

City Muscapes: Live Music in the Cities of Groningen and Utrecht, 2010–2016

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Philomeen Lelieveldt

Utrecht University, Netherlands

p.lelieveldt@uu.nl

Evert H. Bisschop Boele

Erasmus University Rotterdam & Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Groningen, Netherlands

e.h.bisschop.boele@pl.hanze.nl

Abstract

What kinds of live music are available to the citizens of the cities of Groningen and Utrecht? That is the main question in two research projects, of which the databases have been made accessible in the *Dataverse City Muscapes* (Lelieveldt & Bisschop Boele, 2018). At first sight databases of statistical research offices provide researchers with clear data about the number of venues and concerts and the participation of audiences (Gemeente Utrecht 2017, Van den Broek 2014). When looking closer we find that in these statistics only the regular (and mainly publicly funded) music venues are included. The authors' projects show that a substantial part (53–60%) of live music concerts take place on *non-regular* locations, such as cafés, restaurants, clubs, churches, shopping malls and in open air. They developed a research tool to be able to draw a map of the musical landscape of a city (Muscapes). In this article we will reflect on the goals, research methods, datasets and some results from analysing our datasets. We hope this contributes to the discussion with scholars, music producers and policy makers about the added value of the concept of Muscapes for the understanding of cultural participation, music performing practices and cultural policies.

Keywords

Musicscene – music sociology – cultural policy – live music concerts – concert venues – music genres – creative cities – music cities

- Related data set “City Musicscenes” with URL www.dataverse.nl/dataverse/musicscenes in repository “DataverseNL”.
- See the showcase of the data in the Exhibit of Datasets: <http://dansdata-journal.nl/rdp/dsdoc.html?id=lelieveldt2018>

1. Introduction: What Is a Musicscene?

The term *Musicscene* is a contraction of the terms “music” and “landscape.” It is inspired by the term “soundscape,” by which the Canadian composer Raymond Murray Schafer (1993, p. 274) meant the sonic environment. It can be described as “the total sound image of a specific place: all sound, coming from nature as well as from man. The wind, the birds, traffic, people talking, and also, as part of sounds made by human beings, music.” (Bisschop Boele 2010, p. 11). A Musicscene is part of a soundscape and means “all music that can be perceived at a certain place and a certain time by a human being. As such, every place – or even every human being – has its own Musicscene, which changes continually. It is very individual and very time and place specific.” (Bisschop Boele, *ibid*). For example, in any Dutch city one can walk through a shopping street and hear fragments of *Muzak* or pop music coming from stores or run into a street organ or a group of buskers. Every hour a carillon will play its tunes, and regularly a carillon concert will be performed by the town’s carillonist. Most towns and cities have a dense infrastructure of theatres and concert halls for organised theatre, dance and music. Also, in many cafés, restaurants and clubs singer-songwriters or bands perform or a DJ mobilises the visitors to dance. In churches music is performed during concerts or religious services. Every person follows an individual path through the musical city, many of them also with personal sound devices, thus creating private musicscenes.

2. Datasets

- City Musicscenes deposited at DataverseNL – URL: www.dataverse.nl/dataverse/musicscenes

- Musicscape Groningen Live 2010 – hdl:[10411/SSQMBP](#)
- Musicscape Utrecht 2011 – hdl:[10411/OGASXO](#)
- Musicscape Utrecht 2013 – hdl:[10411/IXHHF3](#)
- Musicscape Utrecht 2016 – hdl:[10411/MXAYQO](#)
- Replication Data for: Podiumkunstenmonitor Utrecht 2016 – hdl:[10411/01HRJU](#)
- **Temporal coverage:** 2010–2016

