Cool aid? Health, wellbeing and place in the work of Bono and U2

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ABSTRACT

Through a discussion of the sounds and statements of Bono and U2, this paper explores the ways in which music can work in particular spatial contexts, contributing towards both personal and population-wide health and wellbeing. We engage critically with the idea of celebrity diplomacy, and look beyond this notion to suggest ways in which the production, circulation and consumption of music warrants greater attention within the unfolding domain of health geography.

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1. Introduction

Western society is celebrity obsessed to the extent that it is not only fascinated by famous people, but also by what they are doing, and what they have become, even after their fame has lapsed. In a recent paper in *Health & Place,* Joseph et al. (2009) comment on these themes and argue that academics might consider 'celebrity places' (noteworthy health care institutions, sites and settings) prior to, during, and after their notoriety. This, they argue, would lead to a greater understanding of how place meanings and identities develop over time in relation to health care. In this paper we extend Joseph et al.'s (2009) invitation to link health, place and celebrity by examining the health and place-related experiences, emotions and identities that can flow from musical celebrities. Specifically, through exploring the ideas and actions of Bono and U2 we discuss how (i) celebrity status can be used as a powerful vehicle to promote the health of individuals, populations and places; (ii) music can carry personal, population and global health messages; and (iii) emotional wellbeing can be part of the consumption of music. Prior to this analysis, we explore interdisciplinary connections between music, health and place and, by way of introducing our case study, discuss two foundations to U2's wellbeing-work: their enduring artistic and commercial success and their religious faith.

2. Inquiries into music, health and place

When searching for studies that engage with music, health and place one is struck by how little work engages contemporaneously with all three of these empirical and conceptual fields. Instead the literature emerges from distinct disciplines where each engages principally with two. Discussing this coverage provides a context to the current study.

First, as will be familiar to readers of this journal, the dynamics between *health and place* underpin the empirical interests of the new health geography. A moving beyond a preoccupation with matters of location has broadened the focus of health geography over the last two decades. At the same time, mirroring wider disciplinary developments, the sub-discipline has extended an understanding of place to incorporate complex social and cultural phenomena (Kearns and Moon, 2002; Parr, 2004; Curtis and Riva (2010). Despite these developments however, aside from some recent attention to fictional literature (Baer and Gesler, 2004; Tonnellier and Curtis, 2005; Williams, 2007a) and paintings (Evans et al., 2009), few studies in the new health geography have engaged with the arts. Moreover, glancing engagements aside (Andrews, 2004), none has focused on music. This is perhaps surprising for a sub-discipline that in part has humanistic origins (Kearns, 1993).

Second, exploring the dynamics between *music and place* has been predominantly the concern of cultural geography, but a number of recent contributions have also come from cultural studies and musicology (see Krims, 2007). In its infancy,

geographical research on music was concerned with mapping diffusions of music—in terms, for example, of genres (Smith, 1997). However, contemporary inquiry has progressed beyond a search for patterns and is more concerned with music's cultural, aesthetic, economic and political relationships through space and place (see Smith, 1994; Leyshon et al. 1998; Waterman, 2006).

A number of interrelated strands of research investigate these relationships. An established line of inquiry considers music as a 'political tool' and some studies examine specific socio-economic circumstances in regions and nation states (McLeay, 1995) or relate to civil rights and sexuality (Valentine, 1995; Aitken and Crane, 2001). Another strand considers how music is integrated emotionally and geographically into people's lives, and the various sites of musical consumption, focusing both on specialist settings and everyday home spaces (e.g., Anderson, 2002). A third strand of research focuses on the role of music in urbanicity (Cohen, 1995; Kong, 1995a,b), for example, investigating the interplay between the design of cities and the making and marketing of music (Hudson, 1995; Krims, 2007) and how certain musical and urban sub-cultures interrelate and identify with city spaces (Rose, 1994). A further and fourth strand considers the widespread movement and globalization of music. In these studies, musical forms are identified as increasingly trans-cultural in character, effectively deterritoralizing place and identity (Connell and Gibson, 2003, 2005). Indeed, as in the case of rock or hip hop, they might reflect the traditions of dominant nations or, as in the case of world music, globally exported local traditions (Connell and Gibson, 2004). A final strand of geographical research delves further into the emotional internalisation of music by listeners and how, using music, they might create and enter a 'soundscape'—an atmosphere and environment mentally occupied in the moment. Anderson (2002), for example, has argued that soundscapes are often used by people to transport them from their current situation, to help them forget, feel better and hope. In the expanding geography of music, current developments crosscut the above themes to include debates on methodology, theorization of listening, politics and practices, and the relationships between music and citizenship, emotions, embodiment and social control (Anderson et al., 2005; Anderson, 2005; Revill, 2005; Saldanha, 2005; Jones, 2005; Morton, 2005; Wood et al., 2007). Although empirical and theoretical interests in linking music and place are expanding, we note this to be an area of inquiry that has yet to deal substantially with either health or celebrity.

Third, the study of music and health is a rapidly expanding field of inquiry conducted broadly across the health sciences. Recently researchers have explored the many ways in which music may assist health. Here, the clinical psychology and allied health literature have explored the use of music therapy involving playing and/or listening within a wide-range of illness contexts and client groups (Kramer, 2001; Hirokawa, 2004; Vink et al., 2004; Whipple, 2004; Currie, 2004; Chase, 2004; Savarimuthu and Bunnell, 2002; Metzger, 2004; Priest et al., 2004). It is argued for example – albeit with differing degrees of confidence – that music therapy can help decease depression, fatigue, stress, pain, blood pressure, and increase confidence, attention and relaxation (McKinney et al., 1997; Scheufele, 2000; Bittman et al., 2004; Dunn, 2004 Chafin et al., 2004). Community-based inquiries meanwhile have considered music and public health. Some have identified how certain forms of music – such as hip hop – can be used to enhance and deliver public health messages (Stephens et al., 1998). Others have reported on the relationship between music, dancing and fitness (Flores, 1995; Robinson et al., 2003) and 'community music therapy', a way of working with people in their geographical and cultural contexts to maximise health and wellbeing (Ansdell, 2002; Pavlicevic and Ansdell, 2004).

