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CHARLES AMBROSINO, BASILE MICHEL
& DOMINIQUE SAGOT-DUVAUROUX (EDS.)

ARTISTIC SCENES AND THE CITY

VOLUME 1: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

How do artistic and cultural activities interact with urban dynamics? This first volume of the book offers a cross-disciplinary and in-depth exploration of the arts in the city by examining the issues of spatial agglomeration, narratives, and spillover effects surrounding the presence of the arts in urban spaces. It develops a theoretical approach based on the concept of the scene to move beyond the "creative city" model. An essential tool for understanding the links between art, culture, and urban development, intended for researchers, students, and professionals in the fields of culture and urban planning.

KEYWORDS

art, culture, city, scene, urban atmosphere, narratives, agglomeration

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INTRODUCTION

CHARLES AMBROSINO, BASILE MICHEL & DOMINIQUE SAGOT-DUVAUROUX

What do artistic and cultural activities bring to the dynamics of a city? Conversely, how does the city impact these same activities? These are two related questions to which this book—first on the conceptual side (this Volume 1) and then on the empirical side (see Volume 2)—offers some answers. Whether we look at academic literature or public policy, the first question has taken precedence over the second. Driven by the process of metropolization and the quest for resilience in deindustrialized regions, the focus in recent decades has largely been on the contribution of artistic and cultural activities to the economic and urban renaissance of cities and territories seduced by the promised virtues of a knowledge economy that provides jobs, brand image, and competitiveness (Scott, 2000; Florida, 2002).

In this context, attractiveness and innovation have become the be-all and end-all for local governments facing intense territorial competition (Ploux-Chillès, 2014; Bouba-Olga & Grossetti, 2015). This has led to the emergence of the "creative city" as an urban model on an international scale (Landry, 2000; Evans, 2001, 2009a, 2017; Scott, 2006). Combining cultural policies, industrial regeneration, and urban renewal, this cross-cutting approach to local public action has often been seen as a way to promote cities as virtuous innovation ecosystems capable of:
(1) supporting artistic activities through the development of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) based on a cluster approach;
(2) producing new urban centers by rehabilitating brownfield sites into cultural venues, the center of new artistic and creative districts that generate specific atmospheres;
(3) re-enchanting the image of cities by making artistic creation visible through cultural facilities and events.

However, these strategies, which were undeniably successful in many cases, were also accompanied by widely criticized phenomena of gentrification,

touristification, and commodification (Peck, 2005; Mould, 2015; Hollands, 2023). Above all, they appeared to be at odds with the transitions required by the contemporary ecological crisis: questioning the objectives of growth and attractiveness embodied in the phenomenon of metropolization, denouncing the effects of excessive tourism on the environment, etc. Moreover, these strategies have paradoxically led to a double marginalization: on the one hand, that of artists and, more broadly, artistic creation in favor of creative workers and creativity; on the other, that of cultural policies and their administrations in favor of territorial development policies and urban planning stakeholders (Pratt, 2010, 2011). One consequence of this subordination of culture to economic and urban objectives has been to obscure the specifically "political" issues at stake in cultural policies, such as cultural democratization, citizen empowerment, and participation in cultural life. These are now at the heart of possible strategies for a "post-creative city" (Miles, 2013; Scott, 2014; Mould, 2015) that would integrate these issues.

Ultimately, we are led to ask if three decades of the instrumentalization of culture by urban policies have monopolized the attention of the academic world to the detriment of a more complex analysis of the interconnections between a specific cultural and artistic offering, urban configurations, and the social organization of a territory. Is there not an opportunity here for research in the humanities and social sciences to adopt a dual approach—cultural for urban issues and urban for cultural issues—by adopting a deliberately multidisciplinary perspective that is currently lacking?

The Scaena research project,[1] funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR) and reported on in this book, has set itself precisely this ambition. How do the amenities of a territory impact its creative dynamics and the forms of creation that unfold there? Conversely, how do these same forms of creation contribute to urban transformation? How do the organization of the city and its urban and social morphology contribute to making artistic and cultural activities resonate with residents, visitors, workers, and those who employ them, beyond the sole angle of attractiveness? Does this generate specific spillover effects, such as urban atmospheres that reveal new ways of being, doing, and, more generally, living?

Economists, managers, geographers, sociologists, and other urban planners have analyzed the agglomeration and urbanization effects of artistic and cultural activities (particularly in the form of clusters and specialized industrial districts),

1. Scaena = Cultural scenes, ambiances, and urban change.

as well as the urban atmospheres and transformations they are likely to generate, but rarely by cross-referencing their respective contributions (Silver et al., 2011; Silver & Clark, 2016; Ambrosino & Sagot-Duvauroux, 2018). This is what some authors, mostly from the field of cultural studies, have attempted to do in an initial effort at synthesis (Guibert & Bellavance, 2014; Straw, 2014; Woo et al., 2015). To this end, they have sought to account for the social and cultural energy of certain territories using the concept of "scene." While this proposal reflects a commendable effort to transcend disciplinary boundaries, it remains rooted in a certain sociological tradition which, while attempting to better articulate the "social organization" and "experiential excess" of urban life, nevertheless offers a reductive representation of the specifically economic and urban aspects of the phenomena it seeks to characterize. Nevertheless, the idea of the scene is no less relevant in that it offers an opportunity to question both the visible and invisible aspects of urban dynamics, as well as the material dimensions of the social embeddedness of artistic and cultural activities.

This book seeks to integrate these dimensions by studying in depth the spillover effects of a creative environment built around artistic activities. A scene is defined as an artistic and cultural ecosystem that is both the product of a territory and a component of its identity, an ecosystem in which artists, businesses, developers, users, and audiences contribute, following more or less convergent strategies, to shaping the narrative, the aesthetic and cultural imprint, and the development (particularly in terms of tourism) of a territory. These interactions are likely to generate distinct and ecstatic codes, norms, and social rituals, a form of idiosyncratic urbanity, opportunities for experimentation, and a way of living whose outputs include certain cultural assets, atmospheres, and innovations.

The scene as thus defined is nevertheless subject to constant change. It is "mortal," as Alan Blum (2001) writes, and therefore fragile. It is an irruption, a privileged moment, a unique spatio-temporal and social conjuncture capable of generating a creative atmosphere, something that hangs in the air, a kind of evanescent commonality threatened by certain forms of commodification specific to urban economies (heritage preservation, touristification, gentrification). It is often through the prism of these knock-on effects that a territory is identified a posteriori as a scene, even though it has probably already lost its creative potential. Only the results of this ephemeral creativity are visible, not its causes, at the risk of encouraging disembodied urban models that seek to standardize a dynamic that is by nature volatile and non-replicable.

The following pages provide a theoretical analysis of the processes that lead to the emergence of a scene and the effects of its transformation. The book is

divided into two parts. The first presents the theoretical foundations on which we have based our construction of the concept of scene. Starting with the dynamics of spatial agglomeration and territorial embeddedness of artistic and cultural activities in the city (Chapter 1), we then explore the different ways of narrating these dynamics and their contribution to urban transformation (Chapter 2). Finally, we look at the spillover effects of artistic activities on urban atmospheres, analyzed as amenities resulting from the friction between networks of cultural actors and facilities, the resident population, and a specific urban configuration (Chapter 3).

The second part focuses on the theoretical contributions of the Scaena research project. Drawing on the concept of the scene as developed by cultural studies (Chapter 4), we present our own theoretical conception of the scene as an ephemeral moment of resonance between an artistic activity and the urban and social components of the territory in which it unfolds, producing specific innovations and atmospheres, and inserting itself into complex life cycles (Chapter 5).

Subsequently, Volume 2 of the book—*Artistic scenes and the city. International case studies and perspectives*—proposes a methodological and empirical approach to the scene based on five international case studies. The sample illustrates the diversity of scenes: diversity in their stages of maturity, diversity in the territorial contexts in which they are organized and deployed, and finally, diversity in the timeframes and forms of investigation required for their observation.

PART 1

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SCENE

The originality of the approach to scenes proposed in this book lies in combining different disciplinary perspectives on the challenges of cultural activities in urban societies and their territories. This combination is based on three main conceptual fields that form the basis of our approach to scenes: the spatial agglomeration of cultural and creative activities and their collaborative networks (Chapter 1), the narratives surrounding cultural dynamics embedded in urban spaces (Chapter 2), and finally the spillover effects of these activities on their territory, particularly in terms of atmosphere (Chapter 3). This first part therefore presents the theoretical foundations on which our approach to the interlocking of cultural activities and territories is based.

CHAPTER 1

AGGLOMERATION(S)

CHARLES AMBROSINO, ÉTIENNE CAPRON, BASILE MICHEL, DOMINIQUE SAGOT-DUVAUROUX & RAPHAËL SUIRE

In a context of increasing aestheticization of lifestyles, consumption, and the design of inhabited spaces (Zukin, 1982; Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2013; Michaud, 2021), the phenomenon of agglomeration of artistic, cultural, and creative activities is one of the main subjects of attention in scientific literature focusing on the spatial and territorial dynamics of urban societies.[1] The aim of this Chapter 1 is to revisit the theoretical foundations of this phenomenon. It will present: (1) the determinants of the spatial concentration of specialized activities and its implications in terms of innovation; (2) the manner in which this geographical concentration interacts with the social organization of the territory, particularly through communities; and finally (3) the role played by territorial attributes (social structures, urban morphology, etc.) in these processes, allowing us to consider urban space as more than just a neutral receptacle.

Why do cultural and artistic activities cluster spatially?

According to a whole body of economic literature, territories play a key role in the processes of innovation and creativity. One of the main ideas can be summarized as follows: the concentration, in a defined portion of a territory, of actors operating in the same sector of activity generates beneficial effects in terms of productivity and innovation. To be convinced of this, one need only think of Hollywood (Scott, 2005) or Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 1994),

1. Artistic and cultural activities (performing arts, visual arts, literature, etc.), although different from so-called "creative" industries (design, architecture, fashion, etc.), particularly in terms of their integration into market logic, are regularly analyzed together in the literature due to certain similarities (the importance of innovation and aesthetics, similar geographical location logic, etc.).

two territories where the film and technology industries, respectively, have historically flourished.

The origins of this vision can be found in the work of economist Alfred Marshall (1890). Observing several neighborhoods in English cities where industries were particularly concentrated, he concluded that the geographical proximity of companies belonging to the same industry determined the economic performance of the whole. For companies, the motivations for setting up in the same area were varied: to be close to a resource that is scarce or essential to their activity, to benefit from the presence of a market, or to have access to transport infrastructure. Beyond this, A. Marshall highlighted above all the importance of agglomeration for the generation of external effects. He believed that the clustering of businesses would promote the creation of a large pool of skilled or specialized labor, the establishment of suppliers, the creation of small and medium-sized specialized and complementary businesses covering the entire value chain of a sector of activity, the transfer of knowledge and skills, and, in short, the formation of an "industrial atmosphere."

