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***The Global Punk Reader: From the Local to the Global***

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## **'Nothing like the rest of Holland': the Groningen punk scene**

### **1. A Tribute to Phil Vane**

I arrived at the venue, Viadukt, at 19.00 just as the sound-check began. I was there early to interview Bram, who would be playing that night. It was a warm, sunny evening in early April, and punks were sitting around the car park drinking beers and chatting, but the palpable pre-gig excitement was tinged with sad nostalgia.

The event was a tribute to recently deceased Phil Vane, co-vocalist of legends Extreme Noise Terror. Originally, ENT themselves had been due to play as part of a small Dutch tour; the preceding night in Amsterdam, and on April 2, 2011 in Groningen. Upon the news of Phil's death in February, the members of the disbanded Groningen-based 'Extreme Noise Error' decided to reform to play the gig that ENT could not. The band had been named as a tribute to ENT, and were their contemporaries, having played gigs together in the 80s. Although ENE were never strictly a tribute band, for this gig they rehearsed ENT covers to play in honour of Phil. Hearing of this, ENT's other vocalist, Dean Jones, decided to join ENE for two Dutch gigs.

This was my third day in Groningen, and everyone I had met had been long awaiting this event. Over the course of the evening, I would meet many more of the current, the ex-, the new, the young and the old punks of Groningen and the surrounding area. 'Everyone' was there that night. As I sat on the door for the first hour of the gig, helping with admission and interviewing Ruben, he regularly stopped to greet and introduced me to old friends; members of the 'old scene' whom he had not seen for a long time, and who had made a special effort to come tonight.

The Phil Vane tribute night was a significant gig. It was a big event in the Groningen punk calendar, third only to ‘GGI Festival’ and the ‘Simplon Punks Reunion’. It brought various strands of the contemporary and the historical punk scene<sup>1</sup> together. Groningen has a number of different groups of punk fans. There are/were the squatter punks, the beer punks, the old punk rock crew from ’77, the farm punks, the skater punks, the hardcore kids, and the straight-edge punks (as explained by participants Bram, Henk). Nowadays the distinctions have eroded<sup>2</sup>, with many of those who had previously been in different groups, hanging out together; especially in the Crowbar (Lotte). Beyond this generational coming together, there was a geographical connectivity too.

The audience was mostly Groningen/nearby residents. However, these residents were not all long-time Groningers; Groningen’s punk scene has attracted over the years an impressive number of individuals from elsewhere in The Netherlands as well as from other countries such as France or Scotland. Moreover, for many this gig was worth travelling for; ‘I travelled over just for the concert’ (Wim).

Indeed, since Extreme Noise Error had disbanded, some members of the band had moved away from Groningen and were also travelling for the gig. ‘[T]hat whole tribute thing has got people from all over the place, you know, so that’s cool!’ (Bram). This highlights issues around locality and global connectivity in the Groningen punk scene, which this chapter seeks to unpick.

Also playing at the gig were Noodweer, a – contemporary – Groningen band which featured a mix of the generations of the local punk scene, Suicide State, a band from Limburg in the South of The Netherlands, and N.F.F.U. who were on tour from the United States. Touring bands are common at gigs both across The Netherlands and in Groningen; whilst (as this chapter will argue) Groningen is not as well connected to other cities in The Netherlands as they are with each other, Groningen *is* well established on the international touring circuit. It regularly hosts international touring bands, which helps foster the connections needed for home-grown bands to tour internationally.

## 2. The Groningen Punk Scene

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<sup>1</sup> I follow O’Connor’s definition of ‘scene’ as being rooted in the way in which it is used by participants of the subculture themselves; ‘the active creation of infrastructure to support punk bands and other forms of creative activity’ (O’Connor, 2002: 226).

<sup>2</sup> The modern melodic hardcore scene is still separate from the core of the Groningen punk scene; the participants who were more involved with it, were not involved with or aware of the Phil Vane tribute gig. Also separate is the straight-edge scene of which neither I nor any participants had any knowledge other than of its existence.

Punk has taken many forms in The Netherlands and some bands have become highly regarded in global underground and commercial spheres. Its roots lie in Amsterdam in the 1960s and early 1970s with the Provos and the Kabouters: groups formed by the anarchist/artistic milieu (Kempton, 2007). Their ‘happenings’, cultural gatherings which usually carried a political message, often focused on issues of squatting and drew international attendees. This bolstered the squatters’ movement in Amsterdam and The Netherlands as a whole.