Despite all these positive health contexts, the music and health literature also recognises that certain cultures of music can be associated with poor health. Concerns here include the relationships between music and drug use (Forsyth and Barnard, 1998; Sherlock and Conner, 1999), urban violence (Kitwana, 2003), negative self perceptions (Brown and Hendee, 1989; Borzekowski et al., 2000), hearing loss (Gunderson et al., 1998), and – specifically with reference to professional performing artists – physical and emotional damage (Zaza, 1992; Spahn et al., 2002). In terms of critique, one observation regarding the music and health literature is that, despite a range of sociological engagements, studies have yet to deal with a wide range of cultural phenomena including mass communication and celebrity.

In sum, despite the noted gaps in the foregoing literatures, these inquiries tell us that music, health and place are closely and broadly interrelated. Health science, sociological, cultural studies and other literature provides evidence that music can be healthy both at the individual and collective level. This is an important starting point for our inquiry. Health geography provides an expansive understanding of health, which is seen to be gained not only from people acting in certain ways and living in certain environments, but also from the everyday spatial activities that they undertake for their own enjoyment and wellbeing (Kearns and Andrews, 2010). Cultural geographies of music lend a sophisticated and critical analysis of musical production and consumption and its relationship with place. As we highlight, no single sub-discipline or study has considered music, health and place together and the issues and potential theoretical directions that arise from this convergence. Our discussion of Bono and U2 provides an opportunity to focus on these links in the context of a popular, mass-mediated band.

Our decision to focus specifically on U2 and Bono as a case in point reflects our earlier observation that the connections they make between health/wellbeing and place are numerous, strong and explicit. In terms of scope, our focus on the work of Bono and U2 (as opposed to either Bono or U2) reflects the almost seamless transition and somewhat symbiotic relationship between the two in terms of issues related to health. Although the phenomena that are Bono and U2 – as celebrity and artistry – could be analytically dissected, this is not our intention. Taking into account recent arguments in geographies of music for multiple data sources (Wood et al., 2007), the current study incorporates a wide range of information. We focus, not only on songs and lyrics but also on interviews in music and other magazines, public statements, the production and consumption of musical moments and events (though materials such as videos and DVDs), media reaction, reviews, biographies and consumer responses (such as fan sites), with the aim of providing a holistic interpretation and description.

3. Transformations in U2's artistic and commercial place

"Time…, time won't leave me as I am,
But time… won't take the Boy out of this man"
(from City of Blinding Lights, 2004)

As the foregoing lyric suggests, history can be a harsh judge in popular music but, through time, U2 and Bono have endeavoured to retain certain principles and beliefs. To date they have released 12 albums, sold 150 million copies and earned 22 Grammy Awards. A key factor underpinning the band's ability to advocate for health, welfare and justice is this artistic and commercial success. As a foundation it provides, at any one time, a large and potentially receptive audience who might be at least supportive of, if not act on, their views. Moreover, the enduring nature of this

foundation is an important factor. Indeed, the band's ability to move quickly with, if not lead, contemporary musical trends – and their surviving the critical judgement of successive generations of youth (and their carrying of earlier generations with them) – has created a political platform and audience, which are both longstanding. This ensures that U2 can develop complex arguments over time, and that officialdom is less likely to dismiss U2's causes, or hope they will decline in public profile and lose momentum. In short, if U2 had enjoyed the success and lifespan of a 'typical' rock band, they would have ceased to exist long ago, and many of the health-related causes they are now known for might never have reached the public sphere or have been pursued. Thus, we begin by offering a basic discography, reflecting on U2's commercial and artistic development in tandem with considering their concern for the political–economic causes and solutions to health and welfare issues.

Formed by high school friends in Dublin in 1976, U2 is comprised of lead vocalist and occasional rhythm guitarist, Bono (original name Paul Hewson), lead guitarist, keyboard player and backing vocalist, The Edge (original name David Evans), bass guitarist Adam Clayton and drummer Larry Mullen Jr. Their 1980 debut album *Boy* offered a unique musical style and made them stand out from the crowd as rebellious, defiant, socially and politically aware. Yet running through the songs was an idealism and optimism (in particular in songs such as *Out of Control* and *I Will Follow*). In addition to having a passionate and intelligent – if boisterous – singer, much of the 'U2 effect' featured a soaring sound reached with ringing guitar, gated drums and expansive mixing by producer Steve Lillywhite. Not surprisingly, U2 were soon portrayed by the musical press and popular media as 'the next big thing' (Johnson, 2004). Following the release of the album *October* in 1981, U2's 1983 release, *War*, represented an artistic and commercial coming of age with passionate statements about the physical, emotional and social consequences of military conflict. The album's youthful energy and edgy style flavoured anthems such as *New Years Day* (about the Polish Solidarity movement), *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (about the 1972 Bogside killings in Derry) and *The Refuge* (a general comment on displacement resulting from conflict). As Johnson (2004) suggests of the record-buying youth of the day, to be a fan of The Cure or Joy Division at this time was to align oneself with a gloomy existentialism, whereas to follow U2 was to be associated with an optimistic and visionary group idealism. Indeed, as Smith (2007) reflects, *War* fuelled triumphant 'flag-waving' amongst young people. However, this fame did not come without scorn and a changing fan base, as some were deterred by U2 becoming increasingly commercial and accessible. Yet despite detractors, U2 were fast emerging as inheritors of the popular alternative tradition last seen before them in bands such as 'The Who' and 'The Clash' (Johnson, 2004).

