

Making a living in live music

Early-career
musicians in the
changing music
industries

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Making a Living in Live Music

Early-career musicians in the changing music industries

De kost verdienen met livemuziek

Beginnende muzikanten in de veranderende muziekindustrieën

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1

Introduction

Introduction

The life of a pop musician looks very appealing. You get to earn a living by doing what you love: making music. You play in front of massive audiences at festivals and in venues that used to impress you back when you were still just a fan. And of course, there's touring, which can be a drag at times, but which also allows you to visit new places where people you have never met before love your music. You get a taste of fame when you start to receive radio airplay and invitations to appear on television or do interviews in other media. But there is more: other musicians and people from the industry also appreciate your performances and recordings, giving you the feeling that you are 'one of them'. Your musical achievements are commemorated in lifelong tangible memorabilia such as vinyl and merchandise. And of course, you get to live the 'rock star' lifestyle, characterized by parties, freedom, a large circle of friends and adoring fans. What's not to like?

Obviously, musicians who are starting out are not naive, and know that the reality of a life in the music industries might be considerably less rosy. Nevertheless, this romantic image continues to attract huge numbers of new musicians to a career in music (Crossley & Bottero, 2015; Haenfler, 2018; I. Rogers, 2008), even though the path to this much-coveted position is steep and narrow, and only a few musicians ever make it to the top. For every superstar who says that success is just a matter of hard work, there are numerous musicians who had to give up along the way. Just like in any high status labour market, such as other art forms, fashion modelling, sports or academia (Dumont, 2018), the influx of talent exceeds the amount of work available (Abbing, 2002; Menger, 1999). Moreover, this dynamic is further reinforced as success attracts further success because both fans and the people working in the industries like to be part of a success story (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Dubois & François, 2013). As a result, for musicians who have had successes in the past, doors are opened that for others stay closed, as these musicians have proven to sell tickets or make good music. Consequently, a small number of superstars occupy a disproportionately large amount of space on the lofty summit of the music industries (Krueger, 2019; Rosen, 1981). For example, when we look at ticket sales for live shows, we see that the top five percent of musicians receives roughly 85 percent of all revenues (Krueger, 2019). As a result, in their attempt to reach the top, most musicians do not make it past the treeline (to stick to the metaphor). Of the 12,000-15,000 acts that have headlined small venues (capacity under 400 seats) in the Netherlands between 2008 and 2019, only roughly 12.5 percent manages to play in a larger venue (capacity over 1000 seats) later in their career (Mulder, 2022). As a result, musicians entering the music industries often have to adjust their expectations.

Of course, this image of the musician as a touring rock god overlooks the many forms that a career in music can take. Musicians can play in cover bands or wedding bands, they can become a music teacher, build a music studio or work part-time at a record label or booking agency. It is possible to earn a living as a session musician or by writing songs for others to perform. In this way, there is still room to prosper in the shadow of the superstars. There is more to a career in music than being Bruce Springsteen or Dua Lipa. In other words, in addition to this difficult path to superstardom, there are other – less glamourized – paths leading to a satisfying career in music. However, circumstances can also be challenging in these areas of the music industries, and overall, there is truth in the saying: 'do a job that you love, and you will have to work twice as hard for half as much money'. Often, musicians are self-employed, combine multiple jobs with no long-term prospects, have insecure sources of income and a low overall income (A. Bennett, 2018; Von der Fuhr, 2015). This means that most musicians who want to make a living from music must find a way to navigate and cope with precarious labour conditions.

Moreover, while these aspiring musicians are playing this game, the rules are changing. Although there has never been a clear guidebook on how to build a successful career in the music industries, it is noticeable that career strategies that worked 20 years ago are no longer as effective due to major changes in the recorded and live music industries (Hughes et al., 2016).¹ One major change is the rise of piracy and streaming, made possible by the Internet, which has eroded the central role of recorded music in musicians' business models as audiences have become less willing to pay for recorded music. Consequently, musicians now see touring as an important pillar of earning a living in music (Frith, 2014). This means that in addition to adjusting expectations and learning to cope with difficult working conditions, musicians need to figure out what strategies are effective ways to build a sustainable career in these 'new' music industries with an increased focus on live music.

1 Williamson and Cloonan (2007, p. 305) argue that we should use 'music industries' to acknowledge the different sectors (e.g. recording, live and publishing), and reflect the 'organizational

structure of the global music economy' and the commercial interests of each sector. That is why I will refer to music industries in plural when I refer to the collection of the different sectors.

This combination of low odds of success, precarious conditions and industry transformations raises the question of *how early-career musicians are building a career in the changing popular music industries*² – which is exactly the question that I aim to answer in this dissertation. To do so, I have focused on three sub-themes. First, I investigate how, under these new circumstances, musicians aim to build a career, what kind of competences their work requires and how they value their work. Secondly, because changes in the music industries have been accompanied by a growth in the number of formal popular music study programmes at higher music education institutions, I zoom in on how these programmes prepare students for a career in music in order to increase their chances of success. Lastly, because industry changes have led to live music replacing recorded music as the most important source of revenue for musicians, I aim to understand early-career musicians' chances of success in live music.

Throughout this dissertation I will pay particular attention to live music because it has become an increasingly important way for musicians to create a sustainable career. As it is neither possible nor desirable to consider the position of musicians in the live music industry in isolation from their position in the recorded music industry, and other connected markets (e.g. synchronization or publishing) I will also take a broader scope if necessary. Moreover, in this dissertation I focus on the Netherlands, which is an interesting case as it has a relatively small population and although it is not considered part of the 'hegemonic mainstream' record industry (Marshall, 2013), it nevertheless has highly-developed recorded and live music industries (e.g. Mulder, 2022), characterized by strong interconnections between industry and governmental actors (Van der Hoeven et al., 2022). As such, this study fills a gap by adding insights from a non-Anglo-Saxon, non-hegemonic mainstream setting (Van der Hoeven et al., 2022).

² When I talk about popular music, I refer to the broader field of popular music and when I talk about pop, I refer to the sub-genre within popular music. However, for the sake of readability, when

I refer to musicians active in the broader field of popular music, I will talk about pop musicians, although here I also imply musicians active in other sub genres than just pop, such as rock or electronic.

By exploring these themes of career building, how this is influenced by popular music education, and careers in live music, I aim to make an empirical contribution to our understanding of the working lives and careers of early-career musicians, and how they have adjusted to changes in the industry. In order to do so, I have examined studies from a variety of disciplines and areas of research, ranging from cultural sociology, sociology of markets, creative industries research, to popular music studies, research on arts education and studies on professionalism. I also aim to make theoretical contributions to discussions in these scholarly fields by focusing on how creative workers construct practices in the context of markets, and how this is affected by change. By doing so, I aim to make this dissertation relevant for both readers who wish to learn more about the working lives of musicians and readers with a more theoretical interest.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to setting the stage for this dissertation. First, I will broadly outline the main ways in which the music industries have changed over the last 20 years, and what we know about how this has affected the careers of musicians. Next, I will look at the three empirical themes that will be explored in this dissertation in more detail and introduce the literature that will be used to obtain a better understanding of the case at hand. Following this, I will discuss the different research questions that have been formulated to address these research gaps, and the approaches taken to answer them. Lastly, I will outline the structure of the dissertation.

The careers of musicians in the changing music industries

What do we already know about how and why the music industries have changed over the last 20 years? And what do we know about how these changes have affected musicians' working lives and careers? Most notably, technological innovations have changed the ways in which music is produced, distributed and consumed. Two notable sets of innovations have drastically altered the music industries: one set of consumer-related innovations was caused by the popularization of the Internet, the other set concerns a series of innovations related to production and dissemination due to the development of new recording and distribution technologies. To start, the arrival and popularization of the Internet, home computers with storage capacity and software for ripping CDs and peer-to-peer sharing in the early 2000s made it easy for audiences to share music online illegally (Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Software like Napster and Kazaa made almost every pop song available to anyone with an internet connection, reducing the need to leave the house to buy CDs. Ten years later, this system of illegal peer-to-peer file sharing was replaced by streaming platforms like Spotify, Deezer, Apple Music, Soundcloud and others that gave audiences access to extensive music libraries by employing a subscription-based business model. Both ways of presenting music to audiences marked a substantial departure from the traditional business model based on the sale of physical sound carriers.

Secondly, together with the growing influence of the Internet in the music industries, a set of technologies and software was developed that allowed musicians to produce and distribute music and connect with audiences in new ways. Affordable home computers, audio interfaces, and software for audio recording have given musicians the freedom to record music in their own bedrooms without having to rely on professional music studios. Music

aggregators such as CD Baby and DistroKid allow musicians to independently distribute their music online without the intermediation of labels. Web shops help musicians to sell their music and merchandise to audiences directly. The aforementioned streaming platforms, but also YouTube, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram connect musicians to an online fan base without the interference of traditional media. In sum, these technologies have allowed musicians to circumvent traditional intermediaries such as labels or media and reach audiences directly.

Changing music industries

The aforementioned technological innovations have had a profound effect on the balance between the recorded and live music industries. First of all, due to these innovations, recorded music revenues from physical (mostly CD) sales have decreased, while revenues from streaming have increased, leading to a change in the structure of the recorded music industry. Until the early 2000s, the music industries were centred on the sale of physical products. Due to online sharing, the global recording industry's revenue from physical sales has declined from 23.3 billion dollars worldwide in 2001 to 4.2 billion dollars in 2020 (IFPI, 2021). As a result, overall global recorded music revenues fell by roughly 40 percent between 2001 and 2014 (lowest point), causing what has been dubbed the 'MP3 Crisis' in the music industries (Hracs & Leslie, 2014, p. 66). To find new sources of revenue, the music industries started to coalesce around new markets that allowed them to profit from music rights, streaming, and to a lesser extent, performance rights (i.e. the rights to publicly perform music) and synchronization (i.e. the use of recorded music in movies, advertisements, games etc.). As a result, these new sources of income led to a growth in overall global recorded music revenues between 2014 and 2020 until they were almost back to their 2001 level (21.6 billion dollars) (IFPI, 2021). While for the Netherlands – the focus of this dissertation – we only have data on record sales, streaming and digital sales, a similar trend can be observed here. Revenues from these sources peaked in 2000 at 468 million euros (NVPI, 2011), after which they declined to 127.8 million euros in 2014 (NVPI, 2015). After 2014, revenues increased again until they had reached 225.8 million euros in 2020 (NVPI, 2021), which is still short of the revenue achieved in 2000. In short, the growing importance of streaming over physical sales is undeniable, as audiences no longer seem to be interested in paying to own individual tracks and physical albums.

In addition to the growing importance of streaming, a second effect of these technological changes is that live music has become a more important source of revenue in the music industries. Previously, live music played a relatively subordinate role in the music industries, as it could neither achieve the economies of scale nor the reduction of labour costs to compete with mass entertainment media. Live concerts are singular events which take place at a specific time in front of a finite audience, and furthermore have high fixed labour costs (Frith, 2014). As a result, live concerts have been primarily used as a vehicle to promote and sell more records. Due to the decline of the recorded music industry, however, attention has shifted to the live music markets in order to compensate for losses and find new ways to make money from music. Consequently, musicians now see live music as an important source of income and use their recorded music to promote their tours (Frith, 2014). As such, albums are now often understood as investments that must be recouped by touring (Wikström, 2009; Young & Collins, 2010). For example, in the USA, musicians' revenues decreased from over 4.5 billion dollars in 1999 to a little under 3.5 billion dollars in 2012 due to a decline in royalties from recorded music (which decreased by about 75 percent). At the same time, income from live performance grew by approximately 60 percent ("Shifting Sources of Artist Income," 2013). In the Netherlands, we have seen an increase of 40 percent in the number of popular music concerts between 2008 and 2016 (Mulder, 2022). Currently, in the Netherlands, live music revenues exceed revenues from recorded music (PWC, n.d.). Moreover, a long-term trend in the USA is that average ticket prices have risen steadily in the period from 1981 to 2003, with an average increase of 4.9 percent per year until 1996 (outpacing inflation) (Krueger, 2005), and a 190 percent growth between 1996 and 2018 (Krueger, 2019). This increase in ticket prices can be explained at least partly by the fact that the music industries were trying to compensate for the loss in revenues from record sales. Revenues from ticket sales also increased in the Netherlands. Between 2007 and 2013, they increased by roughly 20 percent (VNPF, 2015). In sum, we see that live music has become an increasingly important staple in the diet of the music industries.

These changes in the industry structure have had severe consequences for the structure of organizations active in the music industries. The financial losses observed during the 2000s reduced the economic power of record labels, leading to job cuts (J. Rogers, 2013) and the termination of thousands of recording contracts (Hracs & Leslie, 2014). Moreover, new players in the music industries, such as Spotify and Facebook increasingly function as powerful intermediaries between musicians and audiences (Leyshon et al., 2005; Young & Collins, 2010) and live music intermediaries such as booking

agencies and festivals have grown in importance. Following some initial adjustments, the major labels regained their traditional dominant position (Hesmondhalgh, 2009) by incorporating the new media into their production systems (Haynes & Marshall, 2017). The most important cause for this was that they had the financial resources to offer musicians assistance with online social media campaigns that helped them to stand out in the digital crowd (J. Rogers, 2013). Nevertheless, overall we see a shift in the balance from the recorded music industries towards the live music industries, whereby the music industries have changed from a rights exploitation sector to a service sector for live music (Frith, 2014).

Changing opportunities for musicians

These changes to the structure of the larger organizations in the live and recorded music industries have also had a profound effect on how musicians organize their work. While there have always been large numbers of pop musicians working independently, in the age of the record industry, musicians were – to a large extent – industry workers. They were or strived to be affiliated with a record label. Record labels prefinanced professional recordings and performed promotion and marketing tasks for signed acts, giving musicians the opportunity to focus on their music. This, however, made them dependent in terms of economic success and limited their creative freedom (Hracs & Leslie, 2014). Due to declining revenues, major labels became less inclined to take risks with regard to offering contracts to new musicians (Frith, 2014; Keunen, 2014). In addition, the mentioned technological developments, i.e., the Internet and new recording and distribution technologies, allowed (or required) musicians to bypass labels and try to reach audiences directly and create new streams of revenue such as selling merchandise online (Fox, 2004; Haynes & Marshall, 2017; McLeod, 2005; Morris, 2014; Wikström, 2009). Meanwhile, the new digital gatekeepers have been erecting new thresholds for independent musicians, for example by asking fees (Haynes & Marshall, 2017).

As a result of these new opportunities and reduced support from labels, other business models for musicians have become more widespread. For example, two business models that already existed and were widely used before – the entrepreneurial and the do-it-yourself (DIY) model – have become the dominant approach for aspiring new musicians (Haynes &

Marshall, 2018; Hracs, 2015). Within entrepreneurial business models, musicians work as independent entrepreneurs but collaborate with labels and other industry actors, for example by outsourcing their marketing and distribution (Hughes et al., 2016). Musicians relying on DIY models aim to circumvent working with traditional industry actors altogether (ibid.). These new entrepreneurial and DIY business models require musicians to perform a variety of new tasks. They create, record and produce their own music, make videos and other online content and have to create their own business opportunities. In addition, they shoulder the responsibility for extra tasks, such as PR, social media, marketing and creating an image/persona (Berkers & Schaap, 2015; Haynes & Marshall, 2018; Zwaan et al., 2009) and spend extra time interacting with their audience (Haynes & Marshall, 2017; Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Morris, 2014). Taken together, these activities might restrict the time they can spend focusing on creative labour. Interestingly, over the period during which these changes in the business models have taken place, we also have seen a huge increase in the number of popular music programmes at higher music education institutions in the Netherlands. The first popular music programme started in 1999 (Nuchelmans, 2002), and today there are nine popular music programmes at higher music education institutes which have between 3,500 and 4,000 attending students per year.³ This development may indicate a demand among students to acquire the competences they need to become proficient in these new tasks.

In addition to their effects on musicians' business models, we see that the changes in the music industries have also impacted their financial position. For example, due to these changes, revenues from selling or licensing recorded music make up a relatively small part of musicians' total income. Research shows that recorded music makes up 15 percent of the total income (2,500 euros) of Dutch musicians (Von der Fuhr, 2015), and between 3 percent (Webster et al., 2018) and 29 percent (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021) of the total income of British musicians (I am making this comparison with the UK here, as I will be returning to it in chapter 4). In addition to the decline in sales of recorded music, another possible explanation of the fact that musicians earn relatively little from recorded music is that it is difficult to make substantial earnings from streaming. Hesmondhalgh et al. (2021) calculated that in the United Kingdom context 'a million streams per month, if sustained over a period of time might be a reasonable basis for a living wage for performers and/or songwriters' (p. 202), but only 0.41 percent of all streamed UK acts

3 <https://www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/kennisbank/feiten-en-cijfers/artikelen/dashboard-instroom-inschrijvingen-en-diploma-s>, visited on 9-9-2022.

managed to achieve this. As a result, even though revenue from streaming has increased, 'the physical experience of live music attendance remains vital under conditions of rapid digitalization' (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020, p. 37).

Indeed, we see that the growing importance of live music is also reflected in musicians' incomes: in the UK, revenues from live music range between 31 percent, (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021) and 43 percent (Webster et al., 2018), while in the Netherlands it makes up 47 percent of the total income (Von der Fuhr, 2015). At the same time, while the live circuit is crucial for musicians' economic survival, the live music market is very competitive and fees remain relatively low for starting musicians, resulting in economically unsustainable careers (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013; Von der Fuhr, 2015). In addition, live music revenues are distributed unevenly: as mentioned, we see that the top five percent of musicians receives roughly 85 percent of the total ticket revenues (Krueger, 2019). Moreover, due to professionalization processes in venues in the Netherlands and the accompanying increases in operating costs, opportunities for early-career musicians to perform are decreasing (Van Vugt, 2018). As a result, for most musicians the revenues from live music remain moderate: in the Netherlands musicians earn 8,500 euros per year from live music on average (Von der Fuhr, 2015), and in the UK, 66 percent of musicians earns less than 15,600 pounds from live music (Webster et al., 2018).

In other words, under the current conditions, many musicians struggle to earn substantially from both streaming and live music (Webster et al., 2018). This puts most musicians in a precarious financial position. On average, the annual income of pop musicians in the Netherlands is 18,000 euros, a sum that also includes other sources of income outside music. Moreover, it is important to note here that, just like revenue from ticket sales, the overall income is distributed very unevenly, with a few musicians earning a lot of money, and the rest earning a relatively low amount (Von der Fuhr, 2015). More than half of musicians do not earn more than 9,000 euros from music (Von der Fuhr, 2015). Nearly half of musicians in the UK do not earn more than 10,000 pounds per year from music (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021).

In sum, the changed music industries seem to require musicians to adopt new business models and perform different tasks. Although live music has become an important source of income, it remains difficult to make a living under these new conditions.

COVID-19

Obviously, the music industries were heavily impacted by COVID-19 since spring 2020. As lockdown measures were imposed and lifted sporadically before being reimposed, it became virtually impossible for musicians to perform for audiences, which drastically reduced their earnings from live music. Dutch venues reported a 76 percent reduction in the number of live shows and an 80 percent decline in the number of visitors in 2020 compared to 2019 (VNPF, 2021). Festivals reported a decrease of 87 percent in music performances and a 98 percent decrease in the number of visitors (ibid.). Considering the importance of live music for earning an income from music, it would be natural to assume that all this has had a profound effect on the financial position of musicians. In addition, governmental support measures to help industry actors cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have not had the same effects for everyone in the music industries. Non-subsidized music producers and venues did not receive enough support to break even in 2020. Moreover, larger organizations benefitted more from state support than freelancers, who lost a lot of work which was not compensated by these governmental schemes (Media Perspectives, 2021). As a result, numerous businesses, freelancers and musicians were forced to abandon the music industries in search of other work. In addition to the financial losses, it can be expected that the lack of opportunities to perform live has also had other effects. Performing live allows musicians to develop their performance skills and build an audience. There are anecdotic reports that the disruption of the live music industry interrupted musicians' career trajectories, as they were unable to go on tour to recoup the investments they had made for the recording and production of a record (Van Gijssel, 2022). At this point it is uncertain whether live music will ever return to being such an important pillar of earning a living in music. While it is important to keep this exceptional situation in mind, this dissertation will not cover the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the careers of musicians. The data for this project were collected before the pandemic hit, and only describes the pre-COVID-19 period. However, the findings of this dissertation can provide insights into more long-term factors that shape the music industries and careers in it, the systematic problems that musicians encounter when building a career, and the conditions that facilitate a healthy live music ecology in which new generations of musicians can prosper.

Empirical themes

In the previous section we have seen that the music industries have undergone significant changes with regard to their structure, the structure of organizations active in the music industries, and the business models and financial position of musicians. Yet, there is a lack of research investigating the careers of musicians under these new conditions, which is especially pressing considering the manifestly precarious position of most musicians. As mentioned, in this dissertation I will focus on three sub-themes: 1) the careers of musicians, 2) the role of popular music education in the careers of musicians, and 3) careers in live music. In this section, I will unpack these three themes, highlight the research gaps and show which lines of research I have incorporated to investigate and understand these topics of interest.

Careers of musicians

To start, the majority of this dissertation will focus on the careers of musicians. Although we have a good understanding of how the music industries have changed, we know little about how musicians build their career in these times of change, their current work practices under these circumstances, and their motivations for pursuing a career in music. Therefore, I will look at 1) how musicians aim to build a career under these new circumstances, 2) what kind of competences their work requires and 3) how they value their work.

First, as we have seen, the music industries have changed, and we can expect that musicians are uncertain as to what will work in this new situation. This requires us to think about how musicians construct career strategies within changing contexts. Do they invent new ways of career building and progressing in the music industries? Or do they imitate strategies that used to work previously, even though they might no longer be as effective? How do they perceive the structural changes in the music industries, and factor them into their career building strategy? To understand how musicians build their career, it is useful to examine research from the production of culture perspective (Peterson & Anand, 2004) that has investigated the role of recognition and reputation in career building of creative workers. Fields of cultural production are characterized by a career system (Peterson & Anand, 2004) that structures the positions of artists within that field. Bourdieu (1993) showed that such fields are hierarchically structured and that the

position artists occupy in those fields is the outcome of the amount and forms of capital (cultural, economic and social) they possess. Artists entering the profession often try to reach more prominent positions in the field, as that can help to get their work produced and distributed and to earn an income (Dubois & François, 2013). Cultural intermediaries play an important role in this process. As they select and provide work opportunities to artists, they have a large say in which artists and art works are presented to audiences (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Janssen & Verboord, 2015). Here, these actors often rely on an artist's reputation to assess whether or not they should be selected (Podolny, 2010). Consequently, artists will engage in reputational labour in order to manipulate the intermediaries and change their opinion in their favour (Dumont, 2018). Therefore, to understand the career building practices of musicians, it is important to look at whether and how musicians perform reputational labour.

Furthermore, I will focus on competences that musicians need to employ in these changing industries. Considering the changes in the music industries, previous skill sets may no longer effectively help musicians to reach their goals. So what competences are needed in this new context? What work activities do musicians perform? And how are these work activities connected to musicians' understanding of the specific conditions of the (changing) music industries? Furthermore, while the global music industries have changed, these transformations might have had different effects on local music industries. This raises the question of how different structural conditions shape different approaches to work in music. Besides the literature that has mapped the various competences that musicians, artists and creative workers must possess in order to work under the current conditions (Haenfler, 2018; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016; Hracs, 2015; Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Morris, 2014; Thom, 2016), I introduce the sociology of markets and cultural sociology to understand how musicians' work activities are shaped under these new conditions. The sociology of markets has argued that the practices of actors in markets are shaped by a combination of the actor's agency and the structure and culture of the field (Aspers, 2011). Yet, when markets are changing, this may destabilize the market structure, which can lead to situations where it is uncertain which practices are valued (Beckert, 1999). In addition, cultural sociology has shown how the explicit and implicit culture of a field exercises its influence on the practices of workers (Lizardo & Strand, 2010). Therefore, in order to understand how musicians adapt to changing markets, it is important to consider the structural and cultural forces that shape their behaviour.

Lastly, I started this introduction by describing the appeal of a career as a pop musician. It may have become clear by now that even though this stereotypical image may be very attractive, in reality musicians have to cope with difficult circumstances. Naturally, this raises the question of why musicians continue to aspire to a career in music in the first place (or as David Byrne sang: 'you may ask yourself, "where does that highway go to?"). As the business models in the music industries have changed, how do musicians value their work under these new conditions? In addition, we may wonder: to which extent are these valuations of work structured by the local conditions of the Dutch music industries? Creative industries research, popular music studies and cultural sociology can help us to understand how musicians value their work and how such processes of valuation are shaped by the context in which these processes take place. For example, Bourdieu's (1993) research in the field of cultural sociology has theorized that fields of cultural production consist of an autonomous pole where an artistic logic dominates and a heteronomous pole where an economic logic often dominates. Research has shown that in the more artistic part of such fields, artists express that artistic values are the main motivation for their work and feel that this contradicts economic motivations (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007). However, other research on the creative industry and popular music studies has argued that Bourdieu's model may only have a limited value for helping us to gain an understanding of the music industries, as the autonomous pole and heteronomous pole are not as polarized as he theorized, since 'restricted production has become introduced into the field of mass production' (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 222). For example, research on the music industries has argued that industry changes have led to the disappearance of the differences between more autonomous and more commercial approaches to work in music (Klein et al., 2017), and that as a result of this alignment of economic and artistic approaches to work, new generations of musicians do not experience tensions between economic and artistic valuations of their work (Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018). For example, music students feel less uncomfortable about performing entrepreneurial work activities (Albinsson, 2018). Moreover, in addition to these artistic and economic valuations of work, other values that motivate people to pursue this career have also been identified (Gerber, 2017). In sum, these different strands of literature suggest that a range of values may be found among musicians, and can help us to understand how these values may be ordered by the structure and culture of the music industries.

Popular music education

Secondly, considering the changes in the music industries it is important to look at how popular music programmes prepare musicians for a career in music. The prevailing image within popular music has always been that anyone can pick up a guitar, learn three chords and become a pop star, while various genres, such as folk and punk, propagate images of authenticity and DIY. As mentioned earlier, several new popular music programmes at higher music education institutions have been established in the Netherlands over the past 20 years. Whereas pop musicians used to enter the music industries without formal music education, learning the trade by picking up information from their peers in the music scenes they were part of (I. Rogers, 2008), these new forms of formal education, often part of established higher music education institutions, offer professional training that aims to help students thrive in the popular music industries. Therefore, it is interesting to examine how popular music programmes at higher music education institutions aim to prepare students for a career in music to increase their chances for success. What are the existing understandings in these programmes on what competences are taught and what other benefits are offered? Are such programmes believed to play a role in the process of reputation building that, as discussed earlier, may be vital for making it in the music industries? And which strategies are taught to cope with the precarious conditions of working in music? By mapping the perceptions of students and teachers in these popular music programmes, I can address a research gap identified by Lamont (2012, p. 18), who argued that we do not yet know how existing values are being transferred to the new generation of actors. Furthermore, these questions allow me to investigate whether the apparent demand for popular music education tells us something about how the music industries operate and what requirements are necessary to survive in them.

To understand the role that popular music education plays in the careers of musicians and what this tells us about the nature of the labour market for musicians, I refer to research on arts education and studies on professionalism. To begin, research on arts education has provided clues regarding a range of different contributions that such programmes may make to the careers of musicians. Musicians have to acquire the necessary competences for their artistic and entrepreneurial performance (J. Bennett, 2015; Bridgstock, 2013). In addition, such programmes can help musicians to establish industry connections (Fine, 2017) and may also help them to create a favourable reputation (Childress & Gerber, 2015). Moreover, the literature suggested a few strategies that such programmes can use to increase the employability of their students, namely by increasing their

industry awareness (D. Bennett, 2007), by preparing them to engage in occupational risk diversification (Menger, 1999) and by helping them to acquire work experience (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Furthermore, the literature on professionalism has provided two opposing perspectives on professionalism that may help to conceptualize whether the role that popular music programmes play in musicians' careers can be understood as part of a professionalization process. On the one hand, the 'normative value' perspective understands professionalism as consisting of certain specialist skills and knowledge that provide workers such as musicians with status and privileges (Evetts, 2014). On the other hand, the 'power struggle' perspective perceives professionalism as a status that is acquired by means of a process of distinction (Schinkel & Noordegraaf, 2011), and as such may be more of a symbolic resource than a reflection of actual competence. These competing perspectives may give us a better understanding of the function that such education programmes play in musicians' careers and shed light on the career system in the music industries.

Careers in live music

The third empirical theme of this dissertation zooms in on the role of live music in musicians' careers. As discussed, popular music research shows that live music is an increasingly important source of income (Frith, 2014; Von der Fuhr, 2015). In order to make a living in music, musicians must build a successful career in live music. However, at the same time, earnings from live music are distributed unevenly, and it remains difficult to make substantial earnings from performing live. As a result, the live music market is very competitive. This raises questions regarding the role live music plays in the careers of early-career musicians in the changing music industries. Therefore, it is important to map the dynamics in the careers of musicians in live music and answer questions such as: which sub-set of the early-career musicians manages to become successful in live music? What do they earn for live shows? What dynamics can we see here? And: can we understand what causes, or correlates with, success in live music?

In order to understand the dynamics of success in live music, I have examined research on popular music and the creative industries in general that have investigated the relationship between career success and a range of characteristics of acts, such as gender (Berkers & Schaap, 2018), age (Williams et al., 2019) or genre (Hitters & van de Kamp, 2010). Moreover, I refer to research from the production of culture perspective

and cultural sociology in general, which has investigated the relationship between recognition and success. As discussed, critics and other cultural intermediaries play a central role for artists (Janssen & Verboord, 2015), as they can award forms of recognition to them. For example, they can favourably review artists, nominate them for prizes (Schmutz, 2016), or help them to become recognized by audiences (Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2020). As a result, acquiring forms of recognition might help musicians to stand out in the crowd and attain success in live music. Therefore, drawing from this literature it is interesting to explore whether forms of recognition correlate with success in live music.

Overall, the three empirical themes as discussed here have informed three empirical studies that form the foundation of this dissertation, and as such these themes are interwoven through the chapters. By doing so, I can address the research gaps identified here and contribute to our understanding of the careers of aspiring musicians in the changing music industries. In addition, I have used this opportunity to make a more theoretical contribution to discussions in the aforementioned bodies of research. Overall, the most important theoretical ambition of this dissertation is to add to theory building on how practices of creative workers in markets are shaped by (changes to) the structure and culture of those markets. This question is addressed in a number of ways throughout this dissertation, and in the conclusion the various findings scattered throughout the different chapters will be brought together to draw an overarching conclusion that furthers our thinking on this topic.

Approach

As said, the goal of this dissertation is to *investigate how early-career musicians build a career in the changing music industries*. To formulate an answer to this question, three empirical studies were conducted within the Dutch music industries that each aim to address one of the three empirical themes. These three studies were performed in the context of the research project ‘Staging Popular Music: Researching Sustainable Live Music Ecologies for Artists, Music Venues and Cities’, or in short POPLIVE, a large-scale research project on live music that was implemented between 2017 and 2022 at the Erasmus University and the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences in collaboration with the VNPF (the Dutch Association of Music Venues and Festivals) and MOJO Concerts BV.⁴ POPLIVE focused on how local live music ecologies can contribute to value creation in the careers of pop musicians, the position of music venues and festivals, and the local (urban) society in general, relying on a mixed approach using both extensive quantitative and intensive qualitative information. Based on these three studies conducted within the context of POPLIVE, six chapters were written, each with their own sub-question designed to fill the research gaps highlighted earlier in this introduction. Together, these sub-questions answer the overarching research question. As the processes of data collection and analysis depended on the specific sub-questions, and as such can be understood as building blocks in the argumentation of the individual chapters, the methodology of the dissertation will be discussed in more detail in the relevant chapters.⁵

For now, I will only provide a brief overview of these studies, and show how they have been used to answer the sub-questions.

⁴ See <https://www.poplive.nl/>, visited on 9-9-2022.

⁵ Moreover, as four of the chapters have either been published or accepted for publication, and the other two chapters are currently being reviewed for publication, these chapters have been adapted only minimally for this dissertation. The main benefit is that this

avoids substantial differences from the versions published elsewhere and each chapter can be read independently of the whole dissertation. The drawback of this choice is that discussions of empirical and theoretical sources and the methodological sections may overlap from time to time.

