AUTHENTICITY REVISITED

The production, distribution, and consumption of independent folk music in the Netherlands (1993-present)

Niels van Poecke

Authenticity Revisited

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Ph.D. thesis

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Authenticiteit Herzien

De productie, distributie en consumptie van indie-folk in Nederland (1993-heden)

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For my grandfather Marinus van Stee –
a true working class intellectual.

~

For my daughter Mance van Poecke who,
in writing the story she wishes to live by,
may discover the power of music.

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Preface and acknowledgments

This dissertation is about indie-folk – the indie of which stands for 'independent'. As a category of music, indie negatively defines itself as the mirror image of the 'mainstream', of music that is produced and disseminated within the realm of the commercial recording industry. Indie musicians are part of a subdomain of the professionalized field of musical production and create music that is labeled *lo-fi* rather than *hi-fi*, *pure* rather than *overly produced*, *authentic* rather than *synthetic*. What it nowadays means to frame music 'authentic' – a concept fiercely contested within academia – is the topic of this dissertation.

As a young academic writing his dissertation, I have oftentimes felt myself like a musician entering the big world of pop music. I felt myself like Llewin Davis, the protagonist of the movie *Inside Llewin Davis* by the Coen brothers, a somewhat clumsy folk singer walking in and out production studios and music venues, oftentimes metaphorically bumping his head against the high barrier to entry. I had entered the big world of science: of international conferences, of discussing my work with colleagues, of reviewing the work of others, and of teaching to and working with talented students. As a researcher-and-teacher-in-the-making, I had to acquaint myself with the rules of the game, with the knowledge and skills necessary to become a professional in the field. I had to become more *independent*, that is, find my own 'signature' by relating myself to the 'mainstream' and be capable of defending my work against the opinions of others. After six years of discovering this big world I have now come to see it as part of my habitat.

Many people have contributed to this dissertation. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, professor Koen van Eijck and professor Jos de Mul. Professor Koen van Eijck I would like to thank for being the most dedicated and fun to work with supervisor. His supervision has been extremely valuable. I thank him for his dedication, for being very confident about my skills as a Ph.D.-lecturer, for working together on designing and teaching new courses on sociology and the philosophy of the social sciences, and last but surely not least, for all the laughs we shared, during our many discussions or when coming across each other at the department or during one of the department events.

I want to thank professor Jos de Mul for all the hard work he has put into this project. His monthly seminars, during which Ph.D. candidates discuss each other's work, were of great help in writing the various articles and chapters of this thesis. Not only because the seminars oftentimes were the carrot this donkey was chasing after, but most of all, because the feedback on my work, provided by Jos and the other students, were very much to the point and have considerably improved the writings of this dissertation. I enjoyed participating in the seminars, as it also allowed me to update my knowledge on philosophy. I will sincerely miss being part of them.

All the respondents that participated in this research I would like to thank for the time they took to speak about their practices, thoughts, emotions, feelings, and memories related to their much-treasured folk music. Without their help and candor this research would not have been possible. I am thankful that some of you have become friends.

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My family and friends I would like to thank for encouraging me to continue working on the topic of this thesis. I would like to thank my parents for learning me the skills to appreciate blues, folk, country and Americana music; my grandparents for always asking me relevant questions about my research and for standing so strong particularly when times were changing. My friends Lieke, Rens, Jelle, Rosa, Willem, Miriam, Geert, Geertje, Misja, Sanne, Stefanie, Wael, I would like to thank for their support and for being my dearest friends. A special thank you goes to Willem and Geert, for accepting the invitation to be my wingmen and for co-organizing the day of the defense.

I know that it is somewhat stereotypical to thank your girlfriend at last, but coming last really means being first. I thank Bieke for being my girlfriend for almost eighteen years. Her improvisation skills in composing (children's) songs and doing all kinds of funny dances on Sunday mornings make even the most gifted folk musician sound and look like an amateur. I sincerely hope that our shared biography is a never-ending story, and simply can't wait to spend more time together and to write a new chapter in which we are the proud parents of a newborn!

Rotterdam, September 16, 2017.

Contents

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

It is a mysterious thing
when a new music appears.

- Philip H. Ennis, *The Seventh Stream* (1992)

1.1. A twenty-first century folk revival

Roughly between 1958, when The Kingston Trio launched their version of the traditional folk song "Tom Dooley" and sold millions of copies, and 1965, when Bob Dylan 'went electric' at the New Port Folk Festival, folk music was a popular genre of music alongside jazz and rock 'n' roll (Rosenberg, 1993). The late 1950s and early to mid-1960s was the time of the so-called "urban folk revival" – or what folk music scholar Neil Rosenberg has referred to as the "great boom" of interest in traditional American folk music (Rosenberg, 1993, pp. 2-3). The urban folk revival was supported and driven by the emergence of an intellectual and urban middle class youth culture, in which the idea of the 'common' folk was used as an authentic alternative to many of the inauthentic traits of post-war – technocratic, conservative and consumerist – society. In the words of ethnomusicologist Robert Cantwell (1993, p. 36),

> Folksongs and original songs conceived and performed as folksongs, sung by young folksong revivalists such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul, and Mary, and literally hundreds of others enjoyed an unprecedented commercial popularity. They inspired thousands of young middle-class men and women to learn folksongs, to accompany themselves on folk instruments […], to search out and lionize authentic folk musicians, and finally to dress, groom, speak, comfort themselves, and even attempt to think in ways of the rural, ethnic, proletarian, and other marginal cultures to whom folksong was supposed to belong.

The great boom exploded, but faded quickly – as mentioned, when Bob Dylan went electric and foregrounded the heydays of rock music. Ever since the early 1990s, however, folk music has made a comeback. The sons and daughters of the post-war generation once again revive folk music, or combine their passion for folk music with other, more contemporary genres like punk, hip-hop, free-jazz, pop, electronic music, and more (Keenan, 2003). They taught themselves to play the banjo, the guitar and the mandolin through YouTube tutorials; men started to grow a folk beard, and by adding layers to traditional folk music they constructed new genres.

The new labels are hyphenated, as in "free-folk", "freak-folk", "indie-folk" and "folk-pop", and refer to Americana and electronics as in "New Weird America", "American Primitivism" or "folktronica" (Petrusisch, 2008; Leech, 2010; Encarnacao. 2013). In ways similar to the 1960s urban folk revival – that is, through live performances, mass mediation and sales successes – the genre of indie-folk or folk-pop gained momentum around 2006 with acts such as Fleet Foxes, The Lumineers, alt-J, Jake Bugg, and most of all Mumford and Sons, who became the genre's spearheads and in 2012 were even framed "the biggest band in the world" (Lamont, 2012). Taking into account that this labeling was mainly based on record-sales, that seems a valid statement. Their first studio album *Sigh No More* (2009) went multiple platinum (selling around 2,5 million copies world-wide), while the group's second studio-album *Babel* (2012) sold a million copies in the first week of its release in October, 2012, hitting the number one position in both the U.S., the U.K., and the Netherlands (ibidem). According to Spotify (Billboard, 2012), users streamed it "around eight million times" in the first seven days of its release, echoing the international sales success of The Kingston Trio in the late 1950s.

The commercial breakthrough of indie-folk acts like Mumford and Sons has once again led to the emergence of commercial folk music; according to American sociologist William G. Roy (2010, p. 149) an "oxymoronic phenomenon" given folk music's history in the American socialist and communist movements of the 1930s and 1940s and, hence, its antagonistic relationship with the culture industries and capitalist society at large. In this dissertation I aim to get a better understanding of how and why new genres of folk music have been constructed and how folk music, usually 'dwelling' under the radar of the mainstream, once again turned into an "industry-based genre" (Lena, 2012) at the turn of the new millennium.

1.2. Research questions

With indie-folk becoming an industry-based genre around the years 2005/2006, musicians, gatekeepers and audiences in the Netherlands started to become familiar with the genre and, similar to their 1960s counterparts, initiated their own version of the latest international folk revival.[1] The Netherlands is a relatively small European

1. The 'indie' of indie-folk refers to the concept of 'independent'. Indie can be defined as a "type of musical production" (associated with small labels operating within a distinctive web of 'independent' music distribution); (ii) as an "ethos" (rooted in the rebellious narrative of punk culture); (iii) as a pathos (associated with heavy and depressive moods and emotions), and (iv) as a "genre" (see Fonarow, 2006). The origins of indie music could be roughly traced back to counter-institutional movements in the international music industry, leading towards the establishment of 'independent' record firms in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It has been observed that 'indie', after first designating a (rebellious) political

country with a population of 17.1 million people (CBS, 2017). It is located at the semi-periphery of the global music market, with the scope of music industry activities generally oriented toward global trends in pop music (Hitters & Van de Kamp, 2010). The transition of global music into a national context also holds for contemporary folk music: as this research points out, the global phenomenon of indie-folk has resulted in the formation of (trans)local scenes (Bennett & Peterson, 2004), fan-driven entrepreneurial activities, scene-driven industries, and a national market for indie-folk. In this research I investigate *how and why folk music reemerged as an industry-based genre and regained momentum in the Dutch music industry*. This results in the following subquestions:

(I) What are factors affording the reemergence and re-popularization of indie-folk in the Netherlands?
(II) To what extent, how and why is indie-folk institutionalized within the Dutch music industry?

As this research centers analysis both on how Dutch indie-folk practitioners (musicians, gatekeepers, and audiences) define indie-folk as an authentic object, and on how indie-folk is used in everyday life and, more specifically, in the formation of self-identity (that is, the subjective dimension of authenticity):

(III) What is the role of indie-folk in the formation of self-identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience?

And finally – in terms of investigating the link between 'indie-folk' and 'society':

(IV) What is the link between the formation of indie-folk and broader social dynamics, specifically in regards to the re-popularization of folk music after the 'death' of (social) authenticity in post- or late modernity?

1.3. The 'end' of authenticity – and beyond…

The latest folk revival has been framed as a strategy of a new generation of musicians and audiences to "bring authenticity back to music" (Jonze, 2012). As such, the re-popularization of folk music seems to be part of a wider 'search for authenticity' in contemporary Western societies, of which sociological analysis, apart from indie-folk, has recently focused on social domains as varied as foodie culture (Johnston & Baumann, 2009), hipster retro-fashion and life-styles (Michael, 2015), alternative cinema (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016), the New Sincerity movement in American fiction (Timmer, 2010), craftsmanship (Van Tuinen, forthcoming), gentrification (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005), new age religion (e.g., Aupers, Houtman & Roeland, 2010), and (media) tourism (e.g., Urry, 1992; Reijnders, 2013; Welten, 2013).

According to Bendix (1997), the search for authenticity should be understood within the framework of "reflexive modernization" (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). In societies where individuals are "surrounded by the mimetic products and enactments of aesthetic reflexivity", she writes (ibid, p. 8), "the continued craving for experiences of unmediated genuineness" is a strategy of (dominant) groups in society who seek "to cut through what Rousseau called 'the wound of reflection', a reaction to modernization's demythologization, detraditionalization, and disenchantment."

Within popular music studies, however, aesthetic reflexivity (Lash, 1994) is seen as a 'symptom' of late modern societies, that has *eroded* more 'naïve' and 'romanticist' constructions of "social authenticity". This refers to a form of authenticity, associated mostly with folk and rock music, grounded in the "expression of a magically dense community" and associated with democratic values of egalitarianism, connectivity and participation (Fornäs, 1995, p. 276). The current folk revival, as it is grounded in a romantic ethic and aesthetics, is thus remarkable in the light of a late modern or postmodern discourse in which the concept of authenticity has been more or less "consigned to the intellectual dust-heap" (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p. 30).[2]

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attitude, gradually evolved into a particular style or genre, emphasizing a "more narrow set of sounds and looks" (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p. 38) than the music produced and performed within the 'mainstream', which is often framed by indie enthusiasts as synthetic. Indie-folk is one of the latest genres founded and coded within the field of indie music and exists alongside genres like indie-rock, indie-pop, and indietronica. It shares the 'narrow' stance with which music is produced and performed with other indie genres, but, given its roots in a romanticist aesthetic ideology, could be characterized by an "even more back-to basics approach" (Encarnacao, 2013, p. 12). See for more theory on indie music and the boundaries between indie-folk and other (indie) genres: chapter 6 of this thesis.

2. In this thesis I use the terms 'postmodern' and 'late modern' to refer to a particular discourse in philosophical theory in general and popular music studies in particular. Specifically, I refer to the work of Frederic Jameson (1991) on postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late-capitalism", and to the work of Anthony Giddens (1991) on the self in late modernity. Jameson uses the term postmodernism to refer to an epoch or historical period ("postmodernity"), and to a cultural logic ("postmodernism"). He argues that with the rise of "late capitalism" a new type of society has emerged, characterized by the industrialization and commodification of everyday life. The underlying cultural logic or "cultural dominant" of this new type of society (which Jameson detects by analyzing developments in architecture, film, and the visual arts) is dominated by a "crisis

Scholars who have studied authenticity within the framework of reflexive modernization have argued that, after the emergence of 'self-conscious' genres like post-punk, avant-garde rock, hip-hop, and pop in the late-1970s through to the early-to-mid 1980s, musical creations and performances could no longer be fabricated by 'denial of the economy' (Bourdieu, 1993a) and consequently started to revolve around constructions of 'honesty'. By incorporating aesthetic features such as irony, pastiche, and parody into popular music practices, the music industry started to produce "reflexive objects" (Lash, 1994, p. 138) so that audiences were able to grasp the artificial nature of productions and performances. As such, these genres became the manifestation of postmodernism in popular culture, creating a rift between the 'true' folk authenticity of the past and the self-consciously constructed, but therewith 'honest', pop authenticity of the present. It is the kind of "social authenticity (…) that folk music once promised to realize", as cultural theorist Johan Fornäs (1995, p. 276) has remarked, that seems to have been used up after the advent of reflexive modernization. According to music critic Simon Reynolds (2011, p. xii), this is a point in history at which popular music authenticity is caught into a 'cage' and starts to suffer from "retromania", the continuous recycling of the past. In times of retromania, popular music is no longer able to get *past* the past and history, hence, starts to (rep)eat itself.

In this thesis I develop the argument that the dismissal of (social) authenticity by this branch of postmodern theory is premature. Though the social construction of indie-folk is nostalgic and could thus be framed as a symptom of retromania, I develop the argument that the reemergence and re-popularization of folk music is a strategy of a new generation of musicians, gatekeepers, and audiences to *respond* to postmodernism, that is to say, to offer revisions of the more 'flat' and 'self-reflexive' manifestation of authenticity characteristic of postmodernism as the cultural logic, or cultural dominant, of postmodernity (Jameson, 1991). The formation of this strategy is most clearly expressed by the return to values typical of Romanticism, most notably purity, sincerity, 'expressivism' and community; as well as to typical romantic artistic stylistics such as the metaphor, the symbol, and the fragment. As such, the emergence of indie-folk seems to be part of the "neoromantic turn" in the arts and cultural industries of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, which has been framed as a strategy to move beyond postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a).

1.4. Methodological foundations

1.4.1. Studying innovation in popular music - The production-of-culture perspective

In this thesis I study the reemergence, re-institutionalization and re-popularization of indie-folk, first and foremost, by drawing from research developed within the so-called "production of culture-perspective", an approach to studying (innovation in popular) culture that emerged in the early 1970s (see Dowd, 2004). Evolving out of the works of Hirsch (1972), Becker (1982), Peterson and Berger (1975), and Peterson (1976), amongst others, it became "a coherent and self-conscious approach to understanding how the expressive symbols of culture come to be" (Peterson and Anand, 2004, p. 313).

Employing the production of culture-perspective involves studying the production of culture in its generic sense (Peterson, 1976, p. 10). This means that the concept of 'production' is often defined in a broad sense, including not only processes of creation and manufacturing, but also of dissemination, evaluation, and even of the consumption of culture. Furthermore, it implies that little attention is paid to studying the symbolic expressions (the 'texts') of culture itself, but that focus should be on studying the *processes* that constitute cultural production in systems. Finally, it implies that the concept of 'culture' is defined as dynamic rather than static. Although there is common acknowledgment that essentially culture evolves gradually, sociologists working within the production of culture-perspective have emphasized that occasionally it can be subject to rapid change (e.g., White and White, 1965; Peterson, 1990; Peterson, 1997).[3]

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in historicity", the "waning of affect", and the use of "simulacra" and "pastiches" in artistic practices. This cultural logic differs from the previous epoch of modernism – or the "cultural logic of monopoly capitalism" –, which was characterized by a belief in "truth", "the real", "engagement", "originality" and "linear progress" (in society in general and in art in particular). – Giddens defines late – or reflexive – modernity as an epoch in which "the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made" (1991. p. 3). This is because there is no longer a "sense of ontological security", resulting from the replacing of traditions by rationality. This causes radical doubt and "insists that all knowledge takes the form of hypotheses' (ibidem). Both the work of Jameson and Giddens has been appropriated by scholars in the field of popular music studies, most notably by Grossberg (1992), Fornäs (1995) and Reynolds (2011) (see for a detailed elaboration: Chapter 3).

3. In his book, *The Seventh Stream: The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music* (1992), American sociologist Philip H. Ennis argues that "[i]t is a mysterious thing when a new music appears. Since something does not come out of nothing, the new must come either from within one existing type of music or from the boundary of two or more different musics" (Ennis, 1992, p. 20). In the case of indie-folk, its origins, as will be outlined in this thesis, is the result of the mixing and matching of a few different musics, including Appalachian folk, blues,

Change may occur, not because of special accomplishments by a few creative individuals, nor due to changes in audience characteristics and/or consumer patterns, but because of changes in the *structure* that constitutes the system of cultural production. Peterson (1990), for example, has argued that the advent of rock 'n' roll as a new genre in American popular music was neither predominantly the result of special accomplishments by musicians such as Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Jerry lee Lewis and Chuck Berry (the "supply side explanation"), nor due to the emergence of the so-called 'baby-boom generation' (the "demand side explanation"), but rather due to the advent of new copyrights regulations and technologies, most notably television.[4]

Drawing from insights from industrial, organizational, and occupational sociology, and by applying those insights to the study of the (popular) arts, the production of culture- perspective has critiqued dominant materialist and idealist approaches of studying the relationship between culture and society (Peterson, 1976; Alexander, 2003). Culture should be neither seen as a direct *reflection* of society, nor as the *creator* of social structure, but as the outcome of "milieux" (Peterson), "systems" (Hirsch), or "worlds" (Becker) in which it is deliberately and socially fabricated (see for a critique on 'simple' reflection and shaping approaches: Peterson, 1976; Alexander, 2003).

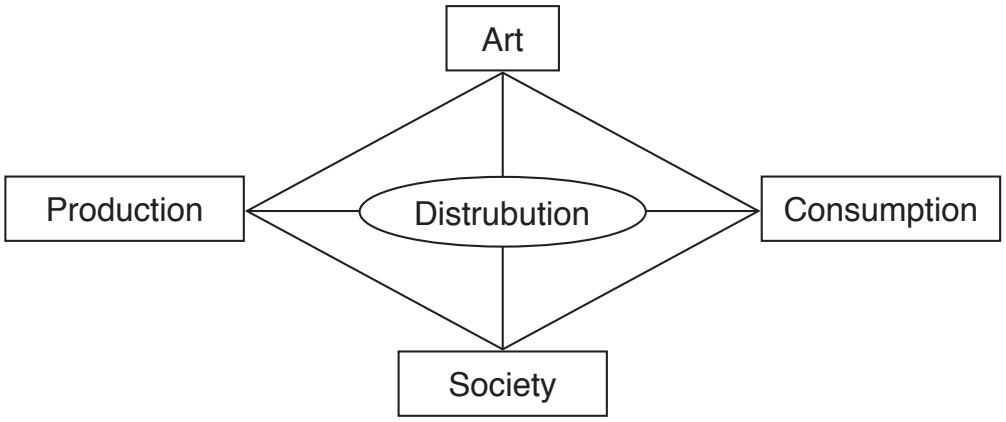

Figure 1.1. The Cultural Diamond (adapted from: Alexander, 2003, p. 62)

Following this line of thought, sociologists Wendy Griswold (1994) and Victoria D. Alexander (2003) have developed the "Cultural Diamond" model. In Alexander's words, the cultural diamond is a "square turned on one end like a kite" and has four corners, representing (1) artistic products, (2) creators of art, (3) consumers of art, and (4) the wider society (see figure 1) (Alexander, 2003, pp. 60-61).To investigate the link between art and society, the researcher needs to take into account that there is no 'direct' relationship between art and society, but that all four corners and all six links of the Cultural Diamond are related (ibid, p. 61). This means, first and foremost, that art does not come out of thin air, but that it is (purposefully) created by artists or groups of artists,

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Krautrock, punk, Tropicália, electronica, hip-hop and 'classical' music. However, when studying innovation or change in popular music, it would be insufficient to investigate changes in artistic styles only, that is, investigate how a new genre emerges as a (re)combination of existing aesthetics. Ennis (1992, p. 19) therefore argues that innovation in popular music often is the result of changes that affect established genres from the *inside out* and changes that affect those genres from the *outside in*. From the outside in, music is affected by changes in wider society; from the inside out from changes in the system – or "stream", as Ennis refers to it – that constitutes musical production.

4. First, changes within *copyright regulations* provided opportunities for musicians and songwriters working within alternative segments to gain public attention. These were mostly musicians performing "communal music", such as jazz, rhythm & blues, gospel, western swing, country, and folk (Peterson and Berger, 1975). These forms of music were denied access to mass media coverage, mainly because license arrangements forced radio networks to exclusively broadcast the music produced by the four major record firms that dominated the music market (RCA Victor, Columbia, Decca, Capitol). When in the early 1940s these license arrangements disappeared, radio networks were able to program other forms of music as well. As a consequence, "communal musics" such as country, gospel, R&B, and folk fed the unsaturated demand of a large proportion of the 'baby-boom generation' and gained widespread public attention. Combined with innovations in technology, including the popularization of the 45-rpm phonograph record in 1952, the advent of the cheap and portable transistor radio in the mid-1950s, and the transfer of network radio programming to television in 1955, the cocktail of "communal musics", which rock 'n' roll was, was popularized and rose to the surface of the recording industry.

who belong to communities, networks or (sub)cultures in society. Furthermore, their art does not reach society at large, as it is selected, distributed (and possibly altered) by individuals, organizations, or networks of gatekeepers, who distribute the artworks to specific audiences.[5]

Likewise, art is not consumed by society at large but by specific audience groups, who form networks, scenes, fan communities, subcultures, or other types of "interpretive communities" (ibid, p. 192). Like the groups of artists, these consumer groups form *social groups* as they might share background characteristics such as class, age, gender and/or race and therefore have similar abilities to decode and interpret artistic objects. 'Society', lastly, forms the final node on the diamond and, in the form of norms, values, laws, and regulations (such as copyrights regulations and the freedom of speech), influences both the production, distribution, and consumption of art.

As Alexander emphasizes, the Cultural Diamond is a "metaphor" or "heuristic device" that sets out the idea that the artistic conventions and meanings of art are formed in a 'diamond structure' that is made up of artists, distributors (including critics), and audiences. Nonetheless, it is an *effective* metaphor because it helps to explain how producers, distributors and audiences relationally form the 'system', 'world', or 'field' (Bourdieu, 1993a) in which the definition of art, and of who is (not) an artist, is constituted. The Cultural Diamond, however, separates in theory what can hardly be separated in practice, meaning that art is not only *related to* society but has a special meaning and function (for specific groups) *in* society as well (Alexander, 2003 p. 287).

Moreover, the Cultural Diamond is neither a theory nor a methodology, and is therefore not capable, in and of itself, of producing knowledge on *how* or *what kind of* relationships between the six corners exist (ibid, p. 61). It has the advantage of visualizing "*that* some relationship exists", but "it can not specify *what* the relationships among the points on the diamond are" (ibid; emphasis in the original). Studying the production, distribution, and reception of culture thus implies that the researcher bases his analysis on metatheoretical considerations in which ontology, epistemology and methodology are coherent (ibid, p. 14). In the remainder of this chapter I therefore first specify why and how I apply the Cultural Diamond to the study of indie-folk (section 1.4.2.). Subsequently, I elaborate on the methodological foundations that are at the core of this research.

1.4.2. Studying indie-folk by 'looking through' a diamond structure

The study of folk music, going back to the works of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) in early Romanticism, has a history in 'simple' reflection approaches (Alexander, 2003). This implies that many scholars have assumed that there is a direct relationship between the musical structure of folk music and the social structure of its practitioners. As Middleton (1990, p. 127) writes, among anthropologists, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and folk music scholars, there has been a tendency "to reduce the music/culture relationship to a deterministic, functional or structural homology." Herder, for example, defined folk music as the "Stimmer der Völkern in Liedern" (1975[1778-1779]). On the eve of modernity, when European countries were in the process of nation-state building, the idea was that "humans (…) give voice to their distinctiveness with song" (Bohlman, 2004, p. 42). British folklorist Cecil Sharp, moreover, saw folk music as "the culture of country workers, isolated, uneducated, uncontaminated by commerce, reading or 'art'" (Sharp, 1972, pp. 1-5 in: Middleton, 1990, p. 128). And American musicologists and musicians like Francis James Child, John and Alan Lomax, and Charles and Pete Seeger defined folk music in terms of a certain type of people – the country workers, the peasants, the industrial workers, the 'common' folk – rather than in terms of musical qualities (Roy, 2010, p. 75).

Central to these simple reflection approaches is the notion of authenticity. As Middleton (1990, p. 127) argues, the tendency to reduce the relationship between folk music and social structure to a purely homologous one "encourages a stress on the notion of 'authenticity', since, given homologous systems, honesty (truth to cultural experience) becomes the validating criterion of musical value." As such, folk music, over the course of centuries, became associated with authenticity-laden values such as simplicity, purity, originality, ruralness, naturalness, honesty, the primitive and spontaneity; as well as with democratic ideals such as inclusiveness, egalitarianism and participation – all supposedly reflecting the structure of its people that expressed it (see Lindholm, 2002).

Obviously, this idea of folk music as the music of a lower class in society is a social construction, or better still, an "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983) that was carefully crafted by elitist groups in Western societies (e.g., Bohlman, 1988; Middleton, 1990; Rosenberg, 1993; Bendix, 1997; Roy, 2010). The

5. This is the reason why 'distributors', such as journalists, record company personnel, and academics, form the fifth node or point, so to speak, in the Cultural Diamond model.

"simple picture" (Middleton, 1990, p. 129) of folk music reflecting the structure of the lower classes, in other words, is a projection of the *elitist search* for a more 'common', 'simple', or 'authentic' culture compared to a society dominated by economic capital and the threats of modernity, technological development, and industrialization (Campbell, 1987). This strategy of *authenticating* folk music implies that "the terms of homology between cultural and social boundaries", as Roy (2010, p. 47) argues, "are redefined or even inverted."

> Representing an affirmation of culture presumably expressed from the heart, authenticity unsettles the link between social status and respectable culture, justifying elite embrace of indigenous culture, not just their own highbrow culture. Authenticity is an imputed relationship between culture and people, mutually validating a set of qualities about the people and the verisimilitude of the culture. People otherwise deemed uncouth by the dominant group become redefined as pure, and their culture, by its association with the group, shares the purity. Cultural capital gets turned on its head (ibid, pp. 47-48).

The labeling of a people as pure also implies the erecting of symbolic fences between the ones who are 'pure' and the ones who are 'fake' or 'inauthentic', and is not only a reflection of an inclusive and egalitarian political agenda. Nonetheless, the notion of authenticity indeed is a sociologically relevant one, as Roy argues (ibid, p. 47), as it raises questions such as who authenticates and for what reasons? – or, more specifically, what kind of objects, subjects, places and spaces are authenticated by which groups of people and how and why do they do so? (*cf.* Aupers, Houtman & Roeland, 2010). In the context of this research, this sociological agenda translates into the question who authenticates indie-folk music and related 'devices' such as clothing, visuals, sites and spaces, and how and why indie-folk is a tool and resource in the contemporary search for authenticity?

In this research I aim to answer this question, as discussed, by using the Cultural Diamond as a heuristic device; that is, by investigating the production, distribution, and consumption of indie-folk and by, subsequently, 'zooming out' to get a better understanding of how the search for a new authenticity in indie-folk – beyond the 'death' of authenticity – is linked to broader changes in society. More concretely, this means that I aim to investigate who creates and produces indie-folk for what reasons? Who are the musicians behind the genre label? How do they define the genre, and why do they use the label 'indie-folk' for the music they create and produce? How do musicians define the genre's aesthetics and what are the artistic conventions associated with the genre?

Focusing on the distribution-side of indie-folk: how, why and through which kind of distribution systems is indie-folk disseminated? Who are the genre's gatekeepers and how do they define indie-folk and associated musicians and audiences?

Finally, who are members of the indie-folk audience? How do audiences and fans define the genre? How do they use indie-folk in their everyday lives and in the process of self-identity formation? Is there a homology between the field of production and the field of consumption? If so, what does the shared view on authenticity say about the position of indie-folk practitioners in Dutch society? How do their production, distribution and consumption practices reflect, or possibly alter, the (integrative) practices (Schatzki, 1996) in which indie-folk is embedded?

1.4.3. Defining music as social practice

Using the Cultural Diamond model as a heuristic device in studying the relationships between art and society implies, as discussed, that the researcher bases his analysis on metatheoretical considerations in which ontology, epistemology and methodology are coherent (Alexander, 2003, p. 14). In empirically studying the production, distribution, and consumption of indie-folk I – alongside the insights produced within the production of culture-perspective – draw from insights developed within "practice theory" (e.g., Ortner, 1984; Swidler, 1986; Schatzki, 1996; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Sauvigny, 2001; Couldry, 2004; Bräuchler & Postill, 2010).

Practice theory is generally defined as a "body of work about the work of the body" (Bräuchler & Postill, 2010, p. 11). This definition implies, first, that there is "no unified practice approach" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 11), but that practice theory consists of an array of work that over the last five decades has been established in philosophy, sociology, and cultural theory (see for theoretical overviews and key references: Schatzki et al, 2001; Bräuchler & Postill, 2010; Warde, 2017). However, although there is only a loosely defined practice *approach*, there is nonetheless agreement among practice theorists on the assumptions that (i) "practices are arrays of human activity"; (ii) that those activities are embodied; (iii) that "nexuses of practices are mediated by artifacts, hybrids, and natural objects", and (iv) "that such phenomena as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions, and

historical transformation occur within and are aspects or components of the *field of practices"*, which is the "total nexus of interconnected human practices" (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001, p. 11; emphasis in the original).

Schatzki (1996, p. 89) argues that there are two notions of social practices:

> The first is practice as a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings. Examples are cooking practices, voting practices, industrial practices, recreational practices, and correctional practices. To say that the doings and sayings forming a practice constitute a nexus is to say that they are linked in certain ways. Three major avenues of linkage are involved: (1) through understandings, for example, of what to say and do; (2) through explicit rules, principles, precepts, and instructions; and (3) through what I will call 'teleoaffective' structures embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions, and moods.