As punk spread throughout Europe, Dutch punks became closely related to the squatting movement. The Dutch punk scene has therefore developed to be particularly politically-minded (Lohman, 2015). Punks throughout The Netherlands found space to develop their music, ideas, and lifestyle within these autonomous spaces and multiple different styles of punk emerged. In Groningen the scene spawned a variety of successful underground bands such as crust punks Fleas and Lice, ska band the Boegies, and garage punks Moonlizards.

Little is written about the earliest Groningen punk scene, with punk histories focusing more on the Amsterdam, Wormer or Rotterdam scenes (Goossens and Vedder, 1996). However there were bands active in the late 70s, including Subway (previously a hippy-blues band from 1969-1972 but reformed as a punk band, 1976-83), The Boobs (1978-81) and Two Two 79 (1979-82).

The first signs of a larger scene in Groningen are apparent with the ‘Rood, Wit, Zwart’<sup>3</sup> punk collective (Berkers, 2012), encompassing the bands Massagraf (1980-unknown), Fahrenheit 451 (1980-3), JETSET (1980-1985), Bloedbad (1982-1985), and Vacuüm<sup>4</sup> (c.1983-unknown) (‘Groningen Pop Archive’, *no date*). The Rood, Wit, Zwart collective were based around the Oude Rooms Katholieke Ziekenhuis<sup>5</sup> (‘ORKZ’, squatted 1979).

The other key venue for the early Groningen punk scene was Simplon: established as a youth centre in 1977, it hosted many early punk gigs (‘Groningen Pop Archive’, *no date*). It was the social nexus of the Groningen punks, and all those involved with it remember it fondly; Henk, Lotte, Jacob, Maarten, and Bram all discuss the ‘Simplon times’. In 1980 Café Vera also began to host punk gigs, although the bands that played Café Vera tended to be more New Wave oriented (Maarten). Divides in the Groningen punk scene became apparent in the late 80s with the spread of hard drug use at Simplon. Around this time many of the punks

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<sup>3</sup> Transl. ‘Red, White, Black’

<sup>4</sup> Utrecht based but part of the Groningen collective.

<sup>5</sup> Transl. ‘Old Roman Catholic Hospital’

drifted to Café Vera, volunteering there as well as, or instead of, at Simplon (Lotte, Jacob, Maarten). In 1993 Simplon closed their doors temporarily, due to insufficient sound proofing ('Groningen Pop Archive', *no date*); this signalled the end of Simplon as *the* 'punk centre' (Lotte). Café Vera remained the epicentre of the punk scene until 2008 when Crowbar, a small 'punk pub' with a stage, opened its doors.

This chapter is based on a subset of data collected for a project on Dutch punk. Data was collected across The Netherlands between July 2010 and April 2011; and in Groningen between March 31 2011 and April 4 2011. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with 13 individuals during that long weekend, and with a further 2 individuals who had previously lived in Groningen but were now elsewhere in The Netherlands, demographic details are in the appendix<sup>6</sup>. Participants were connected both contemporaneously and/or historically to punk. The data set was augmented with participant observation and document analysis. Names of bands and locations are retained, but individual participants are referred to by pseudonyms<sup>7</sup>.

### 3. Locality

The role of the 'local' is today a hotly debated subject in understandings of subcultures such as punk. That multiple locally-based scenes exist around the world that draw upon similar practices shows an interplay between the global aspects of punk, and the local. Whilst musical styles, social practices, attire and methods of production and consumption may be recognizable wherever punk is found, there is still value in understanding that locality will give rise to particular forms and distinctive practices (O'Connor, 2002), often based around venues or groups of bands (Shank, 1994). These debates have led to various proposed terms; 'glocal' (Robertson, 1995; Pilkington, 2004), and 'translocal' (Bennett and Peterson, 2004; Hodkinson, 2004) subcultures.

'Glocal' emphasises the interaction between global ('central') influences of punk, and local ('peripheral') interpretations (Pilkington, 2004). However, this does not adequately take into account the multiplicity inherent in a subculture such as punk which is constantly reimagined and altered (Sabin, 1999), nor one which is as well connected as the underground punk scene.

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<sup>6</sup> N.B. A few participants who were interviewed in Groningen were originally from, or were living in Leeuwarden at the time. Leeuwarden is the closest large city to Groningen and there was a great deal of connectivity between punks in both cities. Groningen has a larger and more active scene, drawing participants regularly from Leeuwarden. Leeuwarden punks have been included in this data-set due to the location of the interview and their knowledge of the Groningen scene, and as part of situating the Groningen scene in a more general Northern context. Where necessary, a distinction will be made when participants are discussing Leeuwarden or the North rather Groningen.