The first empirical study that I performed focused on early-career musicians. I conducted 21 in-depth interviews with early-career musicians who participated in the 2018 edition of Noorderslag, an influential showcase festival in the Netherlands, about their motivations for working in the music industries, their approaches to working in music and their perceptions of the music industries. Moreover, seventeen of the 21 musicians agreed to participate in a weeklong online diary questionnaire study that allowed me to map their work activities in real time. Subsequently, these seventeen musicians were interviewed at the end of that period to learn more about their perceptions of these performed work activities. In addition, the opportunity arose to compare this dataset with a similar dataset of interviews with ten early-career musicians in the United Kingdom, collected by Jo Haynes and Lee Marshall (2017, 2018). Overall, this study allows me to answer three sub-questions. First of all, the interviews help us to understand *the role played by reputation in the career building strategy of early-career musicians in the changing music industries*. In this way, I can both map the way in which musicians aim to build their careers in the 'new' industries, and provide a theoretical contribution on how (reputational) practices are shaped by structural and cultural change and the ways in which this is valued by these musicians. In addition, the combination of the interviews, the diary questionnaire and the post-questionnaire interviews are used to answer the question of *what the work activities of early-career musicians look like, and how they value their work within these changed industries*. As such, this helps us to understand the nature of musicians' work within the changed music industries and adds to the discussion on the valuation of work by mapping the ways in which they value their work activities and by showing how this is shaped by current conditions in the music industries. Lastly, the comparison with the British dataset can be used to answer the question of *whether the strategizing of Dutch and British musicians can be understood as responses to the structural conditions within their context*, adding to our understanding of the way in which strategies and valuations of work are structured by local conditions.

The second empirical study focused on popular music education. For this, I collected data at three Dutch popular music programmes in higher music education institutions to understand how such programmes prepare their students for a career in music. I conducted eleven interviews with teachers in these programmes, held five small focus groups with final-year students, and collected all possible policy documents and course guides, resulting in over 200 documents. Based on this dataset, two sub-questions can be answered. First, it allows me to investigate *whether and in which way popular music programmes at higher music education institutions are*

perceived to contribute to the career development of their students. Here, we can also see what ideas exist regarding what competences and other assets are important for a career in music. Secondly, focusing more on the strategies that are taught to cope with the precarious working conditions, based on this study I can answer the question of *how these programmes prepare students to cope with the uncertainty of building a career in the popular music industries*. This provides the opportunity to analyse how the new cohort of musicians is being socialized to prepare for a career in music.

The third empirical study focuses on the careers of early-career musicians in live music. For this, I constructed a dataset that followed 216 acts that had performed at five editions of the Noorderslag showcase festival in the eight years following their participation. I collected information on the number of shows that these acts had performed in the years after Noorderslag, and – if possible – the fees they had received for their shows. Moreover, I enriched the dataset by adding a range of independent variables such as measures of recognition that are associated in the literature with career success in the music industries and the creative industries at large. Using this dataset, I can investigate *what the dynamics are in the number of live shows starting acts play and the fees they receive, and which factors explain success in live music* by performing descriptive and explanatory analyses.

In short, taking these three empirical studies together that explore the careers of musicians, the role of popular music education in their careers, and their careers in live music, enables me to map what early-career musicians do, what they are taught, and what careers in live music look like, helping us to understand how early-career musicians build a career in the changing music industries. A schematic representation of the overall approach is shown in figure 1.

In the next section I will present the structure of the dissertation.

How do early-career musicians built a career
in the changing music industries?

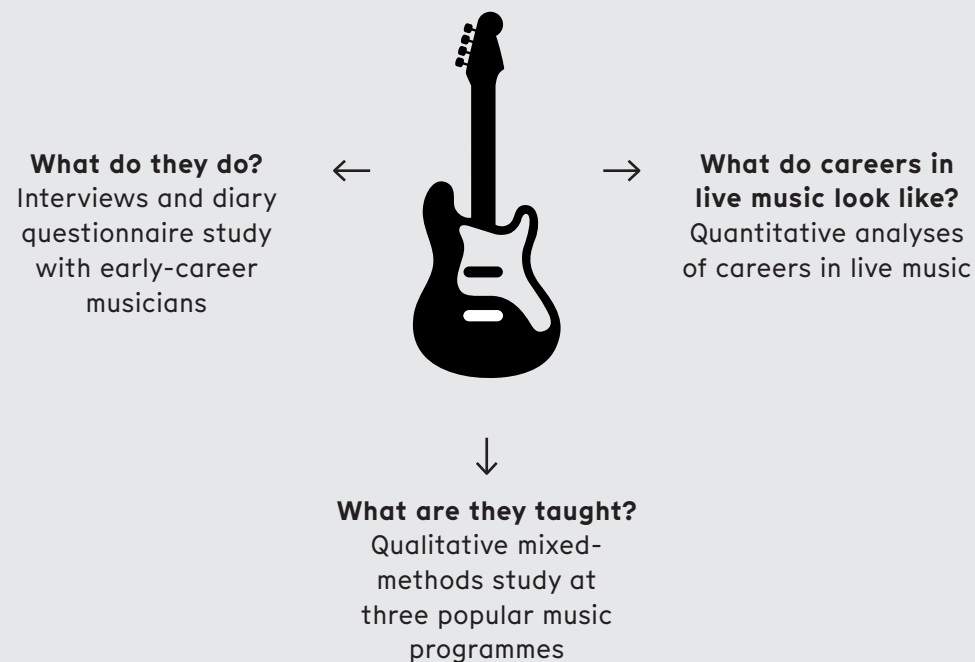


Figure 1 – Schematic representation of the dissertation

Structure of this dissertation

Chapter 2 will discuss the role of reputation in the career building strategy of early-career musicians in the changing music industries. Drawing from the interviews with the 21 musicians, I show that musicians continue to believe that building their reputations within the established music industries is important for career success, despite the technological changes. My analysis proceeds in two stages: first, I discuss how musicians put considerable effort into achieving particular career milestones that they believe will signal success to industry intermediaries. Second, I show that new technologies have not eliminated musicians' belief in appealing to industry insiders through milestones.

Chapter 3 will explore the working life of early-career musicians. Based on the aforementioned interviews, the diary questionnaire and post-questionnaire interviews with seventeen of the 21 musicians, I investigate the day-to-day activities that these musicians perform and how they value these activities. To start, I will show that they perform a wide variety of non-creative work activities, including DIY and entrepreneurial tasks. In addition, I discuss three accounts of value that shape how musicians perceive their work, transcending the traditional art-commerce dichotomy.

Chapter 4, co-written with Jo Haynes (authorship 50 percent), examines the relationship between the conditions of national music industries and the strategies used to negotiate a career in music, and the extent to which musicians frame their careers as entrepreneurial, based on a secondary comparative analysis with the interviews with Dutch and British musicians. We argue that their strategizing can be framed as a set of responses to their local structural conditions. However, neither set of responses produces a market advantage as only a very small fraction of the aspiring musicians are able to sustain themselves financially in music.

Chapter 5 investigates the perceived advantages of popular music programmes at higher music education institutions for the career development of their students, drawing from the data collected at these programmes. I will show that the main benefits that these programmes are believed to offer concern the development of a set of necessary competences, the establishment of industry relationships and the acquisition of symbolic resources. Secondly, I consider whether these benefits contribute to a form of professionalism, relying on the two aforementioned theoretical perspectives on professionalism, namely the normative value and the power struggle perspective.

Chapter 6 maps the opportunities for a sustainable career in the music industries as perceived by teachers and students in Dutch popular music programmes at higher music education institutions and how these programmes aim to prepare their students for these careers. In the analysis I will discuss three connected strategies used to help students cope with the current demands of the music labour market. First, according to the participants, these programmes provide students with information about their chances for success by facilitating a *reality check*. Second, they advocate occupational risk diversification in the form of a *mixed professional practice*. Third, they encourage students to start obtaining *work experience* during their programmes.

Chapter 7 draws from the quantitative dataset following the careers in live music of acts that had participated in showcase festival Noorderslag. On the basis of this dataset, I investigate dynamics in live music, and map relationships between a range of variables and success. In the analysis I show that there are huge inequalities, as only a few acts manage to perform a lot of shows and receive high fees, and most acts are only able to play a few shows per year for a relatively low fee. Furthermore, I demonstrate amongst other things that critical recognition and popular recognition are positively associated with the number of shows performed, as is having industry representation in the form of being signed with a label or booker.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion and discussion of this dissertation, where I will summarize the answers to the sub-questions and the main research question and discuss the empirical and methodological contributions. In addition, I will discuss the theoretical value of this dissertation by showing how it adds to the various lines of research that it draws from, especially how it adds to our knowledge on how practices of workers in markets are shaped by the structure and culture of those markets and changes therein. Furthermore, I will share my thoughts on the limitations of this project, the implications of these findings for further research and my suggestions for popular music policy.



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Milestones in music

Reputations in the
career building of
musicians in the
changing Dutch
music industries

Introduction

The music industries have undergone major changes due to the fact that both legal and illegal downloading and streaming have caused a shift in the balance between revenue from recorded music and revenue from live performances, tilting it in favour of the latter (Naveed et al., 2017; Young & Collins, 2010). Furthermore, the advent of social media and other technological innovations has allegedly democratized the means of the production, promotion and distribution of music (Fox, 2004). Recent scholarship has examined the implications of these changes for the work practices of pop musicians, focusing on the rise of do-it-yourself (DIY) or entrepreneurial business models (A. Bennett, 2018; Threadgold, 2018) and newly required tasks and skills, such as aesthetic labour (Hracs & Leslie, 2014) and social media skills (Haynes & Marshall, 2017). As in other labour markets such as 'sports, the arts, academia, knowledge work and fashion modelling' (Dumont, 2018, p. 515), reputation is an important commodity that enables musicians to build a career, as it helps them to receive support and opportunities from market actors (Lingo & Tepper, 2013). However, because of these changes, previous key signals of reputation, such as releasing an album, may no longer hold as much weight in the current music industries. Few studies have examined how musicians use their reputation to build a career in a context marked by technological changes. Therefore, drawing on in-depth interviews with 21 Dutch early-career pop musicians, this chapter addresses *the role of reputation in the career building strategy of early-career musicians in the changing music industries*.⁶

In this chapter, I break this research problem down into two parts. First, I investigate *how musicians attempt to create and signal a favourable reputation to build their career*. Ample research has been done on how cultural intermediaries cope with uncertainty due to the lack of formal evaluation standards, relying on reputation to select and promote artistic products, for instance in television (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Zafirau, 2008), visual arts (Velthuis, 2013) and literature (Franssen & Kuipers, 2013). However, it remains unclear how cultural workers can create a favourable reputation

⁶ I would like to make clear that the purpose of this chapter is not to establish a before and after snapshot of the Dutch music industries regarding the impact of these technological changes.

to increase their chances of being selected by these intermediaries (Dumont, 2018). Moreover, the way in which musicians, and artists in general, build their careers by promoting themselves is currently underexplored (Lingo & Tepper, 2013; Zwaan et al., 2009). Such research is especially pressing in light of the changing working conditions. To address this issue, I argue that musicians can be thought of as workers in a 'status market' (Aspers, 2011) where cultural intermediaries decide which workers they will offer business opportunities to (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) by ranking them on the basis of their reputations (Aspers, 2011). Here, according to Podolny (2010), reputation 'denotes an expectation of some behavior or behaviors based on past demonstrations of those same behaviors' (p. 13). Therefore, workers may want to perform practices which help to create a favourable reputation (Dumont, 2018). In my analysis I show that musicians attempt to achieve milestones, as milestones create such a reputation and can be used to signal past and future success to music industry representatives. In this way, I introduce milestones as a mechanism through which market culture shapes reputational practices.

Second, I examine *the beliefs of musicians about the ways in which new technologies impact their career building strategies*. As the music industries are changing, strategies that meet 'traditional' market demands – work in line with the market culture – may no longer guarantee immediate economic success, and musicians might want to leave the existing market. While we can expect that reputational practices, such as the collection of milestones, are shaped by how artists such as musicians interpret these changes – i.e., which processes affect reputations and how the value of these reputations may be changing – it remains unclear how such artists are navigating technological changes in the creative industries and adjusting their career building strategy accordingly. Therefore, I draw from the sociology of markets and cultural sociology to explain why artists may (or may not) be resistant to technological changes and continue to follow (or deviate from) established industry practices, by referring to structural factors such as power dynamics (Beckert, 1999) and cultural factors such as 'cultural lag' (Swidler, 1986). In my analysis I show that musicians experience a continuing dependency on the traditional music industries, leading to a situation whereby milestones are collected to meet the industries' demands in the expectation that this will help musicians to achieve long-term career success, but do not translate into short-term economic profits. This contributes to our understanding of why the effects of changes on workers' career-building strategies may be mediated.

Theory

The role of reputations in the career building of musicians

To understand how artists find work in uncertain labour markets (Menger, 1999), previous research investigated ‘the symbolic work that artists do to build reputations, convince others of their legitimacy as artists and professionals’ (Lingo & Tepper, 2013, p. 338). For artists, it is especially important to convince cultural intermediaries, because in art markets they function as gatekeepers, connectors, marketers, distributors and more (Janssen & Verboord, 2015). This is also the case in the music industries, which have been conceptualized as networks of intermediaries, where ‘the manager, record firm or bookie introduces artists to the industry (input), while media, retail and concert promoters present the artist to a public (output)’ (Keunen, 2014, p. 26). Because of their role in matching supply and demand, artists try to influence the decisions of these intermediaries in order to increase ‘the probability that a given new release will be selected for exposure to consumers’ (Hirsch, 1972, p. 648).

As art markets lack a standard to assess the quality of artists and their work and demand uncertainty means high economic risks (Hirsch, 1972; Negus, 1992), intermediaries face high levels of uncertainty when selecting artists (Franssen & Kuipers, 2013; Velthuis, 2013). They therefore look for solutions to help them assess and value the quality of artists (Smits, 2016) in an attempt to filter out the oversupply of candidates (Hirsch, 1972). Most importantly, intermediaries create a circuit of commerce, i.e. a network that ‘reinforces credit, trust, and reciprocity within its perimeter but organizes exclusion and inequality in relation to outsiders’ (Zelizer, 2010, p. 315). For instance, research on the Dutch and other music industries has shown that intermediaries use their professional networks to obtain information about acts (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). Furthermore, these circuits share evaluation repertoires that help them to value art works (Zelizer, 2010) based on a combination of institutional culture such as ‘shared values, norms and conventions’ (Mears, 2011, p. 159) and expertise consisting of professional standardized knowledge and personal dispositions (Smith Maguire & Matthews, 2012). For example, Dutch A&R (artist and repertoire) managers select musicians on the basis of ‘the live performance, quality of the music,

musical skills, appearance, motivation as well as potential media and audience appeal’ (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009, p. 97).

Intermediaries rely on these evaluation repertoires as a proxy for quality in order to judge artists’ reputations (Podolny, 2010) and rank them relative to each other in the market (Aspers, 2009). As such, art markets like the music industries can be understood as status markets: based on this hierarchical order, intermediaries award artists with a certain amount of status and higher levels of status translate into increased rewards (Aspers, 2011). In this way, reputation (based on past behaviours of artists in the market) is converted into status (one’s position in this hierarchical order) (Podolny, 2010), and business opportunities are awarded accordingly.⁷ For example, having a ‘favourable’ reputation (Zafirau, 2008, p. 102) is a strong predictor of a product being picked up by intermediaries (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). For this reason, reputation is often used as a rhetorical strategy to legitimize choices for certain artistic products (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). Therefore, to take advantage of the career opportunities provided by intermediaries, musicians must implement practices that help to create a favourable reputation (Dumont, 2018; Zafirau, 2008) by performing actions in the market that signal their qualifications (C. Jones, 2002). Performing reputational practices is especially important for early-career artists, as this helps them to acquire support in a market where educational credentials do not function as closing mechanisms (Eigler & Azarpour, 2020; Jensen & Kim, 2020; Skaggs, 2019). Indeed, research has shown that pop musicians engage in a process of capital mobilization and conversion to draw attention from intermediaries (Scott, 2012). Moreover, music industry actors attempt to increase the symbolic value of musicians, for example by promoting their work and using their network (Lizé, 2016). Furthermore, music industry actors tend to ‘aggrandize’ their businesses to acquire or inflate their reputation (Schreiber & Rieple, 2018). Yet, it remains unclear how musicians attempt to create favourable reputations.

⁷ Because workers create a reputation and intermediaries convert this into status, when focusing on the practices of workers I will refer to reputation, and when focusing on the ranking practices of market actors I will talk about status.

In sum, artists rely on a circuit of commerce of intermediaries (Zelizer, 2010) to build their career. To evaluate artists, these intermediaries look at their reputations, which is why artists perform practices to create a favourable reputation that will meet industry expectations. Based on these reputations, intermediaries rank artists in a hierarchy that converts reputations into status and then offer business opportunities accordingly.

Building a career in a changing market

As new technologies are providing musicians with career opportunities that do not depend on intermediaries, one might expect them to shift their focus away from traditional intermediaries (e.g. record labels, radio stations) and the corresponding career building strategy. As mentioned, a shift in revenues from recorded music to live performances and a series of technological innovations has allegedly democratized the means of music production and distribution. As a result, some intermediaries such as record labels, music retailers and media outlets have lost their central role in the music industries. Most importantly, record labels have lost economic power (J. Rogers, 2013), making them less inclined to take risks with regard to offering contracts to new acts (Frith, 2014). At the same time, other and new intermediaries, such as live venues and streaming services have become more important for musicians (Naveed et al., 2017). Moreover, new technological opportunities can help musicians to monetize direct contact with their fans, as it enables (or requires) them to bypass labels, record and distribute one's own music, reach audiences directly and create new revenue streams (Haynes & Marshall, 2017; Young & Collins, 2010). To understand the way in which musicians navigate these changes, the combination of sociology of markets and cultural sociology can help us to analyse *how* market culture and structure shape career building strategies and why market change may affect such strategies.

To start, market sociologists distinguish three ingredients that influence the practices of workers: structure, agency and culture (Aspers, 2011). First, the position that a worker has, and the structural conditions of that position, affects the opportunities for action. For example, research in music has shown that the strategies of musicians can be understood as a response to the specific configuration of the local industries (Tarassi, 2018). Second, workers strategize their actions by reflecting on their current and desired

position. Third, market culture creates order by providing a set of rules on 'how market actors are allowed and expected to cooperate and compete in the market' (Aspers, 2011, p. 94). Here, institutionalized decision rules enable actions because they make outcomes predictable, while they constrain other actions because these would possibly violate these rules (Beckert, 1999).

Research in the sociology of markets has shown that these changes can have two effects on the practices of workers: first, practices can remain resistant to change 'the more they enjoy high levels of social legitimacy and the more they have the backing of powerful agents' (Beckert, 1999, p. 791). This shows that agents with more capital can continue to promote practices when they understand them to be appropriate, which especially tends to happen when changes affect the distributional outcomes in the market (Beckert, 2010). Under these circumstances, workers experience normative pressures to resist new practices even when these practices are more efficient (Beckert, 1999). A second effect is that markets may become destabilized, changing power dynamics and altering opportunities (Beckert, 2010). This, then, results in a process where it is re-established what actors want to trade (Aspers, 2011). For example, Ryan and Peterson (1993) argue that in the market of popular music new technologies can lead to shifts in the power balance, causing a re-evaluation of musicians' skills.

Cultural sociological approaches inform a conceptual framework for understanding how an established market culture exercises possibilities and constraints on actors by highlighting the effects of explicit and implicit culture (Lizardo & Strand, 2010). First, according to Swidler (1986, 2001), *explicit* culture functions as a 'tool kit' (Swidler, 1986) which structures the actions of actors and their goals, as 'action *and* values are organized to take advantage of cultural competences' (ibid., p. 275, original emphasis). These practices are experienced as taken-for-granted, which has been demonstrated in research investigating the way in which risk coping strategies of theatre actors are shaped by local institutional contexts (Kleppe, 2017). Second, according to Bourdieu (1993), practices are affected by *implicit* culture as actors have a habitus shaped by their position in a field that structures their practices. For example, in popular music, Threadgold (2018) has shown that the DIY culture of their music scene has a symbolic appeal for musicians, and that this informs their actions. Moreover, this habitus influences the way actors perceive the field and their chances for success, or how the field 'presents itself to each agent as a *space of possibles*' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 64, original emphasis). For example, this model has been used to explain how musicians choose out of a range of creative possibilities when writing or playing music (Toynbee, 2016).

Moreover, cultural sociology helps us to understand that the way in which musicians interpret industry changes might also affect their career building strategy. Here, implicit and explicit culture can mediate the effects of market change. First of all, change disrupts the influence of implicit culture on actors, as it causes *'temporary disjunctions between habitus and field'* (Sweetman, 2003, p. 541, original emphasis), forcing actors to be more reflexive (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In addition, explicit culture can both hinder and stimulate innovations of actions in times of change. If the existing cultural scaffolding breaks down, the old culture might lose its influence and actors can experience *'unsettled times'* (Swidler, 1986). In those cases, actors need to draw from new cultural repertoires to create new actions (Swidler, 1986) which is most often done by new *'institutional generations'* (Lizardo & Strand, 2010, p. 223) such as early-career musicians. At the same time, *'cultural lag'* may occur whereby actors fail to take advantage of new opportunities because this would require them to change their way of doing things (Swidler, 1986). In these situations, the *'old'* cultural scaffolding is retained and keeps being taken for granted, even though it may no longer be functional.

Overall, to understand how musicians build their career by creating a favourable reputation in the changing music industries, we should understand their career building strategy as an outcome of 1) the interplay between their structural position and agency within the dynamics of a status market, 2) the explicit and implicit culture of the market they operate in, and 3) the way market change may affect this.

Data and methods

This study focuses on musicians who participated in the 2018 edition of the Noorderslag festival, an influential showcase festival in the Netherlands. Focusing on this festival helped me to identify pop musicians who were in the same phase of their career, as the acts who perform here are promising early-career artists (Kamer, 2016). Furthermore, targeting this population made it possible to identify musicians who wanted to build a career in the Dutch music industries, as Noorderslag is widely perceived as the stage where the new generation of pop-rock acts presents itself to the intermediaries of the Dutch music industries (Keunen, 2014; Van Vugt, 2018). More specifically, musicians and intermediaries who partake in this festival are active in what Keunen (2014) has called the *'alternative mainstream'* part of the Dutch music industries. This circuit is situated between the

underground and mainstream and contains musicians active in a multitude of sub styles such as indie pop, punk or folk who all rely on the same network of intermediaries (ibid.).

To reach this population, I employed a purposeful sampling strategy: first, I left musicians performing at the two main stages of the festival out of the sample, as these were more established acts. Second, to achieve a geographical spread, acts from various cities in the Netherlands were selected. Third, as musicians might have different roles in an act, I aimed to speak with musicians of each act who were involved in reputational and career building practices. Fourth, as gender significantly affects music careers (Berkers & Schaap, 2018), I aimed for a gender balance in my sample. However, because of rejections of interview requests, the sample consists of fourteen respondents who identify as men and seven who identify as women.⁸ Of the 54 acts participating in the festival, 21 musicians were interviewed.⁹ Musicians were approached via the e-mail addresses on their website or via their booker or manager. Table 6 in appendix 1 contains an overview of the participants, along with further background information. To ensure their privacy, participants have been anonymized and their age is reported in categories. In the results section, each interview is referred to by each participant's number.

The interviews were semi-structured to obtain information in light of the research question, while allowing for the possibility to ask follow-up questions (Kvale, 2007). During the interviews, questions were asked about: 1) their goals and motivations in music, 2) how they had built their careers and created favourable reputations, and 3) their reflections on the changing music industries and how this was shaping their work practices (see appendix 2 for all interview questions). In addition, a more general set of questions was asked for context, for example about the financial aspects of their work.

8 31 musicians were contacted, ten of whom declined the invitation to participate. Their reasons for refusing were diverse, ranging from a busy schedule due to touring and recording, to a more general disinclination. Except for my efforts to include more women in the sample, upon comparison the musicians who refused did

not show substantial difference from the included participants regarding age, label type, music education and style.

9 While not large enough to represent all early-career musicians in the Dutch music industries, the sample does have a sufficient size to reach saturation (Small, 2009).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and took place in a location that was convenient for the participants, ranging from cafés to rehearsal spaces, between 18 June 2018 and 11 January 2019. The conversations lasted 66 minutes on average. Audio was recorded and afterwards transcribed verbatim. After transcription, the data were thematically analysed in ATLAS.ti, version 8 (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to produce 750 initial codes capturing the interesting features of the data in light of the research question. Afterwards, in the process of searching for, reviewing, and defining themes, fifteen code groups were created containing patterns found in the data.

Results

In my analysis, I first explore how musicians attempt to build their career by creating a favourable reputation. Then, I investigate their beliefs about the ways in which new technologies are impacting their career building strategies.

Performing success by obtaining milestones

For most respondents their central goal is a career in music that is sustainable in terms of workflow and finances. Naturally, as in earlier research (Umney & Kretsos, 2015), the participants expressed a passion for music: they want to continue to create and perform music – placing an emphasis on playing live gigs for an audience – and to increase their opportunities to do so.

In addition, they try to earn money and increase their revenues. Notably, to reach these goals, all participants feel that they depend on the traditional intermediaries within the Dutch music market, such as media, labels, bookers, managers, pop venue and festival programmers:

It is difficult to earn a steady income in music ... this depends on whether you are taken seriously based on whether people think you're cool or believe that you belong in the media and music world. ... It is not public opinion that informs this, the people from the music industry decide. (15)

Participants understand these intermediaries as being linked together in a powerful network, which they characterize as 'cliquish' (7, 11, 15). According to the participants, this network shares information and draws boundaries to exclude outsiders (Zelizer, 2010) and they believe that being judged positively by this small circuit can lead to new business opportunities: 'bands ... get hyped because they know the right people' (12). Surprisingly, Spotify was the only new intermediary that was mentioned often by the participants: 'I am releasing singles. ... I hope that they get on playlists on Spotify, because that is so important these days' (13). In particular, curated playlists seem to increase musicians' visibility in the Dutch music industries and can provide additional revenues.

To some extent, this dependency on the established market and its intermediaries can be understood as a forced marriage. As musicians do not see a lot of opportunities to reach their goals outside the market, they feel that they depend upon the music industries to reach their goals. At the same time, they are pessimistic about their chances of reaching these goals within the industries, as they see the market as being characterized by heavy competition and difficulties with establishing an income. As one musician said about creating a sustainable income:

That is probably never going to happen. ... If you aim for a minimum: then you should pay yourself 1,000 euro per month. That is 4,000 per month for the whole band, and the booker and manager go on top of that. And the additional fixed costs like the van, your stuff, the rehearsal space, gas, that kind of shit, and you have big expenses such as the studio etcetera. Then you need to earn 10,000 euro per month. How? That is never going to happen. (7)

Nevertheless, the participants believe that they depend on the aforementioned intermediaries to reach their goals. However, according to the participants, because these intermediaries are confronted with an oversupply of new musicians and cannot be certain who will become successful, they are selective about who they work with. Therefore, to receive support, participants pursue a strategy whereby they try to create a favourable reputation and signal this reputation to intermediaries, in the hope of convincing them of their suitability. To create a reputation, musicians engage in a career strategy consisting of striving to reach what some participants refer to as milestones. According to the musicians, milestones are ritualized practices which they believe function as signals of prior success and predictors of future success to intermediaries. By achieving these milestones, which they believe will be evaluated positively

by intermediaries, musicians aim to reflect the evaluation repertoires of these intermediaries. Musicians hope that collecting milestones and signalling them to intermediaries will increase their status and lead to new business opportunities. As one musician said: ‘the more you achieve, the more milestones you collect, the higher your fee’ (8), and another:

Yes, successful singles are sort of milestones that you have. Like: ‘o, we released this single, that did well and got airplay on this radio station and was picked up by them’, and that will give you some leverage for the next one, so to speak. (4)

In other words, while the core of being a pop musician revolves around material performances for musical audiences (on-stage and in recordings), musicians also give symbolic (offstage) performances for an organizational audience of intermediaries where they, together with their bookers and managers, act out their success story (or prior hits, see Bielby & Bielby, 1994) to create a favourable reputation for their act.

The milestones that were mentioned can be categorized on the basis of the different cues they signal (C. Jones, 2002). First, several milestones signal the competence and experiences of these musicians in the music industries, such as releasing EPs or albums, participating in popular music competitions, organizing tours, playing a lot of gigs, or playing abroad. Collecting such milestones can be used to signal that an act has acquired a level of success in the market that enables them to perform such activities, indicating that they have the capacity to reach similar or larger successes in the future. For example, one musician argued that touring abroad had a signalling function for the Dutch industries, rather than helping to build an audience in those countries: ‘Of course you don’t play very big venues there, so you really don’t get a lot of fans there, but it’s good for the people here to see that you play abroad’ and ‘when people see you come there, they know that you’re busy’ (20). Second, other types of milestones signal social relationships with high-status industry actors. This association confirms a musician’s reputation (Bielby & Bielby, 1999) and the status of these actors rubs off on them (Podolny, 2010). Examples of such milestones include playing at prestigious festivals and venues, receiving attention from blogs, television, newspapers, magazines, and radio stations such as 3FM and signing with established domestic or international bookers or managers. For example, playing at a prestigious showcase festival signals to industry actors that your band is promising and worth investing in, or as one musician reported: ‘playing at Noorderslag holds a certain value for people, like ‘okay, that band played at Noorderslag’ (9).

As said, according to the participants, collecting these different kinds of milestones is key to creating a favourable reputation. In the field, having a ‘favourable’ reputation means that musicians display a capacity for commercial success, for example that they have potential audience appeal and can be ‘ticket sellers’ (2); and have the prerequisite qualities to do well, such as having a good live act and appearance as well as making music that ‘is good and preferably something unique’ (20) and ‘poppy enough to reach a more mainstream audience’ (13) (cf. Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009, p. 97). As such, collecting and signalling milestones has a performative quality as it helps to build a reputation of potential success, because it leads intermediaries to expect that they could achieve similar successes in the future, or to rephrase Podolny’s discussed definition of reputation, it is this past behaviour that causes an expectation of similar future behaviour (2010, p. 13). For example, one musician described how good reviews on a showcase gig had led to her going on a small tour as it built a reputation that she was able to put on ‘very good shows’ (6). In a similar manner, for one musician a successful single on a streaming platform led to attention from labels, because, as he told, these labels hoped that: ‘maybe they can make another one, then we can earn something with that’ (20).

In an attempt to convince intermediaries of their suitability, musicians signal these milestones to them in multiple ways. First, musicians send out PR packages and press releases to industry actors. For example, one musician discussed how they used the milestone of releasing their first EP to acquire new gigs: ‘Well when we released our first EP ... We did a lot of promotion then. So, we made promotional packages and sent them to all kinds of people’ (9). Furthermore, achieved milestones are mentioned in social media posts to show industry actors and audiences that they are busy doing ‘interesting’ things (11) because ‘you need to keep them warm, otherwise they leave’ (7). Most importantly, musicians, together with their bookers and managers, contact intermediaries and use these milestones to signal their reputation. For example, one participant explained how his band had managed to get a gig at a big festival by obtaining milestones which their booker used to pitch them to representatives of that festival. They asked themselves:

How can we reach this with a minimum of resources? We thought we can do that with 20, 25 gigs. That was the strategy. ... In addition, we did two weekends in Germany, because it was interesting for our Dutch booker. (21)

Of course, these musicians also experience many of these milestones, such as releasing an album or playing in a small pub, as pleasurable activities. This is reflected in other research that has argued that passion and the pursuit of creative interests are central motivations in creative and musical work (Bhansing et al., 2018; Threadgold, 2018; Umney & Kretsos, 2015). Consequently, these milestones are not achieved for the sole purpose of appealing to intermediaries. However, even though musicians have other motivations for performing these practices (see also chapter 3), they are part of a deliberate strategy to build their career:

While you want to try to live in the now as much as possible, especially as a musician, because you want to make music now, you have to look at what you will do in the future, and how can you make sure that you can be at festivals again and so on. (11)

As such, these milestones have a double function: they often are pleasurable activities for the musicians, while at the same time they are strategically collected and used to signal the act's quality to the industries in order to reach their goals. Therefore, according to several participants, milestones should not be pursued just because they are enjoyable but should always be incorporated into a long-term strategy: 'for example, if you perform a lot, but there is no good plan behind it, if you have no good reason why you are doing it... You should not forget the end goal...' (6). Therefore, as one musician said, the collection of various milestones must strategically 'tie into each other' (10). For example, this musician planned his schedule so that the 'autumn tour comes after the release of the EP' so that his act could then 'send out a press release again and promote those songs again' (10).

As shown, collected milestones function as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993) and musicians hope that a positive evaluation of their reputation can help them to convert this acquired capital into more and other forms of capital that they need to build their career (Scott, 2012), such as economic (e.g. new gigs), cultural (e.g. media attention) or social capital (e.g. management deals) – which can, in turn, be used to achieve new milestones. For example, one musician explained how a representative of a radio station told her that 'if you release this single, it will not get in our day rotation, so that would not be smart' (4), after which she chose to release an alternative single. However, when that single did well on the radio, the station became interested in the single that they had rejected earlier. Milestones can also be used to negotiate higher fees. One musician described how their booker was able to increase their fees after they scored a hit on the radio, another musician was able to do this when their live show was well-received, and a third one

did just the opposite and accepted a lower fee from a prestigious concert organizer because playing that gig would give their booker leverage in future negotiations with that organizer and other concert organizers:

We make certain choices so our booker can slowly increase our fee. That is why we did that gig for less, because it was from that organizer. We did a show for 150 euro ... our booker said that it was the right thing to do. (20)

These examples show that initial success can influence your chances for future success, or as Bielby and Bielby state 'success breeds success' (1999, p. 80).