Following *War,* and recognising the risk of staleness, 1984s *The Unforgettable Fire* saw an adjustment to their formula with a richer and more ambient sound. Despite the abandonment of the short verse-and-chorus format of their early punk-inspired days, this collaboration with Brian Eno still featured politically inspired anthems such *Pride* (a song of hope about Martin Luther King). U2 continued these changes and in 1987 released *The Joshua Tree,* with an even more expansive and 'cinematic' (Jones, 2008) song cycle evocative of the desert and mountain landscapes of American West (*Where the Streets Have No Name* perhaps characterising this atmosphere the most). In songs like *Mothers of the Disappeared, Red Hill Mining Town* and *Bullet the Blue Sky* this album also extended U2's political stances particularly on state violence and neglect. *The Joshua Tree* sold over twenty-five million copies and made U2 one of the most high profile bands in the world.

Through the late 1980s, critics began to focus negatively on the band's overreliance on historical frontier imagery and their lack of a connection to the everyday lives of young people. Notwithstanding, place-themes continued to loom large in their 1989 live album and film *Rattle and Hum*, which features a journey back to their blues and rock-and-roll roots. For some, such a journey seemed self-indulgent and, as Johnson (2004) suggests, this context prompted Bono to close a New Years Eve show in Dublin with the words "we have to go away and dream it all up again".

Such dreaming resulted in 1991s *Achtung Baby*, which featured a change from creating music of the 'great outdoors' to music of capitalism-infested urban spaces (Moore, 2002). U2 was now a glittery, 'glam', fun, ironic and relaxed band which rode a new wave of success with 1993s *Zooropa*. This album retained their social and political commentary, though tended to concern the contemporary *Zeitgeist* (e.g., the information age, new technologies, the emerging Europe, etc.). These commentaries were also less explicit, and it was often difficult to ascertain whether Bono and U2 supported or opposed late twentieth century phenomena, or were simply raising issues. As Bono remarked, the band was embracing these contradictions and 'surfing them'. *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa* (and the associated *Zoo TV* tour) were not without their detractors however. Criticism centered on U2 claiming to be on the 'cutting edge' whilst being late to the post-modern musical turn, late in focusing on subjects such as communication, materialism and capitalism, and late in using irony and hyper-conformity in approaching them (see Cummins, 1993). Moreover, some critics were personally annoyed at U2 proclaiming that 'everything we know is wrong', when previously they had been preaching about political, economic and social certainties: blacks and whites, rights and wrongs (Cummins, 1993).

Following a long break – including the release of an experimental album *Passengers* – U2 followed up with the 1997 album *Pop.* With dance music at its height of popularity, U2 employed producer and DJ Howie B to give their songs samples, drum loops and synthesized sounds (O'Dell, 2009). Although boasting a number of commercially successful songs and a successful associated tour (*PopMart*) with *Pop* U2 were once again perceived to be following rather than leading musical trends. There were still tracks of political and social substance (most noticeably *Please*, about the peace process in Northern Ireland and *Last Night on Earth,* about living fast and self-neglect). Nevertheless, after eight years of embracing irony, U2 recognised that another overhaul was required.

The overhaul occurred in 2000 with the album *All That You Can't Leave Behind,* a return to familiar musical ground (O'Dell, 2009), featuring songs full of feeling and journeying (emotional and physical)—such as *Kite, Walk On* and *Stuck In a Moment*. The subsequent 2004 album, *How to Dismantle An Atomic Bomb*, was more explicitly health-orientated (particularly in its tracks such as *Crumbs from your Table* and *Sometimes You Can't Make it On Your Own* (Graham and van Oosten, 2004). More recently the 2009 album, *No Line on The Horizon,* was more conflict-orientated particularly from the standpoint of fighters, victims and witnesses (Jones, 2009). At the time of writing, media statements by U2 suggest that a future 2011 Album '*Songs of Ascent*' will be a natural continuation of this trend that will apparently address personal development, attachment and pilgrimage.

Firm religious beliefs have underpinned U2's social and health activism—at least in all members bar Adam Clayton (see Scharen, 2006; Hicks, 2006; Seales, 2006; Vagacs, 2005). However, throughout their career, despite being strongly influenced by Christianity, U2 have not been spokespersons for particular organized religious groups and churches. Rather, they have often been quite critical of them. This wariness, many have suggested,

originates in their childhood and their witnessing sectarian conflict and violence in Ireland (significantly, perhaps, Bono had both Catholic and Protestant parents). Indeed, an idealism runs throughout Bono and U2's statements and music related to faith, hope, love and peace (in the midst of world doubt, despair and violence). With regard to love and peace, for example, Bono often talks about the need for religious co-existence and transcendence, on possibilities for Muslims, Christians and Jews living together in harmony. One might categorise their faith as coming from a Christian–socialist perspective. However, given U2's current wealth and the scale of their commercial enterprise, it might now be more appropriately described as a Christian-liberal perspective based on a commitment to social justice through intervening to assist others.

4. Locations of health in music

4.1. Activism and celebrity: promoting the health of people and places

The origins of musical concerns for social issues and causes can be traced to gospel music and jazz of the 1930s and 1940s, and in the songs of singers such as Billie Holiday. Later in the 1960s and 1970s these concerns re-emerged in the emotional rallying cries of artists such as Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley and John Lennon. Today, the terrain has shifted considerably with not only involvement expanding to direct action but also health becoming a specific focus. Musicians have become powerful socio-political actors who are able to initiate awareness of health inequalities, exert direct influence through fund raising and forms of boycott, and directly influence the funding for health-related initiatives (e.g., 2005s Tsunami Aid: A Concert of Hope). There are also a significant number of famous artists, actors, sportspersons and other public figures focusing on health, making today's emerging interest in health issues by musicians just one part of a wider emergence of 'celebrity diplomacy' or 'celebrity politics' in the 21st century (West and Orman, 2002; Street, 2004; Alleyne, 2005; Cooper, 2007).