This last point is particularly important. According to A. Marshall, the localization of actors from the same sector within a given territory (at the district level) facilitates the creation of networks of relationships between individuals, within which new ideas can emerge and circulate. Since they belong to different companies or social groups, individuals build bridges between different firms. Knowledge then circulates, which can subsequently be implemented in production processes or new activities. The effects of the industrial atmosphere are evanescent ("in the air") and difficult to identify, since they are most often based on informal relationships.

The dynamics of arts and culture agglomeration confirm A. Marshall's observations. They show that galleries, artists' studios, and other cultural venues tend to cluster in certain central and peri-central areas of cities in order to benefit from the density of urban services (transport networks, etc.), proximity to audiences, a pool of skilled labor (technicians, etc.), the presence of peers with whom to exchange and collaborate, the attraction and visibility generated by their concentration in the same geographical area, and even the unique atmosphere that emanates from certain urban neighborhoods (Ambrosino, 2013; Michel, 2022c). This produces different types of artistic centralities (heritage, emerging, etc.) that fuel the city's cultural influence and vitality (Boichot, 2012).

However, Marshall remains very vague about how co-located actors cooperate. Furthermore, the role that a public actor could play in supporting innovation

strategies is not in and of itself an issue at a time when public intervention remains marginal in the economic sphere. This is precisely the initial focus of research on innovative environments (Aydalot, 1986) and local production systems (Courlet & Pecqueur, 1992), paying close attention to the specific learning capacities of a territory, followed by economist Michael Porter (1998) with the concept of clusters. The latter focuses less on the phenomenon of concentration of activities than on the mechanisms of coordination between actors within a production chain integrating complementary activities (suppliers of specialized goods and services, technology designers, subcontractors, etc.). According to M. Porter, the geographical proximity of actors enables them to develop repeated formal and informal exchanges, which have the virtue of ensuring better coordination and greater trust between them. Ultimately, this would offer greater efficiency and flexibility in innovation processes described as "coopetitive," combining cooperation and competition. This reinforces the differentiation and competitive advantage of the territory. M. Porter also highlights the impetus that public authorities can provide by promoting concentration and coordination mechanisms on the one hand, and by organizing the pooling of a number of services, such as research and training or standardization, on the other.

The cluster has become a conceptual tool widely used in the literature to think about the dynamics of localized innovation, particularly in the cultural sector (Zarlenga et al., 2013). It also appears at the crossroads of urban and economic policies promoted by local authorities as a dominant model of development to stimulate innovation and creativity in regions. Thus, since the early 2000s, numerous cultural and creative industry clusters have been deployed by public authorities around the world (Mommaas, 2004; Foord, 2008), such as the Quartier de la Création in Nantes and 22@ in Barcelona (Morteau, 2016), or the many examples in China (Keane, 2009; Michel, 2020). The aim of these public policies is to stimulate the development of these sectors of activity, support urban regeneration, and contribute to the attractiveness and economic growth of the region (Mommaas, 2004; Evans, 2009b).

However, the "Porterian" approach pays little attention to the specific characteristics of territories in the dynamics of clusters and their capacity for innovation, ultimately leaving aside the "Marshallian" intuition of an "industrial atmosphere" produced at the urban level. Yet, as early as the 1970s, work on the industrial districts of Third Italy (Bagnasco, 1977, 1988; Becattini, 1979) already highlighted the role played by the spatial and social structures of a territory—the diffuse urbanization of the countryside and the organization of rural

societies around the "extended family"—in the coordination and competitiveness mechanisms of economic sectors. In the field of arts and culture, this is all the more significant given that creative and cultural production activities are marked by a strong "idiosyncratic" dimension (Santagata, 2002). How, then, can we take a more systemic view of the role of the urban ecosystem in the innovative capacity of artistic and cultural clusters?

The social embeddedness of cultural and artistic activities

The question, therefore, is whether geographical proximity alone is sufficient to produce mutually beneficial interaction. We need to consider forms of organized proximity, some of which are embedded in and largely dependent on the territory and urban dynamics (Rallet & Torre, 2004; Boschma, 2005; Suire & Vicente, 2009).

From this perspective, work in economic geography and management has shown that individuals (employees, members of a company) are part of communities within which ideas, know-how, and values that affect their capacity for innovation in their work environment circulate and are shared. These communities are defined as group of individuals who regularly and voluntarily exchange ideas about a shared interest or goal, whether in the cultural field or in other sectors (Amin & Cohendet, 2004; Sarazin et al., 2017). They are informal, self-organized groups with porous and fluid boundaries: continuous entry and exit renew the composition of the community and promote the dissemination of knowledge, just as the formation of "weak ties" between certain individuals positioned at the crossroads of several communities promotes the emergence of socially embedded innovations (Granovetter, 1973, 1985). AnnaLee Saxenian (1994) explains Silicon Valley's greater capacity for innovation compared to Route 128 in the United States by the circulation of ideas enabled by a social organization structured around numerous communities that transcend the strict boundaries of economic sectors. Adam Brown et al. (2000), drawing on the examples of Manchester (Northern Quarter) and Sheffield (Cultural Industries Quarter), emphasize the role of intermediate places in these innovation dynamics as spaces for knowledge transfer, but also for testing and validation.

The "grounds" model extends these ideas (Cohendet et al., 2010, 2014). It posits that, in a given urban context, the dynamics of creative ideas are based on a process that connects an informal "underground" of creative individuals or collectives with an institutional "upperground" of public and private organizations. Between the two, there may be a "middleground" composed of places, events, communities, and collective projects whose role is to create

links between the different categories of actors. The aim is to develop, test, and feed ideas from the underground to the upperground so that the latter can incorporate them. It is also a question of transferring established practices and standards to underground actors, enabling them to gain visibility. Together, these elements would constitute the anatomy of a "creative city," illustrated by the authors through an analysis of the functioning of the video game and circus sectors in Montreal.

This model offers a key to understanding the processes of innovation and creativity based on collective dynamics that are sometimes intangible. The presence of intense interactions and circulation between the three strata of actors (underground, middleground, upperground) would then constitute a fertile ground for the development of the "creative city." However, one criticism that can be levelled at this model, and more generally at economic literature on the social organization of innovation (proximity, communities, weak/strong ties, etc.), is that it reduces the territory to a neutral container, a platform on which creative communities interact without considering the specific role of urban morphologies (Ambrosino & Sagot-Duvauroux, 2018; Michel, 2022a).

From the cluster to the neighborhood: what the city does to the agglomeration

This leads us to carefully consider the process of territorial embeddedness of communities. The work of urban planner Jane Jacobs (1961) highlights the importance of urban configurations based on diversity (social, functional, etc.) as a source of innovation and vitality in cities. Following on from this, numerous studies in geography, urban planning, and urban sociology show not only that artistic, cultural, and creative activities do not cluster just anywhere, but that the socio-spatial properties of their locations—urban structure, architectural typology, real estate prices, vacancy and availability of premises, history, memory and image of places, etc.—also influence their nature and development path. While cultural venues for consumption and dissemination tend to be concentrated in historic centers, venues for artistic creation and production (artist-run spaces, cultural brownfields, etc.) tend to be concentrated on their margins (Boichot, 2013) or even in urban peripheries (Michel, 2022b).

As a result, certain parts of cities are identified in academic literature and urban planning documents as genuine artistic, cultural, and/or creative districts (Wynne, 1992; Boichot, 2014; Michel, 2022b). Whether spontaneous or planned, self-proclaimed or officially designated, these districts have been (and continue to be) the subject of numerous studies, which can be divided

into two main categories: some aimed at practitioners, developers, and even elected officials, focusing mainly on the methods and "best practices" necessary for their structuring and management (Montgomery, 2003; Roodhouse, 2006); others aimed at academics and professionals, focusing more on critical analysis of the phenomenon and of certain paradigmatic historical or more contemporary cases (Moss, 2002; McCarthy, 2005; Porter & Barber, 2007). This recognition by observers and experts, and also by those directly involved in urban development, is in fact the result of the "quarterization" of cities (Bell & Jayne, 2004) and their development policies, which seek to articulate, on a scale deemed operationally relevant and socially significant (the neighborhood), urban regeneration projects, real estate enhancement operations, and clusterization strategies[2] (Pollard, 2004; Vescovi, 2013). In this context, the spatial agglomeration (spontaneous or driven) of artistic, cultural, and creative activities is accompanied and sometimes even justified by proactive place-branding policies aimed at making these hubs more attractive to certain segments of the urban elite, tourists, and investors (Zukin, 1995).

Within this taxonomy, the literature identifies a particular type of neighborhood combining a strategic location (inner city), the presence of large numbers of brownfield sites, and a spatial, social, and architectural configuration typical of former industrial peri-central districts undergoing redevelopment. Among these, Hoxton in London (Hutton, 2008; Ambrosino, 2013), Wicker Park in Chicago (Lloyd, 2006), SoHo in New York (Bordreuil, 1994; Shkuda, 2016) and Les Olivettes in Nantes (Michel, 2022c) have been the subject of in-depth analysis. These monographs show that the materiality of their built environments, landscapes, and morphologies affect the social organization of innovation discussed in the previous section (Hutton, 2006): artists, graphic designers, theater directors, music producers, designers, gallery owners, and other professionals in the cultural and creative sectors meet, rub shoulders, inspire each other, help each other, and cooperate to varying degrees depending on the circumstances. Narrow streets lined with lively buildings (bars, cafes, restaurants), numerous courtyards hosting coworking spaces, workshops, or galleries, and a proliferation of interstices awaiting projects and undergoing basic redevelopment: all these places amplify these effects of social condensation on different scales and according to different timeframes. While they sometimes

2. It is not uncommon for the terms "cultural and/or creative districts," "quarters," and "clusters" to be used interchangeably in scientific literature and technical documentation (Chapain & Sagot-Duvauroux, 2020).

function as closed "clubs" marked by a certain exclusivity, they also constitute porous spaces connecting between the worlds of art and their audiences, the local populations, and all the actors necessary for urban life (shopkeepers, restaurateurs, service companies, etc.) (Michel, 2022c). As a result, these neighborhoods, described by some as "neo-bohemian" (Lloyd, 2004, 2006), act as incubators and serve as spaces for in situ and in vivo prototyping of artistic projects fueled by an idiosyncratic interplay between supply, demand, and lifestyle (Brown et al., 2000; Ambrosino & Sagot-Duvauroux, 2018). Depending on the nature of the projects carried out by the cultural actors present (who are more or less committed to the issue of cultural democracy), the neighborhood can even become a place where artistic dynamics are embedded in local cultural and social life, producing spaces for artistic and intellectual encounters with the rest of the city (Klein et al., 2019; Michel, 2019a & 2022b).

