cultural injustices are inter-implicated, they can be analytically separated in that ‘the remedy for economic injustice is political-economic restructuring’, captured by ‘the generic term “redistribution”’, while in the case of cultural injustice, the remedy is a form of cultural change captured by ‘the generic term “recognition”’ (Fraser, 1995, p. 73).

Ross (1998, p. 191) echoes Fraser in arguing that cultural justice is enmeshed in ‘the transformation of socioeconomic conditions’. Writing on the impact of economic realities on cultural expressions, Ross (1998, p. 2) defines cultural justice as ‘doing justice to culture, pursuing justice through cultural means, and seeking justice for cultural claims’. He argues that ‘respectful recognition’ of differences can provide ‘material and ethical improvement of our lives’ and subvert ‘the channels of official neglect, economic subordination, and cultural denigration and turn them into routes toward pride, empowerment, and equity’ (Ross, 1998, p. 3). Denning (2004, pp. 164–5) similarly emphasises ‘politics of recognition’, ‘the battle over the relations of representation’ and ‘struggles to reassert the dignity of despised cultural identifications’. He speaks specifically of the heritage sector, noting that the ‘struggle for cultural justice is also a struggle to reshape the selective traditions that determine which works of art and culture will be preserved, kept in print, taught to young people, and displayed in museums, and which cans of film will be housed, whose manuscripts and letters will be archived and indexed’ (Denning, 2004, p. 165).

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Denning (2004, pp. 164–5) argues that ‘artists, intellectuals, and cultural workers’ can ‘self-organise and create organisations and cultural institutions that can work to reinstate dignity’ and fight for ‘equal access’ to such institutions. Banks (2017) likewise refers to the importance of cultural workers in his work on creative justice. Drawing on Ross’ work, Banks (2017, pp. 1–2) explores three kinds of justice relating to the cultural industries: paying respect to culture as something with ‘objective’ value; recognising the pluralistic value (economic, social, aesthetic) of cultural work; and attending to the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities on behalf of cultural institutions.

The scholarship cited in Section 1.2.1 offers valuable guidance as to some of the core principles of cultural justice, which we summarise elsewhere as ‘the recognition and value of cultural objects, cultural institutions and cultural work, as well as issues of power, participation, access and representation’ (Cantillon et al., 2021a, p. 75). How, then, does cultural justice manifest in practice? Banerjee and Steinberg (2015), writing on the use of culture in environmental activism, put forth three key tools that comprise a cultural justice toolkit:

1. *Symbologies of place* – material artefacts, landmarks and ‘physical remains of a community’s past history’ as well as ‘images of ongoing economic and cultural relationships in the community’ and ‘cultural symbols and imaginaries’ (Banerjee & Steinberg, 2015, p. 43).
2. *Historiographies of space* – historical narratives and ‘place-based storytelling’ that ‘promote and protect cultural ties that affirm collective cultural identities’ (Banerjee & Steinberg, 2015, p. 43).
3. *Social ties and community networks* – bringing together communities for collective action through both informal, ‘intra-community’ initiatives and resources, such as ‘financial support, volunteering, and organizational needs’ (Banerjee & Steinberg, 2015, p. 44) and ‘inter-community’ support, such as ‘relationships with well-established activist networks’ that can help bolster their reach and visibility (Banerjee & Steinberg, 2015, p. 48).

The conceptual framework and structure of this Element is informed by Banerjee and Steinberg’s toolkit. Building on their scholarship, we rework the aforementioned tools in the context of popular music heritage initiatives in deindustrialising cities. Importantly, we aim to bring a critical lens to cultural justice, examining the complexities of how popular music heritage may both *resist* injustices as well as *reproduce* them.

That cultural justice is an underutilised concept in critical heritage studies is surprising given that ‘heritage is a *cultural* product (and process) that seeks to represent *cultural* identities, expressions, practices, symbols and materialities’ (Cantillon et al., 2021a, pp. 74–5, original emphasis). The most substantive

work on heritage and cultural justice stems from our own research – often in collaboration with Paul Long, Lauren Istvandy and Jez Collins – on popular music heritage (Cantillon et al., 2021a, 2021b; Long et al., 2017, 2019). The outputs by Long and colleagues (2017, 2019) focus primarily on community archives of popular music, using cultural justice to refer to processes by which we can do justice to culture – specifically, recognising the value of popular music history, which has often been trivialised within authorised heritage institutions and discourses. Drawing on Banerjee and Steinberg’s (2015) toolkit, our most recent work explored the relationship of each of the three tools to examples of popular music heritage initiatives in deindustrialising cities (Cantillon et al., 2021a). In doing so, we reframed the tools of cultural justice as: (1) collection, preservation and archiving; (2) curation, storytelling and heritage interpretation; and (3) mobilising communities for collective action. In this Element, we extend our understanding of the application of a critical cultural justice lens by exploring the tools in relation to a varied array of popular music heritage practices in our case study cities of Detroit, Birmingham and Wollongong.

1.3 Introducing the Deindustrialising Cities of Our Study

Communities experiencing industrial decline have struggled with significant socio-economic injustices, including unemployment, urban decay, inadequate public services and infrastructure, increased poverty and higher crime rates (Doucet, 2020). These challenges intersect with and amplify existing inequalities, disproportionately impacting people of colour, migrant populations and working-class groups (Shaw, 2000). Such social and economic injustices are subsequently implicated in cultural injustices, including stigmatisation, disrespect and derision of both place and people. The negative connotations attached to deindustrialising cities were acknowledged by our research participants. Wollongong has long been known as a ‘dirty town’ (Julie, 9 October 2018; Brian, 10 October 2018; John, 11 October 2018), a ‘violent and run down sort of steel city’ (Aaron, 9 October 2018) with ‘a pretty big violence problem’ (Ashley, 9 October 2018). Birmingham had ‘gangs everywhere’ (Bill, 3 September 2019), was ‘very run-down, very dark, very depressive’ (Mark, 2 September 2019) and ‘was looked upon as this making place: cars, coal, concrete, boring middle of the country, nothing ever happened there, and our accents reflected that’ (Jez, 1 April 2019). Detroit had become ‘blighted’, a ‘tumbleweed’ town, ‘the world’s poorest city’ with the country’s ‘highest crime rates’ (Matt, 11 April 2019), driven by ‘the drugs, the gangs, the crime syndicates’ (Michelle, 8 April 2019). These narratives do not, of course, capture the social and cultural vitality and local distinctiveness that also constitute such places.