In sum, the interviewed musicians envisage the pathway towards reaching their goals within the boundaries of the traditional music industries and experience a dependency on traditional intermediaries. Consequently, they create a favourable reputation by means of achieving milestones and signalling them to these intermediaries to obtain status and corresponding business opportunities. In this way, their career building practices are shaped by their attempt to reflect the evaluation repertoires they perceive to exist within the market (Zafirau, 2008).

The changing music industries

To understand how musicians account for the changing conditions in their career building strategy, I will first discuss the new technologies and new roles that have been incorporated into their existing career strategy. Then, I will show how, due to cultural lag, several work practices have remained resistant to change.

Incorporating change

To start, musicians have incorporated work practices that have been made possible by new technological innovations. All interviewed musicians are active on social media and several musicians record their music themselves or release their songs independently on Spotify. Moreover, many musicians

have a web shop through which they sell merchandise. Nevertheless, the participants believe that these technological possibilities only make a modest contribution to reaching their career goals and they are not optimistic about their economic potential. For example, musicians report that it is difficult to build a following online: 'smaller artists are suffering, because it is very difficult to reach the mainstream social media' (11). Moreover, an online fanbase is difficult to monetize: 'having 100,000 followers does not translate into higher ticket sales' (19). As a result, musicians continue to feel dependant on the traditional career path that the music industries offer, in part because they perceive a lack of economic opportunities outside the music industries, indicating that power dynamics have remained unchanged. In addition, participants report that some of these new practices, such as being selected for highly rated Spotify playlists and having a strong presence on social media, have become understood by intermediaries as milestones, revealing that the evaluation repertoires of the intermediaries have also adapted to the new situation. As one musician said:

I think that a lot of labels base their choice on what stands out with regard to Spotify plays. We released something independently and that did pretty well for something that had been released without a label, and that led to attention from labels because these were plays that we could generate ourselves. (16)

In other words, these new work practices are also incorporated into the discussed career strategy within the traditional music market, creating additional market demands that these musicians must try to meet by adding supplementary reputational opportunities.

Second, while musicians had already been adopting entrepreneurial and DIY approaches, dwindling support from labels and increased technological opportunities have transformed these models from a niche alternative into a dominant approach for new aspiring musicians (Haynes & Marshall, 2018; Hracs, 2015):

Everyone can release music on the internet. Earlier you had the whole process of recording and pressing. And you had to manage to sell it. Now, everyone can record in their bedroom and put it online. (9)

As a result, participants were taking on managerial tasks such as developing long-term strategies; business tasks such as networking and finance, and technical tasks such as recording or selling merchandise (see chapter 3),

which corresponds to research on protean careers in creative industries (Bridgstock, 2005). However, they remain pessimistic about reaching their goals by relying on the new technological opportunities and continue to depend on traditional intermediaries, for example to reach bigger audiences. In addition, they acknowledge the limitations of a DIY approach, mainly because it reduces the possibilities to build a network and create a favourable reputation with the circuit of intermediaries. Here, building an alliance with managers, bookers, labels and other professionals in the music industries can help them to gain access to that circuit of intermediaries. As one musician, without a label or manager, reflected on the benefits of collaborating with industry partners:

A large part of music is networking. So yes, if your manager is friends with programmers that can help a lot. And labels can get you on television. We played Noorderslag twice, and at other prestigious festivals, but we don't get to do that. ... These days, it is about who knows who. (20)

Therefore, in their organization of work, participants choose the middle ground between a DIY approach and collaborating with traditional actors in the music industries. Whereas previous research predicted a shift towards DIY and entrepreneurial approaches, this study only partially confirms these findings as musicians opt for a hybrid approach.

In short, while these musicians also draw from new repertoires to create new capacities, they continue to depend on the – to a large extent – unchanged structure of the music industries. Their traditional career strategy based on creating a favourable reputation within the industries and the corresponding toolkit has maintained its influence, suggesting that they are adding new tools to their toolkit without replacing outdated tools. As a result, this generation of musicians is experiencing a moderate adjustment of their work practices rather than fundamentally unsettled times (Swidler, 1986).

Resisting changes

Another effect of the continuing importance of the structure of the traditional industries is that several milestones are resistant to change. However, whereas in the traditional industries these milestones might have predicted revenues from sales and reaching an audience, the changes in the industries mean that this is no longer necessarily the case. Here, the two

most striking examples are releasing albums and obtaining radio airplay. First, musicians continue to release albums, even though they believe that audiences listen more to individual songs in playlists:

Playlists are doing well. People don't listen to albums. The medium of the album ... is becoming less relevant. People go for one specific track. In the 80s you had more physical sales and people had to listen to your whole record to hear that one single that they really wanted to hear. (10)

Moreover, releasing one album does not generate enough attention ('buzz') to tour for a year. For example, releasing songs regularly makes it easier to capture the audience's attention over a longer period:

The music industry is volatile. You want to be in the spotlights all the time because those are the moments where you can build an audience. Releasing an album ... only gives your audience one release moment ... and then they have to remember your album for the next couple of months. Whereas if you release tracks every three, every two months, you are in the picture more often. (8)

Second, due to changing media consumption the prominent radio station 3FM is becoming less influential. The musicians believe that receiving attention from this radio station no longer has the same effect with regard to reaching an audience. Nevertheless, musicians continue to pursue airplay on 3FM: 'right now, 3FM is a difficult brand to aim for I think ... but our management doesn't doubt that we should focus on them, so we trust them in that' (10). According to the musicians, because of the changes in the industries these traditional milestones are suboptimal strategies as they have become (at least partially) decoupled from immediate economic success.

To understand why these musicians continue to pursue such practices, we have to look at how the existing culture of the music industries mediates the change in the market. First, musicians believe that intermediaries continue to use several milestones as part of their evaluation repertoire, and therefore these practices still appear to receive backing from these powerful actors (Beckert, 1999). According to the musicians, getting radio airplay is still an important way to signal the potential quality of an act and get picked up by the industries: 'radio airplay really is a factor that can bring you success' (5). In the same manner, it is still considered essential to release albums because dominant music critics still focus on them: 'That is how the industry works. ... [I]f you want to get a review in *De Volkskrant* [Dutch newspaper]

or in *Oor* [Dutch popular music magazine], you have to release an album' (9). In other words, because musicians continue to rely on intermediaries, and these intermediaries continue to rely on these milestones, the cultural scaffolding of the traditional industries seems to have remained stable, leading to cultural lag (Swidler, 1986). Even though the milestones have little or no economic benefit, they remain important steps for the accumulation of reputation over time and hence are expected to contribute to later economic success. Therefore, musicians have come to perceive these milestones primarily as useful tools for building a favourable reputation. However, as discussed earlier, because they feel that they have such a slim chance of reaching their goals in the industries, collecting these milestones has the risk of becoming an 'empty' story to hold on to, without much guarantee that this investment will pay off in the long run.

A second reason why milestones are resistant to change is because musicians keep drawing from the traditional market culture as a toolkit to shape their work practices. When asked why a musician wanted to release an album with his act, he responded: 'it is a band thing I guess. Bands will always release albums' (11). Here, the market culture continues to provide these practices with a certain taken-for-grantedness (Swidler, 1986). In addition, several practices also have a symbolic appeal for musicians, which also causes them to continue to perform these practices. This symbolic appeal relates to romanticized connotations that musicians attach to the archetypical image of the pop artist. As one musician captured this appeal:

I think that everybody secretly wants to be a rock star. As in, travel a lot, see a lot of places, people think you're cool, a lot of crazy parties, crazy people, yes that is very cool. It's just fun. (12)

Musicians enjoy being part of the traditional music industries (see also Crossley & Bottero, 2015), and continue to be attracted to its symbolic appeal (Threadgold, 2018). As a result, they orientate themselves on the opportunities, or space of possibles (Bourdieu, 1993), offered by the music industries and shape their work practices accordingly. As a result, for example, musicians still aspire to play at prestigious festivals, 'our ultimate goal is to play at Glastonbury' (10), or tour abroad, 'we want to play [abroad] more often. These are very small pub shows, but that is a lot of fun' (9), even if they lose money with it, because, in addition to their function as milestones, these activities correspond with the romantic myth of the musician.

Of course, the experiences of these musicians have been altered by the changes in the music industries: they earn less from record sales and depend more on performing and they might have less of a role as industry workers and function more as entrepreneurs, trying to take advantage of the new technological opportunities. Nevertheless, because of their continuing dependency on traditional intermediaries and the value they attach to the symbolic appeal of being part of the music industries, musicians continue to perform reputational practices with low immediate economic impact.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have investigated the role of reputation in the career building strategy of early-career musicians in the changing music industries. In the first part of my analysis, I showed how the participants create such a favourable reputation. Here, I argued that to build a sustainable career in music they experience a dependency on the intermediaries within the Dutch music industries. Therefore, to improve their status and acquire rewards, they aim to create a favourable reputation by collecting milestones to signal a track record of prior successes and their capacity for future success (cf. Bielby & Bielby, 1994). Together, these findings provide insights into how early-career musicians solicit the support of intermediaries when entering the music industries (Lingo & Tepper, 2013; Zwaan et al., 2009) and the role of reputations in this process (Dumont, 2018), by showing how musicians attempt to manipulate the decision processes of intermediaries by means of these milestones.

In the second part of my analysis, I studied musicians' beliefs about the ways in which new technologies are impacting their career building strategies. While digital optimists were hopeful about the opportunities that industry changes held for musicians (Frost, 2007; McLeod, 2005), in line with other recent scholarly work (Haynes & Marshall, 2017; Young & Collins, 2010) critiquing the prediction that digitization has democratizing effects, for my participants the potential effects of these technological transformations on their career strategy have not materialized. Results indicate that musicians have only implemented new technologies and roles to a moderate extent and they continue to see the traditional music industries as the most viable pathway towards reach their goals. In addition, several milestones have remained resistant to change even though their immediate economic impact is limited, creating cultural lag. This is because the evaluation repertoires

of intermediaries continue to function as cultural scaffolding (Swidler, 1986) and musicians believe that the intermediaries still back traditional milestones – showing that agents with high levels of capital can continue to promote practices, even if change occurs (Beckert, 2010). In addition, as musicians continue to value the symbolic appeal of the music industries, they continue to experience traditional milestones as meaningful within the context of that market (Bourdieu, 1993).

Overall, my study offers a framework to help explain how culture structures reputational practices. I have introduced milestones as a mechanism to illustrate that workers perform certain reputational practices because they believe that they reflect the evaluation repertoires of intermediaries. In this way, these evaluation repertoires function as cultural scaffolding for cultural workers and these milestones serve as signposts structuring their careers. Similar analyses in other creative industries may yield comparable patterns of institutionalized practices that workers use in order to be valued and selected by intermediaries to increase capital volume and capital types. At the same time, systematic comparisons of different markets can show how the importance of milestones may differ based on the degree to which finding audiences for artists are 'contingent on gatekeepers' actions' (Hirsch, 1972, p. 655).

Furthermore, my findings contribute to our understanding of why reputational practices may be influenced by industry changes and help to understand the circumstances under which workers may be resistant to technological changes and continue to follow established industry practices. First, at this point in time, the discussed technological changes were not enough to destabilize the market as the power relations appear to have remained stable. This confirms the point made by Hesmondhalgh (2009), that changes due to technological innovations in the music industries are recurring patterns and should not be understood as market disintegration. Second, when change occurs, workers do not immediately turn into reflexive entrepreneurs who under such circumstances can '*envision* alternative modes of getting things done' (Beckert, 1999, p. 786, original emphasis), because they may continue to take the cultural scaffolding for granted and leaving the market altogether might undermine the whole reason why they chose to participate in the first place, i.e. the romantic appeal of being part of the music industries.

Of course, this chapter only tells one part of the story of careers in music. The practice of gradual accumulation of reputation and its value for early-career musicians as described here is also reflected in the discourse in the Dutch music industries when discussing the importance of a 'chain approach'

whereby musicians work their way up in small steps (e.g. Bussemaker, 2013; Gielen et al., 2017; Van Vugt, 2018). Yet, as I focused on the perspective of musicians, I cannot provide evidence that this strategy based on creating a favourable reputation is appealing to intermediaries other than what the experiences of these musicians tell us. Moreover, not all musicians want to build an act in the music industries: some opt for a career as a music teacher, session musician or songwriter. Some try to build an act outside the traditional music industries where different business models exist (e.g. cover bands or resident DJs). For example, the new generation of hip-hop musicians relies 'only on informal DIY channels for the production, performance and consumption of rap and hip hop to make their names' (Reitsamer & Prokop, 2017, p. 13). Therefore, it remains important to investigate other forms of work in music and the role of reputation in it.

Nevertheless, the perceived importance of the strategy of investing in milestones shows the necessity for new acts to accumulate a reputation in the music industries in order to stand out from their peers. Their chances of success are low as the music industries have been characterized as a winner-takes-all market in which many musicians struggle to make a living – a situation which has only intensified due to the changes in the industry. Consequently, these practices may cause 'value slippage' as other industry actors may benefit more from the investments made by these musicians than the musicians themselves (Van der Hoeven et al., 2022). Even so, acquiring a competitive advantage in this way could very well make the difference between sold-out tours or a life in the margins of the music industries, rehearsing in your parents' garage.

3

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The working life of musicians

Mapping the
work activities
and values of
early-career pop
musicians in the
Dutch music
industries

Introduction

Technological innovations have drastically altered the working life of musicians in the music industries. As revenues from recorded music have plummeted due to downloading and streaming (Marshall, 2015; NVPI, 2011), performing live has once more become an important source of income for pop musicians (Wikström, 2009). In addition, the web and new software offer opportunities to produce music independently, reach audiences directly via social media (Haynes & Marshall, 2017; Morris & Powers, 2015) and monetize these new forms of contact (Hughes et al., 2016). Due to these changes in the music industries, early-career musicians can (or have to) take responsibility for more work activities in order to build their career: they can produce and distribute music (Morris, 2014), are expected to carry out more business and managerial tasks (Hracs, 2015) and have to engage more in aesthetic labour (Hracs & Leslie, 2014). As a result, early-career musicians are relying on new do-it-yourself (DIY) and entrepreneurial approaches to work in order to make a living (Bernardo & Martins, 2014; Young & Collins, 2010). However, the ways in which such musicians aim to build their careers and enter the music industries have been underexplored so far (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). In order to further our knowledge of the work activities of early-career musicians within the changed music industries, I have used an online diary questionnaire in this chapter to systematically map their day-to-day routines.

In addition, the question remains how musicians understand their work within these changing industries. Previous research has shown that musicians have difficulties with aligning the artistic and entrepreneurial aspects of their work, and that they are reluctant to see themselves as entrepreneurs (Coulson, 2012; Haynes & Marshall, 2018). However, current research on early-career musicians reveals that artistic and entrepreneurial valuations of work might be becoming more aligned (Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018). Members of the new generation of musicians are less hesitant to see themselves as entrepreneurs (Albinsson, 2018) and to carry out the required entrepreneurial tasks. This shift in the valuation of work might be due to the fact that changes in the industries have led to promotional and commercial activities becoming inseparable from the artistic work of musicians, undermining traditional understandings of 'selling out' (Klein et al., 2017). As a result, the art-commerce dichotomy (Bourdieu, 1993) may no longer suffice to understand how the new generation of musicians value their work, especially since its usage 'often results in a static binarism whereas practices are more fluid' (Haynes & Marshall, 2018, p. 469). Therefore, in this

chapter I inductively map the different accounts of value (Gerber, 2017) that early-career musicians rely on to value their work activities.

The purpose of this chapter is thus twofold. First, I examine *what the work activities of early-career pop musicians look like in the changing music industries*. In order to answer this question, seventeen Dutch early-career pop musicians participated in a week-long diary questionnaire study that mapped their work activities. This innovative research design made it possible to examine their actual behaviour in a natural environment (Bolger et al., 2003), while avoiding biases that could result from inaccurate memories in retrospective self-reports (Andersen & Mikkelsen, 2008). Secondly, I study *how these musicians value these work activities*. To do so, musicians participated in in-depth face-to-face interviews and short post-questionnaire interviews, providing me with the opportunity to pair and compare their actual behaviour measured by the diary methodology with their valuations of their working lives. In this way, this study contributes to our understanding of the nature of work of early-career workers following the changes in the music industries and the creative industries at large.

Theory

The work activities of early-career musicians

Workers see their work in the creative industries as attractive because of the high status of these fields (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013). Furthermore, as this career is characterized by uncertainty, some workers are lured by the prospect of avoiding the predictability of routine work. However, the downside of this uncertainty is that, due to an oversupply of labour, workers face a high risk of failure (Menger, 1999). Consequently they feel that economic insecurity is the price that they pay for their freedom to work where they want and how they want (Hermes et al., 2017). This economic insecurity means having to work long, flexible and unpaid hours and deal with precarious career prospects (Haynes & Marshall, 2018; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013). Workers in the creative industries, especially early-careerists, are faced with a high degree of mobility, have to promote their own work and often juggle multiple occupational roles and unstable sources of income (Bridgstock, 2005; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Under these circumstances,

workers must perform a wide range of tasks themselves, such as marketing, publicity, networking and financial activities, in addition to artistic, problem-solving and communication tasks and tasks related to new media (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016).

Two concepts often used to conceptualize the work activities of musicians under these conditions are those of the DIY musician and the cultural entrepreneur. While these concepts are sometimes used interchangeably (A. Bennett, 2018; Haenfler, 2018) and display similarities, they highlight different aspects of the work of musicians, and thus together can be used to understand the range of work activities that musicians rely on to make a living in the current music industries. First, the emergence of the internet and other technologies has enabled musicians to circumvent the recording industry by producing and distributing their music online, turning DIY into a dominant approach for musicians (Hracs, 2015). DIY musicians operate in informal networks with a strong sense of community, aiming to create spaces outside the mainstream for autonomous creation (A. Bennett, 2018; Threadgold, 2018). Besides song writing and performing, these musicians take responsibility for other creative tasks such as the presentation of their live shows and maintaining their image and online presence. Furthermore, they carry out aesthetic labour, such as 'crafting unique identities and looks and forging emotional connections with audiences' (Hracs & Leslie, 2014, p. 69), turning this into an ongoing practice where musicians have to be in a 'constant state of readiness' (p. 70). In addition, DIY musicians perform a range of non-creative tasks necessary to produce, distribute and market their music (Hracs, 2015; Hughes et al., 2016). They are responsible for business tasks such as merchandise, networking, financing and marketing. They carry out management activities such as booking shows, organizing tours, PR and taking care of the legal aspects. They also perform technical activities such as maintaining instruments and recording, engineering and mastering music (Haenfler, 2018; Hracs, 2015).

Second, in an attempt to externalize the financial risks caused by the discussed changes, musicians have been forced to become cultural entrepreneurs, turning this into a dominant business model for musicians (Hughes et al., 2016). Just like DIY musicians, cultural entrepreneurs work with limited resources, but they often operate within the parameters of the music industries, collaborating with partners such as the marketing and distribution services of labels (Ellmeier, 2003; Hughes et al., 2016). According to Thom (2016), the various definitions of entrepreneurship are characterized by 'risk taking, opportunity recognition, and creativity' (p. 4). Entrepreneurs use non-economic forms of capital to produce creative products and raise

awareness of intermediaries in an attempt to pursue artistic interests (Scott, 2012), which requires performing a combination of artistic and business activities (Ellmeier, 2003). For entrepreneurs in the music industries, marketing is central and they try to build audiences by using social media to share their music and to interact with their audiences (Morris, 2014). Research among visual artists (Thom, 2016) shows that entrepreneurial activities such as networking, finance, strategic thinking and planning activities are considered important. Communication activities as well as art-specific technical tasks are also required.

Research indicates that DIY and entrepreneurial approaches to work are especially common among early-career musicians. Due to their increasingly precarious position, young people pursue DIY careers in music in order to achieve autonomy from the labour market and to do something they experience as meaningful (A. Bennett, 2018). As a result, they opt for 'strategic poverty' (Threadgold, 2018, p. 14), and their careers are marked by uncertainty and precarity. For example, in hip-hop in particular, young musicians rely on DIY approaches to make a name for themselves (Lombana-Bermudez & Watkins, 2020; Reitsamer & Prokop, 2017) as they distribute their albums for free online to gain exposure or participate in rap battles on YouTube. In addition, the discussed entrepreneurial approach of mobilizing and converting non-economic capital is often pursued by young musicians as most of them start out with limited resources (Scott, 2012).

The literature on DIY musicians and entrepreneurs helps us to understand the tasks performed by early-career musicians in the current music industries. Relying on the overarching activity categories used by Hracs (2015), table 1 provides an overview of the discussed activities, summarizing our current knowledge from both lines of research. By investigating the activities and perceptions of musicians, I examine to which extent these DIY and entrepreneurial practices are indeed predominant in the Dutch music industries.

Table 1 - Overview of identified activities required for musicians grouped per activity category, adapted from Hracs (2015), Thom (2016), Haenfler (2018), Hennekam and Bennett (2016), Hracs and Leslie (2014), and Morris (2014)

Creative	Managerial	Business	Technical
Art specific technical tasks	Bookings	Accounting	Acquiring/maintaining technical knowledge
Artwork	Communicating	Branding	Distribution
Collaborating	Legal	Business planning/venturing	Maintaining instruments/equipment
Graphic design	Management/organization	Financial tasks	Manufacturing/packaging
Image/fashion	Music licensing	Grant writing	Recording/engineering/mastering
Merchandise/design	Project/time management	Investor relations	Video editing
Performing	Publicity/media relations	Marketing/promotion	Website maintenance
Product development	Strategic thinking/planning	Merchandise	
Rehearsing	Team working/collaboration	Networking	
Song writing		Social media	
Video		Social media - audience interaction	
Website design			

Valuing work in music

In line with the work of Bourdieu, a widely shared (and much debated) understanding is that a binary opposition exists in art fields between a more autonomous pole and a more heteronomous pole (see for example Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018). On the one side, artists produce *l'art pour l'art*. Here, making art and earning money are seen as conflicting activities. On the other side, artists have an explicit market orientation and they understand success as the ability to establish an income (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007). This dichotomy is reflected in the discourse of the music industries (Frith, 1991; Negus, 1997), and has been a recurring pattern throughout the history of popular music: ‘the relevance and prominence of the “art versus commerce” debate in popular music has varied across genre, era, and artist, but it has persisted as a sign of popular music’s acceptance as “serious” art’ (Klein et al., 2017, p. 223).

McRobbie (2016) argues that due to increased economic insecurity this binary opposition in the creative industries is changing, as entrepreneurial values are replacing artistic values. The inherent value of creative work has become subject to inflation and a more openly commercial discourse has become dominant. Artists of the new generation often operate as cultural entrepreneurs and increasingly see themselves as professionals (see also Gerber, 2017). This also seems to be case for musicians. As a consequence of the changing business models in music, entrepreneurship has come into a positive light and there is an emphasis on opportunities for ‘autonomy, flexible working conditions and the potential for creative self-realization’ (Haynes & Marshall, 2018, p. 464). Musicians perceive entrepreneurial activities as part of being a musician, even though they do so reluctantly and perceive this as a minor part of their identity (Coulson, 2012; Haynes & Marshall, 2018). Research on young musicians in Sweden and the Netherlands shows that commercial and artistic poles have become even further aligned (Albinsson, 2018; Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018). Moreover, activities that used to be framed as selling out, such as attaching your name to brands, or licensing your music for commercials, have become part of a new justifying discourse (Klein et al., 2017).

In other words, the art-commerce dichotomy may no longer suffice to enable an understanding of how musicians value their work, as the reality might be more fluid (Haynes & Marshall, 2018). This might especially hold for young musicians, as Bennett (2018) argues: ‘The balance is not necessarily between staying pure (or authentic) or selling out; it is more about how to make something that is a minority pursuit (and probably destined to stay that way)

economically sustainable, or at least as sustainable as possible, alongside other short-term work opportunities that young DIY cultural entrepreneurs are able to take advantage of' (p. 150). Moreover, Miller (2018) has shown that not every amateur or semi-professional is aiming to build a professional career in music. Many musicians aspire to a position of 'sustainable semi-professionalism' (p. 15) and create 'music on a long-term basis without seeking a professional music career' (p. 6). These musicians might value other aspects of their work in music and take pleasure from participating in a music scene (Crossley & Bottero, 2015). For example, indie bands do not necessarily want to earn a living with their music but may enjoy making music as a leisure activity, a social bonding practice and a way of gaining recognition (I. Rogers, 2008). Again, the focus on other values is especially relevant for young musicians, as research has shown that they pursue a career in music because they value creativity and the music community (Threadgold, 2018), or because they want to continue making music, honing their skills and obtaining social capital (Lombana-Bermudez & Watkins, 2020). This emphasizes the importance of adopting a theoretical approach that leaves analytical room for a variety of valuations of work in music.

One way to transcend these art-commerce and amateur-professional dichotomies is by identifying the different values which musicians attach to their work. Gerber (2017) has shown that American fine artists draw from four accounts of value to think about their work and strategically navigate the art field, rather than perceiving a binary opposition. Here, accounts of value are narratives to 'account for the value of the things that they do' (Gerber, 2017, p. 8). Depending on the different accounts of value they draw from, they value and organize their work differently. *Pecuniary accounts* relate to narratives about investment and return, *credentialing accounts* focus on a career in the artistic labour market rather than producing works of art, *vocational accounts* are based on the idea that the practice of art is its own reward, and *relational accounts* focus on the social relationships that work in art brings. This multidimensional model can be used to interpret the artist's valuations of their work activities, even outside the Bourdieusian axes, and thus provides an opportunity to map various ways in which musicians value their work activities. At the same time, it is important not to take these four accounts as self-evident in popular music, for different accounts of value might be at play here. Next, I will discuss how I have investigated the activities that musicians perform and the ways in which they value their work.

Data and methods

I collected data from seventeen early-career musicians. I wanted to find musicians who were actively trying to build a career with their act in the music industries, and therefore could not be understood as pure amateurs,¹⁰ but who were also not established musicians. In order to reach this group, my population consisted of musicians who had performed at the 2018 edition of the Noorderslag Festival. This renowned showcase festival is widely perceived in the Netherlands as the place where the new generation of talented (pop-rock) musicians is presented to representatives of the Dutch music industries (Van Vugt, 2018). I employed a purposeful sampling strategy (Flick, 2007) in the following manner: first, in order to include only early-career musicians, established acts who performed on the two main stages were left out of the sample. Second, as music careers are shaped significantly by gender (Berkers & Schaap, 2018), I aimed for a gender balance. However, as several of my requests for an interview were turned down, the sample consisted of ten respondents who identified as male and seven who identified as female.¹¹ Third, I included musicians from different regions in the Netherlands in order to achieve a geographical spread. All sampled musicians had already taken their first steps in the music industries: all have been performing regularly and most have released their first album and signed with a booker or manager. None of them, however, have yet built a sustainable career. An overview of the participants with more background information can be found in table 6 of appendix 1. In the results section, musicians are referred to by an individual case number.

¹⁰ Of course, as I will discuss in more depth in chapter 5, the distinction between professional and amateur musicians is problematic as it is hard to point out characteristics that separate the two categories (Miller, 2018). I use the term amateur here to distinguish our sample of musicians from musicians who do not aim to participate within the music industries, such as the ideal-type amateur who has no peer recognition and no ambition

to achieve anything within the music industries.

¹¹ Of the 31 musicians I contacted, 14 refused to participate. Reasons for refusal varied, ranging from a lack of time due to recording and touring activities to a more general refusal to participate and/or respond. These musicians did not differ significantly from the participants in my study.

In order to investigate how these musicians perceive and value their work activities in general, face-to-face interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured and included topics such as 1) their career history, 2) the description of their work activities, 3) their reflections on the music industries, 4) their reflections on their work and 5) the financial aspects of their work. Interviews took 66 minutes on average and were transcribed verbatim. Second, in order to clarify their work activities, participants filled out an online diary questionnaire for about a week. This contained questions about which work activities the participants performed, which could be selected from a list or added manually. In addition, they were asked to report how much time they had spent on these activities and how they rate the activities in order of their perceived usefulness. Lastly, participants were asked to respond to five Likert questions using a five-point scale that measured whether they perceived the day as useful, stressful, busy, fun or as causing insecurity. On average, the participants filled in the diary questionnaire 6.17 out of 7 days (min. 5, max 7) and in total 105 days were measured (14 days are missing). Third, a ten-minute post-questionnaire interview was conducted via telephone. Here, the goal was to investigate how these musicians perceived their past work week and how they valued the activities they had performed. Extensive notes were taken during the conversation and turned into short reports. Interview questions of both interviews and the design of the online diary questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

To analyse the quantitative data, descriptive reports were produced using R, where I calculated the percentage of the total time spent on these activities, the percentage of the participants who had engaged in these activities, and the number of days that activities were reported. In some cases, manually added activities were merged if they overlapped. Because of the small sample, no statistical tests were performed. To interpret the perceived usefulness of the activities, I recoded the absolute positions of the activities on rankings which depended on the number of activities that were reported that day (e.g. 1 to 5, whereby 1 was the most useful, and 5 the least useful activity), into a relative score (with 5 reported activities, the most useful activity received 1 point, the second 0.75, the third 0.5, etc.). Next, the mean and standard deviation were calculated. All qualitative data was analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in Atlas T.I. version 8, where 750 initial codes were created and merged into themes. Afterwards these themes were evaluated and further refined, resulting in fifteen themes, grasping patterns in the data concerning the work activities of the participants, their perspectives on their work, and their reflections on the music industries.

Results

First, I discuss the outcomes of the diary questionnaire to investigate what these musicians' work activities look like and how they reflect on these activities, drawing from the post-questionnaire interviews and the in-depth interviews. In the second section, I explore their general valuations of their work and work activities, once again using the interview data.

Activities

Of the 105 days measured, participants reported that on 11 days no activities relating to their musical career were performed. On average they invested 1498 minutes in their music career (min. 635, max. 3361), which accounts for 245 minutes, or 4.08 hours per day. This means that musicians invest 25 hours per week in their musical career (min. 6.25, max. 56.02) on average.

During the measured days, the largest amount of time (41 percent) was spent on *creative activities* such as rehearsing together, writing songs, rehearsing alone and performing (see table 2). Participants perceive these activities as the foundation of their career in music: 'Music comes first. It is the most important. ... In the end, your music needs to be good and ideally it is something unique' (20). It may be no surprise that the three activities that were ranked in the first quartile as being the most useful revolved around the creative aspects of their musicianship, such as performing (average ranking of 0.94, done by 59 percent of the musicians), rehearsing together (0.85, 71 percent) and composing (0.74, 71 percent). Musicians felt that they often did not have enough time for creative work, which is in line with earlier research reporting that only a small part of their work involves making music (Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Morris, 2014). However, the results from the diary questionnaire suggest that musicians manage to reserve time for what they like to do most.