The Musicscapes of the cities of Groningen and Utrecht consist of extensive collections of data about “organised live musical events.” We restricted our data to *live music* (as opposed to *mass-mediated music*), performed by musicians or DJs. Following the conclusions of a research project in Groningen (Van der Blij, 1995) we distinguished between *regular stages* (subsidised and private concert venues) which are specifically designed for music or theatre performances, as well as *non-regular venues*, such as cafés, restaurants, school auditoria, museums, parks, monuments, stores etcetera. To provide for a consistent and repeatable research method, we included only those live events (to be named ‘concerts’ in the remainder of this article) that were announced in journals, newspapers, flyers, posters, websites and *Facebook* pages. This means that street musicians and street organs, but also pop-up concerts (flash mobs) and private concerts are not included. It is hard to track such activities. Finally, music festivals are not included in the Groningen 2010 and Utrecht 2011 datasets because these would cause biases. In the 2013 and 2016 datasets of Utrecht the festivals and Christmas events have pragmatically been counted as one concert per day, in order to be able to register the (increasing) presence of these events.

The Groningen database was made in *Microsoft Excel 2007* because it can handle large numbers of entries of text as well as numbers and easily produces figures and graphs of these data (Bisschop Boele, 2018). As part of the Groningen project three visual arts students (Jolijn Olijve, Marlies Hulzebos, Tanja Miletic) gave photographic impressions of the live music scene of Groningen. Composer Robert Ramaker was asked to write a new composition, ‘Noordenwind’ (‘Northern wind’), that was performed at the presentation of the publication “Musicscape Groningen – Live!” in Groningen on October 19th, 2010 (Bisschop Boele, 2010).

The Utrecht databases were made in *Microsoft Excel 2010*. The function of Pivot tables (*Draaitabellen* in Dutch) was used for the analysis of the Utrecht data. As part of the Utrecht project, a total of eighty students participating in the 2011, 2013 and 2016 projects, visited concerts of the database and wrote reviews about the music performed, the number and composition of the audiences,

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
	Naam Locatie	Type	regul - wijk	G	Artiest	Titel voorstelling	subgenre	Hoofdgens	Datum	Tijd aanvan			
1	Gebouw voor Kunst-podium	ja	Binnenstad	Lisanne Jacobs & Latino's from Lunchconcert	latin jazz	Jazz	Monday, December 2, 2013	12:30					
2	restaurant Live (voor restaurant)	nee	Binnenstad	live muziek en zang	eten met live muziek	restaurantmuziek	Overig	Monday, December 2, 2013	18:00				
3	Stadsschouwburg-podium	ja	Binnenstad	Fernando Lameirinhas & Paul Caminho	portuges	Wereld	Monday, December 2, 2013	20:00					
4	t Oude Pothuys cafe	nee	Binnenstad	open mic o.l.v. Eka Permana	Singer/Songwriter Open	Singer-Songwriter	Overig	Monday, December 2, 2013	21:30				
5	ACU podium	ja	Binnenstad	open podium	Flying carpet Jamesjessie	Jamesjessie/open	Overig	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	21:15				
6	Bresnon restaurant	nee	Binnenstad	dj Klaas van Noord	Tuesdays Tango	tango	Wereld	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	21:00				
7	Feestcafé De Kneus cafe	nee	Binnenstad	diverse amateurs	Kneus Karaoke	eigen aanvraag	Pop	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	21:30				
8	restaurant Live (voor restaurant)	nee	Binnenstad	live muziek en zang	eten met live muziek	restaurantmuziek	Overig	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	18:00				
9	Stairway to Heaven cafe	nee	Binnenstad	dj's	Stairway to Salsa	Salsa	Wereld	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	20:30				
10	t Oude Pothuys cafe	nee	Binnenstad	Jamesjessie o.l.v. Viktor Karantz	Taylor-made Electrics	Jamesjessie/open	Overig	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	21:30				
11	Tivoli podium	ja	Binnenstad	Kurt Vile & The Violators	Kurt Vile & The Violators	Indierock	Pop	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	20:15				
12	Averrechts Cafe cafe	nee	Noordooit	Onbekend	Open podium	Jamesjessie/open	Overig	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	21:30				
13	Beatrix Theater podium	ja	Zuidwest	Joop van den Ende	Jersey Boys	musical	Overig	Tuesday, December 3, 2013	20:00				
14	ACU podium	ja	Binnenstad	open podium	Klassiek Open Podium	Jamesjessie/open	Overig	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	21:30				
15	cafe Hofman cafe	nee	Binnenstad	Close Up	Tonigh Event	Indiepop	Pop	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	21:00				
16	Kargadoor podium	ja	Binnenstad	Stocontact, Linnials, Amber	Live InRoom	Indie	Pop	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	20:00				
17	restaurant Live (voor restaurant)	nee	Binnenstad	live muziek en zang	eten met live muziek	restaurantmuziek	Overig	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	18:00				
18	t Oude Pothuys cafe	nee	Binnenstad	David de Marens Oyens	concert	jazz	Jazz	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	23:00				
19	Tivoli de Helling podium	ja	Binnenstad	Marduk + Grave + Valkyria + DMarduk + Grave + Valkyria	Metal	Metal	Overig	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	18:30				
20	Winkel van Sinkel cafe	nee	Binnenstad	Onbekend	Lindy hop Tea Dance	bigband/swing	Overig	Wednesday, December 4, 2013	19:00				