<sup>7</sup> Occasional quotes are unattributed to protect anonymity as far as possible, where requested by the interviewee or where the context would reveal the participant's identity.

‘Translocal’ allows for a more nuanced understanding of patterns of cultural flow and interactions between subcultural participants. In his account of the UK goth subculture, Hodkinson argues that;

rather than consisting of a series of highly separate, distinctive, and clearly bounded local scenes, [UK goth] comes across more as a singular and relatively coherent movement whose translocal connections were of greater significance than its local differences. While locality remained highly important to everyday participation, the identities, practices, values, and infrastructural elements of the goth scene usually operated beyond the bounds of particular towns or cities (Hodkinson, 2004: 144).

This interpretation is broadly applicable to The Netherlands’ punk scene, which is characterized by a high level of mobility between participants, both producers and fans. Bands (e.g. Vitamin X, Human Corrosion, and Planet Eyelash) can be based ‘translocally’, with members living in multiple cities and travelling for weekly practices. However, I will argue in this chapter that the Groningen punk scene is distinct from the rest of The Netherlands, in that it lies both literally and metaphorically on the periphery of the Dutch scene, which imbues it with a heightened sense of locality when compared to the rest of the country<sup>8</sup>.

Kennedy (2010) has discussed the multifaceted way in which the local lives function in relation to globalised cultural flows. He argues that globalisation debates have not placed enough emphasis on the role of the local in affecting individuals’ interaction with the global, nor how this then impacts global flows. Individuals need to be recognised as micro-actors in both constructing and understanding their place in a local and global world.

A useful way to understand cultural flow, then, is as having a rhizomic character based on biological rootstocks: ‘[t]he wisdom of the plants: even when they have roots, there is always an outside where they form a rhizome with something else’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003: 11). This model can be understood on varying levels: allowing cultural flow between different locations, different forms of culture, and different understandings of one form of culture, for example, punk. It allows for high levels of connectedness, whilst the possibility remains for differences in form. Greater importance need not be attributed either to local or global actors within cultural forms: culture forms a complex network in which any social phenomena can be, and is, connected to any other. We are therefore able to break with hierarchical

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Northern peripherality affecting locality in punk, see Pilkington (2014) in relation to punks in Vorkuta, Russia.

understandings of global cultural flow as necessarily linked to transmission from the centre to a periphery (Hannerz, 1992).

The Netherlands' punk scene does not enjoy a similarly high profile to that of 'origin' countries such as the UK/USA, and could be located as 'peripheral' to them in a similar way that Groningen might be seen to be 'peripheral' to the rest of the Dutch scene. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, the Groningen (like the Dutch) scene is highly connected to the international underground punk scene; it is one node of the rhizomic network.

The contested importance of locality within globalized musical praxis, and the relationship between a city and the production and promotion of its 'sound' has been discussed in depth by Cohen in relation to Liverpool (2007). These themes have been further explored in Lashua et al.'s (2014) book, *Sounds and the City* which recognises that these localities affect the global praxis, just as the globality affects the local; 'the increasing mobility of individuals, cultural practice, and ideas, and the emergence of global networks such as the Internet, made popular music places more common and yet more diverse. In this century, popular music has become a leisure form that seems to transcend borders and it has reshaped the postmodern city' (2014: 5). Whilst this chapter discusses the production of locality within the Groningen punk scene, it maintains a focus on the scene's place within a rhizomatic and global underground punk network. In doing so it traces both participants' understandings of themselves as 'separate from the rest of the Dutch punk scene', and as highly connected and mobile international punk actors.

The Groningen punk scene is affected by its geographical position in the far north of The Netherlands. The majority of large Dutch cities lie in close proximity to one another, with travel time between the 'big four' of the 'Randstad' (Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague and Rotterdam) rarely exceeding 1 hour; Groningen lies at least 2-3 hours from most other cities. For punks in more central areas of country, travelling forms a key part of their scene participation; it is normal to travel to see or play gigs. Sander, who lives in Amsterdam, will often travel to 'Nijmegen, Utrecht, Tilburg; if there's a cool band then we'll hop in the car, or on a train, no problem!' However, this is more of a problem for those who live further away; interviewees describe the city as 'isolated' (Kosta), and this being a cause of less travelling by Groningen's punks (Lisa). Whilst participants do still travel in order to play and occasionally to attend gigs, this is not as *normalised* as it is for those who live in the better-connected south. Whilst Jasper was considering a trip to Hamburg for a gig around the time of the interview, this was noted as something he did not do regularly.