The second notion Schatzki distinguishes "is that of performing an action or carrying out a practice" (ibid, p. 90). As he remarks, this second notion "denotes the *do-ing*" (ibidem; emphasis added), since practices constantly and continuously need to be performed or carried out in order to exist and to be sustained.

Schatzki's first notion of practice implies that analysis should focus both on studying practices in action (the "doings") and on the discursive accounts of those practices (the "sayings") (Warde, 2017, p. 82). Moreover, this first notion of practice gives the researcher an account of the "avenues of linkages" that make up the *organization* of practices and by which human behavior within practices is structured. By "sensitized understandings" Schatzki refers to the "abilities to act and speak" that are part of social practices; they are the "knowing how to" do something (1996, p. 100 & p. 91). Procedures are the "explicit rules, principles, precepts, instructions, and the like (…) that people take account of and adhere to (…) when participating in the practice" (ibid, p. 100). The "teleoaffactive structure", finally, concerns both teleology (the ends, purposes, desires, intentions, projects, beliefs, hopes, etc. that people have and undertake when participating in a practice) and the affectivity – particular emotions and moods – that are 'appropriate' within and across practices (ibid, pp. 100-101). These three organizing principles are summarized by Warde (2017, p. 82) as (1) understandings; (2) procedures, and (3) engagement.

Schatzki furthermore distinguishes between "dispersed practices" and "integrative practices". Dispersed practices are widely disseminated among multiple domains of social life and include "practices of describing, ordering, following rules, explaining, questioning, reporting, examining, and imagining" (ibid, p. 91). They mostly require *understanding* as organizing principle, as they are rarely constituted by procedures, and in fact require "the absence of the teleoaffective component of practice organization." The latter is the case, because if dispersed practices were linked with particular ends and/or moods and emotions, they "could not appear in more or less all walks of life and in a wide variety of situations" (ibid, p. 92).

The doings and sayings that make up *integrative* practices, on the other hand, are constituted by both understandings, procedures and engagements, as they are "the more complex practices found in and constitutive of particular domains of social life. Examples are farming practices, business practices, voting practices, teaching practices, celebration practices, cooking practices, recreational practices, industrial practices, religious practices, and banking practices" (ibid, p. 98). Both dispersed and integrative practices, lastly, are "social entities", as they are the product of coexistence and social interaction (ibid, p. 104).

In this research I define music, at a very basic level, as a social practice – in the definition of Reckwitz' understanding of practice as *Praktik* (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249); that is, "a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge."[6] At the ontological level, music – in the definition of 'musicking' (see Roy, 2010, p. 11) – is thus defined as an *activity* rather than as an object, although the material aspects of music (e.g., instruments, technological equipment, sheet music, clothing, etc.), as well as the bodies that 'carry' those things, are considered to be the (prosthetic) devices that make musical activity possible.[7] Nonetheless, "[r]ather than an object with fixed qualities", the study of music as an activity shifts "the agenda to what people are *doing* when they compose, perform, listen, discuss, dance, worship to, or imagine music" (Roy, 2010, p. 11; emphasis added). As Roy (ibidem) argues, this

6. Reckwitz (2002) makes a distinction between *Praxis* and *Praktik*. He defines *Praxis* as "an emphatic term to describe the whole of human action (in contrast to 'theory and mere thinking)" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249).

7. This ontological orientation to music as a social practice implies that I define music as a social entity, as well as that I define musical behavior as something that is embodied and routinized, following from the organization of musical activity by means of institutional rules or conventions (Becker, 1982) that make up the "deep structure" of a musical practice (see Swidler, 2001).

is an ontological approach to studying music, which is particularly suited for studying *folk music*, "which is often treated in process terms, highlighting the folk process" (see also: Bohlman, 1988).

More specifically, music within this research is defined as a medium that has a *function* in other social practices (Roy, 2010, p. 11). Understanding that consumption, as Warde argues, "is not itself a practice but, rather, a 'moment' in almost every practice" (2017, p. 86), I define the *consumption* or *use* of (indie-folk) music as s a 'moment' in other social practices or domains.[8] This relates to the work of Tia DeNora (2000, p. 110), whose approach revolves around "action-as-practice", and who has demonstrated that music is a device in the organization of social life. That is to say, music enables and organizes social interaction, it structures routines, habits and customs, it instigates and regulates moods, energy levels, feelings and emotions, and it provides resources in processes of self-perception, self-understanding and self-definition – or what DeNora has referred to as the "technology of the self" (1999). From DeNora's work, then, follows, as will be outlined more specifically below, that the consumption of indie-folk is a 'moment' in a multitude of integrative practices.

1.4.4. Studying the production, distribution, and consumption of indie-folk – A practice-theory based approach

A returning point of attention within practice theory is that the human body is seen as "the nexus of people's practical engagements with the world" (Postill, 2010, p. 7). As Postill argues, practice theorists have searched for a "virtuous middle path between the excesses of methodological individualism – explaining social phenomena as a result of individual actions – and those of its logical opposite, methodological holism – the explanation of phenomena by means of structures or social wholes (ibidem)." Practice theorists, in other words, wish to "liberate agency – the human ability to act upon and change the world – from the constrictions of structuralist and systemic models while avoiding the trap of methodological individualism" (ibidem). This view on the central function of the body is predominantly influenced by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., 1984; 1990), who introduced the notion of "habitus" to find a middle ground between the excesses of subjectivism and objectivism (Johnson, 1993, pp. 3-6).[9]

The critique that social order is neither the result of individual actions, nor that individual actions are fully determined by the social, makes practice theory a helpful approach in studying social constructions of authenticity. As discussed above, dominant within a particular branch of postmodern or poststructuralist theory is the tendency to deconstruct authenticity in order to make manifest its artificial nature.[10] Concerning authenticity's "subjective front" – that is, authenticity defined as self-identity (Haselstein, Gross & Körber, 2009, p. 10) – it has been argued that postmodernity produces a "multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self" and, hence, results in a fragmentation of the self (Gergen, 1991, p. 6) or the production of a "plural actor" (Lahire, 2011[2001]). Skeptical postmodernist theorists such as Baudrillard (1981), more dramatically, have even argued that the distinction between the 'authentic' and the 'inauthentic' disappears in postmodernity as it is characterized by the emergence of "hyperreality", the construction of a televisual 'world' or matrix consisting of models, signs

8. Warde (2017, p. 86) defines consumption as "a process whereby agents engage in appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes, of goods, services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not, over which the agent has some degree of discretion." With this definition of consumption as 'use', Warde highlights the active nature of the act of consumption. He moreover adds that consumption is perhaps a dispersed practice, as it occurs often on many different sites (ibidem, f. 7). It is contrasted with shopping, which is defined by Warde as an integrative practice.

9. For Bourdieu, the habitus is a "set of dispositions which generate practices and perceptions" (Johnson, 1993 p. 5). On the one hand, the dispositions represented by the habitus are "structured structures", in the sense that they are the reflection of the process of socialization and thus of the inculcation of social structure. The fact that dispositions (of thinking, feeling, and behaving, for example) are determined by the social order is why the habitus is also defined by Bourdieu as a "feel for the game". It explains why the actions of individuals are not always conscious, but are also grounded in implicit knowledge and are therefore unconscious and routine-like – particularly when there is a 'fit' between habitus and habitat. Moreover, as Johnson remarks (ibidem), "it authorizes speaking of a class habitus", since individuals who belong to the same social class share dispositions. On the other hand, however, the dispositions of the habitus are "structuring structures", since the individual is not completely determined by social structure, but always has the capacity to improvise and, hence, to generate new practices that 'fit' within the new social environment in which the actor is embedded (ibidem).

10. Although the terms 'postmodernism' and 'poststructuralism' are often used interchangeably, I follow the distinction proposed by Vermeulen (2017), who argues that the term 'poststructuralism' refers "to a methodological a priori" or a "style of theorizing (…) rooted in a particular set of ontological presuppositions", while the term 'postmodernism' "denotes the cultural logic, the structure of feeling, in which these assumptions are shared." In this thesis I predominantly use the terms 'postmodernity' and 'postmodernism', the former referring to a "socio-economic condition supplanting the industrial society", the latter to "a cultural modality reacting to modernist aesthetics", characterized by the use of pastiche and the "waning of affect" (ibidem). However, as Vermeulen also argues, there are postmodern*isms* rather than one single definition of the term, as it is defined in many – contrasting – terms and has been associated for example both with emo-TV and the waning of affect; both with pastiche and the replacement of the grand narrative by new, 'minor' narratives. When I use the notion of postmodernism in this thesis I predominantly refer to the definition of Jameson (1991) who defined postmodernism as the cultural logic, or cultural dominant, of the historical period of postmodernity. As he argued, by drawing from Baudrillard, postmodernism is characterized by a "crisis in historicity", the "waning of affect", and the use of "simulacra" and "pastiches" in artistic practices (see also note 3).

and codes that replaces the 'real' world in which the (modern) actor was once embedded. In the postmodern mediascape, "the models or codes structure experience and erode distinctions between the model and the real" (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 119). Also the 'authentic' self, then, becomes a media construction: a 'field' of floating signifiers, and ceases to exist.

Following this line of thought, but turning our focus to authenticity's objective front, it has been argued by postmodernist theorists and critics such as Grossberg (1992), Fornäs (1995) and, more recently, Reynolds (2011) that authenticity should be considered a blast from the past due to the emergence of a postmodern sensibility – "which marks the collapse, or at least the irrelevance, of the difference between the authentic and the inauthentic" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 227). In the postmodern condition, popular music is defined as 'artificial', first, because it is a commodity circulating within the realm of the commercial music industry and, second, because the commodity lacks originality – that is, the ability to sound new and "to constantly push forward into new territory" (Reynolds, 2011, p. 404). The work of these authors, most notably that of Reynolds, forms the latest chapter in postmodern aesthetic theory on the 'death' or 'end' of authenticity, resulting from a paradigm change from the 'avant-garde' to the 'neo-avant-garde' taking place in the early 1980s. Within the paradigm of the neo-avant-garde, art is seen as something that no longer *represses* the notion of the copy (as in modernist art), but instead emphasizes the reproductive nature of artistic creation (Krauss, 1985); as well as that the *artist* is no longer framed as a "Promethean adventurer", but as a *pasticher* – as someone who creates copies of past works and therewith consciously illustrates art's reproductive nature (Kuspit, 1993). Within this discourse, popular music is reduced to a sample; it's creator to a sampler.[11]

Drawing from insights developed by Warde (2017), Ardèvol *et al*. (2010), and Holstein and Gubrium (2000), I aim to envisage a different 'ending' of authenticity. Concerning authenticity's subjective front I primarily draw from the work of Holstein and Gubrium (2000), who, by combining insights from early practice theorists such as Lyotard (1984[1979]) and Foucault (2004[1975]), have argued that the construction of the self in postmodernity is a form of "narrative practice", a term they use to "simultaneously characterize the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 104). To say that self-identity is a form of narrative practice implies that identity is seen as the product of *both* autobiographic storytelling ('identity *work*') *and* of the institutional discourses that provide the conditions, procedures, and resources under which identity is mediated and constructed (ibid, pp. 96-97). As Dutch literary theorist Nicoline Timmer (2010, p. 41) has remarked, this vision of the self still implies that it is mediated by social discourses, "but instead of surrendering to a form of linguistic determinism, the focus is on language *use* and for that what is needed is a conception of the self as language user, or: as *storyteller*" (emphasis in the original). The work of Holstein and Gubrium, therefore, complements (skeptical) postmodernist theories on the 'death' of self, which, as Best and Kellner (1991, p. 283) remind us, "lack an adequate theory of agency, of an active self, mediated by social institutions, discourses, and other people."

Thus, when investigating the *consumption* of indie-folk by Dutch audience members, I argue that the global music industry is one of the social institutions that provides the building blocks for the formation of narrative identity; a process that, nonetheless, is and remains a form of "interpretive practice"– "of putting forth the effort and engaging in the everyday work of orienting to each other as *selves*" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 11; emphasis in the original). Although, as this research suggests by drawing from Paul Ricoeur's (1988[1985]) theory of narrative identity, the input for constructing self-identity not only arises out of social input, but is also, and perhaps increasingly more so, constructed on the basis of discourse: the narratives audience members draw from items that are produced by and circulate within global (American) pop culture.

In studying the *production* and *distribution* of indie-folk, I primarily draw from the work of Ardèvol *et al*. (2010), who have used practice theory, mostly in alignment with Schatzki (1996), Couldry (2004) and Warde (2017), to theorize the consumption of 'new' media. They broadly define new media as a "new 'media landscape'

11. Kuspit distinguishes the avant-garde artist with the neo-avant-garde artist by comparing the former with the mythological figure of Prometheus and the latter with the historical figure of Herostratos. Herostratos is believed to be the one who burned down the temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) in 356 BC, only because he wanted to achieve something which made him famous. His name became a metonym for an official decease – namely, for someone who suffers from committing crimes just for the sake of wanting to be standing in the spotlight. Similarly, Kuspit argues that neo-avant-garde or appropriation artists, such as Sherrie Levine and Mike Bidlo, are acting "as a kind of Herostratos" (1993, p. 26) because their work is no longer innovative, future-directed and engaged with society, but is only created for the sake of gaining fame and capital. As a consequence, neo-avant-garde art becomes narcissistic and increasingly repetitive and nostalgic. The distinction between 'original' avant-garde art and 'reproductive' neo-avant-garde art, however, has been deconstructed by Krauss (1985), who pointed to the fact that contrasting terms such as originality and repetition, as well as associated terms like singularity and multiplicity, or spontaneity and calculation, are no binary oppositions (which they still are for postmodernist theorists like Baudrillard and Reynolds), but that they are „interdependent and mutually sustaining" (p. 160). In case of the popular song, it could be argued, for example, that it is 'artificial by nature', because it is always a commodity to some extent and thus involves both production *and* reproduction, singularity *and* multiplicity, spontaneity *and* calculation.

(…) in which new digital technologies and old broadcasting systems, the emerging cultural forms and the traditional mass media, interact and reshape each other, though not without tensions and contradictions" (Ardèvol *et al*, 2010, p. 263). This definition is inspired by the work of media and fan scholar Henry Jenkins who, in his book *Convergence Culture* (2006), has argued that the new media context should be understood in terms of cultural media convergence characterized by the emergence of a participatory culture (ibidem).

The concept of "media convergence", in Jenkins definition, does not primarily refer to technological processes – that is, the synthesizing of various technologies (radio, television, typewriter, for example) into a single device (pc, smartphone, tablet) – but to a much broader "cultural shift" that is altering "the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences" (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 15-16). More specifically, Jenkins refers to changes in the operation and organization of media companies, as well as to the altering of roles between producers and consumers of media content. Whereas 'old' media (mass-media) were based on a one-way communication model that 'forced' users to consume passively, 'new' media, due to their interactive nature, allow users to engage with media content more actively, for instance by producing, uploading and sharing texts, sounds and images through wikis, blogs and online forums such as YouTube and Facebook – or, more fanatically, by re-writing the stories of popular culture or fan fiction (ibid, Ch. 4 & 6).

The contributions of such active fans, as Jenkins argues, challenge the dominant market position of large media firms and might lead to the emergence of what he refers to as "participatory culture" – a culture "in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content" (ibid, p. 33). New media, in other words, would have a liberating effect, as they lead to civic agency, shift the power balance between highly specialized media companies, independent firms, and everyday users, and alter the relations between producers and users/consumers – or even makes the concept of the consumer obsolete (e.g., Benckler, 2006; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). It is therefore that participatory culture is often ideologically defined as the folk culture for the digital age, as it revolves around a folk ideology based on tropes of community, sharing, and connectivity. Participatory cultures, like (online) fan communities, for example, build community by sharing, therewith operating on the basis of collective instead of individual ownership, and in doing so, implode the hierarchy between specialized producers and passive consumers (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 136-141).[12]

Drawing from Jenkins, amongst others, Ardèvol *et al*. argue that due to the emergence of Web 2.0 and more accessible technologies such as the mobile phone and digital camera, the concept of consumption should be redefined. Because new media "have expanded the capacity for the viewer/user to produce, appropriating and making cultural forms their own", new media implies a changed spectrum of what defines production and consumption" (ibid, p. 263).

> The key point, thus, is production, so we must take into account that audiences are currently often involved in production processes at different levels, creating semi-professional and amateur works that are displayed and distributed on the same channels as media professionals and via the internet (ibid, pp. 263-264).

The new media landscape proposed by authors such as Jenkins and Ardèvol *et al*. is in many ways different from the Baudrillardian mediascape characterized by the dominance of mass media, most notably television, producing consumer identities and "empty" selves (Cushman, 1990). Although Ardèvol *et al*. (2010, p. 264) also argue that "media corporations still have [the power] to decide and legitimate what constitutes relevant cultural content" (ibid, p. 264), the advent of digitization and its potentially democratizing effect on audiences implies that audiences are becoming part of 'the' media themselves, even actively contributing to and/or acting against the process of media saturation (ibidem). This redefinition of the consumer as (co-)producer asks for an approach that defines self-production and self-distribution as a "media practice in its own right", and to study "how people's media practices mix with institutionalized media practices and how they contribute to define cultural production" (ibid, p. 265).

12. As always when new technologies emerge, utopian views are contrasted with dystopian ones. This is no different in the case of digitization. Aiming to counterbalance the "digital utopianism" (Burgess and Green, 2009), critics have argued that the "participatory turn" is not taking place, since only a very small percentage of all users online (about 9 percent) are creators, whereas the majority (about 90 percent) is only "lurking" (Nielsen, 2006). Others have argued that the binary distinction between passive and active usage dominant in convergence parlance is a false one, since theorists within the users and gratifications tradition have already shown that users are always actively interpreting media content (Jansz, 2010). Lastly, from a Marxist perspective, it is argued that active users or prosumers are by no means empowered, but exploited instead, since they offer creative work for free without gaining rewards for their labor (e.g., Comor, 2010). Empirical research has pointed out that digitization gave birth to the "extended media consumer" rather than the "active user" or "prosumer". That is to say that consumers are not completely abandoning their old consumer behavior, but due to new media are "enabled to take on additional roles besides being media consumers" (Slot, 2013). Besides, I believe it is more relevant to take on a descriptive rather than normative position in studying how "convergence culture" has changed the production, distribution, and consumption of culture.

Using Schatzki's distinction between dispersed and integrative practices, as well as Warde's notion of consumption (see above), Ardèvol *et al.* ultimately define media consumption "not [as] an integrative practice by itself", but as a "dispersed practice in a set of practices (…) related to media that *includes* the production and sharing of cultural products" (2010, p. 274; emphasis added). Moreover, they define a media practice "as an integrative practice that involves a set of dispersed practices of production, distribution and consumption that together constitute a social domain or cultural performance" (ibid, p. 275).

In this thesis I similarly define the production, distribution, and consumption of indie-folk as a set of dispersed practices that together make up the social domain or cultural performance of 'indie-folk'. Furthermore, I define the *consumption* of indie-folk, as discussed previously, as a 'moment' in a (linked) set of integrated practices. Referring to the work of DeNora (2000), music should be seen as part of the "aesthetic dimension of social organization" (p. 110) as it is used by actors in the regulation of affect, as well as in the pursuing of ends and projects ('teleology') that are part of integrative practices such as working, traveling, studying, and cooking. It follows that music, indie-folk included, is a device that helps constituting the teleoaffective structures that organizes human behavior within practices. Moreover, DeNora has demonstrated that the consumption of music is tied to the integrative practice of identity formation, as it is used by actors as a means to probe autobiographical memory and as a resource in the "technology of the self". In this research I similarly demonstrate that (the narratives of) indie-folk songs, as they are produced by the global music industry, are tools and resources for the construction of narrative identity.

Furthermore, I demonstrate in this thesis that the field of indie-folk, as it is embedded in the aesthetic ideology of social authenticity, is the product of cultural media convergence. Indie-folk is the product of amateur-DIY practices taking place in (trans)local music scenes only; subsequently, the product of the institutionalization of those practices within the professionalized field of musical production. This practice theory-based approach on studying cultural consumption as cultural production, obviously, challenges insights employed within the production of culture-perspective, in which research has almost exclusively focused on music produced within the mainstream recording industry (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Strachan, 2007). This is a somewhat false generalization since outside of the boundaries of the professionalized recording industry numerous actors are involved in the production and dissemination of music within (trans)local scenes. These actors often see their industrial and aesthetic strategies as counterhegemonic to the commercial recording industry, yet, as Strachan (2007, p. 246) argues, are "deeply engaged (and highly aware of) the machinations of cultural production." First, because they are "dialectically bound up with the aesthetics and discourses of large-scale cultural organizations" and, second, because they "are engaged with a similar set of practices: the sale, promotion and distribution of recordings" (ibid, p. 247). Without denying the truth that, even in disruptive times of digitization, media conglomerates have hegemonic power over the production and dissemination of popular music, I demonstrate in this thesis that industries not only produce culture, but that culture produces industries, too (Negus, 1998). In the case of Dutch indie-folk, bottom-up practices of self-production, self-distribution, and self-organization by consumers and autodidacts, enhanced by the advent of Web 2.0, have considerably contributed to the re-popularization of folk music in the twenty-first century.

1.4.5. Field, genre, scene, or practice? All of the above [13]

In this research, indie-folk is not only defined as a practice, but also as a 'field', as a 'genre' and as a 'scene'. To avoid conceptual confusion, I first and foremost argue, following Warde (2017, p. 124), that "the concepts of field and practice are neither synonymous nor isomorphic." On the one hand, it is true, according to Warde (2017), that fields are built upon practices, as well as that that field says something about *Praktik* – "in that there is some relationship between success in the field and a capacity to do things well, to achieve success or victory in a competitive arena" (p. 123). It is therefore that fields institutionalize the most successful strategies through "institutional isomorphism" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). On the other hand, however, the concepts of field and practice are not synonymous nor *necessarily* isomorphic, because a field is "almost entirely energized by strategic and instrumental action" (Warde, 2017, p. 119).[14] That is to say that, for purposes of sociological analysis, the concept of field is valuable to capture

13. *Cf.* Hesmondhalgh, 2005.

14. For Bourdieu a field (e.g., the political field, field of cultural production, economic field, etc.) is a relational structure in which actors orient their competitive action towards the achievement of rewards, that is, power or 'capital' (*cf.* Warde, 2017, p. 119). In regards to fields of cultural (i.e. literary, artistic, musical, etc.) production, Bourdieu argues that it consists of a structure that is made up of a heteronomous and autonomous pole, in which the accumulation of economic and cultural capital, respectively, dominates. The field of cultural production, in other words, consists of two sub-fields: the field of large-scale production (in which economic capital dominates) and the sub-field of 'restricted' production. In the latter sub-field, predominantly cultural capital gives agents authority, which can be defined as "a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural

the *strategic* and *instrumental* activities of agents, which, according to Bourdieu (1993a), can be reduced to the accumulation of power or 'capital'. Within the context of *artistic fields*, this implies the accumulation of either predominantly economic or cultural capital, depending on the agent's position in the field, consisting of a binary structure that is made up of a heteronomous and autonomous pole. However, as Warde argues, not every activity is strategic, but is also employed, for example, for purposes of self-esteem, personal development, and social interaction (ibid, p. 122). He therefore suggests to think of 'field' and 'practice' as two concepts that are not mutually incompatible, but having different logics nonetheless – "of a field – competitive, strategic and oriented to external goods – and the characteristics of practice – cooperative, pluralistic and oriented towards internal goods" (ibid, p. 125).

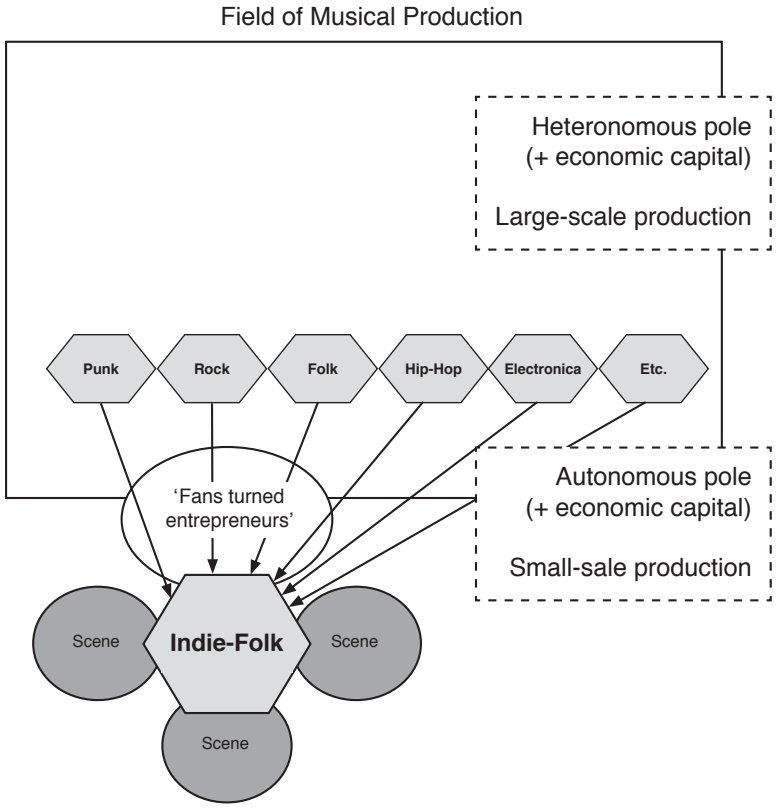

Figure 1.2. The field of musical production (after Bourdieu, 1993a)

In the underlying study, I apply a similar distinction between the strategic or 'interested' behavior of professionals (musicians and gatekeepers) embedded within the professionalized field of musical production, and the more 'disinterested' behavior of semi-professionals, active consumers, fans and amateur musicians, mostly operating within networks forming small-scale music scenes (see figure 1.2.). As this research points out, the performance and experience of indie-folk within scenes is often defined in non-strategic and non-instrumental terms and emphasize, adhering to the history of folk music in socialist political movements (see section 2.4.), the importance of small-scaleness and intimacy, of community and social interaction, and of being antagonistic to the heteronomous pole within the field of musical production. The 'negative' definition of indie-folk as the antidote of mainstream musical production implies that indie-folk scenes, rather than operating 'outside' of the boundaries of the music industry, are relationally bound up with the aesthetics and institutional logics of the mainstream (Bourdieu, 1993a).

Although performing 'disinterested' behavior within scenes, obviously, is a way to 'mask' *strategy* (as being antagonistic towards economic capital implies showing off an interest in autonomy or symbolic capital), I agree with Warde, arguing that reducing the analysis of practice-based behavior to utilitarian behavior only "does not

relations and cultural artifacts" (see Johnson, 1993, p. 7). Bourdieu furthermore argues that primarily cultural capital can be converted into symbolic capital, which in the field of cultural production, where the "economic world is reversed" (Bourdieu, 1993a), is defined in terms of recognition, consecration and prestige (ibidem). The agents with most cultural capital, in other words, are the ones with most symbolic capital, too, forming the cultural elite within society and standing in an oppositional and antagonistic relationship with the economic elite.

grasp the mechanics and operations of those practices which are not *primarily* instrumental" (ibid, pp. 123-124; emphasis added). From this follows that, as soon as behavior within the informal realm of music scenes becomes more strategic and instrumental, for example in the case of "fans turned entrepreneurs" or "fan-driven industries" (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, p. 5), DIY practices become part of the field of musical production. Behavior within musical practices could, in other words, be situated on a continuum of which 'strategy' forms one end of the pole and 'disinterestedness' the other. The phenomenon of practices becoming part of fields explains why "[c]ompetition within a field often contributes to the transformations of practices" and how, conversely, "the logic of field might be disrupted by the evolution of contributing practices" (ibid, p. 125). The latter scenario seems to be the case with indie-folk, of which practices became coopted by the music industry in the mid-2000s, leading towards changes in the music industry.

Finally, apart from a scene-based practice and a subfield at the autonomous end of the field of musical production, indie-folk, within this research, is also defined as a *genre*. Holt (2007, p. 2) defines a genre as "a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation and signification." In terms of how genres are established, he argues that they are most often *founded* and *coded* by members of "center collectives", such as active fans, leading journalists, and/or iconic artists, who operate within (trans)local scenes. From there on, genres are "further negotiated" by actors working within the commercial music industry, who mass-mediate them to mass audiences (ibid, p. 20). Putting this into Warde's framework, this implies that genres are founded and coded at the 'grassroots' level of scene-based practices and that they become generic categories within the field of musical production after being appropriated by professional gatekeepers. The same is true for indie-folk, which became an industry-based genre after the appropriation of new forms of folk music by gatekeepers operating at the global music industry in the mid-2000s (see Petrusisch, 2008; chapter 4 of this thesis).

It should be added, however, that indie-folk, like many other genres within contemporary popular music, is eclectic and intertextual and the 'new' thus came "from the boundary of two or more different musics" (Ennis, 1992, p. 20). Within the current postmodern field of musical production, characterized by nostalgia, eclecticism and fragmentation (Hibbett, 2005; Reynolds, 2011), the founding and coding of genres at the grassroots level, in other words, occurs by making (re)combinations of canonized aesthetics, rather than by inventing new conventions. While the coding of a new genre is – and remains – a form of "discursive practice", the aesthetics of canonized genres are the building blocks (the "discourses-in-practices", so to speak) by which new genres are founded and coded. Of the music(s) that constitute(s) the boundaries of music scenes, hybrids like indie-folk in other words, are increasingly common, which is not to say that the boundaries of *musical communities* are necessarily flexible and fluid (*cf.* Straw, 2001; Hesmondhalgh, 2005), since the structure of scene-embedded music can still be homologous with the social structure of its founders, coders and practitioners. Therefore, I agree with Hesmondhalgh (2005, p. 29), who argued that genre is a better candidate than the concept of music scene to study the link between music and social structure, for it has the integrative power, even when being eclectic and intertextual, to connect up text, audience and producers (see figure 1.2.).

1.5. Data collection and method

In order to investigate the production, distribution, and consumption of independent folk music in the Netherlands, musicians, gatekeepers and audience members were interviewed. In total, 48 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, lasting between 50 minutes and two hours and 20 minutes. Two interviews were double interviews, which eventually resulted in a sample consisting of 50 interviewees in the age bracket 20-57 (see Appendix 1).