Conclusion

This Chapter shows the limitations of existing concepts for thinking across the complex embedding of cultural activities in territories from a cross-cutting perspective. While clusters and communities are certainly useful for highlighting the advantages of spatial concentration, the influence of social relations, and the role that public policies can play in creative processes, they remain primarily focused on economic and managerial issues, at the risk of reducing the territory to a simple platform. By taking greater account of audiences and residents in innovation processes—what A. Marshall might have called the "creative atmosphere"—work in geography, urban planning, and sociology highlights the role of socio-urban configurations in the ability of artistic, cultural, and creative actors to interact with each other and capture the creativity specific to the territory. Beyond this, the predominant presence of cultural activities helps shape the imaginaries and representations associated with cities, contributing to urban scenography and narratives. This is the subject of Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVE(S)

CHARLES AMBROSINO

After exploring the logic behind the concentration of artistic and cultural activities in urban spaces (Chapter 1), we will now examine their symbolic, narrative, and spatial significance in the field of local public action. The aim of this Chapter is to gain a better understanding of the contribution of arts and culture (1) to material transformation, but also to the construction of renewed representations of cities. With this in mind, we will discuss (2) the different ways in which urban change is made visible (through events, scenography, etc.) and their repercussions. Understood as a form of collective action, the process of staging all or part of the city will finally allow us to glimpse (3) the performative and territorializing effects of the urban planning narrative, as well as (4) the contradictions revealed by the oppositions between institutional and informal narratives when artists and cultural circles endeavor to (5) make their social creative activities visible in the public space.

Culture, branding, and urban entrepreneurship

At the turn of the 1980s, against a backdrop marked by a sharp decline in the industrial base of the large Fordist cities on the east coast of the United States, the first studies appeared attesting to the instrumentalization of arts and culture in the process of urban transformation. Two models emerged (Hélie, 2009): on the one hand, "cultural gentrification," in which artists spontaneously, unintentionally, and without coordination initiated a cycle of symbolic and then real estate revaluation of peri-central spaces (Zukin, 1982); and its "rationalized" version, driven this time by urban growth coalitions bringing together public and private actors convinced of the economic potential of culture (Whitt, 1987). The paradigmatic example of the former model is the New York neighborhood of SoHo, a figurehead of the artistic colony forced into exile following the success of the residential loft market, which it paradoxically helped to shape

by making its way of living—the loft living—visible, spatially, aesthetically, and ultimately in the media (Simpson, 1981; Zukin, 1982; Bordreuil, 1994; Kostelanetz, 2003; Shkuda, 2016). The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust exemplifies the second, a partnership established between the municipality and a group of banks and foundations (including that of industrialist Jack Heinz), which became the developer of a cultural district combining cultural facilities, parks, leisure infrastructure, residences, and shops, all located near the business center (Brooks & Kushner, 2001). In both cases, culture is invested with the ability to influence the mechanics of urban decline through the influence of actors who are external to the cultural field itself. Drawing on the semiotization of inner city landscapes, New York developers know how to capitalize on the economic rents generated by the historical preservation of the built environment. Similarly, in Pittsburgh, local investors and industrialists are banking on cultural amenities to diversify the activities and uses of central and peri-central spaces. More broadly, these pioneering configurations usher in an era in which culture, flanked by a marketing function, is rapidly establishing itself as one lever (among other) of gentrification in North American cities.

A clear sign of the entrepreneurial shift in municipal public action (Harvey, 1989; Hall & Hubbard, 1998), this form of mobilization of cultural offerings as a part of city branding strategies is primarily intended to promote a new image of major urban areas (Paddison, 1993). Local governments are working to provide the private sector with a favorable environment by seeking to distinguish themselves and showcase their qualities, specialties, and differences. From the first North American initiatives to culturally redevelop waterfronts (Baltimore, San Francisco, New York), to major tourist and cultural events (European Capital of Culture label and other mega events), urban self-celebration (Glasgow) and the use of iconic cultural facilities designed by a "starchitect" following the Bilbao model (flagship cultural projects), many Western cities on both sides of the Atlantic are banking on the virtues of art and culture to recode their media and tourist identity (Gómez, 1998; Gravari-Barbas, 1998; Richards, 2014). From experiments to "best practices," from "flagship projects" to "success stories," the model known as culture-led regeneration justified a wide range of collective urban actions throughout the 1980s and 1990s, inviting, through mimicry or hybridization, a profound reconsideration of the narrative construction of cities (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993).

Making the city in transformation visible

From the 2000s onwards, the display of art and expressive practices in public spaces was gradually accompanied by the "spectacularization" of large-scale

development projects designed to profoundly transform urban spaces. This led to a decompartmentalization of cultural, tourism, and urban development policies in favor of a new approach to audiences, territories, and events. In this regard, Nantes, Lille, and Montreal appear to be paradigmatic cases. Around emblematic cultural operators such as Jean Blaise (Voyage à Nantes), Didier Fusiller (Lille European Capital of Culture 2004, then Lille 3000), and Simon Brault (Culture Montréal), collaborations between the fields of culture and urban development have made possible the emergence of cultural projects with a genuine urban dimension, as well as urban projects that integrate culture as part of their inherent structure (Gravari-Barbas, 2013). These new ways of reconciling historically impervious fields of public action (support for artistic creation, transformation of the living environment, and attractiveness) are achieved by broadening the target audiences and herald new forms of aestheticization of urban production. Local authorities are using artistic creation to construct positive representations of future living spaces (most often former brownfield sites on the outskirts of cities or pockets of renewal located in the heart of old towns), and staging them in advance of the social practices that are expected to unfold there once the project is completed (Petiteau & Chérel, 2004). In this perspective, street performances, art festivals, and cultural events play a central role (Chaudoir, 2007; Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2007). Through performances, happenings, and walking tours, artists not only offer an experience of urban public spaces, but also give to the audience the opportunity to establish links between places and enhance their sensory perception through walking and wandering. Art is thus more present in the street than in institutional venues, and its revelatory power gives residents the opportunity to explore and, more generally, to (re)discover their city.

More than infrastructure, it is atmosphere that local stakeholders seek to promote, distinguishing themselves from the equipment-focused approach that has long served as the basis for urban cultural policy development (following the Bilbao model, in particular). A range of technical and creative skills (alternative management of green spaces and urban lighting, design of public spaces, installation of works of art and original street furniture, etc.) are then mobilized to showcase the changes taking place in cities in vivo and in situ. This "scenography" of urban spaces (Gangloff, 2016) is sometimes accompanied by a veritable "plot construction" (Pradel, 2007) around events that are both structuring and recurring (biennials, festivals, etc.) with a view to creating suspense, each event calling for a sequel that symbolically enhances places that have become receptacles for increasingly diverse audiences. The recipients of these events, indeed, are not only local populations, but also travelers, day-trippers,

and curious individuals informed by the cultural media. Together, through their simultaneous participation in the various events on offer, they construct images and representations, memories and impressions that they take away with them, share and disseminate within their social networks and on social media (Manovich & Indaco, 2017; Al-Kodmany, 2019). Like a mobile cultural product, these exchanges of content generate and sell cities at least as much as they make them attractive and desirable in the eyes of newcomers and the middle and upper classes. Ultimately, this narrative re-enchantment of urbanism is based on the weakening of the dichotomy between tourists and residents in favor of the figure of the visitor-consumer (Fabry et al., 2015), who is just as attracted by a classic heritage repertoire (museums, exhibitions, etc.) as they are by unique urban experiences (brownfield sites, gastronomy, in situ art, etc.) produced by the heritage designation of the urban production. The logic of cultural tourism is thus transformed to the point where sensory immersion and the imaginary of the city become motives for travel that are at least as compelling as a visit to a prestigious institution. However, such strategies depend on the constant renewal of proposals designed to maintain the ephemeral nature of event-based and creative tourism, which raises questions about its durability, legitimacy, and even ecological sustainability (Garnier & Devisme, 2023).

Institutional narratives and the performativity of collective urban action

This is how "new territorial legends" (Pagès, 2010) are forged, designed to attract regional, national, and even global attention, to foster an emotional connection and a sense of pride locally, and to galvanize the collective memory. But how can we distinguish between the dissemination of brand images—reducing the urban planning narrative to a one-dimensional quest for notoriety—and the construction through dialogue of the narrative identity of cities (Evans, 2003; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005)? To do this, we must postulate that there is an identity register in urban action whose role is precisely to give meaning. The instrumentalization by elected officials, technicians, and other consultants of "identity in action" (Lussault, 1997) testifies to this spatial performativity of the narration of urban spaces. To reduce it to a simple exercise in fictional storytelling consisting of artificializing the media image of a territory would be to deny that the story the actors tell has an effect on the one they are constructing (Matthey, 2011; Spivak L'Hoste & Vinck, 2011). The convergence between the "spectacularization" of creation in public space, the provision of leisure activities, and livability reinvests urban production with a cultural value capable of circulating meaning within multiple communities (visitors, residents, workers,

etc.). This care taken in proposing new urban atmospheres reflects a desire to connect and create links between various resources (artistic, commercial, or social facilities), multiple fields of action (design of public spaces, artistic programming, transport services) and actors working in different areas (from bar owners, booksellers, gallery owners, and even artisans to cultural entrepreneurs).

From this perspective, the trajectories of Nantes and Saint-Étienne are quite instructive (Ambrosino et al., 2016). These two examples clearly show how local actors have been able to overcome the constraints and burdens of deindustrialization to position two former bastions of Fordism at the forefront of France's "creative cities" movement, thanks to projects, individuals, and other intangible resources. Based on a form of selective memory, the narrative is constructed in such a way as to counteract a number of negative representations by generating new imagery, largely free from the burdensome legacies (related to urban decay, economic decline, and demographic erosion) of a past that we wish to reinterpret. This original image, projected externally and relayed by the media, visitors, elected officials, and residents, creates a sense of unity for the present and acts as a starting point not only for discussing the city, but also for defining its directions and expectations. This is the case in Saint-Étienne, where the promotion of design as a territorial value makes it possible to reconcile industrial heritage with the enhancement of local innovation capacities, albeit at the risk of controversial heritage trade-offs: regular conflicts between the defenders of technical memory (manufacturing know-how, invention of technical and commercial processes) and the guardians of social memory (workers' struggles, power relations, etc.) reflect the dissent that can be aroused by the strategic and one-dimensional exploitation of local history. More generally, the narratives that local actors present to outsiders (in France or internationally) and tell each other (among themselves, among institutions) have an impact on their actions. The transformation of the Île de Nantes is an example of this: the Quartier de la Création would certainly not have seen the light of day if, upstream, the Festival des Allumés, the redevelopment of the LU factories into cultural facilities, and the establishment of the Machines de l'île had not gradually accustomed local actors to the idea that art and culture could be a driving force for the regeneration of this former industrial area.

