

Institution: Newcastle University		
Unit of Assessment: 21 Sociology		
Title of case study: Championing Alternative Urban Cultures: Independent Nightlife in Geneva and the Prague Fringe		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 1, 2000 – Dec 31, 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Robert Hollands	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Sociology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: January 1 2000-ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 1, 2013 – December 31, 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Alternative cultures, defined as self-organised events and spaces of a creative nature, are important markers of urban vitality. Working in conjunction with nightlife activists in Geneva, and with festival directors from Prague Fringe, Hollands' long-term research on such urban cultures has created beneficial impacts for independent nightlife and festival stakeholders by: (a) raising their profile and representation in contributing to urban creativity; (b) aiding their capacity, networks, and sustainability; and (c) challenging existing policy-making to recognise and account for the importance of the alternative sector in fields like culture, licensing, and tourism.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research Hollands' long-term research and engagement with alternative urban cultures [PUB 1-6] has been instrumental in defining them as self-organised events and spaces of a creative nature, including independently organised nightlife and arts spaces, and some types of fringe festivals. It has also critically questioned some of the limits of standard models of urban regeneration achieved through mainstream cultural provision and conventional tourism, such as gentrification, over-tourism, and a 'one size fits all' governance (particularly licensing) regime. Finally, it has asserted the important idea that 'real' urban creativity is rooted in the strength and sustainability of its alternative cultures, spaces, and movements, and that they provide the basis for imagining more democratic and sustainable models for cultural and tourism policy. Hollands' research has been supported by the ESRC, with two grants, first in 2000-2002 to investigate the operation of urban night-time economies (including alternative nightlife) [GRANT 1], then in 2008-2009 looking at the transformative power of an alternative arts organisation [GRANT 2]. This research was supplemented by a later Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship (2015-2017) which examined the potential alternative cultural organisations and movements have for enhancing urban creativity and change [GRANT 3]. Within these broader fields of enquiry, the two areas that have been directed to impact have been on defining and nurturing creative alternative nightlife and arts spaces in Geneva (for the past decade), and a body of work championing Prague Fringe as engendering new forms of cultural and tourism experiences (going back nearly two decades).</p> <p>For instance, Hollands' pioneering work with Paul Chatterton (Newcastle University at the time) on the night-time economy, led to their significant research-based methodological distinction between 'alternative' and 'mainstream' nightlife cultures and spaces [PUB 1]. In contrast to the alcohol based, commercial monoculture of the mainstream, they emphasised the experimental, accessible, and self-regulating 'do-it-yourself' character of alternative nightlife, found in independent bars and clubs, cultural/ art squats, and the 'free party scene'. They also outlined the need for this alternative sector to protest, organise, and create progressive pressure groups to challenge the dominance of the 'corporate nightlife machine'. These research findings have had a particular resonance over the last decade with the alternative creative sector in the city of Geneva, which has had to combat soaring property prices, increased gentrification of cultural</p>		

life, and draconian legislation preventing alternative venues from thriving (i.e. anti-squatting and licensing restrictions) [PUB 2]. In 2010 Geneva experienced a wave of 'night protests' which set in motion a whole series of public reports, events, and debates centrally informed by Hollands' and Chatterton's research and methodology [PUB 1]. This impact pathway culminated in the creation and operation of an influential nightlife pressure group, called the Grand Council of the Night, as well as the emergence of other alternative cultural sector organisation, activity, and decision-making [PUB 3].

A related stream of research is Hollands' work on the alternative cultural sector in Prague, particularly through his long-term engagement (18 years) with the Prague Fringe, an independent and annual performer-led theatre festival. Prague is an ideal case study because after the 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989, it rapidly developed as a culture-led city experiencing significant 'over-tourism'. Following an initial report in 2005 concerned with how the Prague Fringe might survive in a city exploding with commercial culture and conventional tourism, Hollands produced three additional independent audience demographic and economic impact research reports on the fringe based on over 800 survey respondents (2007, 2012 and 2016) (see webpage <http://www.praguefringe.com/about/research/> for report details). The overall research focus has been on the need for the city council culture department to recognise the alternative cultural sector in Prague (including the fringe), specifically through the provision of separate funding streams [PUB 4]. Hollands further developed the idea that Prague Fringe was emblematic of an 'alternative form of cultural tourism' [PUB 5]. In this regard, the research demonstrated that small independent fringes like Prague are characterised by different forms of cultural production and exchange, non-hierarchical structures (including being gender friendly), high levels of accessibility, and unique social bonding between performers, audiences, locals, and tourists. Also, it was noted that the Prague Fringe was importantly located in a less visited part of the city (avoiding 'tourist bottlenecks') and was also characterised by high levels of repeat visitors amongst its audience. In his most recent independent audience study/ impact report produced on the Prague Fringe [PUB 6], Hollands' research documented the combined economic, social, and cultural benefits of the festival for the city.