Bob Geldof's mid-1980s Band Aid and Live Aid benefit projects (the latter reincarnated by Geldof as Live8 in 2005) were highly visible social catalysts. Musicians and their audiences turned their attention towards the social and health issues in sub-Saharan Africa (especially famine victims in Ethiopia). As a pivotal social turning point for musicians, fans and people around the world, Band Aid inaugurated a purportedly new unified form of social awareness and commitment that provided members of the general public with a collective voice to express their social and health concerns.

In one of his first forays into health activism and charity, Bono performed on the 1984 Band Aid charity record 'Do They know its Christmas?' A year later, with U2 he performed at the Live Aid concert in Wembley Stadium, London. Commenting on the success of the event, he stated:

> "For Bob Geldof, the sight of little bits of black plastic actually saving lives was something of a shock. I wasn't quite as taken back by the success of it all. The 60s music that inspired me eventually helped stop the Vietnam War, and there is no reason why contemporary music cannot have a similar importance"
> (New Musical Express 14th March 1987, p. 24)

In hindsight the social awareness generated and mobilized through Band Aid and Live Aid was actually limited in its 'on the ground' impacts. For example, these initiatives did not address, or even acknowledge, that the causes of the famine in Ethiopia were largely the product of structural forces like national debt and global agricultural markets which, in combination, drove increase in exportation of Ethiopian agricultural goods even as some of the Ethiopian population starved (similarly while the Live8 activity of 2005 swayed political opinion, many promises made in relation to aid remain unfulfilled). However Band Aid was undoubtedly the starting point of a new generation of celebrity, public and musical power.

During and since the 1980s, Bono's and U2's interest in health and social issues has increased; their activities have ranged from international tours and events for Amnesty International to local events targeted at drug addiction and poverty in Ireland. One of Bono's most consistent strategies over the years has been to unite his personal assessments with public statements. His public pronouncements have often been aimed at conveying the 'big picture' and an ethical argument pertaining to what, in his view, defines global health. His approach has involved combining descriptive statistical data with figurative language to support an argument:

> "There's no way we can look at Africa – a continent bursting into flames – and if we're honest conclude that it would ever be allowed to happen anywhere else. Certainly not here in Europe, or America, or Australia or Canada. There's just no chance" (BBC.com 2004)

Another of Bono's approaches has been to strategically lobby politicians ranging from the conservative US President George W. Bush to the Leftist Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. He recognises that without his celebrity status access to such public figures would likely be denied to him:

> "It's sick, sick but its just access. We have access that other people don't have. The thing that's most oppressive in our era is celebrity and that's why people want to burn my house down. I think I understand that…" (New Musical Express 14th October 2000, p. 31)

Bono is prepared to work as an informal diplomat with politicians, some of whom have almost diametrically opposed political orientations to him (including, not only the former US president Bush but also right wing Republican Senator Jessie Helms). There have even been occasions when he has publicly critiqued or 'outed' those politicians who have not kept their promises to deliver or fund aid, though this tactic seems to have had limited efficacy in prompting action. For Bono, adopting a tense and potentially volatile diplomatic position appears to be part of his sense of duty to maintain pressure on elected officials. In recent years he has supplemented this activity by taking regular trips to Africa, often alongside other activists, business people and politicians and later publicising his observations in newspaper editorials, magazines and online. Although these trips are always to specific places, and for specific causes and purposes, their general profile is as important, helping to center public attention on matters of poverty and its unhealthy outcomes.

Beyond the aforementioned tactics and approaches, Bono has championed, participated centrally in, and even led, very specific poverty alleviation efforts many of which – reflecting his pragmatism in achieving health goals – have involved collaborating with business and private sectors. These efforts have been developed particularly in the last decade, the most notable being the Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt Campaign, the ONE Campaign Make Poverty History, the think tank DATA.org (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa) and Product Red (a business model selling youth products and providing credit cards that contribute money to the global fund for foreign aid fighting AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria). Although some of these have not always achieved their rather

ambitious initial goals, they have still resulted in considerable success, together generating over $400 million (USD) in debt relief for developing world countries (ridding many of them of their debt to the developed world completely), creating a new international AIDS program and nearly doubling non-loan international financial assistance to Africa. In light of these initiatives, it is undeniable that Bono has played an important role in the international promotion of global health. Moreover, he is the poster child of a cultural turn whereby celebrity and 'show business' are now key actors in promoting global citizenship in health matters (Nash, 2008).

4.2. Health messages in songs

"All I got is a red guitar,
Three cords and the truth.
All I got is a red guitar,
The rest is up to you"
—(U2's 1989 adaptation of Bob Dylan's All Along the Watchtower)

For many musicians, the power of music lies in the combined fundamental components of the art form: lyrics, chords and beats. Using these elements they can convey their thoughts and feelings, emotionally and efficiently. This particularly applies to U2 (Cogan, 2007; McLeay, 1995; Fast, 2000; Johnson, 2004). Lyrics alone can also directly convey artists' feelings on pressing global health issues. Here what we might call Bono's 'health geography' is evident in the music of U2 at two interrelated scales: at the macro-scale there is often a focus on opportunities for health and access to health care (engaging with location and distance). At the micro-scale, there is often reference to individuals and settings (engaging with personal situations, feelings and sense of place). For example, lyrics in the 2004 song *Crumbs From Your Table* move freely between international circumstances and finance: "Where you live should not decide whether you live or whether you die…I'm waiting on the crumbs from your table" and describing a particular facility "Three to a bed, Sister Ann, she said, dignity passes by". Similarly, the 2004 song *Miracle Drug* initially focuses on one individual (the late Irish author Christopher Nolan who had cerebral palsy), "I wanna hear you when you call, Do you feel anything at all?". However it unfolds into a much broader commentary on AIDS and pharmaceutical drugs. "Science and the human heart, there is no limit" … "Love makes no sense of space and time will disappear, Love and logic keeps us clear, Reason is on our side…"

