Tourism Management 71 (2019) 226–233

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Tourism Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tourman

"Turning rebellion into money" – An ethnography on Malaysian punk mobilities and tourism

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Tourism and music
Punk
Punk mobilities
Punk tourism
Travelling subcultures
Tourist ear

ABSTRACT

While the nexus between music and tourism has been explored by scholars, little has been written in the tourism literature about the so-called "alternative" forms of music (metal, punk), their related "alternative subcultures", and their potential to propel forms of tourist mobility/consumption. This is particularly true within the context of Asian countries, including Malaysia, in which the underground punk scene is vibrant, yet relatively unexplored. Based on an ethnographic fieldwork conducted among a group of Malaysian punks, this paper explores punk mobilities and their related forms of tourist consumption. Overall, this work leads to three main conclusions. Firstly, physical mobility is crucial to strengthen a sense of *communitas* among the Malaysian punks. Secondly, punks often engage in forms of tourist consumption, although they prefer not to be labelled as "tourists". Thirdly, punk could become a tourist product as long as a balance between punk values and commercial exploitation is maintained.

1. Introduction

While Urry's (1990) seminal work on the "tourist gaze" has propelled a fervent interest on the visual in tourism, which has generated a constant stream of studies centred on understanding how tourists consume places visually, in the last 15 years the "tourist ear" (Gibson & Connell, 2007, p. 165) and tourists' embodied listening practices (Waitt & Duffy, 2010) have also begun to be explored in scholarly representations of tourist experiences. In this respect, part of the literature (e.g. Gibson & Connell, 2005; Saldanha, 2002) has increasingly focused on the nexus between music and tourist consumption as "beyond the visual, sound plays a key role in creating tourism landscapes, attractions and experiences" (Gibson & Connell, 2007, p. 165). Despite this, tourism scholars have not paid much attention to the so-called "alternative" forms of music, their related "alternative subcultures" and their potential to propel forms of tourist mobility/consumption.

Broadly, the term "alternative music" indicates a genre of music that includes several different styles, such as metal, reggae, and punk rock (Baulch, 2002b). Within the diverse and fragmented scenario of alternative music, punk rock (or simply punk) has played an important role since its emergence in the late 1970s. The punk scene was mainly propelled by bands based in the UK (e.g. the *Sex Pistols* and the *Clash*) and the USA (the *Ramones*, the *Stooges*, and the *New York Dolls*). Although it originated in the Western world, a punk scene soon emerged in non-Western countries too, including Asian nations. Despite its importance as both music genre and socio-cultural phenomenon, studies exploring the nexus between punk rock and tourist consumption are scarce. This is particularly true within the context of Asian countries, such as Malaysia, in which the underground punk scene is vibrant, yet relatively unexplored. This paper was conceived to address this knowledge gap. Specifically, in this article we attempt a textual representation of an ongoing ethnographic/netnographic study about the punk scene in Malaysia, its subcultures and, most importantly, Malaysian punks' forms of mobility (including touristic mobilities).

Overall, with our ethnographic/netnographic account we aim to contribute to the existing tourism literature from three different perspectives. Firstly, our work attempts to add to the emerging stream of studies on the "tourist ear" and "music tourism", which could lead to a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between tourist consumption/spaces and music. In this regard, to explore the nexus between tourism and music is important as music tourism has been regarded as a vehicle to generate economic growth and foster socio-cultural rejuvenation in local communities (Gibson & Connell, 2005). Secondly, our study attempts to cast light on a specific subculture, namely the punk subculture, which has received attention by social scientists (Baulch, 2002b; Hebdige, 1979) but not by tourism scholars. Thirdly, an important contribution of this work also lies on the idea of giving voice to a subculture, namely the Malaysian punks, whose tourist

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.10.026
Received 8 May 2018; Received in revised form 14 October 2018; Accepted 15 October 2018

(and non-tourist) lived experiences have not been explored in the tourism body of knowledge.

2. The punk rock music scene and its alternative subcultures

The term 'punk' is controversial as it identifies a socio-cultural phenomenon characterised by several 'waves' (see Hebdige, 1979 for the 1970s 'first wave'; Belsito & Davis, 1983 for subsequent waves like hardcore in the 1980s) and forms (e.g. straight edge, anarchopunk, political punk, hardcore, etc.), which present differences in the various regions of the world (e.g. see Xiao (2016) on Chinese punk; Císař and Koubek (2012) on Czech punk and Moore (2007) on punk in the USA). The diversity of the scene has led to different, and often discordant, definitions of punk (O'Connor, 2004) to the extent that a universally accepted definition is difficult to elaborate (Thomson, 2004).

