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LIVE MUSIC POLICING IS NOT JUST BouncERS!

From government creating licensing legislation to CCTV capturing concertgoers – live music policing is a complex system involving state actors (like police and local councils), businesses (including live music venues and private security firms), and even members of the public.

SO, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Some controversy surrounds this policing – including suggestions that police target "black or black inspired" genres (Talbot, 2011, 87) and that licensing and noise abatement powers are used excessively by councils in order to force venues to close to make way for new developments (e.g. Ellis-Petersen, 2014; Music Venue Trust, 2015, 18–9).

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Live music policing has never been analysed as a whole system. However, research into similar areas of policing in the night time economy (e.g. nightclubs) has found that policing here can exclude ethnic minority and lower income groups (Measham and Hadfield, 2009), and has led to “the criminalization of black spaces” (Talbot and Böse, 2007, 113). Further, it has been shown to contribute to gentrification, through the closure of subcultural venues (Talbot, 2006).

WHAT DON'T WE KNOW?

KNOWLEDGE GAP:

Live music policing has never been studied as a whole system. Only isolated elements have been examined (e.g. the licensing process (Talbot, 2006)).

MY CONTRIBUTION:

To analyse the policing of live music as a whole system. This will allow us to understand not just how individual actors operate, but how their decisions affect each other, and how this might lead to the exclusion and closure of subcultural spaces that other researchers have identified.

METHOD:

A study of a small number of London boroughs. Interviews with venue staff, private security, police, local authorities, artists, promoters, and concertgoers, plus observation of security procedures at live music events and analysis of licensing decision documents from councils and police.