

## **What's Going On? The changing network ecology of musicians in Toronto**

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A cursory reading of the literature on networking in economic geography yields two generalizations. First, that the outcomes of networking are overwhelmingly positive for workers, firms and city-regions. Second, that face-to-face interaction remains the preferred and dominant form of networking among 'creative' individuals. Recently, however, these assumptions have been tested and challenged. While Christopherson (2002; 2008) has provided evidence that networks can be exclusionary there is a growing sentiment that face-to-face interaction is being supplemented and even replaced by virtual networking. In this paper I argue that industrial restructuring and competition are altering the ways in which independent musicians practice and value networking. Extending the work of Christopherson, I demonstrate the tendency for established musicians to form 'defensive exclusionary networks' to safeguard their access to the dwindling supply of paid work. I also demonstrate how competition is catalyzing the shift from traditional forms of social networking to what Grabher and Ibert (2006) call 'connectivity' networks. Indeed, rather than 'hanging out' in bars, professionalized musicians prefer to form short-term strategic collaborations, often in virtual spaces, to solve specific problems. To augment deficiencies in their own skill sets, for example, these musicians are hiring and collaborating with fashion designers, photographers and web designers. Ultimately, the findings highlight the need for a more nuanced and critical approach to networking in economic geography and further research that investigates the evolving and exclusionary nature of networking in the digital economy.