Another substantive category revolves around *managerial activities* (17 percent of time spent). Trying to achieve success as an act is a social endeavour and requires ongoing discussions with band members, team members and others, which requires a constant state of readiness: 'this goes on throughout the day, starting at 10 A.M., continuing to 10 P.M. ... This is a train that keeps on running' (21). Musicians carry out a lot of managerial tasks concerning the overall strategy and planning for their act. They

Table 2 - Overview of the reported work activities

Activity	Minutes spent	% of minutes spent	Days reported	% participants engaged in activity	Mean usefulness	Sd usefulness
Creative¹²	10369	41%		100%		
Rehearsing others	3240	13%	18	71%	0.85	0.29
Song writing	2903	11%	28	71%	0.74	0.37
Rehearsing alone	2186	9%	25	65%	0.48	0.46
Performing	1740	7%	18	59%	0.94	0.24
Graphic design	300	1%	3	18%	0.25	0.35
Managerial	4430	17%		94%		
Meetings with band	2590	10%	40	76%	0.62	0.30
Meetings with team	1115	4%	28	76%	0.56	0.38
Meetings with others	725	3%	9	29%	0.35	0.36
Business	3961	16%		88%		
Administration/finance	2240	9%	29	82%	0.41	0.33
Social media – general posts	741	3%	24	65%	0.24	0.25
Networking/acquisition	330	1%	5	24%	0.48	0.39
Social media – interaction audience	275	1%	9	35%	0.31	0.17
Visiting concerts	210	1%	2	12%	0.58	0.25
Interviews/photoshoots	165	1%	3	18%	0.36	0.38
Technical	1940	7%		71%		
Recording	1065	4%	6	29%	0.83	0.28
Distributing merchandise	625	2%	17	41%	0.56	0.38
Logistics	250	1%	6	29%	0.40	0.37
Other	4771	19%		88%		
Traveling	4471	18%	35	82%	0.11	0.19
Following education	300	1%	4	12%	0.48	0.17

¹² Overarching activity categories, based on Hracs (2015) in bold.

reported a variety of issues that they discussed, such as looking for new opportunities to perform, recording and releasing music, shooting videos, producing merchandise, touring schedules, preparing for interviews and more. In line with the literature (A. Bennett, 2018; Scott, 2012), the fact that these musicians were performing these managerial activities might be a typical characteristic of early-career musicians, as they believe that they need to achieve a certain level of success before they can outsource such activities to managers, labels and bookers (if they want to):

If you want to start with something, you often have to do it yourself. In the beginning, you have to get gigs, and arrange that you can record music, that you release it, and maybe can get a label. ... You just have to start a small company, and make sure that you are organized, because help will only come later, I think. (11)

Business activities accounted for 16 percent of time spent, with most of the time being taken up by administration and finance. One musician told: 'we are all freelancers, we all have our own company. So you need to be able to do bookkeeping, know what reasonable prices are if you replace someone at a gig: you need to deal with the practical daily stuff' (4). Furthermore, musicians are expected to carry out marketing activities such as maintaining their social media and networking. Contrary to reports that social media require musicians to interact continuously with audiences, social media played a limited role in this sample. While these musicians are still at the start of their career and may not yet have reached a large online audience, remarkably they do not feel that they 'always have to be on' (cf. Hracs & Leslie, 2014). Rather, musicians feel pressure regarding how to look active on social media in less eventful weeks and are afraid that they don't have any relevant content to share: 'I think it is super boring to see an artist making videos about himself. ... With smaller artists I always think 'why are you doing this', because I don't think that there are many people who think this is interesting' (13). Moreover, musicians believe that their social media activity has limited impact and perceive it as being relatively useless (general posts 0.24, audience interaction 0.31). Here my findings confirm research showing that musicians struggle with monetizing social media outreach or building an audience online (Haynes & Marshall, 2017). Some of the musicians interviewed said that in order to stand out online to audiences when there is such an oversupply of acts, they would need resources that they do not yet have access to: 'I see that bigger artists can easily grow bigger through social media, but smaller artists suffer because they have a hard time reaching the mainstream social media' (13).

Lastly, *technical activities* accounted for 7 percent of time spent, including all activities regarding selling merchandise and logistical activities such as building up for sound checks and instrument reparation. While grouped under technical activities (e.g. Hracs, 2015), musicians perceive recording as creative and technical at the same time, and see it as a very useful (average ranking of 0.83) and fundamental part of their work: ‘these days it is normal that everyone produces their own music. ... Everyone has a laptop with Logic. So, when you are writing you are immediately recording or producing. ... Yes, it becomes an artistic thing instead of just a mean’ (5). It is therefore remarkable that this perceived importance does not lead to a larger time investment (4 percent of time spent). On the one hand, this might be explained by the fact that activities vary week per week depending on which phase an act is in within the cycle of recording, releasing and performing, and on the other hand by the fact that several musicians feel that, in addition to home recording, they still depend on recording studios and producers to get their recording quality to a level that is acceptable to the music industries.

The reported work activities are shaped by the conditions of the music industries. Of course, DIY and entrepreneurial work practices have been present in the music industries before. Yet, as predicted by research on DIY and cultural entrepreneurship (Haenfler, 2018; Hracs, 2015), the musicians here have become responsible for a wide range of management and business activities, due to decreased industry support. In addition, technological advancements such as social media or home recording software make it possible for musicians to perform activities which had previously been taken care of by industry intermediaries. Furthermore, music industries are organized locally (Marshall, 2013) and their local conditions enable and limit behaviour. The Dutch music industries are relatively small compared to mainstream music industries (see chapter 4); in 2018, the live music industry contributed 581 million euros to the economy, while the recorded music industry contributed 385 million euros (PWC, n.d.). However, a combination of governmental and commercial initiatives (Van Vugt, 2018) gives young musicians a lot of opportunities to perform live (Gielen et al., 2017). This makes it attractive for them to focus their managerial and business activities on gaining access to the small group of cultural intermediaries who regulate this circuit for live performances. As a result, these musicians prioritize a specific set of work activities such as performing live, networking, building a team with people who have connections within the music industries and discussing topics at meetings that might help them to be acknowledged by these key actors (see also chapter 4).

At the same time, early-career musicians in the Netherlands occupy a precarious position (Von der Fuhr, 2015). As most of the participating musicians (14 out of 17) are unable to make a living from their work in music and opportunities for funding are limited, the 25 hours they spend on working in music are in addition to other work that they must do to stay afloat financially. This leads to unsustainable situations and several musicians reported that it would be impossible in the long run for them to continue earning next to nothing, while working long days. As a result, their experiences are characteristic of working in the creative industries, as they report unstable sources of income, difficulties with managing their time and a perceived lack of long-term career prospects (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013). However, at odds with this understanding, my sample reported being quite satisfied with their work. In general, they perceive their days as being relatively useful (mean 4.06 on a 5-point scale, standard deviation 0.84), fun (3.83, 0.71) and less busy (2.78, 1.09), stressful (2.51, 0.94) and as causing insecurity (1.86, 0.85). This goes against the literature that suggests that workers in creative industries experience high levels of insecurity (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013; Menger, 1999), and that young musicians have to build a career while having low levels of capital, which makes them more insecure (Scott, 2012). These counterintuitive findings might be explained by the fact that work satisfaction compensates for the instability of their situation (Abbing, 2002) and that musicians are happy that they can pursue their goals in music even though they might not be able to make a living out of it (A. Bennett, 2018; Threadgold, 2018). To understand why these early-career musicians did not perceive their work negatively on a day-to-day basis, it is important to look at the ways in which they value their work.

Values

The analysis revealed three accounts of value that influence how musicians perceive their work activities: *pop as art*, *pop as business* and *pop as a hobby*. While these accounts are not mutually exclusive and sometimes overlap in musicians’ narratives, they clarify the different viewpoints that musicians take when reflecting on their work.

Pop as art

The most dominant account of value is pop as art, which could be compared to what Bourdieu (1993) calls the autonomous pole and Gerber (2017) a vocational account. For these musicians, artistic autonomy is often fundamental as they want to make the music they prefer: 'we only make music for ourselves. Because we like it' (7). In opposition with recent research that showed that commercial and artistic values in the music industries are aligning, especially for younger musicians (Albinsson, 2018; Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018), musicians who draw from this account of value oppose commercial values. Often, they are not willing to make concessions to increase their appeal. To them, music should be a personal expression and they emphasize the pleasure of writing music and playing live. Several of these musicians feel that the type of music they make limits their chances of becoming financially successful: 'it was never my intention to make money with it and get rich. Also because it is not realistic, especially not with selling your records' (12).

As a result, musicians here reflect negatively on activities that they perceive as being market oriented. They dislike networking and the fact that this can have such a positive impact on one's career. Marketing and thinking about one's image are perceived as inauthentic, and musicians have the feeling that they cannot be themselves when performing such activities:

Ideally you can just be yourself. ... It feels artificial to think about your image. Quite quickly that feels like branding or marketing. That feels very far away from why you make music in the first place. They are two opposite things, and I cannot do both at once. (5)

These musicians dislike doing administrative tasks and are afraid that doing too many managerial or business activities would limit the time they have available for making music. As discussed, traditionally these activities were performed by industry actors such as labels – at least for signed musicians – but now musicians either need to do this themselves or find others to do this for them. Musicians who draw from this account prefer to outsource this kind of work to bookers and managers, even though this increases costs. In a way, this can be understood as an entrepreneurial form of organizing one's career as they operate within the parameters of the music industries in collaboration with traditional actors (Hughes et al., 2016), but here this entrepreneurship is approached with reluctance (Coulson, 2012; Haynes & Marshall, 2018). If such collaborations are not possible, musicians opt for a marginalized position within the boundaries of the music industries rather than performing

additional business tasks. This results in an organization of work whereby they aim to do as little themselves as possible, similar to the DIY culture as described by Threadgold (2018) where musicians 'choose poverty' (p. 14) and keep overheads low so they can continue focusing on creative work.

While these musicians are not optimistic about their chances of earning a living with their act, they perceive opportunities for remaining active in the music industries without having to compromise their artistic ideals. Either this is due to the fact that they see sufficient scope to continue with their act by focusing on their artistic goals rather than looking for commercial opportunities as an entrepreneur, or because they are satisfied with their marginalized position within the boundaries of the music industries. Remarkably, this value repertoire is not confined to musicians active in genres that can be understood as being forms of restricted production (Bourdieu, 1993) such as folk or indie, but also for musicians who are active in more commercial genres such as pop or electronic but who nevertheless are not optimistic about their chances of commercial success. In addition, no distinction was found regarding the usage of this account of value between musicians who participated in forms of music education and self-taught musicians.¹³

Of these musicians, a small group hopes to use the recognition that they achieve with their music to obtain other jobs within the music industries. This would enable them to make music without compromising their artistic ideals, remain part of the music industries and earn an income, which could be compared to the credentialing account as described by Gerber (2017). They aim to write toplines (writing songs over beats produced by others) and music for commercials and other musicians. While this is not a pure form of *l'art pour l'art*, artistic integrity remains important for their credibility and their reasons for wanting to be part of the music industries in the first place. As one musician said:

Because you are presenting yourself all the time to the outside world, people get the feeling of: 'that guy is doing good things'. That way you create a certain status that you can use pretty well for other activities. I have created my job as a result of the things I achieved with [my act]. (16)

¹³ Furthermore, while this study aimed for a gender balance of participants, the interviews did not reveal a clear gender distinction with regard to performed work activities or expressed values.

Pop as business

The second account of value is more commercially oriented, comparable with the heteronomous pole (Bourdieu, 1993) and the pecuniary account (Gerber, 2017). These musicians want to earn a living with their music, and they see opportunities to obtain a position in the music industries that would allow them to sustain themselves financially. Moreover, they say that they will quit music if they do not become financially successful. Often, they aim to make music that appeals to large audiences and believe that artistic and commercial goals can go together. While they believe that staying true to their artistic ideals will benefit them economically in the long run, some musicians are willing to reconsider their approach if their attempts to reach an audience are unsuccessful. So, in opposition to the previous account of value, these musicians manage to align artistic and economic values, confirming the trend found in recent research (Albinsson, 2018; Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018). Again, this value repertoire transcends genres, and is used by both musicians who studied music and self-taught musicians. So even though these musicians are more commercially oriented than the musicians who draw from the pop as art account, they do not seem to be active in a different (or more commercial) part of the music industries. Rather, they differ according to how they perceive the opportunities that are embedded in this market.

In order to become financially sustainable, these musicians have a strong belief that they are responsible for creating their own success, which mirrors the point that a commercial discourse has become more prevalent (McRobbie, 2016). As a result, musicians see entrepreneurial activities as being helpful to their artistic work. To them, their career in music is an adventurous undertaking, they find the work activities versatile and instructive and see it as their responsibility to take financial risks. As one musician summarized this:

I believe in taking responsibility for the financial risks. [Music] is something I really like to do and I think that it is a privilege to make music instead of having a boring office job. I take the risk so I can do something for the rest of my life that I really love doing. (16)

These musicians enjoy managerial activities such as participating in team meetings. But even though they take on more strategic tasks, they still believe that they need industry support to reach a level where they can earn a sustainable income. Therefore, just like several of the musicians who understood pop as art, they opt for an entrepreneurial organization of work by collaborating with managers, labels and bookers (Hughes et al., 2016), embracing their role as an entrepreneur in opposition to the 'reluctant entrepreneur' discussed in literature (Coulson, 2012; Haynes & Marshall, 2018).

Furthermore, these musicians enjoy business activities like networking or tasks related to their image such as marketing and social media. They perceive the boundary between marketing and creation as being blurred and understand both as forms of content creation, since creating posts for social media can feel like a form of creative expression and writing songs also involves a process of shaping creative ideas into marketable products. In order to become successful, musicians need to form a uniform identity that is expressed in all outings of an act:

Image is something that can reinforce your music ... and if you do not make a conscious choice, you will miss a huge opportunity. ... People can get interested in your music because they see a photo and think 'that looks interesting, I am going to listen to that'. (6)

Some musicians within this commercial orientation aim to circumvent the traditional industries, which they distrust, displaying the anti-industry attitude of DIY musicians (A. Bennett, 2018; Threadgold, 2018). These musicians enjoy working independently and do not want to depend on labels and managers, mainly because they take a considerable percentage of their revenues:

We could have chosen to sign with a label immediately, but that would mean giving up a large share of our revenues. I think that bands do that too quickly. ... Then it is difficult to remain entrepreneurial, because you can use these revenues to make new products. (15)

Consequently, they assume responsibility for many tasks such as administration, strategic planning, producing tours and recording music. With minimal resources, they aim to create sufficient revenue to make a living in music.

Pop as a hobby

Lastly, a smaller group of musicians, who are often self-taught, explicitly see their work in music as a hobby and emphasize that their music career is all about having fun. Like the artistically oriented musicians, they are pessimistic about the opportunities to make a living as a musician and have instead opted for a semi-professional position. While these musicians see themselves as hobbyists, they aim to be part of the professional field, demonstrating the limitations of relying on the amateur-professional dichotomy (Miller, 2018). They will quit their activities in music if they require too much effort, become difficult to combine with the rest of their life or if internal frictions in their act make it impossible to continue as a collective.

Although these musicians don't believe that they can acquire a more central position in the music industries, they try to maintain their marginal position in order to achieve their goals. They mentioned a variety of reasons why they derive pleasure from participating in the music industries. For example, they want to live the life of a pop artist and accumulate experiences that are part of that life, such as performing, partying, touring abroad and playing at prestigious festivals. This latter aspect confirms Rogers' (2008) finding that some musicians strive for recognition. In addition, they value the social bonding and community aspects (I. Rogers, 2008; Threadgold, 2018), or what Gerber (2017) describes as a relational account. Musicians enjoy participating in a lively music scene and collaborating with others. Making music gives them the opportunity to spend time with friends while doing what they love:

Yes, I still see it as free nights out. You go somewhere and you get food, you get drinks. You have a fun night with, yes with my [friends]. And you can make music and people like it. It's just a lot of fun to do this. (9)

While these musicians do not express a strong anti-industry sentiment, they opt for a DIY organization of work in order to keep overheads low and minimize their obligations to industry partners, relying on a strong sense of community (A. Bennett, 2018; Threadgold, 2018). Because they perceive their work in music as a hobby, they often dislike rehearsing and activities such as administration, taking part in strategic meetings or networking, and tasks such as social media, merchandise and maintaining their instrument. These musicians perform the bare minimum of non-creative activities required to continue participating in the music industries. Like some of the musicians who perceived pop as art, they aim to do as few of these tasks as possible.

Conclusion

The first aim of this chapter was to provide an answer to the empirical question of which work activities early-career pop musicians perform in the current Dutch popular music industries. The participants invest an average of 25 hours per week in their career in music and, remarkably, manage to reserve most of this time for creative work. Furthermore, they carry out a range of non-creative tasks such as managerial activities and business activities, consisting most prominently of meetings with their band members and doing their administration. Deviating from earlier research, these musicians spend minimal time on social media, which they do not perceive as being very useful as they lack the funding to build a significant audience online. In general, their experiences mirror understandings of work in the creative industries (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013) except for the fact that their work satisfaction is higher than expected. The use of the diary questionnaire, which showed the varied set of work activities these musicians perform to cope with the demands of the music industries, adds to research on the generalist skills that workers need to survive in the precarious labour markets of the creative industries (Bridgstock, 2005; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016; Lingo & Tepper, 2013). Secondly, I asked the question of how musicians value these work activities. The analysis revealed three accounts of value that musicians draw from when reflecting on their work that affect how they perceive and organize their work: pop as art, pop as business and pop as a hobby. The reported variety in the accounts of value used by musicians to account for their work furthers our understanding of the motivations of workers in the creative industries and the ways in which they navigate the existing artistic and commercial logics in their markets (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018).

In addition, based on these findings, I have formulated two main theoretical take-aways. First, the analysis shows the importance of inductive research that considers the diversity of workers' experiences in the creative industries. Depending on the value repertoires they draw from, the musicians reported a variety of perceptions and approaches that intersect with and deviate from existing understandings of work in the music industries. In line with the literature on DIY musicians, we see that artistically oriented musicians (pop as art) sometimes chose not to perform business tasks; several commercially oriented musicians (pop as business) displayed anti-industry attitudes, and hobbyists (pop as a hobby) emphasized the communal aspects of their activities in music (Haenfler, 2018; I. Rogers, 2008;

Threadgold, 2018). At the same time, other commercial musicians, artistic musicians and hobbyists reported collaborating with a team to outsource tasks, which is more in line with the literature on entrepreneurship (Hughes et al., 2016). In addition, commercial musicians enjoy the entrepreneurial aspects of their work. These results suggest that primarily relying on concepts such as DIY and cultural entrepreneurship will highlight some aspects but conceal a variety of experiences found in the current music industries. In the same manner, using the art-commerce dichotomy conceals a variety of valuations of work in music. Even though they all are active in (a part of) the same market, artistic and commercial musicians disagree on whether or not artistic and commercial goals align, while hobbyists embrace other values such as friendship. Furthermore, by acting as semi-professionals in a professional environment this last group transcends the amateur-professional dichotomy. In other words, by relying on the discussed concepts and dichotomies, theoretical models adopt a rigidity that does not do justice to the experiences of these musicians. Here my research contributes to literature that critiques the use of deductive concepts such as entrepreneurship (Oakley, 2013), and to literature that argues that art fields should not be conceptualized as consisting out of an art-commerce binary (Franssen & Kuipers, 2013; Haynes & Marshall, 2018).

Second, my analysis adds to theory formation on the relationship between work activities and the perceptions of actors and the way in which they aim to position themselves inside fields. Earlier research has argued that work activities of musicians are shaped by the local context of the music industries (Tarassi, 2018) and that 'the internal logic and the dynamics of participation in a world shape motivations, values and satisfactions' (Crossley & Bottero, 2015, p. 53). My research confirms these findings, as the results show that the musicians opted to organize their work in response to the specific conditions of the Dutch music industries. Therefore, it is important to stress that the experiences of these musicians do not reflect the position of early-career musicians in the music industries at large, but rather reveal the importance of focusing on the local conditions that shape the working lives of musicians. However, in addition to this attention for the local context, I suggest that it is important to take into account the positions that actors occupy within those fields and the opportunities they perceive, as the data show that the positions that musicians strategically navigate towards and the opportunities they perceive to acquire these positions influence the way in which they organize and value their work. Gerber's model (2017) helps us to understand this but lacks a discussion of the ways in which accounts of value relate to art fields and mediate structural factors. Based on this study, I argue that these accounts of value

could be understood at least to some extent as the perception of the opportunities that are embedded in the field to achieve certain positions, or to use Bourdieu's words (1993), as the 'space of possibles' (p. 64). According to Bourdieu, actors perceive these experienced possibilities through "vocations," "aspirations" and "expectations" (p. 64), to which we might add accounts of value. As a result, these accounts mark, in the words of Gerber (2017), 'the boundaries of legitimate artistic practice' (p. 155) between which musicians have to navigate.

Despite the innovative research design of this chapter, some limitations should be noted. First of all, as mentioned earlier, as musicians' work activities may vary per week, the relatively limited period of a week requires us to be cautious when generalizing findings, as the measured week might over-represent one aspect of work over another. Secondly, it is important to note that these data provide an overview of the work activities of a specific type of musician. To start, the sampling strategy targeted musicians aiming to build a career with a live act within the Dutch music industries, but musicians can also focus on other forms of work in music such as being a music teacher, a songwriter or a session musician, or their act may operate completely outside the boundaries of the music industries. Furthermore, because musicians who were able to provide more information about work activities related to building a career with an act were selected, I interviewed musicians who might perform more business and management tasks than the other band members. In other words, more research on other forms of work in music is called for. Nevertheless, this chapter provides a next step in the conversation on the working life of early-career musicians following the changes in the music industries.

4

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Taking care of business

The routines and
rationales of early-
career musicians
in the Dutch and
British music
industries

Introduction

Music continues to be an attractive career prospect for many young people (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013) even though research continues to highlight the precarious conditions of cultural workers within a variety of cultural industries, including music (Oakley, 2013). The working conditions in the music industries are shaped in part by the reconfiguration of two of their sectors. First, until recently, there was widespread speculation about the future of music due to the economic demise of the *record* industry as a result of the impact of digitization on the mediation and distribution of music (Zentner, 2006). Second, there have been more optimistic economic forecasts recently for the *live* sector, including the commercial emphasis on non-music merchandise (Frith, 2007). Alongside the shift away from the dominance of the recording sector, digitization and the Internet gave rise to a sense of optimism about opportunities for musicians to take back control and to construct a career in music without depending on traditional intermediaries (Haynes & Marshall, 2018). However, competition for work/gigs, and the possibility of monetizing music and selling merchandise has led to additional pressures. Whereas a music career was believed to be tied to a *recording* contract with a major label that took responsibility for delivering musicians and their music to the market (M. Jones, 1999), negotiating a music career today involves taking on more financial risks as musicians are expected to perform new kinds of entrepreneurial tasks (Haynes & Marshall, 2018).

However, even with significant changes, the record industry is not a homogeneous entity. Musicians' working conditions are also shaped by localized dynamics. In addition to being a 'global industry', according to Marshall the record industry is better construed as a 'series of recording industries, locally organized and locally focused, both structured by and structuring the international recording industry' (2013, p. 1). This means that the restructuring of the relationship between the recorded and live music sectors is configured by the specific relations of the 'hegemonic mainstream' record industry.¹⁴ In addition, these relations are shaped within the local

¹⁴ Marshall conceptualizes the ideological organization of the international recording industries as three concentric circles: the hegemonic mainstream as centres of power located in the US, UK, Japan, France and Germany; integrated

countries such as Belgium, Canada and Singapore whose musical economies are 'very tightly integrated to the legitimate industry'; and periphery nations where 'the legitimated industry enjoys far less influence' (2013, p. 6).

circumstances of each context by factors such as country size, governmental policies (Janssen et al., 2008), and commercial and aesthetic logics (Van Venrooij, 2011). Local markets are also considered to have become more significant as the global downturn in record sales between 1995 and 2010 has had a larger impact on the sale of 'international' acts than domestic repertoires (Marshall, 2013). Thus, contemporary music career pathways must be understood in light of the structural and discursive conditions of the recording and live sectors in each context.

A comparison of musicians within the UK and the Netherlands, ideologically positioned within the 'hegemonic mainstream' (UK) and tightly integrated with the mainstream but not mainstream (NL) (Marshall, 2013), can provide insights into the practical and discursive strategies adopted. In turn, this will illustrate any variation in the perception of an alignment between entrepreneurship and work as a musician and the local conditions that produce this. In addition, a comparative focus on musicians in different settings is (ideologically) important as knowledge on the music industries tends to be informed by research on the Anglo-American industries (Marshall, 2013).

Therefore, a secondary comparative analysis was carried out on existing interview data with musicians from two separate studies in the Netherlands and the UK (Haynes & Marshall, 2018), to investigate *whether the strategizing of Dutch and British musicians can be understood as responses to the structural conditions within their context*. In my analysis, I argue that this indeed is the case, but that neither set of responses produces a commercial advantage. The next section will address how discourses of entrepreneurship are used to frame opportunities for musicians. Following this, I present a critical comparative summary of the key factors shaping the local contexts in the Netherlands and the UK.

Theory

Entrepreneurship as discourse and practice

In recent years, how musicians frame their business activities alongside the creative dynamics of being a musician is an important consideration within the context of the discursive influence of entrepreneurship within the music industries (T. Bennett, 2015), higher education (Cloonan & Hulstedt, 2012) and in the wider labour market (Haynes & Marshall, 2018). On the one hand, cultural work is framed through this discourse as offering opportunities for creative self-realization, as well as greater autonomy and flexibility in one's career (Bridgstock, 2005). In order to align their artistic work with forms of self-management, self-marketing, and low levels of income and other forms of insecurity, creative workers (including musicians) adopt a bohemian lifestyle (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006) that is distinct from the bourgeoisie and typically associated with artists and intellectuals with 'unorthodox and anti-establishment viewpoints and habits' (Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018, p. 175). Within this discourse, which has been heralded within cultural policy, entrepreneurial traits such as innovation, resilience and flexibility are promoted and converge with the ideal of artistic self-expression as the key motivation behind one's work (McRobbie, 2016).

On the other hand, the opportunities believed to be offered by cultural work are critically understood to depend on workers having to be more self-reliant and accepting greater risks and little to no pay more routinely (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013). In the same manner, transferring entrepreneurship onto musicians can be understood as an aspect of the response of industry actors to the above-mentioned shifts to externalize the financial risks onto musicians (Hughes et al., 2016). Research shows that musicians are disinclined to align economic and artistic value as they are reluctant to see themselves as entrepreneurs (Coulson, 2012) and perform such tasks out of economic necessity. More recently, Bennett (2018) suggests that the collapse of the labour market (post-2008) for young people, and their progressively worsening position has prompted many more of them to develop a do-it-yourself (DIY) career in music. Due to these conditions, DIY, once characterized as practices 'that embed an anti-hegemonic, non-

mainstream ethic', now encompasses 'increasing levels of professionalization and entrepreneurialism' (A. Bennett, 2018, p. 142). However, the extent to which the influence of discourses of entrepreneurship varies depending on the local conditions, remains under-explored (see Threadgold, 2018).

The conditions of the music industries suggest that musicians perform more business tasks in order to create artistic products and establish a career with typically limited financial support. In order to do so, these self-employed and often precarious workers (McRobbie, 2016) collaborate with industry actors such as labels, while remaining independent (Hughes et al., 2016). Consequently, musicians must perform a wide range of business tasks that can be construed as entrepreneurial. First, musicians need to create their own business opportunities (Albinsson, 2018), as markets in creative industries demand career self-management (Bridgstock, 2005). In order to do this effectively, musicians need social and networking skills (Thom, 2016). In addition, a wide variety of more general business and managerial skills are required to effectively raise funds, distribute and market their music, and perform project management tasks (Ellmeier, 2003). While musicians are expected to perform more business activities themselves, there may be localized contextual variation in whether such activities are interpreted as expressions of entrepreneurship and align with their sense of being a musician.

Local contexts of music production

The Netherlands and the UK occupy different positions within the global music industries. By drawing on recent academic, industry and government research, we identify three ways in which the different conditions frame musicians' creative and business activities, and how their rationales for these activities are shaped by discourses of entrepreneurship.

The first is the size of each music setting. The British popular music market is one of the largest in the world, and is roughly twice the size of the Dutch market. The decline of the global recording industry impacted both the Netherlands and the UK significantly. Between 2000 and 2014 the Dutch market for recorded music contracted by 61.7 percent (NVPI, 2011, 2015), compared to the UK market which by 2016 had lost 41 percent of its volume

since its peak in 2001 (Tschmuck, 2017).¹⁵ The live music sectors in both countries, however, now exceed the contribution made by the recording sectors. In the Netherlands, live music contributed 581 million euros to the economy in 2018 compared to 385 million euros from recorded music (PWC, n.d.). In the UK, the live sector contributed 1.1 billion pounds (GVA)¹⁶ and the recording sector contributed 568 million pounds (GVA).

The second important difference relates to the localized infrastructure, which varies with regard to the stability and significance of smaller music venues and the role of popular music studies degree programmes. In the UK, smaller venues ensure that the music industries are healthy and foster the 'talent pipeline' (UK Music, 2018). Financially, they are the most important for musicians (Webster et al., 2018). Since 2007, however, 35 percent of smaller venues have disappeared, due to noise complaints, property development and the increasing costs of licensing rates (Webster et al., 2018), making access to smaller venues an even greater challenge for aspiring musicians due to increased competition (DCMS, 2019). While there has also been closure of small venues in the Netherlands, it has not reached the same level of concern. As a consequence of governmental cuts in 2010, the number of pop venues attached to the Dutch interest group for venues and festivals (VNPF) decreased from 75 to 57 (a loss of 24 percent). Nevertheless, the Dutch popular music infrastructure remains characterized by a high density of venues (Van Vugt, 2018).

Other career pathways are becoming more popular, with both countries seeing an increase in the number of popular music studies degree programmes, particularly in Europe, where the accreditation of such courses is well established. However, in the UK a DIY approach was prevalent until the 1990s, when some institutions began to challenge this rationale, but did not fully eradicate it as scepticism about the impact of academia on developing authentic music careers persisted (L. Green, 2002). Nonetheless, the number of courses in the UK increased from 26 to 84 between 2002/03 and 2013/14 (T. Bennett, 2015) and there has been a fivefold increase in graduates with these degrees. In the Netherlands, 3,500 to 4,000

¹⁵ The Dutch statistics were derived from International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) data and the British from the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) data, which supplies national data to IFPI.

¹⁶ GVA is the measure used to refer to all revenue totals. This figure is produced from 'final sales and (net) subsidies, which are incomes into businesses' (UK Music, 2018, p. 8).

students participate in programmes at higher music education institutions annually.¹⁷ Within these courses, entrepreneurship is believed to play a vital role in finding success. In 2011, Dutch higher music education institutions gave entrepreneurship a central position in their programmes (*HBO-raad* [Dutch Council for Higher Professional Education], 2011) and in the UK, the British & Irish Modern Music Institute (BIMM) claims to develop the 'skills, experience, contacts and confidence to make the music industry feel like a walk in the park'.¹⁸ While a recent survey of students at Dutch music schools revealed that they did not experience tensions between the artistic and entrepreneurial dimensions of their identities (Schediwy, Bhansing, et al., 2018), within the British context there is a degree of ambivalence about such an alignment (Coulson, 2012). Moreover, music degrees are also regarded with some scepticism by sections of the British media and industry, and musicians themselves (Cloonan, 2005; Muga, 2002). In short, in the UK there is pressure on early-career musicians as they depend more on access to a reduced number of small venues, and while in both countries we see an increase in the appeal of popular music studies, in the UK they are treated with more scepticism and remain a less typical pathway into music.

The final distinction concerns government and industry support for music careers. At both local and national levels, the Dutch government has developed strong structural policies and subsidies for the development of the sector and individual musicians (Nuchelmans, 2002), even though budget cuts after 2010 have impacted talent development initiatives and financial support for venues to programme popular music (Gielen et al., 2017). In addition, the industries provide opportunities for new acts to develop skills, or to acquire recognition and touring experience, by organizing regional popular music competitions (Nuchelmans, 2002), seminars and conferences and various showcase festivals such as Eurosonic Noorderslag, which present acts to a domestic and global audience (Van Vugt, 2018).

In contrast, while successive UK governments from the late 1990s onwards have recognized the economic and cultural significance of the UK's music industries and worked with record industry representatives to protect their interests (e.g. piracy, copyright issues), support for musicians is less pronounced. The New Labour government did, however, attempt to champion young people starting a music career through mentorship with industry

¹⁷ <https://www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/kennisbank/feiten-en-cijfers/artikelen/dashboard-instroom-inschrijvingen-en-diploma-s>, visited on 9-9-2022.

¹⁸ See <https://www.bimm.co.uk/employability/>, visited on 9-9-2022.

partners, training and some financial support (Cloonan, 2002). There has not been a similar form of support for aspiring musicians from successive governments since 2010, even though lack of ‘funding for musicians’ was recently recognized as one of the threats to the ‘talent pipeline’ (DCMS, 2019, p. 4). However, there has been new policy development to support the live music infrastructure by making it more difficult to force music venue closure (UK Music, 2018). Overall, government support has focused on the commercial interests of the recorded and live industries, rather than on individual musicians directly. While the Dutch music industries are comparatively smaller, the discussion above suggests they are better subsidized by the state in conjunction with other industry actors at the point of access for aspiring musicians. The forms of training and recognition that the field offers provide an ‘institutionalized path’ consisting of a series of supported steps to build one’s career (Gielen et al., 2017) that may potentially offset operating in a smaller market. Nevertheless, Dutch musicians remain financially insecure as their average gross income is 17,500 euros and more than half did not earn more than 9,000 euros (Von der Fuhr, 2015). The majority of musicians in the UK do not fare much better as 66 percent of ‘professional’ musicians – those who make all of their income from music – earn less than 15,600 pounds per year from live music (Webster et al., 2018, p. 20). In light of these particular conditions, I compare whether the strategies and rationales of musicians differ as they attempt to develop sustainable careers.