FIGURE 1 Detail of the database *Musicscape Utrecht 2013*.¹

the prices, publicity and the general atmosphere (Lelieveldt (ed.), 2011, 2013, 2016, see Figure 1). They collected posters and flyers and added weblinks in the databases to the ensembles or actual performances available on the internet. In 2013 students also interviewed 25 concert organisers in Utrecht about their programming philosophies and about Utrecht as a breeding ground for music (unpublished).

3. The Goals and Research Questions

In 2010 Evert Bisschop Boele developed a spreadsheet to describe the kinds of music available to the inhabitants of Groningen, the capital of the eponymous northern province in the Netherlands. The Groningen data consist of an inventory of 297 concerts that took place from Monday April 12th until Sunday April 25th 2010, “an average period in the concert season,” without peaks of Christmas or Easter concerts or local festivals. The goal was to provide a broad description of the organised musical events. The main questions were “how many concerts took place, what kinds of music were performed (a genre-analysis), for how many people, on what type of stages (publicly or commercially financed stages), on which days and at what times, and for what entrance fees.”²

- 1 The language used in the databases is Dutch. The first page contains guidelines in Dutch and English, and English translations can be found in “comment boxes” in the column titles.
- 2 The *Musicscape Groningen* project was embedded in a PhD-project about the uses and functions of music. The data collection was driven by a general question about what musical

The Utrecht project started in 2011, on the initiative of Philomeen Lelieveldt, who adopted the Groningen mapping method to create a “baseline” to measure the impact of future policy decisions regarding music. The summer of 2011 was a political turning point in art policy, when the national government decided on a budget cut of forty percent on national performing arts organisations, such as orchestras and music ensembles, art production laboratories, dance and opera companies. The music world was worried about the effects on the number of jobs, musicians’ remuneration and the future number and diversity of the programmes of musical venues. The first Utrecht Musicscape created “a picture of the status quo” before the budget cuts would take effect (as from January 2013), and was repeated in 2013 and 2016. The second goal was to test the Groningen method of mapping the musical landscape. Utrecht (ca. 334.000 inhabitants in 2015) and Groningen (ca. 200.000 inhabitants in 2015) share certain geographical characteristics, such as a historical city centre dating back to the Middle Ages (with Roman roots in the case of Utrecht), surrounded by a ring of canals. These city centres are surrounded by 19th and 20th century suburbs. Both cities have shown a growth in population during the past five years and have a large share of ten and nineteen percent respectively in their population of students from institutions of higher education, including a music conservatoire.³

4. Methodology

Due to the criteria of the Groningen project (no festivals and Christmas period) and the Utrecht University course timetable allowing for students to collect the data, the first Utrecht Musicscape could only take place from Monday December 5th until Sunday December 18th 2011 (Lelieveldt, 2018a). It was repeated in the same period in December 2013 and in December 2016,⁴ and resulted in three datasets with 284, 308 and 411 concerts for the three time periods (Lelieveldt 2018b, 2018c). The Groningen spreadsheet and research questions (where, when, what kind of music, by whom, for what price and at what time?) were the departing point. Since our goal was to be able to track future

offerings a listener can choose from, when he or she is actively looking for a live music experience (Bisschop Boele, 2013).