Most of the interviewees were living in larger urban areas in the Netherlands (notably in the so-called Randstad metropolitan area), were having similar socioeconomic (middle-class or upper middle-class) and educational backgrounds (BA and MA degrees in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and arts), and were employing similar – and occasionally freelance – jobs in education, social healthcare, IT, arts and culture, and journalism. Forty-one (41) of the interviewees were male; nine (9) were female. Although the genre of indie-folk, as this thesis demonstrates, characterizes itself as egalitarian and inclusive rather than hierarchical, the sample of respondents thus seems to be consistent with former research indicating that folk music is generally male dominated (Badisco, 2009) and that (folk) music revivals are "middle class phenomena which play an important role in the formulation and maintenance of a class-based identity of subgroups of individuals disaffected with aspects of contemporary life" (Livingston, 1999, p. 66; see chapter 6 of this thesis). Because of strong similarities in social and educational backgrounds, and because most respondents belong to the same age group (the clear majority of them is in their

twenties and thirties), it could be argued that they are part of an "interpretive community" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) belonging to the cultural (upper) middle-class in Dutch society (De Graaf & Steijn, 1997).[15]

All of the interviews with musicians and audience members were conducted face-to-face in a domestic setting, with the exception of two interviews using Skype. All of the interviews with gatekeepers were conducted face-to-face in an institutional setting, with the exception of one interview using Skype, and one interview using e-mail. Names of the interviewees have been changed to protect their privacy. Most of the interviewees, however, clearly stated that they did not mind using their own names, indeed stating that they were not in favor of using pseudonyms.

For the sampling of bands and musicians I used *criterion sampling*, meaning that either the musicians themselves, their record label or the press should have positioned them within the category of 'indie folk'. All of the musicians (14 in total) were able to make a living performing and recording music, though some held multiple jobs (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Gatekeepers (10 in total) were selected on the basis of their long-term involvement in the promotion and distribution of Dutch indie music, and were ranging from the head of business operations of a recently established independent music platform (*Subbacultcha!*) to one of the product managers of Warner Music Benelux. Finally, for the sampling of audience members, I used *maximum variation sampling*, aiming to include a diverse range of respondents within the sample, containing male and female audience members from different age groups.

Most of the audience members (20 in total) were approached and selected during concerts of folk acts whose music was categorized as 'free-folk', 'New Weird America', 'freak-folk', 'indie-folk' or 'folk-pop' either by themselves, their record label, or the press.[16] Some additional respondents (6 in total) were approached using the snowball method. All of the audience members were only selected if they considered themselves to be aficionados of indie-folk music in general or of the indie-folk acts they visited the concert in particular (see footnote 16 for locations where respondents were approached and selected).

Interviews were chosen as a research method, first, because this research, as discussed, defines the production, distribution and consumption of indie-folk as a set of dispersed practices that together make up the social domain or cultural performance of 'indie-folk'. Using practice theory to study *innovation* in popular music requires a more qualitative approach as it centers analysis on how the practices of semi-professionals, active consumers, fans and autodidacts, have contributed to and/or intermingled with the institutionalized practices of gatekeepers. Within the context of this thesis, this implies studying how the practices of consumers have contributed to the establishing of professional careers of musicians as well as to the formation of scene-driven industries and, accordingly, how these practices have resulted in the formation of indie-folk as a new domain within the Dutch music industry or professionalized field of musical production.

Studying practices implies, as discussed, that analysis should focus both on studying practices-in-action (the doings) and on the discursive accounts of those practices (the sayings). Using interviews as a research method implies that analysis primarily centers on the discursive accounts of indie-folk producers, gatekeepers, and consumers, rather on studying their behavior as action-in-practice. Given the importance of discourse (language) as a medium through which behavior is given intelligibility (see Schatzski's notion of "sensitized understandings" referred to above), it is argued nonetheless that at minimum there is a relationship between doings and sayings.[17] As such, it was the aim of this thesis to map the discursive strategies of Dutch indie-folk practitioners in order to investigate to what extent they associate indie-folk with the notion of authenticity and if so, why they do so and what meaning they derive from their production, distribution, and consumption practices. More practically, this implied that the concept of authenticity was not mentioned by the interviewer before or during the interview, but was only 'taken up' and further discussed when interviewees brought the concept into play.

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15. Following the work of Lamont (1992), amongst others, De Graaf & Steijn distinguish between cultural specialists belonging to the middle class in Dutch society and cultural specialists belonging to the upper class. They argue that 13,7% of the Dutch population belong to the former category, while 2,2% belong to the latter category. A more recent report on class inequality in the Netherlands, published by the Netherlands Institute of Social Research (2014), similarly indicates that 15% of the Dutch population belong to the upper class as they score highest on economic, social and cultural capital (SCP, 2014, p. 290). The report, however, does not distinguish between cultural specialist and people belonging to the dominant fraction of the dominant class. It could be argued based on the level of education of parents, that the respondents participating in this research generally grew up in families belonging to the middle and upper classes in Dutch society, but due to the obtaining of high amounts of institutionalized cultural capital, are currently part of the cultural upper class in Dutch society (see Appendix 1 for an overview of respondents and their occupations and educational backgrounds).

16. Audience members were approached and selected during the concerts of *Mumford and Sons* (Ziggo Dome, Amsterdam, 30 March 2013), *Woods* (Paradiso, Amsterdam, May 20, 2013), *Animal Collective* (Melkweg, Amsterdam, 27 May 2013), *CocoRosie* (Tivoli, Utrecht, 29 May 2013), *The Lumineers* (Heineken Music Hall, Amsterdam, 18 November 2013), and during the yearly *Incubate Festival* (16–22 September 2013, Tilburg, the Netherlands) and the yearly *Le Guess Who Festival* (28 November–1 December 2013, Utrecht, the Netherlands).

17. Although Schatzki (1996, p. 13) adds that "language alone does not articulate intelligibility – bodily behavior and reactions also play an omnipresent and foundational role."

Moreover, interviews were chosen as a research method to study the use of indie-folk in everyday life (*cf.* DeNora, 2000) and to investigate the interviewees' social judgments of taste (Bourdieu, 1984). Taste is thus defined in this research as a cultural practice (something one 'does' rather than something one merely 'has') and requires focusing on the *modes* of cultural consumption, rather than on finding statistical patterns between the consumption of cultural goods and social class (*cf.* Lizardo & Skiles, 2012).

Because practices are routine activities and therefore occur at the habitual and oftentimes unconscious level, the interviews were conducted following the epistemological guidelines of "active interviewing" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). This refers to a type of interviewing that defines the setting of the academic interview as an "interpretive practice" (ibid, p. 113). This means that knowledge and meaning are constructed also in the interview encounter itself, and that both interviewer and interviewee are active in the assembling of knowledge and meaning. Rather than merely focusing on the 'whats' of the interview – the content of questions and answers – the *interaction between* interviewer and interviewee takes central stage. Due to the focus on interaction between interviewer and respondent the interview itself becomes a site at which knowledge and meaning is actively produced. As such, it allows the interviewer to provide the interviewee with possible linkages with previous answers, or to bring into play alternative thoughts and considerations (ibid, p. 117). This is not to direct interviewees into preferred answers and predetermined research agendas, but "to explore incompletely articulated aspects of experience" (p. 115).

The interviews were structured around the following five topics: (i) musical taste formation; (ii) personal descriptions/definitions of indie folk; (iii) personal affinity with indie-folk music; (iv) use and understanding of indie-folk music in everyday life, and (v) broader artistic, cultural and political interests (see Appendix 2 for a complete overview of interview topics and interview question). The interviews with musicians were complemented by questions based on the topics of (i) career path and (ii) use and understanding of indie-folk aesthetics. Interviews with gatekeepers were complemented with questions on the formation of their enterprises and on the selection and marketing of indie-folk acts included in their rosters or other media outlets.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using *Atlas.ti*, enabling me to search for patterns. The analyses were carried out using a combination between "thematic narrative analysis" and "interactional analysis"; the former placing premium on the content of the text (the 'whats'), the latter focusing on the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee and therefore also on the 'hows' of replying (Kohler-Riessman, 2005, pp. 2-5). Specific details about the analyses of data, as well as about the results it generated, will be given in the methodology sections of the empirical chapters 5-7.

1.6. Preview

This thesis consists of two theoretical chapters (chapters 2 and 3), one historical intermezzo (chapter 4), and three empirical chapters (chapters 5, 6 and 7).

In ***chapter 2*** I describe how a 'folk consciousness' originates in Romanticism, a cultural shift occurring in early nineteenth century Europe. Specific attention is paid to answering the questions how and why folk music, ever since romanticism, is associated with the notion of authenticity and associated tropes such as simplicity, purity, and community. Drawing from Campbell (1987), I show how Romanticism emerged out of the religious form of Puritanism and became characterized by adopting a purist stance in the *interpretation* and *consumption* of culture. Drawing from Van Rooden (2015ab), I demonstrate how during romanticism a *relational* conception of autonomy emerged, resulting in the idea of art as a vehicle for aesthetic education – the idea that art stimulates citizenship and builds community by training the emotions of its spectators. It is this relational conception of art that lies at the heart of the romanticist fascination for (communal) folk music, a fascination that extends in contemporary indie-folk.

Building upon the works of Denisoff (1971) and Roy (2010), I furthermore demonstrate how the link between European Romanticism and American folk music was established during the first American folk project of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. At this time the European project of nation-state building was imported to the U.S. to contribute to debates on racial inequality. As a consequence, the second American folk project of the 1930s and 1940s – institutionally embedded within the settings of the Marxist and communist movements – was a reaction against the original American folk project and redefined folk music as a "real life reflection of real people" (Roy, 2010, p. 3). It is this interpretation of folk music that foregrounded the emergence of the 1960s "urban folk revival", which marked a point in time during which folk music transitioned from being a vehicle in the expression of radical political conscious into a form of art music. The emergence of a "folk stream" (Ennis, 1992) or "field"

(Bourdieu, 1993a) during the early 1960s was emphasized by the work of folk revivalists such as Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan, who adopted an anti-ideological stance and introduced a more formalist approach to the creation and performance of folk music.

In ***chapter 3*** I first set out the debate of postmodernism in popular music, as it was established in the early-to-mid 1990s by cultural theorists Lawrence Grossberg (1992) and Johan Fornäs (1995). Accordingly, I argue that the dismissal of romanticist conceptions of authenticity by this particular branch of theory is premature by outlining the contours of the "neo-romantic turn" in the art worlds and culture industries of the 2000s and 2010s, as it was developed in a contemporary theoretical debate on "post-postmodernism" and the "new authenticity" (Haselstein, Gross & Snyder-Körber, 2009; Timmer, 2010; Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a). A review of this debate is meant as a stepping-stone to the presentation of the empirical findings in chapters 5-7, in which I – after a short intermezzo of the history of folk music in the 21st century (***chapter 4***) – demonstrate that a romanticist aesthetic extends in contemporary indie-folk.

In ***chapter 5*** I show how contemporary indie-folk pays tribute to the participatory ethos and aesthetics of folk music. I describe how Dutch indie-folk musicians, gatekeepers, and audience members adopt an anti-capitalist stance and in doing so ground themselves in the romantic aesthetic ideology of (American) folk music. Contrary to the image of folk music as the antithesis of industrialization and technological development, I argue that one of the factors affording the public reemergence of folk music is *digitization*. I argue that the social production of indie folk is affected by a shift towards "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006) brought about by the rise of Web 2.0. It is noted how Web 2.0 helps musicians to educate themselves and to develop careers in popular music. Second, from the perspective of both musicians and gatekeepers, I demonstrate how participatory culture links their preferences for participatory aesthetics, decreasing boundaries between creators, distributors, and users. Finally, from the perspective of the audience, I describe how consumers actively contribute to the production of indie-folk by self-organizing small-scale events, enabling the establishment of (trans)local scenes, reframing music as a social experience. Along with Van Rooden (2015ab) and Haselstein *et al*. (2009), I argue that the emergence of indie-folk as a genre reflects a romanticist, that is to say, *relational* understanding of autonomy, emphasized by the way community members celebrate participation over presentation, and sincerity over authenticity.

In ***chapter 6*** I critically examine the participatory ethos of the Dutch indie-folk community by conducting a Bourdieusian field analysis of contemporary indie-folk and by arguing that underlying the participatory ethos of indie-folk lies an exclusionary political agenda of social and cultural distinction. I show how the social construction of indie-folk as a genre is part of the qualitative shift from snobbism to cultural omnivorousness as a marker of high-status (e.g., Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Van Eijck, 2001). I specifically demonstrate how contemporary musicians, distributors and consumers are so-called "poly-purists" (Goldberg, Hannan and Kovács, 2016) – a type of cultural omnivores who consume a broad variety of genres, yet by cherry-picking within those genres those items that are considered to be more 'pure' or authentic. By consuming music by means of the "aesthetic disposition" (Bourdieu, 1984), indie-folk is distinguished from music that is considered to be snobbish (e.g., jazz), populist (e.g., *Schlager*), and commercial (e.g., pop and dance).

In ***chapter 7*** I investigate the consumption of indie-folk by audience members, particularly how indie-folk is an integral part of the construction of a life-story and the formation of self-identity. In this chapter I demonstrate that particularly the lyrics of indie-folk songs are tools and resources in the construction of "narrative identity" (e.g., Ricoeur, 1988[1985]). I show how the consumption of indie-folk results in ritualistic listening behavior aimed at coping with the experience of accelerating social time; how respondents use indie-folk narratives as resources for reading the 'me' in life (DeNora, 2000), and how indie-folk songs provide healing images that are effective in coping with the experience of narrated time as discordant. In arguing for the central role of narrative in identity formation, this chapter contributes to existing research on music as a "technology of the self" (DeNora, 1999). It specifically emphasizes how narrative particles are building blocks in the construction of narrative identity, a process characterized by the oscillation between narrative coherence and disruption. In doing so, this chapter contributes to existing empirical research on the construction of self-identity in contemporary modernity and illustrates the integrative power of narrative, which enables people to cope with (increasing) experiences of discordance and narrative fragmentation.

In the ***general conclusion and discussion*** (***chapter 8***) I summarize and synthesize the results of this thesis and reflect on how the return of (social) authenticity in indie-folk is related to changes in the art worlds and cultural industries as well as to changes in society at large. Also, I demonstrate how this research contributes to current and ongoing debates within the sociology of arts and culture, more specifically within the sociology of (popular) music, and related fields such as aesthetics, philosophy, narrative psychology, sociology, and literary theory.

Chapter 2 – Theory

Romanticism, Authenticity and the Construction of Folk Music as the "People's Music"

At one moment, we understand our situation as one of high tragedy, alone in a silent universe, condemned to create value.

- Charles Taylor, *The Roots of Authenticity* (1991)

Just as fish are oblivious to water and landed creatures to earth, people are rarely enchanted by their own customs, dramas, and dreams.

- William G. Roy (after John and Alan Lomax), *Reds, Whites, and Blues* (2010)

2.1. Introduction

The histories of the concepts of 'authenticity' and 'folk music' run a parallel course. Both concepts find their origin in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Romanticism. Just like authenticity and folk music, so the notion of Romanticism is one that has multiple meanings and connotations. As historicist Arthur O. Lovejoy once noted, one should speak of a "plurality of Romanticisms" rather than singling out one comprehensive definition (1924, p. 236). As he argued, it would be virtually impossible to place two distinct notions such as, for example, 'primitivism' and 'dandyism' under the same banner, although both naturalism and a love for red waistcoats, blue hair and eccentricity have been considered romantic. Isaiah Berlin, in *The Roots of Romanticism* (1999, pp. 18), thus defines Romanticism as:

> (…) unity and multiplicity. It is fidelity to the particular (…) and also mysterious tantalizing vagueness of outline. It is beauty and ugliness. It is art for art's sake, and art as an instrument of social salvation. It is strength and weakness, individualism and collectivism, purity and corruption, revolution and reaction, peace and war, love of life and love of death.

Despite facing difficulties in defining the term, Berlin nonetheless argues that there was a European romantic movement somewhere around the years 1760 and 1830 and that its main, albeit contradictory, characteristics can be discerned. Thus, when aiming to clarify how a "folk consciousness" (Denisoff, 1971) emerged out of Romanticism; or, more specifically, when aiming to investigate how and why the value and ideal of authenticity relates to the notion of folk music, the links between the various concepts need to be explored. This inevitably entails first embarking on the troublesome concept of Romanticism.

2.2. Romanticism, sincerity and authenticity

Romanticism has been narrowly defined as an artistic movement and a philosophy, emerging against the backdrop of the French and Industrial Revolutions (Campbell, 1987, p. 178). As an artistic movement, it has been associated with artists and poets such as Caspar David Friedrich, William Wordsworth and William Blake, and with tropes such as a longing for nature and the sublime, the presentation of the artist as genius, and an emphasis on imagination, emotionalism and "expressivism" (Taylor, 1989, pp. 368-390). As a philosophy, it has been particularly associated with a group of writers, poets and theorists – Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, Novalis, the Schlegel brothers, amongst others –, gathering at Jena University at the turn of the nineteenth century (Safranski, 2014).

Though Romanticism as a *philosophy* is characterized as a very unsystematic set of ideas – linked both, echoing the words of Berlin (see above), with the extreme poles of autonomy and engagement, optimism and pessimism, individualism and collectivism – there seem to be a few threads of unity. First, in regards to how Romanticism both *grew out of* the Enlightenment and was a *reaction against it* (Campbell, 1987). Second, in regards to how nature was conceptualized as antagonistic to a society dominated by rationalization, industrialization and division of labor (Taylor, 1989, pp. 355-367). And third, in regards to how Romanticism should be characterized not by contradiction but by its oscillation between opposite poles (De Mul, 1999). Though the purpose of this chapter is not to develop deep insights into Romanticism as a philosophy, I will return to debates in aesthetics throughout the various sections. First, however, I wish to situate Romanticism in a broader socio-historical context, thus acknowledging that Romanticism is not best represented as an artistic or intellectual movement, but should be more broadly defined as a "cultural shift" (Campbell, 1987, p. 178), a "great upheaval of thought and sensibility" (Taylor, 1989, p. 368), or even as the greatest "shift in the consciousness of the West" (Berlin, 1999, p. 1).

According to Berlin, Romanticism was a "transformation in consciousness" that changed the thoughts and lives of Western men and women and – with that change – morals, politics, religion and aesthetics:[1]

1. Building upon the work of Berlin, and borrowing from Foucault's concept of '*epistèmè*', Dutch philosopher Maarten Doorman (2004, pp. 16-17) argues that Romanticism represents the emergence of a new historical "imperative", which changed people's way of speaking, thinking, classifying, experiencing and feeling. The "romantic imperative" was a transformation in history that changed both the form and content of cultural, religious, political and artistic practices. Doorman moreover argues that the advent of a romanticist order in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century extends in history, for example in the hippy culture of the 1960s, referred to by Doorman as the "swan song of Romanticism". This thesis suggests that Romanticism is a 'swan song' by no means. However, along with Van Rooden (2015ab), I emphasize that the return of Romanticism in contemporary folk music is a 'return with a difference' (see the concluding section of this chapter).

> [c]learly something occurred to have shifted consciousness to this degree, away from the notion that there are universal truths, universal canons of art, that all human activities were meant to terminate in getting things rights (…), that all intelligent men by applying their intellects would discover them – away from that to a wholly different attitude towards life. (…) When we ask what, we are told that there was a great turning towards emotionalism, that there was a sudden interest in the primitive and the remote – the remote in time, and the remote in place – that there was an outbreak of craving for the infinite (ibid, p. 14).

Although Berlin, as emphasized in this quote, presents an image of Romanticism as a very abrupt transformation in consciousness, characterized by being critical of universality and rationality, he elsewhere points to the roots of Romanticism in German pietism (ibid, pp. 38-40). In the seventeenth century, German pietism developed as a particular form of anti-culture, characterized by anti-intellectualism and xenophobia, particularly against French rationalism. With its emphasis upon spiritual life and soberness, and with its stress upon the individual relationship of the human soul with God, it was this branch of Lutheranism that caused, in the words of Berlin, a kind of "retreat in depth" (ibid, p. 37). It hence produced the context in which Romanticism occurred. Berlin adds that key figures of the (early) romantic movement – Kant, Fichte, Herder, Schelling, Schiller – were either humbly born or lower middle-class (ibid, p. 38). Doing so, he places the emergence of Romanticism as a historical movement in a wider socio-historical framework of class struggle, more specifically of the struggle between the dominant elite of French rationalists and the dominated cultural elite of the German romantics. Combined with the fact that Germany failed to achieve centralized statehood (contrary to England, France and the Netherlands), German Romanticism should be seen, according to Berlin, as the product of a "wounded national humiliation" (ibid, p. 38). In the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this would lead to an attack on French rationalism, particularly on its scientific, empiricist and mechanical outlook on the world.

As Berlin describes, the Enlightenment of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries produced an image of nature and life analogous to a "jigsaw puzzle", of which the pieces could be brought together once mankind discovers its internal dynamics (ibid, p. 23). On a political level, the "mechanization" of life resulted in the utopian belief that the universal ideals of the French Revolution – freedom, equality, and fraternity – could be made compatible with one another. On the level of aesthetics, it is reflected, for instance, in the dominant neoclassicist doctrine of the time, in which it was emphasized that the artist should hold up a mirror to nature, not necessarily to copy it but "to discover the method in nature itself" (ibid, p. 27). That is to say, to discover the objective and eternal principles of beauty upon which nature is founded and to produce a science of how to live well, in accordance with values of harmony, prudence, order, and sincerity. From a more commonsense point of view, the Enlightenment doctrine resulted in the notion of the 'economic man', who on the basis of his rationality maximizes personal utility.

It were the romantics, however, who cracked this "smug and smooth wall" of the Enlightenment by introducing a different vision of man. While the Artificial Man is the man "who belongs in society and conforms to the practices of societies and seeks to please" (ibid, p. 51), the Romantic Man does not *sell out* to society but dedicates himself to a more personal ideal. The Romantic Man, moreover, does not believe in harmony and the power of institutions, but "throws away the world" and creates one of his own (ibid, p. 13). As Berlin adds, this is a world in which nature is described in terms of organic growth rather than being represented as a machine, in which art and artistic creation become center stage of history, and in which values such as purity of heart, integrity and devotion predominate over reason, materialism and utilitarianism. A world, in short, in which God "was not a geometer, not a mathematician, but a poet" (ibid, p. 48).

In his book, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1971), the American literary critic Lionel Trilling presents a similar vision of Romanticism by developing a historical analysis of the two title-concepts. He argues that sincerity is the conceptual precursor to the ideal of authenticity. The roots of sincerity are located in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Europe, and is defined by Trilling as "the striving for personal congruence with period style" (Trilling, 1971, p. 7). In this definition, sincerity implies that people – as an act of decorum – come to terms with the morals and conventions prescribed by society. As Trilling argues, the invention of sincerity as a dominant ideal within European societies resulted from a diminishing of the authority of the Church and therefore by the invention of the concept of society itself, replacing the religious moral order for social structure. By the end of the sixteenth century, European society became increasingly described in terms of a collection of *individuals*, rather than in terms of an anonymous group or entity associated with the Kingdom or the Church. The invention of society thus resulted from the discovery of the self-conscious individual

during the Enlightenment. With the discovery of the self, society became the 'looking glass' through which man was able to actualize himself and through which he discovers his personal autobiography in which he demonstrates his sincerity.

Trilling goes on to describe how in the course of the eighteenth century the dominant ideal of sincerity became gradually substituted by the idea that society *corrupts* – that it "reduces the actuality and autonomy of the self" (ibid, p. 63). Similar to Berlin (1999), Trilling argues that at this stage in history, a transformation in consciousness occurred, which replaced the dominant view of the individual as the "honest soul" (Berlin's Artificial Man) with a framing of the individual as someone who, in Hegelian terms, is afflicted with "disintegrated" or "alienated" consciousness (the Romantic Man). According to Trilling, this view is "beyond considerations of sincerity" (ibid, p. 114) and is more in line with the value and ideal of *authenticity*. Contrary to sincerity, authenticity implies that people intentionally *reject* decorum as an act of conformation, and debunk sincerity as a way of self-deceit. Entering the stage of European history in the second half of the eighteenth century, but coming to full bloom in Romanticism, authenticity privileges self-expression and personal autonomy over conventionalism and conformism as superior moral values. Charles Taylor, in his book *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991), has referred to this process as the "subjective turn of modern culture", most clearly expressed by the idea that man has within himself a "self-determining freedom" (ibid, p. 27) through which he is able to break with external sources and to construct a world of his own.

In *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (1987), British cultural sociologist Colin Campbell defines Romanticism as a "mode of feeling", rather than as a unified system of ideas, "in which *sensibilité* and imagination predominate[s] over reason" (p. 181). Rather than framing the European romantic movement as the *mirror image* of the Enlightenment, he emphasizes that it also "grew out of it" (ibidem) – for it shares with the enlightened doctrine a "skeptical attitude toward orthodox religion" and "an emphasis upon individualism" (ibid, pp. 182-183). Moreover, Campbell argues that the reaction of Romanticism was not against the Enlightenment in general, but against its narrow version, "the culture of rationalism and the empiricist and materialist outlook which it had generated" (ibid, p. 181). Though focusing on English rather than German Romanticism, Campbell also points to the socio-historical roots of Romanticism in the emerging struggle between the dominant classes. While the Enlightenment first resulted in the emergence of the *bourgeoisie*, displacing the old aristocracy as the leading socio-economic fraction in society, the emergence of Romanticism represented a split *within* the middle classes – more specifically, between the "cold-hearted utilitarian philistinism of the *nouveau riches*" and the cult of sensibility carried by the "new artist class" (ibid, p. 178).

Similar to Berlin, Campbell points to the historical roots of European Romanticism in pietism by describing it as "a further evolution of the essentially pietistic current of feeling (…) traced back to Puritanism" (ibid, p. 179). Puritanism is a branch of Calvinism, emerging in sixteenth century Britain, characterized by values such as simplicity of worship, ascetism, high standards of morality, a rejection of superfluous rites, and a strong distaste for institutional hierarchy and excessive adornment (see Fonarow, 2006, p. 28). Though Puritanism is commonly associated with a distrust of sensual pleasure and the expression of emotions, Campbell (convincingly) develops the hypothesis that Puritanism has created the conditions for Romanticism to emerge. Due to the fear of damnation and the self-doubt caused by the absence of signs that "one is of the elect", Puritanism developed a deistic ethic consisting of a preference for very powerful emotions, most notably self-pity, despair and melancholia (ibid, pp. 123-125).

It is the cultivation of melancholia by Puritanism, according to Campbell, which extends in European Romanticism. He argues that during the Enlightenment, a shift occurred "from the *spiritual significance* of emotions to their *intrinsic pleasures*" (Campbell, 1987, p. 204; emphasis added). It was this shift that appeared to be fertile soil for the historical movements of Sentimentalism and Romanticism to occur. This represents a moment in history during which not only the *pleasure* but also the *expression* of emotion became center stage.[2] By being a combination of Enlightenment and Christian values, Campbell ultimately defines Romanticism as a "theodicy" or "metaphysical paradigm", shared by most of the (European) romantics, consisting of a "sentimental

2. Sentimentalism was a literary movement rising in mid-seventeenth century Europe, characterized by the cultivation and expression of sensibility, most notably 'heavy' emotions such as self-pity and melancholia (Campbell, 1987, Ch. 7). Sentimentalists believed that having a rich emotional inner life was of a specific moral importance, for it not only brought intrinsic pleasure, but also showed the ability of the individual to enter the emotions of others. As such, sensibility was seen as a sign of empathy and thus as a sign of virtue. Campbell therefore refers to Sentimentalism as being characterized by an "ethic of feeling" (ibid, p. 138). As he argues, the close connection between feeling and morality points to the close relationship between Sentimentalism and Puritanism; in fact, the former emerging out of the emphasizing of melancholia and suffering by the latter (ibid, p. 138). Moreover, he argues that Sentimentalism cultivated the role of the imagination in creating an illusionary world in which artistic imagery was used as a proxy for conjuring up emotions. The cultivation of sensibility, closely associated with the ability of the imagination to create emotional 'worlds', makes Sentimentalism "proto-romantic and anticipates the direction of a later development" (ibid, p. 144).

Deism infused with the spirit of evangelical Protestantism, with beliefs about the inspirational and redeeming power of art functioning as a catalyst to unite the two streams of thought" (ibid, p. 181). It was the Enlightenment, in other words, which removed the romantics from their orthodox religious spirits, while "leaving them with the temperament of pietists" (Berlin, 1999, p. 55). It is due to its strong emphasis on the expression of emotion and inner feelings, and due to its religious beliefs about the redeeming power of art, that Romanticism is generally described in terms of being the first anti-culture in modern society, as it was critical of the demythologizing tendencies of modernity (Bendix, 2000, p. 8; see introduction). It explains why Safranski (2014, p. 13) coins Romanticism a "continuation of religion with esthetic means."

2.3. Romanticism and aesthetics

A common understanding of the subjective turn in modern culture is that it involved, in the words of Taylor (1989, p. 375), a "turn inwards" or a turning towards "expressivism". Taylor more specifically argues that there is a close analogy between the notion of self-discovery and artistic creation or, vice versa, that "artistic creation becomes the paradigm mode in which people can come to self-definition" (1991, pp. 61-62). Because self-*discovery* implies self-*creation*, along with the invention of the self as "perpetual movement" (Berlin, 1999, p. 106), a new theory of art emerged around the turn of the nineteenth century. In this new theory, art became understood in terms of expression and creation *(poiēsis)*, rather than in terms of imitation *(mimēsis)*, and is probably best described by American literary critic M. H. Abrams in his book *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953). In this book, Abrams describes how a shift occurred during Romanticism from defining art in terms of *mimēsis* towards a vision of the artist as the creative genius, defined early on by Immanuel Kant (2000 [1790], p. 188) as "the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to Art." It is within this view that Romanticism, as previously discussed, is commonly characterized by tenets such as the emphasizing of inner emotions and feelings, imagination and creativity; the latter being seen as a divine force emerging from nature and most clearly expressed in the work of the artistic genius.

Campbell (1987, p. 185) adds to this view that, contrary to the more *world-accepting* outlook of the previous period of Sentimentalism (see note 2), Romanticism should be characterized by a fundamentally *world-rejecting* stance stemming from its idealistic ontology. During Romanticism, the faculty of the imagination became the crucial link between the empirical (phenomenal) and spiritual (noumenal) world, forming the source of the typically romantic yearning *(Sehnsucht)* for the infinite. This was expressed either in the form of a nostalgia for the (medieval) past or in the form of (day)dreaming about a mythical world beyond the here and now.

Contrary to Hegel's 'positive' idealism, the idealism shared by most of the romantics, however, had more in common with Kant's 'negative' idealism. While positive idealism claims the *existence* and *potential realization* of a better world *in* the here and now, negative idealism, on the contrary, stresses that the noumenal can only be *reflectively* reached through the faculty of the imagination and thus by formulating *regulative ideas* about its existence. Negative idealism, in other words, implies a kind of 'as-if' thinking – 'as-if' the desired future – a utopian world of 'eternal peace', for example – exists, while simultaneously acknowledging that this utopian world is fundamentally unachievable (Vermeulen, 2013). It is this form of Kantian idealism, as Dutch philosopher Jos de Mul (1999) also argues, which explains why Romanticism, emerging against the backdrop of the French Revolution ending in the so-called terror of reason, was skeptical of fanaticism, universality and teleology. Building upon the work of Friedrich Schlegel, who once defined Romanticism as "the eternal oscillation of enthusiasm and irony", De Mul argues that *irony*, rather than merely being a stylistic characteristic, was Romanticism's "fundamental ontology" (De Mul, 1999, pp. 9-14). Irony, according to De Mul, even "constitutes the *goal* of romantic desire", as the "expression of the insight that the grandeur of romantic desire resides precisely in the fact that it is fundamentally unachievable. It hinders our falling into the illusion of a last, absolute interpretation of the world" (ibidem).