Data and methods

Two studies were used as the basis for the secondary comparative analysis of qualitative interview data: the Dutch study investigated the work practices of musicians within the live music infrastructure, while the smaller British pilot study focused on the careers of musicians and their use of social media. Pilot studies constitute an important way to define the scope of qualitative research especially in under-explored topics that require further scrutiny for the purposes of ongoing research (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Dutch methods and sample

This research incorporated 21 semi-structured interviews targeting musicians who were trying to build a professional career in the music industries. Therefore, the targeted population was musicians who had performed at the Noorderslag festival. Despite actively seeking a gender balance, the sample consisted of 14 participants who identified as male and 7 who identified as female.¹⁹ The participants were between 18 and 35 years of age. All were in an early phase of their career: more than half of these musicians had graduated from a popular music programme at a higher music education institute, most had released their first EP or album, had been touring for a few years and had signed with a manager and booker. However, only five of the musicians managed to earn a living from music. Table 6 in appendix 1 provides an overview of the participants with more information. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted 30–90 minutes (for an overview of the questions, see appendix 2).

¹⁹ While the women who declined were too busy, the under-representation of women reflects how gender continues to affect music careers (Berkers & Schaap, 2018).

Because it remains important to address this imbalance, one solution for future research is to include a booster sample to incorporate more women.

British methods and sample

This study incorporated 43 online questionnaires²⁰ with musicians about their music careers, followed by ten semi-structured interviews. The research targeted musicians who were signed to record labels,²¹ as a sample aimed for that would be regularly involved in the business practices of maintaining a career. Twenty-three of the participating musicians agreed to do follow-up interviews, from which a sub-sample of ten was chosen.

The research aimed for a balance of gender, genre and income for the follow-up interviews (see table 7 in appendix 1). Even though the number of music industry courses is expanding in the UK, the sample of musicians had not graduated from such programmes. Fewer participants identifying as female agreed to be interviewed, resulting in a sample of three females and seven males between the ages of 18 and 35. The sample incorporated early-career musicians: they were all signed to a label and had released at least one album, but only five made a living fully from music. Nine interviews were conducted face-to-face, another via Skype, and each interview lasted 45–90 minutes (for an overview of the questions, see appendix 2). In order to ensure anonymity, the data is referred to by study identifier and participant number, with for instance, a participant from the Dutch study (D8) and from the British study (B9).

Notes about the comparison

Although each study employed a different sampling strategy and had interview numbers corresponding to its overall size and purpose, the motivations were similar. Both projects aimed to identify early-career musicians who were committed to a career in music. Moreover, as shown in table 6 and table 7 in appendix 1, both samples were comparable with regard

20 The online questionnaire was used as a way to identify a sample of musicians for the purposes of interviews.

21 The British research targeted smaller well-established labels (i.e. not huge corporations) that were not vanity endeavours run by a single artist.

to the genres that musicians were active in (predominantly rock, folk and to a lesser extent pop and indie). In other words, the samples contained a comparable set of musicians and, as will become clear in this chapter, the differences in the sampling strategies to reach these early-career musicians can be understood as reflecting the variations in localized conditions and strategies to develop a sustainable career. Thus, the apparently incompatible sampling strategies used as the basis of comparison are actually very much part of the analytical inferences relating to the conditions of each context.

Our collaboration constitutes a secondary analysis as both datasets were investigated to address a research question that was not part of the initial study, albeit one that is related to the original questions. Secondary analysis of qualitative data is becoming a more routine option for researchers, particularly as a way to frame the reuse of one's existing data for a new/different purpose (Mason, 2007). The preparatory process for the secondary (and comparative) analysis included an examination of both sets of interview questions, a close reading of existing data and conceptual reflection on the purpose of each project.

While each project developed independent interview guides, the comparison of the questions revealed an overlap with regard to questions and themes, including their views on musicianship and entrepreneurship, weekly musical and business activity, income, skills required, and social media. Examples of overlapping questions include: (NL) 'Do you have to be an entrepreneur to achieve your goals?' and (UK) 'Do you think musicians need to be entrepreneurial to be successful?' These areas of thematic overlap were used to explore the discursive formation of entrepreneurship in each context. An important aspect of the chosen approach included ongoing scrutiny of the way the data was initially produced and subsequently recontextualized for this new purpose (see Bishop, 2007). This provided the opportunity to reuse the datasets for a comparative analysis that reveals differences in how musicians negotiate the local conditions of the music industries, how they frame their experiences and how entrepreneurship discourses have penetrated such views. The following section begins by detailing routine types of business activity.

Results

Routine practices and strategic alliances

The data from both samples show that the musicians perform an extensive set of routine activities. They release and perform music and attempt to generate awareness by relying on a mix of marketing, public relations and social media. Moreover, they publish their music, perform business activities such as financial administration, have managerial responsibilities and carry out production tasks, such as the organization of tours and selling of merchandise.

Given this required range of routine activities, both samples have developed a 'can-do' attitude (i.e. if you don't perform these tasks, no one else will); as they believe industry assistance comes only after achieving initial success. Musicians from both samples suggest that this attitude is necessary to create opportunities:

We must do things ourselves, otherwise nothing happens. If I don't distribute posters, I would have to hire someone ... so I'd rather go there myself and get this done in a day. (D17)

[I will] go out of my way to sort things out myself rather than waiting for other people to do things for me [such as] booking gigs. (B10)

Musicians thus strive to be self-reliant, which underlines the literature suggesting that labels are taking less responsibility for musicians (Hughes et al., 2016) and that musicians are required to be self-supporting (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013). As argued elsewhere (Albinsson, 2018), this business activity is more than routine, however, as it also requires innovative and creative thinking in order for musicians to 'stand out from the crowd' and find new opportunities within a saturated field. These attitudes of self-reliance and innovation reflect the entrepreneurial discourse promoted within cultural policy (McRobbie, 2016). Therefore, much of the routine business activities that musicians carry out can be framed as entrepreneurial.

While all musicians perform entrepreneurial activities, most of them doubt whether it is possible to establish a sustainable career without the help of industry actors such as managers, bookers and labels. These actors can put musicians in touch with venues, create marketing campaigns or take over parts of the production and distribution process. However, the samples demonstrate some variation in the mechanism of enlisting professional expertise. The Dutch sample shows that these collaborations come at a price and, considering their small budgets, musicians need to make a cost-benefit analysis:

We have a lot of costs. We have to pay a sound technician. ... We have our own driver ... that costs money, and our management gets a percentage as well. So there's not much left for us. (D13)

Several musicians expressed ambivalence about whether to collaborate in order to push their career forward, or to do more themselves to save costs.

The British sample also acknowledged their responsibility for business activities to varying degrees and recognized that professional skills were essential within an industry reliant on new forms of mediation and digital expertise. One musician suggested that:

It would be almost impossible to be successful and solely manage everything, you wouldn't have enough time in the day ... iTunes and LPs and stuff and write songs and keep an eye on your accounts ... you're going to need some help somewhere. (B10)

Yet, for the British sample the need for help was linked to the recognition of their own lack of expertise (beyond music) and, importantly, the resources to implement an effective 'game-changing' promotional campaign. One musician admitted that there were risks associated with having to take responsibility for the business aspects of music: 'there's loads of examples where you realize that you've jeopardized something just probably because we're not very good at doing business' (B44).

For most of the Dutch sample, enlisting specialist services was not linked to a lack of skill. This perhaps can be explained by the fact that they were disciplined to be more entrepreneurial as they attended popular music programmes at higher music education institutions, where business and entrepreneurial skills are essential components of the syllabus (Toscher & Morris Bjørnø, 2019), or took advantage of other opportunities for industry support concerning business advice and skill acquisition. For example,

musicians praised the fact that they learned ‘how you can market yourself as a musician’ (D13), and ‘how the promotion cycle works when you release a single’ (D4). In contrast, the respondents in the British sample were embedded within local music scenes, signed to small independent labels that fostered collaborative forms of knowledge and skill sharing, thus demonstrating a difference with regard to the route taken into a music career, as emphasized here: ‘you can’t expect one person to have all of the skills, and I think that’s what a lot of musicians struggle with ... so that’s why [record label] is so important for me because we share our skills ...’ (B7).

Moreover, while both samples of musicians recognize their precarity and thus dependency on industry actors, many expressed a determination to avoid self-exploitation. For example, while Dutch musicians seek out collaborations with industry professionals, they are careful about accepting offers: ‘we really doubted whether we should sign with a label. They cost a lot of money, is it worth it?’ (D20). In addition, they complained about unsustainable financial compensation for live performances, which in several cases was not enough to cover costs. Musicians from the British sample criticized the ticket-selling tactics used by venues and promoters in lieu of commercial fees and stressed that it was important ‘not to get ripped off ... which happens a lot. So, don’t go to a gig and they go “here’s 25 tickets, you’ve gotta sell them”, don’t do that’ (B10). Moreover, they acknowledged the need for payment not just for economic reasons, but because of the emotional impact and their professional standing: ‘it’s very important that we do get something and really that we break even at the very least, because that’s like the bottom line’ (B15). While the potential for self-exploitation exists, in light of debates about creative labour that suggest musicians allow self-exploitation because of the precarious conditions that define this work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013), an important finding here is that both samples talked about their attempts to circumvent this.

The comparison, however, reveals two different approaches to avoiding self-exploitation. In the British sample, musicians try to establish a peer support network to compensate for the challenging market conditions and limited support from the record labels they were signed to. One suggested that this was mutually beneficial, ‘I do a lot of networking and I help people a lot and I do it with the intention that sometime in the future I might be able to then rely on them and use their connections’ (B7). With limited forms of government and industry support in the UK, musicians learn early on that they will have to work more collaboratively to further their careers. This explains why being signed to small, independent labels that operate on a more peer-oriented, collaborative DIY basis remains an important aspect

of the UK music ecosystem. The historical prevalence of a DIY aesthetic in Britain is linked to the way in which subcultures (e.g. punks) expressed dissatisfaction with the mainstream orientation of the recording industry and thus participation in independent labels and scenes was encouraged (A. Bennett, 2018).

In the Dutch sample, however, instead of relying on peer support, musicians prioritized building a network that includes industry actors early on in their career. While several musicians came to terms with their marginalized position and opted for a semi-professional career, thereby putting themselves at greater risk of exploitation, others tried to improve their situation. This group suggested that rather than negotiating better fees, they had to move into more prominent circuits in the music industries, where the fees are high enough for them to make a sustainable living. In their perception, the Dutch music industries provide a pathway for talent development that offers performance opportunities and forms of recognition with the tacit promise of achieving success, and, as a result, musicians focus on gaining recognition from the gatekeepers of these music industries (see also chapter 1). One musician explained that they tried to do this by signing a booker and management with a good reputation, and by ‘working hard on improving their brand awareness’ (D10). Because of the limited size of the Dutch industries, musicians have to direct their networking efforts at a small group of key cultural intermediaries such as programmers, journalists, label representatives and bookers: ‘the music world in the Netherlands is nowadays so “who knows who” that as a band you cannot email a venue yourself. You cannot email the press. This way it is sewn up between labels and bookers’ (D7). These findings reflect research showing that Dutch A&R (artist and repertoire) managers rely on their professional network to identify new talented acts (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009), emphasizing how important it is for musicians to connect with industry actors.

Of course, the musicians in the British sample also acknowledged the importance of key industry people, but they did so in relation to career development, rather than as a support network. The reason for this difference might be located in the moment in the musicians’ careers when relationships with these actors become important in each context: due to the smaller market size in the Netherlands it is prudent to become visible and gain access to gatekeepers early, whereas in the UK musicians have to or prefer to work independently for longer before support is available. Here it becomes clear that the way in which both sets of musicians network is a result of their local conditions. Whereas the networking performed by the British sample reflects the strong DIY culture associated with genres

such as indie rock and the collaborative aspects of the smaller, independent labels, in the Netherlands the smaller market increases the dependency on gatekeepers, which is reflected in the way in which musicians use the showcase festival Noorderslag to acquire recognition.

Converging musical and entrepreneurial sensibilities and activities

While entrepreneurship tends to be presented through either a celebratory or critical theoretical lens as suggested earlier, it is important to understand the empirical reality of musicians' working lives in light of the prevalence of entrepreneurship discourse. Focusing on their rationales for the business dimensions of their routine labour enables us to understand how the different sensibilities and strategies are a manifestation of the local contexts.

For several of the Dutch musicians, being a musician means that you have to demonstrate an entrepreneurial sensibility (see also chapter 2): 'You need to have an entrepreneurial attitude. That is just common sense' (D13). Here, entrepreneurship is understood as a prerequisite for success and an entrepreneurial mind-set and artistic goals are aligned: '[entrepreneurship and music] reinforce each other.... Every time we've had a meeting we are so enthusiastic that we want to start writing music' (D13). Although music is believed to always come first, their entrepreneurial sensibility appears to be driven by the belief that it demonstrates a seriousness about their art and, in doing so, it potentially provides greater access to the music industries. Nevertheless, some musicians showed signs of reluctance, as they suggested that entrepreneurial tasks are time-consuming and feared that an intention to create commercial music might lead to 'bad', inauthentic art: 'it can lead to a lot of pressure if you want to make something commercial, invest a lot of time in it and then nothing happens. Then it feels like a sort of sacrifice' (D12).

The British sample demonstrated a preference to maintain a distinction between an entrepreneurial and a musical sensibility. While they felt that some of their *activities* may be construed as entrepreneurial, they were reluctant to accept the existence of any alignment between musicianship

and entrepreneurship as they conveyed that the dominant sense of being a musician is distinct from being an entrepreneur. One musician said: 'I'm definitely not an entrepreneur' (B8), while another said, 'I don't feel like an entrepreneur because it feels like an old game; I'm just writing three-minute pop songs and other people are kind of marketing them' (B15). One participant expressed a negotiated position between the two sensibilities by describing themselves as, 'an extremely reluctant entrepreneur' (B43). These findings are similar to the tension identified by Coulson regarding the business activities that musicians were expected to perform and whom she thus describes as 'accidental entrepreneurs' (2012, p. 251).

Although the entrepreneurial activity of both samples is partially driven by necessity, for several Dutch musicians, entrepreneurship might be an expression of an urge to create their own success and to overcome the passive behaviour of waged labour. They associate entrepreneurship with 'positive' values such as autonomy, freedom, flexibility and personal responsibility: 'you can manage your own time schedule. You are your own boss and that is a lot of fun' (D17). Such a positive valorisation of entrepreneurship seems to reflect a more widespread conception in the Dutch industries that professionalism and the willingness to work hard predict career success (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). Furthermore, it echoes Leadbeater and Oakley's characterization of Britain's new cultural entrepreneurs, as being at the vanguard of the de-traditionalization of work, and who 'prize freedom, autonomy and choice' (1999, p. 15).

In contrast, the British sample tended to extol creative self-fulfilment linked to music-making above all else. One musician suggested that, 'music is something that I'm kind of compelled to do, and get a lot of satisfaction from and do even when I'm not consciously trying to do it' (B8). In addition, although, as suggested above, some could understand how these business activities could be interpreted as entrepreneurial, for others these activities are better described as DIY, 'I'd call it DIY rather than entrepreneurial' (B15), while another attempted to downplay any entrepreneurial implications by suggesting that 'I just circulate stuff that makes you visible to people that you think count' (B8). The connotations of a DIY approach implied by the British data align more with independence, self-reliance and an anti-commercial strategy often associated with a DIY ethos (Strachan, 2007). In other words, a significant finding is that, whereas in the Dutch sample characteristics such as freedom, autonomy and choice are linked to discourses of entrepreneurship, in the British sample they are linked to DIY.

Here, the fact that most musicians in the two samples are active in rock, folk, pop and indie genres, adds credibility to the analysis, as explanations for differences in attitudes towards entrepreneurship therefore cannot be sought in diverging dispositions of different genres. For example, it was acknowledged by Haynes and Marshall (2018) that musicians working in other genres, such as EDM (electronic dance music) and hip-hop, may be more at ease with and positively predisposed towards entrepreneurship. Moreover, the different responses to local conditions explain the significance of the variation in sampling strategies. The alignment of artistic and entrepreneurial values for a lot of musicians in the Dutch sample, and the DIY approach of the British sample can be explained by the career pathways predominantly taken by each: the former is more likely to be more confident in adopting an entrepreneurial approach due to education at music education institutions and the latter in adopting a DIY approach through their embeddedness in local scenes and working with small, independent record labels. As both projects intended to target musicians who aspire to a music career, it made sense in the British context to sample musicians signed to labels, because in the UK this expresses such a commitment. As a result, this sampling strategy mirrors the centrality of local scenes, peer networks and independent labels and a corresponding DIY aesthetic. On the other hand, in the Netherlands a commitment to a career in music is expressed by participating in the showcase festival Noorderslag. The Dutch sampling strategy thus reflects the institutional embedding that musicians have in the Netherlands, whereby Noorderslag is understood as the end point of an institutional pathway, leading to a more entrepreneurial mind-set.

However, even though these musicians have developed strategies to negotiate a career in music in response to the structural conditions within each context, musicians in both samples were pessimistic about their chances of achieving this goal. For example, one musician mentioned, 'I would like to earn money. Yes. But somehow I do not see that happening' (D9) and another said, 'It's frustrating that the thing that I want to do is, at the moment, not a thing that is very viable' (B15). Even though musicians in the Netherlands believe that relying on this institutional pathway gives them the greatest chance of success, they acknowledge that this is unlikely to happen:

It remains difficult and insecure to earn an income. It's still a game of 'are you in or out' based on whether ... people think you belong. In the Netherlands there are a few outlier bands who play in nice places but none of the others get to do that. (D16)

In a similar manner, musicians in the British sample expressed a sense of pessimism regarding their chances based on their approach:

I wouldn't want to be doing anything else. I have worked in a few other jobs and I've been filled with doom, it's a different type of doom, but it's only because I care so much about what we're doing. (B44)

While there are relative differences in the level of business or entrepreneurial skills that musicians in each context believe they have, neither set of conditions provides any further commercial advantage or security against exposure to the precarious nature of cultural work per se. Irrespective of these different routes, most musicians in both samples remain in similar financial positions, where the sustainability of their careers is always in contention. This suggests that, in line with the work of McRobbie (2016), the large majority of musicians who operate on the periphery of the music industries remain in precarious positions, as self-reliance in their music careers – a quality promoted within cultural policy – does not seem to offset the insecurity of the market.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I investigated music careers in light of the local contexts of the Dutch and British music industries, showing that the size and configuration of each music setting and government support affect the practices and rationales of musicians. While musicians are forced to adapt to the changing relations of the music industries, the structural and discursive conditions of the local contexts appear to shape how they respond to these changes.

Musicians' rationales on entrepreneurship are produced through different pathways of experience and knowledge, and are thus linked to the configuration of the localized conditions and normative expectations that shape music careers. For example, despite wider changes, the local Dutch infrastructure has benefited from a combination of initiatives by commercial and governmental parties to support new acts. Hence, even though the chance of establishing a career is small, it makes sense for musicians to focus their entrepreneurial efforts on gaining access to key actors and the circuits and funds they control. Conditions in the Netherlands therefore provide an 'institutionalized pathway' geared towards the production of

commercial success, encouraging an alignment between entrepreneurial sensibilities and artistic goals.

In contrast, the closure of smaller music venues and reduced government and public funding of culture helps to explain both the significance of peer support networks and why views of entrepreneurship were infused with reluctance within the British sample. Indeed, as these musicians were products of local music scenes and signed to small independent labels, awareness of the material conditions of the music industries appears to strengthen a DIY approach as part of an ethical or critical response to the wider industry, expressed through their perceptions of it as 'broken' (B15) and a 'dinosaur' (B23).

However, as 'old' power/economic relations still prevail (Haynes & Marshall, 2018) and only a fraction of musicians sustain a successful career, *neither* set of musicians is better off financially because of their strategizing. As a result, *neither* music career pathway provides an advantage, showing that local contexts are not separate worlds and are in fact part of the same global industry. In addition, the opportunities that the music industries offer are inversely proportional to the number of young people wanting to pursue a career in music, and these low odds might have decreased even further due to the fact that the Internet and digitization have lowered the entry barriers to the music industries (Haynes & Marshall, 2017). Moreover, the increasing number of popular music studies degrees seems to be at odds with this reality, as they 'are based on the premise that pop stardom can be just as much a matter of proper instruction and assessed achievement as a classical performing career' (Frith, 2007, pp. 12–13).

Perhaps we need to think more about why, given these conditions, young people continue to choose music careers. The analysis demonstrated that musicians are not unaware of the working conditions in the music industries, where the majority of risk is outsourced to independents. Instead, their attempts to manoeuvre around possible exploitative practices suggest that the penetration of neoliberalism and general awareness of the precarious nature of labour markets has produced a shift in career expectations and negotiations. As Christiaens (2020, p. 496, original emphasis) argues, 'instead of listening to the sound advice of economists pleading for a prudent cost/benefit-analysis, they hope to create their own future out of thin air *in spite of the odds*'. The decision to pursue a music career today, therefore, could be further framed within the context of the popularity and influence of reality TV shows like *Pop Idol* and *X Factor*, which, alongside the increasing number of music education institutions and talent schools, coalesces around

what Frith describes as the new demands of and commitments to music 'as a symbol of our individuality' (2007, p. 14). Younger generations are making different kinds of calculations with their careers, where even if music is recognized as being more risky than other kinds of work, for many it is more closely tied to a sense of self, thereby reflecting the ideas of individualism and self-reflexivity that pervade neoliberal capitalism.

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Facilitating dreams with a sense of reality

Employability in
Dutch popular
music programmes
at higher music
education
institutions

Introduction

The music industries are a precarious labour market for musicians. As in other sectors of the creative industries, the supply of labour tends to exceed demand (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013; Menger, 1999). As a result, careers in music are insecure: most musicians struggle to earn a decent living, they have to combine multiple unstable sources of income, and work is often sporadic, with few long-term career prospects (Bridgstock, 2005; Von der Fuhr, 2015; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). At the same time, neoliberal policies have increasingly framed this market in terms of ‘competition and commerce’ (McRobbie, 2015, p. 42) and notions of entrepreneurship and individual responsibility have been promoted to reconcile musicians with these market conditions (ibid.). Yet, only a small number of musicians will gain financial success (Von der Fuhr, 2015), and consequently, it is difficult for starting musicians to assess their chances of a sustainable career (Menger, 1999).

The insecure nature of work in the music industries has consequences for the role that music education can or should play in musicians’ career building. In general, enrolling in arts education does not necessarily guarantee an economically successful career in the arts. As career paths are often ‘fuzzy or even non-existent’ (Fine, 2017, p. 1464), art schools such as higher music education institutions cannot provide a cookbook recipe guaranteeing success in the music industries (Frith, 2007). For that reason, the way in which higher music education institutions address issues of employability and possible career paths in their programmes is an important consideration and a ‘moral imperative’ for administrators and teachers (Beckman, 2007, p. 93). Dutch popular music programmes at higher music education institutions are an interesting case in this respect because compared to traditional music education where teachers tend to focus on students’ artistic training in one-to-one teaching lessons, they are characterized by a strong emphasis on cultural entrepreneurship and establishing a connection with the labour market (*HBO-raad*, [Council for Higher Professional Education] 2011), reflecting broader cultural policy trends in the Netherlands (Essig, 2017). Yet, while these programmes may be more successful at preparing students for the labour market, a neoliberal focus on employability might also contain a risk of devaluing the importance of devoting time to one’s artistic practice and there is a possibility that it might not increase the ‘*economically viable opportunities for graduates overall*’ (Kenning, 2019, p. 127, original emphasis) due to the insecure nature of art markets. Therefore, in this chapter I explore *how Dutch popular music programmes at higher music education institutions*

prepare students to cope with the uncertainty of building a career in the popular music industries.

Earlier research has identified three interrelated strategies that popular music programmes could use to make their students more employable. First, art students tend to be generally unsatisfied with the career advice received in the course of their arts education (Fine, 2017). This lack of information makes it difficult for them to be aware of their chances of achieving their goals and to adjust their career planning and study trajectory accordingly (D. Bennett, 2007). Subsequently, research has suggested that popular music programmes should provide detailed information about possible careers, chances of success, and the market as a whole (Hall, 2019), thus increasing students’ ‘career preparation and industry awareness’ (D. Bennett, 2007, p. 10).

Secondly, musicians can increase their chances of making a career in the music industries by engaging in ‘occupational risk diversification’ (Menger, 1999, p. 562) – that is taking on different kinds of work in the music industries to improve one’s financial position. This enables musicians to build a ‘career portfolio’ that can help them to gain a better position in the market and guarantee career continuity (Menger, 1999). While many musicians aim to make a living from creating and selling their own music, research has shown that pursuing a career in music frequently means having to perform multiple roles within (and outside of) the music industries, with teaching music being the most popular option (Bennett, 2007; Von der Fuhr, 2015; Menger, 1999). As such, careers in music have been described as ‘protean, boundaryless, or portfolio careers’ (Bridgstock, 2005, p. 40), because they are characterized by a combination of multiple occupational roles. Therefore, popular music programmes can improve their students’ career prospects by preparing them to perform multiple roles in the music industries (Bridgstock, 2005).

Thirdly, popular music programmes can increase students’ employability by helping them to acquire work experience, for example in the form of internships (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Gaining experience in the music industries enables students to identify whether they are suited to this occupation and teaches them how to assess their chances of success (Menger, 1999), and the skills required in order to function well in a range of industry roles (D. Bennett, 2007). Because of these benefits, music students consider these practical experiences to be more important than a diploma because they assume that graduating does not hold a great deal of value for future employers (Hall, 2019). Moreover, researchers have found that having ‘a music degree with experience’ (Comunian et al., 2014, p. 185) rather than

just a degree, may serve to indicate exceptional promise to employers in the music industries, thus augmenting a student's reputation (Comunian et al., 2014; Menger, 1999).

In this chapter, I will investigate whether these risk management strategies are embedded in popular music programmes. To answer this question, I conducted in-depth interviews with ten teachers and five focus groups consisting of students at three different higher music education institutions in the Netherlands in 2020 (for an overview of these participants see table 9 in appendix 1). These institutions offer four-year bachelor programmes and two-year master programmes focusing on popular music. Each bachelor programme, which I am focusing on here, has an admission exam and attracts around 40 to 140 new students per year. Within these programmes, students focus on becoming a musician and choose a main track based on their instrument of choice. In addition, they can follow tracks on entrepreneurship, music education and recording/producing. The interviews and focus groups addressed the respondents' perspectives on future employment and the various ways in which these programmes prepare students for a career in music (for an overview of the interview and focus group guide see appendix 2). Based on an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the collected data, I will first show how these programmes provide a *reality check* for their students. Second, I discuss the role that a *mixed professional practice* plays in preparing students for a career in music. Third, I highlight how students perceive the importance of gaining *work experience* throughout the course of their programmes. For privacy reasons, the higher music education institutions, teachers and students have been anonymized. When discussing the findings, I will refer to the interviews and focus groups by an individual case number, after which I specify the role and instrument or specialization they teach or study, e.g. "3, entrepreneurship teacher".

Results

Reality check

Both students and teachers mentioned that students have big dreams when they embark upon a popular music programme. Most of them hope to have their own band and earn money with their own music, as this quote illustrates: 'When I entered the programme, I wanted to play as much as possible and that is still partly the case for me. I still want to make and produce my own music and let the world hear it' (15a, vocals student). Similarly, a teacher notes:

The percentage of students that enter with a dream like 'I'm going to make my own music, I'm going to record it myself and play it live and I'm going to make a living from that' ... that percentage would be around 75 percent upon arrival. (6, keyboard teacher)

A minority of the students had a more general ambition to just to 'make as much music as possible' (14a, drums student), and was pragmatic about the form this could take. Yet, most students who want to earn a living with their own music will discover that this dream might be very difficult to achieve. From the teachers' perspective, most students overestimate their chances (see also Menger, 1999) as only a few will attain this level of success: 'So, when you look at bands that just got out of school, I think that that is very difficult' (12, audio production teacher). Teachers understand the market for live acts as a superstar or winner-takes-all economy (Ordanini & Nunes, 2016) and argue that even if musicians have the right strategy for their act and take the right steps when it comes to building a career in this market, they still have to accept that there is a considerable risk that they will not become successful. This might be especially the case in the Netherlands as the Dutch popular music industries remain relatively small compared to, for example, the UK (see chapter 4) which makes it difficult to earn a living from touring or selling recorded music.

Therefore, the goals that students pursue upon entering the programme pose a dilemma for their teachers. On the one hand, teachers want to cater to their students' dreams by helping them to achieve success with their own music. On the other hand, teachers realize that they have to prepare students for a different career so that they will be capable of making a living in the future. For example, one teacher explained that even though they can instruct students on how to build a career, there is no guarantee of success:

And then of course you also have to be realistic. This is a very hard job. Everyone has a dream, but it is not for everyone to play in the major leagues one day. ... On the other hand, we do try to explain how to get into the major leagues. ... Because you cannot ... reduce that to: 'Yes, but this person has a unique quality'. ... There is no recipe for success. (1, business teacher)

Popular music programmes deal with this dilemma of dream versus reality by facilitating what students and teachers have called a 'reality check' that aims to give students a realistic understanding of the popular music industries and their chances of achieving various careers in music. Several teachers said that they rarely advise students against a career path that offers only a small chance of economic success. Instead, they invite students to investigate the viability of such career paths:

I'm not going to say to them [the students]: 'No, you shouldn't do that. You won't earn anything from that.' That is not for me to say. What I do say is: 'Okay. Can you find out for me where the world is, where you want to end up? Do your research. Also look at the money flows in that industry. Then draw your own conclusion.' And often people find out themselves: 'Shit ... that is actually a very difficult world to get into or succeed in.' So, I am never going to take that dream away from them. I am going to try to make them wake up on their own. (9, guitar teacher)

These programmes provide opportunities to explore the consequences of students' career choices in a variety of ways. For example, students conduct interviews with established musicians early on in their studies to learn more about their perspective on the music industries and their financial situation. They also attend courses on the music industries and revenue streams. Towards the end of their studies, students develop a career plan where they work together with teachers to develop an assessment of which level of success is required to become financially sustainable and what strategy should be employed to increase their chances of success. Furthermore, throughout the programme teachers advise students on how to organize the business side of things and help them to evaluate contracts that labels (and other parties) offer to students.

Students are not discouraged from pursuing more artistic projects with less economic potential. Yet, several students mentioned that they had changed direction during their studies because of this reality check and are now aiming to do a different kind of job in the music industries after graduation. This student said:

In the first year, everyone wants to make as much music as possible. Which makes perfect sense because you come here because you are a musician. Eventually, you will think again: 'Of course I want to make music, but I can still do other things and ... still work in the music industry. (15b, bass student)

For example, one student decided to learn how to work in a studio, while others considered full-time or part-time work as a music teacher. Another student was focusing on a career in the music industries that did not involve making music and had acquired a more widely applicable skill set in the course of his studies:

Setting up your own act is very difficult. It wasn't really something for me and I also thought it was better to broaden myself more. So, I'd rather focus on the business side now. That feels good and I really learn new things that I can apply a bit more broadly. (8a, vocals student)

The feelings of students about the reality check were twofold. Some, like the student quoted above, discovered that there is more to a career in music than just having an act and that other work can also be enjoyable. At the same time, the pessimistic prognosis for a career in music also caused stress and feelings of anxiety and depression among some students: 'There isn't a single person here in our programme who didn't suffer from a form of depression for a while' (15a, vocals student). Students therefore said that they wanted more attention to be paid to their mental health, as these feelings were widespread: 'There are more people who suffer from a kind of burnout here at school than the school knows' (13a, song writing student).

All in all, on the one hand, the reality check provided by these programmes is an important strategy to make students more aware of ways to find employment. As a result, it helps students to decide for themselves whether they want to focus on achieving their dreams or to adjust their plans and build a more realistic career in music. At the same time, it also indicates the inability of these programmes to help students achieve their initial career

goals, and it mirrors neoliberal policies as it attempts to coalesce students' goals with the nature of the labour market of the music industries (Kenning, 2019). Moreover, it transfers the responsibility for the outcomes of these choices onto the students, causing feelings of stress.

Mixed professional practice

Due to the slim chances of making a successful career playing their own music, several teachers mentioned that the majority of the graduates turn to other kinds of musical work to earn a living while remaining active in the music industries, pursuing what they call a *mixed professional practice*. In this mixed professional practice, graduates earn an income by combining different work activities in music. These findings reflect the general trend that musicians and creative workers pursue a 'protean career' by combining multiple jobs (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016, Von der Fuhr, 2015). According to the teachers, graduates engage in a wide range of industry roles: most prominently, they play in their own acts and cover bands, and work as session musicians or music teachers. Teaching is especially important as it provides an indispensable source of steady revenue (see also D. Bennett, 2007; Menger, 1999). Other sources of income mentioned included being a songwriter, arranger or composer for others, working as a band coach, producer or studio engineer, making music for advertisements or movies and performing non-musical tasks such as working for labels, bookers and festivals (e.g. marketing or production), or as a manager.