Whereas city or regional boundaries between scenes do not affect the majority of the Dutch scene (Lohman, 2015), in Groningen the participants talked of the existence of a ‘Groningense’ or ‘Northern’ punk scene (Bram, Kosta, Lotte, Ruben)<sup>9</sup>. It is through these discursive patterns that we can understand the production of and pride in their locality. Interviews with Groningen punks often became an exercise in ‘story-telling’, with a number of recurrent themes between interviews through which they construct their local identities. This in part echoes the practices of young people in Vorkuta, Russia in their construction of local community and identity, as highlighted in Pilkington’s (2012) discussion of the relationship between people and place. Part of this process is through the telling of ‘insider stories’ (Pilkington, 2012: 272).

An important part of the punk scene’s local identity is its squatter history and the battles they fought with the government. A significant number of participants of this research discussed the ‘stories’ of the Wolters-Noordhoff Complex (‘WNC’, squatted 1984) and/or the ORKZ. Both the ORKZ and the WNC were large squat complexes which provided housing, practice rooms, gig venues, pubs, cafes and more. These venues, alongside a few other squats and the Simplon club were key social spaces for the Groningen punks in the 80s. Whilst the ORKZ went through a squat legalisation process, the WNC was targeted to be torn down. The eviction turned into a ‘huge fucking riot, it was a two day riot and something like 150 people (of our side) got arrested for that and most of them were in jail for a month or more’ (Bram). This event, and subsequent discussions of it, helped cement the Groningen punks’ local identity, and their stereotype in the eyes of the rest of The Netherlands. Bram says that after the WNC eviction, it was ‘kind of known throughout Holland that we didn’t give a fuck so, you know, so they always put us up at the front of the demonstration so even if there’s like fights with cops or with skinheads or something we’ll just fucking kick the shit of them you know!’. Another participant confirms that to this day, the Groningen punks are considered ‘loud, drunk, noisy, troublemakers’ by their peers in Amsterdam. Whilst Henk recognises that ‘people in Amsterdam, you know, [have always] looked down upon us’, to Bram the stereotype is a mark of pride;

I think everybody here will tell you the same, [the] Groningen punk scene is nothing like the rest of Holland. It’s always been a bit *more*. More drugs, more drink, more

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<sup>9</sup> Also discussed by participants who had connections to Leeuwarden, was the ‘Frisian’ scene (Tom, Erik, Jasper).

bands, more partying; but also more fights - we've had a fucking rough time here in squats with cops and students but also with hooligans you know (Bram).

The Groningen scene is characterised by strong connections between punks and other groups. This is something which is particularly noticeable as a recent development, with both Lotte and Bram discussing how the diminishing size of the punk scene in Groningen has led to greater hybridism: both keeping punk alive and 'keeping it interesting'.

Well if you go to the bars here where we hang out, or the gigs, you [now] get a lot of different people you know. It's not just [the] punks, it's also [...] the metal guys, and rock and roll, rockabilly, [...] even the proper normal looking people, middle age[d] people. [...] It's not always like that but it has been perhaps for the last ten to fifteen years. And I like that. It's also because the subcultures are getting smaller so it mixes a bit more. You can't run a pub with just 10 fucking metalheads showing up, you know, you need to get all the other people in as well! And it works really well cos it turns out that we all get on really well, a lot better than we expected! (Bram)

The unity between subcultures is a recent development in the Groningen scene, noted by multiple individuals as particularly important to their survival. 'Unity' becomes another discursive tool in the construction of the *Groningen* punk scene.

Henk explains that this happens not just at a social level, but also at a musical level; 'I think for all music and all musicians in Groningen there's a difference; because the city's pretty small. So whether you play jazz, or whether you play funk or hardcore, punkrock or pop; whatever you do, we all know each other! All these people, they're all musicians and they all gather at the Viadukt [...] rehearsal space' (Henk). Kosta believes that this improves the quality of the music that is made in Groningen; 'in Groningen musicians are for real, they really go for it and everybody plays tight, I like that! [...] For example] if the band from Groningen plays with a band from Amsterdam you can see the difference straight away; Groningen guys gonna blow the other guys away. No! [I'm] serious! [It's the difference between] the nuclear plant and the battery!' (Kosta).