The earliest allusions to linking justice, place and wellbeing were evident in early U2 songs like *Electric Co.* (1980), which was a reaction against the common use of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) to treat mental illness in Ireland at the time, and the meditations on difference and social justice implicit in *The Refugee* (1983) and *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1981). These ideas achieved fullness in the Irish context in *Running to Stand Still* (1987), a ballad about the connection between poverty and heroin abuse in Dublin, and in a British context in *Red Hill Mining Town* (1987), a song about family, relationships and coping during the 1984 miners strike. More recent songs continue these themes, with *Breathe* (2009), for instance, mixing humour, comment on global epidemics and African health beliefs: "16th of June, Chinese stocks are going up, and I'm coming down with some new Asian virus. Ju Ju man, Ju Ju man, Doc says you're fine, or dying. Please…"

The connections U2 make to health may be oblique, however. For example, in the 1987 song *Bullet the Blue Sky* (a commentary on the social consequences of US intervention in El Salvador's bloody civil war) Bono sings "And I can see those fighter planes,

across the mud huts where the children sleep" alluding to an imminent threat to wellbeing. More recently this song has been modified in live performances to encompass commentaries on such issues as the global arms trade and the American obsession with the right to bear arms. Again, health impacts are implied not stated. Just as oblique are the connections made to health in songs that variously connect to personal wellbeing and happiness. This is a far cry from global health activism and causes, but nevertheless these themes are important at a personal level. For example the 2000 song *Beautiful Day* is essentially about being joyous in an imperfect world. Bono slips references to "tuna fleets clearing the seas out", "oil fields at first light" and "the bird with the leaf in her mouth" into what otherwise appears to be a simple celebration of the joys of being immersed in the social and natural world. Many other oblique examples can be found on 1993s *Zooropa*. Here lyrics comment on coping with everyday life in the post-modern mass-mediated world where: ".. I have no compass, and I have no map, and I have no reasons, no reasons to get back" (Zooropa, 1993), and "some days are dry, some days are leaky, some days are clean, other days are sneaky…some days you feel like a bit of a baby " (*Some Days Are Better Than Others*, 1993). They can also instruct subversively on interacting with such a world, "be a winner, eat to get slimmer" (Zooropa, 1993), "don't move, don't talk out of time, don't think" (Numb, 1993). The lyrics also reflect on emotions when falling in and out of love "I feel like I'm slowly slowly slipping under, I feel like I'm holding onto nothing" (Lemon, 1993) and "You can't even remember what I'm trying to forget" (Dirty Day, 1993). More generally, as suggested earlier, the subject of physical and emotional journeying runs explicitly and purposefully throughout U2's music. Bono, for example, once referred to the 2000 album *All That You Can't Leave Behind* as "11 good reasons to leave home". One of its most popular tracks, *Walk On*, includes the lyric "And I know it aches, and your heart it breaks, and you can only take so much, walk on. You've got to leave it behind."

Live venues can be a particularly effective arena in which to stage and voice political messages, and encourage an emotional reaction. As Bono has stated "History is made at night and electrically" (Bono, 2010). U2's music and live performance have changed over three decades to reflect broader musical, technological and socio-cultural shifts. In turn, the methods to make social statements have also changed. During the 1980s, for instance, U2 unflinchingly wore their hearts on their sleeves. For some critics these shows were rather bombastic and even pretentious, though we agree with Stephen Cantanzarite's (2007, xvi) contention that "[w]ithout a fair amount of pretension, rock and roll would never have made it past 1955, and U2 would never have made it out of Dublin". He goes on:

"The opening strains of 'Zoo Station' recreate our first fall from grace. The last few moments of Paradise are faintly heard ticking away before a fuming guitar shreds the firmament. A series of short, dark bursts explode as the man and woman are out of the unadulterated bliss of the garden. They fall and fall hard, landing in the outskirts. A thin, industrial breeze whistles in their ears, signalling the first rush of their new existence, and we can imagine them struggling (already) to get their bearings" (Catanzarite, 2007).

As Cantanzarite's comment illustrates, their multimedia *Zoo TV* tours (1992–1993) teemed with ironic gestures and reflective accounts of the brave new media-saturated post-modern world. During performances they alloyed self-depreciation with egomaniacal promotion (e.g., Bono's stage personas of The Fly, MacPhisto and The Mirror Ball Man), as well as absurdist multimedia performances (e.g., gigantic video walls, monitors,

close circuit cameras and a handicam) with flashes of traditional earnestness (such as acoustic arrangements on a small stage in the middle of the audience and a live link to filmmaker Bill Carter in Sarajevo, who facilitated residents of the city to speak directly to U2's vast audiences). The popular critical assessment of *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa*, and their associated tours as ironic and escapist, putting the politics of the 'old U2' behind them, overlooked many indicators that U2 remained as political as ever. From opening American tour dates (with an animated George H. W. Bush chanting "We Will Rock You" on a massive video screen) to the cover art of the *Zooropa* album (on which a cartoon spaceman represented the cosmonaut stranded above the Earth by the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent squabbling over who was responsible for his return), U2 never abandoned its concerns for social justice.

In the new millennium, U2 in concert highlight a renewed newly overt commitment to directly addressing the world's wrongs and social realities. Bono continues to convey his political and social ideologies through his established technique of speaking and/or singing narratives between and within songs. Bono's (out)spoken messages, conveyed personally and emotionally, are usually geographically situated both in terms of tactically acknowledging where and to whom he is speaking and where and whom he is speaking about. For example, at a concert in Chicago in 2004, he stated:

> "We have the technology, we have the resources, and we have the know-how to end the extreme poverty… That's what's up to us, this generation.., we're gonna make poverty history… And I believe that it's not an impossible adventure. And in 50 years, they'll look back on this moment and they'll say 'there were some people who said it's not okay to have a child die from a lack of a 20c immunization. It's not alright to have a child die through lack of food in its belly, not in the 21st century, that's not okay any more'. And I know you know that…" (*How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb, 2004 tour DVD*)

It should be remembered, however, that concert DVDs notwithstanding, live performances occur at relatively exclusive sites and times. Most consumers play recorded music at home, at work, or whilst travelling, and musical performance plays an important sensory backdrop in daily life. Here, then, lies the opportunity to focus research on the forms, mechanisms and impacts of health messages located in songs and their replaying in a range of social settings. We explore these ideas in the following section.