As students face a future of multiple job holding, popular music programmes aim to prepare them for a mixed professional practice in order to increase their employability. Preparing students to take on different jobs in the music industries in order to earn a sustainable income acts as a form of occupational risk diversification (Menger, 1999). Furthermore, it makes students more flexible, so that they can accept different job opportunities and adapt to changes in the music labour market, thereby increasing their chances of working in the music industries in the long term. Therefore, even students who strive for a career with an act are encouraged to prepare for a mixed professional practice because teachers believe that the chances of making it as an act are low, and any such career may be short-lived. For this reason, one teacher explained that when students want to leave the programme because their career is starting to take off, they try to dissuade them:

What we want is for them to become very good at many things. And suppose they have a breakthrough with that one little thing, because they have a hit or excel in The Voice [talent show on television]. ... Suppose that one little thing doesn't turn out what they had hoped for, then we'll keep them in the programme to also teach them the rest. And that can be teaching, but also song writing or producing, or more studio work. (10, keys teacher)

In order to prepare their students for a mixed professional practice, these programmes aim to turn them into versatile musicians who are able to perform multiple roles in the music industries by expanding their musical toolbox. They introduce students to different genres, for example by teaching about music history, and issuing assignments where students have to write, perform and record music in certain genres. Teachers also invite students to experiment, increase their technical skills and knowledge, teach them to read sheet music, and help them to perform well on stage with little preparation. As one teacher summarizes, the goal is: 'that they have received all the necessary resources from our programme so that they can actually master that repertoire in no time, with a scrap sheet, if necessary' (4, drums teacher). Moreover, popular music programmes train students for non-performing work in music. Here, most prominently, students learn didactic skills and how to develop training material to prepare them for the role of music teachers. Due to the reality check, all students feel that preparing for multiple industry roles is important because to make a living 'it is crucial that you do different things' (13a, vocals student). Consequently, students argued that the main benefit of attending a popular music programme is the versatility – rather than specialization – in skills they acquire.

The mixed professional practice helps students to align commercial and artistic interests in their careers in music, as they can pursue less economically promising artistic endeavours, while earning enough on the side to remain active in the music industries. At the same time, participants also realize that this focus on a generalist skill set and approach to work might also lower their chances of achieving commercial success with an act because they have to divide their time and resources between different projects. The same teacher addresses this issue as such:

I also strongly believe that you need to focus on something. You have to believe in something. And then do it. I also don't believe in teaching four days a week and then trying to build your career one day a week. That doesn't work. I think that the focus is very important. (9, guitar teacher)

This quote highlights a contradiction in these programmes as students are prepared for a mixed-professional practice to widen their career prospects, while at the same time they must decide to focus on a certain career path (e.g. building their own act). While teachers feel it is their duty to train students in different professional activities, once again they make it the students' responsibility to choose between a mixed professional practice and other approaches to work. As a result, each individual student must figure out how they will navigate the music industries.

Work experience

The third way in which popular music programmes aim to increase the employability of their students is by encouraging them to start their career while they are still enrolled in the programme. The teachers share the view that if students wait until after graduation to start planning and working on their career in music, they will be too late: 'Then you are actually too late. It has to start at school. It is very common that students who are in their third year are already registered with the Chamber of Commerce' (6, keyboard teacher).

Therefore, within these programmes students are encouraged to take advantage of the relative convenience of having a period of four years during which they can receive coaching and free material resources, by already starting to work in the music industries: 'Yes, they encourage you to start working in the industry and develop yourself already' (13b, vocals student). The teachers and the students cite various reasons why it is important for students to gain work experience during their study. First, they believe that graduating from a popular music programme is not enough on its own to convince employers to hire graduates: 'I always ask: 'Have you seen that placard at Paradiso [big venue] right next to the door that says that only higher vocational education certified musicians are allowed to perform here? There is none!'' (1, business teacher). Therefore, to increase the value of their diploma, it is important that students collect a record of achievements. They can do so by already starting to work and build a 'career portfolio'. This demonstrates that they are able to meet professional standards, which improves their employability. Furthermore, work done during their study may generate more work in the future (Comunian et al., 2014; Menger, 1999).

A second reason for starting their career during their study is that students learn what their chances of success are in certain career paths and identify other career options they might want to pursue. Popular music programmes help them to acquire experiences in the music industries. Students go to song writing camps, get gigs as session musicians and learn how to record music in studios. Furthermore, programmes offer teaching internships, and one programme offered internships in the music industries (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016) to experience other non-musical industry roles. In this way, gaining work experience functions – once again – as a form of a reality check that helps students to adjust their goals. As a result, one student pointed out: 'I also found out that I like having control over management things, over production things, so also to actually do things like that in the music industry' (15a, vocals student).

Thirdly, by allowing students to gain these experiences, popular music programmes help them to realize what competences will be expected from them in the market and the level of quality they need to achieve, giving them the opportunity to develop themselves in this respect. Gaining hands-on experience and knowledge of the industry gives students the opportunity to develop their artistic and professional practice (Comunian et al., 2014). Most importantly, by offering this industry experience, these programmes try to cultivate an entrepreneurial approach to work, consisting of competences such as self-reliance, self-reflexivity, perseverance, discipline, and the ability to create and find job opportunities. Starting to work on their careers during their study and reflecting on how they can achieve their dreams confront students with the importance of such entrepreneurial competences. Teachers emphasize that students need to take responsibility for their career early on in their study programme because if they do not, no one else will do this for them. For example, one teacher mentioned that a willingness to work hard might increase a student's chances of success more than being an exceptionally gifted musician:

There are also students of whom I think: 'You think it will all come to you naturally.' Sometimes there are also students of whom I think: 'You might be able to play a little less well than him. But I would sooner put my faith in you because you believe 'I just know what I want. And if I have to study until four in the morning, I will.' (12, audio production teacher)

This entrepreneurial attitude is also important for students who continue to dream of a career with their own act: 'So, when people think in their second year, 'wow it's very hard to become the next Kensington [a well-known Dutch band]', never mind. Yes, then you don't have it in you" (12, audio production teacher).

At the same time, this expectation of an entrepreneurial attitude entails a lot of pressure, and the question remains whether this attitude will offset the precariousness of the labour market for all students. This might be a second reason why students report high levels of stress:

I feel like I have said 'yes' to a lot of various projects ... in order to be working in the music industry. At some point, your calendar is just completely full. ... There is little balance. I also have the feeling that people work very hard towards their EP release, they work very hard towards their final exams, they work very hard towards a certain thing which is the next step in their career. After that, they fall into a black hole. I hear from so many people how tough it is. Mentally and physically. (13b, vocals student)

Again, the analysis reveals a dilemma: on the one hand, through encouraging students to gain work experience, popular music programmes try to give them the best starting position for establishing a career in the risky market of the music industries. At the same time, the promotion of notions of self-reliance and entrepreneurship requires students to take control of their career in a precarious market marked by little job security. This pressures students to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the programmes and to get their career off to a successful start, which can also feel like a burden and lead to feelings of stress and anxiety. As such, this emphasis on enterprise also seems to be an attempt to positively frame students' future experiences and reveals an understanding of the music industries in which workers are expected to self-organize and compete with each other (McRobbie, 2016).

Conclusion

The popular music programmes we have looked at in this study are designed to make their students more employable. However, a tension exists because, on the one hand, these programmes want to help students to achieve their dream career (with little chance of economic success), while, on the other hand, they aim to prepare students for careers in music that are more realistic in terms of success – but these are careers that fewer students initially aspire to. My analysis reveals that the programmes do not push students towards the most economically viable careers in music, but support artistic ambitions which may lead to a more marginalized career. At the same time, these programmes aim to counter the insecurity of the market and to increase students' employability. They do so by facilitating a realistic perspective on career prospects, by encouraging students to prepare for a mixed professional practice, and by encouraging students to gain work experience throughout their studies. In this manner, popular music programmes are, as described by a teacher, 'facilitating dreams, with a sense of reality' (1, business teacher).

As a result, one of the functions of popular music programmes is to bust any romantic myths on how to build a career in music that students might be cherishing when they start their study and to present them with a more realistic approach to work in music. One teacher explicitly mentioned that people in the music industries may have distorted ideas about musical careers: 'It is the monkey on top of the rock who will say in interviews: "Yes, nobody believed in me and I still managed to get this successful." But yes, that is easy for them to say' (9, entrepreneurship teacher). Therefore, this teacher intends to fight such misconceptions by functioning as a 'catalyst' to ensure a more 'realistic' view. This finding is reflected in other research that has suggested that one of the functions of art education is to help students to envision 'occupational imaginaries' (Fine, 2017, p. 1463) and to visualize their place in the arts market and develop their artistic and professional identities in line with that imagined future.

Considering the precarity of the labour market for musicians, these strategies to ensure employability might be understood as burdening individual musicians with the obligation of coping with these working conditions (McRobbie, 2015). Overall, the idea is communicated that students are solely responsible for achieving their goals while the chances of success are slim, and most students can only partially pursue the career for which they entered these programmes in the first place. At the same time, however,

this approach is pragmatic as it provides students with the best starting position by giving them the tools they need to find employment in the market and allows them the freedom to choose a career model of their liking. Even though the students and teachers interviewed said that even more could be done to help students in this regard, students within these programmes acquire various strategies for occupational risk management.

In any case, these strategies reveal a specific understanding of the work of musicians in the changing music industries. These industries are perceived as having winner-take-all labour markets in which most musicians struggle to earn a modal income (Von der Fuhr, 2015), where having multiple jobs is the rule rather than the exception (Bridgstock, 2005; Comunian et al., 2014) and strong portfolios 'with an accumulation of hiring records' function 'as a reputational signal' (Menger, 1999, p. 550) that can generate more work.

All in all, the sooner that aspiring musicians are made aware of the nature of working in the music industries and the corresponding odds, the more able they will be to make an informed and conscious choice on pursuing a career in music. Therefore, to the extent they are not doing so already, similar programmes could inform students applying for these programmes about the nature of working in the music industries. In any case, students' employability should be an ongoing consideration within popular music education, although dilemmas such as those identified in this chapter should not be overlooked.



Conclusion and discussion

Conclusion

The music industries have always been a challenging labour market for musicians, due to the low odds of obtaining success and precarious working conditions. In addition to this, contemporary musicians hoping to break into the music industries and chase their dreams are faced with a very different situation than 20 years ago. Technological innovations such as online music streaming, audio recording software and social media have led to many changes in the music industries and far-reaching consequences for the working lives of musicians. To name just a few of these changes, revenues from the sales of physical sound carriers such as CDs have plummeted, streaming has become a new and important market for recorded music and live music has become a more important source of income for musicians. At the same time, these technological innovations have provided opportunities for musicians to bypass traditional industry intermediaries to reach audiences directly and find new ways to monetize working in music. As a result, entrepreneurial and DIY business models have become the dominant approach for early-career musicians, requiring them to perform a range of new work activities.

To understand the effects of these changes on the career strategies, work activities, and experiences of up-and-coming musicians, the main goal of this dissertation was to explore *how early-career musicians build a career in the changing popular music industries*. To do so, I conducted three empirical studies within the Dutch music industries, focusing on the careers of musicians, popular music education and careers in live music. Overall, I interviewed 21 early-career musicians, seventeen of whom participated in a diary questionnaire study and post-questionnaire interview. I conducted interviews with music teachers, held focus groups with music students and made a content analysis on course guides and policy documents in three popular music programmes at higher music education institutions. Furthermore, I created a quantitative dataset following 216 acts over a period of eight years after their participation in the Noorderslag showcase festival.

These three studies allowed me to investigate a series of sub-questions, the answers to which helped to answer my main research question. In short, in this dissertation I have mapped how early-career musicians aim to build their career, what existing beliefs are about what they are taught about the assets and strategies required to become successful under today's conditions, and what careers in live music look like. My findings indicate that

early-career musicians build a career in the changing music industries by engaging in reputational practices in the form of milestones, performing a wide variety of creative and non-creative work activities, and by focusing their entrepreneurial efforts on the 'institutionalized path' provided by the Dutch music industries, consisting of a series of steps to build one's career supported by the state and industry actors. Popular music programmes at higher music education institutions help in this process by giving students opportunities to develop competences, build a network, and accrue symbolic resources, while promoting strategies for coping with the precarity of a career in music. This precarity is also visible in their careers in live music, where their activities demonstrate the importance of having a network and receiving forms of recognition in order to obtain success.

I started this dissertation by contrasting the romantic appeal of the life of a pop musician characterized by wonderful experiences, music and fame, with the less rosy reality of the music industries with their small chances of success, precarious working conditions and market changes. When we look at my findings as summarized above, we can see that the experiences of the musicians whom I followed throughout my research encompass both sides of the story. For example, live music careers prove to be short-lived, ill-paid and with long odds of success. At the same time, we have seen that musicians look for ways to align their careers with their love for music, as the music industries continue to exert a powerful attraction despite the difficulties of entering the music labour market. For example, aspiring musicians take advantage of the existing institutionalized path in the music industries to increase their chances of a breakthrough, while trying to find ways to avoid having to compromise their ideals. Musicians may diversify their work in the music industries to create a situation in which they can earn a living and still have time for passion projects. Popular music programmes at higher music education institutions aim to prepare their students in the best way possible in order for them to cope with these working conditions, and at the same time to try create an awareness amongst their students of what the future holds in store for them. All in all, by investigating what early-career musicians do, what they are taught, and what careers in live music look like, this dissertation paints a picture of the music industries as a challenging and changing market for early-career musicians that, in order to build a career, requires them to formulate responses to these difficult conditions. As their chances of making it big in the music industries are small and their financial position is often precarious, musicians try to walk the thin line between meeting industry demands and staying true to their own goals and values in the music industries.

In the next sub-sections, I will summarize the most important findings of the different studies in more depth, highlight the methodological relevance (if relevant), and underline how these studies have added to our understanding of the careers of musicians. Overall, I will show how each of the three empirical studies have contributed pieces to the puzzle of how early-career musicians are building their careers under the changing circumstances in the music industries. Then, in the discussion I will discuss the academic contributions, my suggestions for future research, and policy implications, after which I will share my concluding thoughts.

Careers of musicians

The first empirical study conducted for this dissertation focussed on the careers of musicians. My goal was to understand how musicians aim to build a career under the changing circumstances of the music industries, what kind of competences their work requires and how they value their work. First, I investigated *what the role of reputation is in the career building strategy of early-career musicians in the changing music industries*. Technological innovations have given musicians the opportunity to present their music directly to audiences without having to rely on industry intermediaries. While it might be expected that this could lead them to focus on new career strategies, musicians continue to believe that it is important to build a reputation within the established music industries. They try to obtain backing from industry intermediaries by performing *milestones*, which are ritualized practices that function as signals of prior success and predictors of future success to industry intermediaries such as labels and festivals. Even though achieving industry milestones may not lead to immediate economic benefits, musicians continue to pursue them because they believe that they may result in later success, and because they value the symbolic appeal and romance of being part of the music industries.

Secondly, I investigated *what the work activities of early-career musicians look like, and how they value their work within the changing music industries*. Diary questionnaire data showed that contemporary musicians must perform a series of non-musical tasks. Nevertheless, they manage to reserve 40 percent of their time for creative tasks. Remarkably, they devote minimal time to social media. The interviews and post-questionnaire interviews revealed three accounts of value that shape how musicians perceive their work, and whether they understand their work in pop music as art, as a business or as a hobby. Musicians drawing from the 'pop as art' account may choose not to

perform business tasks, and several musicians who were using the 'pop as business' account demonstrated anti-industry attitudes whereas musicians relying on the 'pop as a hobby' account focus on the social aspects of their activities in music. As a result, while the findings indicate that musicians organize their work in response to the specific conditions of the Dutch music industries, we can also observe that their approach to their work varies, depending on the account of value they draw from.

Thirdly, comparing the experiences of musicians in the Netherlands with musicians in the UK, I explored together with Jo Haynes *whether the strategizing of Dutch and British early-career musicians can be understood as responses to the structural conditions within their respective context*. Overall, we conclude that the strategies musicians employ can be understood as a response to the specific make-up of the local context in which they are active. For example, as within the Dutch context – compared to the UK – more state and industry supported initiatives are offered in the form of a series of steps to build one's career that gives access to key actors, it makes sense for musicians to focus their entrepreneurial efforts on this institutionalized path in the music industries. However, as the large majority of musicians who operate on the periphery of the music industries remain in precarious positions because traditional power and economic relations tend to prevail, the strategies employed in both contexts do not seem to offset the insecurity of the market.

Overall, this study makes two methodological contributions. Firstly, the online diary questionnaire in combination with the interviews allowed me to measure the activities of early-career musicians directly in a natural environment (Bolger et al., 2003), avoiding reporting biases (Andersen & Mikkelsen, 2008). This provided me with the opportunity to compare their perceptions of their working lives to their actual day-to-day behaviour. Such attempts to circumvent misperceptions or biases are important, as relying on interviews alone contains the risk of reinforcing cultural beliefs, for example with regard to how musicians are suffering under the current conditions. Secondly, the secondary comparative analysis of interview data between two samples from two different countries, showed the fruitfulness of analysing existing data for new purposes (Bishop, 2007; Mason, 2007). Moreover, this comparative analysis shows the importance of the analytical tool of comparison. Knowledge of the music industries is often informed by research on the Anglo-Saxon industries (Marshall, 2013). Therefore, it is important to compare contexts as this sheds light on the transferability of qualitative findings (Bryman, 2015) by showing which local findings might be applicable to other contexts, which are the specific outcomes of local conditions (Janssen et al., 2008), and which conditions lead to which effects.

In addition to making these methodological contributions, this study of early-career musicians adds to our understanding of the way in which musicians are currently constructing career strategies within the changing context of the music industries. Due to the enduring power of traditional intermediaries, and the symbolic appeal of certain practices, musicians continue to perform traditional strategies and at this point are hesitant to rely on new ways of career building. For example, while social media are experienced as necessary for building a career, musicians struggle with building and monetizing an online following (Haynes & Marshall, 2017). As a result, they incorporate such new practices into existing career practices, rather than replacing the latter. However, this hesitance to incorporate new practices might also be caused by the fact that we are in the midst of these industry transitions. Perhaps in the future, new ways of career building will become profitable or interesting options for musicians after further transitions have taken place in the music industries. Moreover, this focus of traditional strategies might also be trait of the pop-rock acts in the alternative mainstream that I have investigated here, as for example hip-hop already seems to be more advanced regarding incorporating new practices (Reitsamer & Prokop, 2017). In any case, this combination of old and new practices requires the interviewed musicians to perform a wide range of activities, which shows that modern early-career musicians have moved away from a traditional career model as industry workers towards a model that includes entrepreneurial and DIY components (Hughes et al., 2016). Overall, the strategies and work activities that these musicians employ are shaped by the context of the local music industries, as musicians are forced to formulate specific responses to the structure and culture of the industries they encounter (Tarassi, 2018), such as the level of state support, the level of industry support, opportunities to acquire certain skill sets, the size of the music industries or cultural notions regarding the relationship between entrepreneurship and musicianship (e.g. Janssen et al., 2008; Van Venrooij, 2011). At the same time, musicians who employ different accounts of value (Gerber, 2017) – pop as art, pop as business or pop as a hobby – develop different responses to the demands of the music industries. In other words, while the music industries structure the accounts of value of musicians, there is still room for different perceptions of the music industries, shaped (at least partially) by the different opportunities that musicians perceive in the music industries.

Popular music education

The second empirical study looked at how popular music education prepares musicians for a career in music. Drawing from this study, I investigated *whether and to what extent popular music programmes at higher music education institutions are perceived to contribute to the career development of their students*. Results indicate that participants believe that such programmes have added value for music students because they offer 1) a range of competences necessary for their artistic and entrepreneurial performance, 2) a network that helps them to gain access to industry gatekeepers and find work, and 3) symbolic resources that can be used to signal a fit with the demands of the music industries so that they can be taken seriously sooner. I also addressed the question of whether such programmes are understood as contributing to the professionalism of their students, and whether this usage of the concept of professionalism aligns with interpretations of professionalism in the literature. The results indicate that it is believed that these programmes promote a standard of expertise in line with the ‘normative value’ perspective on professionalism, which argues that professionals are characterized by specialist skills and knowledge. At the same time, in line with the ‘power struggle’ perspective which understands professionalism as the outcome of a struggle over control, participants believe that the symbolic resources provided by these programmes foster a professional identity. Participants expect that this professional expertise and identity help students to stand out from musicians without forms of formal education when entering the market.

In addition, drawing from the interviews with teachers and focus groups with students from this second study I also answered the question of *how popular music programmes at higher music education institutions prepare students to cope with the uncertainty of building a career in the popular music industries*. Here, the analysis focused on the specific career strategies that students learn to help them cope with the precarious working conditions that are prevalent in the music industries. Three interrelated strategies were identified that help students to deal with the current nature of the music labour market. First, these programmes provide a reality check by portraying a realistic picture of the music industries, forcing students to decide whether they want to continue following their dreams (with little chance of success), or to start building a more pragmatic career. Second, students are prepared for a mixed professional practice as a form of occupational risk diversification. Lastly, these programmes encourage students to start work while still studying so that they can build a career portfolio, assess their chances for success in certain career paths and learn what level of quality is expected of them in the music industries.

Overall, this study adds to our knowledge on how these programmes influence musicians' careers. It maps the ideas held by teachers and students and set out in course guides and policy documents regarding the assets (competences, social relations and symbolic resources) and career strategies that are important for a career in music. Here, my findings depict contemporary musicians as people who acquire expert knowledge in the form of musical and entrepreneurial competences (e.g. T. Bennett, 2015; Bridgstock, 2013) and know how to use their network and cultural capital to give the impression that they are a competent musician (e.g. Childress & Gerber, 2015; Fine, 2017). At the same time, to build a career in music musicians need to develop strategies to overcome the precarious conditions they must deal with (Beckman, 2007), even if these strategies are at odds with the goals they had when they entered these programmes. However, as in the previous study, a scepticism exists amongst teachers regarding the chances for musicians to reach their goals, painting the picture of the music industries as winner-take-all markets where most musicians have to look for ways to make ends meet in the long tail of the music industries.

Careers in live music

The third empirical study explored the role that live music plays in the careers of early-career musicians in the changing music industries. On the basis of this study, I mapped *what the dynamics are in the number of live shows early-career acts play and the fees they receive, and which factors explain success in live music*. The analysis of a dataset following the careers in live music of acts during the eight years after their participation in Noorderslag showed huge differences in the number of shows that acts perform per year and the fees they receive for performing. Differences are already clear in the first year after their participation in Noorderslag and increase over time. Overall, we see a decrease in the number of shows that acts play per year as most acts stopped performing at some point between the first and the eighth year. At the same time, the average fees the acts received increased, which shows that the most successful acts manage to command higher fees. I performed a multilevel analysis to chart the relationship between success in live music and a number of variables. The most important results showed a high correlation between critical and popular recognition and achieving success in live music. Other noteworthy positive effects on success in live music were having industry connections and having attended a popular music programme.

This study brings new insights by incorporating and analysing data that have not been used in previous research into the careers of musicians. The fee data for live performances adds a piece to the puzzle on pop musicians' sources of income and shows that live music fees are heavily skewed, once again demonstrating a winner-takes-all economy in the music industries (Rosen, 1981). This is in line with what can be expected on the basis of other research that has investigated revenues from streaming (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021) or ticket sales (Krueger, 2019). Even though live music might be an important source of income for a sustainable career in music, only a small percentage of musicians manage to make a profitable career in live music. Moreover, findings suggest that there seems to be a cull early on in these musicians' careers, separating the successful acts from the unsuccessful acts. Whereas the interviews with musicians in the first empirical study suggest that although there is an 'institutionalized path' consisting of a series of supported steps to build one's career in the Dutch music industries that culminate in performing at Noorderslag, there seems to be little scope to help acts grow gradually after this showcase festival.

In addition, this study promotes an understanding of success in live music. To start, most measured individual characteristics of acts and musicians such as gender, age of an act or genre are not predictors of success (in opposition to earlier findings by e.g. Berkers & Schaap, 2018; Hitters & van de Kamp, 2010; Williams et al., 2019). What did yield a positive effect on success in live music is having industry connections in the form of representation by a major booker (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Hirsch, 1972; Williams et al., 2019). In other words, in confirmation of the participants' views, industry connections seem to affect the evaluations made by gatekeepers in the music industries. Furthermore, this study shows that forms of recognition are clearly associated with success in live music. This indicates that, just as argued by the participants, to become successful in live music, gaining industry connections, and obtaining critical and popular recognition should be part of the career building strategy of acts.

Discussion

Academic contributions

Throughout this dissertation, I have referred to various bodies of research to help conceptualize and study the position of early career musicians within the context of the changing music industries. Overall, drawing from these lines of research in this dissertation I portrayed the case at hand as an example of the (reputational) work practices of workers in the creative industries and their valuation of these practices, and the way in which these practices and valuations are affected by the structural and cultural conditions of the field these actors operate in and the changes therein. By doing so, this dissertation also makes several contributions to the theoretical conversations of the incorporated bodies of research in addition to filling the various research gaps as discussed in the previous sections.

First of all, my investigations of the career building practices of musicians introduces the mechanism of the milestone. Milestones help us to understand *how* the reputational work practices that actors perform are shaped by the culture of fields of cultural production, because they believe it reflects the evaluation criteria of gatekeepers, and has symbolic appeal. As such, this concept adds to the production of culture perspective and cultural sociology in general by furthering our understanding of how culture structures reputational practices. Furthermore, these findings add insights to the sociology of markets on how cultural and structural forces shape the behaviour of workers in markets. My analysis indicates that even though the market has changed for these musicians, they continued to focus their career building efforts within the traditional markets because, in their perception, the power relations between themselves and the gatekeepers had remained stable. This is because musicians feel that new ways of reaching audiences are not yet profitable and the traditional gatekeepers have incorporated the new technologies into their business models. Furthermore, the symbolic appeal of traditional practices (such as milestones) is still attractive for these musicians because the cultural scaffolding of the music industries does not seem to have broken down. Indeed, the sociology of markets has shown that whether or not practices change depends upon changes in the power dynamics (Beckert, 1999, 2010). However, while my research confirms these findings as any change in working practices is impeded due to musicians' continued experienced dependency on gatekeepers, we see that the effect of such structural factors is mediated through culture, as the practices of actors are shaped by the cultural scaffolding of markets which provide

cues on what are effective and meaningful practices. As such, for market destabilization to occur, the cultural scaffolding needs to break down as well (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Swidler, 1986).

In addition, I add to creative industry and popular music studies and cultural sociology by showing how musicians' accounts of value and their corresponding strategies and work activities are shaped by the structural and cultural conditions of their field. In line with these bodies of research (e.g. Crossley & Bottero, 2015; Tarassi, 2018; Threadgold, 2018), we saw that certain practices gain meaning and symbolic appeal within the context of the music industries. My findings add to this research that the specific make-up of the local context (Janssen et al., 2008; Van Venrooij, 2011) has a distinctive impact on the way in which musicians value their work, and therefore different contexts yield different valuations. The most outspoken example here is that, compared to the UK, the local conditions of the Dutch music industries, e.g. the institutionalized path for career building and the relatively small group of cultural intermediaries, have facilitated a more entrepreneurial mind-set amongst musicians – although there is still room for different valuations of entrepreneurship.

Creative industry and popular music studies and cultural sociology show how different types of valuation are caused by different markets within fields of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1984; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Klein et al., 2017). Here, my findings make a second contribution to these disciplines by showing that the opportunities that musicians perceive within the music industries shape the way in which they value certain work activities, resulting in different valuations of work. As such, in line with the work of Gerber (2017), I offer an inductive multidimensional model that can be used to interpret the way in which pop musicians value their work activities, transcending Bourdieusian axes. Moreover, my findings show that the accounts of value that cultural workers employ in such markets can be understood to some extent as 'occupational imaginaries' (Fine, 2017, p. 1463) and reflect to at least some extent the opportunities or space of possibles (Bourdieu, 1993) they perceive to exist in such markets to perform certain forms of work (perhaps also informed by the 'reality check' they might have received within arts education). In this way, as these accounts of value reflect perceived market opportunities, one could say that they function like a 'desire path' (*'olifantenpaadje'*, i.e. elephant path in Dutch). They indicate existing paths towards specific possible positions in the market that have been created as the consequence of 'erosion' due to the 'traffic' of predecessors that have been successful in obtaining these positions. As such, just like real desire paths in public spaces, they can be seen as an indicator of the level of traffic that certain paths have received in the past.

Next, research on arts education and professionalism in the arts allowed me to study the role that popular music education plays in the careers of pop musicians. I contribute to these lines of research by showing that the contemporary musician is expected to need both professional expertise and a professional identity, in opposition to earlier studies that have emphasized one of the two different aspects of professionalism (Childress & Gerber, 2015; Lindström, 2015; Sciulli, 2007). Consequently, I propose that we need to synthesize the two different understandings of professionalism, e.g. the normative value perspective and the power struggle perspective (Evetts, 2014; Schinkel & Noordegraaf, 2011), if we want to understand how professionalism is currently functioning in the music industries. In addition, my study of popular music programmes at higher music education institutions also allowed me to understand how the new generation of musicians are being socialized in these programmes in order to increase their fit with the music industries. As such, I address a research gap identified by Lamont (2012, p. 18), who asked for more research on how existing values are transferred to new generations of actors. To highlight one aspect of my findings, I showed that a reality check is used to ensure that the students' goals are aligned with the nature of the labour market of the music industries.

Lastly, I relied on research on popular music and the creative industries in general to understand career success in the live music industry. In turn, my study contributes to these bodies of research in two ways. First, building on earlier research (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Hirsch, 1972; Williams et al., 2019), it highlights the importance of networks for the career building of acts and characterizes the music industries, and the live music industry in particular, as networked fields. All three empirical studies suggest that gaining access to these networks is (believed to be) one of the key determinants of a successful career in music. As I mentioned earlier, this might be due to the fact that cultural intermediaries have a great deal of power with regard to which musicians and acts will be presented to audiences. Especially in the Netherlands this network of gatekeepers is considered to be small, tightly-knit and powerful, so this might have increased the importance of gaining access to them. Therefore, direct contact and brokers who wager their reputation in order to convince gatekeepers (Bourdieu, 1993), may help aspiring musicians to obtain a successful career in music.

Second, this dissertation adds knowledge to these lines of research regarding the way in which various forms of recognition are related to success in popular music (e.g. Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Keunen, 2014; Klein et al., 2017; Schmutz, 2016; Schmutz & van Venrooij, 2021). The correlation of both

critical recognition and popular recognition to success in live music suggests that the live music industries have an aligned heteronomous and autonomous pole, confirming earlier research that has argued that the field of restricted production in music is part of the field of mass production (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Moreover, as I have argued above, in addition to the alignment of the heteronomous and autonomous pole within this part of the music industries, there seems to be room for different valuations of work among musicians, which also shows how a rigid dichotomy falls short of the variety of experiences in the music industries. Together, this shows the limitations of applying the traditional Bourdieusian model to the field of popular music, and requires us to rethink how artistic and commercial values are part of the logic of the music industries.

However, to complicate things further, because of the mixed professional practice, musicians can use the reputation they have earned by obtaining less 'successful' positions as a performer in the recorded and live music industries to acquire a variety of other roles in other music markets (e.g. as a teacher, session musician, song writer manager), and by doing so establish a sustainable career without obtaining a profitable position in the live and the recorded music industry. As such, even the status of positions in the periphery of these fields can be wagered to acquire other jobs elsewhere, and may thus contribute to fruitful careers (Childress, 2017). To understand musicians' careers, perhaps we should imagine the career system for musicians as a series of interlinked markets in which a position acquired in one market influences positions in the other markets. Yet, even with this combination of various jobs, the findings of this dissertation suggest that careers often remain precarious.

Limitations

Of course, every research design has its limitations, which is also the case for the three empirical studies that I conducted for this dissertation. To begin, overall I have focussed on the pop-rock genres, or to be more precise, the alternative mainstream (Keunen, 2014). As a result, this dissertation might have a genre bias, and we should be careful not to generalize these findings based on data mostly collected in the genres of pop, electronic and rock to the whole field of popular music. Most prominently, as mentioned, the importance of traditional cultural intermediaries might also be due to the specific characteristics of these genres, such as the fact that they stemmed from the time before the changes and thus may have older power structures

and ways of doing things. Furthermore, they may have certain cultural notions with regard to the role of intermediaries. As discussed, musicians active in other genres such as hip-hop (Reitsamer & Prokop, 2017) might be less reliant on traditional intermediaries, but more dependent on new ones (Balaji, 2012) as they have found new ways to reach audiences based on the new technologies. This might also have consequences for the career building strategies of musicians and the importance of cultural intermediaries and consequently the importance of reputational practices such as the collection of milestones. Therefore, for future research it might be interesting to draw comparisons with other genres as this may shed light on the structural and cultural factors which create the circumstances that cause market change and demand new career strategies.