Several scholars agree that punks represent a specific counterculture (Fox, 1987) or subculture (Hebdige, 1979), often a youthful subculture (Tsitsos, 1999), which is associated to anarchist values, anti-capitalist views, anti-bourgeois and working class attitudes. However, punk subcultures not necessarily reject the values and norms of dominant cultures but rather embrace forms of resistance that can be described as a "negotiated version" of mainstream values. In this respect, an argument reiterated by Heath and Potter (2006) maintains that although countercultures, including punk, tend to reject "mainstream" markets and values, they produce "alternative" markets that still follow (and to a certain extent even reinforce) capitalist values. In their words, countercultures are "intensely entrepreneurial" and embody "the most authentic spirit of capitalism" (Heath & Potter, 2006, p. 5).

Punk has always been associated to counter-societal patterns of behaviour. In this respect, Worley (2017) argues that in England the media played a role in constructing punk as deviant and rebellious, particularly after the infamous Grundy episode, in which members of the *Sex Pistols* swore during a television appearance on *Today*. More specifically, "it was the Sex Pistols' appearance on Today that fixed the press' conception of punk. Attention thereafter focused on punk's anti-social mannerism – the swearing, the spitting and the violence" (Worley, 2017, p. 38).

In the punk literature, discourses related to mainstream/alternative dichotomies are intertwined with issues concerning 'commercialisation' and 'authenticity'. As 'youthful expressions of alienation and rebellion can be valuable commodities' (Moore, 2007, p. 231), some marginal punk subcultures have become incorporated into the 'mainstream' and thus perceived by others (both members of the subculture and outsiders) as not (or less) 'authentic' (Fox, 1987). However, there is no agreement within (and outside) punk subcultures about who/what qualifies as 'authentic' punk as the concept of authenticity in punk performance involves fluidity, subjective interpretation, and negotiation (Force, 2009; Xiao, 2016; Yuen, 2016).

O'Connor (2004) proposes to abandon the notion of punk as subculture based on substantive thinking and favours Bourdieu's notion of 'field'. In this regard, he argues that punk should be conceived as a field, namely 'a relatively autonomous area in which specialized activities take place' (O'Connor (2004), p. 69), and in which actors can assume different positions. Importantly, regarding punk as a field or a scene constituted of diverse actors/subcultures, instead of a homogeneous subculture, allows us to overcome the issue of identifying who is (and who is not) a punk. Indeed, as a scene/field, punk is diverse and includes different actors who are all (or identify themselves as) punks albeit in different forms of commitment (e.g. in terms of political participation, level of commercialisation, appearance, ideology, and preferences for diverse punk sounds) (Císař & Koubek, 2012; Fox, 1987).

The embodied rituals and practices of punk have also been a subject of analysis in the literature. In most cases, to perform perceived 'authentic' punk identities requires wearing leather jackets (a trend set by seminal bands like the *Ramones* and the *Sex Pistols*), torn jeans, spiked clothing, Mohawk hairstyles, and body piercing (Fox, 1987). Also, bodily performances at punk rock concerts include 'slamdancing and 'moshing', namely "styles of dance in which participants (mostly men) violently hurl their bodies at one another in a dance area called a 'pit'" (Tsitsos, 1999, p. 397). Pogo dances, specifically performances "in which dancers jump up-and-down as if they were riding pogo sticks, with some body contact between dancers" (Tsitsos, 1999, p. 403), are typical embodied performances at punk concerts and are pivotal to reaffirm a punk/counterculture identity.

3. Music, tourism and punk

In the last 15 years, scholars have explored the different aspects that link music to tourist consumption. By emphasising the complex links between tourism, music and space, Gibson and Connell (2007; p. 161) argue that music tourism, namely forms of mobilities that occur when "people travel, at least in some part, because of music, whether to festivals or raves, concerts, museums, graveyards or opera houses", shapes tourist spaces and identities (both tourist and local identities). In other words, music may produce spaces that attract specific forms of tourist consumption (particular "ways of hearing") and audience/fandom (e.g. ravers in Ibiza or jazz fans in New Orleans). Importantly, the production and consumption of spaces and embodied identities through music tourism are influenced by political and socio-cultural structures of power, often embedded in tourism marketing and management strategies and practices, which may privilege certain values/ethnicities/genders/bodies over others (Saldanha, 2002). This argument is also supported by Brocken (2015, p. 157), who discusses how the 'politics of space' have driven the (re)construction and use of space in Liverpool based on Beatles fandom and their patterns of tourist mobility.