The consequence of all this is that the faculty of the imagination not only formed the bridging function between the phenomenal and the noumenal world, but also between the aesthetic and the ethical, "using the concept of 'taste' to unite the two" (Campbell, 1987, p. 182). As Campbell (ibidem) writes, the "romantic *Weltanschauung* can reasonably be portrayed as a theory of art extrapolated into a philosophy of life." Crucial to the romantic doctrine, namely, was the belief that art, and most notably poetry, had the ability to train the sensibility; emotions and feelings of the reader. While Romanticism is commonly portrayed as an artistic and intellectual movement emerging from a "radical individuation" (Taylor, 1989, p. 375), placing premium em-

phasis on the autonomy of the artist and the autonomous nature of aesthetic judgment, Campbell again points to the roots of Romanticism in Protestantism by claiming that artistic creation (as well as artistic recreation or consumption) became interpreted as the road to redemption.

Campbell specifically argues that, alongside the belief in the *creative* power of the artistic genius, the *re-creative* abilities of the reader were given priority. By using the imagination when reading poetry, "[t]he reader is also, in that sense, assumed to be a creative artist, capable of conjuring up images which have the power to 'move' him" (Campbell, 1987, p. 189). As such, imagination became associated with the ability to experience altruism and empathy. It is this vision of art that is reflected, for example, in Schiller's *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794-95), a work that is generally regarded as both the birth certificate and the blueprint of German Romanticism (Van Rooden, 2015b, p. 38).[3] In this work, Schiller presents an image of art as a vehicle for *Bildung* or 'aesthetic education', by which he means that both artistic creation and recreation were seen as crucial practices in the instigation of a 'cultural revolution'. By forming artistic interstices in society, the individual could experience emotions like empathy, and in doing so, she or he could playfully practice freedom so as to become a full member of democracy.

By revaluing the political dimension of romanticist art (theory) of (early) romantics such as Schiller and the Schlegel brothers, Dutch philosopher Aukje van Rooden (2015ab) has recently criticized the "expressivist" model of Romanticism in which art, as discussed, is primarily defined in terms of subjectivism and the expression of inward feeling and emotion. Van Rooden argues that because of its strong focus on defining art from an "expressivist" point of view, modern art theory has lost sight of the fact that romantic art was also a *turn outwards*. The framing of romantic art as "expressionist", in other words, is accurate but too narrow and therefore misleading, because it misinterprets or even disregards the notion of the "in-dividual". With this notion, Van Rooden refers to the typical romantic desire to be "un-divided" (*in-dividual*) – that is, the desire to harmonize heterogeneous elements in society. The goal of the romantics was thus to think of art as something that is individual, not in an "expressivist" sense, but in the sense of being "undivided":

> In the individual paradigm, the often employed notion of the 'microcosm' to describe the poetic work does not so much stress its being independent and isolated from the world, but rather its being undivided, one, and therefore a small reflection of the being un-divided of the world as such (2015a, p. 174).

The notion of art as a microcosm refers to the idea that art should neither imitate nor copy reality, but should be an autonomous 'reality' in itself. From a subjective point of view, this implies that artistic creation should organically spring from the "productive imagination" (Kant, 2000[1790], pp. 189-190) of the artist-genius. From an objective perspective, it refers to the idea of the artwork as a "world-in-itself" – of which the parts form a coherent 'whole' (Vande Veire, 2002, 63-64). Within this vision, art is something that cannot be interpreted from an external point of view, but can only be understood from 'within'. It is autonomous, in other words, in the sense of being a product springing from the creative imagination of the individual (the artist) *and* in terms of being closed off from the surrounding world. Within the 'expressivist' paradigm, the typically romantic understanding of art as a 'microcosm' (or by using related metaphors such as the artworks as a 'hedgehog' or biological 'cell') foregrounds the model of 'aestheticism' or 'art for art's sake' (see Van Rooden, 2015b, Ch. 2).

Though we must remind Lovejoy in saying that one should speak of a "plurality of Romanticisms" (and we should thus pay tribute to the fact that aestheticism indeed grew out of Romanticism to become a dominant theory of art in the late nineteenth century; see Campbell, 1987, pp. 198-199), I agree with Van Rooden who points to the fact that the image of art as a microcosm was a metaphor used by the romantics for the 'wholeness' of the world as such, and therefore a symbol of the world as undivided. Due to a conceptualization of society as

3. Next to Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*, the works of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) have been considered groundbreaking in the formation of Romanticism as an intellectual movement. Particularly his *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is regarded as the blueprint of Romanticism (see De Mul, 1999, Introduction). In this work, Kant develops a transcendental analysis of 'taste' or aesthetic judgment. For Kant, this implies an analysis of the a-priori principles of aesthetic judgment, of which one is the a-priori principle of "disinterestedness". According to Kant, the aesthetic judgment is disinterested in the sense that it does not depend on moral, utilitarian and/or economic principles. As such, the aesthetic judgment is a 'pure' form of judgment, in the sense of being independent of any interest. For Kant, it is this characteristic of aesthetic judgment that makes it a symbol of 'hope', as it represents the ability of the individual to be truly autonomous, not only in the sense of being free from any interest, but also of being free from the natural world dominated by causality (in which man experiences no free will). Thus, although Kant emphasizes the autonomous nature of aesthetic judgment, he at the same defines art as a symbol of freedom; a concept which in his practical philosophy is related to the ability of the individual to subordinate his free will to the general laws or 'categorical imperatives'. Simultaneously, however, Kant emphasizes the *limitations* of the 'moral' implications of aesthetic judgment, as it remains a *symbol* of freedom. For romantics such as Schiller and F. Schlegel the framing of artistic judgment by Kant as "disinterested" and "distanced" was a crucial first step in their attempt to 'aestheticize' the world, that is, to produce a vision of art as being a vehicle in the bridging of the modern caesura between man and nature, finitude and infinity, freedom and causality, the phenomenal and noumenal, and so forth.

mechanic and fragmented, the romantics aimed "to re-unite art and society (…) within the idea of the undivided (…), because it is what society should be, in-dividual in the strict sense" (2015a, p. 175).

The idea of art as "in-dividual" produces a different conceptualization of the notion of autonomy, namely that "art does not have its purpose outside of itself, but within the inner harmony between the parts and the whole" (ibid, p. 174). The image of art as a microcosm, in other words, implies that autonomy "operates on the integrated levels of the aesthetic work, the artist and the audience or society" (ibidem). Romantic art is therefore not 'poetry' in the strict sense, but always a form of *poiēsis*. Poetry, put differently, is a *temporary fixation* of *poiēsis*. Within this idea, typical romantic stylistics such as the fragment, the metaphor and the symbol are not merely used to reflect upon and/or criticize the fragmented nature of modern society, but to emphasize that a single work of art is just a fragment or a miniature version (a 'micro-cosmos') of the 'wholeness' of the world. Within the paradigm of the in-dividual, art is thus not only framed as an entity that exists, and should exist, outside of society, but also as a vehicle for aesthetic education. Better still, art is framed as a vehicle that *stimulates* citizenship and *builds* community – it creates 'wholeness' in a society that is fragmented and fractured. Like a cell 'splitting' inside the human body, art divides itself and creates wholeness, a process that, according to the romantics, should take the form of an infinite progression. Within the paradigm of the in-dividual, then, art is not conceptualized as an *end product*, but as a *process* that takes the form of a "progressive universal poetry":

> Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical. (…) It is capable of the highest and most variegated refinement, not only from within outwards, but also from without inwards. (…) The Romantic kind of poetry is still in the process of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. (F. Schlegel, *Athenaeum,* fragment 116).[4]

The idea that art builds community and stimulates citizenship – organically and in infinite progression – is regarded by the romantics as the antidote to the mechanicist caesura between part and whole resulting from modernization. When Schiller, in the sixth of his *Aesthetic Letters,* writes that society has turned into a "monotonous wheel" in which "Man himself grew to be only a fragment", he does so by adding that art has the ability to "restore (…) this wholeness in our nature" (Schiller, 2004[1794-95], pp. 84-95). Whereas the "expressivist" model primarily emphasizes the subjective dimension of artistic creation and consequently pushes the spectator in the background, the romantic project implies an oscillation *between* the opposite poles of autonomy and heteronomy.

Van Rooden (2015b, Ch. 2) describes how in the wake of Romanticism a debate emerges within aesthetics and literary theory between so-called "autonomists" and "anti-autonomists" – the former defending the autonomous nature of art, the latter being skeptical of autonomy due the embedding of art in heterogeneous society. However, as Van Rooden convincingly argues, both autonomists and anti-autonomists frame art within the same expressivist paradigm in which art is seen as autonomous from society; the difference between the two being a difference in attitude, not in kind. Van Rooden (2015ab) instead proposes to re-evaluate the romanticist conception of autonomy and to frame contemporary artistic practices within a "relational paradigm".

Such a relational framing of autonomy within art, according to Van Rooden, has been most clearly developed by French art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) by introducing his notion of "relational aesthetics". In the words of Bourriaud (2002, p. 22), relational aesthetics refers to a form of art in which "inter-subjectivity does not only represent the social setting for the reception of art, which is its 'environment', its 'field' (Bourdieu), but also becomes the quintessence of artistic practice." Similar to how autonomy was conceptualized by the romantics at the level of the "un-divided", contemporary participatory art aims to stimulate citizenship and build community by means of co-creation. In the words of Van Rooden (2015a, p. 187), "the essence of this kind of participatory artwork is not to be sought anymore in the signature of the artist or the closed form of the artwork itself, but in its "formation", that is, in the dynamic relation between the more or less contingent elements of the material, the participants, the space, the time, and so forth." Rather than conceiving the relational dimension of art exclusively at the level of the institutional, Van Rooden thus proposes to understand it at the level of the *ontological* (2015a, p. 186). As she writes,

4. Friedrich Schlegel. (1991). *Philosophical Fragments*. Peter Firchow (transl.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Athenaeum Fragment 116, pp. 175-176.

> Whereas socio-cultural or institutional approaches ultimately imply a form of contextualism and in doing so subscribe to the problematic dualist framework that opposes autonomism and anti-autonomism, the ontological conception of the relational makes the more radical claim that co-existence is the transcendental condition of all beings – including literature (ibidem).

The difference with the romanticist paradigm is that, within the relational paradigm, artworks are interpreted as being infused with a postmodern sensibility. This means that relational art is not seen as a vehicle for the aesthetic education of mankind; that is, a vehicle that is capable of transforming the world into some kind of utopia, but as more fluid, temporary, local and precarious (Van Rooden, 2015a, pp. 187-188). "These works disappear as easily as they emerge and are (…) for this very reason exemplary expressions of our present mode of existence, in which identities have become fluid as a result of globalization and multiculturalism and are dependent on multiple and often temporary networks" (ibid, p. 187).

The history of folk music as a category of music is characterized by a similar debate between autonomists and anti-autonomists. In the course of the twentieth century, folk music became constructed by Marxist folk entrepreneurs as the "people's music" (Roy, 2010). It became used as a weapon against the hegemony of capitalism, as it was regarded by left-wing social activists as the antidote of both commercial music and high art-infused musical genres such as jazz and classical music. With the advent of the international folk revival in the late 1950s and early 1960s, folk music was aestheticized by artists such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Phil Ochs. This meant that folk was radically disconnected from its political connotations of the past and that it became associated with the art music tradition (see Denisoff, 1971, pp. 164-197). The emergence of this type of folk music further increased the image of the folk artist as "integrated professional", hence further decreasing the image of the folk artist as the "people's musician" (ibid, p. 148). However, before elaborating on the historical development of 'folk' as a musical genre, we should first explore how the construction of folk music as "the people's music" finds its roots in Romanticism. This leads us back to the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1944-1803) who, along with Kant and Schiller, is regarded as one of the "true fathers" of Romanticism (Berlin, 1999, pp. 57-67). From the discussion of Herder's conceptualization of the 'folk', this chapter proceeds by discussing the way (American) folk music became a genre reflecting the musical culture of the 'common' people.

2.4. The construction of folk music as "the people's music"

Berlin (1999, p. 65) frames Herder as "the originator of all those antiquarians, who want natives to remain as native as possible, who like arts and crafts, who detest standardization – everyone who likes the quaint, people who wish to preserve the most exquisite forms of old provincialism without the impingement on it of some hideous metropolitan uniformity." He furthermore writes that:

> Herder is the father, the ancestor of all those travelers, all those amateurs, who go round the world ferreting out all kinds of forgotten forms of life, delighting in everything that is peculiar, everything that is odd, everything that is native, everything that is untouched (ibidem).

As one of the first representatives of the "radical individuation" of modernity, Herder contended that every individual has a "voice speaking" (Berlin, 1999, p. 59). For Herder, only the individual who expresses himself actualizes himself. From this "expressivist" perspective he turned to folk song, which he defined as the "voices of the people in songs" (quoted in Bohlman, 2004, p. 5). In doing so, he laid the foundations for the close connection between the concepts of authenticity and folk music, the latter seen by Herder as the objective manifestation of the inner-voice of the individual. Besides expression, it became associated with homecoming, belonging and community; tropes of authenticity that extend, as will be emphasized in the empirical chapters 5-7 of this thesis, in contemporary indie-folk.

By emphasizing the expression of group or social identity through folk song, Herder is generally regarded as an early contributor to the political ideals of nationalism and nation-state building grounded in the Enlightenment (Bohlman, 2004, pp. 4-5). Though Berlin (1999, p. 61) adds that Herder never used the criteria of 'blood' and 'race' in defining the group or nation, he nonetheless was one of the first theorists to establish a connection between preserving and studying 'folklore' on the one hand and the discovering of some 'common gestalt' on the other. It is the employing of this kind of authenticity work, associated with the drawing of social boundaries, which runs through the history of folk music – not in the least through the history of American folk music.

In his book, *Reds, Whites, and Blues. Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States* (2010),

American sociologist William G. Roy describes how folk music was socially constructed as a musical genre as the product of two specific "cultural projects" or so-called "folk projects". Roy (2010, p. 50) defines a cultural project as a "coordinated activity by an identifiable group of people to define a category of cultural objects, distinguish it from other cultural objects, make claims about its significance and meaning, promote its adoption by others, and thereby have a social impact." Roy adds that in its ideal typical form a cultural project consists of five types of 'works': definition work, significance claims, boundary work, cultural innovation, and institution building (ibid, pp. 50-51). Cultural projects, then, are not the work of a single individual, but of a group of individuals who work together in reaching a common goal. American folk music, as Roy argues, was the product of the dialectics between the "original" American folk project of the early twentieth century and the "second" American folk project of the 1930s and 1940s.

The link between European Romanticism and American folk music was established during the first American folk project of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Roy describes how at this time the European project of nation-state building was imported to the U.S. to contribute to debates on the American racial dilemma. As it was believed that the U.S. had no folk tradition of its own, the project consisted of a nostalgic search for common roots and origins. Drawing from Benedict Anderson's work on the role of imagined communities in processes of nation-state building, Roy describes how an elite group of literary scholars, anthropologists, collectors, and academic folklorists invented an American folk tradition in their search for shared national origins.

Institutionally, the original folk project was embedded in the settings of the university and the settlement school movements. The rural settlement schools were modeled around the romanticist ideal of *Bildung*, aiming to drag the poor people living in the Southern Appalachian mountains out of poverty through education. According to Roy (ibid, p. 62), this resulted in the construction of the image of the "quaint mountaineers minding primitive looms and strumming traditional dulcimers, an image congruent with those promoting a vision of America founded on Anglo bedrock, threatened by non-white and non-Protestant contenders."

By actively promoting 'traditional' American customs and crafts, the settlement schools formed the link between academic folklore scholarship and the people who were imagined to create 'folk' music. During the years of the First World War (1916-1918), English folklorist Cecil Sharp was invited by a member affiliated to one of the schools to travel through the Appalachian mountains of Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee. He collected 1,612 tunes from 281 singers and published it as the *English Songs of the Southern Appalachians*, one of the canons of English folk music in the U.S. (ibid, p. 64). Because Sharp's purpose was to track down and record Elizabethan *ballads,* he neglected the fact that most people he recorded played popular commercial music next to the more traditional 'folk' ballads.[5] The 'remote' community of Appalachian mountain balladeers, nonetheless, came to represent the people who carried an authentic American – that is, Anglo-Saxon – folk music tradition. It illustrates how the original American folk project of the early twentieth century socially constructed an image of the 'real' American 'folk' artist by the persona of the 'mountain balladeer', and how 'authentic' folk music was defined along racial lines.

Roy contends that the first American folk project was a typical modern phenomenon in the sense of being critical of modernity itself (ibid, pp. 57-58). Besides a cultural project initiated for the purpose of 'discovering' a true American folk tradition, it was the product of self-criticism, voiced by members of the upper-middle class in society criticizing modernizing tendencies such as globalization, the optimism concerning technological innovation, standardization, and homogenization. The community of mountain balladeers – and the musical customs they were believed to 'preserve' – functioned as the *mirror image* of modernity. It is this boundary work that, according to Roy, would shape the genre of folk music: "folk culture embodies a people; it is contrasted to the polluted culture of civilization; it is rooted in the past; and it is rural" (ibid, p. 55).

With the invention of a folk tradition, the discourse of American folk music was thus shaped around the construction of binary oppositions: whereas the 'folk' represented the essence of *community* and *collectivity*, modernity came to represent *individualization*; while folk music was seen as *pure* and *simple,* high art was *too sophisticated* and popular music *too commercial;* while the folk tradition was a connection to the lost and innocent past, modernity would leave the past behind; and while folk music connotes remoteness, modernity equals urbanization (ibidem). It are these binary oppositions that are still at the heart of contemporary folk music, of which conventions include the preferred use of acoustic over electric instruments, of bodily rhythm (through strumming and picking) over harmony, of collective singing and performing over soloing, of relations in narratives to real life and 'real' emotions

5. Roy adds that ballads were only a small part of what the Appalachian 'folks' were performing and listening to. Bohlman (2004) claims that ballads were particularly popular among the early folklorists because they were more narrative compared to popular tunes. Hence, the ballads were more suitable in the search for national origins, as they were capable of portraying an image of shared roots through narrative storytelling.

(work, labor, suffering, etc.) over relations to the star system and superficiality, and of the celebration of audience participation over the emphasizing of musical virtuosity (see chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis).

Roy goes on to describe how the *second* American folk project of the 1930s and 1940s was a reaction against the first American folk project. Institutionally embedded in the setting of the Marxist and communist political movements, the second folk project redefined folk music as a "real life reflection of real people" and used it as a vehicle "to contest the definition of 'American' in American folk music " (ibid, p. 3).[6] In the course of the twentieth century, folk music became a weapon in the communist fight against the hegemony of capitalism, as it was believed to reflect the equalitarian ideals of the Communist Party (CP). The adaptation of folk music by the socialist and communist movements would further contribute to the formation of the combative relationship between folk and commercial music, as well as to the relationship between folk music and musical genres, such as jazz and classical music, rooted in the high art tradition. It explains why folk music, in Roy's words (2010, p. 149), is antagonistic to the high culture of the *bourgeoisie,* and commercial folk music an oxymoronic phenomenon.

The value of the left-wing political movements for the historical formation of folk music as a genre is that they "erected an organizational infrastructure, a coherent art world to control the production, distribution, and to some extent the consumption of culture" (ibid, p. 81). Building upon the work of Howard Becker (1982), Roy demonstrates how the CP created an organizational infrastructure for the production and dissemination of culture – including 'folk' music. This infrastructure consisted of the organization of literary clubs, the establishing of theatre committees and magazines (e.g., *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker*), the developing of radio programming, the publication of songbooks (e.g., the 1932 *Red Song Book*) and the foundation of choirs, musical clubs and in 1931, the Workers Music League (WML). The mission of the WML, which held offices in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, was to train choirs, to educate working-class musicians and composers and to communicate class-consciousness. Both the musical clubs and the WML, however, failed in achieving their mission, since many of the affiliated composers were upper class and created a canon of avant-garde oriented music which was either too dull or too difficult for the targeted masses to 'decode' (Denisoff, 1971, p. 15-17). Moreover, it turned out that the 'masses' already had their own musical customs, and it was due to this discovery that the CP in the early 1930s shifted its attention from European avant-garde music to 'vernacular' folk music (ibid, pp. 66-71).

Of particular significance in the discovery of American folk music by the CP were the 1929 Gastonia, North Carolina strikes. Denisoff (1971, pp. 19-20) describes how it was this event that redefined the folk song into an expression of "folk consciousness" – a form of "utopian mentality" antagonistic to the 'false consciousness' expressed by the dominant capitalist class. As a manifestation of the 1929 Great Depression, during which millions lost their jobs, the Gastonia strikes were organized by unified members of the CP, who helped the local workers in their battle against the exploitation caused by industrial capitalism. During one of the strikes, a local balladeer named Ella May Wiggins was killed in a shooting. The songs she sang were transported to the north of the country, as they were sung in public and published in some of the party newsletters by New York-based singer Margaret Larkin (1899-1967). Due to the spreading and popularization of her songs, Ella May Wiggins became a martyr of the communist fight against capitalism. And due to the type of songs she sang – narrative songs revolving around stories about the suffering and exploitation of working-class people – she became the embodiment of the 'folk' or 'proletariat' (Roy, 2010, p. 96). As a consequence of this rather tragic event, a specific type of folk song was crafted and launched as the model for the propagating of folk consciousness. The folk ballad was officially adopted by the CP as the "song of persuasion" and hence replaced the avant-garde oriented musical movement of before, similar to how during the first American folk project the 'mountain' ballad became the template of the authentic folk song (Denissoff, 1971, p. 41). It reflects the transition the CP underwent in the 1930s and early 1940s from stimulating *Bildung* towards the incorporation, promotion and dissemination of the music of the 'common' people.

After the adoptation of the folk ballad by the CP, a relationship was established between the proletariat in the south and the emerging network of intellectuals and musicians in the cities (ibid, p. 40). In the late 1930s and early 1940s it were "working class intellectuals", including figures of the front rank of American folk music such as John and Alan Lomax and Charles and Pete Seeger, who formed a subculture in New York City and contributed

6. As such, folk music is a manifestation of (socialist) Realism, which Taylor (1989, pp. 430-434) defines as one of the transformations of Romanticism, alongside Dandyism and Pessimism. More specifically, Taylor argues that the artistic movement of Realism, as it became dominant in France after the revolutionary year 1848, was both a negation and a continuation of Romanticism. It was anti-romantic for it aimed to portray things "in their crude reality", contrary to the 'epiphanic' tendencies of romanticist art. Realism is also a continuation of Romanticism, nonetheless, for it was counterinstitutional in its aesthetic politics (it positioned itself against the hierarchy of the French Salon) by depicting the everyday lives of workers, peasants and ordinary people as 'larger than life' and by giving it a monumental scope. Finally, Realism should be considered a continuation of Romanticism, for it aimed to depict everyday life from a subjective and aesthetic perspective, therewith contributing to the emergence of Impressionism and a further aestheticization of the world.

to the advent of the so-called "Proletarian Renaissance". As Denisoff describes (ibid, p. 68), the Proletarian Renaissance "was a sort of 'folk music revival' in miniature." It emerged against the background of the Popular Front Era, a moment during which the CP Americanized and consequently turned native in its search for musical material that could promote utopian, that is, Marxist ideology. In Denisoff's words, "in the process of adopting American material, 'folk music' became increasingly 'in' among New York Communists" (ibid, p. 57). At this stage in history, radical activists, musicians and folk entrepreneurs gathered around Marxist ideology, culminating in the construction of a vision of folk music as the "people's music" and of the folk artist as the "people's artist":

> Nativism, coupled with Marxism and Leninism, was the credo of the 'folk' renaissance. Earl Robinson, 'a young minstrel in overalls', went around the country singing his compositions. Dropouts from Harvard imitated Leadbelly and Aunt Molly and other genuine articles by dressing in working-class garb and strumming banjoes and guitars. (…) Magically, genuine folk singers became people's troubadours and urban intellectual folk singers became people's artists (ibid, p. 74).

Folk music became something of a fashion item, as it was associated with a certain clothing ("overalls", "working class garb"), a certain behavior ("dropping out"), the creation of persona (the "minstrel", the "troubadour"), and the collective celebration of music using 'simple' instruments such as the guitar and the banjo. The personification of this type of folk music was Woody Guthrie, the "Shakespeare in overalls", as he was occasionally called (Roy, 2010, p. 96). Along with artists such as Aunt Molly Jackson and Earl Robinson, he was a model for the quest for proletarian music due to his roots in the rural South (Oklahoma), his traveling through the U.S. (Guthrie was nicknamed the Dustbowl Balladeer for he escaped Oklahoma during the years of the Great Depression), and, most importantly, due to the fact that he composed many of his 'own' songs, revolving around stories about the suffering of working class people due to unemployment and exploitation.

It were writer-poets such as Woody Guthrie, who were much needed in the communist search for 'native' material that could promote Marxist ideology during strikes and other labor union events. Complementary were the folklore projects initiated by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal agency meant to stimulate employment by initiating public works projects including the subsidizing of the arts production. As part of the program, the WPA carried out a number of folkloristic projects, of which the most influential ones were the folk music field recordings initiatives of the Federal Music Project (directed by Charles Seeger) and the Folk Music Archives of the Library of Congress, managed by John Lomax and his son Alan Lomax. As Denisoff describes (ibid, p. 70 and pp. 134-135), it were these projects that contributed to the formation of professional careers of recorded artists such as Woody Guthrie, Aunt Molly Jackson and Lead Belly (born Huddie William Ledbetter), as well as to the expansion of an available folk repertoire that could further stimulate an "urban folk consciousness" in the newly established New York subculture revolving around 'folk' music.

However, the construction of folk music as the people's music did not occur "magically", as Denisoff suggests in the aforementioned quote (see above). Rather, it was the result, as Roy emphasizes, of the collective organization of folk music within a network of creators (artists, composers, songwriters, producers, label owners), distributors (journalists, scholars, communist party officials) and audiences (left-wing intellectuals). Roy specifically emphasizes that folk entrepreneurs such as Charles and Pete Seeger and John and Alan Lomax were successful in their entrepreneurship because they never held long-lasting positions of authority within one specific institution, but were instead able to *bridge* multiple institutions on the basis of their organizational skills and social networks (ibid, p. 103). By establishing an organizational base, publishing magazines, organizing events, arranging media coverage and contacts with other institutions such as the university, the (local) government and the political movements, they were able "to mold American folk music as not only a style or sound but a musical world that itself bridged institutions" (ibidem). American sociologist Philip H. Ennis, in his book *The Seventh Stream. The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music* (1992), has referred to the molding of American folk music as a musical world as the emergence of a "folk stream".[7] He demonstrates how in the late 1930s the "folk stream" gradually took charge of "folk music" by employing authenticity work. That is to say, by classifying 'traditional' music into a canon of folk music and by erecting symbolic fences between folk and commercial music on the basis of conventions, such as the use of 'simple', acoustic instruments, the depiction of 'real life' events in songs (mostly revolving around work and the strug-

7. Ennis' concept of "music stream" (1992, p. 88) is similar to Becker's (1982) concept of "art worlds" and Bourdieu's (1993a) concept of "artistic field" and designates an artistic system consisting of artists, distributors, critics and audiences, working on the basis of an economic exchange system of some complexity, and having its roots in a social movement.

gle between the 'workers' and the 'bosses'), and the celebration of music in egalitarian and participatory settings.[8]

Two of the entrepreneurial activities that were of particular importance in the emergence of the folk stream were the formation of the Almanac Singers in 1940 and the founding of People's Songs Inc. in 1946. The Almanac Singers were a group of musicians headquartering in New York, but with branches in industrial cities such as Detroit and Michigan. Though the Almanacs referred to themselves as an "amorphous group" because of the continuous interchanging of performers, the core of the group consisted of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Millard Lampell, and Lee Hays. Denisoff describes how the formation of the Almanac Singers was "the first organizational attempt to put folk consciousness into practice" (1971, p. 77). This was done by self-consciously creating an image of a folk group rooted in proletarian culture, while in fact many of the members (Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell) were either trained musicians, writers and/or university graduates. The group toured around the country, performing songs of social injustice and anti-war sentiment at concerts organized during manifestations of the labor union movement. The impact these concerts had on their audiences, however, was limited, since the songs that were sang, "were better known in bohemian and leftist circles than in the ranks of labor" (ibid, p. 85). During the Popular Front Era, the group changed in attitude towards war and started to produce songs, such as "Hitler's Grave", reflecting militant patriotism. This slightly increased the group's popularity, but, as Denisoff writes, at the same time reflected the increasing isolation of "utopian ideology" (ibid, p. 99). Around the year 1942, the group fell apart, partly due to the debunking of communism by the established New York press, partly due to the fact that affiliated musicians each went their own way: Woody Guthrie formed a new folk group called the Headline Singers (with Lead Belly, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee), and Pete Seeger joined the army.

However, after the Second World War, the enthusiasm in regards to folk song as a political weapon reawakened. On January 2, 1946, People's Songs Inc. (PSI) was officially launched to the American public as a follow-up to the Almanac Singers. Founded by Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax and Lee Hays, and holding offices at Times Square, New York, the political purpose of PSI was "to aid labor in its historical mission of class struggle" by both producing and disseminating folk music (ibid, p. 109). The production and dissemination of folk music was organized through the publication of a weekly newsletter and a quarterly magazine (*People's Songs Bulletin*), as well as by writing columns for the *Daily Worker*. The primary vehicle for the dissemination of folk music, however, was the so-called 'hootenanny', a self-organized musical event – disguised as a party annex jam-session – taking place in people's homes and club houses and revolving around the celebration of audience participation, topicality and commitment (ibid, p. 114). However, despite all these organization efforts, PSI failed in achieving its political mission. First, because the Cold War and the advent of McCarthyism caused a political climate in which communist organizations such as PSI were blacklisted. Second, and most importantly, because of the strictly hierarchical organization of most of PSI's activities.

As Roy describes, PSI failed to establish a connection between the people forming the core of the organization and the 'folk' at the periphery due to its hierarchical and bureaucratic organization. Most of the entrepreneurs, composers, songwriters and professional musicians were centered in New York, while the unions were located in industrial areas in the south(east) of the country. The development of an increasingly more professional folk musical world in New York thus created a gap between the urban 'folksters' and the actual 'folk' located at the countryside (Roy, 2010, pp. 140-141). While rooted in the ideology of participation, and while embracing values of inclusiveness and egalitarianism, PSI, in the course of the 1950s, became professionalized, a process which turned the social movement into a bureaucratic enterprise, thereby further increasing the boundary between core members of the musical world and members affiliated with the American trade union movements at the periphery.