In addition, in the chapters based on the first empirical study drawing from the interviews with musicians, the importance of cultural intermediaries for building a career in music was emphasized. However, cultural intermediaries were not interviewed for this dissertation because of its size and scope. While earlier research confirms my findings that intermediaries rely on their network to learn about new trends and acts (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009), more research is necessary to learn about their evaluation criteria. My data cannot show whether the perceived importance of reputational work practices in the form of milestones to convince intermediaries is corroborated by the intermediaries themselves. Do these milestones make up such an important part of their evaluation criteria as would be expected based on the perceptions of the musicians interviewed for this dissertation? For example, does releasing EPs or albums, participating in popular music competitions, or gaining media attention increase the value of acts in the eyes of the gatekeepers? And how do they value the various forms of recognition as mentioned in the third empirical study?

Furthermore, in the second empirical study on the impact of popular music programmes on musicians' careers, I collected data on these programmes. While this sheds light on the *perceptions* that exist within these programmes regarding the ways in which they can assist a career in music, I did not test the effect on the actual careers of graduates. Although I measured the effect of attending a popular music programme on success in live music in the quantitative study, I did not investigate whether graduates are actually having more successful careers or have acquired better competences, networks and symbolic capital, compared to people entering the market without formal education. To address this gap, future research could quantitatively compare the careers of popular music programme graduates and musicians who did not participate in formal education, although isolating

the different assets that these programmes offer in order to establish causality may require special attention.

Lastly, the design of the third empirical study which mapped careers in live music had a few limitations. Following acts over a period of eight years limits the possibility to understand how musicians end up in the long run. Although the data suggests an early division into winners and losers, eight years may not be long enough for some acts to achieve success. Additionally, on the basis of this dataset I cannot say how long any act will continue to have success in live music, how long live music will continue to provide a reliable source of income or which factors predict long-term success. Furthermore, the focus on individual acts has provided a one-sided portrayal of the chances of success in the live music industry. Throughout the dissertation, we have seen that musicians' careers often do not consist of performing with only one live music act. Most musicians are part of multiple acts, or perform live music as a session musician, and thus often do not dedicate themselves to a specific act. Others have an act for a certain period of time, and then start a new one. For example, if musicians perform in different acts, and one becomes successful, they may stop touring with another, so that one act is discontinued because of a musician's personal (financial) success. As a result, focusing on the life, death and financial sustainability of acts might not tell us everything about the ways in which musicians manage to earn a substantial income from live music.

Future research

While this dissertation adds empirical and theoretical insights on the careers of musicians to the various strands of research, it also raises a series of new questions that deserve to receive attention in future research. Based on the limitations, my suggestions for future research are to draw a comparison to other genres, to investigate the evaluation repertoires of intermediaries, to perform a study comparing the careers of graduates and musicians who did not participate in formal education, and to track careers in live music over a longer period of time, taking musicians rather than acts as the unit of measurement. Furthermore, I would like to suggest a few other directions for future research.

First, research questions similar to those I addressed on the level of the musicians in this dissertation could also be asked on the level of the intermediaries. Research has shown that despite the new technological

opportunities, intermediaries remain vital in making or breaking new hip-hop musicians (Balaji, 2012). Furthermore, on new streaming platforms, editorial choices of gatekeepers remain important, for example, when creating a play list (Bonini & Gandini, 2019). The question remains of how they have adjusted their scouting after the innovations, and how and why have they managed to obtain their position of power. Moreover, other research has shown that the intermediaries in the music industries have to reconcile different interests (Van der Hoeven et al., 2022). So, while it might feel like a power disbalance from the position of musicians, this dependency might be mutual and due less to exploitation by intermediaries, than to winner-takes-all imbalances between successful and less successful musicians, which is a typical dynamic of superstar markets (Rosen, 1981, Krueger, 2005).

Second, to learn more about the transferability of my findings it would be fruitful to draw comparisons between different artistic, creative and other occupations. For example, focusing on the role of education in the careers of workers would allow us to understand whether the importance of the benefits of such programmes, such as the acquisition of social networks, can also be found in other disciplines. Furthermore, this would enable us to explore which characteristics of occupations determine the importance of professional performance over identity or vice versa. In other words, an interdisciplinary comparison would give us the opportunity to figure out to what extent the findings of this study reflect the context of the music industries and the nature of work in it, or whether these findings are generalizable to the arts in general or even to other forms of creative and non-creative work.

Third, future research should extend its view beyond live music. As I have shown throughout my dissertation, musicians have a mixed professional practice (or portfolio career or protean career, Bridgstock, 2005) to earn a living. Alternatively, they might opt for a career as a semi-professional musician where they complement their endeavours in live music or other forms of music with work outside the music industries. It is for this reason that throughout this dissertation I have adopted a broader view than focusing on live music alone to understand the careers of musicians. However, it might be useful for future research to take an even broader approach, and start by sampling a wide variety of musicians to look at what types of work they perform and in which (parts of the) music industries they are active. This could also help to shed additional light on how we should conceptualize the careers of musicians. In several of the previous chapters I promoted the inductive approach as it helps us to transcend the limitations of binaries such as professional versus amateur and art versus commerce, but future

research could take this one step further (either by means of in-depth interviews or large-scale surveys) and begin with the question: what does the range of activities of their mixed professional practice consist of? And as a result, what does a career in music look like, in which industries and labour markets does it take place, and how do these musicians progress in these fields? This then would allow us to further our thinking on the extent to which the labour markets and career systems for musicians consist of a complicated hopscotch combining different interlinked markets.

Policy implications

Overall, throughout this dissertation I have shown that the careers of aspiring musicians starting out in the Dutch music industries are often precarious. Most musicians that I have spoken to were struggling to make substantial earnings from music, and most live music acts struggle to reach a point where their fees are high enough to provide a substantial source of income. Despite these challenging circumstances, the musicians I interviewed were passionate about a career in music. This raises the question of how cultural policies can contribute to a music ecology that is more sustainable for musicians. Even though the winner-takes-all dynamics of the music markets are strong, they continue to exert a powerful attraction. Dynamics transcend local markets and therefore it is probably impossible to avoid a marginal long tail, but based on the three studies that I conducted for this dissertation I think that there are several interventions that could contribute to music industries that distribute the profits more evenly, or at least contribute to the sustainability of different ways to be active in music.

To start, in the Netherlands we currently see a discussion taking place with regard to the topic of fair pay, based on the Fair Practice Code that has been developed as a code of conduct for the creative industries regarding the fair treatment of workers.³⁹ Amongst others, musicians, policy makers, industry actors think about ways to make sure that musicians are paid fairly for live shows based on this Fair Practice Code. For policy makers working for municipalities, governments, private and public funds it is important to think about ways to promote these initiatives. To the extent that they are not already doing so, they could think about ways to incorporate the code into

³⁹ See <https://fairpracticecode.nl/>, visited on 9-9-2022.

the requirements for grants that funds, municipalities and governments offer to venues and festivals that program music. If fair pay has consequences for live music organizers' ability to break even, policy makers could think about grants to cover the unprofitable peak of their expenses. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, live music is often just one of the revenue streams for musicians, so it also important to think about fair pay for other forms of work in the music industries. For example, we could raise the questions of what would be a fair fee for a musician to receive when their music is streamed from a streaming platform and what a fair price is that the customer should pay. Another suggestion is that policy makers could look for ways to support and accelerate the position (or establishment) of advocacy groups and labour unions for musicians to improve their position in fee negotiations with intermediaries in the music industries.

If one of the causes of huge inequalities in musicians' earnings is an oversupply of musicians, a second contribution to improving the precarious condition of musicians might be to provide musicians entering the profession with a clear perspective on their prospects in the music industries. This would equip them to make an informed choice upfront about whether they want to take their chances or opt for a safer career. For example, while a study choice check or motivation interview to check whether the study programme matches with the applicant's ambitions is a mandatory aspect of the enrolment process for popular music programmes at higher music education institutions (just like all higher education programmes),⁴⁰ it would be worthwhile to investigate to what extent students commence upon such programmes with a clear understanding of their prospects and chances in the music industries. In addition, we could ask the same question with regard to musicians who take part in the institutionalized path for talent development in the Netherlands.

Governmental policies have had a strong hand in the establishment of this talent development path by supporting a series of initiatives such as regional popular music competitions (e.g., Grote Prijs van Nederland, Amsterdamse Popprijs, Clash of the Titans), talent development programs (e.g., Popsport, Proud of the South, Kunstbende), conferences (e.g., No Man's Land, Rock Your Business) and showcase festivals (e.g., Noorderslag, Popronde, ADE). The main benefits as reported throughout this dissertation are that this

⁴⁰ See <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/hoger-onderwijs/vraag-en-antwoord/regels-studiekeuzecheck>, visited on 9-9-2022.

path allows musicians to acquire recognition, gain experience and develop skills. Moreover, this institutional embedding of talent development offers a clear focus in career building for these musicians and encourages an entrepreneurial mindset, compared to music industries which provide less support, such as the UK. As such, this path can be understood as a best practice of how industry actors and governmental policies can support up-and-coming musicians. Yet, after this path, which culminates in appearing at Noorderslag, musicians encounter a situation where they have to fend for themselves.⁴¹ As such, the end of this path marks a key junction where they can choose a professional career, which will remain precarious at least in the early years, or return to the position of amateur. Here, my findings suggest that after Noorderslag most live acts cease to exist. Therefore, these initiatives must also be transparent upfront about the long-term perspectives for musicians and their chances of success, or at the very least should be moderate when painting a picture of their future. This suggestion is not an attempt to raise the threshold for people who aspire to a career in music, but a pragmatic argument in favour of better informed choices and a more realistic portrayal of a career as a musician. As I have argued earlier, such an early reality check should always be paired with initiatives to improve labour conditions for musicians. Otherwise, this approach would lead to a cynical transfer of responsibility for career success onto the musicians themselves (Hughes et al., 2016).

Furthermore, for supporters or initiators of such popular music programmes and talent pipelines it is important to constantly evaluate whether these initiatives fit with the demands of the current market. Are they currently offering the best preparation for a sustainable career in music? For example, a focus on a career with a live music act might not be the best preparation for a sustainable career in music (again, preparations for a mixed professional practice might increase the chances). Further research on the way in which alumni experience their popular music education and talent development programmes might be a good way to shed more light on how effectively these programmes contribute to financially sustainable careers.

Of course, musicians have different reasons for aspiring to a career in music, drawing from the different accounts of values. Some aim to earn money, some do it purely for the joy of it. If we want to create a healthy ecology for

⁴¹ This is also noted by actors in the music industries themselves. For example, during the conference which was part of

Eurosonic Noorderslag 2018, a panel was organized with the title 'Noorderslag, and then what?'

musicians with different approaches to working in music, it is important that we create circumstances that enable musicians who aim to operate based on a pop as art, pop as business or pop as a hobby account of value to prosper, as well as those active somewhere between these 'boundaries of legitimate artistic practice' (Gerber, 2017, p. 155). Of course, for musicians to be active in music, it is important that they have access to affordable rehearsal spaces, housing, venues, places to meet peers, a network of intermediaries, grants, guidance on how to navigate the music industries, an audience etcetera. Yet, the musicians drawing from the different accounts of value might also have different needs in this regard. Here, governmental policies, industry initiatives and grants from private and public funds should support the different ways of working in the music industries. For musicians aiming to earn a living in music, emphasis should be placed on fair pay or audience building opportunities, while in the case of hobbyists the emphasis should be on performance opportunities or working grants. For example, if talent development programmes contribute to an oversupply of musicians with low chances of obtaining a sustainable position in the market, this raises the question of whether they are able to accommodate either of the two groups. As such, policy makers should evaluate whether their policies and grants are tailored to the wishes of different kinds of musicians and the goals they strive for in the music industries. They should reflect on the different ways in which musicians aim to be active in the music industries, and whether the initiatives they undertake help these groups to thrive in the music ecology.

Concluding thoughts

The changes in the music industries have had profound effects on how musicians organize their work practices. The musicians I interviewed for this dissertation partially still seem to rely on the 'traditional' structures to build a career in music, also because new opportunities are not (yet) profitable. Perhaps this is the case because the effects of technological changes have not fully played out yet, and is it just a matter of time before new ways of selling music become profitable and turn into dominant business models in the music industries. At the same time, perhaps the alternative mainstream I have focused on here, which is mainly characterized by bands, might be conservative due to the symbolic appeal of the traditional ways of doing things. As discussed, musicians active in other genres seem to be more advanced with monetizing new opportunities. Nevertheless, how matters will unfold in the next decade remains a matter of speculation. It is therefore

important to realize that the development that I mapped in this dissertation does not mark a transition from one equilibrium to the next. As others have argued (Hesmondhalgh, 2009), the music industries have been in constant flux over the past decades, and will continue to be so. For musicians this requires constant adaptation to new trends and a flexibility and willingness to try out new approaches to working in music.

Whatever new developments the future may bring, live music will probably continue to be an important part of the careers of musicians. The COVID-19 crisis has once again made it clear how vital live music earnings are to making a living, even though in most cases they are not enough to enable musicians to escape precarity. Now that we are entering the 'new normal' post-COVID-19 period, we see that a lot of musicians are trying to catch up on their touring. A lot of shows that were postponed in 2020-2021 have been taking place in 2022. Anecdotal reports indicate that this is leading musicians to compete for audiences (Westerlaken, 2022), which might be a disadvantage for early-career musicians. At the same time, audiences are hesitant about buying tickets, and at this point in time (compared to the pre-COVID-19 period) they are more likely to wait until the last moment to buy tickets (de Wit, 2022). Moreover, many supporting workers such as technicians, stage builders, and bar staff have left the music industries, which makes it difficult to produce all shows as planned (Valent, 2022). You would need a crystal ball to predict how long these effects of COVID-19 will last. Yet, we can be certain of the fact that concerts will continue to function as a fundamental part of the music industries: the direct contact between musician and audience in a concert hall creates an energy for both parties involved that has not yet found its digital equivalent (Vandenberg et al., 2021).

Because of the added value of the concert experience, one can expect that this will continue to function as an important place for musicians to build audiences and to monetize their work in music. This means that musicians will always have to find ways to navigate the precarity and unfavourable odds of the live music industry. Earnings are distributed unequally, the chances of success are small, and musicians have to be very strategic about the way in which they build their career in live music. What is the best pathway to success? Which parties should they involve? How can they reach audiences and cultivate the right image and persona? How can they create a sustainable financial position for themselves and their band members even if earnings from music are low and they may never generate substantial revenues?

When I started this research project, one of the first exploratory conversations I had was with a booker in the Dutch music industries. When I made a comment about how unjust the labour market was for musicians, he interrupted the conversation and told me that was the wrong way to look at things: he saw it as a great privilege to work in the music industries, and even though he made little money from it, he was very happy that he had received this opportunity. If he had wanted to make money, he told me, he would have worked in his uncle's construction company. Other musicians also expressed this sentiment, arguing that no one forces you to aspire to a career in music, and if you have the privilege to do so, you should accept the financial and other risks that come with it. Of course, this point of view was just one of the many perspectives that I encountered during my time studying the Dutch music industries. Numerous other participants complained about the precarity and exploitation practices that exist in these industries. However, not everyone is interested in a career path where you earn a modal income. And not every musician sees their career in music as work. But as the allure of a music career leads to huge income disparities, it might be important to think about ways to create a live music ecology that is more sustainable and fair for musicians in the long tail.

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Appendix 1

Tables of participants and collected documents

Table 6 - Overview of interviews with early-career musicians. Names have been removed and age has been transformed into categories to ensure anonymity. The reported genres have been collected from Discogs.com

Participant number	Gender	Age	City	Label	Music	Genre	Interview	Diary questionnaire
1	Male	31-35	Amsterdam	Indie	No	Folk	Yes	No
2	Male	31-35	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Electronic	Yes	No
3	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Indie pop	Yes	Yes
4	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Major	Yes	Rock	Yes	Yes
5	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Pop	Yes	Yes
6	Female	21-25	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Folk	Yes	Yes
7	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Self-	No	Indie rock	Yes	Yes
8	Male	26-30	Groningen	Major	Yes	Pop	Yes	No
9	Female	26-30	Eindhoven	Indie	No	Punk	Yes	Yes
10	Male	21-25	Nijmegen	Self-	No	Rock	Yes	Yes
11	Male	21-25	Rotterdam	Indie/ self- released	No	Rock	Yes	Yes
12	Male	21-25	Utrecht	Self- released	Yes	Electronic	Yes	Yes
13	Male	26-30	Rotterdam	Indie	Yes	Psychedelic rock	Yes	Yes
14	Male	26-30	Rotterdam	Self- released	Yes	Hip-hop	Yes	No
15	Female	26-30	Utrecht	Indie	No	Folk	Yes	Yes
16	Male	21-25	Rotterdam	Indie	Yes	Pop rock	Yes	Yes
17	Male	21-25	Almere	Major	Yes	Indie rock	Yes	Yes
18	Male	21-25	Utrecht	Self- released	Yes	Pop	Yes	Yes
19	Male	31-35	Hilversum	Major	No	Rock	Yes	Yes
20	Male	26-30	Eindhoven	Indie	No	Rock	Yes	Yes
21	Male	31-35	Rotterdam	Indie	No	Rock	Yes	Yes

Table 7 - Overview of British participants. Names have been removed to ensure anonymity

Participant number	Gender	Age	Genre
7	Female	31	Folk / indie
8	Male	32	Folk / indie / punk / rock
10	Male	23	Folk / acoustic / rock
15	Male	27	Indie / rock
16	Female	17	Folk / country
23	Male	29	Indie / pop / rock / jazz
35	Male	40	Electronic / techno
42	Female	25	Folk / electronic / pop / lo-fi / RnB / dance
43	Male	30	Folk / rock / blues / psychedelic / experimental / lo-fi
44	Male	27	Folk / rock / psychedelic / dub / swing

Table 8 - Overview of the collected documents from popular music programmes at higher music education institutions

Document type	Number of documents
Course guides	182
Curriculum descriptions	12
Policy documents (mission, reflection, programme profile)	4
Other teaching guides	7

Table 9 - Overview of the participants at higher music education institutions

Participant Number	Interview/ focus group	Role	Gender	Specialisation	Higher music education institution
1	Interview	Teacher	Male	Business	A
2	Interview	Teacher	Male	Business	B
3	Interview	Teacher	Male	Entrepreneurship	B
4	Interview	Teacher	Male	Drums	B
5	Interview	Teacher	Male	Keyboards	A
6	Interview	Teacher	Male	Keyboards	A
7a	Focus group	Student	Male	Hammond	B
7b	Focus group	Student	Female	Song writing	B
7c	Focus group	Student	Female	Song writing	B
8a	Focus group	Student	Male	Vocals	A
8b	Focus group	Student	Male	Keyboard	A
9	Interview	Teacher	Male	Guitar	C
10	Interview	Teacher	Male	Keyboards	C
11	Interview	Teacher	Male	Roots	C
12	Interview	Teacher	Male	Audio production	C
13a	Focus group	Student	Female	Song writing	B
13b	Focus group	Student	Female	Vocals	B
14a	Focus group	Student	Male	Drums	C
14b	Focus group	Student	Female	Vocals	C
14c	Focus group	Student	Male	Drums	C
15a	Focus group	Student	Female	Vocals	A
15b	Focus group	Student	Male	Bass	A

Appendix 2

Interview guides

Interview guide for early-career musicians

Opening

- 1 Can you tell me something about how you became a musician?
- 2 Can you tell me something about what attracts you to the life as a musician?

Goals and skills

- 3 What are your goals in music?
- 4 How do you try to ensure that you achieve your goals?
 - a Do you have a plan for the upcoming year? What does that look like?
 - b From which people in your surrounding do you get help? What does your team look like?
 - c Do you experience uncertainty about this? Why?
- 5 Can you describe an average week and the corresponding work activities?
- 6 What are the skills that you need most in addition to musical skills in order to achieve your goals?
 - a Are there other skills that you would like to develop?
- 7 Have you participated in forms of music education such as popular music programmes?
 - a If so, what is the most important thing you learned about being a musician?
 - i What do you wish that you had learn there (in addition)?
 - b If not, have you considered that?
 - i Do you think things would have been easier if you had followed some form of music education?
- 8 Can you also say something about what attitude you need to make it in pop music?

Gaining recognition

- 9 What factors do you think that play a role in whether an act makes it in the music industry?
- Do you have a label and a manager, and how would you describe their role in this?
 - Do you experience a lot of competition?
 - What are the biggest challenges you have encountered along the way?
 - Has your gender influenced this?
 - Do you think that with the rise of the internet, streaming and social media it has become more difficult or easier to build a career as a pop musician? Why?
- 10 How did you try to gain brand awareness (name recognition)?
- What is the importance of an image/persona for a musician?
 - How do you experience occupying yourself with your image?
 - Can you give a description of your audience?
 - In what way does your audience influence you when you make new music?
- 11 What is the role of releasing recorded music for the development of your career?
- 12 What is the role of performing in venues and festivals for the development of your career?
- Do you have a preference for venues or festivals? Why?
 - What do you think that the criteria are upon which venues and festivals select acts?

Values

- 13 What do you like the most about your life as a musician? Why?
- 14 What you dislike the most? Why is that a less pleasant side to being a musician?
- 15 Is the life as a musician different from what you had expected? How is it different?
- 16 To what extent do you have to be an entrepreneur to achieve your goals?
- In what way does this affect your artistry?
- 17 Have there been moments in your career where you have had to choose between artistic and commercial options?
- Is there a risk in being too commercial?
- 18 What effect does working on your music career have on other aspects of your life?
- Do you have to give something up for your music career?
- 19 Under what circumstances would you need or want to stop with your act?

Money

- 20 Are you managing to financially sustain yourself on the basis of your music?
- How do you feel about this?
 - What do your main sources of income consist of?
 - What is your goal in this area?
 - How do you achieve that?
 - If this does not work out, will this influence whether you continue with your music?

Ecology

- 21 What does a city need to guarantee a good live music sector?
- 22 How would you characterize the state of live music in [city]?
- 23 Can you describe the strongest points of the live music sector in [city]?
- 24 What would you like to change to the live music sector in [city]?
- 25 What are, of all parties you work with in [city], the three most important partners that help you to do your work well?

Final Questions

- 26 Any advice for upcoming musicians?
- 27 Are there other things that you want to discuss that did not come up in the interview?

Design of the online diary questionnaire

Hello, thank you for taking part in this study of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. You will receive this survey for seven days, every day at 10:00 AM. We ask you to fill in what you did the previous day. With this questionnaire we want to map out the daily activities of your work as a musician. The survey takes about five minutes.

Instructions

- Select the work activities related to your music career that you have done from the moment you got up until the moment you went to sleep.
- You can also add activities yourself. We are also interested in the smaller tasks, so please be as complete as possible. These added activities will come back as options in the next few days, so you only have to add them once.
- You have until midnight tonight to answer yesterday's questionnaire. If you don't do this, that option will expire. It is therefore not possible to fill in for earlier days. So please keep this up every day.
- If you have any questions after completing the questionnaire, you can always contact Rick Everts. He can be reached on [phone number] (WhatsApp & call), and [email address].

Questions

- 1 Did you do any work yesterday related to your music career?
 - a [If no, continue with question 6.]
 - b If yes, which one? Select from the list below which activities. You can also add other activities.
 - i Rehearsing alone
 - ii Rehearsing with others
 - iii Composing music/writing lyrics
 - iv Performance
 - v Meetings with bandmates (face-to-face or otherwise)
 - vi Meetings with team (manager/booker/label etc.) (face-to-face or otherwise)
 - vii Meetings with third parties (face-to-face or otherwise)
 - viii Travel time
 - ix Social media – general posts
 - x Social media – direct contact with the public
 - xi Networking/acquisition
 - xii Merchandise
 - xiii Administration/finance
 - xiv Other activities, namely: [open options]

- 2 Please sort the activities you performed yesterday based on how useful these activities were for you. [First activity is the most useful, last activity is the least useful.]
- 3 [Per activity:] How much time did you spend in total on this activity?
- 4 Finally, indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements: [5-point Likert scale from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree' with a Don't know/No opinion option]
 - a This day was useful
 - b This day was stressful
 - c Today I had to do a lot of work
 - d Today I felt uncertain about what to do
- 5 Is there anything else you would like to say about your day? If not, you can leave this blank.

End

That's it for today! [Tomorrow morning you will receive another invitation for the next questionnaire. Thank you very much for filling in.]/[This was the last day of this questionnaire. On behalf of the entire team of Erasmus University and all partners, thank you very much for filling it in! Rick Everts will contact you to briefly discuss this week with you.]

Post-questionnaire interview guide

- 1 Can you tell me something about this week? How did you experience this?
- 2 Was it an average week, or how was it different from other weeks?
- 3 I saw that you spent quite some time on [...]. Can you tell me something more about this?
 - a I saw that you had meetings. With whom was this and what was this about?
- 4 I saw that you experienced this week as relatively [...]. Can you tell me more about that?
- 5 Are there things that you do in a week like this that you rather did not do?
- 6 Are there things that you didn't do this week that you were supposed to be doing?

Interview guide of musicians in the UK⁴²

Music profile

- 1 What kind of music do you play?
- 2 Tell me about your current musical activity (composition, recordings, gigs, how many bands etc.).
 - a How much time do you spend on music?
- 3 In the survey, you said you made about XX from your music –how long have you been making money from music?
 - a Is that from record sales, or gigging, or something else?

Work and Identity

- 4 Do you have another job?
 - a How much time do you spend on it?
 - b Does most of your income come from your music or your other job?
- IF NO OTHER JOB:
- 5 So, you're trying to make a real go of music at the moment, make yourself financially self-sufficient?
 - 6 Do you think being a musician is similar to other kinds of jobs?
GO TO 10.
- IF OTHER JOB:
- 7 Do you think of what you do musically as a job?
 - a IF YES: Do you think it's the same as other jobs?
 - b IF NO: So does that mean you think of it as more like a hobby?
 - 8 Is it difficult to balance your commitments between your music/musical job and your other job?
 - a IF YES: What are the biggest challenges?
 - 9 Is your music/musical job more important to you than your other job?
 - a Does that mean that your ****musical job/other job**** is more important to your sense of who you are?
 - 10 Do you consider yourself as a professional musician? Why/not?

IF NO:

 - a At what point would you consider yourself 'professional'?
 - b Do you think that you act in a professional way?
 - c What does that mean?

['Being professional' examples = being polite, responsive, organised, responsible, keeping track of money/paperwork(?)]

- 11 Even if you can't support yourself entirely from your music, is it important to you that you receive *some* money for your musical work?
 - a Is it emotionally rewarding that some people are willing to spend money on you/your music?
- 12 Do you think that money is the most important measure of success?
 - a IF NO: What else is important?
 - b IF YES: What other things might be important elements of being successful?
- 13 Do you think of yourself as an entrepreneur? Why/not?
 - a What do you think an entrepreneur is/what do they do?
 - b Do you do some of those things, or is what you do very different? *['Being entrepreneurial' examples = publicising and promoting things, getting people excited about products and ideas, making connections with people who might be useful in the future, raising money, cutting deals, organising events]*
- 14 Do you think musicians need to be entrepreneurial to be successful? Why/not?
 - a With the emergence of the internet and new technologies, do you think that musicians are having to do more of this kind of activity?
- 15 Would you like to be more entrepreneurial?
 - a Should there be opportunities for musicians to learn how to become more entrepreneurial?

Social Media

- 16 Can you give me a rough idea of how much time you spend using social media for your music/musical job each week?
 - a What does that involve?
 - b Is it mainly interacting with your audience?
 - c Do you use SM in different ways in relation to other musicians/music industry professionals?
- 17 Do you think that social media has been useful for your musical career?
 - a Can you give me any specific examples of things you've done that have been very effective?
 - b What have you tried that hasn't worked?

Focus group guide for students

1 What instrument do you play and what is your field of study?

Goals & industry

- 2 What are your goals in music?
- What attracts you to a life in music?
 - What kind of work do you want to have in music in the future?
 - Who wants to make it as an act? Who in another way?
 - How do you estimate your chances of achieving these goals? Do you experience a lot of competition?
 - How can you earn money in a sustainable way with work in pop music?
 - How do you estimate your chances of succeeding?
 - How important is it to you that you can make a living from music?
- 3 Breaking through as an act: Is it a lottery/luck, or can you force it?
- What do you have to do to get through the early years?
 - How do you build an audience and ensure brand awareness?
 - How do you get discovered and build a reputation with industry actors?
 - How do you distinguish yourself from other acts?
 - Are there any other factors that determine whether you break into the music industries or not that you should consider?
 - Apart from music, what skills or attitudes do you most need to achieve your goals?
 - For activities other than act: what does it take to become successful?
- 4 To achieve your goals in music, do you have to be more of an artist or more of an entrepreneur/entrepreneur?
- Do these conflict with or reinforce each other?
 - What do you think about this?
 - Do you need to adapt the music you make (artistic concessions) to reach a wider audience?
 - Do you think the genre you play in increases your chances of making money here? What do you think of that?
 - Is there a risk of selling out?

Education

- 5 What is the main reason that you chose pop education?
- Why did you choose this programme? How does this programme differ from other programmes?
- 6 How does this programme help you achieve your goals?
- Do you think you are well prepared for your career after you graduate? In what way yes/no?
 - What are the most important lessons you have learned here?
- 7 What have been the most valuable subjects/experiences in this programme?
- 8 What kind of courses have you taken that are not about making music itself? What are the most important lessons you have learned? Did you find that useful or not? Why?
- Social media / marketing
 - Image
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Other roles in the music industries
 - Forms of income
 - Taxes and other practical matters
 - Production
- 9 What kind of career advice do you get? What kind of career does this programme lead you to?
- 10 Are you more likely to learn to become a pop artist (cultural capital) or pop entrepreneur (economic capital)?
- Or how would you describe the role for which you are being prepared?
 - And what do you think of this?
- 11 Have you become better musicians here? In what way?
- How did you develop as an act at school?
 - Can creativity be taught?
 - Can authenticity be taught?
- 12 How important are the time and resources offered by the programme to you?
- What does that consist of? Can you give examples?
 - Are there enough opportunities? How important is that?
- 13 Are you building a network here within the programme?
- What does that consist of? Can you give examples?
 - Are there enough opportunities? How important is that?
- 14 In what ways does the programme offer opportunities to present your music to the public and/or industry?
- What does that consist of? Can you give examples? Are you being scouted?
 - Are there enough options? How important is that?

- 15 In what other ways does the programme contribute to your career that have not been discussed now?
- 16 What do you wish there was more attention for?
- 17 Does a diploma also have value for your work later on?
Does the sector require a diploma?
a Does following this programme contribute to a status in the field?
- 18 What makes you different from untrained musicians?
- 19 Do you see yourself as a professional musician? Why/why not?
a If not, when would you see yourself as a professional musician?
b And: what is a professional musician?
- 20 Are there any other things you would like to mention?

Interview guide

- 1 What subjects do you teach?
- 2 What is your background in music?

Talent

- 3 Are you involved in the selection process?
a Can you describe the selection process?
b Can you tell us something about what kind of students you are looking for?
i How do you recognize a talented student?
ii What qualities should students possess here?
ii. Do you select by genre? On instrument choice?

Industry

- 4 What careers lie ahead for those who graduate here?
a What do most graduate students aspire to?
b What do you think are the chances of them achieving these goals? Is there a lot of competition?
c What are the experiences of recently graduated students on the labour market?
- 5 How can graduates earn money in a sustainable way with work in pop music?
a How do you estimate the chances of students that this will succeed?
- 6 Breaking through as an act: Is it a lottery/luck, or can you force it?
a What should the students' career strategy look like for the first few years?
b How do you build an audience as a student and ensure brand awareness?
c How do you get discovered and build a reputation with industry actors?
d How do you distinguish yourself from other acts?
e Are there any other factors that determine whether you break into the music industries or not that students should consider?
- 7 Besides music, what kind of skills or attitudes do students need most to achieve their goals?
a For activities other than act: what does it take to become successful?

- 8 To achieve their goals in music, should students be more of an artist or more of an entrepreneur/entrepreneur?
- a Do these conflict with or reinforce each other?
 - b Do you need to adapt the music you make (artistic concessions) to reach a wider audience?
 - i How does the genre in which students play affect their chances of earning money? How should students think about this?
 - ii Is there a risk of selling out?