Informal narratives and raising the profile of artistic and cultural circles

However, the narrative construction of cultural territories is neither unambiguous nor solely the work of the prince; in many cases, it is polyphonic and sometimes even contradictory. Indeed, many authors show how certain cultural actors do

not hesitate to carry out collective actions that are parallel to, or even antagonistic to, institutional practices (Maisetti, 2013; Vivant, 2007), particularly in the discursive field. The aim is therefore to promote new aesthetics, creative activities, and alternative cultural offerings through informal storytelling strategies emerging from the underground worlds of art and urban activism (Michel, 2022b). This is particularly the case in Nantes, where, alongside the territorial marketing strategies conducted by the public authorities to promote the Quartier de la Création (city's official creative district, "in"), a collective of creative workers has been organized within the Olivettes neighborhood. Like a selective club, this collective works to promote the brand image of the city's "true" creative district ("off" or alternative), where they organize their collaborative networks and interprofessional affinities and claim membership under the name of the Democratic Republic of Olivettes (Michel, 2019b). This is also the case in Bristol, where a local collective called the People's Republic of Stokes Croft, made up of residents and artists, is working to preserve the "authenticity" of the peri-central neighborhood of Stokes Croft, threatened by gentrification and now internationally known for its street art—particularly that of the famous Banksy, who is said to have made his debut there (Ambrosino, 2014). Founded in the late 2000s, this activist movement accuses the municipality of abandoning what they have self-defined as "Bristol's cultural quarter" to the luxury housing market, and they themselves are responsible for its historicization (within their own museum), defending (by proposing an extension of the heritage protection perimeter), and promoting (selling books and DVDs, organizing cultural tours and street festivals). Mobilizing around local and global issues (real estate speculation and gentrification, access to healthcare for all, etc.), they draw inspiration from a culture of appropriation dear to graffiti artists and vandals to occupy urban space using artistic mediums (happenings, appropriation of municipal signage, street graffiti competitions), adorn their rebellious tendencies with an idiosyncratic aesthetic closely linked to the cultural and social life of Stokes Croft. Now a tourist destination in its own right and recognized as such by local cultural operators, this latest example clearly illustrates the complex intertwining of "in" and "off," institutional and informal, so symptomatic of the domestication of countercultures and their protest narratives within gentrified cities (Pattaroni, 2021).

Public space, social creative activities, and territorial marking

As Éric Charmes (2005) points out, if artists have a role to play in the process of urban change, it is not so much through their residential concentration as through the strategies they develop to occupy public space. It is by gaining

publicity in the street space that they influence opinion makers, but also those they rub shoulders with on a daily basis (residents, shopkeepers, workers, etc.). It is therefore "less the work than the artist's studio"[1] (Charmes, 2005, p. 119) that contributes to the social construction of space and, consequently, to an urban experience conducive to its potential transformation. This conclusion is widely shared by Sophie Gravereau (2008), who subtly describes the conditions for promoting and enhancing the identity of Paris's Belleville neighborhood, where artists are providing new visibility by organizing events and open houses and leaving physical traces. Within these artistic and bohemian neighborhoods (Chapter 1), creators build themselves around a professional identity and a particular way of life, while at the same time renewing a physical territory. The neighborhood is transformed into an open-air studio and is staged through informal narratives conveyed both by the media and by the alternative actors themselves. Through the way artists engage with the neighborhood, they produce an image that sometimes even becomes the guarantee of their recognition within the art world, with the spatial object (the neighborhood) conferring symbolic value on the cultural products and works that emanate from it, "a reputation that makes a mark" (Halbert, 2008). Through their presence and their installation, they demonstrate that the neighborhood is changing and can change. In doing so, they give concrete form to the possible transformation of the territory and reinsert it into the mechanics of media, land, and real estate development.

Conclusion

Analyzing the SoHo phenomenon in retrospect, Jean-Samuel Bordreuil (1994) goes further. In order to fully account for the specificity of this new kind of art territory, he does not hesitate to invoke the theatrical metaphor. His aim is to show how the classic distinction between "backstage"—the studio where one works, socializes, and lives—and "scene"—the gallery, museum, or salon where one shows and is shown, where one sells, contemplates, or buys—is gradually disappearing. The loft-studio thus becomes at once an exhibition space, a workspace, and a living space, and, by metonymy, SoHo becomes a place of artistic creation and dissemination, but also of transactions that transcend the boundaries between public and private spaces, between public space and the space "of" the public. A clear sign of this change: art dealers and gallery owners, restaurateurs and developers followed in the footsteps of artists, thus accelerating their territorial eviction. In this configuration, what artists create is ultimately less a narrative than a landscape, that is, a perceived space, but

1. In the book, all excerpts from non-English sources have been translated by the authors.

also a new spatial organization that is visible, perceptible, and legible, with its own centralities, its own toponymy, and its own choreography, all three of which are fundamental to an "atmospheric experience" of space (Michaud, 2021). Such "ecstatic" energy (Chapter 3) is the combined result of objects (a building with striking architecture, original street furniture, a temporary installation, etc.), artistic proposals (graffiti, a sculpture, an ephemeral device, a theatrical performance, etc.), events (a market, a concert, a festival, etc.) or simply breaks in the perceptual routine (signage or lighting, the language used by a group of people, smells coming from restaurants, etc.) which, in their own way, overflow and express a presence that spreads and affects the senses. Scene effects, scenography, and staging then combine symbiotically with the rhythm of events, inaugurations, and exhibitions, indistinctly mixing the worlds of art, visitors, and the neighborhood. According to J.-S. Bordreuil (1994), these are the ingredients necessary for the transformation of this "territorial soft underbelly" into a true global cultural and artistic center.

Beyond the narratives, as we can clearly see in the example of SoHo, the predominant presence of cultural and creative activities contributes to the transformation of urban spaces in terms of atmosphere, attractiveness, social profile of the population, etc., all of which are effects linked to their spillover effects on the territory. These spillover effects will be discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

SPILLOVER(S)

RAINER KAZIG & DOMINIQUE SAGOT-DUVAUROUX

This third Chapter explores the capacity of artistic activities to transform the overall dynamics of a territory by examining their ecstatic properties and the way in which they singularly affect its modes of habitation, atmospheres, and economy. Focusing on the sensory and affective dimensions of cultural and creative territories, the Chapter revolves around the concepts of (1) amenity, (2) atmosphere, and (3) resonance. The aim is to identify the multiple sensory spillovers, beyond the economic and social effects alone, that artistic and cultural activities generate, either intentionally or unintentionally, in a territory. More generally, the goal is to show how artistic and cultural activities anchored in a given territory leave their footprint and thus contribute to its sensory transformation (Michel, 2022a).

The intangible value of cultural and artistic activities

Cultural and artistic activities have a unique impact on the territories in which they are established. The economic and social effects they have on the production of the city, and more generally on urban development, are the subject of extensive literature (Cooke & Lazzeretti, 2008). Economists use the term "externalities" to refer to the consequences of an economic agent's activity on the wellbeing of other agents (individuals or organizations), without these consequences being subject to market compensation (Meade, 1952). In urban economics, the term amenity is more commonly used to describe the non-market effects generated by these activities, which benefit actors located in the area. It is these amenities that influence the willingness of individuals and businesses to locate in a given neighborhood or city, leading to a process of ongoing transformation (Helbrecht, 2004; Partridge, 2010).

Olivier Mouate (2019) thus considers amenities to be a kind of commons that correspond to the ambiance, atmosphere,[1] identity, or vitality of a city. "The atmosphere is undoubtedly a common good that can be nurtured or degraded, cared for or abused," notes Jean-Paul Thibaud (2018). "Commons," in the economic sense of the term, are goods that are both non-exclusive (you cannot prevent a resident from enjoying or enduring the atmosphere of their neighborhood) but potentially rivalrous, because permanent access to that neighborhood or city is limited and depends on the real estate market (rivalry). They result from the way in which the various attributes of a territory are arranged (type of population, businesses, particularly shops, urban morphology, etc.). The same type of cultural facility is therefore likely to have very different effects on the atmosphere depending on its architecture, the configuration of the neighborhood, and how it is received by residents. Amenities act as a filter between the objective and quantifiable attributes of a neighborhood, particularly in terms of the density of artistic and cultural activities, and the economic and social externalities associated with these attributes.

In the places where they are located, cultural assets generate a specific atmosphere (which is a form of amenity) that attracts or repels certain categories of residents, visitors, or organizations subject to access conditions. These movements are unique in that they are geographically localized. It is therefore necessary to get around on site to benefit from and experience this atmosphere.

The spillover effects of cultural activities may be short-lived. For example, the short-term economic impact of a cultural event (particularly a festival) on the local economy has been widely documented, particularly in terms of increased attractiveness and tourist activity (OECD, 2009). In the longer term, the amenities provided by artistic and cultural activities could, in a post-industrial economy in transition, attract a skilled population seeking entertainment (Glaeser et al., 2001; Clark & Kahn, 1988) and/or creative workers who have become strategic

1. In the field of research on ambiances and atmospheres, there are different research traditions that are also reflected in the establishment of the two terms "ambiance" and "atmosphere" (Adey et al., 2013). In French-language literature, the term ambiance has mainly become established in the field of architectural research. The term "atmosphere," used in English- and German-language literature, has its origins in philosophy and has been used in a multitude of disciplines and fields of application over the past twenty years. It has recently been used more and more by French speakers when referring to German-language texts (for example, issue 46 of the *Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* on atmospheres, see Galland-Szymkowiak & Labbé, 2019; and the translation of a book by Gernot Böhme, 2020). In this text, we use the terms ambiances and atmospheres as synonyms, despite the subtle conceptual differences.

resources for attracting businesses, particularly high-tech companies (Florida, 2002). Beyond that, Jane Jacobs (1969) refers to the urbanization economy to describe the transfer of knowledge from cultural sectors to other sectors. This would explain the frequently observed link between cultural asset density and innovation (Rodríguez-Pose & Lee, 2020). The urban model of the "creative city" thus seeks to leverage individuals' willingness to locate there by investing in assets that generate positive amenities for creative workers. This can lead to a radical transformation of the social structure of the neighborhood and the city. These amenities can therefore have negative effects when the territory and its associated atmosphere are constructed to the detriment of certain categories of the population. These cities are at risk of gentrification, driving low-income populations out of lively neighborhoods (Zukin, 1987; Florida, 2017), including artists, who are often the driving force behind the area's appeal. While the economic effects of artistic activities on territorial dynamics are debated, particularly in terms of empirical verification (Storper & Scott, 2009), they have nevertheless strongly inspired policies for creating "creative cities."