Jolanda describes both the importance of the DIY scene and the squat scene to the Groningen punks, and how well these work together with the more 'normal' music circuit in the city. 'There really is a collaboration between DIY, punk and squatter scenes and the more normal places; bars, Crowbar. These are [now] per se two different worlds, but if needbe then they



work together, I think that it's lovely to see' (Jolanda). Again, in describing what is unique about Groningen, Jolanda brings up discourses of 'unity'.

Indeed, these 'normal' venues often work so well with the punk scene due to their shared values. Café Vera is a larger venue (having a capacity of 450 people), and usually plays host to established, touring bands; some play punk but most do not. However, Café Vera history and those who work and volunteer there are firmly rooted in DIY traditions and alternative politics, which are reflected in their desire to support the local underground punk scene. All participants who were engaged in organising shows in the north mentioned 'helping people out' (Erik) or supporting the 'local' scene as one of the key motivators for what they did. Local bands are often offered support slots on Café Vera's main stage, or in the smaller 'Cellar bar'. Jaap believes that most local punk bands have played at Café Vera. Another participant, who was involved in the opening of the Crowbar, says that the idea to open this 'punk pub' stemmed explicitly from a desire to support the local music scene. 'We thought that we need[ed] a small venue for alternative bands because there wasn't anything like that, especially for local bands'.

The emphasis that organisers place on making sure to provide for, and support the *local* scene shows a pride in the bands that it has produced. Moreover, it is a sign of recognition that in lieu of easy, quick access to the venues across the rest of The Netherlands it is their resourcefulness and self-reliance in Groningen that keeps the scene vibrant.

One final way in which local identity was produced and negotiated by the Groningen punks was in how a great number of them were engaged in processes of reminiscing about their punk pasts as well as their present. Whilst I was in Groningen, many punks talked excitedly about the upcoming 'Simplon Punks Reunion'. The 'old' crowd which had coalesced around Simplon in the 80s were, at the time of fieldwork, planning to all get together later on that year (2011) in Café Vera. This was prompted by a spate of nostalgia as a number of them (particularly Jacob and Henk) began to upload old photos to their Facebook accounts and a recently created (29<sup>th</sup> December 2010) Facebook page; 'Simplon Punks'. Jacob noted that this was the first time such a thing had happened and he was looking forward to seeing those who had left the Groningen punk scene, with people planning to travel from as far as France in order to attend (Jacob).

Their identity as 'Simplon' punks, rather than just as 'Groningen' punks shows super-locality: an identity tied to one specific venue. Furthermore, not only is it related to just any

location, but to a specific location in history; for most participants, the ‘Simplon’ of which they talked existed only from the late 70s to the mid/late-80s. Whilst the venue is still in existence, changes in management and direction meant that the ‘Simplon punks’ became an identity no longer associated with the venue from which they took their name.

#### **4. Connectivity**

Whilst there was a sense of isolation and difference from the rest of the Dutch punk scene, the Groningen punks were not lacking in mobility and connectivity. On an individual level, compared to other Dutch punks, Groningen punks travelled less often in order to attend gigs; however, Groningen bands maintained extensive tour networks, and Groningen’s punk venues were very well connected internationally.

Mobility in the punk scene is often founded upon personal, translocal or transnational relationships, which both reaffirm these connections and allow new ones to form. This process is the basis of another element of the transmission of cultural practices which may influence the individuals involved and their understandings of what it might mean to ‘be’ punk. Hodkinson suggests that just as ‘travelling participants [(of UK goth)] were all liable to influence and be influenced by their counterparts in other areas of the country. ... The national and sometimes international tours of even small goth bands provided further translocal influence’ (2002: 106-7). This travelling from one element in the way punk cultural praxis is communicated translocally, affecting its rhizomic global flow.

As discussed above, in terms of gig-going opportunities, Groningen was relatively isolated from the rest of the country. Whilst a few participants did report travelling to attend gigs outside Groningen (Lotte), the majority did not do this very often. Travelling was something that was more likely to be undertaken if the participant was invited to *play* a gig elsewhere. For example, Jolanda says that beyond travelling to Leeuwarden regularly for band practice ‘if I travel further it’s usually if I’m playing myself. And then I’ll get to see other bands play too’.

Bands in Groningen often find themselves playing international gigs very rapidly. This is partly due to the small nature of both the scene and the country; ‘Holland is too small [to do shows every weekend] (Theo). Playing gigs elsewhere is made possible by good connectivity within an international DIY punk scene. Indeed, in this regard, Groningen bands’ touring opportunities are similar to those of the rest of the country. Nijmegen-based Larry describes his band’s touring pattern as being similar to many Dutch punk bands; ‘After the first demo

we started playing outside of our own town. And then after our first album we started playing all over the country and eventually we went to other countries.’ ‘[O]ur first gig abroad was in Belgium in Oostende and we really did a lot of gigs in Belgium.’ ‘So we went to England, well we had some shows in France, mostly in Paris and Northern France. ... But we also went to Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland, Romania one gig, Slovakia, Norway and Sweden’. A Groningen-based band would, by contrast, often skip from playing in Groningen straight to playing abroad.