Education

- 9 How do you hope to prepare your students?
- a What qualities/qualities do graduates possess?
- 10 How does this programme differ from other programmes?
- 11 How does this programme help students to achieve their goals?
- a How do you prepare students for a career after this degree?
 - b How do you assess the connection to the field?
- 12 What lesson would you like them to have learned during the program?
- 13 Can you tell us something about the courses you teach and the specialization you are involved in?
- a What is the most important thing you are trying to convey to the students?
 - b How does it help them to achieve their goals?
 - c How does this course fit in with the current industry?
 - d Are you satisfied with the structure of this course, or how could it be better?
- 14 What other topics do you teach that are not about music making itself? What are the most important lessons you teach?
- a Social media
 - b Image
 - c Entrepreneurship
 - d Other roles in the music industries
 - e Other forms of income
 - f Taxes and other practical matters
 - g Production
- 15 What kind of career advice do you give? What kind of careers does the programme outline for their students?
- 16 Are your students more likely to teach you how to become a pop artist (cultural capital) or pop entrepreneur (economic capital)?
- a Or how would you describe the role for which you train students?
- 17 In what ways do you contribute to students becoming better musicians?
- a How do you contribute to their development as an act?
 - b Can creativity be taught?
 - c Can authenticity be taught?
- 18 How important is the time and resources that the programme offers to your students?
- a What does that consist of? Can you give examples?
 - b Are there enough opportunities? How important is that?
- 19 Do you contribute to the development of a network?
- a What does that consist of? Can you give examples?
 - b Do you use your network to draw attention to students?
 - c How important is developing a network to their success in the music world?
- 21 In what ways does the programme offer opportunities to present music to the public and/or industry?
- a What does that consist of? Can you give examples?
 - b Are students also scouted here at the study programme?
- 20 In what other ways do you contribute to student careers that have not yet been addressed?
- 21 What do you wish there was more attention for?
- 22 Does a diploma have any special value for graduates? Does the sector require a diploma?
- a Does following this programme contribute to a status in the field?
- 23 What makes students different from untrained musicians?
- a And: what is a professional musician?
- 24 Are there any other things you would like to mention?

Appendix 3

Table 10 - Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33				
1 Number of shows	1																																				
2 Year	-.338	1																																			
3 Newspaper reviews	.392	-.080	1																																		
4 DWDD	.402	ns	.289	1																																	
5 Yearlist Oor	.256	ns	.303	.268	1																																
6 MTV awards	.252	-.110	.088	.099	ns	1																															
7 3FM awards	.467	-.135	.230	.180	.082	.441	1																														
8 3voor12 awards	.327	-.113	.256	.173	.432	ns	.167	1																													
9 Edison awards	.256	ns	.206	.136	ns	.297	.386	.170	1																												
10 Buma awards	.139	-.085	.122	ns	ns	.153	.187	ns	.168	1																											
11 Google Trends	.413	-.139	.448	.191	.109	.301	.511	.157	.363	.399	1																										
12 Song van het Jaar	.402	-.113	.391	.233	.367	.185	.333	.376	.159	.138	.339	1																									
13 Male	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	1																								
14 Female	ns	ns	ns	.101	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.083	ns	ns	-.641	1																							
15 Mixed	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.654	-.161	1																						
16 First album	ns	ns	.133	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.114	ns	ns	1																					
17 First EP	ns	ns	.101	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.084	-.085	ns	.637	1																				
18 Self-released	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.086	ns	1																			
19 Indie	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.100	-.224	.092	.171	.195	-.272	1																		
20 Major	.194	ns	.137	.138	ns	.088	.176	ns	.102	ns	.216	.094	ns	.126	-.143	ns	.083	-.233	-.263	1																	
21 No booker	-.100	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.101	.116	ns	ns	-.239	ns	ns	-.115	1																
22 Small booker	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.103	ns	-.020	ns	ns	.123	ns	.092	-.152	-.256	1														
23 Large booker	.214	ns	.111	.124	ns	ns	.124	.081	ns	ns	.120	.162	ns	-.024		ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.265	-.258	-.678	1													
24 Pop academy	.100	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.178	.139	.092	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.116	1													
25 Pop	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.251	.213	.113	ns	ns	ns	ns	.139	ns	-.106	.157	.092	1												
26 Electronic	-.205	ns	-.166	-.173	ns	ns	-.139	ns	-.097	ns	-.161	-.125	.119	-.151	ns	-.132	ns	ns	.112	-.206	ns	.208	-.269	ns	-.288	1											
27 Rock	.115	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.102	ns	ns	ns	ns	.099	ns	-.086	.116	.118	.145	.096	ns	ns	-.150	-.173	.213	ns	-.108	-.184	1										
28 Indie/alternative	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.100	ns	ns	ns	ns	.082	ns	-.136	.229	ns	ns	.113	.092	-.143	-.091	ns	.109	ns	ns	-.265	.185	1									
29 Hiphop/rap	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.170	ns	.202	-.129	-.132	ns	ns	ns	ns	.205	ns	ns	ns	-.142	-.134	-.167	-.201	-.146	1								
30 Jazz/blues	ns	ns	.123	.134	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.097	.082	ns	-.166	.136	.080	.090	ns	ns	ns	ns	.151	ns	ns	.204	ns	-.179	-.141	-.080	ns	1							
31 Singer-Songwriter	.123	ns	.133	.092	ns	ns	.081	ns	ns	ns	.141	ns	-.158	.319	-.111	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.142	-.167	-.132	-.119	-.115	-.081	1						
32 Funk/soul/world	ns	ns	ns	.092	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	.087	ns	ns	ns	.126	.118	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.085	-.132	-.119	-.115	.258	ns	1				
33 Folk/country	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.158	ns	ns	-.087	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	-.120	-.094	ns	-.083	.124	ns	.139	1			

Summary

While the life of a pop musician may seem appealing, their careers are characterized by low odds of success and precarious working conditions. Moreover, over the last 20 years changes in the recorded and live music industries have created a drastically different playing field for early-career musicians. Two sets of innovations have been particularly influential: first, consumer-related innovations made possible by the Internet, such as peer-to-peer sharing and streaming, have opened up a virtually unlimited music library for audiences, reducing their need to buy physical sound carriers such as CDs. Second, thanks to a series of dissemination-related innovations caused by the new recording and distribution technologies, such as home computers and audio recording software, musicians can now produce and distribute their music without having to rely on industry intermediaries. Due to these innovations, recorded music revenues have plummeted globally and live music has become an increasingly important source of income for musicians. These changes have also diminished the economic power of traditional industry intermediaries and entrepreneurial and DIY business models have become the dominant approach for new aspiring musicians. In order to make a living under these new conditions, they have had to take on new tasks. In this dissertation, I explore *how early-career pop musicians build a career in the changing Dutch popular music industries* to gain an understanding of how such musicians are coping with these low odds, precarious conditions and changes in the live and recorded music industries.

To answer this question, in this dissertation I focus on three sub-themes: 1) the careers of early-career musicians, 2) the role of popular music education in their careers, and 3) their careers in live music. Due to its increased importance as a source of income for musicians, I will pay special attention to live music. For each of these themes, I conducted an empirical study. To start, to learn more about the careers of early-career musicians, my first empirical study featured 21 in-depth interviews that asked early-career musicians who were trying to build a career with their act in the Dutch music industries about their approaches to work. Moreover, seventeen of the 21 musicians participated in a weeklong online diary questionnaire study to map their work-related activities. At the end of this period, these seventeen musicians were interviewed in order to learn more about their perceptions of these work-related activities. In addition, this dataset was compared to a similar dataset of interviews with ten early-career musicians in the United Kingdom, collected by Jo Haynes and Lee Marshall (2017, 2018).

On the basis of this first empirical study, three chapters were written to answer three sub-questions. First of all, chapter 2 addresses *what the role of reputation is in the career building strategy of early-career musicians in the changing music industries*. Drawing from the interviews with 21 musicians, I found that musicians continue to believe that building their reputations within the established music industries is important for career success, despite the technological changes that could enable them to focus on alternative career strategies. My analysis proceeds in two stages that broadly reveal how market culture (institutionalized decision rules of how actors are expected to behave in markets) shapes workers' strategies. First, I discuss how musicians put considerable effort into achieving particular career milestones that they believe will signal success to industry intermediaries. Second, I show that new technologies that connect musicians directly to audiences without having to rely on intermediaries have allowed them to pursue new career-building strategies. These new technologies, however, have not eliminated musicians' belief that these milestones are important because achieving them increases their appeal to industry insiders. Even though achieving industry milestones may not lead to immediate economic benefits, musicians pursue them because 1) they believe that backing from industry intermediaries may result in later success and 2) they value the symbolic appeal and romance of being part of the music industries.

Chapter 3 explores the working life of early-career musicians in the wake of the changes to the music industries wrought by technological innovations. Based on the in-depth interviews, the diary questionnaire study and post-questionnaire interviews with seventeen early-career pop musicians, I investigate *what the work activities of early-career musicians look like, and how they value their work within these changing industries*. The analysis reveals that musicians perform a wide variety of non-creative work activities, including DIY and entrepreneurial tasks. However, they spend over 40 percent of their time on creative tasks, and, remarkably, devote minimal time to social media. In addition, three accounts of value were identified which shape the ways in which musicians perceive and value their work, according to whether they understand their work in pop music as art, as a business or as a hobby: musicians drawing from the *pop as art* account may choose not to perform business tasks, multiple musicians using the *pop as business* account display anti-industry attitudes whereas musicians relying on the *pop as a hobby* account focus on the social aspects of their activities in music. While they are active in the same part of the music industries, they perceive different opportunities in the market, thereby transcending the traditional art-commerce and amateur-professional dichotomies. By showing how the local context of the music industries shape the working lives of musicians,

this chapter adds to our understanding of the relationship between work activities and the perceptions of actors and how they aim to adopt a position within fields.

Chapter 4, co-written with Jo Haynes, examines the relationship between the conditions of national music industries and the strategies used by musicians to negotiate a career in music as well as the extent to which musicians frame their careers as entrepreneurial, by exploring *whether the strategizing of Dutch and British musicians can be understood as responses to the structural conditions within their context*. In order to do so, the experiences of musicians in these two European musical contexts were compared by means of a secondary comparative analysis comparing the interviews with the 21 musicians to a set of ten interviews with early-career musicians from the UK. I argue that the strategizing of these musicians can be framed as a set of responses to their local structural conditions. For example, as within the Dutch context – compared to the UK – more state and industry supported initiatives are available in the form of a series of steps to build one's career through which musicians can gain access to key actors, it makes sense for musicians in the Netherlands to focus their entrepreneurial efforts on this institutionalized path in the music industries. However, neither set of responses of the two samples of musicians produces a market advantage. Instead, traditional power and economic relations tend to prevail, whereby only a very small fraction of the aspiring musicians can sustain themselves financially in music.

The second empirical study focused on popular music programmes at higher music education institutions to understand how they prepare their students for a career in the music industries. In order to do so, I collected three forms of data at three programmes. I conducted eleven interviews with teachers in these programmes, held five small focus groups with students in their last year of the programme, and collected every course guide and policy document possible, resulting in over 200 documents. Due to technological innovations the music industries have become more accessible to outsiders over the past two decades. Yet, during this period we have also seen an increase in the number of popular music programmes at higher music education institutions. Therefore, in chapter 5 I use this dataset for a qualitative mixed-methods study to explore *whether and in which ways popular music programmes at higher music education institutions are perceived to contribute to the career development of their students*. Results indicate that the main perceivable benefits of these programmes concern the development of a set of necessary competences, the establishment of industry relationships and the acquisition of symbolic resources. Secondly,

I investigate whether it is thought that such programmes contribute to the professionalism of their students, and whether this usage of the concept of professionalism aligns with existing scientific interpretations of professionalism. In line with the 'normative value' perspective on professionalism we see that a norm of expertise is promoted, e.g. in the form of a quality standard that students must adhere to, and in line with the 'power struggle' perspective we see that the acquired symbolic resources are believed to foster a professional identity, both of which are expected to help graduates to stand out from musicians without formal education when entering the market.

In addition, in chapter 6 I investigate *how these programmes prepare students to cope with the uncertainty of building a career in the popular music industries*. Analysis of the in-depth interviews with the teachers and focus groups with the students reveal three connected strategies that are used to help students cope with the current demands of the music labour market. First, according to the participants, these programmes provide students with information about their chances of succeeding in the market by facilitating a reality check. Second, the programmes promote occupational risk diversification in the form of a mixed professional practice. Third, they encourage students to start obtaining work experience during their studies. By mapping these strategies, this chapter shows how such programmes help students to visualize their place in the music labour market and develop their artistic and professional identities in line with that imagined future. Second, it reveals how these programmes provide students with the best starting position by teaching strategies necessary to find employment in the market. At the same time, this approach transfers the responsibility for the outcomes of these career choices onto the students, causing feelings of stress.

The third empirical study focused on careers in live music. I constructed a quantitative dataset following the careers in live music of 214 popular music acts in the Netherlands over the eight years following their participation in Noorderslag, a showcase festival. Drawing on this dataset, in chapter 7 I map *what the dynamics are in the number of live shows early-career acts play and the fees they receive, and which factors explain success in live music*. The analysis reveals huge differences in the number of shows acts perform per year and the fee they receive for these shows. Differences are already clear in the first year, and increase over time. Overall, we see a decrease in the number of shows that acts play per year, but an increase in the average fees received by acts, suggesting that most acts are disbanded in the years following their participation in Noorderslag, and that the remaining successful acts manage to negotiate higher fees. In addition, by

performing a multilevel analysis I map the relationship between success in live music (operationalized here as the number of performances per year), and a number of variables. The most important result here is that receiving critical recognition (awarded by critics) and popular recognition (awarded by audiences) is highly correlated with success in live music. Other noteworthy positive effects are having industry connections and having attended a pop music programme.

Overall, the studies conducted here show how early-career musicians build a career in the changing music industries by engaging in reputational practices, by performing a wide variety of creative and non-creative work activities, and by focusing their entrepreneurial efforts on the pathways made available by the Dutch music industries. Pop music education is perceived to help in this process by giving students opportunities to develop competences, a network and symbolic resources, and by teaching them strategies to cope with the precarity of a career in music. This precarity is also visible in the careers of acts in live music. In addition, their careers in live music show the importance of having a network and receiving forms or recognition to obtaining success. In addition to filling an empirical knowledge gap, this dissertation also makes a theoretical contribution by offering a reading of the case at hand as an example of the (reputational) work practices of workers in the creative industries and their valuation of these practices, and the ways in which these practices and valuations are affected by (changes to) the structural and cultural conditions of the field these actors operate in.

Samenvatting

Hoewel het leven van popmuzikanten aantrekkelijk lijkt, wordt hun carrière gekenmerkt door lage kansen op succes en precare werkomstandigheden. Bovendien hebben veranderingen in de recorded en livemuziekindustrieën de afgelopen twintig jaar een drastisch ander speelveld gecreëerd voor beginnende muzikanten. Twee reeksen innovaties waren in het bijzonder invloedrijk: om te beginnen openden consumentgerelateerde innovaties als gevolg van de komst van internet, zoals peer-to-peer delen en streaming, een vrijwel onbeperkte muziekbibliotheek voor het publiek, waardoor de noodzaak om fysieke geluidsdragers zoals cd's te kopen werd verminderd. Daarnaast kunnen muzikanten dankzij een reeks innovaties op het gebied van distributie veroorzaakt door nieuwe opname- en distributietechnologieën, zoals thuiscomputers en audio-opnamesoftware, hun muziek zelf produceren en distribueren zonder afhankelijk te zijn van tussenpersonen uit de muziekindustrieën. Als gevolg van deze innovaties kelderden de inkomsten uit opgenomen muziek wereldwijd en werd livemuziek een steeds belangrijker bron van inkomsten voor muzikanten. Bovendien verminderde door deze transformaties de economische macht van traditionele tussenpersonen in de muziekindustrieën, en werden ondernemers- en doe-het-zelfbedrijfsmodellen (*entrepreneurial and DIY business models*) de dominante benadering voor nieuwe aspirant-muzikanten. Hierdoor moesten ze nieuwe taken uitvoeren om onder deze nieuwe omstandigheden in hun levensonderhoud te voorzien. Om te begrijpen hoe beginnende muzikanten omgaan met deze omstandigheden van lage kansen, precare werkomstandigheden en veranderingen in de recorded en livemuziekindustrieën, onderzoek ik in dit proefschrift *hoe beginnende popmuzikanten een carrière opbouwen in de veranderende Nederlandse popmuziekindustrieën*.

Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, richt ik me in dit proefschrift op drie subthema's: 1) de carrières van beginnende popmuzikanten, 2) de rol van popmuziekonderwijs in hun carrières, en 3) hun carrières in de livemuziek. Voor elk van deze thema's heb ik een empirisch onderzoek uitgevoerd. Ten eerste, om meer te weten te komen over de carrières van beginnende popmuzikanten, heb ik in het eerste empirische onderzoek 21 diepte-interviews gehouden over hun manier van werken met beginnende muzikanten die een carrière willen opbouwen met hun act in de Nederlandse muziekindustrieën. Daarnaast namen zeventien van de 21 muzikanten deel aan een elektronische dagboekstudie van een week om hun werkactiviteiten in kaart te brengen. Verder zijn deze zeventien muzikanten aan het eind van

die periode geïnterviewd om meer te weten te komen over hun beleving van deze uitgevoerde werkzaamheden. Tot slot werd deze dataset vergeleken met een vergelijkbare dataset van interviews met 10 beginnende muzikanten die actief zijn in het Verenigd Koninkrijk, verzameld door Jo Haynes en Lee Marshall (2017, 2018).

Op basis van dit eerste empirische onderzoek zijn drie hoofdstukken geschreven om drie deelvragen te beantwoorden. Om te beginnen onderzoek ik hoofdstuk 2 in *wat de rol is van reputatie in de carrièrestrategie van beginnende muzikanten in de veranderende muziekindustrieën*. Op basis van de interviews met 21 muzikanten, constateer ik dat muzikanten blijven geloven dat het opbouwen van hun reputatie binnen de gevestigde muziekindustrieën belangrijk is voor een succesvolle carrière, ondanks de technologische veranderingen die mogelijkheden bieden voor alternatieve carrièrestrategieën. Mijn analyse schetst in twee fasen in grote lijnen hoe de marktcultuur (d.w.z. geïnstitutionaliseerde beslissingsregels over hoe actoren zich op markten moeten gedragen) de strategieën van werkers vormen. Ten eerste bespreek ik hoe muzikanten aanzienlijke inspanningen leveren om bepaalde carrièremijlpalen te bereiken waarvan zij denken dat ze succes zullen aantonen aan tussenpersonen in de muziekindustrieën. Ten tweede laat ik zien dat nieuwe technologieën die muzikanten rechtstreeks met het publiek in contact brengen, zonder afhankelijkheid van tussenpersonen, muzikanten in staat hebben gesteld om nieuwe carrièrestrategieën na te streven. Desondanks blijven muzikanten geloven in het belang van het gebruik van mijlpalen om zich aantrekkelijk te maken voor insiders uit de muziekindustrieën. Hoewel het behalen van mijlpalen in de muziekindustrieën niet direct tot economische voordelen leidt, streven muzikanten hiernaar omdat 1) ze geloven dat steun van tussenpersonen uit de muziekindustrieën kan leiden tot later succes en 2) ze de symbolische aantrekkingskracht en romantiek van het onderdeel zijn van de muziekindustrieën waarderen.

Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt het beroepsleven van beginnende muzikanten in een tijd waar technologische innovaties de muziekindustrieën hebben veranderd. Op basis van de diepte-interviews, het dagboekonderzoek en de aansluitende interviews met 17 beginnende popmuzikanten, onderzoek ik *hoe hun werkzaamheden eruitzien van dag tot dag en hoe zij deze werkzaamheden waarderen in de veranderende muziekindustrieën*. Uit de analyse blijkt dat muzikanten een breed scala aan niet-creatieve werkzaamheden uitvoeren, waaronder doe-het-zelf en ondernemerstaken. Daarnaast besteden ze meer dan 40 procent van hun tijd aan creatieve taken en, opmerkelijk genoeg, weinig tijd aan sociale media. Bovendien identificeerde ik drie waarderegimes (*accounts of value*) op basis waarvan

muzikanten hun werk ervaren en waarderen: sommige muzikanten zien hun werk in de popmuziek als kunst, anderen als een bedrijf of als een hobby. Muzikanten die putten uit het waarderegime van *pop als kunst* kiezen er soms voor om geen zakelijke taken uit te voeren, meerdere muzikanten die het *pop als bedrijf* waarderegime gebruiken nemen een anti-industriehouding aan, terwijl muzikanten die het *pop als hobby* waarderegime gebruiken gericht zijn op de sociale aspecten van hun activiteiten in de muziek. Hoewel ze actief zijn in hetzelfde deel van de muziekindustrie, zien ze verschillende kansen in de markt en overstijgen ze de traditionele dichotomie tussen kunst en commercie en tussen professionals en amateurs. Door op deze manier te laten zien hoe de lokale context van de muziekindustrie het beroepsleven van muzikanten vormgeeft, draagt dit hoofdstuk bij aan ons begrip van de relatie tussen werkactiviteiten en de percepties van actoren en de manier waarop ze een positie willen innemen binnen velden.

Hoofdstuk 4, geschreven samen met Jo Haynes, onderzoekt de relatie tussen de omstandigheden van de nationale muziekindustrieën en de strategieën die worden gebruikt door muzikanten om een carrière in de muziek te realiseren, en de mate waarin muzikanten hun loopbaan zien als vorm van ondernemerschap, door te kijken naar *of de strategieën van Nederlandse en Britse musici kunnen worden begrepen als reacties op de structurele omstandigheden binnen hun context*. Hiervoor werden de ervaringen van muzikanten in twee Europese muziekcontexten – Nederland en het VK – vergeleken door middel van een secundaire vergelijkende analyse waarbij de interviews met de 21 muzikanten werden vergeleken met een set van 10 interviews met beginnende muzikanten uit het VK. We stellen dat de strategieën van deze muzikanten kunnen worden geframed als een reeks reacties op hun lokale structurele omstandigheden. Omdat bijvoorbeeld binnen de Nederlandse muziekindustrieën – in vergelijking met het VK – meer overheids- en industriesteun wordt geboden in de vorm van een reeks stappen om je carrière op te bouwen waarmee muzikanten toegang kunnen krijgen tot sleutelactoren, is het logisch voor muzikanten om hun werkzaamheden te richten op dit geïnstitutionaliseerde pad in de muziekindustrieën. Echter levert geen enkele reactie marktvoordeel op. In plaats daarvan hebben traditionele machts- en economische relaties de overhand, waarbij slechts een zeer klein deel van de aspirant-muzikanten zich financieel staande kan houden in de muziek.

Het tweede empirische onderzoek richtte zich op popmuziekopleidingen op hbo-niveau om te begrijpen hoe dergelijke opleidingen hun studenten voorbereiden op een carrière in de muziek. Hiervoor heb ik bij drie opleidingen drie vormen van data verzameld: ik heb elf interviews gehouden met docenten, ik heb vijf kleine focusgroepen gehouden met studenten in het laatste jaar van hun opleiding en ik heb alle mogelijke beleidsdocumenten en cursusgidsen verzameld, resulterend in meer dan 200 documenten. Door technologische innovaties is de muziekindustrie de afgelopen twee decennia toegankelijker geworden voor buitenstaanders. Toch hebben we in dezelfde periode een toenemend aantal popmuziekopleidingen gezien. Daarom gebruik ik in hoofdstuk 5 deze dataset voor een kwalitatieve mixed-methods studie om te onderzoeken *of en op welke manieren popmuziekopleidingen op hbo-niveau worden gezien als bijdragend aan de loopbaanontwikkeling van hun leerlingen*. De resultaten geven aan dat de belangrijkste ervaren voordelen van deze opleidingen zijn dat ze helpen bij de ontwikkeling van een reeks noodzakelijke competenties, het aangaan van relaties in de muziekindustrieën en het verwerven van symbolische middelen. Ten tweede onderzoek ik of dergelijke opleidingen worden gezien als bijdragend aan de professionaliteit van hun studenten, en of dit overeenkomt met bestaande wetenschappelijke interpretaties van professionaliteit. In lijn met het 'normatieve waarde'-perspectief op professionaliteit zien we dat een norm van expertise wordt bevorderd, bijvoorbeeld in de vorm van een kwaliteitsnorm waaraan studenten moeten voldoen. In lijn met het 'machtsstrijd'-perspectief zien we dat geloofd wordt dat de verworven symbolische middelen bijdragen aan het bevorderen van een professionele identiteit. Van deze beide bijdragen verwachten participanten dat ze studenten helpen zich te onderscheiden van muzikanten die zonder formele opleiding de markt betreden.

Verder onderzoek ik in hoofdstuk 6 *hoe deze opleidingen studenten voorbereiden op het omgaan met de onzekerheid van het opbouwen van een carrière in de popmuziekindustrieën*. Analyse van de diepte-interviews met docenten en de focusgroepen met studenten onthullen drie samenhangende strategieën die worden gebruikt om studenten te helpen omgaan met de huidige eisen van de arbeidsmarkt voor muzikanten. Ten eerste geven opleidingen volgens de deelnemers informatie over hun kansen op succes in de markt door middel van een *reality check*. Ten tweede pleiten de opleidingen voor diversificatie van beroepsrisico's in de vorm van een gemengde beroepspraktijk. Ten derde bevorderen ze dat studenten al tijdens hun opleiding werkervaring opdoen. Door deze strategieën in kaart te brengen, laat ik in dit hoofdstuk zien hoe dergelijke opleidingen studenten helpen hun plaats op de arbeidsmarkt voor muzikanten te visualiseren en

hun artistieke en professionele identiteit te ontwikkelen in overeenstemming met die ingebeeldde toekomst. Ten tweede laat het zien hoe deze opleidingen studenten de beste uitgangspositie bieden door strategieën te onderwijzen die nodig zijn om werk te vinden. Tegelijkertijd maken ze studenten verantwoordelijk voor de uitkomsten van de carrièrekeuzes, wat gevoelens van stress veroorzaakt.

Het derde empirische onderzoek richtte zich op carrières van acts in de livemuziek. Hiervoor stelde ik een kwantitatieve dataset samen waarin van 214 popmuziekacts in Nederland hun carrières in livemuziek gevolgd werden gedurende een periode van acht jaar na hun deelname aan showcasefestival Noorderslag. Op basis van deze dataset onderzoek ik in hoofdstuk 7 *wat de dynamieken zijn met betrekking tot het aantal liveshows die beginnende acts spelen en de vergoedingen die ze ontvangen, en welke factoren succes in livemuziek kunnen verklaren*. Uit de analyse blijkt dat er grote verschillen zijn in het aantal shows dat acts per jaar spelen en de vergoeding die ze daarvoor ontvangen. Verschillen zijn al duidelijk in het eerste jaar, maar nemen na verloop van tijd toe. Over het algemeen zien we een afname van het aantal shows dat acts per jaar spelen, maar een toename van de gemiddelde vergoedingen die acts ontvangen. Daarnaast breng ik de relatie tussen succes in livemuziek (hier geoperationaliseerd als het aantal optredens per jaar) en een aantal variabelen in kaart door middel van een multilevel analyse. De belangrijkste resultaten hier zijn dat kritische erkenning (toegekend door critici) en populaire erkenning (toegekend door het publiek) sterk gecorreleerd is met succes in livemuziek. Andere opmerkelijke positieve effecten zijn het hebben van connecties in de muziekindustrieën en het gevolgd hebben van een popmuziekopleiding.

Over het geheel laten de onderzoeken die hier zijn uitgevoerd zien hoe beginnende muzikanten een carrière opbouwen in de veranderende muziekindustrieën door zich bezig te houden met het opbouwen van een reputatie, door het uitvoeren van een breed scala aan creatieve en niet-creatieve werkactiviteiten en door hun ondernemersinspanningen te richten op het pad die de Nederlandse muziekindustrieën bieden. Popmuziekonderwijs wordt gezien als een hulpmiddel bij dit proces omdat het studenten kansen biedt voor het ontwikkelen van competenties, een netwerk en symbolische middelen, en door strategieën te onderwijzen om het hoofd te bieden aan de precariteit van een carrière in de muziek. Deze precariteit is ook zichtbaar in de carrières van acts in de livemuziek. Bovendien tonen hun carrières in de livemuziek opnieuw het belang aan van het hebben van een netwerk en het krijgen van vormen van erkenning om succes te behalen. Naast de empirische kennislacune die dit proefschrift

opvult, levert dit proefschrift ook een theoretische bijdrage door een lezing van de casus aan te bieden als voorbeeld van de werkpraktijken (ook met betrekking tot het opbouwen van een reputatie) van werkers in de creatieve industrie en hun waardering van deze praktijken, en de manier waarop deze praktijken en waarderingen worden beïnvloed door (veranderingen in) de structurele en culturele omstandigheden van het veld waarin deze actoren opereren.

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Howard Becker argued that art works are not the product of isolated individuals but the outcome of a collaboration between many actors, from the supplier of art materials to the critics. Of course, I wrote (almost) all the words of this manuscript, but even though I take full responsibility for this, I would nevertheless like to make a similar argument about writing a dissertation. This manuscript is not solely the creation of the undersigned isolated individual, but of a whole fantastic community of people who helped him during the last five years in many ways. So, here we go:

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Portfolio

Publications during PhD project

Journal articles and book chapters

- Everts, R., Berkers, P., & Hitters, E. (Forthcoming). Facilitating Dreams, with a Sense of Reality. Employability in Dutch higher popular music education. In R. Reitsamer & R. Prokop (Eds.), *Higher Music Education and Employability in a Neoliberal World*. Bloomsbury Academic.
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Presentations during PhD project

Paper presentations

- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2021, June 10). *Crafting professional pop musicians: the added value of pop academies for a career in music*. Dag van de Sociologie, Utrecht, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2021, March 10). *The Professional Pop Musician, How Dutch Pop Academies prepare their students for a career in music*. Conference European Sociological Association (ESA), Helsinki, Finland.
Nominated for Best Conference Paper award 2021 of the 2021 EGSN PhD Excellence Awards
- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2020, November 6). *License to Rock, How Pop Music Education creates Professional Musicians*. Cultural Sociology Lowlands conference, Nijmegen, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2020, February 27). *License to Rock, On Professionalisation in Pop Music Education*. Creative Identities in Transition Conference, Vienna, Austria.
- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2019, January 25). *'All institutions die hard', How beginning pop artists navigate the changing Dutch music industry*. 6th Creative Industries Seminar, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2018, September 6). *Making a Living in Live Music: entrepreneurial artists in the Dutch popular music industry*. Conference European Sociological Association (ESA), Valetta, Malta.
- Everts, R., Berkers, P. & Hitters, H. (2018). *Nobody knows what they're doing: entrepreneurial artists in Dutch pop music ecologies*. Conference Keep it simple, make it fast! Gender, differences, identities and DIY cultures, Porto, Portugal.

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Invited and guest lectures

- Everts, R. (2021, December 1). *Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS.ti*. Course: Applied Methods of Arts & Culture Research, Master Arts, Culture & Society, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.
- Hitters, E. & Everts, R. (2021, June 17). *Live Music Agency Moments in the Netherlands; Milestones on the road to success?* [Keynote presentation]. HYPE & Friends Conference, Hannover, Germany,
- Everts, R. (2021, May 31). *Understanding success in live music*. Course: music business, SAE Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R. (2020, January 16). *"ESNS: Wie gaat het maken?"* Kenniscafé Studium Generale Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R. (2019, November 27). *'Survival of the Fittest?'* No Man's Land conference 2019, Utrecht, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R. (2019, March 28). Course: Economics of the Performing Arts, Master Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Chairing Panel

- Everts, R. (2021, November 4). *How is the money split in the streaming age and does it affect musicians' earnings?* 12th International Music Business Research Days, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.
- Everts, R. (2018, May 25). *'Digitization'*. International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) student conference, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Courses taught during PhD Project

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| 2020-2021 | Academic skills |
| 2018-2020 | Bachelor Thesis Seminar |
| 2017-2021 | Key Concepts in the Social Sciences |
| 2017-2021 | Qualitative Methods |

Courses followed during PhD project

- 2021 Multilevel modelling 1: an introduction (2.5 EC)
- 2019 Data visualisation, web scraping, and text analysis in R (2.5 EC)
- 2019 English academic writing for PhD candidates (2 EC)
- 2018 Digital research methods for textual data (2.5 EC)
- 2018 Professionalism and integrity in research Courses for beginning PhD candidates (1 EC)
- 2018 Your personal PhD work-life balance: how to do less, but achieve more (1 EC)
- 2018 Data analysis with R (1 EC)
- 2017 Open interviewing (1.5 EC)
- 2017 Brush up your SPSS skills (1.00 EC)

About the author

Rick Everts (1989) is currently a senior policy advisor at the department of culture of the municipality of Utrecht. He holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology (2012) and a research master's degree in Social Sciences (2016) from the University of Amsterdam. He has also worked as a producer for Sonic Acts (Paradiso, Amsterdam) and as teacher in the bachelor Sociology at the University of Amsterdam, where he taught courses on qualitative research methods, sociological theory and cultural sociology. In 2017 he started as a PhD candidate in the Department of Media & Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam. During his PhD, Rick taught courses on sociology, cultural sociology, qualitative research methods and academic skills in the International Bachelor for Communication and Media.

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