While the literature on music tourism is expanding, less has been written on whether and how alternative forms of music, such as punk rock, may generate tourist spaces, identities and forms of mobilities (some of which may also include tourist consumption). Yet, the link between punk and tourism has not been totally neglected. By referring to countercultures in general, and punk as part of countercultural movements in particular, Heath and Potter (2006, p. 277) point out that "thanks to their unceasing efforts at scouring the earth in search of ever more exotic locales, countercultural rebels have functioned for decades as the 'shock troops' of mass tourism". In other words, they argue that countercultures' quest for "distinction" and the "authentic", mainly grounded on socially constructed fantasies of the "other", has often propelled patterns of tourist mobility toward perceived "exotic" destinations, which eventually became mass tourist destinations. Baulch (2007) emphasises the role played by tourism in shaping the emergence of alternative music scenes in Bali in the late 1990s. In the case of death/trash metal, for example, she contends that the emergence of the scene was partly influenced by discourses of marginalisation that also contested the fast-growing tourism development in the island. Moreover, death metals' exclusion from performing in tourist circles was employed to reinforce their perceived "authentic" identities as "death metal enthusiasts identified themselves as 'rubbish', 'troublemakers for reggae', defining their own authenticities in opposition to the market logic of the tourism industry which, in their view, so constricted reggae bands" (Baulch, 2007). Likewise, the fact that punk bands in Bali were not usually allowed to play in tourist circuits enabled punks to reassert free/independent identities as tourist spaces were perceived as spaces in which artistic freedom was constrained (Baulch, 2007).

Within the context of the Malaysian scene, the information about punk and tourism is rather limited. Ferrarese (2016) observes that certain Malaysian punk spaces, such as Kuala Lumpur's Rumah Api, are patronised by Western travellers for both short and long periods of time. Also, the information provided by non-academic sources, such as punkzines, online blogs, websites and social media, seem to indicate that, as other forms of music (see Gibson & Connell, 2005), punk generates patterns of mobilities in Malaysia (e.g. bands touring, punks

travelling to attend concerts and festivals in the country and overseas), some of which include tourist consumption. Yet, academic studies specifically focusing on punk and tourist mobilities in Malaysia are inexistent.

4. The punk rock scene in Asia and Malaysia

Although punk is a Western phenomenon, the interest on its developments and adaptations in Asian countries has not been neglected by social scientists. Indeed, the existing literature on punk in some Asian contexts, such as Burma (DeHart, 2013), China (O'Dell, 2011; Xiao, 2016), Indonesia (Baulch, 2007; Wallach, 2008) and Pakistan (Murthy, 2010), portrays a rather diverse mosaic of national and regional punk scenes and subcultures. Despite this, the extant body of knowledge on Asian punk still remains relatively limited and fragmented. Among the various Asian countries, the Indonesia scene has received more attention than others have. In this respect, Baulch's (2002a) study of Balinese alternative music scene represents one of the most relevant ethnographic works conducted on Indonesian punk. More specifically, she points out that the Balinese punk scene emerging in the 1990s developed around spatial discourses related to a 'centre'/'periphery' dichotomy. Within these discourses, she articulates how the shopping mall was conceived by Balinese youth as a space to perform alternative punk identities, which were grounded on the juxtaposition of Jakarta, perceived as the "centre", and their Balinese identities, regarded as the "periphery". In her own words, 'their [punks] orientation towards the *différance*-ridden shopping mall, and their idealization of Jakarta imagined as a 'core of disorder', makes the practice of alternapunk appear as an engineered state of exile' (Baulch, 2002a, p. 170).

In Malaysia, Ferrarese's (2015, 2016a, 2016b) work on metal punk, black metal and hard rock represents one of the very few attempts to cast light on the scene in the country. What emerges from his scholarly production is that the scene is part of a complex religious, political and socio-cultural scenario in which apparently incompatible individual and collective identities need to be constantly (re)negotiated and (re) engineered by Malaysian punks. Malaysia is a diverse country, populated by multiple ethnic and sub-ethnic groups (e.g. Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Bidayuh, Kadazan, Dusun, Orang Asli, and several more). Different religious values coexist and are freely practiced in the country. However, Islam is recognised as the national religion, professed by the largest ethnic group, namely the Malays. As Islam and punk embrace often-contrasting values (see Hosman, 2009, on punk and Islam in the United States), it is not surprising that the Malaysian punk scene at times has been condemned by some (usually most extremist) religious authorities.

Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar, Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail and Muhammad Febriansyah (2016) point out that the Malaysian punk scene centralises on a punk space in Kuala Lumpur known as Rumah Api. Their paper captures the evolution of the music subculture scene from a solely music based subculture to one that participates in political engagement and socio-economic activism. In contrast to Ferrarese's (2015) paper on the metal scene, which concluded that the metal scene's performances are separated from the social life of their practitioners, Sharifah Nursyahidah Syed Annuar et al.'s (2016) work discusses how Malaysian punk's elements of resistance are often embedded in forms of art, clothing, performances and activism.

Other than academic sources, punk publications in the form of 'zines', namely independently produced magazines, are also a vital source of the narration of the subculture's history (Yuen, 2011). The information provided by the zines (see Kidd, 2012) claims that the Malaysian scene originated from the congregation of music fans at Central Market in Kuala Lumpur since the beginning of the 1980s and reached its apex in the early 1990s (Kidd, 2012). Zines represented a significant source of documentation of the Malaysian punk scene, especially before the advent of the Internet, and nowadays are still important platforms to share punk-related news alongside digital media. The typical content of a zine includes bands' interviews, scene reports, music release reviews and articles ranging from personal reflections to political ideologies, which remain an unexplored academic artefact.