Artistic and cultural activities that generate atmosphere

Cultural activity in a territory is not simply perceptible through the presence of galleries or the occupation of real estate by creative economy companies. It can also be felt through a specific atmosphere in the urban space. Sophie Gravereau (2013) showed that in the Belleville neighborhood of Paris, the arrival of artists contributed to the emergence of a new atmosphere that made it more attractive to new residents. Drawing on various empirical cases to establish a general trend, Basile Michel (2022b, p. 65) refers to a "re-enchanted atmosphere in cultural and creative quarters." As these examples suggest, the terms atmosphere and ambiance refer not only to the sensory dimension, but also to the affective dimension of urban development. They refer to the vitality of urban space and allow us to address a dimension of the economic transformation of neighborhoods that has rarely been explicitly considered until now.

The concepts of atmosphere and ambiance, around which a unique field of interdisciplinary research has developed over the last three decades, have contributed to giving greater prominence to the sensory, sensitive, and affective dimension in the humanities and social sciences. They are based on the idea that a person is connected to their environment at all times through their senses. Their sensory capacity is not understood as a perception of objects or signs, but as a feeling of a place (Kazig, 2007a). Atmosphere is an experienced quality of place that depends, among other things, on its physical configuration and the ordinary or extraordinary social practices that take place there.

An atmosphere can manifest itself on an individual's own body or as a quality of a place (Böhme, 2020). On the one hand, it is felt according to a person's state or disposition (*Befindlichkeit*). A person's affective and emotional state can thus change subtly depending on the atmosphere of a place. On the other hand, an atmosphere can be felt as the tonality of a place or situation (Thibaud, 2013). Gernot Böhme (2020) has shown that a person's state and their experience of the world are two closely related elements.

An atmosphere is neither purely subjective, as is the case with emotions, nor purely objective, such as a social practice in space or a material element of the environment. An atmosphere is the result of a relationship between the two and can be understood as a medium that is established between subjects and their environment (Thibaud, 2011), i.e., an amenity as we have defined it. Research on atmospheres has often implicitly started from a neutral subject without taking into account gender, age, social background, etc. (Bille & Simonsen, 2021). This leads to the idea that those present share the same experience of the atmosphere of a place. Nevertheless, in the German-speaking context, sociologist Martina Löw (2015 [2001]) emphasizes in her sociology of space (published in German in 2001) the need to take socialization into account when reflecting on atmospheres and to start from the idea that the atmosphere of a space is not experienced in the same way by all those present. M. Löw's proposal—which has received little attention to date—of a plurality of ways of experiencing the atmosphere of a place is particularly important in the context of cultural atmospheres. It challenges the idea of the emergence of *an* automatically re-enchanted atmosphere in cultural and creative districts and invites us to question, through empirical work, the coexistence of multiple experiences of their atmospheres.

In most cases, the atmosphere of a place and its possible effects on a person remain at a preconscious level. But there are situations where it is consciously experienced as one of the qualities specific to a place or situation. Andreas Rauh (2014, p. 257) refers to this situation as a "special atmosphere." To understand the atmosphere generated by the presence of the creative economy and artistic and cultural activities in a region, we focus primarily on places and situations where this atmosphere is consciously experienced and becomes a phenomenon of everyday aesthetics (Foster, 1998; Kazig, 2020).

Taking these atmospheres into account requires some reflection in order to conceptualize them. First, the immediate nature of their experience (Thibaud, 2002) must be supplemented. By immediate, we mean the fact that an atmosphere imposes itself independently of the knowledge that people who frequent

the place may have. This is generally the case with architectural atmospheres: the atmosphere of a room with a very low, dark ceiling is immediately experienced as stifling. But the idea of immediacy cannot be transposed in the same way to all types of atmospheres. Some require the addition of a cognitive dimension to grasp the experience of the atmosphere. In the same vein, Phillip Vannini et al. (2012) developed a somatic approach to the sociology of the senses, arguing that sensory perception and the production of meaning should be considered together. Similarly, in his project on aesthetics, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2004) also proposed, with the notion of epiphanies, that the aesthetic experience be understood as an oscillation between effects of presence and effects of meaning. For example, the presence of a design firm in a commercial space with windows on the ground floor certainly has immediate effects on the atmosphere of the public space, but for the experience to convey a creative atmosphere, it is necessary to know that these are designers at work and not financial analysts.

Next, we need to distinguish how artistic, cultural, and creative activities manifest themselves in a neighborhood. This can be through workplaces, venues, pop-up events, the presence of creative workers, and art in urban spaces. Each of these different forms conveys a creative atmosphere in a neighborhood in its own specific way. The potential of workplaces to convey such an atmosphere depends largely on their visibility from public spaces. Small offices located in premises with a window overlooking the street can thus have a greater effect on the atmosphere of a neighborhood's streets than an office building housing a large number of activities that are invisible from public spaces. The atmosphere created by performance venues (theaters, cinemas, etc.) is linked to their architecture or a particular staging, as well as to the temporary presence of the audience in the street before and after performances. Ephemeral events such as festivals, vernissages, or open days at galleries and artists' studios have great potential to create—in a limited time—an artistic atmosphere in a neighborhood, both through the staging of these events and the presence of the participating public (Debroux, 2017; Gravereau, 2013). These extraordinary events are easily memorable due to the intensity of their atmosphere and can even be used to construct a narrative about the creative dimension of the neighborhood that bears their "footprint" (Michel, 2022a). On a daily basis, the presence of creative sector employees and/or artists in public spaces or restaurants also contributes to shaping the atmosphere of an area. It can be experienced as an expression of the neighborhood, but also seen as a place of creativity when certain bars or cafes are identified as meeting places for the neighborhood's creative types. In addition, creative workers can influence the atmosphere

of a neighborhood through their expressive clothing, manner of expression, movement, or appropriation of public space. Finally, art in public spaces can also contribute to instilling a creative atmosphere in a neighborhood (Hillary & Sumartojo, 2014).

The above reflections have shown how cultural and artistic activities can contribute in various ways to the emergence of a more or less intense creative atmosphere in a neighborhood. The intensity (Thibaud, 2007) or pervasiveness (Thibaud, 2004) of an atmosphere, i.e., its ability to impose itself on those present, regardless of their characteristics, depends on several factors. The consistency (Thibaud, 2018) or homogeneity (Hauskeller, 1995) of the elements that make up the territory that give rise to it is an important condition. The spatial distribution and density of artistic and cultural activities are likely to influence the intensity of the cultural atmosphere in a territory. Their concentration in a given space certainly has a more marked effect on the consistency and prevalence of a creative atmosphere than a dispersed distribution. Finally, intensity can vary over time (Kazig, 2007b), depending on whether or not the territory's artistic activities are sustainable. These vary over the course of a day (working hours, performances), a week (working days and weekends) or a year (programming of temporary events) and thus lead, depending on the unique configurations of each territory, to variations in the intensity of creative atmospheres over time. B. Michel (2022b) has shown, in the case of the Ourcq Canal in Paris and the M50 district in Shanghai, different forms of variation in the intensity of creative atmospheres. In the M50 district, he notes a predominance of artistic activities (art studios and galleries) which contributes to a strong consistency and intensity of the creative atmosphere. In the case of the Ourcq Canal, due to its diverse uses, the consistency is much weaker, and one experiences a series of micro-atmospheres rather than *one* intense and homogeneous cultural atmosphere.

However, the atmosphere created by artistic activities in an area does not necessarily resonate with the diverse expectations of the area's users (residents, workers, consumers, tourists, etc.). This is why it is important to address the concept of resonance in the following section.

From atmosphere to resonance

In recent years, the concept of resonance has gained popularity in the social sciences, particularly thanks to Hartmut Rosa's (2019) "sociology of our relationship to the world." Resonance is the central concept here. According to H. Rosa (2019, p. 169), the experience of resonance is "a three-note chord

consisting of the momentarily converging movements of body, mind and tangible world." With the great importance of human sensuality, materiality, and the conception of a subject that is formed only in its relationship to the world, his understanding of resonance is closely related to the concept of atmosphere.

Before H. Rosa, other authors in the social and cultural sciences had already taken an interest in the notion of resonance (see, for example: Wikan, 1992; Ingold, 1993) or analyzed social relationships of resonance without explicitly using the term (see Schütz, 1951, with his text on "making music together"; or Seel, 1996, in his aesthetics of nature). In the context of our reflections, H. Rosa's work is particularly relevant because he uses resonance not only as an analytical concept, but also in a normative understanding as a condition for a successful life.

In principle, resonance relationships can develop with any part of the world, and therefore also with urban neighborhoods, both in their material and social dimensions. While the concept of atmosphere, as an analytical concept, only takes into account the fact that neighborhoods can be felt by individuals in their own bodies, the concept of resonance raises the question of whether and for whom relationships with the world are experienced as indifferent, repulsive, or precisely as resonant and, in the latter case, as a moment of successful life.

According to H. Rosa (2019, 2020), resonance describes a mode of relating to the world that can be defined through four characteristics. To resonate with a person, but also with a landscape or a neighborhood, means first and foremost to be affected or touched by it (Rosa, 2020). So what are the connecting agents that contribute to these artistic activities being relevant to us (certain individuals, but also architecture, urban configuration, etc.)? Secondly, resonance then requires a reaction to this impact. Do we seek out what has touched us? How do we react, for example, to the presence of cultural activities? This may be a choice of mobility (I move closer or further away), of participation (I participate in the activities, or I oppose them in an alternative movement, for example). Thirdly, resonance implies a transformation of our relationship with the world through a subtle interplay of interactions between us and our environment (transformation of atmosphere, changes in circulation, modes of consumption, relationships with others, etc.). Finally, resonance cannot be fully exploited (H. Rosa talks about the uncontrollability of resonance). We can work on creating the conditions for resonance, but this resonance is uncertain. It resists rationalization. Public policies, in particular, can attempt to promote resonance and generate a specific atmosphere through urban development plans, building architecture, and social policy, particularly housing

policy, but without any guarantee of success. Over-instrumentalization can indeed create a consistent atmosphere, as in a supermarket, but one that no longer produces resonance.