3 For a brief sketch of the province and city of Groningen, see Bisschop Boele (2013, 89–99). For the city of Utrecht (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018).

4 Initially a two-year interval was planned, but due to a change in the Utrecht University course planning, the 2015 project was postponed.

changes in “programming formats” in public and commercial venues, we added questions about musical subgenres, the status of the performers (whether they were professional, amateur or semi-professional)⁵ and in 2016 also about the origin of the acts.⁶ Also the Musicscape of 2016 was complemented with a “baseline” data collection of all theatre and dance performances in Utrecht, to be able to more closely compare (future) developments in these different disciplines (Lelieveldt, 2018d).

5. Some Results

In Groningen (2010) as well as in Utrecht (2011) about hundred locations for live music were tracked during our research periods, presenting 297 and 284 concerts respectively in two weeks’ time.

Most of the concerts in both cities took place in the historical city centre (inner city), where the majority of the music venues are situated and where the inhabitants and visitors of Groningen and Utrecht most likely seek for live music (Figure 2 and 3).

Figure 4 shows how the main musical genres of pop, classical and world music were represented on the Utrecht and Groningen stages. The relatively low number of jazz concerts in Utrecht was caused by the closure of the main Utrecht jazz venue *sjU Jazzpodium* in 2010. The category “other” contains amongst other things performances of musical, cabaret, live background music in restaurants and (incidental) Christmas concerts.

Figure 5 shows a thirty percent increase of concerts in Utrecht in 2016 compared to the Musicscape of 2013. A few factors contribute to that. First the opening of the new *TivoliVredenburg* venue in the city centre (a merger of the main popular and classical music venues in 2014) caused an increase from 28 concerts in 2013 (pop and classical music only) to 63 (all musical genres) in 2016. Second, from 2013 to 2016 we see a substantial increase in activities in electronic dance music (see also figure 6). Third, in neighbourhood West the

5 Semi-professionals are the group of music students at conservatoires. We found out it was impossible to find information about the professional status of DJs.

6 The students of 2011 and 2013 were participating in a course about artistic decision making in music organizations. The students of 2016 were doing a course on sociology of art, where the work of Pascal Gielen about cultural institutions and their (inter-)national networks was discussed (Gielen, 2007). This group decided to add a new question about the origin of the musical acts, in order to open up the possibility to draw conclusions about the role concert venues play in supporting local or (inter-)national acts. The results in this column labeled “NL/Int” are tentative.

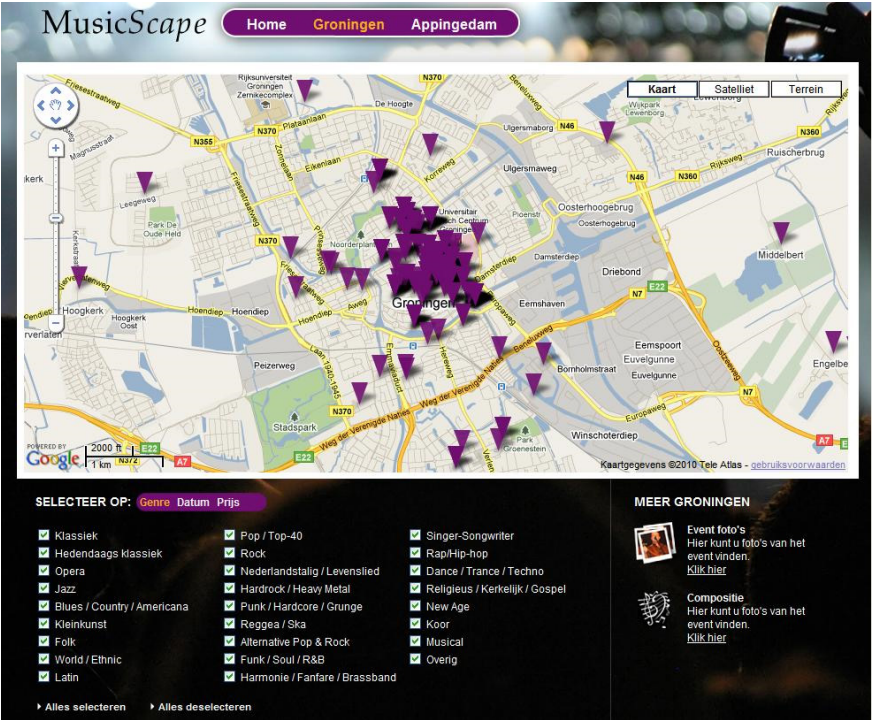


FIGURE 2 Google Maps view of concert locations in Groningen city centre, April 2010.