There have also been instances, probably not only for religious reasons but also for political causes, in which local authorities have taken a rather "prohibitive turn", which has resulted in police raids of punk venues. In 2015, for example, a raid was conducted by the Malaysian police during a performance in *Rumah Api*, one of Kuala Lumpur's main punk spaces. This episode reasserts the role that music may play in shaping political discourse (Moore, 2007). In Bohlman's (1993, p. 413) words, music can be regarded as "an arresting form of attention, a means of commanding public spaces, and a context for the narration of history".

Colonial and post-colonial forces have also played a role in shaping the Malaysian punk music scene. In this regard, Ferrarese (2016a, p. 160) points out that "Malaysian punk and metal bands generally tend to follow what's been done in the West rather than try to bring any localised flavour to the metal punk recipe". In other words, as in many other realms of post-colonial Malaysia, Western values seem to play a prominent role in the way punk is played (as a music genre) and performed (as an embodied subculture). This may also explain why in general many Malaysian bands prefer to sing in English rather than in Malay language, although exceptions to this status quo do exist. However, Ferrarese (2015) concluded his paper remarking that rather than dismissing Malaysian bands as inauthentic, it is their intention to perform authenticity for the sake of 'maintaining a disappearing subculture alive' that urged them to conform to the perceived format of their respective subcultures. Their social context does not affect the performance of an identity which, in order to be 'authentic', must follow a particular code, and is negotiated as temporary transition to and from everyday life. This view, however, has been challenged by the Malaysian local punk scene, which has often reiterated that even though punk culture originated from the west, it has assumed its own identity in Malaysia. By doing so, Malaysian punks have often questioned the east-west dichotomy and aligned themselves towards solidarity amongst the disenchanted, anti-establishment, working class and 'angry' youth.

5. Methodology

As this work is guided by non-positivist beliefs, which privilege subjective, co-constructed and reflective ways of knowing, we – the two authors of this paper – embrace reflexivity as a starting point to explain our methodological choices.

5.1. First author's voice

My interest in punk dates back to 1994, when I started to follow the scene as a 15-year-old teenager in Italy (the country in which I was born and raised until my early 20s). I was fascinated by the counterculture ideologies professed by punks as well as their performative practices. Drawing from Fox (1987, pp. 349–350), who classifies punks in 4 categories (the 'hardcore', highly involved in the scene; the 'softcores', highly involved but less than the 'hardcores'; the 'preppies', minimally committed; and the 'spectators', mainly outsiders with an interest in the scene), my involvement in the scene has oscillated between 'hardcore'/'softcore' times (e.g. attending punk clubs and concerts regularly, wearing punk clothing, attempting unsuccessfully to play in a band) and moments in which I perceived myself as a more detached 'spectator' (mainly just listening to punk music, reading *punkzines*, and attending concerts occasionally but without 'looking punk' or being fully immersed in the scene and its actors). Although my commitments to punk have not been consistent over the years, I have never lost interest in the scene, especially when in 2010 I moved to Malaysia to take up a lecturer position in tourism in a local university. My knowledge about punk in Malaysia is based on both ethnographic and netnographic

approaches to research. I value ethnography as physical presence and participation *in situ* allow me to have an in-depth understanding of punk subcultures through empathy and first-hand experience. Also, it allows me to build trust and establish rapport with other members of the scene, which is essential in the process of knowledge co-construction. At the same time, as the Malaysian punk community is particularly vibrant online (mainly because the Internet represents a way of escaping from societal stigmatisation and legal risks related to be perceived part of a counterculture), I also regard netnography as a powerful research approach to punk research.

5.2. Second author's voice

As a Malaysian born and raised in the greater Kuala Lumpur area, my first introduction to punk occurred when I was 15 year old by listening to cassettes borrowed from my school's friends. I did my own exploration after my first encounter but it was only when I reached 20 years old that I became acquainted with a punk community. My participation gradually increased with the passing of time, from a passive observer to an active member producing zines, organising shows and running a punk space. The ideologies I learnt from the subculture shaped my worldview and played a role in nurturing my interest in the understanding of the punk culture, the society-at-large and the relationship between the two social institutions. I graduated with a master's degree in social science while being employed as a lecturer in a local university. My master's dissertation was on punk identity/ideology and attempted to understand this subculture from an insider's perspective. With participation spanning 15 years, most of my closest friends are also individuals that are involved in the alternative music scene, which the punk subculture is a part of, and the friendships extend across countries within the active network of scenes maintained primarily through communication on social media.

5.3. The methodological strategy

The empirical material for this ethnographic study, which formally started in January 2017, was mainly produced through different strategies, which include countless informal discussions with participants gravitating around the Malaysian punk scene, namely Malaysians who identify themselves as punks, punk band members, people attending punk concerts, people patronising punk and/or alternative music's record stores and punk spaces. In total, 15 formal face-to-face semi-structured interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed. Notes were taken during informal conversations. Besides formal and informal interviews/conversations, online interviews, participant observation in punk events and concerts, analysis of online websites, blogs and punk zines were also part of the fieldwork.