3. References to the research

Taken as a whole, the publications listed below represent research of at least 2* quality based on REF criterion of significance, rigor, and originality, with most of them coming out of data gathered through ESRC or Leverhulme grants. Additionally, the majority have also been rigorously peer reviewed in high quality journals and through EQA/ IQA processes.

[PUB 1] Chatterton, P. and Hollands, R. (2003) *Urban Nightscapes: Youth Cultures, Pleasure Spaces and Corporate Power*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203402054>

[PUB 2] Hollands, R. (2018) 'Creative dark matter rising?: Struggling over the future of alternative cultural spaces in the city of Geneva'. *Discover Society*, 58. <https://discoversociety.org/2018/07/03/creative-dark-matter-rising-struggling-over-the-future-of-alternative-cultural-spaces-in-the-city-of-geneva/>

[PUB 3] Hollands, R., Berthet, M.A., Nada, E. and Bjertnes, V. (2017) 'Urban cultural movements and the night: Struggling for the right to the (party) city in Geneva' in J. Hannigan and G. Richards (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of New Urban Studies*. London: Sage, pp. 295-310. Chapter <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412912655.n19>

[PUB 4] Hollands, R. (2009) 'Cultural workers of the world unite, you've nothing to lose but your theatres: 'Dny neklidu' ('days of unrest') and the initiative for a cultural Prague'. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13(1): 139-145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902771265>

[PUB 5] Hollands, R. (2010) 'Engaging and alternative cultural tourism: The case of the Prague Fringe Festival (PFF)'. *Journal of Cultural Economy*. 3 (3): 379-394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2010.506324>

[PUB 6] Hollands, R. (2016) *Prague Fringe Audience Survey & Impact Report*. Newcastle/Prague: Newcastle University and Prague Fringe, October, pp. 1-28. Available on request or online at: <https://www.praguefringe.com/about/about-prague-fringe/research/>

GRANTS

[GRANT 1] Robert Hollands (PI) and Paul Chatterton (Co-I), 'Youth Cultures, Identities and the Consumption of Night-life City Spaces', Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, January 2000-March 2002 (GBP123,044).

[GRANT 2] Robert Hollands (PI) and John Vail (Co-I), 'The Promise of a Transformative Arts: A Political and Cultural Analyses of the Amber Collective', Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, December 2008-November 2009 (GBP99,345).

[GRANT 3] Robert Hollands (PI), 'Urban Cultural Movements and the Struggle for Alternative Creative Spaces', Major Research Fellowship grant from the Leverhulme Trust, September 2015-August 2017 (GBP91,000).

4. Details of the impact

Details of the research impact will be presented as two case studies. Case 1 is concerned with enabling alternative nightlife in Geneva, while Case 2 focuses on the impact of research supporting the Prague Fringe. Whilst there are slightly differing emphases within the cases, the main types of impact discussed and evidenced here focus around: (a) raising their profile and representation; (b) contributing to capacity, networks, and sustainability; and (c) challenging orthodox policy thinking in the cultural, licensing, and tourism fields.

Case 1. Alternative nightlife in Geneva: Enabling recognition/ representation, networks, and capacity

The major impacts of Hollands' research in Geneva include fostering alternative nightlife recognition and representation, as well as aiding the networking strategies and capacity of independent creative spaces. Pathways to creating this impact require a brief elaboration. Following an influential public presentation of their research **[PUB 1]** at the Electron Festival in the city in May 2010, Hollands and Chatterton's ideas were directly picked up and implemented by a prominent cultural city councillor, André Waldis. This led to their 'nightscape methodology' of distinguishing alternative from mainstream nightlife being adopted in a highly influential survey of Geneva nightlife commissioned by the city culture authorities entitled *Journey to the End of the Night* (2010). The main finding of the survey was that there was a lack of alternative nightlife provision in the city, and this prompted a high profile week-long public debate in 2011 called 'General State of the Night'. Hollands was a keynote speaker and made specific recommendations about the need for the alternative sector to raise its profile and gain public representation through networking and making alliances **[PUB 2-3]**. As a result of this event, a unique 'pressure group' concerned with nightlife issues comprised of professionals, practitioners, managers, and researchers, called the Grand Council of the Night (GCN), came into being in 2011. Within the entire REF impact period, the GCN has sought to raise nightlife issues and influence policy and law-making particularly as they relate to the independent sector. Due to the direct impact of Hollands' research recommendations **alternative nightlife concerns have been specifically well represented on this body to the present day.**