These uneven relations were reflected in the adapting of the performer-audience template as well as in the presentation of the artist as "integrated folk professional" (Becker, 1982). In the words of Roy (ibid, p. 139), "[t]he hootenannies tied together audiences. When those audiences correspond to the connective structures of the movement, the movement was solidified. But too often audiences were a narrow part of the movement networks – the educated urban cultural elites, not the workers." Furthermore, it turned out that unionists and workers did not share the view of folk music as a vehicle for social change. In fact, as Pete Seeger in hindsight (snobbishly) observed: "Most union leaders could not see any connection between music and pork chops. (…) 'Which Side Are You On' was known in Greenwich Village but not in a single miner's union local" (quoted in

8. One example of the employing of authenticity work by the entrepreneurial activities carried out in the 1930s and 1940s is the publishing of these four volumes by John and Alan Lomax: *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934); *Our Singing Country* (1941), *Best Loved American Folk Songs* (1947) and *The Folk Songs of North America* (1960) (see Roy, 2010, pp. 115-116). The compilation of the 1947 volume is currently known under the title, *Folk Song: U.S.A.* and consists of 111 American ballads. For many of the folk entrepreneurs active in the 1930s and 1940s, it was a significant source of inspiration, which it still is today for many folk musicians.

Denisoff, 1971, p. 127). Moreover, if the 'folk' were interested in music, they embraced the popular music of the time (Tin Pan Alley) rather than the category of 'folk music' that was carefully crafted by "working class intellectuals" like Seeger. In short, by defining folk music as music of the people, and by associating it with the old-fashioned, a distinction was cultivated between the urban elite and the rural proletariat, whereas the second folk project was initially launched to *bridge* this distinction. While PSI never achieved to attract a large number of members and audiences (PSI's membership never exceeded 2,000 nationwide), in the course of the 1950s, PSI resulted in political failure (ibidem). Folk music as the people's music and the folk artist as the people's artist were consequently transformed into isolated phenomena.

2.5. The 1960s "urban folk revival"

The employing of authenticity work by key actors operating in the folk stream explains why artists such as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger became personifications of the folk artist, since their partly self-romanticized, autobiographies included tropes of authenticity that were already invented during the first American folk project of the early twentieth century. These included their southern and rural origins as well as their ability to write politically informed songs and ballads. Also, it explains why African-American artists such as Lead Belly became icons of the Proletarian Renaissance, since an important part of the project was to raise awareness on the uneven distribution of human rights (a tactics that extended in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s; see Roy, Ch. 8). However, as a form of 'soft' *power*, the employing of authenticity work necessarily resulted in a form of 'soft' *violence* – for example, in fights over the possession of property rights, in the romanticizing of 'exotic' black artists such as Lead Belly and Big Bill Broonzy, or in the exclusion of artists that did not meet the conventions of folk music altogether (see Wald, 2004).[9]

More generally, folk music developed, as Roy (2010, p. 75) argues, into a category of "someone else's music", meaning that it were the folk entrepreneurs who demarcated 'real' folk music from the inauthentic kind – and "'the folk' were [thus] denied a voice in defining the boundaries between 'folk' and 'non-folk'." By defining folk music as "someone else's music", Roy demonstrates how the construction of folk authenticity is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the authenticity work employed by key actors in the folk musical world of the mid-to-late 1940s and early 1950s unavoidably resulted in exclusion, since symbolic boundaries were drawn along the lines of class and race. On the other hand, the construction of a folk authenticity redefined "the terms of homology between cultural and social class", as it "unsettle[d] the links between social status and respectable culture, justifying elite embrace of indigenous culture, not just their own highbrow culture" (ibid, pp. 47-48; see section 1.4.2.).

The adaptation of folk music by the socialist movements explains why folk music could sustain in an environment dominated by the hegemony of mass media and the production of popular music working on the basis of a star system. The entrepreneurial activities carried out by PSI resulted in the establishment of a musical world where urban folk acts and audiences collectively gathered. The erecting of a musical world was intended to promote a form of expression that was counterhegemonic to commercialism. Ironically, however, PSI's orientation towards professionalism, created a platform for a commercial variant of folk music to emerge.

After the Second World War, folk music commercialized due to a number of factors. First, because the folk entrepreneurs affiliated with PSI noticed that the unionists in the south(east) of the country were not the audiences to be targeted and instead turned focus to the group of urban, middle-class intellectuals based in Greenwich Village. Second, it was due to the efforts of artists such as Burl Ives and Josh White, who decided to adopt a more commercial stance in their music, which caused folk music to become more popular among gatekeepers at the mass media and professional recording industry (Denisoff, 1971, pp. 144-150). They presented themselves as "integrated folk professional", a model that was first met with hostility among the ranks of "isolated folk entrepreneurs" such as Pete Seeger, but at the end of the 1940s was adopted by the politically conscious folk singers as well (ibid, p. 148).

9. Wald (2004) describes how in the late 1950s a category of music emerged (the "country blues") as the mirror image of post-war American society connoting – in the eyes of members of the counter culture – industrialization, consumerism and conservatism. Blues artists such as Big Bill Broonzy and – particularly – Robert Johnson (1911-1938) were seen as members of a rural society, representing the antidote of mainstream society. As such, they became icons of the folk revival, during which blues music (most notably the acoustic country blues played by artists like Broonzy, Johnson and Mississippi John Hurt) was an important source of inspiration for key players in the revival, such as Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, and the Rolling Stones. Historical research by Wald, however, demonstrates that 'country blues' was the least popular form of music among African-Americans during the pre-war years, as it – more so than the jazz and "city blues" of artists such as Louis Jordan, Count Basie and Leroy Carr – reminded them of earlier times of slavery and suffering.

The adoptation of the model of the integrated folk professional resulted in the major commercial success of the Weavers (Pete Seeger, Ronnie Gilbert, Fred Hellerman, Lee Hays) in the years 1949-1952. After signing with Decca Records, the Weavers became the first folk group in American history that managed to achieve a level of popularity in the commercial music industry, selling over four million copies with hits such as Lead Belly's "Goodnight Irene", "So Long", and "Wimowe" (ibid, p. 146). During this period, folk clubs popped up at university campuses, folk music was played in the specialized setting of the coffeehouse (forming the Greenwich Village coffeehouse scene), and the image of the individual folk entrepreneur rose in popularity, as they were creating and performing a type of folk song that was stripped from its radical political consciousness. The commercial success of the Weavers foregrounded the formation of the "urban folk revival" towards the end of the 1950s

The commercialization of folk music occurred against the background of the Cold War and the emergence of a post-war generation, of which members conceived the "end of ideology" – "the decade in which America turned its back on radical ideas, particularly Marxism" (Denisoff, 1971, p. 167). Elitist members of the baby-boom generation developed a "new politics", which was concerned with the promotion of what became referred to as "participatory democracy", including the promotion of full human rights (ibid, p. 172). Folk music was associated with these rights, but due to the fact that ideology was considered to be naïve, it became a commodity rather than a political weapon. The field of folk music adopted the star-system and indeed delivered pop stars such as Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, and Peter, Paul, and Mary – who signed deals with major record labels, covered newly established folk magazines such as *Sing Out!,* and became subject to the commercial tides of the *Billboard* charts. Aesthetically, folk music became a musical form that was still rooted in the "Guthrie-Seeger tradition" – yet "invoked and filtered through a sense of individualistic or existential reality" (ibid, p. 174).

The folk artist of the new generation – with Bob Dylan as a model – celebrated individuality and self-expression over collectivity and ideology. The abandoning of ideology is reflected in the emergence of parody and satire as dominant aesthetical modes in folk music of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1959, folk artists Dave Van Ronk and Richard Ellington, for example, published *The Bosses' Songbook*, "a collection of modern political songs of satire", as the subtitle writes. In the one-time published magazine or zine, as *The Bosses Songbook* was also called, songs were published that were ridiculing the political folk songs of before (ibid, p. 171). One of the songs was titled "Hold the Line", a satirical play on The Almanac Singers:

> There is a group in this here town
> That really goes too far.
> They've traded in their Ph.D.'s
> For a folk guitar.
>
> > Chorus:
> > Sing a song for People's Artists
> > Balladeers unite!
> > Buy your latest People's Songbook,
> > There's a hoot tonight.
>
> Organize and fertilize
> And sing your little song.
> You are right on every issue,
> All the rest are wrong.[10]

A second example of how ideology was abandoned in folk music was Bob Dylan's release of his 1964 album, *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (Columbia Records). While on his previous two albums (*The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan and The Times They Are a-Changin*) Dylan included protest songs such as "Blowin' in the Wind", "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" and "Masters of War", the release of *Another Side of Bob Dylan* [sic!] was meant to demoralize folk music. Dylan abandoned the celebration of audience participation in performances and structured most of his songs upon the lyrical poem, creating expanded and non-repetitive song structures associated with the high art tradition (ibid, p. 186). Due to the radical break with the political past, folk music was turned into a category of music connoting aestheticism and autonomy. It became integrated in the discourse of rock music, with the

10. Van Ronk and Ellington (1959, p. 10). Retrieved from (October 22, 2016): http://www.sds-1960s.org/TheBossesSongbookPart1.pdf

persona of the folk artist as singer-songwriter or "rock auteur" (Encarnacao, 2013, pp. 46-47). While advocates of the more 'aesthetic' folk music, like Dylan and Van Ronk, celebrated modern avant-gardistic notions such as originality and experimentation, opponents took a more purist stance and held on to a vision of 'authentic' folk music as rooted in the rural past. It represents a split within the field of folk music between a more commercial subfield in which folk is defined in terms of autonomy and authenticity, and a subfield in which actors adopt a more nostalgic and purist stance (see chapter 6 of this thesis).

The transformation of folk music from an expression of radical consciousness into art music mirrors the paradigmatic evolution of cultural fields of production. Bourdieu (1993a) argued that cultural fields generally develop a structure consisting of two subfields operating in an interdependent and antagonistic relationship: on the one hand, an autonomous subfield in which the "economy is reversed" and, on the other hand, a heteronomous subfield in which profit-seeking dominates (see the Introduction and chapter 6 of this thesis). The same pattern can be discerned in the field of (American) folk music. With the strangest of ironies, nonetheless, that it is only after folk music turning commercial – first by acts such the Weavers, subsequently by singer-songwriters such as Bob Dylan – that it was able to secure a relatively autonomous position within the commercial field of musical production. It made folk music part of the "art-commerce" or "rock-pop" dichotomy (Frith, 1981), "offering the commercial [music] streams some of its riches while trying, at the same time, to keep itself intact and true to its standards" (Ennis, 1992, p. 89). In the chapter that follows, I describe how the adopting of an anti-ideological stance in the field of American folk music, as well as the incorporating of aesthetic modes such as formalism, parody and satire, reflect the emergence of "aesthetic reflexivity" (Lash, 1994) in popular music.

Chapter 3 – Theory

Beyond the deconstruction of folk authenticity: from reflexive modernization to neo-romanticism

When ice freezes, all the excrement rises to the surface. When the future is deep-frozen and, indeed, even the present we shall see all the excrement come up from the past. The problem then becomes one of waste.

- Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End* (1995)

I need another world
This ones nearly gone
Still have too many dreams

- Antony and the Johnsons, "Another World" (2009)

3.1. The 'end' of authenticity: Folk music in times of "retromania"

In his book, *We gotta get out of this place: Popular conservatism and postmodern culture* (1992), American popular music scholar Lawrence Grossberg outlines the hypothesis that the construction of a "folk authenticity", as it originated in Romanticism and extended in the 1960s urban folk revival, should be considered a 'blast from the past' – a 'preserve' of the 1960s counterculture. He argues that somewhere in the early 1970s, it dissolved into thin air due to the emergence of a postmodern sensibility – "which marks the collapse", in his words, "or at least the irrelevance, of the difference between the authentic and the inauthentic" (Grossberg, 1992 p. 227).

The commercial variant of "folk authenticity" was created, as discussed in the previous chapter, against the historical background of the late 1950s and early 1960s, a period during which the emergence of a postwar liberalism went hand in hand with apocalyptic end-of-the-world-scenarios 'inspired' by traumatic events such as the Cold War and AIDS. Folk music, in this contradictory state of optimism and cynicism, became a place of belonging, a place where the unleashed affects by liberalism could attach themselves to an investing in the present due to the absence of Grand Narratives or in-the-future ideologies (ibid, p. 205). After the Manson Family murders (August, 1969) and 'Altamont' (December, 1969) it became clear that the counter cultural movement failed to achieve its ideological mission, and hence the deconstruction of folk authenticity was set in motion.

With the advent of reflexive punk subculture in the early 1970s, the field of popular music moved into the direction of an increased self-consciousness about the artificiality of its own products. In the reflexive punk era, the concept of authenticity is not deemed irrelevant, but is forced, nonetheless, as Grossberg argues, to become allied with constructions of 'honesty' and 'innocence' (ibid, pp. 213-214). In the subsequent post-punk era of the late 1980s and early 1990, a tendency occurs among acts associated with genres such as pop (e.g., Madonna), New Wave, avant-garde rock (e.g., Talking Heads), and New Romanticism (e.g., Pet Shop Boys), to display their 'integrity' towards the well-informed crowd about the artificiality of their personas and products. Constructions of such "authentic inauthenticities", as Grossberg labels them, are the reversal of the "folk authenticity" of the 1960s, leading towards the reversal of the traditional privileging of folk (and rock) authenticity over pop authenticity as well (Grossberg, 1992, p. 224).

These "authentic inauthenticities" are created against the historical background of postmodernity, representing "a crisis", in Grossberg's terminology, "in our ability to locate any meaning as a possible and appropriate source for an empassioned commitment" (ibid, p. 222), In postmodernity, "it is not that nothing matters – for something has to matter – but that there is no way of choosing, or of finding something to warrant the investment" (ibidem). While folk music historically represented engagement, community and commitment, postmodernity promotes detachment, individuality and decenteredness. Hence, Grossberg refers to postmodernity as representing a "logic of 'ironic nihilism'" – the inability of the individual to find a place of belongingness (ibid, p. 224).

In his book, *Cultural theory and late-modernity* (1995), cultural theorist Johan Fornäs builds upon Grossberg's analysis and similarly argues that the developing of postmodern or late modern reflexivity "has problematized earlier, naïve and romantic views on authenticity" (p. 277). What appears in post-punk self-conscious pop is what Fornäs defines as the construction of "cultural authenticity" or "meta-authenticity" – "which plays with styles, well-understanding that they are always artificially constructed, but through this very cynical self-knowledge shows a kind of realistic honesty" (ibid, p. 276). In the post-punk era, romanticist constructions of authenticity will not completely erode, but, as Fornäs argues, "an increased demand for reflexivity has forced older and more naïve conceptions of authenticity to develop meta-authentic traits" (ibidem). As he elsewhere writes (ibid, pp. 276-277),

> [a]rtists and audiences can continue to strive for experiences of spontaneous community or bodily presence but it has become hard to repress the insight that this takes place through a complicated play of gestures, songs and strategies.

According to Fornäs, the construction of meta-authenticity could lead towards the situation that "the striving for reflexive self-consciousness can be locked up in an authoritarian submission to the burden of convention, in a regressive obedience to pre-determined traditions" (ibid, 277). On the other hand, however, "it can also be a free play with newly created self-presentations which draw on historical references and reconstruct genealogical trees to subvert established power relations and search for roots as a defense against oblivion" (ibidem). While the latter prediction fits the empirical analysis as presented in this thesis most, the former one is dominant in postmodernist accounts of authenticity's demise.

In his book, *Retromania: Pop culture's addiction to its own past* (2011), British music theorist Simon Reynolds draws from the works of postmodernist theorists such as Baudrillard, Jameson and Derrida and argues that at some point in history – during the emergence of reflexive punk culture in the early 1970s – popular music imprisoned itself in a 'cage' and as a kind of survival (or, better still, re-vival) strategy started to recycle its own past. Reynolds argues that contemporary popular music is suffering from "retromania", an incurable addiction to its own immediate past (p. xii). In Reynolds terminology, the concept of retro "refers to a self-conscious fetish for period stylization (in music, clothes, design) expressed creatively through pastiche and citation" (ibidem). It includes phenomena as widely varied as the musealization of popular music artifacts; the rise of the rock curator; the massive availability of back-catalogue records; the obsession with everything vintage; the use of the iPod [sic!] as a personal oldies radio station; the use of samples as ready-mades; band re-formations and re-unions; re-vival cults; re-issues and re-launches of canonical records; re-enactments of historical concerts – in short, "all kinds of retrospection" (ibid, p. xvi-xviii). Due to decades of postmodern irony, and because digital media such as YouTube have made the past instantly available, originality is considered a blast from the past. To use Reynolds' words: "neophilia has turned to necrophilia" – a statement by which he echoes the work of Baudrillard (1995, p. 26), who once compared postmodern culture to a "living lump of waste, that dying monster which, like the corpse in Ionesco, continues to swell after it has died."

Retromania, according to Reynolds, distinguishes itself from earlier obsessions with antiquity, for example from the Renaissance's reinvention of Roman and Greek classicism, because of its obsession with cultural artifacts "that occurred within *living* memory" (ibid, p. xiii; emphasis added). Nonetheless, retromania is "a dominant force in our culture" and therefore a concept that has ontological status (ibid, p. xiv). For Reynolds, retromania is an example of "hauntology", a neologism he borrows [sic!] from Derrida (1993) of the words 'ontology' and 'haunting', which Reynolds defines as "a self-conscious, emotionally ambivalent form of nostalgia that sets in play the ghosts of childhood" (ibid, p. 343). In times of hauntology, the only way out of the 'cage' of authenticity is by resuscitating the ghosts of the past. The recycling of the past, however, is a form of downgrading culture, according to Reynolds, and is therefore at risk of *exhausting* the past as well – or, as Reynolds apocalyptically prophesizes: "the heading towards a sort of cultural-ecological disaster" (ibid, p. xiv).

Reynolds pinpoints indie-folk – with Fleet Foxes as "the poster boys for the new bucolism" – as an example of hauntology. By re-appropriating the 'Old, Weird America' (Marcus, 1997; see chapter 4 of this thesis), new-folk artists are defined as "crate diggers [who] patch together their 'strange quilt' (…) from Folkways-style field recordings of traditional music, outsider minstrels and maverick composers (…), obscure acid rock and esoteric improvisation and drone groups" (ibid, pp. 344-345). New folk's "guiding fantasy", moreover, "is the unsettled wilderness of early America: a self-reliant existence, outside society and remote from urban centers" (ibidem). In idolizing the past, new folk artists are echoing "the hippy and Beat movement's own yearning invocations of the American frontier spirit; the beards that almost every man in the freak-folk scene wear simultaneously recall The Band, Allen Ginsberg and the early-nineteenth century trapper and mountaineer Grizzly Adams" (ibidem). Being a revival to the second degree, the latest folk revival equals: exit authenticity.

Apart from the question whether popular music is artificial by nature, it is questionable whether Reynolds' analysis of the current sensibility in popular music is an accurate one. It should be noted, first and foremost, that his criticism on recycling is grounded in a modern – and essentialist – conceptualization of authenticity in which it is similar to the notion of innovation or originality. Reynolds' criticism shows signs, in other words, of a *nostalgic longing* for innovation – particularly to the golden years of rave culture, during which he still felt "the shock of the new" (ibid, p. 428) –, which makes his analysis a symptom of that which he criticizes: retromania.

Moreover, as popular music scholar Allan Moore has previously remarked, authenticity should not be identified with the notion of originality exclusively, as this is just one understanding of the concept, which should not be used to cover the debate as a whole (Moore, 2002, p. 210). Reynolds' conceptualization of authenticity in terms of originality implies that authenticity is somewhere 'inside' the music. However, as Moore emphasizes, "[a]uthenticity is a matter of interpretation which is made and fought for from within a cultural and, thus, historicized position. It is ascribed, not inscribed" (ibidem). Moore therefore proposes to focus on studying *who* authenticates, rather than aiming to define the ontological status of authenticity in postmodernity and thus by falling back into strictly essentialist accounts of the concept.

These are account, moreover, which have been deconstructed by a branch of poststructuralist aesthetic theory (e.g., Krauss, 1985) in which contrasting terms such as originality and repetition, as well as associated terms such as singularity and multiplicity, and spontaneity and calculation, are not framed as binary oppositions (which they still are for Reynolds), but as „interdependent and mutually sustaining" (p. 160; see also section 1.4.4. of this

thesis). Apart from this fundamental critique, Moore finally argues that "the social alienation produced under modernity [representing the ideological roots of the search for authenticity] grows daily more apparent" (ibidem). Consigning the concept to the intellectual dust-heap thus seems to be premature.

The work of Moore is part of an emerging field within the sociology of popular music in which it is emphasized, not only that authenticity is a socially constructed phenomenon, but also, and most importantly, that it is a "moving target" (Peterson, 2005, p. 1095). Building upon the work of Peterson (2005; 1997), Vannini and Williams (2009, p. 3) summarize that

> authenticity is not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation, that is, it refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar. As culture changes – and with it, tastes, beliefs, values, and practices – so too do definitions of what constitutes the authentic.

The 'problem' of authenticity in postmodernity, then, does not concern the question of what constitutes its ontological status, but relates to questions such as what authenticity means to people, how and why people (still) embrace authenticity as a valuable ideal, which groups decide what authenticity entails (and what it definitively does not entail), and which social factors are underlying the search for authenticity (*cf.* Aupers, Houtman & Roeland, 2010, p. 7). These are the questions, as discussed in chapter 1, that are at the heart of this thesis.

Regarding the question how authenticity 'survives' in postmodernity, Moore specifically distinguishes three types of authenticity: first-, second-, and third person authenticity. First person authenticity – or "authenticity of expression" – "arises when a composer and/or performer succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience" (ibid, p. 214). It can be achieved, according to Moore, by creating unmediated performances, that is, by "compressing the distance between its (mental) origin and its (psychical) manifestation to nil" (ibid, p. 213). For example, by reducing technological mediation to the minimum, by reinstating the distinction between autodidact and trained, by incorporating autobiographical references in lyrics, or by the positioning of the artist as 'independent' from the mainstream. As Moore argues, it is this form of authenticity that is grounded in folk discourse (see chapter 2) and extends in the underground DIY movements through to the present day.

Third person authenticity – or "authenticity of execution" – "arises when a performer succeeds in conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance" (ibid, p. 218). The construction of this form of authenticity can be complicated, according to Moore, due to the "disruption of continuity" caused by postmodernity. The concept of "disruption" is borrowed from David Harvey (1989) and refers to the formation of a rift between the present and the past due to social and geographic mobility (ibid, p. 216). It causes artists to *appropriate* past traditions and to *fabricate* a "secure ground" (ibidem) from which productions and performances can be created – for example, by grounding performances in the blues or folk tradition, or by returning to a "child-like state of musical immediacy" as an alternative to the 'synthetic' production of music more common in the commercial music market (ibidem).

Second person authenticity – or "authenticity of experience" –, finally, "occurs when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener's experience of life is being validated, that the music is 'telling it like it is' for them" (ibid, p. 220). It is achieved, when an audience appropriates the music as 'authentic', implying that authenticity, from the perspective of the audience, has increasingly become a matter of "acceptance" or "toleration" (ibid, p. 218). It implies that even the most manufactured pop music could be labeled authentic, according to Moore. This is particularly due to the fact that popular music remains to fulfill a role in processes of enculturation and self-authentication, as it is often through commercial pop music that young adults are able to experience group identity and achieve individual security (ibid, p. 220).

A similar approach in addressing the 'problem' of authenticity in postmodernity has been offered by American sociologist Richard A. Peterson (1997). At the end of his book, *Creating country music: Fabricating authenticity*, Peterson wonders what structural conditions are necessary for country music to survive in the twenty-first century. As he argues, the question of authenticity is "[c]entral in addressing this concern" (1997, p. 201), because it is increasingly more problematic for country producers to *maintain* authenticity in times of postmodernity. Similarly to Moore, Peterson observes that audiences within the country music stream (Ennis, 1992) are more reflexive about what constitutes the 'authentic' and what, in terms of agreed-upon conventions, falls out of the genre. Reflexive fan communities, in other words, have started to take the fabrication of a country music tradition 'for real'. However, since artists are no longer part of the tradition but members of a music industry, they need to

authenticate themselves in order to "speak for the country identity" (ibid, p. 218). To gain acceptance in the musical field, they are forced to construct *signifiers* of authenticity – for example, by referring to their origins in the 'rural' South, or by singing about country music pioneers such as Bill Monroe and thus by incorporating (musical) quotes in their repertoires. The construction of such signifiers of authenticity, however, is in risk of signifying the reverse, as Peterson observes, for "even the most faithful attempt to preserve authenticity works to dissipate it because to copy the authentic creates what is necessarily inauthentic" (ibid, p. 229).

Peterson, however, contests the view that "reflexive modernization" will wipe away authenticity in its entirety. He observes three dialectical processes that "allow the circle to remain unbroken" – that is, which might allow country music to survive in the twenty-first century (ibid, p. 230). First, he argues that there will be an ongoing dialectic between so-called "hard-core" and "soft-shell" musical styles. While the hard-core styles are embedded in the institutional system (based in Nashville, Tennessee), which tends to resist change, the soft-shell styles are located at the periphery of the genre and are based upon conventions that aim to subvert established genre rules. There will always be innovators, aiming to debunk conventions by creating new aesthetics and by establishing new scenes at the 'margins' of the institutional system. In other words, and this refers to the second dialectical process Peterson distinguishes, there will be an ongoing dialectic between newcomers on the one hand and actors holding positions of authority on the other, with new generations of musicians acting as innovators by incorporating the music they grew up with into the country tradition. As Peterson contends, this might not only result in the formation of new scenes, sounds and styles, but might even result in changing systems of production. Because innovation attracts new audiences, it will be attractive to actors operating in the institutional system, looking out for new business opportunities.

Finally, Peterson argues that changes in technology and copyrights regulations might be external factors underlying changes in the social production and aesthetics of country music. Thus, instead of the 'negative dialectics' prominent in postmodern theory, in which the recycling of history produces waste material which eventually will be consigned to the musical dust heap, Peterson's theory is based upon a 'positive dialectics' in which a struggle between social groups is seen as a stimulus for growth. Rather than framing recycling as a form of "down-cycling", Peterson thus defines it, on the contrary, as a form of "up-cycling" (Braungart & McDonough, 2002) – that is, the upgrading of the past to the present by infusing the country 'tradition' with new material and presenting it to new audiences.

Peterson's analysis is an accurate one, at least in regards to the emergence of indie-folk as a twenty-first century industry-based genre (Lena, 2012). Both in the historical intermezzo (chapter 4) and in the empirical chapters 5-7 that follow, I will outline how a new generation of musicians, gatekeepers and audience members, enforced by disruptive digital technologies, have collectively created an eclectic form of music by infusing 'traditional' folk music with more contemporary styles such as hip-hop, electronica, ambient, rock, punk, lo-fi, and pop – a form of music they nonetheless preferably coin 'folk'. In doing so, they return to the construction of social or folk authenticity revolving, as discussed in the previous chapter, around values of participation, egalitarianism, community and sincerity. The construction – or reconstruction – of social authenticity in Dutch indie-folk, however, should not be regarded as a naïve *return* to a modern notion of social authenticity, since the emphasizing of community, participation, authenticity, etc. is infused with a postmodern sensibility about authenticity's artificiality; as well as that the emphasizing of idealism (particularly concerning indie-folk's institutional politics) is infused with a sense of professionalism and pragmatism (see chapter 5). This implies that the return of social authenticity, rooted in the ideology of participatory democracy, should be regarded as a return with a difference. It emerges against the backdrop of a theoretical debate on "post-postmodernism", in which it is argued that postmodernism – in which irony and detachment have become dominant social conventions – functions as a background framework of interpretation which could be replaced by a framework that emphasizes something more 'real' and more 'human' (*cf.* Timmer, 2010, p. 13).

3.2. From irony to nostalgia and the "new authenticity"

Since the late 1990s, various scholars have announced the "end of irony" (Hutcheon, 1998) or proclaimed that "the epoch of postmodernism had (…) come to a close" (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009, p. 14). They specifically agree upon the fact that postmodern irony is abandoned for a nostalgia for the authentic as a cultural dominant in western societies. In her 1998 essay, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern", Canadian literary theorist Linda Hutcheon, for example, argues that "[o]ur contemporary culture is indeed nostalgic" – although "some parts

of it – postmodern parts – are aware of the risks and lures of nostalgia, and seek to expose those through irony." For Hutcheon, a distinction should be made, therefore, between "the contemporary" and "the post-modern". Whereas contemporary society displays a nostalgia for the authentic, the postmodern parts of it are critical towards nostalgia and authenticity and seek to reveal that criticism through irony.

Hutcheon defines nostalgia as an emotional and cognitive reaction, which is developed by (groups of) individuals in society whose aim is to express the fact that "the past is irrecoverable." Crucial, however, is that "[t]his is rarely the past as actually experienced", as Hutcheon observes, but "the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire". Following Bakhtin, Hutcheon emphasizes that nostalgia "operates through (…) a 'historical inversion'", by which she means that constructions of nostalgia consist of a projection of elements of an imagined future onto an invented past. This is conceived of as an operation through which the past becomes a "site of immediacy, presence, and authenticity." Unlike irony, which aims to *cancel out* any desire for the authentic, nostalgia, then, is "prelapsarian" and "utopian."

In their book, *The Pathos of Authenticity: American Passions of the Real* (2009), literary theorists Ulla Haselstein, Andrew Gross, and Maryann Snyder-Körber build upon Hutcheon's analysis and argue that "authenticity is making a comeback, in the guises of memory, ethics, religion, the new sincerity, and the renewed interest in 'real things'" (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009, p. 19).[1] Haselstein *et al.*, however, upgrade Hutcheon's argumentation by emphasizing that the "comeback of authenticity" should be seen as a comeback with a difference. A difference with previous manifestations of authenticity, for example, is that "contemporary authenticity seems more concerned with re-establishing connections between individuals and society than in advocating individual protest and autonomy" (ibid, p. 18). They see this as a kind of inversion of the historical genealogy of the concepts of sincerity and authenticity, as outlined by Trilling (see section 2.2. of this thesis). While Trilling observed a transformation from sincerity to authenticity during Romanticism, Haselstein *et al.* observe that in the first decennium of the new millennium the reverse process is taking shape – that "authenticity is redefined in terms of sincerity" (ibidem).