6. From the field

6.1. The Malaysian punk scene(s) – an overview

The Malaysian punk scene incorporates a complex array of different, yet connected, sub-scenes and sub-cultures. Different aspects subdivide the scene. One of them is represented by the age of the punks. In this regard, “old punks” (the punks aged 40 and above, who have experienced the first wave of punk in the end of the 1970s and have been part of the scene for more than thirty years) and “new punks” (the younger punks, who began to patronise punk venues and concerts at the end of the 1990s after the advent of the second and third waves of punk, mostly after bands like Green Day, Offspring, Bad Religion and Nofx became popular) often share similar values, practices, and spaces. Another aspect contributing to the diversity of the Malaysian scene is related to musical preferences as punks may privilege specific subgenres of punk over others (e.g. hardcore, crust, grind, screamo/skramz etc.). Due to this plurality of interests and preferences, rather than “a scene” it seems more opportune to refer to the Malaysian punk scene as “scenes” (plural). This diversity seems to evoke the idea of neo-tribes, a term used by Bennett (1999) to identify shared cultural elements within the small pockets of scenes. Although this diversity was often a subject of debate during the fieldwork, participants often tended to emphasise the idea of “a scene” as a way to group all the different forms of punk and propel the concept of “unity in diversity”. More specifically, the term ‘scene’ (Glass, 2012) was mostly used by the Malaysian members to denote two main meanings: the “big scene” – to refer to the collective of DIY-hardcore-punk scenes – and the “small scene” – to indicate the respective small scenes driven by specific musical preferences (and alongside other symbols of their consumption and social network affiliations).

Importantly, punk involves different performative acts, which often transcend music consumption and include different expressions of art. As such, the importance of sharing a common space where punk can be “consumed” in all its different dimensions (music, style, art, literature, bodily performances, etc.) was often discussed by the participants. Traditionally, band performances in Malaysia have occurred in “ephemeral spaces”, which cannot be labelled as “punk”, such as travelling funfair sites, dangdut joints, pubs, music practice studios and community halls. However, the Malaysian punk scene marked a watershed moment with the establishment of *Rumah Api* (formerly known as *Gudang Noisy*), a space in Kuala Lumpur that became the unofficial home of punk. The establishment later propelled the founding of more punk spaces across the country, including *The Wall* in Johor, *Phantom Limb* in Kuching, *The Key* in Melaka and *Terminus* in Kota Kinabalu. The importance of Rumah Api – whose original venue was demolished in 2017 due to the construction of a highway and has been moved to another location – was often reiterated by the participants during the fieldwork. Some of the participants also mentioned Central Market as the first punk space in Kuala Lumpur. However, many agreed that this was just a space where punks gathered but never a place in which punk bands performed.

6.2. Malaysian punks' mobilities

One of the main points emerging from the fieldwork concerns the role of punk in generating different patterns of mobilities. As the Malaysian punk scene is part of a larger international punk network and closely connected to other countries' scenes, it is common for punks to travel to other countries for punk-related reasons. International punk networks have existed since the end of the 1970s, mainly propelled and strengthened by postal communication among members of the community. Before the advent of the Internet, Malaysian punks (especially those aged 40 and above) were usually part of pen pal networks in which information and news about punk were exchanged among groups of people via postal mail. By the end of the 1970s, these networks already generated flows of mobility based on the friendships formed around punk solidarity. Some of the punks interviewed pointed out that originally – in the late 1970s and 1980s – these flows were rather “unidirectional”, mainly constituted by punks travelling from Western countries to Malaysia, as at that time only rarely Malaysian punks could afford to travel overseas. In this respect, *Code 13* from Minnesota, USA, was mentioned as the earliest recorded band on tour in Malaysia. However, the gradual decrease of air transportation costs has gradually enabled Malaysian punks to travel abroad and patronise domestic events, especially in the East Malaysia states of Sabah and Sarawak. Importantly, the advent of the Internet has intensified punk connections among Malaysians and between Malaysia and the global scenes. The development of social media (originally Myspace and later Facebook) was crucial for punks to establish new contacts with the outside world. This facilitated better opportunities to trade punk material (e.g. music, merchandise), explore other scenes outside Malaysia, and travel overseas to attend punk-related events. Moreover, this led to the creation of a network of friendships, which eventually encouraged travel patterns

based on punk solidarity.

Punk mobilities in Malaysia and between Malaysian and non-Malaysian punks are generated by different actors in different ways. Punks belonging to bands and touring around the country and abroad represents the backbone of Malaysian punk mobilities (both in Malaysia and overseas). At the international level, few Malaysian bands, such as *Daighila*, *Tools of the Trade*, *Carburetor Dung*, *Utarid*, *Berantakan*, *Split Tongue* and *John Macbaren*, have toured countries outside of Malaysia. The grindcore band *Tools of the Trade*, for example, has toured twice various countries in Europe and performed in major grindcore festivals, such as *Obscene Extreme Festival* (OEF) 2012 and 2018 in Czech Republic and *Chimpy Fest* 2016 in London.