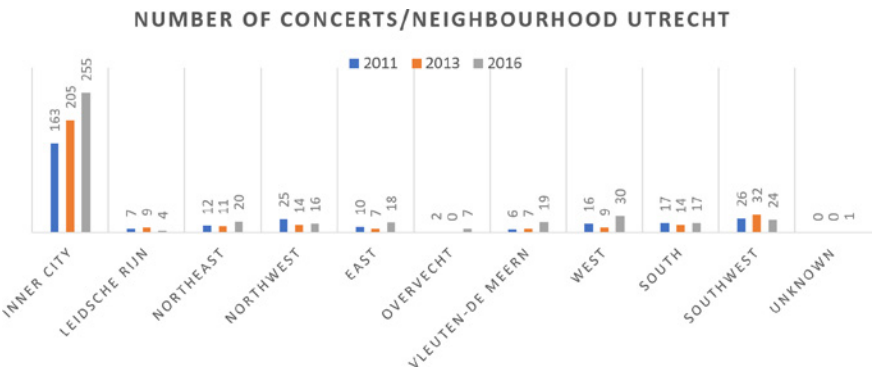


FIGURE 3 The number of concerts in Utrecht neighbourhoods, 2011, 2013 and 2016.

Cereolfabriek opened, and pop music venue DB's and churches organised more activities (see also figure 3).

In Groningen as well as in Utrecht, popular music is the largest musical genre. A closer look at the subgenres in pop music shows a forty percent

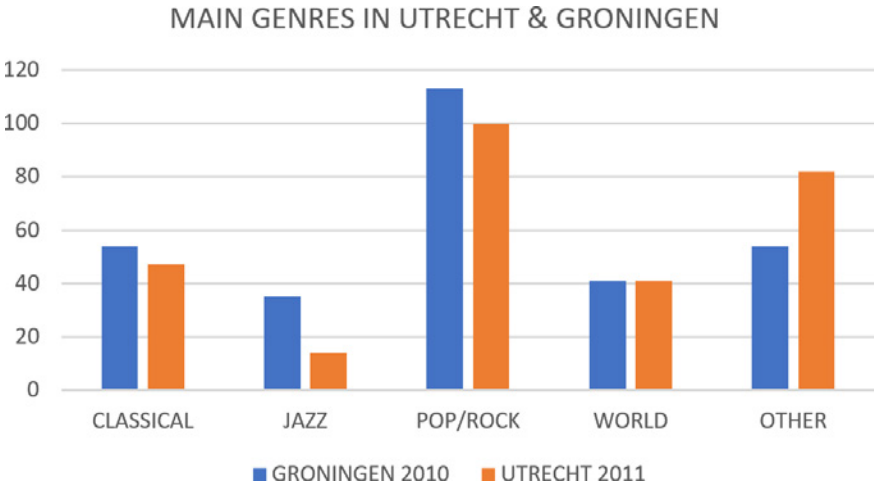


FIGURE 4 Number of concerts per genre in Groningen (2010) and Utrecht (2011).