4.3. Medicinal melodies: wellbeing inside the sound

> "I'm just trying to find A decent melody A song that I can sing In my own company"
> (from *Stuck in a Moment*, 2000).

Attempts to create healing places in and around music have always been part of musical composition and consumption, whether in music by Mozart or by a rock band such as U2. In this sense, the music does not have to openly mention health, but wellbeing can result from its consumption (Anderson, 2002). Often listening to music can be an emotional and personal experience and thus analysing this phenomenon poses a series of methodological difficulties (Wood et al., 2007). What follows, however, is an attempt to convey – at least from our own perspective – some of the dynamics involved in what we earlier referred to as soundscapes (Smith, 1994).

To begin with, musical content itself might be based on emotional experiences or deliberately written to incite different emotional responses. Two examples are particularly illustrative.

The 1991 song *One*, while remarkably evocative of the struggles inherent in human relationships, lacks overt lyrical statements that might clarify the type of relationship in question. Thus, the song has come to take on many meanings for different listeners, from a husband and wife struggling to save a marriage to a young man, dying of AIDS, trying to speak to his father, etc. On the other hand, the 2004 song *Sometimes You Can't Make It On Your Own* is an unapologetic effort to convey Bono's personal experiences of relating to his sick and dying father, such as when he sings "Listen to me now, I need to let you know, You don't have to go it alone". Even words that emerge from experiences as personal as this, when accompanied by instrumentation, can be easily internalized by people to make sense of their own lives and feelings. In this sense we create our own, and are created by, personal soundscapes: places that go in and out of our hearts and minds for our own wellbeing (Kingsbury, 2007). The experience is not always overwhelmingly positive or enjoyable. Soundscapes, being as complex as the human mind itself, might involve a range of distressing thoughts and feelings – such as sadness, regret, loss – for a wide variety of personal, and often unconscious, ends. Herein dwells music's infinite motivations, forms and possibilities that coincide with everything the human imagination is capable of. As suggested by Bono in a recent biography, his favourite songs are those that "take you through a journey, to a place you couldn't imagine before then" (Assayas, 2005, p. 130).

Our next point is that music and emotional wellbeing depend on the location of music in our everyday lives, as well as the places we frequently visit. Reflecting on the immediacy of music, Bono comments on its accessibility and how music can alter people's life experiences:

> "Can a song make a difference? Songs can change the world, well certainly my world. A song can change your mood, the temperature of the room you're in. Songs are incredible because they're not like movies where you see them once, twice or three times, they become part of your life. They're more like smells" (Bono, *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb, 2004 DVD*)

Moreover, the sharing of physical space with audiences can be central to both music and wellbeing. The emotional resonance experienced by groups of people in a live performance can initiate a collective sense of healing, particularly if the music engages with significant historical events. Referring to New Yorkers following the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, Bono stated:

> "When we played the United States on our last tour, after 9/11, we were among the first bands to go to New York and play a proper show… we used these giant screens to project the names of everyone who'd lost their life… Everybody in Madison Square Garden could see somebody they knew or somebody who knew somebody and the whole place wept". (Assayas 2005, p. 196)

More recently, a member of the band Snow Patrol, who supported U2 on their 2009 '360 Tour', posted a blog on the U2 website that reflected on a recent concert. It is worth including in detail:

> "I have never in my life seen a crowd reaction like that of Katowice last night. Right from opener *Breathe* there was a daft magic in the air. Insanity everywhere you looked. People's faces clothed in the kind of joy I've only seen in gospel churches, and then only on the TV, so to see this religious fervor up close was overwhelming. The city outside the stadium could have been under heavy fire from alien spacecraft and I don't think anyone would have heard, saw, or indeed cared that much. Then The Edge takes to the piano for

New Year's Day and the place is bathed in red and white instantly. Red cards held aloft by the people on the floor and white cards in the seats to make a giant Polish flag you could probably see from space. It took the breath clean out of me. By the end even Bono was speechless, for a few seconds anyway. The things he said next are lost to me verbatim but what I won't forget is the tears that came to me then. In floods. And when I turned to check if anyone had snared me for blubbing I realised that every single person around me also had tears in their eyes. We were sharing something that simply never happens at rock shows anywhere. A collective emotional and spiritual surrender of epic proportions."

Clearly this commentary signals deep connections between the personal and the collective in the performance of music and the production of emotion. For this writer, being in a place (the stadium during a U2 concert) was deeply implicated in a feeling of a place-in-the-world, a connectedness with others reflected in the "collective emotional and spiritual surrender". Finally, spatial proximity to music is always accompanied by temporal factors. For many people, music provides a backdrop or even soundtrack to their life course. In the case of U2, different phases of their music have accompanied listeners, their different life phases and transformations. Fans might at different times, for example, have been influenced by the same fashions, or been interested in the same art, social and political movements. Not only did these connections matter to people in the past, they matter to them in the present as they reflect on their lives. In today's age of digitally disseminated music, our chance interactions with specific musical phases might spontaneously trigger intensely personal memories and emotions. On the other hand, our deliberate downloading of specific songs, genres and musical eras can actively call forth personal moods and emotions.