Groningen’s proximity to Oldenburg in Germany<sup>10</sup> enables especially close links between the cities, which affects bands’ touring opportunities. Compared to other Dutch bands, Groningen punks tend to tour internationally in Germany before they have toured as much in The Netherlands itself;

You can compare [Groningen] a lot more with I suppose the German punk scene, which is not that weird because we’re more or less on the border. When the first big city in Germany is Oldenburg, which is a lot closer than the first big city in Holland, you know, so. We’ve always – we’re a bit more international – none of our bands played a lot in Holland either, we always went over the border straight away (Bram).

Not only does Bram note how this specific proximity affects touring chances, but also how this affects Groningen punks’ self-perception: being closer in identity as well as in distance to Germany’s punks. Local identity and transnational connections both affect the rhizomic network.

Bram’s observation was backed up by the frequency with which participants discussed touring in Germany and other neighbouring countries (Suzanne, Maarten, Jacob, Ruben, Jaap, Henk, Bram, Wim). Even a short-lived band such as Jolanda’s first band, who never recorded their music, had toured ‘once five days in The Netherlands and Belgium. And we went once for a couple of days to Germany’.

Extending touring schedules across Europe was common for more established bands or bands with members who were more established in the scene. Jolanda points out the importance of connections to the DIY scene, which makes touring across Europe possible. Erik also discusses the worldwide DIY network and views his own place within it as trying to establish as many network contacts as possible. The process of putting on a gig is a reciprocal one to him; if you organise a gig for an international band in your country they should do the same

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<sup>10</sup> 130km from Groningen to Oldenburg, compared to 180km between Groningen and Amsterdam.

for you (Erik). In this way, networks of connections are built up, maintained, and then passed on. Tom suggests that the aging punk population in Groningen is key to this; those who have remained in the scene have built up bigger and more extensive networks. These are then passed between the generations. This intergenerational transmission of knowledge is enabled by the small size of the scene in which people know each other, as well as the prevalence of intergenerational bands such as Noodweer.

The Groningen scene has well established links with the Americas. Whereas non-Groningen based Andre commented that ‘America is really hard to go to for a tour’, Jolanda reports that (for the Groningen bands that she knows); ‘there are very many bands who go on tour to America really quickly’.

Connections have been made across large swathes of the Americas, particularly the USA, by Groningen-based bands. In 1992 Jacob and Jaap travelled to America to play at their friends’ (Fred and Toody from Dead Moon) 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary party. They then toured the USA’s West Coast, including Portland and Seattle. Wim and Bram also discussed American connections stemming from a joint tour of undertaken by Fleas and Lice and the Boycot in 1998. They started in Canada and travelled down America’s East Coast before finishing the tour in Mexico; although only the Boycot played ABC No Rio, Fleas and Lice were banned after a band member made disparaging comments about Americans in an interview with Profane Existence.

Each time a band organises and goes on tour they strengthen and widen their translocal connections. Their touring mobility becomes a form of rhizomic cultural flow in which Groningen’s local punk is shared globally.

The Dead Moon connection is one that originated in Groningen, in Café Vera, and with the support of the local government. In order to celebrate the city’s 925<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, money had been provided for cultural endeavours. Café Vera, as a ‘larger’ venue, was relatively well established in the city as the place which attracted better-known touring bands, playing host to the Vibrators, Crass, Joy Division, Nirvana, At the Drive In, to name a few. They were seen by the government as worthy of receiving financial support. This gave those at Café Vera the freedom to indulge themselves with gigs that they would ordinarily not be able to afford.

We flew in Dead Moon, our most favourite unknown band, from Portland, Oregon [for the release gig]. They came to Europe for one gig only, and that was here. And since

then they played about twenty times. [...] They always started the[ir] tour[s] in the cellar bar with like [a] free secret gig, but of course all the people... knew [about] it. It was always packed and sweaty and they [would] play for two and a half hours. And the last gig of the tour was [always] in the main hall. [...] They played like thirteen times in the main hall and about maybe nine times in the downstairs (Jaap).

