

Darren Roberts

Doctoral Researcher

[School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences \(/schools/gees/index.aspx\)](/schools/gees/index.aspx)

Contact details

Email dxr827@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:dxr827@bham.ac.uk>)

School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT
UK



About

Title of PhD: Analysing the reciprocal relationships between music, place, and power: an examination of local music practices in Birmingham, UK

Supervisors: [Dr Phil Jones \(/staff/profiles/gees/jones-phil.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/gees/jones-phil.aspx), [Dr John Round \(/staff/profiles/gees/round-john.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/gees/round-john.aspx), Dr Stefan Bouzarovski and [Dr Julian Clarke \(/staff/profiles/gees/clark-julian.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/gees/clark-julian.aspx)

I am a final year PhD student, my research is on local music practices in Birmingham and I am aiming to understand how music shapes the production of place in the city. My research brings together three research techniques; interviews; participant-observation; and discourse analysis; through my empirical research I have developed an in-depth insight into to the spatialities of music in Birmingham.

The theoretical underpinnings of the research largely come from critical cultural geography and social musicology literatures. The three key theoretical themes for the research are music, place, and power; notable authors that are important to my research include; Jacques Attali, Michel Foucault, John Allen, Susan Smith, and Nigel Thrift. In my research I attempt to bring traditional lines of enquiry such as Marxism and Feminism together with new ways of thinking about cultural politics under the broad heading of non-representational theory.

Qualifications

BA (First Class Honours) Human Geography – University of Leicester 2004-2007

- Awards : Undergraduate Human Geography Dissertation Award

MSc (Merit) Society and Space – University of Bristol (2007-2008)

Biography

Whilst studying as an undergraduate student at the University of Leicester, I developed a keen interest in critical human geographies and in my third year I was able to use my undergraduate dissertation to combine my passion for critical enquiry with my passion for music; my dissertation explored the phenomenon of 'guerrilla gigs' and the temporary transformation of space through music.

During my time as a Masters student at the University of Bristol my passion for critical thinking was nurtured through exposure to the post-structuralist philosophy of writers such as Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze, and Giorgio Agamben. Again I was able to combine these ideas with my passion for music in my Masters dissertation, the focus of which was to analyse hip hop music using the ideas of Alain Badiou as a conceptual framework.

Keen to further develop my research, in 2008 I began a PhD at the University of Birmingham. In my first year I spent a significant period developing my understanding of how 'power' is conceptualised, especially in the work of Michel Foucault and John Allen. In my second Year, I spent around twelve months collecting data on local music practices in Birmingham. This was an invigorating process as Birmingham's local music scene is home to some very interesting characters. Following the field work I have been analysing the results and writing my thesis.

Research

Research interests

Geographies of music , noise, politics of consumption, resistance, anarchy, post-structural philosophy, non-representational theory, subcultures, social exclusion

Other activities

I am an active musician, I play guitar and writes songs as part of a duo. I have collaborated with various musicians over the years and have always seen music as a platform for politics.

I am a very keen cyclist and in the last few years have been lucky enough to tour around different parts of Britain by bike. When I get the chance I also greatly enjoy mountain walking, I climbed Ben Nevis in December last winter.

Finally, I am also a very keen 'birder' not to be confused with 'twitching' which is a competitive pursuit. I love to watch birds and sometimes I get to see a new species. Related to this I have an interest in rural conservation and have recently joined a local conservation group.

Publications

Peer-reviewed papers

Roberts, D. (Forthcoming – spring 2012) 'Local Music Practices and the Cultural Economy: Three Spaces of Research'. *Qualitative Researcher*.

Conference Papers

Doctoral Researcher Conference 2009 (University of Birmingham) - 'The Order of Sounds'

Doctoral Researcher Conference 2010 (University of Birmingham) – 'Exploring the Production of Power Relations through Music'

RGS – IBG Postgraduate Forum Mid-Term Conference 2010 (Aberystwyth University) – 'Noisy Places: Exploring the Production of Power Relations through Music'

Spatial Methodologies in Social Science Conference 2010 (University of Birmingham) – 'Performing and Producing Ethnographic Methods' (Co-Organiser of conference)

RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2010 (London) (Session title:Sonic methods in human geography) – 'Placing Sound in Ethnographic Research'

Analysing and Defending Qualitative Research Conference 2011 (University of Birmingham) 'From the field to the file: what to do with all that data...'

AAG Annual Meeting 2012 (New York) (Session title: Geographies of Media 3: Geographies of Music) –'Decentring the Urban Cultural Economy: A Study of Local Music Practices in Birmingham, England'

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