5. Debate and controversy

"Some people got way too much confidence baby"

(from *Origin of the Species*, 2004)

Celebrity musicians such as U2 who act in the cause of health and wellbeing have not been without critique (West and Orman, 2002; Alleyne, 2005; Cooper, 2007). The first group of criticisms has focused on the mixing of music and politics. Building on a wider concern that representation and democracy are being bypassed (Street, 2004), increasing in numbers of politicians and members of the public have questioned the appropriateness of having well-known people influence debates on health and justices issues. For instance, Bono's association with Jeffrey Sachs, the Columbia University development economist, has become contentious for the way in which it publicly elevates certain academic and policy views over others. While Sachs promotes his solutions for poverty as 'self-evident' and easily accomplished (Sachs, 2005), his project is rife with conceptual problems that have drawn much criticism in policy and academic circles (Easterly, 2005; Cabral et al., 2006; Carr, 2008). However, because Bono has great visibility, Sachs' ideas receive far more attention than those of his critics. Arguably, Bono's affiliation with this thinker may be constraining the generation of more productive development policy (whilst his association with Bono has meant Sachs has likewise become one of a new breed of celebrity academics). More generally, for some people, politicians and musicians and others cynically use each other to achieve very different aims, rather than believing in each others' agendas. Bono's meetings with politicians who possess right wing or conservative views, for example, have attracted considerable criticism, as have his public 'outings' of those politicians whom he feels have failed to fulfill promises.

A more straightforward critique is that politics and music do not mix well because the former spoils the latter. At one level critics highlight the immediate impediment of listening pleasure. Noel Gallagher (formerly of Oasis), for example, has criticized Bono, U2 and others for 'singing the news', 'turning gigs into guilt trips' and ultimately 'ruining a good night out' (Bono himself recognises this potential in posing the rhetorical question 'am I bugging you?' during the *Rattle and Hum* DVD). At another level critics highlight the damage that health activism might do to musical reputations and identities. One argument suggests, for example, that some fans are finding it increasingly difficult to separate 'Bono the musician' whom they enjoy from 'Bono the activist' who annoys them. This potentially changes their feelings for both him and U2. Indeed it is undeniable that Bono is now a regular target of parody, contempt and envy. Neil McCormick, wrote in a *Telegraph* newspaper blog:

"I am well aware there are a lot of people out there who find The Man Who Saved The World… a pompous, egotistic, overbearing, messianic megalomaniac… and furthermore consider U2 to be overblown, over-rated stadium rockists with nary a hint of nuance or subtlety" (McCormick, 2009).

A related moral concern with the mixing of celebrity and political causes exposes the hypocrisy of wealthy individuals demanding greater public spending. For example, it became well known in 2007 that U2 moved their business out of Ireland in order to be, in their own words, 'tax-efficient'. U2 simultaneously promote solutions to poverty and their own musical business. At best these objectives do not make comfortable bedfellows; at worst they work symbiotically in the making of vast profits. Such critiques are not only directed at U2. For instance, in an infamous New York Times editorial in 2005, Paul Theroux described 'The Rock Stars Burden'. He argued that good deeds are best done in private but the world now has a new breed of 'mythomaniac' – famous people who by, presenting debatable arguments as imponderable facts, wish to convince the world of their own worth. This, to Theroux (who compared celebrity activists Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt to Tarzan and Jane), is tantamount to a new colonialism (Theroux, 2005).

A second critique centres on the nature of celebrity arguments and sub-issues of simplicity, portrayal and basic accuracy. With regard to 'simplicity', it has been argued that musician's statements can over-simplify social issues and the implementation of long-term reforms. Too easily they can ignore the specific political, economic, social and cultural contexts that create local health conditions and circumstances (this, for example, we highlighted earlier in the case of Band Aid and Live Aid's overlooking the underlying determinants of Ethiopia's economic situation, which led to the export of agricultural goods during famine). With regard to 'portrayal', it has been argued that celebrity statements can reinforce inaccurate images—such as the global South as merely a wretched, sick and needy place. At the same time they can overlook the unique social diversity and richness such countries offer, and the extent to which they can and must address the political and economic challenges that lie at the heart of their social and health problems. Moreover, Theroux observed that ongoing negative portrayals deal a double blow as they are potentially damaging to African self-confidence and thus capacity for self-determination (Theroux, 2005). With regard to 'accuracy', it has been argued that celebrity experts' misunderstandings of complex political–economic issues might lead to poor outcomes. For example, some commentators have criticized celebrity arguments in favour of cancelling developing world

debt, which allegedly results in reduced financial investment (other commentators posit that the debt that was relieved was already unserviceable, so commercial lenders really lost nothing in this process—and the countries in question are now much more viable as receivers of post-relief loans). More generally, some argue that it is misleading for celebrities to portray Africa as only able to be 'saved from outside' and that instead effective, lasting solutions have to come directly from within Africa through reducing political corruption and broadening democracy (Theroux, 2005). Although one can attempt to quantify the effectiveness of celebrity charity and politics, the Mancunian realism and sarcasm of Noel Gallagher perhaps best reflects a certain public critique, and is worth repeating:

> "Global problems are very easily solved by rockstars, aren't they!… Starving people in Africa, let's do a gig, that'll sort it out. There's war on the streets of Baghdad, let's do a gig. Global warming and carbon emissions—let's have a concert. It's f—ing bullish. The only way it's going to be solved is if the world powers get together and are serious about it… It's just f—ing nonsense. You can't put a load of rockstars up on a stage and expect to wipe out global poverty. That's ludicrous. Somebody's doing a load of acid if they think that's going to happen." (http://www.heraldsun.com.au)

Bono has replied to these kinds of criticisms personally, but very generally and not to individuals. For instance, he commented that many of his detractors lack the knowledge and ability to do anything about poverty and disease themselves. In his view, it is easy for "cranks" to be critical and "carp from the sidelines" when they do not exert any effort themselves, make tough decisions and stand by them (TimesOnline 26.2.10). Meanwhile, in other statements, Bono has highlighted his many financial 'wins', for the developing world. Specifically in 2005 he mentioned ridding 30 of the world's poorest countries of their debt and beginning new international relationships between the "haves and have-nothings". In Bono's support, one might argue that although the extent of gains is debatable, his work has resulted in people being a degree healthier, and the world more aware of global health issues. With the exception of politicians, health care professionals and charity workers, few people can claim an equivalent influence on health—including the majority of academics (even those of us who specialize in health and like to think we 'make a difference'). Theoretically speaking, from a combined consequentialist moral standpoint (where ends justify means), and utilitarian standpoint (where the aim is to do the greatest good for the greatest number), Bono's work and approach have merit. This holds no matter how annoying one might personally consider it or him to be, or how one might wish his methods were different.