In her book, *Do You Feel It Too: The Post-Postmodern Syndrome in American Fiction at the Turn of the Millennium* (2010), Dutch literary scientist Nicoline Timmer similarly observes (yet by focusing on authenticity's subjective front) that the works of American authors such as David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, and Mark Danielewski "envision possible reconfigurations of subjectivity that can no longer be framed (…) as "postmodern"' (Timmer, 2010, p. 13). Building upon the works of Giddens (1991) and Holstein and Gubrium (2000) (see Introduction and chapter 7), Timmer argues that in the works of this new generation of novelists, born in the heydays of postmodernity, a "new sense of self" is becoming manifest – which is characterized by the "empathic expression of feelings and sentiments, a drive towards inter-subjective connection and communication, and (…) a sense of 'presence' and 'sameness"' (ibidem). Moreover, their texts often involve a complicated and occasionally explicit critique (in the case of David Foster Wallace) of postmodern subjectivity, "especially on the perceived solipsistic quality of the subjective postmodern experience world."[2]

In the three novels analyzed by Timmer –Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996), Egger's *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000) and Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) – a search for something "more real" and something "more human" is perceived. The main characters of the novels all suffer from experiencing the world as a "solipsistic universe", or what Christopher Lash (1979) has coined the "culture of narcissism." They speak about other humans in a way that is "de-personalizing" and "de-humanizing" (as if they are objects rather than subjects). They suffer from what Wallace has coined "analysis paralysis" (not knowing what to choose, since there is so much, too much, to choose from); or only know what to do or choose by mimicking others. In short, they suffer from what Timmer coins "the post-postmodern syndrome" – that is, having "a lack of decision making tools" and suffering from the inability "to feel anything" (ibid, p. 302).

They no longer know what it is "to be human", meaning that their selves have become "empty" (Cushman, 1990). Consequently, and this is what commonly characterizes the three novels, the protagonists start a 'new' search for themselves by reconnecting with others, and thus by exploring what mediating role feelings and emotions can fulfill in the construction of the self. In Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, the main character Hal Incandenza, for example, decides

1. The "comeback of authenticity" can be perceived, according to Haselstein *et al.*, in the increased tendency towards the musealization of historical artifacts, "which even at the height of postmodernism still generated a sense of loss and nostalgia"; in the return of materiality in the American neo avant-garde of the visual arts at the end of the 1990s (see Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real*, 1996), as well as in the "ethical turn" in trauma theory, in which the notion of suffering, or the current fascination with personal suffering (on television and other mass and new media), is regarded as "the basis for a new model of sympathetic community."

2. The American novelist and essay-writer David Foster Wallace (1962-2008) has produced a number of novels and essay in which he explicitly criticizes postmodern irony. One of his most prominent essays addressing the concept of irony is his 1993 essay, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction".

to join an Alcoholics Anonymous therapy group and refers to the AA-meetings as the "irony-free zone" – a zone in which individuals are not allowed to perform a role but are forced to act "sincere". Timmer interprets this as an act of re-programming the self: the look for a 'real' connection with the self through the contacting of (generalized) others. She refers to this process as a "leap into faith" – or, more accurately, as a "leap out of the 'cage' of the self" (ibid, p. 163). In Wallace's fiction, a "new" sense of self emerges, which "signals a departure from a more postmodern preoccupation with a self-obsessed and self-deconstructing subject ('I doubt I am')" (ibid, p. 354). It reflects an attempt by the protagonist to re-humanize the self and to experience communality. This "new" sense of self, as Timmer writes,

> is not grounded in any preconceived idea of similarity and sameness between self and other, and so does not signal a return to some form of 'universal' humanism, but is also not (any longer) grounded in the idea of non-negotiable differences either. Wallace's stories exemplify that indeed some 'traces remain of the self' (…). They conceptualize (…) the self neither as a traditional autonomous self, nor as completely determined by an *other*. This 'other' is as elusive as this 'self'. But this 'I' and 'You' *may* have 'a certain something' in common. It is not posited that 'we' do, what is bracketed, if only for a moment, is the idea that 'we' *never* do. (ibid, p. 117; emphasis in the original)

Timmer's observation of a post-postmodern syndrome or new sincerity in American literature is similar to what Ulla Haselstein *et al.* have defined as the "new authenticity". Central to their argumentation is that the nostalgia for the authentic in the twenty-first century should not be conceived of as a naive return to some 'paradise lost'. Instead, they argue that it "remains profoundly shaped by postmodern skepticism regarding the grand narratives of origin, telos, reference, and essence" (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009, p. 19). For this reason, the new authenticity should not be perceived as "the rejection of postmodernism" (for example, as a naïve longing for traditional, pre-consumerist American society, as Reynolds coins the emergence of indie-folk), but rather that it "offers a revision of postmodernism" (ibidem). The "new authenticity", in other words, is both a negation and a continuation of both modernism and postmodernism.

This negation-continuation dynamic, in fact, is what Dutch cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker have come to call the "metamodern". In their 2010 essay, "Notes on metamodernism", they coined the term metamodernism as an intervention in the debate on post-postmodernism. In their application, the prefix 'meta' does not refer to taking a reflexive stance (*cf.* Fornäs' analysis above), but to Plato's term "metaxis" – which indicates an oscillation between as well as beyond opposite poles (Vermeulen and Van den Akker, 2010a, p. 2). Building upon the work of Raymond Williams and Jos de Mul (see section 2.3), they argue that metamodernism is an "emerging structure of feeling (…) characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment" – or, as they elsewhere put it, "between a modern desire for *sens* and a postmodern doubt about the sense of it all" (ibid, pp. 2-6).

More accurately, they argue that metamodernism should be situated epistemologically *with* (post)modernism, ontologically *between* (post)modernism, and historically *beyond* (post)modernism (ibid, p. 2). Historically, the emergence of a metamodern sensibility marks the transition from the epoch of postmodernism to the epoch of metamodernism. Ontologically, the metamodern sensibility is situated between (post)modernism – as it oscillates, as discussed, between a modern enthusiasm for authenticity and a postmodern 'sense' about authenticity's artificiality. Epistemologically, the metamodern sensibility is situated with (post)modernism as it is critical of ideology, teleology and essentialism. Both the 'modern' and the 'postmodern', according to Vermeulen and Van den Akker, are in fact tied to Hegel's positive idealism. This expresses itself, in the case of the modern, in a belief in the *practical realization* of Utopia, and, in the case of the postmodern, in proclamations of 'the end of history', the 'end of art', the 'end' of authenticity, et cetera. Metamodernism, however, is epistemologically related to Kant's negative idealism (see also chapter 2). According to Vermeulen and Van den Akker, it is an attitude, tied to a generation born in the heydays of postmodernity, characterized by a "pragmatic idealism" or "informed naivety":

> The current, metamodern discourse (…) acknowledges that history's purpose will never be fulfilled because it does not exist. Critically, however, it nevertheless takes toward it *as if* it does exist. Inspired by a modern naiveté yet informed by postmodern skepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility. (…) Metamodernism moves for the sake of moving, attempts in spite of its inevitable failure (…) Like a donkey it chases a carrot that it never manages to eat because the carrot is always just beyond its reach (ibid, p. 6).

Most clearly, the metamodern attitude is expressed in what Vermeulen and Van den Akker coin the "neoromantic turn" in the arts and culture industries. They perceive that a new generation of artists, over the last ten to fifteen years, has increasingly abandoned postmodern tactics such as pastiche and detachment for 'modern' tactics such as myth and commitment. This is observed, for example, in the architecture of Herzog & de Meuron (as "negotiations between the permanent and the temporary"); the artworks of Olafur Eliasson, Glen Rubsamen, Dan Attoe, Kaye Donachie, and Armin Boehm (as "obsessions with the commonplace ethereal"); the photography of Gregory Crewdson and the film making of David Lynch (as "adaptations of civilization by the primitive"), and in the film making of Spike Jonze, Michel Gondry and Wes Anderson (as "attempts to rekindle the naivety and innocence of their childhood") (ibid, pp. 8-12).

Although this may seem an incoherent potpourri of artists and practices, what they have in common, according to Vermeulen and Van den Akker, is the expression of a romantic desire for nature, the ethereal, the childlike, the outsider, the primitive, and the communal. Typical to the neo-romantic artwork, however, is that the romantic desire for something more authentic is held 'in check', so to speak, by the simultaneous adoption of postmodern aesthetics such as pluralism, irony and deconstruction. The difference with the postmodern artwork being the fact that

> in metamodernism this pluralism and irony are utilized to counter the modern aspiration, while in postmodernism they are employed to cancel it out. That is to say, metamodern irony is intrinsically bound to desire, whereas postmodern irony is inherently tied to apathy (ibid, p. 10).

This oscillation between enthusiasm and irony is what constitutes the metamodern artwork. In the words of the authors, the metamodern

> is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm (ibid, p. 6).

It is argued that the oscillation between enthusiasm and irony is the expression of a neo-romantic spirit, as it 'mirrors' the strategy employed by the romantics in the aftermath of the French Revolution ending in the terror of reason, emphasizing their criticism towards teleology yet postulating ideas 'as-if' the future was moving somewhere, organically and in infinite progression (see chapter 2). In this thesis I argue that the reconstruction of social authenticity by Dutch indie-folk practitioners represents a similar (neo)romantic strategy. This argument will be further elaborated on in the empirical chapters 5-7, which now follow after a short intermezzo on the history of (indie-)folk in the 21st century.

Chapter 4 – Intermezzo

BROKEN CIRCLE REBOUND: THE REEMERGENCE AND RE-POPULARIZATION OF FOLK MUSIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY[1]

1. This chapter is based upon my contribution to the book Made In *The Low Countries: Studies in Popular Music* (L. Mutsaers, G. Tillekens & G. Keunen, eds., 2017. London: Routledge) – which is titled "Broken Circle Rebound: New Regionalism and Vernacular Indie Folk." In this contribution I focus on the way contemporary Flemish and Dutch musicians have re-appropriated the folk genre as a means to cope with emerging nationalism and populism in the Low Countries. A review of this debate has been left out of this Ph.D. thesis as it is a rather marginal phenomenon related to the emergence of new forms of folk music; which, in other words, is not representative of the Dutch indie-folk community at large.

If it was never new, and it never gets old,
then it's a folk song.

- Oscar Isaac in *Inside Llewyn Davis* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2013)

4.1. Introduction

In 2012 Belgian filmmaker Felix Van Groeningen delivered his fourth movie *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, the scenario of which was based on an original Belgian theatre play (Heldenbergh/Dobbels). His fellow countryman Bjorn Eriksson composed the soundtrack containing twelve 'old-time' country, folk and bluegrass songs performed by The Broken Circle Bluegrass Band. The melodrama was a commercial success both in Belgium, the Netherlands, and the U.S.. At the 2014 Oscars it was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film. After the release of the original soundtrack, Eriksson took The Broken Circle Bluegrass Band on tour and toured around the Low Countries for almost four years.

Music plays a major part in this story set in the countryside near the city of Ghent. Bluegrass player Didier meets tattoo artist Elise, who shares his passion for folk, country, and bluegrass music. They fall in love, hook up, and she joins his band as a singer. Their daughter Maybelle, named after the guitarist of the legendary Carter Family, pioneers and icons of American folk and country music, dies from cancer at the age of seven. A series of fatalities unfolds, resulting in the decision of Elise, who has renamed herself Alabama Monroe, to take her own life. Band members pray and play at her deathbed.

The song to which the film title refers is the Christian hymn "Will The Circle Be Unbroken?" (1907). In 1935 the Carter Family made it one of their signature recordings. In their days country music was a fledging commercial stream, producing songs about the treadmill of life and the everyday trials and tribulations of working class people (Ennis, 1992, pp. 25-26). Fate, faith and family were key representations; voices were nasal and high-pitched, the choice of instruments guitars, banjos and fiddles – never drums. Gatekeepers at the emerging mass media – radio broadcasting and (sound) film – constructed the genre as "white" (Peterson, 1997). Nonetheless, the blues was and remains a major influence in both form and emotional effect. Parallel to the country stream ran the less commercial "folk stream", producing and disseminating songs of social critique (Ennis, 1992, pp. 88-98). While folk singers with guitars, banjos and harmonicas called for social change, actively defying segregation and (racial) inequality by organizing hootenannies (see chapter 2 of this thesis), the genre of country music adopted a more commercial stance.

"Will The Circle Be Unbroken?" in the partly rewritten Carter Family version tells the story of the death, funeral and mourning of a loved one, and reflects upon the coping of the family after the loss. Those left behind remember childhood, when they sat around the campfire singing "hymns of faith", and remind themselves of "a better home in the sky". The metaphor of the 'unbroken circle' also works for American roots music itself, which, in the words of Richard A. Peterson (1997, p. 222), "has gone, and will continue to go, through unbroken circles of death and renewal".

The story of *The Broken Circle Breakdown* taps into this very idea of death and renewal, with country, folk and bluegrass music as a means for emotional rescue.[2] It would not have worked if the music had been alien to contemporary audiences, as they take part in a twenty-first century revival culture in which American 'roots' music – similarly to the 1960s "urban folk revival" (Rosenberg, 1993; Holt, 1997) – is brought into the pop market.

4.2. Prime movers – folk music in the Netherlands

Folk was the term used by the American music industry to launch a brushed off popular song genre in the late-1950s teenage market as a sophisticated alternative to rock 'n' roll dance songs and sentimental ballads that had climbed hit parades (see section 2.5.). The postwar "urban folk revival", taking roots in U.S. big cities like New York and Boston, turned out to be an international phenomenon. Locally it had its own dynamic of adoption and adaptation.

In 1959 "Tom Dooley" was in the Dutch radio charts for five months in a row, peaking at number one (Hitnoteringen, 2017). In the mid 1960s, most of the bigger cities in the Netherlands had their own folk clubs, such as Folkclub '65 in Amsterdam and Hoetenennie '66 in Utrecht; student associations organized annual folk festivals at university campuses, and gradually several music magazines were founded, exclusively covering

2. Although the genres of folk, country and bluegrass are frequently grouped under the umbrella term 'American roots music', and both country and bluegrass music have roots in "the indigenous folk music of the South" (Ennis, 1992, p. 25), there are differences between the genres in terms of aesthetics and institutional politics. See for more detailed elaborations on the differences between these genres: Ennis, 1992; Peterson, 1997. In this research, I apply a sociological approach to the grouping and categorizing of acts into genres, which means that instead of making genre categories myself I investigate how contemporary (Dutch) indie-folk musicians, gatekeepers and audiences create genre categories and in doing so, erect symbolic fences between folk and, for example, country, Americana and hip-hop (see Chapter 6).

the latest news in folk music. By the late 1960s, a Dutch version of the international folk revival was officially established (see Koning, 1983).

The industry-backed folk movement aimed at the rock 'n' roll generation championed Bob Dylan as their main man in popular music credibility, before and after his much commented turn to the rock sound in 1965 (Rosenberg, 1993). His impact on up-and-coming musicians in the Low Countries was considerable (Mutsaers, 2012). The growing interest in American folk music also stimulated the study and performance of homegrown repertoire, although here the folk revival was much more internationally – that is, U.S. and U.K. – oriented (see for a historical overview: Rans & Koning, 2001).

At first the Dutch folk revival of the times was much less dedicated to reviving homegrown song material (Koning, 1983). Musicians and audiences preferred to ignore the existence of such a tradition, mainly because it had already been marginalized to the point of disappearing altogether, with the notable exception of rural regions at the fringes where older people still remembered the old songs. The new generation of folk musicians, eager to communicate with peers on the current terms of engaging in popular music, studied and emulated the topical and popular folk-oriented groups of the English-speaking world. Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and Donovan became household names as a consequence of their progressive image as protest singers. These artists were promoted by the music industry without compromising their adherence to the emerging counterculture aimed at debunking western consumerist society. Boudewijn de Groot first scored hits with translations of French *chansons* and released his eponymous first album in 1965. When anti-war song "Welterusten mijnheer de president" ("Sleep Well Mr. President"), inspired by Dylan's "Masters of War", became a top-10 hit in 1966, De Groot was nicknamed the Dutch alternative to Bob Dylan.

Around the 1967 *Summer of Love* the lone folk song and protest singer-with-guitar lost momentum in favor of the folk-rock band using string instruments such as guitar, mandolin, dobro, and banjo; wind instruments such as flute and accordion, and percussion instruments such as woodblocks, washboards, and the tambourine. The Scottish "hippie" group The Incredible String Band in particular became popular among Dutch folkies.

Crackerhash, Pitchweel, and the Paul Kolling Trio chose from a wide range of folk song repertoires and languages. CCC Inc. focused solely on American roots music, building an image as the best acoustic string band around. Tail Toddle and Fungus fused the British folk-rock sound of Pentangle and Fairport Convention with traditional Dutch sea shanties and drinking songs. The Dubliners, who exerted an immediate influence, introduced Irish folk music in the Netherlands. Folk records were readily available. Polydor, for instance, on its subsidiary label Storyville Special, reissued several albums with American blues and folk songs, with the original lyrics printed on the back sleeve. While the newly founded (1971) rock press *Oor* (styled after *Rolling Stone Magazine*) largely ignored the folk revival, musicians and aficionado's joined hands and created their own border crossing network of venues, festivals, and info bulletins. Despite these efforts and incidental sales successes (e.g., Fungus) Dutch native folk and folk-rock remained marginal in the bigger picture of a small nation tuned in to hit music from the Anglo-American world.

Legend has it that the English folk advocate Martin Carthy found that Dutch folk aficionados consciously ignored their roots music for no good reason (Koning, 1983). Carthy's authoritative peer criticism sparked a dedicated domestic turn spearheaded by groups such as Wolverlei, Folkcorn and Wargaren (formerly Pitchweel), which combined traditional song repertoire – actively archived by ethnomusicologist and radio programmer Ate Doornbosch, the 'Dutch Alan Lomax' – with creative innovation and musical skill. Audiences at folk venues and festivals perceived the native language and acoustic instruments as more authentic and sincere than mere imitations of commercially produced American and British folk. The native approach gained popularity and even became commercially successful, but it was not to last long, eventually going underground in the late 1970s.

When the international economic crisis of the early 1980s struck and the so-called 'No Future-generation' emerged, belief in the practical realization of 1960s countercultural ideals had vanished. While folk music in the western sense of the term became marginalized, former pop stars Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, and David Byrne introduced non-western sounds to the industry, for which gatekeepers coined the term "world music" in 1987 (Frith, 2000). A new generation of discriminating music consumers meanwhile had deeply engaged itself in the ideology and aesthetics of the international punk movements, which, boosted by a late-modern reflexivity, problematized, as discussed, romanticist construction of social authenticity rooted in the ideology of community. It seemed unlikely that the next generation of critical consumers would care much about 'old time' folk music and associated values such as community, participation, and authenticity all over again. In his dissertation dedicated to the Dutch folk revival, Dutch musicologist Jos Koning (1983, pp. 188-189) concludes:

> Small-scaleness, tolerance, and nostalgia increasingly loose popularity among youths. Both amongst anarchist-leftist and rightwing youngsters (…) there is an ever increasing and evermore grim feeling of intolerance. Seen from the perspective of their outlook upon society, folk music is too friendly, too much based upon trust and participation with a small group of individuals. Because young people no longer enter the existing folk community, the average age among folk participants increases and the total amount of participants decreases. (…) It seems that the potential for change that folk music once promised has been used up.[3]

The "potential for change" Koning indicates refers to the way folk participants in the Netherlands, in line with the ideals of the international "counter culture" (Roszak, 1971[1969]), aimed to establish modern, democratic ideals such as communality, egalitarianism and inclusiveness through self-organizing concerts and festivals in participatory settings. These romantic ideals ultimately vanished, with the emergence of aesthetic reflexivity in 1970s punk and 1980s post-punk. The disappearance of folk music from the popular music stage, however, would not be the case, since at the start of the new millennium, the folk genre gained momentum once again with American and British acts such as Fleet Foxes, the Lumineers, alt-J, Jake Bugg, and Mumford and Sons, all of whom are associated with the genre of 'indie-folk' or 'folk-pop'. This particular genre, rooted in the aesthetics and institutional ideology of 'indie' music (Hesmondhalgh, 1999; Hibbett, 2005), however, has a longer history that goes back to the early 1990s, when "lo-fi" and "free-folk" musicians, such as Matt Valentine, Bill Callahan, and Will Oldham, started to experiment with American folk music and infused folk with the aesthetics of other contemporary genres including punk, rock and electronic music.

4.3. Folk music in the twenty-first century – from avant-garde based movement to industry-based genre

In her book, *Banding Together: How communities create genres in popular music* (2012), American cultural sociologist Jennifer C. Lena proposes a theoretical model for understanding the social formation of music genres. Conducting a survey of primary and secondary texts on the history of sixty market-based American musical forms – from bluegrass to rap and South Texas polka – she discovered that a majority of musical forms followed a certain pattern in their development; starting as an avant-garde-based movement, gradually evolving into a scene-based and, subsequently, into a industry-based genre. During the avant-garde-based phase, a small circle of musicians begin to share musical recordings and try to subvert dominant conventions, which are felt as alienating. When they succeed in finding their style, as well as attracting a small audience, the small circle develops into a scene. This scene develops into an industry, eventually, when gatekeepers at the music industry, such as music critics, newspaper journalists, and owners of record companies, start to pay attention to the music by writing articles or inventing names and labels for the music. During this last industry-based phase, the musical genre is launched as 'the next big thing in popular music' and starts to attract major fan bases, as well as an influx of money and international media attention (Lena, 2012, pp. 27-55).

The history of contemporary folk music followed this same pattern. Although it is, obviously, problematic to delineate one specific moment of 'birth', it would be fair to say that its avant-garde moment took place sometime around the year 1994, when New York-based musician Matt Valentine, together with some friends, formed Tower Recordings, a psychedelic folk ensemble involved in fusing traditional American folk music with free jazz and experimental electronica. "When Tower Recordings did our first album in 1994, no one was doing folk", Valentine declares (quoted in Petrusisch, 2008, p. 250),

> It was the heyday of Nirvana. We were playing acoustic guitars, a very DIY setup, and everyone else had a really big sound, while we were doing much more lo-fi things. And to me, that was the start of the acoustic underground. Up until then, not much was happening in an avant-garde-meets-acoustic-music way.

John Encarnacao, in his book *Punk Aesthetics and New Folk* (2013), similarly argues that what he labels "new folk" became a "distinct channel of activity in the independent sphere" in the early 1990s. Three albums released in the year 1993 – *There is No One* by Will Oldham/Bonnie 'Prince' Billy/'Palace'; *Julius Ceasar* by Smog/Bill

3. Original quote is in Dutch, translation by the author.

Callahan; and *Our Bed Is Green* by Charalambides (Tom and Christina Carter) – are particularly formative of the genre, with its "lack of conspicuous studio craft or prodigious musical technique" and "home recording"; with its "associations of music making as a domestic activity"; with its "do-it-yourself rejection of music standards", and with its "ad hoc borrowing of elements from pre-rock American musical traditions" (Encarnacao, 2013, p. 11).[4] Particularly Smog's *Julius Caesar*, according to Encarnacao (ibidem), helped to "establish a legitimate place for singer-songwriters in the independent sphere, up until this point very much the preserve of groups", and contributed to the launching of careers of singer-songwriters such as Elliott Smith and Cat Power (Chan Marshall). And although the music of these singer-songwriters and groups, apart from its origin in domestic musical activity, could not be considered folk music in the strict sense, the use of acoustic instruments such as the banjo and the mandolin; the incorporation of aesthetic features such as the drone; the occasionally incantatory singing; the use of faltering voices; the underpinning of verse-upon-verse ballads and through composition, carry connotations of folk music (ibid, pp. 10-11). Acts such as Smog, Cat Power and Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, in other words, were carrying on the history and aesthetics of indie music in the early 1990s, a musical category that has a history in the 1970s punk movements, with its anti-establishment and back-to basics approach (see chapter 6 of this thesis). Yet, with 'alternative' becoming a category through which artists could make a transfer to the mainstream after the commercial success of Nirvana, and with indie-rock being co-opted by major labels, the emergence of new folk added a new chapter to the ongoing narrative of 'indie' and marked the beginning of a new underground "with an even more back-to basics approach" (ibid, p. 12). In other words, it marked the transition from indie-rock to indie-*folk*, the genre category that is central to this thesis.

At the turn of the century, various musicians and writers were starting to group the abovementioned artists together and started to categorize their music by using labels. In May 2003, Matt Valentine was the one who co-organized the Brattleboro Free Folk Fest, a two-day musical get-together held in a warehouse space named The Cottonhill in downtown Brattleboro, Vermont: a small north-eastern U.S. city with a history steeped in the 1960s counterculture and therefore still a sanctuary for hippy-like communes. The Free Folk Fest headlined gigs notably of direct friends of Valentine, including the late Jack Rose (guitarist of Pelt), Scorces (featuring Christina Carter and Heather Leigh Murray), Tom Carter (of Charalambides) and Sunburned Hand Of The Man; as well as performances of his own ensembles Tower Recordings and the Matt Valentine and Erika Elder (MV & EE) Medicine Show. Scottish music journalist David Keenan, of British avant-garde music journal *The Wire*, cited the Free Folk Fest as the representing of "the first major coming together of this new vague movement" (2003, p. 38). It was the first physical meeting of what he also referred to as a "cottage industry", a network of likeminded musicians, "mostly based outside of the US cities" that began "to telegraph between each other, forming alliances via limited handmade releases and a vast subterranean network of samizdat publications, musician and fan run labels and distributors" made possible by "home publishing and CD burning" and the "globe-spanning reach of the internet" (ibid.). It was the moment, in short, when the small avant-garde circle of free-folk musicians slowly devolved into a scene.

David Keenan also was the one who labeled this "groundswell musical movement" the "New Weird America". He characterized the music as eclectic when referring to the way musicians were fusing traditional Appalachian folk music with "a range of avant-garde sounds", from drone to Krautrock, free-jazz, and punk. By using the term "New Weird America", Keenan showed his acquaintance with Greil Marcus' term "the Old, Weird America", coined in his book *Invisible Republic* (1997). Marcus had discussed the connection between the 'old-time' folk singers featured on *Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music* – items recorded between 1927 and 1932, first released as an anthology in 1952 and reissued as a luxury box set in 1997 – and the 1960s acoustic recordings of

4. Encarnacao rightly remarks that it is problematic to pinpoint one specific year and/or three distinct albums as the 'starting point' of new folk music. Regarding the genre of indie-folk, which is central to this thesis, it would be fair to argue that 1980s acts such as Billy Bragg and The Pogues should be included in the category, as they were too fusing punk with folk aesthetics. Moreover, Americana acts such as Ryan Adams, Gillian Welch, Lucinda Williams and Drive-By Truckers are making music similar to the music of acts referred to in this thesis, and are occasionally also referred to as American 'roots' musicians or even as folk musicians. The term "Americana" was coined in 1994 as an umbrella term that covered a range of genres revisiting the acoustic landscape of American roots music, including blues, bluegrass, rockabilly, and country, and is often used interchangeably with labels such as 'alt.country' and 'roots' music (Van Poecke, 2005). Americana acts draw on genre traditions existing within the country and folk streams and incorporate them into their contemporary, mostly rock and punk infused semi-electric sound. In 2010 the US Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences incorporated Americana in the Grammy Awards as a separate category, thereby underlining the cultural importance and institutionalization of the genre within a national canon (grammy.com). The difference between genres such as Americana, folk-rock, roots music and folk music is thus oftentimes hard to delineate. First, because genres such as country and Americana have roots in traditional folk music (Ennis, 1992) and, second, because genres like Americana and roots are used as umbrella terms that include multiple, folk-infused genres. It could be argued, though, that by means of being antagonistic to commercial Nashville country, Americana musicians tap more into the history and aesthetics of the country stream than the folk stream (Ennis, 1992). This is emphasized by the way the DIY-ethic and associated 'bedroom' and 'backwoodsy' aesthetics is somewhat less prevalent in alt.country music, placing the aesthetic tendencies of acts such as Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Bill Callahan, Devendra Banhart, CocoRosie, and Bon Iver more on the folk than the country side of the continuum.

Bob Dylan (and The Band). The label "New Weird America" gave the next generation a fresh heading within an old yet ongoing historical narrative.

While David Keenan attended the Brattleboro festival and foregrounded a new genre of folk music, the American visual artist and singer-songwriter Devendra Banhart released his debut album *Oh Me, Oh My… The Way the Day Goes By the Sun Is Setting Dogs Are Dreaming Lovesongs of the Christmas Spirit* (2002) on Young God Records, a New York-based independent label owned by Michael Gira, front man of the experimental folk rock band Swans. Roughly around the same time, albeit independently, singer-songwriter Samuel Beam (a.k.a. Iron and Wine) released his first album *The Creek Drank The Cradle* on Seattle's Sub Pop Records, the most prestigious and wealthiest independent record-label in the U.S. since the major sales success of Nirvana's *Nevermind* (1991). Iron and Wine's debut album was the first folk album released by Sub Pop, which was exemplary for the fact that folk music, at the start of the twenty-first century, started to attract larger audiences (Petrusisch, 2008, pp. 235-238).

The re-popularization of folk music took a flight in April 2004, when at the request of the American art magazine *Arthur,* Devendra Banhart put together a compilation album of what was from that moment on, besides "New Weird America" and "free-folk", also labeled "freak folk". On the album, titled *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (after a poem by W.B. Yeats), Banhart selected songs by direct friends such as CocoRosie, Joanna Newsom, and Antony and the Johnsons, but also a track by Iron and Wine and songs from artists who were present at Brattleboro, including Matt Valentine and Jack Rose. In the same year, Banhart released his second album titled *Rejoicing In The Hands*, and his third album, *Nino Rojo*, both on Young God Records. Joanna Newsom, a California-based, classically trained harpist, released her debut-album, titled *The Mild-Eyed Mender*, on Drag City Records after touring with Bonnie 'Prince' Billy (Petrusich, 2008, pp. 242-243). CocoRosie, an ensemble consisting of the sisters Bianca and Sierra Cassady, recorded a bunch of songs in a bathtub of a Paris hotel. The album, titled *La Maison de mon Rêve*, was released on the Touch and Go Records, together with Sub Pop and Matador Records one of the most prestigious U.S. independent records labels. More and more artists who appeared on Banhart's compilation album, in other words, followed with a debut and/or breakthrough release on smaller indie labels such as Locust (Espers, Josephine Foster), FatCat (Animal Collective) and DiChristina (Vetiver). And soon local and national newspapers picked up the hype and contributed to what a journalist very adequately labeled as the emerging of a "loosely affiliated gang of musicians (…) whose music is quiet, soothing and childlike, their lyrics fantastic, surreal and free of the slightest trace of irony" (Hermes, 2006).

In 2004, Devendra Banhart sold around 50,000 album copies; his concerts attracted 500 people (ibidem). Although his music (and that of others) received national media attention, it seemed that "freak-folk" (the most common-used name at that moment), was still a rather marginal phenomenon. Musicians were seeing themselves as part of a community or family (paying tribute to the folk-tradition), setting up inner-circle collaborations, instead of framing themselves as musicians who were "making music for magazines and record labels" (ibidem). In 2006, however, freak-folk got more and more (inter)national media attention – a documentary was dedicated to Devendra Banhart and his *milieu* (David Kleijwegt's *The Eternal Children,* 2006), and Antony and the Johnsons, Joanna Newsom, CocoRosie and Devendra Banhart all appeared at (major) pop festivals both in and outside of the U.S, such as the Motel Mozaique Festival (Rotterdam, the Netherlands), and the Coachella Music and Arts Festival (Indio, California).