The transformation of a territory into an artistic and creative territory therefore not only changes atmospheres, but with this transformation, the possibilities for building resonant relationships with the world in and with the territory. In the positive case, the transformed territory can be experienced as a place where one feels at home—referred to in German by the term *Heimat* (Rosa, 2019, p. 359)—because artistic activities resonate not only with new residents who feel attracted by their presence in the neighborhood (Gravereau, 2013), but also and above all with long-time residents. If this is not the case, the transformation of the area can lead to the loss of previously meaningful relationships for the latter and thus a decline in the value of the neighborhood for their personal wellbeing. This dynamic has been described in the context of the discussion on gentrification as displacement, which in recent work also includes an affective and emotional dimension (Elliot-Cooper et al., 2020). However, residents' attitudes toward these transformations remain a complex phenomenon, as illustrated, for example, by the feelings of young people in Pantin, in the Paris suburbs, toward the transformation of their city, which range from pride to fear of marginalization (Demoulin et al., 2022).

Introducing the concepts of atmosphere and resonance into this discussion provides a better understanding of the sensitive and emotional dimension of this dynamic initiated by the presence of cultural and creative activities and practices. It highlights the fragility, ambiguity, and ephemeral nature of the effects that the multiple spillovers of these activities have on a territory.

Agglomerations, *narratives*, *spillovers*: three concepts that shed light, each in its own way but only partially, on the interconnections that exist between a localized artistic offering and urban dynamics. The literature on the effects of agglomeration highlights the challenge of building and organizing dense networks of actors and their ability to establish themselves in order to take advantage of the diffuse creativity of a territory and bring about artistic innovations. The literature on narratives highlights the strong development of storytelling and representations of the city's production through art and culture, constructed by institutional as well as informal actors. Finally, literature on the territorial spillover effects of artistic offerings, beyond the economic and social effects they generate, highlights the complexity of the atmospheres that these offerings

can create and thus highlights the sensitive implications of the ecstatic nature of arts and culture.

The intersection of these three bodies of scientific literature leads to an analysis of territories marked by a strong artistic presence as fragile ecosystems, whose trajectories reflect the complex balances between economic, social, cultural, and urban issues. The moments of resonance between these issues correspond to what we call, in the second part of this book, a scene.

PART 2

BUILDING A THEORY OF THE SCENE

The first part of this book showed how difficult it is for the social sciences to grasp the diversity of the impact of artistic activities on cities and, more broadly, on territories. The concept of the scene seemed to us to be a fertile one for better characterizing the role played by urban and social structures in the emergence of new artistic forms, but also the influence of these artistic presences in the transformation of these structures. The purpose of this second part is therefore to define it conceptually. Chapter 4 traces how this concept—which emerged in the 1990s to describe the territorial embeddedness of popular music—became in the 2010s a conceptual tool widely used in academic literature in the social sciences, characterized by a high degree of plasticity depending on the discipline, at the risk of suffering from a certain vagueness. In line with this dynamic, the notion of scene used in the Scaena project is based on a metaphorical approach to a territory-scene in order to develop a pluralistic analytical framework for the territorial dynamics associated with the presence of artistic activities (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 4

PIONEERING APPROACHES TO SCENES

GÉRÔME GUIBERT

Beyond its most common meaning,[1] describing the place where a live show or artistic performance takes place, there was nothing to suggest that the term "scene" would become so relevant in characterizing certain forms of relationships between culture and territory. That is why, in this Chapter, we propose to develop a perspective that is both historical and archaeological. The aim is to determine the context in which the notion of scene emerged to describe urban cultural dynamics, and then to establish a genealogy of its use within academic circles. We will therefore review (1) the main stages in the emergence, consolidation, and dissemination of this concept within the social sciences, before turning our attention to (2) its institutionalization in France.

The scene as a program: the role of research on popular music

The use of the concept of scene to study cultural dynamics in relation to territory exploded in the 2010s (Woo et al., 2015; Guibert & Bellavance, 2014). Authors working on the origins of the term agree on one point: following an initial attempt to apply it to sociology by John Irwin (1977), it was in the context of scientific literature on popular music that the idea of a scene first crystallized, with a specific perspective summarized by Benjamin Woo and his colleagues (2015, p. 287): "talking about the roles of place, participation and circulation in the production of popular music. […] some have […] identified this as a 'scenes perspective' (Bennett 2004)." The pivotal text is Will Straw's "Systems of articulation, logics of change: Communities and scene in popular music," published in 1991 in the journal *Cultural Studies* (Straw, 1991). In this seminal text, the author distinguishes between what he considers to be two relationships

1. This brings to mind "scenographic" works; see, for example, the writings of Marcel Freydefont (2016) on this subject.

between musical genres and territory. First, community, which according to W. Straw is appropriate to describe alternative or independent post-punk rock trends, spreading throughout most cities around the world, from an ideological perspective of resistance to the mainstream logic of the cultural industries. These "community" music genres find their own unique ways of functioning depending on the city, while operating in a similar way almost everywhere in the world (with bands, record stores, radio stations, and DIY labels of various subgenres in each case). They create translocal links, with bands traveling from city to city within a community, a specific subgenre (hardcore punk, gothic, garage, psychedelic, indie pop, etc.), and these subgenres can evolve independently of each other. But in the same seminal text, W. Straw contrasts the post-punk rock "communities" mentioned above with the recently developed electronic dance music scene, which he describes as facing an uncertain but more innovative future, and which he refers to as "scenes." These electronic music genres (writing in 1990, he refers in particular to Chicago house, Detroit techno, Miami bass, and Los Angeles swingbeat) are characterized in each city by dance venues, clubs, DJs, or producers specific to each of them. For him, at the time, they were more specifically part of the singularities of cities and were sensitive to the characteristics of those who inhabited them (such as racial or sexual minorities), yet they retained the ability to suggest a common aesthetic direction (unlike rock). He writes: "The discursive labour of dance music's infrastructures operates implicitly to prevent the fractures and lines of difference which run through the culture of metropolitan dance music from either fragmenting that culture into autonomous, parallel traditions" (Straw, 1991, p. 382). Beyond this thesis, which would subsequently be widely debated and which the author would probably no longer defend in these terms today, the article focuses on a key point: the importance of cities and, more broadly, of physical materiality in the construction of cultural expressions.

In this text, W. Straw addresses the relationship between urban environments and the dynamics of cultural development and circulation. In his own words,[2] the idea of using the concept of "scene" originated in a workshop on contemporary trends in popular music research held in 1988, where W. Straw discussed the topic with two other fellow researchers, Holly Kruse and Barry Shank.[3]

2. Personal interview with the author, Paris, 2010 (Guibert, 2016).

3. First joint conference of the Canadian and US branches of the IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music) in October 1988 at Yale (Connecticut, United States).

According to W. Straw, a reflection emerged explicitly at the end of the round table when the researchers realized that they used the term "scene" very frequently without it being theorized. "Scene" was indeed—and still is—a vernacular term, and this is a point that must be taken into account in any analysis. It is a word that has been used since the 1960s by fans, journalists, and musicians to describe collective creative movements in popular music, with "scene" meaning two things: either a musical genre (the baggy sound scene, the reggae scene, etc.) or the music of a real or supposed geographical area (city, region, state). The place used with the term scene can then be the place where one or more underground artists had emerged and then had become famous or mainstream (the Beatles and the Liverpool scene), or it can reinforce the first meaning of musical genre by locating its supposed origin, such as, to use the examples of musical genres cited above, "the baggy sound of Manchester" or "Kingston reggae," which allows aesthetic and geographical dimensions to be combined.

While W. Straw wrote the first research article in a major journal (*Cultural Studies*) that sought to theorize the concept, it was Barry Shank (1994) who published the first book, *Dissonant Identities. The Rock'n'Roll Scene in Austin, Texas,* which associates a city, a musical genre, and the notion of scene. In this work, B. Shank develops an approach that is quite different from that of W. Straw, even though they are in dialogue with each other. A researcher in American studies and a musician, B. Shank shows, from an intersubjective perspective influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, how a city's music is the receptacle of the activity and feelings of its inhabitants, which it in turn inspires, these phenomena contributing to shaping the uniqueness of a given city's culture. Temporary identifications produce "productive anxiety": spectators become fans, who become musicians, the latter always remaining fans. For B. Shank, the intensity of engagement generates a meaningful, overproductive community connected to a territory that questions and transgresses "dominant" cultural forms. It is in line with this logic that Alan Blum (2003) describes, in a chapter devoted to the concept, the scene as a mechanism of urban effervescence resulting from the public display of intimacy.

It could be said that these early attempts, although still in use today, were merely ethnomethodological attempts to decipher the customary debates of fans, musicians, and journalists using the term "scene." However, since the early 1990s and following the publication of W. Straw's seminal text, the term has been increasingly used in popular music studies. David Hesmondhalgh, who reported on the facts in 2005 in the form of an initial assessment, quotes Simon Frith's comments on the proceedings of the 1993 biennial world conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music

(IASPM) (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). For S. Frith, therefore, as early as 1993, "the central concept now (a fruitfully muddled one) is scene" (Frith, 1995, p. iii). D. Hesmondhalgh confirms the proliferation of uses ten years later, noting that at the 2003 popular music biennial world conference, "IASPM chair Anahid Kassabian commented […] that scene was one of the few concepts that popular music studies had made its own" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 27).

The notion of "scene," a "tool concept"?

At this stage, before the term spread more widely and became "fashionable" at the turn of the 2000s, two elements are important to remember. First, the specificity of the concept, and second, the disciplinary question.

"Scene" is not a clearly defined concept; it remains fluid and relatively vague, as noted by S. Frith (1995), lamented by D. Hesmondhalgh (2005),[4] and reiterated by B. Woo: "not quite a paradigm or school" (Woo et al., 2015, p. 287). In this special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* coordinated by B. Woo et al. (2015), W. Straw also discusses the fluidity of the concept, turning this characteristic into one of its attributes: "The unsettled and oft-noted flexibility of the term, an effect of the haziness for which it is sometimes dismissed and of a fluidity often seen as the source of its generative power" (Straw, 2015, p. 477). This corresponded to the intuitions we had attempted to develop in the French context concerning Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblance" (*air de famille*) (Guibert, 2012, p. 101), "operational concept," or "sponge word" (*mot-éponge*).[5] We could thus say that "scene" is a "tool concept," enabling us to analyze and explain, but also, upstream, to establish a context.[6]

Intuitively understood by all, used to describe a specific collective cultural phenomenon in a given territory, shared by artists and amateurs but not always

4. D. Hesmondhalgh finds "its use has been very ambiguous, or perhaps more accurately, downright confusing" and believes that "studies of 'scenes' seem to have been mainly confined to the bohemian metropolis" (2005, p. 29).