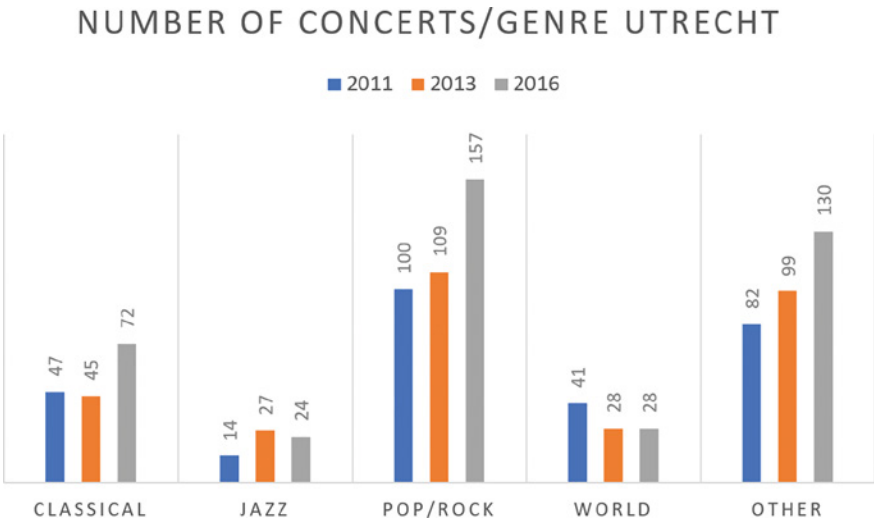


FIGURE 5 Number of concerts in main musical genres in Utrecht, 2011, 2013 and 2016.

increase in electronic music activities in 2016 as compared to 2013. Also, more singer-songwriter concerts took place (category “Pop other”).

Figure 7 shows that the concerts took place in a wide variety of locations. In the regular concert venues (both subsidized and commercial) we find the majority of professional performances and (inter-)national acts. Music students and amateur musicians tend to perform in community centres and churches, while cafés and restaurants play an important role for singer-songwriters,

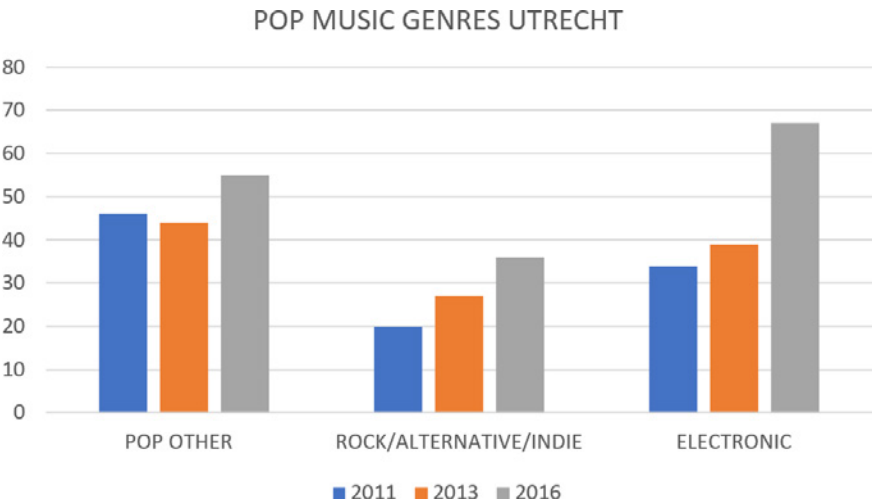


FIGURE 6 *The number of concerts in subgenres of popular music in Utrecht, 2011, 2013 and 2016.⁷*