Hollands' influence is evidenced by a testimonial from the ex-president of the CGN, who said, '*In forming the group, we were conscious from Hollands' research, that it was important that the alternative sector had adequate representation and a strong voice in the organisation...*' **[IMP 1]**. Alternative representation on the GCN body is also evidenced by the fact that four prominent alternative cultural organisations, the Association for the Living Reconversion of Spaces, Motel Campo, L'Usine, and the Federation of Kugler Artists, have served as members of this important nightlife pressure group throughout the entire REF impact period **[IMP 2]**. In addition to influencing the constituency of this lobbying body, the GCN has also used Hollands' research to help create policies and laws that are advantageous to sustaining the alternative nightlife sector **[IMP 1]**. Specifically, they utilised the important idea of his that to maintain nightlife

'diversity' and encourage independent nightlife spaces, exceptions in the law (specifically in the area of governance and licencing) would have to be fought for [PUB 1]. In this regard, the CGN actively and successfully lobbied for exceptions in the formation of a new licencing law (passed on January 1, 2016 [IMP 3]), which allowed for events that are 'primarily cultural' not requiring state approval of an alcohol license, thereby benefiting alternative cultural providers in terms of avoiding extra costs and 'red tape'. For example, one co-founder of an alternative venue said of the legal exception: *'It's lighter in terms of infrastructure, we don't have the same constraints, and we have more flexibility'* [IMP 4].

Hollands and Chatterton's alternative nightlife typology referred to above [PUB 1], and Hollands' related research [GRANT 3] emphasising the importance of developing a collective infrastructure for this sector [PUB 2-3], has also led to other significant impacts concerning **increasing networks and capacity of independent creative spaces**. For example, his research and participation in the event 'Cultural Resistance, Urban Activism and the Arts' workshop (held in Leeds Sept 8, 2015 and attended by Geneva activists) has fed into the networking activities of other cooperative ventures in Geneva beyond just nightlife. One such cooperative, the artist-led Ressources Urbaines (founded in December 2015), who work with city authorities in Geneva to identify empty buildings and help to provide affordable spaces to alternative groups, have used Hollands' research work to aid their infrastructural and decision-making strategies. A spokesperson for the group has said *'Hollands' definition of what is meant by alternative and his research on the importance of creating an alternative infrastructure was useful for us in terms of our networking strategies and deciding on which kind of cultural practices we wanted to actually support'* [IMP 1]. The research has aided the organisation to distinguish exactly which types of artist groups they should offer spaces to, which has included helping hundreds of alternative artists to gain a foothold in the city. For example, they obtained places for 80 independent artists in one space alone in September 2017 [IMP 5], offering further evidence that the research has indirectly contributed to increased growth in the alternative creative sector in Geneva.

Case 2. Prague Fringe: Raising profile, ensuring sustainability, and influencing policy thinking

The major pathways to impact in this case study include the production of audience and impact reports containing recommendations, a special participatory workshop (see details below), and interviews with key policy personnel in the city, with the main beneficiaries identified as fringe stakeholders (directors and fringe staff, as well as audiences, performers, and culture/ tourism personnel). Regarding **raising the profile** of the Prague Fringe to a range of constituents, Hollands' 2016 impact report [PUB 6] has helped create awareness of not only what Prague Fringe is, but what extra benefits it can generate economically (bringing in GBP640,000 into the city in 2016), socially and culturally. Three hundred copies of the report were distributed to key stakeholders (listed above), and the Prague Fringe website containing the report has attracted over 2000 visits during the last three years. In addition to this, the research report was specifically sent to various culture and tourism personnel in the city to showcase the Fringe and was followed up by taped interviews. One prominent senior tourism and culture official said that the report showed *'...the importance of the position of the festival in Prague'*, and that Prague Fringe *'...has some special role'* in the city, while a spokesperson from Prague City Tourism said *'...it has been more visible this year'* (2017), evidence that the report has helped **raise the festival's profile** as a significant cultural event for two key decision-makers [IMP 6]. A second type of impact of the research concerns its **beneficial effect on the Prague Fringe's sustainability and growth (capacity)**. At the launch of the 2016 report, at a participatory workshop (including fringe audience members, performers and staff) entitled 'Loving Your Work': Engagement, Impact, and the Prague Fringe' (October 2016), presentations by two of the fringe directors revealed the importance of Hollands' research in helping to sustain funding for the festival, with one key audience member and fringe supporter, later remarking *'...without it [the research] I don't know if [Prague Fringe] fringe would have survived'* [IMP 7]. More specifically, one director of the Prague Fringe has said of Hollands that *'...his research work has been utilised to secure future funding and helped shape decision making as we seek to make our fringe more responsive to our various stakeholders'* [IMP 7]. Further evidence that Hollands' 2016 research report findings have impacted on Prague Fringe funding and capacity, comes