It was this musical connection that resulted in a transatlantic friendship between members of Dead Moon and Portland, Oregon's "punk hearted" "rock and roll" scene (Jaap), and individuals in Groningen such as Jaap and Jacob. It facilitated visits and tours in both directions; and therefore enabled the creation of yet further networks of contacts.

The interest in punk rock 'n' roll in Groningen meant that Café Vera also booked bands such as The Gun Club, who are mentioned by three participants as particularly influential to both their tastes and those in the wider scene (Lotte). Relationships and touring patterns, affected by particularly influential people who are actively engaged in booking many of the bands that come to Groningen, results in the shaping of individuals' tastes within a scene. This heightened interest in rock 'n' roll influenced punk was something that was particular to the Groningen scene when compared to the rest of The Netherlands.

The Crowbar occupies a similar position to Café Vera, although within a different international touring network. A small venue, set up to help support the local scene, it still holds a key position internationally for DIY punk. 'We book not only local bands, we book from throughout the world; Venezuela, Brazil, America, South America, England, Europe; bands that are on tour'. At all levels, the venues in Groningen's punk scene reinforce its global connectivity.

Historically and contemporaneously Groningen has had a sizeable enough local scene to support many gigs. From the earliest days of punk, the 'big' bands would visit Groningen; 'my daddy was a bit of an old beatnik he actually went, here in Groningen, to see the Sex Pistols and The Ramones' (Bram). The scene has maintained and continued to create new connections at varying levels of the 'music industry' to retain a position within international touring networks. These translocal connections feed into Groningen's understanding of its locality, but Groningen has also had an effect on the global punk scene; an example of a rhizomic process of cultural flow.

One last way in which the Groningen scene maintains high levels of connectivity in spite of its relative isolation, is by being a city that people wish to migrate to. Of the 14 participants<sup>11</sup> from which I have the necessary data, only five were born in Groningen or the surrounding villages. Three were from nearby Leeuwarden, and five from elsewhere in The Netherlands. One participant was international, however this (as far as ethnographic data can suggest) potentially underrepresents the internationalism of the scene, with other scene participants I met during fieldwork having moved to Groningen from France, Scotland and Ireland. Ruben commented (exaggerating, perhaps) that ‘it’s mainly non-Dutch people here [in the Groningen punk scene]’.

For at least some of those who moved to Groningen, the punk scene was the key reason for their choice. ‘When we started to play [punk shows] in Groningen [...] we were amazed how many people were actively busy here and how much people were going to the shows here. I [...] pack[ed] my stuff and mov[ed] my ass over here’ (Ruben).

These migrations highlight individual commitment to the scene – people are willing to make important life decisions based on this. When Groningen University did not offer the course that Lotte wanted to study, she chose to study something else; ‘I really came to Groningen for the music scene and the city; twenty years ago there really was a lot happening. I wanted to study Journalism but they didn’t have that at Groningen. I really wanted to come to Groningen, so when I came here I studied Dutch Language and Literature’.

This added form of mobility may be the result of connections with the scene will always bring new opportunities and fresh connections; both from people who have left scenes elsewhere to come to Groningen, and those who leave Groningen to go elsewhere.

## **5. GGI Festival**

GGI Festival is an annual punk festival that was founded in 2004 and alternates between three homes; Groningen (G), Glasgow (G), and Ireland (I)<sup>12</sup>. Each year, the popular bands from the Groningen, Glaswegian, and Irish punk scenes are joined by other new bands to form a weekend’s entertainment. At the time of the fieldwork for this research, participants were gearing up for GGI Groningen 2011.

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<sup>11</sup> Out of 15.

<sup>12</sup> All Groningen’s events have taken place in Groningen itself, in 2005, 2008 and 2011. ‘Glasgow’s’ first event took place in Edinburgh(!) in 2006 and the rest have taken place in Glasgow in 2009 and 2012. The first three Irish dates, 2004, 2007, and 2010 took place in Wexford, and the 2013 event took place in Ballina.

The festival was set up as a celebration of the connections that had already been forged between these locations by participants of the scenes. More and more it, can be seen as a yearly 'reunion-festival' (Lotte), in order to rekindle those translocal friendships.

Basically the festival is a celebration of the links between the punk rock communities of Groningen in the Netherlands, Glasgow in Scotland and Ireland. Over the last ten years bands such as Kidd Blunt from Ireland, Brawl from Wexford, Ex-Cathedra from Glasgow and Link from Groningen have toured in each others countries and many friendships have been made between people from the three places. This link is still very much alive with Fleas and Lice now having two Glaswegians in the band, Groningen bands Makiladoras, Link and Fleas and Lice touring Ireland on separate occasions and Easpa Measa washing up on the hospitality of Groningen people some summers ago, for example ('GGI 2008').