According to *The New York Times* journalist Will Hermes, the festival season of 2006 should be credited as the "Summer of Love 2.0" (ibidem). This was the moment in the development of twenty-first century folk music when the scene, spearheaded by Matt Valentine, came into full bloom and promised "nothing less than a new age of Aquarius" (ibidem). Less dramatically, it was the moment, when freak-folk made the transition from a scene to an industry-based genre, attracting larger audiences and increasing artistic imitation. Up to the point that around 2006 the catchall "indie-folk" became widely used (Petrusisch 2008), a genre label partly overlapping with "folk-pop" and currently including both more experimental acts such as CocoRosie and Joanna Newsom and (alternative) mainstream acts such as Iron and Wine, Bon Iver, Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros, alt-J, and Mumford and Sons. The latter band was founded in London, U.K., and, along with Ben Howard, Laura Marling and Bear's Den, became one of most commercially successful indie-folk acts of Communion Music, a music company / record label (Communion Records) that was established in 2006 in Notting Hill, London by musicians Kevin Jones (Bears Den) and Ben Lovett (Mumford and Sons) and producer Ian Grimble (Communion, [n.d.]). They spearheaded the latest folk revival by being labeled the "biggest band in the world" (see the Introduction of this thesis).

4.4. Subsequent movers: Indie-folk in the Netherlands

With indie-folk becoming an industry-based genre around the years 2005/2006, musicians, gatekeepers and audiences in the Netherlands started to become familiar with indie-folk music and, similarly to their 1960s counterparts, started to produce own versions of global indie-folk. A few quotes from this research that emphasize this process of adoption and adaptation:

> N): (…) How did you come up with the idea to make this documentary? [*The Eternal Children,* VPRO, 2006], to make a portrait of the New York freak folk scene?
> (D): (…) Strictly, it is not a documentary about the freak-folk scene, but purely a story about friendship between what were three very important phenomena in popular music at the time, around 2005-2006, Devendra Banhart, CocoRosie and Antony & the Johnsons.
>
> — (David, 52, Amsterdam, music journalist / director / program maker)

> (L): It all started with... that documentary which the VPRO…?
> (N): *Eternal Children?*
> (L): Yeah, I watched it and I immediately thought: 'wow!'. I thought it was amazing, and immediately embraced it [the music of CocoRosie].
>
> — (Line, 57, Rotterdam, visual artist / technician, CocoRosie fan)

> I also did this thing with Lucky Fonz, Lucky Fonz III. Essentially, he is a folk artist – obviously. He started as a musician at the same time I released Eternal Children. And he was inspired, too, by a few artists in the documentary. Yeah… sometimes those things are in the air, you know, then you affirm each other.
>
> — (David, 52, Amsterdam, music journalist / director / program maker)

> (O): I had a romantic desire for… a desire for a romantic life. Because in 2005 I still worked as an English teacher in high school and that sort of was my life. I was in a relationship and… we were about to move in with each other, and I saw myself becoming very *bourgeois*. But there always was this sort of 'living your life as a rock star', that I always secretly wanted to live. (…) And then around 2005 there suddenly were all those new singer-songwriters, who very non-shamefully exact that type of singer-songwriter. Before there was David Grey or that kind of stuff, you know, a kind of those half poppy kind of singer-songwriters. But then suddenly there was CocoRosie, Devendra Banhart, Bright Eyes, with those autobiographic fragments of his [referring to how Bright Eyes frontman Conor Oberst, on some of his earlier albums, has included autobiographical references, NvP]. And those sort of paradise-bird-type-of singer-songwriters like Antony and the Johnsons – all singer-songwriters in the classical sense, all real singer-songwriters…CocoRosie, when I heard them for the first time… I had to think about the Carter Family, you know. That was the first thing that popped into my mind: it sounds like the Carter Family!
>
> — (Otto alias Lucky Fonz III, 36, Amsterdam, professional musician)

The quotes emphasize how, around 2005/2006, gradually a group of likeminded people started to familiarize themselves with American and British folk music – how they decided to shoot a documentary of the New York freak folk scene; how they became fans of acts like CocoRosie almost overnight, or how they, after hearing the music of Devendra Banhart and others, left their former job as a teacher and decided to live a more romantic life by becoming a professional musician instead. Similarly, Dutch indie labels, such as Snowstar Records (Utrecht, the Netherlands), made a transition from releasing punk-infused albums to releases that were accordingly framed as

"indie/folk/singer/songwriter-esque" (Snowstar Records, [n.d.]. Currently, Snowstar Records has formed a scene of musicians and fans around the label and houses some of the more popular indie-folk acts of the Netherlands, including I Am Oak, Kim Janssen, Town of Saints, and broeder Dieleman. The bigger Dutch indie labels, including Excelsior Recordings (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), started to increasingly release folk-infused music around 2006, and now promote acts such as awkward i, Goslink, Tangarine, The Bluegrass Boogiemen, and El Pino and the Volunteers – which fall under the broader banner of indie-folk. And around 2008, even the major labels included Dutch folk acts into their rosters, such as Blaudzun (V2 Records Benelux), Mister and Mississippi (V2 Records Benelux), Lucky Fonz III (Topnotch / Universal Music Benelux), and Douwe Bob Posthuma (Universal Music Benelux). The latter won the 2012 version of the popular Dutch television show *De Beste Singer-Songwriter [Best Singer-Songwriter of the Netherlands*, NvP] and was the Dutch representative in the finals of the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest.

In the empirical chapters that follow I, more specifically, introduce members of the Dutch indie-folk field and provide answers to the central research question of this thesis, which is *how and why folk music, given the 'death' of romanticist constructions of (social) authenticity in postmodernity, has reemerged as an industry-based genre and regained momentum in the Dutch music industry*. In the chapter that follows first (chapter 5) I aim to answer the question what factors have afforded the social production of indie-folk in the Netherlands, after which I continue with studies on the social construction of indie-folk as a performance of cultural omnivorousness (chapter 6) and on the role of indie-folk in the formation of narrative identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience (chapter 7).

Chapter 5 – Empirics

Bringing the Banjo Back to Life: The Field of Dutch Independent Folk Music as Participatory Culture[1]

1. A shorter version of this chapter is published – in co-authorship with Janna Michael – in *First Monday,* 2016, 21(3), and has been awarded with the "Graduate School Award for PhD Excellence 2016", Erasmus Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v0i0.638

In a sense, we have a process analogous to leaving the factory system and returning to cottage home industry production all made possible by the most advanced technologies available.

- John Ryan and Richard A. Peterson (1993) [2]

2. "Occupational and Organization Consequence of the Digital Revolution in Music Making", 1993, p. 195.

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the affordances that allowed folk music to emerge and attract the attention of gatekeepers operating at the music industry and its audiences.[3] Independent folk music (indie-folk) is defined here as a genre, structured around a set of key aesthetics (see below), rather than as a mode of distribution or an ethos (*cf.*, Fonarow, 2006). Although there are marked differences in aesthetics and institutional politics between the various subgenres associated with contemporary folk music (see chapter 6), I have chosen to not strictly differentiate among them for several reasons. First, because the empirical work underlying this research indicates that Dutch folk musicians generally position themselves within the broader categories of 'folk' or 'indie-folk', and disregard other genre classifications as too narrow or, in the case of freak-folk, as somewhat offensive. Second, because this research indicates, in ways similar to Hesmondhalgh (1999, p. 51), that indie-folk defines itself partly by distancing itself from a punk ethos, thus moving from the margins of the music industry more towards its center. Hence it becomes a term designating a particular sound or genre rather than an attitude.

Although folk music has traditionally been seen as the antithesis of industrialization and technological development, tapping into a romantic discourse of authenticity (see chapter 2 of this thesis), I argue that the genre of indie-folk fits well into new conditions of media production and distribution embedded in "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006). This results from indie-folk being grounded in a "folk ideology" revolving around values of egalitarianism, participation and inclusiveness (see chapter 2). Similarly, online participatory culture is often ideologically defined as a folk culture for the digital age, as it builds community by sharing, operates on the basis of collective instead of individual ownership, and thus implodes the hierarchy between specialized producers and passive consumers (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 136-141).

Whilst the rise of Web 2.0 and the emergence of indie-folk in the first decade of the new millennium happened simultaneously, and, as I suggest, can be related to each other, systematic links between these phenomena are rarely addressed in the literature. It has been suggested that the digitization of music production would have led to a resurgence of music with a "folk culture-like quality" (Ryan and Peterson, 1993, p. 195). This analogy is often continued with Web 2.0, where theorists recognize the emergence of online "digital folklore", manifest in phenomena such as amateur re-workings and re-circulations of commercial video clips (Blank, 2009). In this study I have taken this argument a step further by looking at the relevance of participatory culture in a different habitat – that of the domain of independent labels, DIY music producers and active music fans. Drawing from 48 in-depth interviews with indie-folk musicians, gatekeepers and audience members, I argue that the shift towards greater participation related to the emergence of Web 2.0 not only constitutes a creation of online digital folklore, but is also representative of the creation and production of contemporary folk music, structured around a set of "participatory aesthetics" (Turino, 2008).

This chapter is organized in the following way. In the introductory sections, I first (2.1.) address how innovation in music production can be studied from a "production of culture perspective" (Peterson and Anand, 2004). Second, I investigate to what extent the Internet and Web 2.0 have changed the structure of the global music industry, including the conditions of music production and distribution within this new structure. Accordingly, I provide an overview (2.2.) of relevant work on music scenes. Having introduced data and methods (section 3), I present the findings in section 4, which is structured in four parts, focusing on (4.1.) DIY career building; (4.2.) self-organization by active indie-folk fans; (4.3.) distancing from punk ethos in musicians' careers, and (4.4.) changes in the institutional politics of Dutch indie firms and promotional platforms. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the emergence of folk music as a strategy to bring authenticity back to music.

5. 2. Theorizing innovation in popular music production

5.2.1. Participatory culture entering the music industry

Sociologists working within the production of culture perspective have emphasized that although culture generally evolves gradually, it can occasionally be subject to rapid change. Change may occur, as discussed in the Introduction

3. In this chapter, I define and study the "social production" of independent folk music in the Netherlands in a generic sense. This means that the concept of "production" is defined in a broad sense, including not only processes of creation and manufacturing, but also of dissemination, evaluation, and consumption (see chapter 1 of this thesis for a detailed elaboration on how (innovation in) culture, from a production of culture-perspective, is defined and studied). Although it should be emphasized that the boundaries between the production and consumption of indie-folk, as this chapter illustrates, are occasionally blurry and difficult to delineate.

of this thesis, not because of special accomplishments by a few creative individuals (the "supply side explanation"), nor due to changes within audience or consumer patterns (the "demand side explanation"), but rather because of changes in the structure of the system of cultural production. Accordingly, Peterson and Anand (2004) have identified six constraints or factors that facilitate the production of culture in systems: technology, law and regulation, industry structure, organizational structure, occupational career and market forces.

Peterson (1990, p. 313) highlighted that technology and law and regulation often are the two factors that can set change in motion, and therefore "define the context in which the others operate." This can be observed, for instance, in relation to changes in copyright regulations and the emergence of television in the mid-1950s, which were crucial factors in the popularization of communal musics and the rise of rock 'n' roll, eventually displacing the then dominant jazz aesthetic of the U.S. popular recording industry (Peterson, 1990). Furthermore, Ryan and Peterson (1993) observed early on that the development of new digital technologies would lead to changes in job skills and aesthetic standards. These changes, more specifically, would lead to an emergence of music with a "folk culture-like quality" (Ryan and Peterson, 1993, p. 195) thanks to the access to relatively cheap do-it-yourself (DIY) computer equipment and software.

Ryan and Peterson (1993) were pivotal in a debate on the effects of digitalization of media and the accessibility of the Internet to the internal structure of the media landscape (see Slot, 2013 for a theoretical overview). A recurrent issue within this debate is the notion of "media convergence". Jenkins (2006) noted that "media convergence" is not simply a technological shift – a transition from 'old' (mass) to 'new' (digital) media – but rather a confluence between two systems of cultural production. In his words:

> convergence (...) is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process (...). Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets, and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18).

Media convergence would thus shift the power balance between specialized media companies, independent firms and everyday users, blurring boundaries between 'active' producers and 'passive' consumers (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). Jenkins (2006, p. 331) therefore referred to this system of media production as "participatory culture", a culture "in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content" (ibid, p. 33).

As Ardèvol *et al.* (2010, p. 264) have argued, what remains problematic in the debate on media convergence "are questions of power relations, agency and the role of the media industry in shaping 'media practices'." Although they acknowledge that in the current media landscape the traditional roles of producers, gatekeepers and audiences are changing, they question whether the blurring of boundaries between producers and consumers undermines the hegemonic power that media conglomerates might still have in agenda setting. Focusing particularly on the music industry, the question of changing power relations has led to diverging opinions. Wikström (2009, pp. 4-8) argues that digitization has transformed the music industry to such an extent that it is relevant to talk about a "new music economy". This new music economy would be characterized by three basic features: (i) high connectivity and little control; (ii) music provided as a service rather than as a product; and (iii) increased amateur creativity. The emergence of a new music economy is somewhat contradicted, however, by recent statistics, which indicate that the contemporary recording industry is still highly centralized. Approximately 76 percent of the physical and digital music market is controlled by three major companies: Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group (Music & Copyright, 2016). Though a large number of independent firms control about a quarter of the international music market, the bulk market share of the major record companies thus persists. This challenges views on the internal dynamics of the commercial music industry, characterized by long periods of dominance by large firms on the one hand and short spans of resurgence by independents, often due to technological changes, on the other (*cf.*, Peterson and Berger, 1975; Lopes, 2002).

Drawing on the works of Jenkins (2006) and Wikström (2009), Baym (2011) has argued that Swedish independent record firms deal with participatory culture more effectively than major record firms. Rather than approaching the audience as a market, owners of independent labels approach their fans "as equals with whom they can build a larger community that benefits them all" (Baym, 2011, pp. 22-24). By giving away free samples, hosting file sharing on their websites, writing label blogs and creating direct interaction between fans and musicians, they are able to build communities based on the practice of sharing. In so doing, they adapt

the ideologies and practices of the gift economy – based on values of trust such as egalitarianism, community and collective feeling – rather than producing music for the market place. In practice, however, both types of economies are often interrelated, placing indie producers in a balancing act between being art-oriented on the one hand and economy-oriented on the other (ibid, pp. 26-32).

In their study of international fan labor in the Swedish independent music market, Baym and Burnett (2009) similarly found that *fans* are creating communities without industry support. They do so by forming relationships with artists in organizing small-scale events. According to Baym and Burnett (2009, p. 434), these active music fan communities are the "manifestation of the 'participatory' culture behind Web 2.0." They argue that

> their social response to the pleasures of music is situated in deeply meaningful social phenomena that harkens back to much earlier phases of musical history, phases before there was an industry, when music was always performed in communities by locals for locals rather than by distant celebrities for adoring fans (ibid, p. 446).

By investigating the role of fan labor in the Swedish independent music market, Baym and Burnett approached the reception of popular music as a form of cultural production in its own right (see Ardèvol *et al.*, 2010, p. 263). Baym and Burnett, more specifically, focus on "how people's media practices mix with institutionalized media practices and how they contribute to define cultural production" (ibid, p. 265). Their study thus expands the boundaries of popular music production beyond the confines of the recording industry. This relates to criticism from researchers working within the field of cultural studies, who criticized work produced within the production of culture perspective as it studied innovation in music production only in relation to music produced and disseminated within the confines of the recording industry (see Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Strachan, 2007). It has been suggested that this is a very limited view on studying innovation in popular music production, since outside the boundaries of the established recording industry numerous actors are involved in the (small-scale) production and dissemination of new forms of popular music (see section 1.5.4. of this thesis). Such active fan labor often takes place in (trans)local music scenes (Bennett & Peterson, 2004), occasionally forming spaces where "scene-based industries" emerge (ibid, p. 5) – with fan and institutionalized practices intermingling with media.

5.2.2. Music scenes: Between professionalization and bohemianism

Ryan and Peterson (1993) predicted that the emergence of digital music technology would lead to the revitalization of local and regional music scenes. They argued that "because it is now easier than ever to produce a professional quality product, and yet still difficult to promote and distribute it nationally, many artists [will] focus on developing a reputation within the area where they are known from frequent live appearances" (Ryan and Peterson, 1993, p. 193). Local and regional scenes are thus central to the local distribution of music and the establishment of musical careers, particularly after the introduction of digital music technology.

Apart from being hubs in the distribution of (local and regional) music, scenes are also important sites of cultural *production* (Currid, 2007). As Currid argued, social and cultural activities are part of cultural scenes. The boundaries of scenes, often invisible and highly elastic, are based on genre, activity and location (Straw, 2004). In this paper, we therefore define the concept of music scene, following Bennett and Peterson (2004, p. 1), as "clusters of producers, musicians, and fans [who] collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others." Moreover, we consider the concept of scene at the intersection of community and genre – that is to say, consumers bring in their skills and expertise and accordingly form informal networks with musicians and promoters based on genre conventions. Thus, collaborations and co-creation activities both within and among scenes are rather common (Currid, 2007).

Scenes, however, are not only informal networks. They serve as the places and spaces where individuals acquire knowledge, form social relations and learn accepted behavior; therefore, they are important bases for the establishing of professional careers (Straw, 2004, p. 413). Such informal networks, moreover, occasionally form the center of scene-supporting industries, "the domain of small collectives, fans turned entrepreneurs, and volunteer labor" (Bennett and Peterson, 2004, p. 5). Scene involvement can thus involve a range of different roles. Fans, for instance, can function as publicists, promoters, archivists and curators of the music they like and aim to promote among peers – as exemplified in the aforementioned study of Baym and Burnett (2009).

While informal exchange is a central characteristic of scenes, Hauge and Hracs (2010) described different forms

of trade within (trans-)local music scenes. A more traditional way of trading is bartering, by which "individuals or groups trade goods and services for free" (Hauge and Hracs, 2010, p. 121). Other forms of trading are "adjustable value exchange" and "full value exchange". Adjustable value exchange "implies the exchange of monetary payment commensurate with the economic and symbolic status of individuals involved" (ibid, p. 122). The amount is often determined by what is perceived as fair but can be lowered if individuals have little money but high cultural capital. Full value exchange, finally, is "exchanging goods and services for full price" (ibid), but raises the question of how monetary value is ascribed to symbolic goods and services.

Creative collaborators paying each other full monetary value establishes a sense of professionalism. Hauge and Hracs (2010, p. 122) observed a growing sentiment amongst indie producers that described formal and "professional agreements as more efficient, productive and creative." However, most of the transactions were still described as favors among friends. One explanation for these seemingly contradictory arrangements between indie producers is that they aim to invoke a bohemian ethic as a defense against accusations of 'selling out' or being too business-minded. According to Hauge and Hracs, indie producers need to brand and collaborate to compete, but they also need to disguise these strategies to make it appear unplanned and spontaneous – because "'trying too hard' is no longer cool" (ibid, pp. 120-121). They thus observed a tension between the more traditional bohemian careers rooted in do-it-yourself (DIY) ideology and the notion that the commercial success of indie musicians was "increasingly predicated on their ability to embrace and operate within the mainstream" (ibid.).[4]

This relates to earlier research by Hesmondhalgh (1999), who pointed to the fact that independent (record) firms increasingly move towards professionalization through the establishment of economic and political relationships with corporate firms. Hesmondhalgh (1999, pp. 52-53) interpreted this move towards professionalization as a consequence of the 'conservative' institutional politics of independent firms, characterized by a preference to stay true to their indie aesthetics. According to Hesmondhalgh, independent firms could only do so by forming commercial partnerships with major firms, thus by 'selling out'. Otherwise independent firms ran the risk of marginalization or 'burning out'. Hauge and Hracs (2010), however, saw 'selling out' or commercialization of indie producers as a response to the demands of DIY production induced by digital technologies. As digitization leads to an oversupply of products and thus to increasing global competition, it encourages "musicians to be original and stand out from the crowd" (2010, p. 118). Building relationships with professionals in the field, then, is a strategy for independent musicians, producers and firms to bring their self-produced products to international audiences.

In the case of Toronto, Hauge and Hracs specifically observed how entrepreneurial musicians strategically enlisted "the services of other creative individuals to enhance the symbolic value of their products" (ibid). Moreover, they developed visual styles that supported their sound, invested in cross-media packaging and professionalized their management. Hauge and Hracs (2010) observed that musicians involved in small-scale DIY production were less affected by the increased professionalization but adhered more to participation, bartering and developing a sense of intimacy. Here, the scene as a (trans-)local cultural space remains of central importance to music distribution, as predicted by Ryan and Peterson. In interviews conducted for this study, I observed a shift towards professionalization among musicians involved in the production and distribution of indie (folk) music. Before elaborating on this observation, however, first a short elaboration o data analysis and the results it generated will be introduced.

5. 3. Methodology [5]

The interviews were analysed using thematic narrative analysis, placing a premium on the content of the text (the "whats") rather than on the "hows" of replying (Kohler-Riessman, 2005, pp. 2-3). Analysis of interviews pointed out that the distinctions between producer, gatekeeper and consumer still makes sense, although the boundaries between the categories – particularly when it concerns the activities of agents operating within (trans)local indie-folk scenes – are often blurry. This can be seen as typical of folk music, where the bundling of tasks and the establishment of close connections between artists, distributors and audiences are part of the conventions defining the genre (Alexander, 2003, pp. 115-116). The fact that specifically these conventions have become relevant for gatekeepers operating at

4. Articulated in the 1970s punk movement, DIY ethics can be described as "make your own culture and stop consuming that which is made for you" (Duncombe, 1997, p. 2). It is thus more than 'doing stuff yourself'. As Beaver (2012, p. 30) puts it, underlying DIY is "a rejection of 'inauthentic' mass-produced consumer culture in favor of an 'authentic' folk culture, a celebration of amateurism, and most importantly, the desire for individual control over cultural production."

5. See for a detailed elaboration on data collection section 1.5. of this thesis.

the professionalized field of musical production, however, also is exemplary for changes in the institutional politics of the alternative mainstream firms they represent.

The presentation of the research findings will follow in the next section. It is structured in four parts, focusing on (4.1.) how digitization relates to DIY career building; on (4.2.) how Web 2.0 results in the formation and establishment of (trans-)local indie-folk scenes; on (4.3.) how a shift from a punk ethos towards folk aesthetics can be perceived in the careers of musicians; and, finally on (4.4.) how a similar shift can be perceived in the institutional politics of music institutions, partly resulting from the more relational instead of oppositional ideologies characteristic of participatory culture.

5. 4. The field of Dutch indie-folk as participatory culture

5.4.1. Building your own career: DIY production meets the industry

Studying the career paths of musicians, I found that some followed more conventional, that is, institutionalized routes. Beginning at a pop academy, art academy or music conservatory, they started by playing in living room concerts, subsequently toured bigger music venues in the Netherlands, participated in local and national music competitions and eventually signed record deals with either a major label or with a large independent record firm. This type of career path is explained, for example, by Danny (24) and Samgar (30), singer-guitarist and singer-percussionist, respectively, of the Utrecht-based indie-folk band Mister and Mississippi. During the interview, they explained how they signed with major label V2 Records Benelux (part of the V2 International group) shortly after establishing their band at Herman Brood Academy (Utrecht) in 2013. Moreover, they explained how one of their teachers, working as a professional in the music industry, guided them in their process of becoming a professional band. Danny and Samgar nonetheless emphasize the importance of playing in living room concerts at the start of their careers, occasions they used to gain experience as (live) musicians and to gather a crowd. As such, they emphasize the importance of the self-organizing activities of 'active' consumers (see below), as they used the experience of playing in living room concerts as a stepping-stone in developing professional careers:

> (N): Do you have any idea what caused that you guys made it as a band, and that other bands from Herman Brood Academy didn't make it?
>
> (S): Yes, we talk about that a lot. But it's a tricky thing to pinpoint… For us… if we look back, it was timing and hard work. V2 was involved because of Marcel [music teacher and professional musician, NvP]. All those factors are important for a band to become successful… And with us: it was just right. We were recording a record, with Reyn [musican and producer], we were playing at Noorderslag [Eurosonic Noorderslag festival, Groningen, the Netherlands], at De Wereld Draait Door [famous Dutch daily talk show], with Giel [Beelen, famous Dutch radio DJ and TV personality]. We played a lot… But before we did a ot of living room concerts. We really worked hard on gathering a crowd, so that we were creating a buzz in the Netherlands. We did all we could.[6]

Most of the musicians, however, are self-taught, and have used DIY strategies to develop their careers. In many cases, they established their own record labels, built their own sound studios and rehearsal rooms, produced, recorded and mixed their own songs and records, designed and screen-printed their own album art, and sometimes even built their own instruments. This type of career path is explained, for example, by Rotterdam-based indie-folk and musician Harm Goslink Kuiper (43). He builds his own instruments from scrap material, such as his "fruit box dobro" and "cookie jar banjo", and released his mostly self-produced debut album on the Excelsior Recordings label in 2010, one of the larger independent record labels in the Netherlands. In the following interview excerpt, he explains the technique he used in learning to play his instruments. It is a technique he learned from a music teacher when being a child, consisting of mimicking a famous Dutch commercial tune (the "Loeki-Leeuw tune") – with his music teacher being replaced by a multi-track recorder when growing up:

I bought an old banjo, a Sips. That's is the only real Dutch banjo maker. (…) But ehm, a five-string banjo. And then I had a guitar and a banjo. But I still hadn't achieved tomake a full sound. So I bought a multi-track recorder, so I could record myself. And so I increasingly recorded more of myself. And I needed more instruments, so I bought a mandolin too, and I learned to play the mandolin in the same way as that 'Loeki Leeuw tune'. I taught myself to

6. The interviews were originally in Dutch. The quotations were translated by the author.

play it. And that was really a kick: 'Wow, this sounds like real bluegrass!' You know, a bit raw. Home-recorded.

Rikke (33, Rotterdam), singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist of the Rotterdam-based indie-folk band *Half Way Station,* similarly explained how he decided to become a musician by learning to play the banjo and guitar, using YouTube videos as instruction manuals:

> (R): When I listened to folk back in the days, I watched a lot of YouTube indeed, but that's something I don't usually do anymore.
> (N): But you got to know a lot of music through YouTube?
> (R): Yeah, especially the folksy stuff. Those people are dead, so you have to.
> (N): Yes, exactly. So you started searching. And how was it then? You typed in a musician, and then you started clicking and watching more videos?
> (R): Hmm ... I had a period that I was working on those American banjo players. I collected them.
> (N): And so you learned to play the banjo that way?
> (R): Yes, because of YouTube, and the guitar as well.

After graduating from art academy, Rikke decided to start earning his living by writing folk songs and performing live music. He first performed as a singer-songwriter in the style of pre-war bluesmen and the early Bob Dylan — "as just a guy with a guitar, banjo and harmonica playing blues and folk songs in the local bar", as he said. The local bar was also where he met a fellow singer and songwriter who, during one of his concerts, spontaneously appeared on stage and started to play and sing along. Interestingly, Rikke frames the formation of his career as typical of the folk tradition: two self-taught musicians who accidently meet, learn to play and perform music through live performances and spontaneously swap instruments on stage.

After touring in Dutch music events and festivals and participating in several local pop music competitions, the two-man formation gradually evolved into a five-man band, including a pianist, bass player and drummer. *Half Way Station* has self-released two studio albums, in 2012 and 2015, respectively, which were self-financed and for which band members did everything themselves – from building microphones to the writing, recording and mixing of songs, designing album art and printing album covers. Rikke self-consciously frames his urge to do things himself as part of DIY discourse, or, more accurately, of the embattled stance that characterized DIY ethos:

> We've reached a point in our careers that we have done a lot of stuff ourselves ... Print screening, cutting, folding, gluing, recording, even the instruments, the microphones, we all made them ourselves. Everything done by ourselves. And we found a sort of confirmation in that. And now I am working on, ehm, if we now cooperate with people, it should be the right person. (...) These days nobody between 20 and 30 makes an arrangement for 20 years (...) or signs a contract for three years. (...) But that makes it very difficult at the same time. Everything is very volatile. For example, many bands work like this: a songwriter, a bunch of musicians – of one label, or with whom they have studied at conservatory. They hire them, pay them 50 bucks per show, well, and they tour along the festivals. If it's a hit, then they continue doing it for another year, or try to make an album that flops then. If it's not a hit, well then the whole group falls apart. And this is the kind of rhythm among which the bands that are stayers are the exception.

Underlying the appropriation of the DIY attitude, as mentioned previously (see note 32), is a rejection of mass production or wider consumer culture in favor of a more 'authentic' folk culture. In many cases, the music industry against which DIY producers define themselves is perceived as artistically homogenizing and exploitative (*cf.* Strachan, 2007). This becomes apparent in the way Rikke describes his career as having grown 'organically', as well as the way he criticizes the volatility of the music industry. It explains Rikke's preference for being a "stayer" in the field and building sustainable relations with co-musicians and audiences. The band, therefore, is organized as a foundation, which enables Rikke to build financial capacity, since income from the band is not paid to the musicians, but directly flows back into the foundation. This approach, however, requires that band members earn income outside of producing and performing music as well.

Tessa (28, Utrecht, professional musician and music teacher), singer-songwriter and guitarist of the Utrecht-based indie-folk bands *Orlando* and *Wooden Saints*, provided a different example of DIY cultural production. After graduating from the Rotterdam Conservatory, she lived together with band members in cheap housing near Utrecht. At that location, they built their own rehearsal room and recording studio, writing and recording music

inspired by popular indie-folk acts such as, for example, Patrick Watson and Sharon Van Etten. Tessa explained her motivation as follows:

> Right now everything costs a lot of money, such as practicing. For example, if you want to use a rehearsal space, it costs money. Because we are living here, it is actually for free. Same thing with a studio, this is also very expensive. But we have it ourselves. Thus we make sure to do as much as possible by ourselves, also because it pays the most. You know, if you sign with a label, then part of the profit goes to the label. While if I sell it, taxes go off, but the rest is for us.

In this example, digital computer technology allowed musicians to create their own studios, record their own music, produce their own albums and establish their own labels. However, Tessa's remarks also illustrate that tapping into DIY discourse is not necessarily part of an anti-establishment ethos. It is as much the result of cost reduction and pragmatic realism.