5. I remember discussing this with Denis Laborde and Michael Werner on March 21, 2013, during a joint session of their seminars at the EHESS ("Places and Spaces of Music" and "World Music," see Laborde, 2018 and Werner, 2018), where they had invited me to talk about "scene" after music geographer Claire Guiu had heard me speak on the subject at one of the first French geography conferences to address the issue of popular music (Guiu, 2006). See also Boivin (2022) on this session. After hearing me speak at the EHESS, the two researchers suggested the notion of "tool concept" to describe the use of the term "scene."

6. See also Shields, 2024, on this discussion.

by the local population, the word "scene" was still difficult to explain simply in the first decade of the 2000s, particularly because its oral usage could refer to several phenomena simultaneously. This included the association of a territory with a specific aesthetic or its genesis, the relationships between actors involved in a territory ("field," "world," "networks"), interpersonal interactions between actors in a given context, atmospheres, "the dramaturgy of everyday life" in Goffman's sense (Bennett & Peterson, 2004), or even the heightened creativity of certain spaces. The polysemy, but also, for the more formalist disciplines, the imprecision of the term thus stemmed from the multidisciplinary use of the "scene" tool, and even from the interdisciplinary context of its development (even if this nomadic aspect could be a vector for innovation).

In any case, the mid-2010s was the moment when the term "scene" spread before stabilizing with different meanings depending on the discipline. It entered into dialogue, within the framework of the "spatial turn" (Hubbard & Kitchin, 2004) that was becoming widespread in the social sciences, with questions of identity politics and the materiality of the body and its place in space (Massey, 1998), the return of the local in relation to the global, and the rise of networks and digital technology (Castells & Banet-Weiser, 2017), diversity of representations and the relationship to innovation (Florida, 2004).

A first decisive point would be the emergence of the use of the notion of "scene" in research fields in connection with notions developed in economics and management sciences, such as "cluster" or "creative cities" (Chesnel et al., 2013). We recall that, during his first presentation in Nantes on June 22, 2012, as part of the "Values of Culture" project directed by Dominique Sagot-Duvauroux, on the dynamics of "Cultural Scenes and Creative Cities,"[7] W. Straw explained a contemporary change in the first part of the 2010s: the new use of the term "scene" (after the rise and then decline of Richard Florida's writings) to describe "creative clusters" (in Michael Porter's sense), but also to discuss the return of economist A. Marshall's "urban atmospheres" or issues of proximity (Rallet & Torre, 2004). For W. Straw, a key point of convergence was undoubtedly the work of Daniel Silver and Terry Nichols Clark (Silver et al., 2010), who began using the term "scene" at this time in their quantitative work on territorial amenities.[8]

7. https://pur-editions.fr/product/8143/scenes-locales-clusters-culturels-et-quartiers-creatifs, [accessed on 27/05/2026].

8. When they first used the term, they considered "scene" to be an "underdeveloped social science concept" and defined "the 'scene' as a cluster of urban amenities" (Silver et al., 2010, p. 2293).

Furthermore, in order to address not issues of activity, but rather representations of the local and its stereotypes—images of the territory and the role that the media can play in this (Bousquet & Smyrnaios, 2012; Noyer et al., 2013; Benistant et al., 2024)—the term "scene" has become commonplace in information and communication sciences, media studies, and media sociology. These are the studies that we initially referred to as "perceived scenes" (Guibert, 2012), before, in the context of the Scaena research project, we began to refer more specifically to "publicized scenes" (see Chapter 5). This moment is important because, for too long, representations and discourses on the culture of territories were not really distinguished from the actual dynamics at work in these territories.

Conclusion

Understanding a scene, as we emphasize in the Scaena project, means understanding and articulating the various elements that are intertwined and combined: the actors, the production chains, the networks embedded in a territory, but also the atmospheres they generate, the political narratives and media discourses associated with them. In the mid-2010s, the review article outlined by W. Straw (2014) "Scenes: Open and restricted" served as a reminder of the two structural trends in the use of the term "scene" that would develop in the contemporary period. The "restricted" notion of scene allows us to focus, often quantitatively and within a defined space, on the density of a given cultural activity, its material productions, and the number of people and companies involved, for a particular aesthetic, discipline, or genre. The most important thing to remember is not simply the quantity produced, but the visibility gained for a cultural activity by a given territory. On the contrary, or rather in a complementary way, the "open" scene is interested in the ambiance, the atmosphere, the "intangible," the representations associated with a territory in a field of art or creation, but which are nonetheless considered remarkable enough to constitute a "scene." The material characteristics of buildings and architecture, as well as the history of places and their "morphology" (Mauss, 1905), can play a role in characterizing the "open scene." From this point of view, the arrival of urban planners and architects (Laurent Devisme, Charles Ambrosino, Jean-Paul Thibaud, Rainer Kazig) in the genesis of the Scaena project reflected the interest in the notion of the scene that these approaches could also draw from it. A conceptual tool with strong performative dimensions, the term "scene" has undoubtedly not yet revealed all its potential facets.

CHAPTER 5

RENEWING THE APPROACH TO SCENES

BASILE MICHEL & DOMINIQUE SAGOT-DUVAUROUX

Building on pioneering approaches to scenes (Chapter 4), this book aims to propose a renewal of these approaches in order to develop a conceptual framework for thinking about and analyzing the complex interconnections between cultural activities and territories in an original and cross-disciplinary way. The objective of this Chapter is to define this framework (1) by drawing an analogy with the theater, to bring out the metaphor of a territory-scene,[1] (2) by defining the scene and its four constituent dimensions (inspired by Guibert, 2012) which (3) appear to be interlinked throughout the life cycle of scenes and the evolving trajectories of territories.

The theatrical scene as a metaphor for a territory

The word "scene" (*scène* in French) comes from the world of theater. A theatrical scene brings together, within a building, different interconnected spaces that connect a performance and an audience: the backstage, the stage, and the auditorium. The humanities have adopted the concept to give a spatial dimension to their approaches. This extension of the domain of the scene leads to the conception of a territory (neighborhood, city, etc.) as a scene.

The word "scene" comes from the Greek *skênê*, originally a tent set up to serve as a home for actors before they entered the stage, which in ancient theater corresponded to the backstage, the wings, and therefore what was not visible to the audience: "Closed and openable, the *skênê* is the hidden place, out

1. The theater metaphor has often been used in social sciences to describe interactions between individuals within social organizations. This is particularly true of Erving Goffman (1973), who uses theater terminology (actor, backstage, performance, staging, etc.) to analyze how individuals interact with others. However, the territorial dimension is not central.

of sight, from which one emerges to appear and to which one retreats to disappear" (Freydefont, 2016, p. 14-15). By analogy, the *skênê* of a territory could be its submerged, invisible part: the vitality of artists, professional or amateur, and their meeting places where ideas abound, values are shared, attitudes are confronted, and aesthetics are constructed. It is also the lifestyles of the inhabitants, their ways of dressing, eating, etc., and the configuration of neighborhoods, the affordance of places, constituting a compost that is more or less favorable to the emergence of creative dynamics in the territory. This ties in with the notion of the "underground" (see Chapter 1) but adds a spatial dimension that generates latent creativity.

Sophocles initiated the practice of *skênêgraphia*, which consists of decorating the facade of the *skênê* using painted perspective. *Skênêgraphia* therefore separates, or links, the backstage (*skênê*) and the stage (*proskenion*). It constitutes the point of passage from the invisible to the visible. Metaphorically, on a territorial scale, it could be likened to a whole series of amenities, devices, protocols, third places, communities, and leading actors that contribute to making this underground activity, this artistic and urban vitality, visible. This is what will accelerate the germination of projects from the compost of the territory. Here we find the notion of the "middleground" (see Chapter 1).

The *proskenion* corresponds to what we now call the stage or the scene in a theater. It is the place of performance. It is what the audience sees. The semantic shift of the word scene, from the backstage to the stage, reflects the value placed on the visible, which captures attention at the expense of the invisible. As soon as there is a performance, there is a scene. But as soon as there is a scene, there is also an offstage area, an off-screen area. When sociologists talk about the local arts scene, they identify a territory where artistic activities are visible. The aim is to identify the density of actors that make the territory a recognizable scene (the "upperground," see Chapter 1). But this visibility is activated by an off-screen space that needs to be studied in an interconnected way: the *skênê* and *skênêgraphia* of the territory.

The *proskenion* faces the *theatron*, which is the place where the audience sits. The configuration of this place may or may not encourage interaction between actors and spectators. It is, in a way, a second *skênêgraphia*, which this time allows the audience to participate and contribute to the creative process. Transposed to the territory, it is a question of identifying the mechanisms that enable the resident population and other users of this territory to participate in the life of the local scene and its dynamics. How does the scene spill over into the city and how does it resonate with it? How does the artistic community relate

to the community of audiences/populations? The scene is a social space that contributes to the construction of the urban imagination. Residents feel more or less involved in it. Nourished by the social space of the city, the scene in turn permeates the territory, shaping its image and identity and determining its atmosphere. Are residents, associations, and artists more or less passive witnesses to the projects that develop there, or are they stakeholders, co-producers of the spectacle that is a territory-scene? Do they co-construct public policies and urban projects?

Today, a scene is also the name given to the building that houses the show (like the "Scènes nationales" certified by the French Ministry of Culture). It can be in the center or on the outskirts, discreet or striking, rich or poor. It will have varying effects on the territory in which it is located, depending on its architecture, the cultural project that animates it (more or less open to the city), its notoriety, and its media coverage. The shift from the scene-stage to the scene-building corresponds, on the scale of a territory-scene, to the way in which a scene presents itself to the outside world. How is this scene portrayed? How is it perceived in the media?

To create a "scene" and produce an atmosphere and an original style, a territory must effectively combine these different territorial strata (Sagot-Duvauroux, 2016). For an artistic community to create a scene through its productions and values, these must be reflected in the various amenities of a territory, and there must be a symbiosis between the dynamics of innovation described by P. Cohendet et al. (2010) and the lifestyles, places of consumption and dissemination of the territory's various users (residents, tourists, etc.). A scene is therefore the result of the intersection between locally embedded artistic activities and the attributes of a place, producing specific atmospheres that alter the living conditions of residents, the sensory and practical experiences of visitors, the working conditions of professionals, and their creative capacity.

Finally, the word "scene" encompasses a temporal dimension. A show is broken down into different scenes characterized by the entrance and exit of actors. Applied to the territory, a scene is also characterized by realities and narratives that evolve according to how actors enter or exit. Just as in a show, there is a beginning and an end, we can thus speak of the life cycle of a territory-scene.