The GGI Festivals are an example of the way in which both locality and connectivity are celebrated within the Groningen punk scene and those to which it is especially connected. Information on the 2014 event, on its Facebook page, says that it 'continues to grow and develop, with the firm intention of uniting people from different countries through a shared love of music, and demonstrates a commitment to supporting acts from the three countries' ('GGI Fest 2014'). The emphasis on making those personal translocal connections, whilst supporting the bands that are at the core of the individual local scenes highlight the themes discussed in this chapter.



Figure 1: Poster for 'GGI Festival Groningen 2008, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> September.

Artist Unknown. (GGI, 2008).

Figure 1 shows the poster for GGI Groningen 2008<sup>13</sup>. It's notable that all Dutch bands playing are from Groningen. The Scottish bands are centred on - but not limited to - Glasgow. The Irish contingent highlights the number of towns in Ireland with connections to the festival with bands playing from Belfast, Dublin and Kilcoole. There are also two American bands on the lineup, highlighting further connectivity beyond the three nodes of the 'G', 'G', and 'I'.

The GGI Facebook page set up for the 2012 event in Glasgow further describes the nature and importance of the connections that are made in terms of how it enables the mobility and continuation of the punk scene;

GGI was founded back in 2003/4 with the intention of celebrating the links forged between Groningen in the Netherlands, Glasgow in Scotland and various towns and cities in Ireland by the punk and hardcore bands that visited these places on tour over the last 20 odd years. Using the D.I.Y network that has evolved through small record labels, promoters and fanzines and the spirit of co-operation and mutual aid, many friendships and allegiances have been struck so this year we hope to recognise the

<sup>13</sup> The most recent GGI to have taken place in Groningen at the time of my fieldwork.



origins of the festival but also bring in new bands that represent the evolution of punk /hardcore and underground metal in these three places. ('GGI Glasgow 2012 About')

A significant proportion of individuals involved in the punk scene in Groningen have played at GGI Festivals, helped to organise them, or travelled to Glasgow or Ireland to attend them. A number of participants talk about the importance of the GGI festival in the social calendar. Whilst Bram talks about being too old to go on tour or to play many gigs, travelling to Scotland to play at GGI is an important exception.

For Lotte, GGI represents everything she loves about Groningen's punk scene; 'That's what's nice about the punk scene here, there's lots of contact with England, Ireland, Scotland; lots of people who know each other. ... Lots of friends and from all over the place, also America and Germany. That's the best thing about the punk scene, if someone comes along and says "I'm a friend of such and such and I need somewhere to stay", yeah, it's a really nice scene' (Lotte).

## **6. Conclusion**

This chapter presents the Groningen punk scene as distinct from the rest of the Dutch punk scene. Unlike many Dutch punks who do not feel connected to notions of the 'local', those in the North actively construct a discourse of difference and locality represented in part through their desire to maintain and support the *local* scene. However, this process is intertwined with their negotiations in terms of positioning themselves within national and international scenes; largely absent from the former and highly connected with the latter. Their *locality* is based on a proximity to the German scene, with more positive comments directed in relation to German than to Dutch punks. Moreover, they regularly discuss their position as highly mobile and connected with scenic friends all over the world.

The Groningen punks emphasise their locality whilst simultaneously discussing the importance of their transnational connections; the two are not at odds with each other. The specific manifestations of their locality (e.g. the desire to support their own scene) feed into their position as globally well connected (their strong scene produces high quality touring bands and venues which others wish to visit); the global and the local are inextricably linked. Punk is a rhizomatic cultural form which is produced and reproduced by both local and translocal experiences on the part of those who are involved.

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## Appendix: Demographic Notes

<u>Participant (pseudonym)</u>	<u>Age (at interview)</u>	<u>Location</u>
Bram	44	Groningen
Erik	29	Leeuwarden
Henk	50	Groningen
Jaap	55	Groningen
Jacob	c.41	Groningen
Jasper	23	Groningen
Jolanda	28	Groningen
Kosta	44	Amsterdam
Larry	28	Nijmegen
Lisa	28	Groningen
Lotte	42	Groningen
Maarten	50	Groningen
Ruben	34	Groningen
Suzanne	40	Groningen
Theo	47	Amsterdam
Tom	31	Leeuwarden
Wim	c.40	Alkmaar