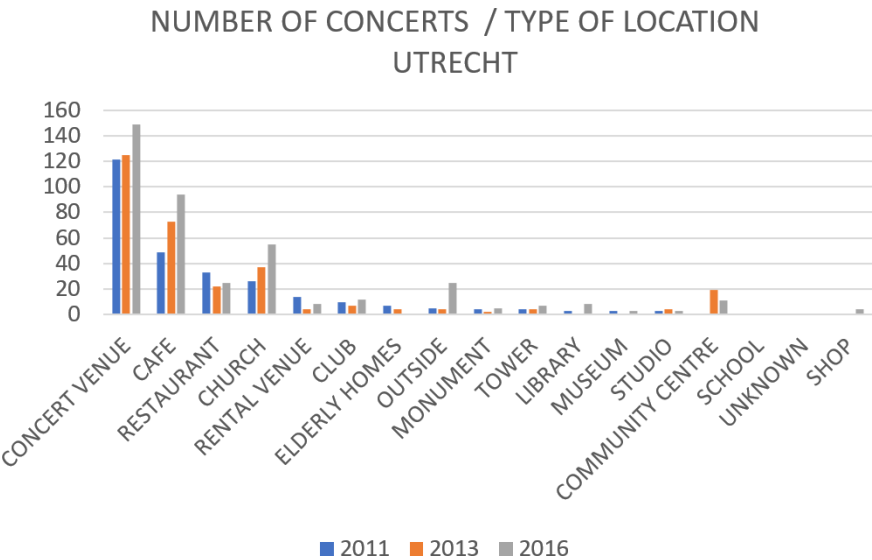


FIGURE 7 *Number of concerts per type of location in Utrecht, 2011, 2013 and 2016.*

beginning rock bands, cabaret artists and live background musicians. Approximately 60% (2011, 2013) and 53% (2016) of the concerts take place in these so called “non-regular” venues.

We were not able to collect audience numbers of the concerts in our database because concert organisers were either hesitant or unable to provide

7 “Pop other” is the label for singer-songwriters, cover bands and schlager music.

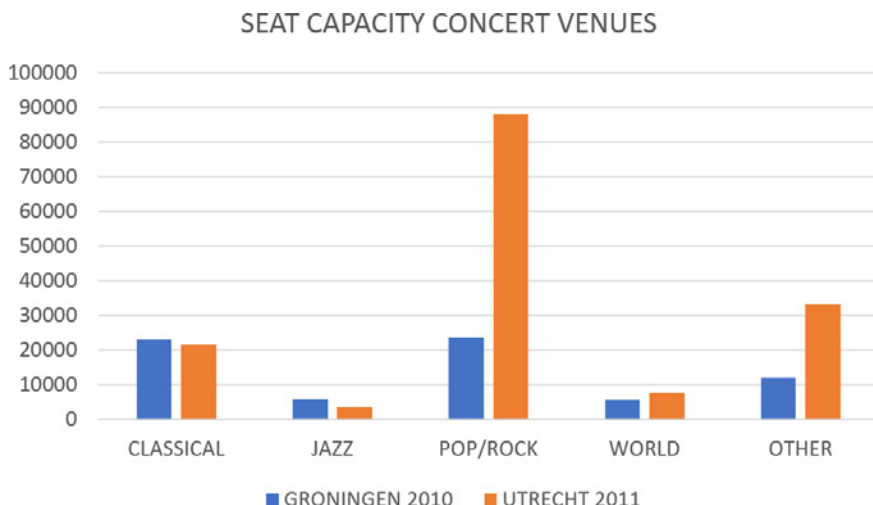


FIGURE 8 *The seat capacity for concerts in musical genres in Utrecht (2011) and Groningen (2010).*

these. Tracking the total number of seats available in the accommodations was chosen as an alternative indication of the capacity for concerts in the cities. Figure 8 shows that the pop music genre and the category of “other” have a larger capacity in the city of Utrecht than in Groningen. This is mainly caused by the Utrecht *Jaarbeurs*, which hosted large music events and a very big dance party (pop/rock) of up to 12,000 people, and the 1500 seats *Beatrix Theatre* with a daily program of musicals or shows (category “other”).

In Groningen and Utrecht sixty percent of the 297 and 284 concerts were freely accessible, especially those in cafés and restaurants. In general the venues in Utrecht charge higher ticket prices in all genres than those in Groningen. The differences in the category “other” can be explained by the expensive tickets for regular musical performances in the *Beatrix Theatre*. In 2011 the average “full” ticket price in Utrecht was €19,90, which decreased to €18,01 in 2016 (see Figure 9). The average ticket price for classical music concerts increased by twenty percent.