6. Future inquiry and action

Through exploring the case of Bono and U2 we have argued that place, health and music connects through both the experience of recordings and live performance (e.g., feelings of wellbeing). Further, we have demonstrated that the band's lyrical roots in protest and social conscience have been transformed through celebrity status into Bono now occupying an unparalleled place as a critic and cheerleader for health-related causes. Not only does a figure like Bono engage with global health causes otherwise championed by agencies like the World Health Organisation (WHO) but also the modus operandi of U2 and Bono transcends mere argument to embrace the multiple wellbeings embedded in the emblematic WHO definition of health. In other words, while health policy analysts and intellectuals seek to see the *effects* of social change, Bono and U2 appear to seek an elevation of both the *affects* and effects of musical activism.

In our view, some celebrities such as Bono are becoming *de facto* new public intellectuals, among the few people who seem able to effectively deliver messages – particularly those containing bad news – and challenge large audiences. Yet few popular celebrities have the training to engage with issues in the detailed manner typical of academics and policymakers (Street, 2004). For more effective celebrity interventions, we suggest that partnerships with academics are critical, partnerships that are broader than those between the current 'chosen few' (see discussion of Sachs above). These partnerships could form through conferences (e.g., via a joint academic/fan/musician U2 conference held in New York in 2009) or informal workshops consisting of dialogue and even performances. One could also imagine, for example, engaging forms of 'fieldwork' (and related methods such as participant observation) between researchers and musicians grounded in specific places in the developed and developing world. More radically, academics could join musicians in activism and even direct action on health and other matters. Discussion with regard to the above activities might be framed within recent debate around the need for a more 'public social science' that would deal far more directly and practically with pressing global issues and involve academics working alongside other professional groups and organizations for their mutual support (Burawoy, 2005; Fuller, 2008).

Several fundamental questions must, however, be addressed before we can have confidence in the interventions springing from these collaborations. How do academics and musicians work together more often and in ways that do not necessitate academics becoming celebrities or being 'selected' by celebrities? Can academics support celebrities and artists by providing cogent and well-substantiated arguments to support their cases? Is there also a moral and ethical imperative to conduct such research? Beyond the issue of celebrity, other more focused questions might be posed by geographers related to musical activism. What types of activities organized by musicians might be effective for particular types of health issues and emergencies and in what ways? For example, what activities are most suited to disaster relief when rapid responses are needed? What activities are most suited to addressing longer term population health issues and their determinants? To what extent do people listen to or attend musical performance because of its political stance or messages relating to health? To what extent do political messages impact upon listeners' views and conduct regarding health? Or to what extent does political rhetoric on health simply add to the potential escapism or indulgence within consumption?

Many important questions also arise regarding personal emotions evoked by music. Providing a necessary complement to existing clinical and public health studies – as reviewed earlier in this paper – researchers might consider the everyday consumption of music. How, why and where might music be a fundamental and intrinsic part of personal health and wellbeing? How do particular genres of music create group identities and sub-cultures, and how does belonging to one and acting in particular ways in urban and rural spaces, effect ones wellbeing? How do 'soundscapes' work for different genres of music, listeners and contexts? How do distressing thoughts and feelings interplay with positive thoughts and feelings, for particular, personal ends? To what extent are 'soundscapes' actively and consciously created, and to what extent do they result from passive or subconscious processes—on the part of both musicians and listeners? Are they modifiable for health reasons? Would we want to modify them? How can geographers and others formulate better theorizations and methodologies to investigate the social

and emotional relations between music, health and place (Morton, 2005; Wood et al., 2007; Kingsbury, 2008)? We also acknowledge a place for feminist analysis in answering the above questions (and realise that the current study has involved four academic discussing about four celebrity men). Indeed, how do men and women engage with different forms of music in different ways for different health ends?

As alluded to earlier, we believe that the burgeoning subfields of emotional and non-representational geographies (see Thrift, 2004, 2007) – that inquire into how emotions and affect take place between, within and beyond bodies, objects and places – provides useful theoretical and empirical orientations for answering the above personal questions. These possibilities require exploration beyond the current paper. However, the learning process is reciprocal, and understanding the ways in which soundscapes are experienced in relation to health might conversely inform existing academic concepts such as the understanding of a 'therapeutic landscape' in health geography (i.e. how places possess healing qualities for individuals and groups, and assist their feelings of wellness or wellbeing—see Foley, 2010; Gesler, 1992; Smyth, 2005; Williams, 2007b). Thus far researchers have explored the ways in which sounds contribute to or detract from therapeutic landscapes (for example, natural sounds in wildernesses, the lack of loud noises in rural retreats and ambient music in health clinics) (Andrews, 2004; Conradson, 2007). In these studies however, sound is often described as a backdrop, being one of many subtle sensory features experienced in-situ. Instead, as we have illustrated in this study, sound – specifically music – might on occasion be one of the most prominent features in place-experience.

In approaching music, health and place, in this paper we have adopted but one of many potential starting points. Others might begin with, and build from, other musicians or bands, a particular musical genre or style, a specific musical technique or practice, instrument or technology, format, place, time period, health or social issue. The possibilities are plentiful, as are the connections they might forge between health geography, other sub-disciplines of human geography and other health and social sciences. We contend such questions warrant addressing, not only because they are theoretically and empirically interesting but also because they relate to the global/local dynamics of place and health experience of people in diverse locations.

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