One of the groups propelling and shaping punk flows of mobilities is represented by gig organisers, who facilitate the organisation of concerts for both local and international bands. More specifically, gig organisers play a major role in the "booking" of touring bands according to DIY values and practices. The process of booking is operationalised by a network of gig organisers, who frequently know one another as friends. In this network, bands are handed over from city to city, from bus station to bus station and from airport to airport almost seamlessly. Once the touring circuit has been determined, bands that have performed in one city under the care of a gig organiser are "handed over" to another gig organiser operating in another city. The bands are transported from a venue to another with personal vehicles and accommodation is often provided by show organisers or their families in their personal homes. These patterns of mobility usually involve minimal costs and the resources used are mostly provided by the punk network (e.g. personal vehicles instead of taxis, personal homes instead of hotels). In some cases, the families that host the bands prepare meals and offer information about local culture.

Besides the members of punk bands, Malaysian punks who do not play in bands but who identify themselves as punks and gravitate around the scene travel domestically and overseas to attend concerts or punk-related events. One of the biggest proponent of domestic and international travel is a series of punk gigs organised by *Not(A)Fest,* a collective of individuals based in Kuala Lumpur that besides hosting shows in the capital city, also organises shows all around the country with the assistance of local punk communities. Not(A)Fest was initiated in 2012 as a node of the Southeast Asian punk network and had organised up to 37 shows to date. The collective is one of the more popular initiatives featuring touring bands from outside of Malaysia, hosting bands from Europe, United States and Australia, among others. The irregular Not(A)Fest shows outside of Kuala Lumpur, notably the festivals organised in Sabah and Sarawak, were held in outdoor locations and attracted attendees from Malaysia and abroad. The shows organised by promoters like Not(A)Fest, alongside others, have been a catalyst for mobilities of members within the subculture. Following local bands on tour and attending festivals are popular practices among the community members, as some of the participants pointed out:

> We travel when we go to see shows … we travel to Kuala Lumpur to see bands (Joey)

> Yes, I do travel because of punk! Back in 2011 I got married to my wife and then we went to see Bad Religion in Indonesia … that was our honeymoon (Dee Dee)

> I have punk friends in Indonesia and Singapore … I often travel to Singapore and Singapore to visit them … I started travelling because of punk … I am now planning to go to Japan to see a friend of mine … a punk I met online (Marky)

The cosmopolitanism of the punk scene also meant that being a current day punk is synonymous as being a traveller. Bands are seen in a higher regard if they have performed the pilgrimage of touring, especially to countries outside of their respective continent. Attendance to major punk festivals, such as *OEF*, *Fluff Fest*, *K-Town Hardcore Fest* and others amongst punks appeared as a form of conspicuous consumption paraded over social media.

6.3. Malaysian punks' mobilities and tourist consumption

It is interesting to note that most of the interviewees agreed that punk mobilities often involve moments in which forms of mass tourist consumption take place. Band members, for example, explained that during their tours sometimes they would engage in rather "touristy" activities between one performance and another, such as visiting local heritage sites and trying traditional food outlets. However, the extent to which punks can be labelled as tourists was a subject of debate among the interviewees. As one of the interviewees put it, "some of the tourists coming to Rumah Api are more tourists than punks, but seek out live music … some travel specifically for local punk events, such as the annual *Chaos in Rumah Api*". Chaos in Rumah Api is an annual 3-day festival held in Rumah Api, the longstanding punk mecca in Kuala Lumpur. The festival, organised by the punk space collective, attracts many foreign bands and attendees from all over the world. The name of the festival was inspired by the annual *Chaos in Tejas* based in Austin, Texas (discontinued since 2014).

Importantly, even if punks not necessarily travel for "punk-related reasons", they still engage in some forms of activities related to punk during the tourist experience. During several interviews, for example, the participants clearly explained that their travel patterns may not be totally determined by their passion for punk as significant others (e.g. family members) also play a role in the choice of the destinations to visit and the activities to be involved in at the destination. Yet, punk still represents an important aspect of their holiday experiences:

> Very recently I went to Turkey with my family … eight of us including my parents. Before I went there I contacted a punk guy on Facebook based in Istanbul trying to find out where they have shows, where I can buy punk items … (John)

> Travellers won't come to Malaysia purposely for punk. They usually come to travel for a period of time around Southeast Asia but then they come to attend gigs (Jennifer)

> The first thing I do when I travel is to go to a punk record store … go to festival shows … my priority is to go to record stores and festivals but if I have time I would sightseeing … why not? (Marky)

Some participants discussed the importance of exploring punk spaces (e.g. venues, clubs, disco stores) during their holidays to support local scenes, build new connections and strengthen existing social bonds. When enquired about the possibility of making punk spaces accessible to tourists (including those who may not qualify as "punk tourists" but rather as "mass tourists"), most of the interviewees did not perceive this option as negative. One of the punks interviewed, for example, stated:

> when it comes to punk music stores, tourists [both punk and non-punk tourists] would search for local stuff, they would buy local stuff … punk could promote and support the local community, could promote change …. (Dee Dee)

More specifically, several punks regarded tourism as a catalyst for local development and a phenomenon that could have positive social and economic implications for local communities. In this respect, the idea of "commercialising" punk (e.g. by selling punk items or promoting spaces as punk) for tourist consumption – in Malaysia or overseas – was contemplated by several interviewees. Interestingly, during the fieldwork, a tour package named 'Down & Dirty with the KL's Punk

Rock Scene', which charges a substantial amount from tourists who would like to get a 'social impact experience', was advertised online. The package appeared on Facebook and was shared on social media by many local punks, who ridiculed this attempt to profit from the punk scene. Those who commented on the shared post jokingly speculated on how they could offer similar tours themselves, expressed disbelief, criticised the profiteering service but none expressed direct opposition to the idea. Forms of criticism only arose due to the fact that the individual offering the said services was unknown by the members of the scene and that the description of the services offered was unclear. Despite this, punks were open to the idea that the service could have been offered by a member of the subculture.

However, in the words of one of the participants – which are representative of a general opinion shared by other members of the Malaysian punk community – the idea of turning punk into a tourist commodity could be explored only if "it does not become a way to have rich bastards" [namely people who would commercialise punk only for their own benefits]. In this regard, many perceived a balance between forms of tourist consumption and anti-capitalist values as crucial.

Reciprocity is important to achieve a balance between punk values and tourism. In this respect, an article published in *Shock&Awe!* zine (Asparagus, 2011) called for forms of "responsible punk tourism", widely defined to include the act of bands touring as a form of tourism. By narrating an occurrence where a touring band expressed detachment from a local issue informed by a local fan, the author argues for reciprocity in the relationship between the foreign touring band and the locals. According to the author, punk bands are accountable to engage with local issues (especially when they are specifically addressed to them by the locals) as a reciprocal action to "pay back" the hospitality provided by the hosts. This was referred to as a defining feature of tourism in the punk subculture.

7. Discussion

One of the most obvious points emerging from this ethnographic concerns the fact that punk propels several forms of mobility. Importantly, these patterns of mobilities, which include different physical movements of people and objects within and outside Malaysian national boundaries, are crucial to strengthen the social bonds that the members of the community have built over the years with other punks (mostly through pen pal relationships and social media). In this respect, our fieldwork indicates that although both the Malaysian and global punk scenes are fragmented and diverse (a point often discussed by the participants), an overarching form of "social connectedness" seems to bind punks together. Waitt and Duffy (2010, p. 468) argue that although listening practices are always subjectively and culturally mediated, they can produce "a sense of *communitas*" among listening bodies. Departing from Waitt and Duffy (2010), who mainly refer to attendees of festival spaces, our work suggests that punks' sense of *communitas* transcends specific spatial boundaries/events (e.g. a musical festival or concert). Indeed, Malaysian punks are part of a liquid community (often visible in cyber spaces and social media) that goes beyond specific locales.

However, to refer to Malaysian punk as a phenomenon in which "subcultural participation is limited to the internet" (Williams, 2006, p. 173) would be misleading. Indeed, attending festivals and patronising specific punk spaces are also important occasions to strengthen social bonds among the members of the community. Drawing on the work of Urry (2003), who conceptualises forms of mobilities as crucial to reinforce social bonds through physical co-presence and proximity, punks' *communitas* is constantly reinforced by physical encounters at festivals, gigs and other events, which would not be possible without physical travel. This also due to the fact that specific performative aspects of punks (e.g. pogoing, moshing) could not occur without physical contact in circumscribed spaces. However, the Internet plays an important role to connect members of the international punk community with local Malaysian punks during and after the physical encounters. In some cases, long-term relationships are established and nurtured online while in others sporadic interactions on Facebook occur.

While some forms of punk mobility do not necessarily involve tourist consumption, there are cases in which punk travel patterns and tourist flows intersect. This may happen when punks travel to destinations with other individuals who are not part of the scene (e.g. family members or non-punk friends). In some cases, the participants also pointed out that attending punk festivals with other members of the community could be an opportunity for visiting tourist sites or tourist attractions. In this respect, the participants used the words "tourist activities" and "tourist spaces" mainly to refer to sites and experiences that are indicated in travel guides and on the internet as "must see" or "must try" attractions and/or experiences. By referring to Kuala Lumpur, for example, the participants mentioned sites like the Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) and Batu Caves, which are advertised as tourist attractions on the internet and in tourist promotional material. As such, these spaces attract large crowds of local and foreign tourists.