6. Concluding Remarks

The results presented in this article are far from complete. They mainly show how our datasets function primarily as a tool to closely observe what is happening in a music city. The similarities in the data of Groningen and Utrecht, as well as the developments in the three Utrecht datasets gave us the

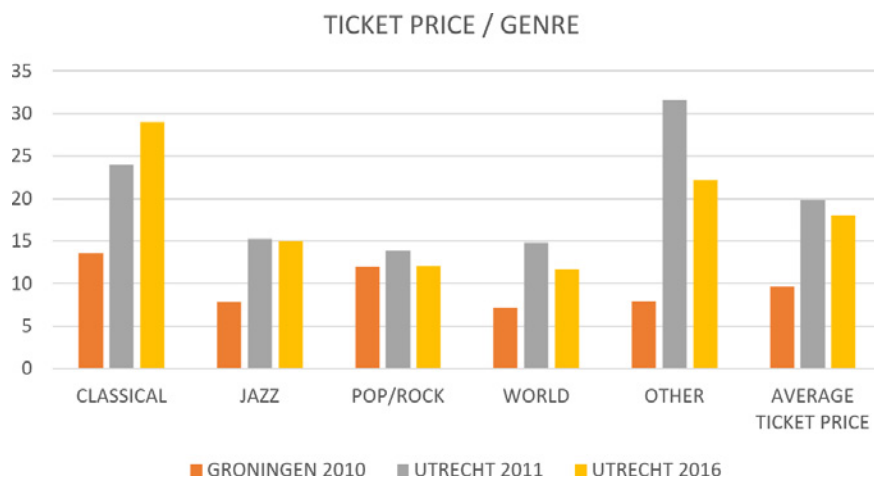


FIGURE 9 Average “full” ticket prices for “payed” concerts in Utrecht (2011 and 2016) and in Groningen (2010).

impression to think that entering data during a two-week period is enough to track general trends and changes in presence of musical genres in a city. However, the success of a comparison of cities as Groningen and Utrecht, and other cities in the future, strongly depends on the consistency of entering, labelling and analysing the data. The examples of the Utrecht *Jaarbeurs* and *Beatrix Theatre* showed that patterns in the data may easily be biased by “big events.” Also the labels for musical genres tend to generate a lot of discussion in the music world and musicology. Furthermore, the omnipresence of music in non-regular locations makes it necessary to further reflect on the concepts of “regular” and “non-regular” (Montesant, 2016, p. 49).

At this stage it is not possible to draw conclusions about the impact of the cuts in public subsidies or the economic crisis on the Utrecht music scene; there was no apparent decline in the number of music performances. A closer look at the data, and more qualitative data from interviews is needed to pinpoint where, when and why changes in artistic developments take place.

Our departing point not to include music festivals and Christmas concerts in the datasets should be reconsidered. The Utrecht data show that the Christmas concert season moved from week 51 and 52 in 2011 to week 49 and 50 in 2016, starting immediately after *Sinterklaas* (Saint Nicholas) on December 5th. Finally, the exclusion of festivals should be reconsidered. In Utrecht it is almost impossible to find a “festival-free” period. In the year 2016, for example, in Utrecht approximately eighty music festivals took place with hundreds of separate concert performances, sometimes in musical genres that are under-represented in the regular musical landscape (Staplab, 2016). A new trend is that concerts and festivals are organised in peoples’ private homes (*Gluren bij*

de Buren, *Stukafest* and *IBBfest* in Utrecht), which again, challenges the departing point of our data collections.

Counting alone will never fully explain what happens in the musical city and why. It is only through a combination of research methods, using quantitative data alongside qualitative components, such as interviews, concert reviews or focus groups, and listening to live music performances, that the usefulness of the concept of Musicscape for future research, music programming and/or public policy is shaped. For teaching purposes, building a Musicscape in the classroom was a very fruitful way to stimulate students to actively reflect on their cultural surroundings.⁸ We hope that other researchers, teachers, policy makers, and music organisers, worldwide, will be inspired to use the *Dataverse City Musicscapes* (Lelieveldt & Bisschop Boele, 2018) and will help to develop it by sharing their future Musicscapes with us, thus contributing to a continuous and connecting conversation about the importance of live music in our cities.

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8 If interested, please contact P. Lelieveldt for the slides of her presentation about the learning goals and practical organization of the Musicscape as a university course. Lelieveldt, P. "Less musicology, serving future audience engagement," *Music Theory Conference*, Royal Conservatoire of The Hague, 1 March 2014.

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