In short, the theatrical analogy suggests that the notion of scene is linked to "a process of appearance (explaining why we often talk about emergence or revelation), manifestation (implicating agreement or disagreement with regard to an effect of acceptance or rejection, a feeling of belonging or not) and

distinction (implicating an objective of identifying a singularity and a desire for recognition) linking a group of actors in the broad sense" (Freydefont, 2016, p. 16). We can therefore talk about a scene if it is visible, embedded in its territory, producing spillover effects, and generating specific atmospheres. In addition to describing the network of actors that compose it, studying a scene requires analyzing its off-screen elements: the urban configuration, the social structure of its territory, but also all the mechanisms that enable its visibility and spillover.

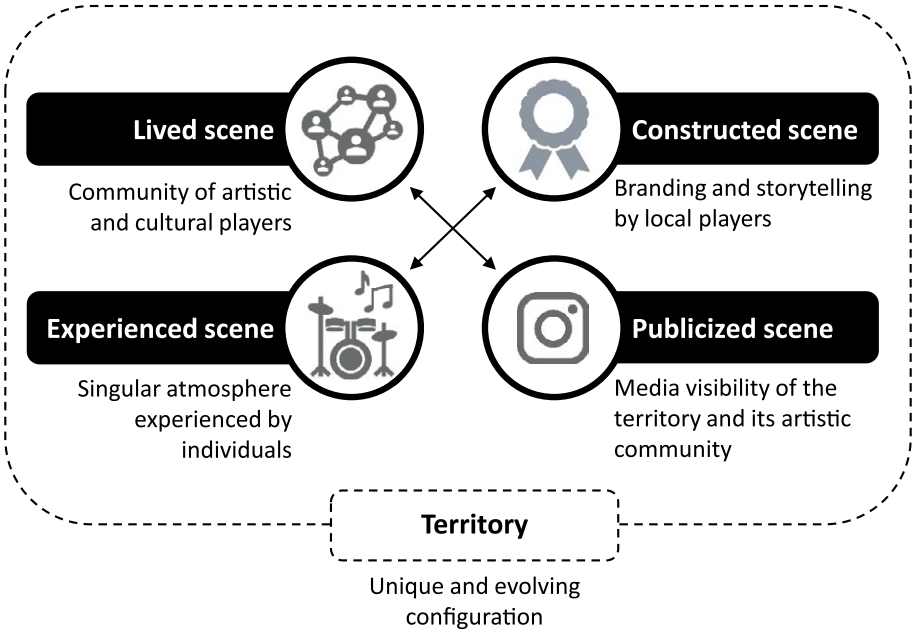
Lived, experienced, constructed, and publicized: the four dimensions of the scene

From this analogy, we can derive a definition of the scene as a community of artistic and cultural actors clustered in a territory with specific urban, social, economic, and other configurations. These actors frequent the same places and events, where they share and confront their values, attitudes, and aesthetics. They rub shoulders with other communities present in the same territory, such as residents and tourists. Their activity is influenced by the territory, while also becoming a marker of it, helping to shape its identity, atmosphere, and transformation.

The scene thus consists of four dimensions: (1) a network of artistic and cultural actors embedded in a territory—the lived scene; (2) a unique atmosphere produced by the strong presence of cultural activities and made accessible to the sensory experience of the users of this territory—the experienced scene; (3) a narrative, a branding of the territory by the actors involved—the constructed scene; (4) a media visibility and notoriety of the territory and its artistic community—the publicized scene. It is the combination and interaction of these four dimensions, within a territory with a unique and evolving configuration, that makes it possible to qualify the existence of a scene (**Figure 1**).

This scene—i.e., this embedded, ecstatic, and visible community—can thus be observed from different angles: that of the community itself, through its territorial anchoring and network dynamics; that of its intra-territorial ecstatic dimension, characterizing the scene's various spillovers into its territory; that of its extra-territorial ecstatic dimension, revealing the strategies of storytelling and visibility, of labeling this "brand" territory; that of its media coverage, revealing how the media and social networks participate in its qualification, dissemination, and symbolic transformation into collective representations; and finally, that of the territory in which it is anchored (or even embedded), which is both the foundation and the product of the scene's reality.

Figure 1. Diagram of the scene concept.



Source: Scaena project. Created by Basile Michel, 2025.

Dynamics and life cycles of scenes

Thus defined conceptually, the four constituent dimensions of the scene only make sense when analyzed in relation to each other. Discussing them separately facilitates the conceptual definition and empirical observation of the different facets of scenes. However, this should not obscure their interdependence in the reality of the territories observed. The aim is to observe the coherence and complementarity, or conversely the discrepancies and tensions, between the four dimensions of the scene within the same territory. Thus, as we define it, the scene does not aim to offer a static, siloed analysis (network/atmosphere/narrative/media image), but rather a dynamic, cross-cutting analysis that highlights the ways in which these dimensions are composed and recomposed within a territory according to complex and evolving interactions. Emergence, development, maturity, displacement, decline, renewal, death, etc., are all potential stages in the life of scenes during which the four dimensions of the scene and the territory transform in an interdependent manner. This leads us to carefully consider questions of temporality, the life cycles of scenes, and the evolving trajectories of territories (Capron & Morteau, 2024). The challenge

is to understand how the different dimensions of the scene evolve over time, interrelated with each other, but also with the territory and its social, economic, and urban transformations.

Responding to critics who question the vagueness of the concept of the scene, the flip side of its plasticity, the Scaena project has sought to give it a pragmatic and dynamic dimension aimed at characterizing an artistic scene and its evolution. The scene as we understand it appears as a moment when artistic activities resonate with the urban and social attributes of a territory to produce a shared common, a fertile atmosphere. Although ephemeral, it can nevertheless leave lasting traces, particularly through the processes of gentrification, touristification, or heritage preservation that it can trigger. Understanding the evolving realities of the scene involves informing the different angles of analysis defined theoretically in this book through various complementary research methods and tools. This is the purpose of Volume 2, which specifies the methodologies for investigating the scene, tests this concept through an empirical analysis of five international case studies, and provides answers to the questions raised by the analysis of culture-driven territorial dynamics.

CONCLUSION

CHARLES AMBROSINO, BASILE MICHEL & DOMINIQUE SAGOT-DUVAUROUX

This book was born out of a triple dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction with the objectives assigned to artistic and cultural activities in urban development, production, and governance models that have been circulating since the end of the 20th century. In this way, the most debated of these, the "creative city," has become, despite its original ambitions (Landry, 2000; Ambrosino, 2018), a vehicle for the systematic instrumentalization of culture for urban development—whether it be to couple cultural policies with territorial attractiveness policies, or with urban planning—at the risk of (1) minimizing its social consequences (gentrification, exclusion, and selection) and (2) marginalizing the traditional objectives of cultural policies (democratization of access to culture, citizen empowerment, etc.).

Dissatisfaction with the way in which scientific debate has informed the concept of territory in this context, most often conceived as a neutral platform where actors interact without taking into account its historical, architectural, urban, social, and other dimensions. This has resulted in a very fragmented view of the issues relating to the friction between a localized artistic offering and the territorial dynamics it generates.

Finally, dissatisfaction with the tools used to capture the effects of these complex frictions, which ultimately favor the analysis of agglomeration dynamics and policies (clusters, districts, networks, milieus, etc.) at the expense of more systemic approaches to territorial trajectories that include sensitive dimensions, modes of living, and other forms of interaction specific to the functioning of urban societies.

The concept of the scene seemed to us to be a relevant tool for addressing, at least in part, these dissatisfactions. From the dynamics of agglomerations, we retained the importance of analyzing the networks of actors and the intermediate spaces in which they are formed. From urban planning policies, we retained the importance of narratives which, as drivers of various forms of collective

action, contribute to producing common representations and even justifying planned or more spontaneous initiatives for transforming cities. From the sensitive and sensory approach of the city, we have retained the importance of paying attention to the genesis and mutations of urban atmospheres, forms of overflowing social creative activities that have hitherto received little attention in academic literature.

We then characterized a scene as the observable and ephemeral manifestation of a resonance between a community (cultural or otherwise) embedded in a territory and the attributes of that territory to produce innovations, but also atmospheres and ways of inhabiting the city; a fragile ecosystem in constant co-evolution with its environment and constraints.

This definition led us to combine four approaches to the scene: through networks of actors and their geographical location (*lived scene*), through the way in which this presence is perceived by those who use public space (residents, users, visitors), particularly through the existence of specific atmospheres (*experienced scene*); through labeling strategies, narratives, and territorial marketing and branding developed by actors and local authorities (*constructed scene*); and, finally, through the media coverage that these territorially embedded networks receive (*publicized scene*).

Beyond that, the concept of scene as we have used it can help us to understand and better observe past or ongoing transition phenomena, and to outline what a "post-creative city" might look like. As mentioned above, artistic and cultural activities have been heavily exploited by municipal authorities and local governments to implement the "creative city" model. This has become the key to post-industrial transition, transforming ways of living, consuming, and socio-urban structures, at the risk of disconnecting with large segments of the resident population. However, a number of other silent transformations are quietly taking place and challenging these developments by refocusing the issues of territorial development around ecological transformation, citizen participation, and the promotion of more horizontal collective actions.[1] In this context, should artistic scenes not be viewed as laboratories for forms of expression and cooperation in the urban societies of tomorrow?

1. See, for example, the report produced by the Scaena team on the city of Nantes in the *Média de l'Observatoire des politiques culturelles* (Media section of the Observatory of Cultural Policies): https://www.observatoire-culture.net/dossier/scenes-culturelles-ambiances-transformations-urbaines/ [accessed on 05/05/2026].

The post-creative city, i.e., the desirable future of the creative city, would then seize on the concept of the scene to think systemically about the resonances between a localized artistic and cultural offering and the transitions underway, so that it would no longer be a tool devoted primarily to urban development based on territorial attractiveness, but rather a tool for urban dynamics based on the activation of local resources and imaginations and their confrontation with those of the rest of the world. It is therefore not a question of promoting a city closed in on itself, abandoning the goal of being desired by outside actors, but rather of promoting the co-production of a hospitable city. This would be a city where artistic activities and what they produce, beyond the "spectacularization" of spaces and their branding, would play their full role in challenging and awakening consciences, coupled with a constant attention to the inclusiveness of the social atmospheres they help to create and a constant concern for taking care of the territories we inhabit.

To complement this theoretical reflection, a second Volume—*Artistic scenes and the city. International case studies and perspectives*—presents the methodological approach to the scene and tests its relevance on the basis of five international case studies. These reveal the evanescent nature of an artistic scene, a moment suspended in its host territory, nourished by its multiple connections with it, but also open to the world and thus a factor of inclusion and innovation as well as, ambivalently, of marginalization and socio-spatial fragmentation.

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