However, most of the Malaysian punks were hesitant to identify themselves as "tourists" and opted for "more alternative labels", such as travellers, backpackers or visitors. This is not surprising, as tourist/traveller perceived dichotomies and the desire for subcultures to distinguish themselves from the mass (in this case mass tourists) have been discussed in the literature (Mehmetoglu, 2004). In this respect, during most of the conversations about tourism, punks tended to reiterate these rather common negative perceptions about mass tourists. Mass tourism is seen as a manifestation of capitalistic consumption, which is perceived as at odds with the anti-establishment position taken by the punks. This self-labelling appears as a strategy by the punks to detach themselves from tourism, although they are open to the idea of performing touristic activities. To perform an identity within a punk subculture requires a constant performance and specific patterns of behaviour, mainly aligned to DIY principles, which are often far from "being a tourist" (whose performances often include choices privileged by the "masses").

Despite this, when enquired about the possibility of making punk spaces more accessible to tourists and more "commercialised" (including those who may not qualify as "punk tourists" but rather as "mass tourists"), surprisingly most of the participants did not perceive this option as negative. As other music genres, punk has the potential of shaping space (Gibson & Connell, 2007) and producing places/attractions that could be appealing to both punk and non-punk tourists. Within this scenario, tourist spaces produced and promoted as "punk" could be a vehicle to reaffirm punk identities and to make this subculture more visible. Yet, this may raise issues concerning capitalist exploitation, authenticity of punk spaces/experiences, and place identity. As a "resistant subculture" (Hall & Jefferson, 1976), punk has been associated to forms of opposition to mainstream practices and capitalist values (Clark, 2003). In contrast, mass tourism has been often regarded as a phenomenon carrying rather negative meanings due to its propensity to reproduce unequal socio-cultural and economic structures of power (Cole & Morgan, 2010). Turning punk into a commodity consumable in tourist spaces by a more "mainstream audience" could threaten the distinctiveness of this subculture as it could have been perceived by both punks and non-punks as a form of co-optation (Hebdige, 1979). In this respect, the responses obtained during the fieldwork often emphasised the importance of contemplating forms of punk tourism that could balance commercial gains and punk values.

8. Conclusion

Driven by an ethnographic fieldwork conducted among Malaysian punks, this paper aimed at mapping punk mobilities and their related forms of tourist consumption. As a first attempt to explore the nexus between punk, mobilities and tourism, this work leads to three main conclusions. Firstly, physical patterns of mobility are crucial to create and strengthen a sense of *communitas* among the members of the punk community. Secondly, punks often engage in forms of tourist consumption, although they prefer to identify themselves as "travellers" or "backpackers" rather than "tourists". Thirdly, the possibility of employing punk as a tourist product is not totally neglected by the punk community as long as a balance between punk values and commercial gains is kept.

Overall, the empirical material presented in this article casts light on the role of mobilities for punk subcultures and their perceptions of tourists/tourism. This has theoretical and practical implications that should not been underestimated. From a conceptual point of view, by focusing on the "tourist ear" this work invites us to go beyond oculocentric conceptualisations of tourism, which tend to place emphasis on the visual and neglect the multisensorial nature of tourist experiences. It adds to our understanding of music – and forms of "alternative music" in particular – as an agent that can shape space and contribute to produce tourist spaces and experiences. Moreover, by focusing on a specific subcultural group, this paper advances our knowledge concerning the intersections between subcultures and tourism. From a practical point of view, this paper could invite the tourism industry to reflect upon the potential of turning some aspects of resistant groups and their alternative music styles into tourist products/attractions. More specifically, if the needs of the various stakeholders (punks, tourists, local communities, marketers and representatives of the tourism industry) are respected and properly balanced, punk tourism could become a way to promote destinations (both in Malaysia and overseas). This may lead to positive economic implications for both locals and the tourism industry.

However, due to the paucity of studies exploring the nexus between punk and tourism, it is evident that the possibility for future studies on this topic are ample. As punk subcultures are multiple and diverse, more research is needed to explore the patterns of mobility of the different forms/subgroups that identify themselves as punk. Moreover, the intersection between "punk selves" and other identities (e.g. gendered, ethnic, religious, cultural) should not be neglected as it could provide relevant information about punks' mobilities. Also, as commercialising punk for tourist consumption could be perceived by some as a form of "selling out" the subculture, more work needs to explore the nexus between punk's authenticity and tourism. Additional research will also be able to explore in detail the meanings that punks associate to tourism/tourists. This could pave the way to a better understanding of subcultures and their travel patterns in tourism studies.

Author contribution

The two authors have both made significant contributions towards the completion of the paper. The first author contributed to the design of the project, as well as the introduction, literature review, ethnographic fieldwork, transcription and interpretation of the empirical material, drafting, revising and finalizing the manuscript as well as supporting documents, addressing reviewers' comments and correspondence with the journal. The second author contributed to the design of the project and fieldwork, provided multiple reviews and input on the project and draft manuscripts, managed editorial work, wrote parts of the literature review, methodology, findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations and assisted in responding to reviewers' comments.

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