from the fact that it has helped them secure baseline funding by the local council from 2017 onwards (CZK30,000 a year), and aided capacity, in the form of a 30% rise in ticket sales from 2013-2018 [IMP 8]. This has been achieved, in part, by recommending a 'student discount scheme', but also using Hollands' research findings that the majority of fringe audience is female [PUB 5-6]. This finding was utilised to help brand the 2018 event as 'female friendly' [IMP 9]. A final type of impact **has been to use the research on Prague Fringe to influence alternative tourism strategies**. Research on the Prague Fringe shows the advantages of alternative forms of culture in terms of tourism, as fringe-goers stay longer, are more likely to be repeat visitors, and inhabit less busy areas of the city than conventional tourists [PUB 5-6]. In an interview with Hollands, a Prague city councillor with a special remit for culture and tourism, acknowledged that his research findings [PUB 6] show that alternative spaces like the Fringe '*...is the way for the future development of tourism*' [IMP 10]. Additionally, after a visit by Hollands in May 2016 to discuss these issues with a senior strategy official of Prague City Tourism, the Prague Fringe, plus a range of other alternative cultural venues, were featured in the main 2017 spring tourism brochure for the very first time [IMP 10], demonstrating that the research has influenced how key actors connected to city tourism are beginning to see the benefits of alternative cultures in both marketing and policy thinking.

In summary, while each case study here is unique, impacts common to both have been strategically focussed around raising the profile of the sector, increasing capacity, networks, and sustainability, and intervening in current policy thinking and decision-making. Championing the alternative sector has been vital not only to its survival and growth, but in challenging the limits of current cultural and tourism policy orthodoxies.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[IMP 1] Testimonial from ex-chair of the Grand Council of the Night (2011-2014) and co-founder of Ressources Urbaines (same individual) (14 September 2020)

[IMP 2] Goals of the Grand Council of the Night, and proof of membership of 4 alternative nightlife organisations, can be found at: <http://grandconseildelanuit.ch/>

[IMP 3] The exception in the licensing legislation is found in article 43.1 at: https://www.ge.ch/legislation/rsg/f/s/rsg_i2_22.html

[IMP 4] Email communication (22 December 2020) with a co-founder of Motel Campo, a well-established alternative nightlife space in Geneva

[IMP 5] Lecoultre, E. (2017) 'Un immeuble entier pour les artistes', *Le Courier* July 14th at: <http://ressources-urbaines.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/R%C3%89GION-GEN%C3%88VE-Un-immeuble-entier-pour-les-artistes.pdf>

[IMP 6] Quotation evidence (6.a: a senior figure in the Tourism Unit, Department of Culture and Tourism (Prague) transcript (30 May 2017); 6.b: a senior spokesperson from Prague City Tourism transcript (30 May 2017))

[IMP 7] Sustainability evidence (7.a: email communication (27 October 2016) with a former performer and long-term audience member of the Prague Fringe who attended the workshop 'Loving Your Work': Engagement, Impact, and the Prague Fringe', Newcastle University (16 October 2016); 7.b: a Prague Fringe Director letter of support for an AHRC application (25 January 2017))

[IMP 8] Email communication (24 April 2019) of funding and ticket sales figures provided by Prague Fringe Administration

[IMP 9] Evidence source of Prague Fringe's 'women friendly' branding is at: <https://www.praguefringe.com/about/news/a-very-female-fringe/?fbclid=IwAR2nEPfgqF-sVFtAlz4AifPxHPUx6kwo0us8BZq3trJ-j0BjLq-9dYCG72w>

[IMP 10] 10.a: quotation from Prague 1 city councillor transcript (31 May 2017); 10.b: brochure at: <https://www.praguecitytourism.cz/file/edee/universal/download/brozury/jaro-v-praze-2017/spring-in-prague-2017-downgrade.pdf>