DIY production enabled indie-folk producers, like Rikke and Tessa, to increase the scale of their operations and to compete with other professional musicians operating in the semi-periphery of the Dutch music industry. I did not see, however, that digitization enabled independent music producers to circumvent intermediaries and gatekeepers, as sometimes inferred, or that it led to the process of "disintermedialization" (Slot, 2013, p. 21). Besides their willingness to do things themselves – either out of ideological or pragmatic reasons – Dutch indie-folk musicians are focused on building relationships with professionals and institutions operating in the (inter)national music industry, rather than, in the words of Rikke, "aiming to be a religious DIY-er." As this research suggests, they work together with bookers, pluggers, copyrighters and marketers, organizing concerts and arranging press coverage. They most often have distribution deals with larger Dutch independent record firms, such as Snowstar Records, Utrecht, Excelsior Recordings, Amsterdam, and V2 Benelux, Hilversum, through which their home-produced music is disseminated to Dutch music stores and international streaming services such as Spotify and Deezer. In order to secure these distribution deals, indie-folk musicians need to build local recognition and gain symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2011[1986]), depending on gatekeepers such as radio DJs, music journalists and talent scouts. Most of the musicians interviewed for this paper explicitly mentioned the importance of participating in local competitions, such as the annual 'Popronde', a traveling music festival touring along 31 Dutch cities. Tessa explained:

> The first 'Popronde' [in 2012] we played in Nijmegen. (...) And there we did a session for 'Cortonville', from Erik Corton [Dutch radio DJ and famous TV personality]. He has this web site, and our gig has been widely viewed on the Internet, that was our first thing directed to the outside world, although we were around for some time already. But we didn't perform that much, I think this was our fourth performance. And that went really well. It was filmed, and Erik Corton said: 'I want to follow you guys, because I think you are great!' So in September we did the 'Popronde' and in November we recorded our first album. In the meantime, we also toured with Wooden Saints, and more and more bookings came in. More and more people heard about us and they loved it.

These observations are consistent with notions of "media convergence," arguing that grassroots creativity coexist with corporate convergence, rather than undermining power bases of major institutions 'within' the music industry or working purely independent. These observations are also in line with the research by Hauge and Hracs (2010) (see section 5.2.), who observed shifts from traditional bohemian careers towards increased professionalization. Dutch indie-folk musicians are 'home-grown', but distance themselves from 'religious DIY-ing'. They choose to operate within the confines of what was adequately referred to by one respondent as "the alternative mainstream" (Atze, 37, Utrecht, editor-in-chief, '3voor12'), rather than existing at the margins of the music industry.[7]

7. The alternative mainstream is a concept coined by music scholar Gert Keunen in his dissertation about "the mechanisms and logics of decisions, choices and selections made by people working on the pop music circuit" in Flanders (Keunen, 2014, p. 11). The concept refers to "the music segment that lies between the 'mainstream' and the 'underground'" (ibid, p. 12), including genres such as hip hop, rock, folk, and electronic music. As such, it is not itself a musical style, but a "cultural construct" – an umbrella term that serves as a selection mechanism to cater the taste of "music lovers", however by drawing symbolic boundaries around the all too weird and the all too commercial. By being a hybrid between the 'avant-garde' and 'mainstream', it is, very much like 'indie', a "buffer zone (…) where economic and cultural logics meet in a most prominent manner" (ibid, p. 12).

5.4.2. Deep scene involvement: The active consumer as organizer

Although the binary distinction between passive and active usage dominant in the debate on participatory culture appears false, since 'users' are always actively interpreting media content on both cognitive and bodily levels to some extent (Jansz, 2010), it is worth observing that most of the fans interviewed for this paper could be generally termed 'active users'. They work (or have worked) as amateur journalists, participate in online music contests, actively share music with peers through social network sites, and have often created online user profiles on sites such as Last.fm and 8-track in order to map their musical tastes and taste formations. Most of the audience members, moreover, explicitly referred to themselves as "active listeners", expressing their discomfort with randomly skipping through digital playlists or defining music as background noise (see on the consumption of indie-folk as a way to create a "literary mode", Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis). They purchased music on CD or vinyl in order to support their favorite artists and bands. Finally, most were amateur musicians, playing music for entertainment or, more commonly, to deepen the understanding of their favorite songs. Thus, although our interview sample is limited, these observations are contrary to claims that the commercialization of music would drive out amateur musicians and reduce users to silent and passive consumers (*cf.*, Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp. 113-115).

As part of their deep involvement with the scene, some fans were actively participating in the promotion and dissemination of indie-folk by organizing small-scale events. An example of such involvement was provided by Rolof (30, Utrecht, health care social worker), indie-folk fan, amateur musician and founder and organizer of the *Raspberry Sessions*. The *Raspberry Sessions* were a series of concerts that took place in a residential group in the center of Utrecht. At the start of the interview, Rolof explained his first ideas on organizing the event as follows:

> I am also a musician and I was part of a band (...) I was thinking about opportunities to release material ourselves (...) So, releasing everything in-house so everything you are producing stays within a small circle of peers. Well, that didn't work (...) But the name Raspberry Records was still on my mind and that has turned into *Raspberry Sessions*, by way of self-organizing and inviting people yourself and taking care of the musicians, that they are paid well for what they are doing and contribute to the event.

Rolof, struggling as a musician to sustain a micro-label, continued to be involved in the field by organizing events. The aim of the *Raspberry Sessions*, as Rolof explained, was to make sure that artists were paid a proper fee, achieved by asking visitors to pay a fixed entrance price:

> Often they walk around with a hat, which is a nice gesture, but results in people thinking: 'okay, I throw in two bucks' ... whereas there are so many good musicians! I would like to take care of these musicians and make sure that they are properly paid for what their status is, as well as that their music gives people something cheerful on their free afternoons. Then I thought: well, we can work around that by charging a fixed ticket price.

Rolof adapted to a form of "full value exchange" (Hauge and Hracs, 2010) to become financially sustainable and to circumvent the risk of not being able to pay musicians reasonable fees. This could be interpreted as a form of 'implicit commercialism', since the mission statement of the *Raspberry Sessions* was non-profit. Underlying the organization of the event, however was a criticism on commercial music business, as Rolof explained:

> I like it when it happens within my own network. Thus, that you don't need to use official music industry resources. For very slick pop music it is great if there is a d irect link between the industry and broadcasting it on the radio. Then people can earn lots of money with it. But that's not what I want.

As an organizer of the *Raspberry Sessions*, Rolof was concerned with adding value, forming a network revolving around his organization and letting visitors experience music in a more intimate, local and relational setting. This was seen as contrary to "very slick pop music", which Rolof saw as industrialized and profit-driven. The sessions occurred thanks to the availability of facilities in the residential group where Rolof lived. The house, which has a history in the 1980s squatting movement, includes a small stage with professional equipment and a bar. Moreover, the residential group was the home of highly educated individuals, mostly employed in creative jobs. These people provided easy access to their networks and maintain strong relationships with each other. The ability of Rolof to take advantage of these human resources was crucial to the success of the *Raspberry Sessions*, as he explained:

> The fun thing is that everyone wants to cooperate. So if I come up with a nice idea, people are saying: 'If you need help I can do this or that.' And that is awesome. In fact, the *Raspberry Sessions* cannot even exist without the help of those people. But I also need those people who are willing to join the event as a spectator. So it exists by virtue of my own environment.

Thus, although the *Raspberry Sessions* was primarily promoted online, particularly on Facebook and Twitter, with tickets sold via e-mail, the event would not have occurred without these 'off-line' resources. As a space where an active music fan such as Rolof brought in his own skills, expertise and network, it needed a physical place to facilitate strong ties, as well as social capital and "relational attributes" (Nicholls, 2009; Uitermark, 2014), such as trust, loyalty and a sense of duty, to exist and to be sustained. Thus, although the Internet and Web 2.0 lowered the threshold to self-organize and to self-promote events, it was driven by 'off-line' networks, plugging into existing technological and physical infrastructures, providing a convergence of 'old' and 'new' media.

The organization of the *Raspberry Sessions* is an example of a contribution to the establishment of a local indie-folk scene, "the clustering of fans, promoters, and musicians around a specific geographical focus" (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, p. 6). Harmen (31, Groningen, professional musician), singer-guitarist of the Groningen-based indie-folk band *Town of Saints*, provided an example of a contribution to the establishment of a trans-local scene – local scenes that are "connected with groups of kindred spirits many miles away" (ibid, pp. 8-9). Besides a professional musician, Harmen – at the time of the interview (January, 22, 2014) – is the co-organizer and co-host of the Melodica Festival Groningen. Melodica is the name of a festival concept founded by Australian musician Pete Uhlenbruch in December 2007, who organized the inaugural festival in Melbourne, Australia (Melodica Festival, 2017). Since then, various editions of the festival have popped up around the globe, with organizers forming online networks by maintaining contact through Facebook as well as by regularly visiting scheduled events.

Harmen organizes the festival together with a group of friends and volunteers. The audience largely consists of active folk music fans, most of whom were members of a local scene assembled by Wishfulmusic. Wishfulmusic organizes living room concerts in Groningen starting in January, 2011. The two co-founders of the organization actively participated in the organization of the Melodica Festival. One of the co-founders, Wouter (38, Groningen, customer service employee), explained his urge to organize the festival and other small-scale indie-folk activities as follows:

> The idea is to get musicians and the public together, to create a nice atmosphere through which beautiful music can be made and people feel comfortable. (...) Eh, it's all about the experience. The experience of music is totally different during a living room concert from a concert in a popular music venue. There, there always is a certain division between the audience, the musicians, and the stage. (...) But during a living room concert, it's a collective experience, then you listen to music intimately. And during living room concerts (...) there is no one talking during the music. So all the attention goes to the musicians, and that's pretty comfortable for them, that there are no disturbing devices.

In ways similar to the *Raspberry Sessions*, the aim of organizing living room concerts and the Melodica Festival was 'to tear down the stage' – that is, to create a sense of intimacy and community among musicians and audiences and to establish egalitarian relationships between them. It was an attempt to frame music as a social experience rather than as a commodity. This is confirmed by the mission statement of the Melodica festival, which is "to foster a sense of community in an increasingly challenging industry" (Melodica, 2017).

For their contribution to the Melodica Festival, musicians were indirectly paid by selling merchandise and directly by donations from the audience. These donations were gathered throughout the weekend by volunteers walking around with a hat. Both were forms of "adjustable value exchange" (Hauge and Hracs, 2010). Acoustic folk music was largely featured at the Melodica Festival, referred to by Harmen as "coffeehouse folk", a term through which he created a historical linkage with the international coffeehouse folk scenes of the 1960s. The term 'coffeehouse folk', however, also uncovered the aesthetic politics of the festival, emphasizing 'intimacy,' 'community' and 'collective feeling'. This was evidenced by the request of the organizers to reduce 'noise' during performances. Throughout the festival organizers urged the public to silence their voices during songs, to mute or shut down their smartphones, and discouraged the audience from photographing or video recording performances. Doing so, they implicitly criticized the mediation and visualization of live music through user-generated content,

which was regarded by the festival organizers as an indirect and insincere way of experiencing music. Participants were expected to be fully immersed within the music (seen as a social experience), rather than being distracted by devices, such as smartphones and video cameras, or being distracted by conversation. This indicates that the self-organization of indie-folk events, such as Melodica, although encouraged by the emergence of Web 2.0, could be seen as an antidote to the visualization and mediatization of popular music consumption (Holt, 2011). Moreover, although events such as Melodica are grounded in a folk ideology emphasizing participation and inclusiveness, indie-folk practitioners occupy a 'commons' distinguished by symbolic boundaries.[8] As evidenced from remarks in interviews, these boundaries are particularly directed at distancing themselves from 'mainstream' popular music, which is predominantly imagined – and accordingly framed – as commercialized, insincere and mediatized (see chapter 6 on the boundary politics of Dutch indie-folk practitioners).

5.4.3. Relational over oppositional aesthetics: Distancing from punk ethos

> Just look at our stage performance, how we play. That is simply four in a row. Just that all four of us are very close to the people. (...) That is very folky; to draw the line towards the public like that (...). We sometimes play dynamic, but often very small too. Many songs are acoustic. That is very much folk; that it's intimate and acoustic.

These remarks are from the interview with Danny and Samgar, exemplifying how contemporary indie-folk acts use a "participatory framework" in performance practice, defined by Turino (2008, p. 26) as "a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions (...)." The use of a participatory framework in performance practice is exemplified, as most of the musicians interviewed for this research indicated, by their intention to act and perform "sincerely". 'Sincere' should be understood as a conscious effort to reduce the 'modern' *caesura* between performer and audiences (see Bohlman, 1988, Ch. 8). Most of the folk musicians perceived this artist-audience distinction as hierarchical, as a loss of their integrity and as a devaluation of music's capacity to create an experience of intimacy, community and sociability. Moreover, they intentionally contrasted their own ways of performing music with what was perceived to be common in the "imagined mainstream" (Crewe *et al.*, 2003), related to 'commercial' and 'synthetic' forms of popular music (see also chapter 6). As Rikke explained:

> You sometimes have the tendency as a band to choose the safe path. To make a set list and push it through; knowing each second what you are doing. (...) Usually all bands would do that. [...] We are of course auto-didactics, but at a certain moment we noticed, when we were playing at larger festivals, that so many bands aren't actually bands, but a songwriter with rented musicians. (...) The drummer has such a thing in his ear, "click clack, click, clack ..." and you can imagine that if the drummer plays like that, that it is possible to play along with tapes of recorded orchestrations (...) and many bands make use of that.

The willingness to perform 'sincerely' functions as an ideal, meaning that in their performance practices indie-folk acts do not (always) *literally* 'tear down the stage'. Even during (tiny) living room concerts there is at least a performative distinction between musician, organizer, and audience member. However, when analyzing interviews on how musicians defined indie-folk music, this produced a set of key aesthetics – revolving around 'traditional' folk idioms – by which they purposely aim to decrease the hierarchy between creators as specialists and consumers as passive receivers. These key aesthetic features generally included (i) the frequent use of harmonic singing, to emphasize communality; (ii) the preferred use of acoustic over electronic instruments, to connote simplicity and naturalness; (iii) the downplaying of musical virtuosity and soloing and (iv) the preferred use of con-

8. The term 'common' or 'commons' is already a few centuries old and relates to the tendency of neo-liberal governments in western societies to privatize and exploit natural – and national – resources. The concept was reintroduced in political debates most notably by Italian philosopher Antonio Negri and his co-author Michael Hardt. In their work, the notion of the 'common' refers to the fact that not only natural resources, but also 'cultural' and 'creative' resources like language, knowledge, information, emotion, affect, art, etc. can be easily shared and thus exist on the basis of social interaction. For Negri and Hardt, open access to the natural and cultural common is a prerequisite of truly democratic, that is egalitarian, societies and is oppositional to a neoliberal politics denying the open access character of the commons (see for a more detailed elaboration on Negri's and Hardt's conceptualization of the common and its link with current artistic practices: De Bruyne & Gielen, 2013). The participatory aesthetics of indie-folk, revolving around the value of egalitarianism, should be seen as a way of framing music as a 'product' of the common, rather than of the capitalist music industry. Nonetheless, as this chapter outlines, collaborating with corporate capital is not unusual among Dutch indie-folk musicians (and gatekeepers), as well as that there is a tension between the framing of indie-folk as a product of the 'commons' and the embedment of indie-folk – as a genre and a social domain – in a professionalized field of musical production where copyrights regulations adhere to the understanding of the individual artist.

stancy of rhythms, to connote egalitarianism; (v) the use of limited (and open) chords and arrangements, to encourage approachability; (vi) a preference for more open song structures through the use of improvisation; (vii) the use of polysemy and metaphor in language, to actively invite the audience to interpret lyrics in own terms; and (viii) the distancing from using persona(e), to emphasize honesty.

In the musicians' preference for participatory aesthetics it is possible to look at similarities between indie-folk and other genres associated with DIY ethos, such as punk, rock, electronica, hip hop and world music (Fonarow, 2006). Similar to or, more accurately, inspired by 'traditional' folk music, these genres are influenced by egalitarian ideals in the creation and experience of music (see chapter 2). Nonetheless, when analyzing the career paths of musicians, I interestingly observed a transition from punk *ethos* to folk *aesthetics*.

Although some musicians were involved in the small-scale production of indie-folk music in earlier phases of their careers, most switched from being punk musicians towards becoming folk musicians – as explained by Geert (38, Leeuwarden, professional musician), once lead singer of American hardcore punk band Shai Hulud and now front man of the Leeuwarden-based indie-folk act *The Black Atlantic*:

> (N): I read that you were the singer of Shai Hulud [American harccore band, NvP]. That is something completely different…
> (G): Yeah, the music, definitely, the type of band, what the music is about thematically. (…) I was part of it when the band already existed for a while, I entered the band, which wasn't really mine. I wasn't the main captain.
> (N): Were you familiar with folk music then?
> (G): No not at all, even not when the band and I split up.
> (N): How did the transition to folk music emerge?
> (G): Gradually. When the first The Black Atlantic EP was released [*Send This Home*, 2007, NvP]… it was very poppy. I wanted to make a mix between Coldplay and Elbow. That was the only thing I knew. But that gradually changed… I started to be familiar with more and more indie bands, and rock and folk, and I started to appreciate more and more different kind of musical styles.
> (N): And that was around 2005, 2006?
> (G): Yeah, the Coldplay/Elbow story, yes. That was 2004, 2005, 2006. And in 2006, 2007, 2008, I made a transfer to independent music and started to search for the experiment.

Some of the musicians interviewed for this paper saw something 'folky' in the 'keep-it-small-and-simple' way of creating punk music, defining punk music even as a form of "folk music on speed" (Tonnie, 40, Middelburg, professional musician and programmer). At the same time, however, they erected symbolic fences and distinguished punk music from folk music as two distinct genres. An important factor underlying the distinction between folk and punk music seems to be that punk ethos is regarded as 'out of sync' with the social conditions of contemporary, postmodern society characterized by a critique of the master narratives of modernity (Lyotard, 1984); the master narrative of oppositional subcultures included (see Hebdigde, 1979). More accurately, it is believed that being anti-establishment is associated, somewhat paradoxically, with dogmatism. As Geert explained:

> So we live in a god-less world, of course already for a hundred years, in a moral equilibrium [vacuum, NvP]. (...) I find it difficult to have a discussion about morality and ethics without a universal truth. I don't get much out of that. (...) I think it's interesting to not show it [music, NvP] as too one-directional. I do have certain ideas, but I think it's not too exciting to put it on top of everything. I'm not a political punk-band.

The critical attitude of contemporary indie-folk artists, as expressed by Geert, could be explained by the fact that they are part of a generation born in the heydays of postmodernity, a cultural condition often characterized by irony, fragmentation, contingency and high levels of reflexivity (e.g., Beck, *et al.*, 1994). It explains their critical attitude towards teleology and the modern belief in Utopia. During one of the interviews conducted for this research, this critical and reflexive attitude is best described by Djurre (36, Amsterdam, musician), who as a solo-artist operates under the name of "awkward i". Djurre explained how he invented this stage-name by being inspired by the short story, *On the Marionette Theater* (1810), written by the German romantic novelist Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811). The narrative of this four-page story revolves around a protagonist seeing himself moving in a mirror, and how he accordingly becomes obsessed by the graciousness of his movement. Consequently, the protagonist tries to copy the original movement, but is unable to do so, which brings him to the decision to build a more perfect version of

himself in the form of a marionette. The marionette, however, fails to copy the original movement as well, leaving the protagonist in despair. For Djurre, the story is a typical illustration of *romantic irony* (*cf.* De Mul, 1999; see also section 2.3. of this thesis), as it explains how the protagonist tries to produce a mirror-image of reality or the Absolute (in this case, Absolute Beauty), but continuously fails to do so. The stage name 'awkward i', in this respect, functions as a metaphor for the fundamental changeability of reality, as Djurre explains:

> That is why I call myself 'awkward i', I guess. The awkard 'I'. I think the human being, at least that is how I see it, is by definition awkward in his environment. The world is not necessarily the friend of people. Also not the enemy but… Yeah, you can do with it what you want. You can organize it, you can mow the grass, you can establish a law – you can organize a society. But… nobody knows, I guess… it's never a closed system. Those constructions are never right. There always is one stone missing, and if you push, the whole bunch falls apart.

Further on in the interview, Djurre explains how he got acquainted with poststructuralist theory during his Research Master's in Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam, and how poststructuralist philosophers like Derrida, with his notion of deconstruction, inspired him to take a reflexive attitude in approaching and describing reality in his poetry. As he explains, this can never be in absolute terms, since reality is changeable, and is thus in need of a reflexive attitude towards the use of language. Djurre thus reveals how he, in the words of Rorty (1989, p. 73), is a true "ironist" by not using a "final vocabulary" in framing reality, but by using a more 'open' form of language. According to Djurre, this can be best achieved through the use of metaphor and polysemy in language, and thus to leave the 'message' of his songs open to interpretation. Thus, although *postmodern* irony is often framed as a force that eliminates engagement and commitment with society (see Grossberg, 1992; chapter 3 of this thesis), the *romantic* irony characterizing contemporary indie-folk is of a different kind: it is not aimed at *eliminating* affect, but rather to *generate* affect, or, better still, to affect to have a certain *effect*. Such a romantic conception of language lies at the heart of indie-folk's aesthetic politics. It is illustrated by Otto (36, Amsterdam, musician) in the following interview fragment, in which he discusses one of his protest songs, titled *Lampedusa:*

> For example, *Lampedusa*, which is a real protest song [about the current refugee crisis in Europe]. (…) I was just really upset, that I thought: how could it be possible… that those people are drowning? And then I thought… maybe I should just write a song about it. (…) But okay, then I started thinking, how do you write such a song? You can of course… take this really cynical stance, you know: "Mr. President" [referring to a famous 1966 Dutch protest song by Boudewijn de Groot about the Vietnam War, NvP], and then say [funny voice]: "You guys are such assholes, and we are the good ones!" You know, that kind of seventies thing. (…) So I thought, no, if I want people to listen, I should start with something they maybe don't immediately get. (…) So the second verse goes like this: 'I think I may be very near / I think I may be very near / The way that water glows, happens only at the coast.' Then you already know, he's not in the pool, if it is about the coast. So I thought, I start with such scenes, as if it is a movie. And then I hope that people will start to zoom in, so to speak. The refrain goes like this, 'Half a year ago, I thought I heard somebody say / It's a sad, sad man, who only loves his son.' It was a sad man, who only loves his son, and this is a metaphor, in fact, for a government that only takes responsibility for its own civilians.

Asking why he prefers to use metaphor in language, Otto metaphorically replies:

> The purpose of metaphor is, I think, for me at least, is seduction. To get someone emotionally involved. So instead of giving information, as if you give someone a fucking chocolate, you actually say: 'Look what I've got in this box.' That is what a metaphor does. (…) So I want to be affective, but how could I be effective? To write a song that is so beautiful that people want to listen to it, that it contains images that are so powerful that people want to look at them... I can just give a speech, but then I am less affective. (…) I don't want applause for my moral superiority. (…) Here I am really authentic, you know, or very eh… sincere.

In the last sentence Otto, almost as a slip of the tongue, makes a transition from *authenticity* to *sincerity*. This reflects the transition from punk ethos to folk aesthetics mentioned above, or how contemporary conceptions of authenticity are more concerned with "re-establishing connections between individuals and society than in advocating individual protest and autonomy" (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009, p. 18). By redefining authenticity in terms of sincerity, indie-folk

could be regarded as a continuation of Romanticism, in the sense that music, particularly its poetry, is seen as a crucial tool to instigate reflexivity, as well as feelings of empathy and compassion among members of the audience. Indeed, the metaphor of the 'chocolate box', referred to by Otto, resembles the romantic conception of the artwork (poetry) as a tool to stimulate citizenship and build community, organically and in infinite progression. Rather than by adopting a very oppositional stance more common in early 1960s folk and 1970s and 1980s punk music, he prefers the use of metaphor in language, which leaves room for personal interpretation and has the power to stimulate the imagination of audience members. All this implies that the notion of authenticity is reframed in terms of sincerty (Haselstein *et al*.; Trilling, 1972). In the context of this research, the turn to sincerity in contemporary indie-folk should be primarily seen as an attempt by musicians and fans to distance themselves from the industrialization, specialization and profit-seeking characterizing the production of mainstream pop music, and to redefine the creation and (live) performance of music as a transparent, participatory and socially engaging enterprise.

5.4.4. Doing things together (DTT) over DIY: Adapting to participatory culture

The appreciation of sincerity over authenticity is not exclusive to the aesthetic politics expressed by musicians. It is also reflected in the *institutional politics* of gatekeepers involved in the promotion and distribution of indie folk, of which the majority is part of Dutch indie culture.[9] Analyzing the narratives of gatekeepers on the foundational history of their institutions revealed that most are "fans turned entrepreneurs" (Bennett and Peterson, 2004, p. 5). Thus, in ways similar to the active fans described earlier in section 5.4.2., most of the gatekeepers have a history in earlier DIY movements and started their business as amateur journalists, amateur musicians or as amateur organizers of small-scale events, after which they became professionals working in the Dutch music industry.

Some of the institutions have roots in former local punk movements and gradually adapted to participatory culture, whereas other institutions saw a direct opportunity to start their business with the advent of Web 2.0. An example of an institution that has roots in online participatory culture was provided by Atze (37, Utrecht, journalist), editor-in-chief of the multimedia platform '3voor12':

> In the 1990s, at 3FM [one of the major radio stations and taste makers in the Netherlands, NvP], you had this coordinator, and he decided to organize the station according to horizontal programming. That is, one profile, one concept on what the station should be. And no longer the fragmentation all the stations were used to until then. (...) The VPRO [one of the major Dutch broadcasting services] disagreed, which resulted in that they were marginalized. And then the Internet emerged. Well, 1998 still was the year of the so-called dialup connection, and ehm, streaming wasn't there yet. However, the VPRO started protesting about this issue, and started to make a lot of noise. And the protesting was well received, so the VPRO kept investing in that, and gradually started to organize events and live sessions. These were broadcasted on the radio, or were released online. And then there were all kinds of niche stations, when broadband came along this was suddenly available. Thus, a punk radio channel, a hip hop channel, no folk music, I guess.

'3voor12' is exemplary for online participatory culture characterized by the confluence of both top-down (corporate) and bottom-up (grassroots) cultural production. Grounded in the advent of the Internet at the end of the 1990s, it allowed the VPRO as a major broadcasting service to divide itself into smaller niches and to start promoting and distributing part of the indie aesthetic, including punk and hip hop. Currently, the platform has become institutionalized again, since it shares radio programming with mainstream radio station and 'mothership' 3FM. However, '3voor12' is still focused on the online world, for it hosts two digital television channels as well as a 'pre-release' streaming website (the so-called '3voor12 Luisterpaal') directed towards promoting albums that do not neatly fit within the conventions of more commercial radio programming. Moreover, although folk was not part of a niche in the early days, it became part of their core business, as Atze explained, somewhere around 2005 – the moment 'indie

9. Alhough some Dutch indie-folk acts have been picked up by a few major labels, such as V2 Records Benelux (e.g., Mister and Mississippi) and TopNotch/Universal Music Group (e.g., Lucky Fonz III). As one of the product managers of the Warner Music Group informed me in one of his e-mails, "folk music is a trend like any other trend (...) and is only interesting when acts are able to make a cross-over to a broader audience, like Mumford and Sons did." Although this research is limited in the sense that I was not able to reach out to more professionals working for the majors, it can be deduced from this remark that interest in contemporary folk music is framed as a "trend", meaning that it is audience- rather than product-driven.

folk' became an industry-based phenomenon (see the Introduction and chapter 4.3. of this thesis). From that point, '3voor12' has been a crucial promotional platform for both international and Dutch indie (folk) music, of which the promotion of the latter is seen, as Atze explains, as "one of the tasks of a public broadcasting service, receiving governmental funding for their activities."

Other institutions, as noted earlier, have roots in earlier DIY scenes and gradually shifted towards an emphasis on connectivity. Interviews with gatekeepers produced various accounts of the distancing from DIY ethos by moving towards what was remarkably often referred to as "doing things together" (DTT). An example is Snowstar Records, an Utrecht-based independent record label, where a number of the musicians interviewed for this research have signed contracts. Snowstar Records (2015) describes its business model as follows:

> Back in the days, Snowstar Records was about punk rock and DIY. Since then the attitude stuck, but the genre shifted towards calmer music. Nowadays a typical Snowstar Records release would be indie/folk/singer/songwriter-esque. (...) Everyone in our roster knows each other and helped shape both the label and this scene by contributing in their own way. Most of the bands even share members, or have at least shared stages. The Snowstar family is about Doing It Together.

The label represents itself more like a family than a business, emphasizing the 'embeddedness' of the label in the Utrecht indie-folk scene. They describe the label as a family, not only because acts affiliated to the label share members and stages, but also because it shares free content with fans on its website, and even organizes events such as indie label markets and label parties. In doing so, Snowstar Records lowers the barrier for fans to be in direct contact with both the musicians and the label, reinforcing a sense of community. This relates to research by Baym (see above) who found that indie labels are directed towards incorporating elements of a gift economy into their business model.

Peter (37, music curator, Berlin) provided a second example of how DIY is increasingly framed as DTT. Talking about the historical formation of the annual *Incubate Festival* (for which he worked as a curator at the time of the interview), a city festival organized in the city center of Tilburg, he explained the following:

> The festival comes a bit out of the DIY and punk tradition. And there the idea is of course as well that you do everything together. It is do it yourself but actually it is doing things together and making sure that you are supporting the local scene. (...) But this festival has become broader in the course of the last 10 years, much more open, and we have left the negative attitude behind us (...). The last years we were very busy with involving as many people as possible with the festival. We even had topics like *We are Incubate and You are Incubate.* And we have had piracy as a theme, which is most of all about the sharing of culture as well instead of keeping it all for yourself. We were the first festival where people could share tips in public. And we opened up (...) the entire Web site. All on Wiki basis, anybody can change everything. Thus it is very much the open source idea. (...) Making culture together, and that is a much more positive attitude which we can also keep.

Here, we see how the institutional politics of the festival, grounded in the local punk scene of the mid-2000s, shifted from being oriented at debunking the 'establishment' towards a more cooperative attitude, aimed at building relations with other institutions working 'within' the system rather than at the margins. This could be interpreted as a way of explaining how the festival has become institutionalized over the course of its decade of existence. Like other institutions that took part in this research (e.g., Crossing Border Festival, The Hague; pop venue Doornroosje, Nijmegen), it receives public funding for their activities and therefore these institutions need to co-operate with local institutions for their legitimization. This inevitably implies that these cultural organizations need to abandon their independence to some extent, or adopt to a form of interdependence (Roy, 2010, pp. 97-98). Despite the fact that exchanging independence for interdependence is a result of becoming more institutionalized within the professional field, these remarks by indie gatekeepers do illustrate that institutionalization is no longer perceived as 'selling out' but, rather, as something that is 'in sync' with the idea of co-creation. Although the DIY ethos of the former local punk scene, as Peter explained, could be interpreted as a form of doing things together too, it is framed as a form of participatory culture that is very much self-involved. This attitude is contrasted with the current mission statement of the Incubate festival, which is perceived as more inclusive and relational.[10] Thus, although the festival is situated

10. In practice, the relational attitude has mainly resulted in the establishment of what the festival refers to as a "social festival model", a website on a wiki basis in which users create personal profiles; contribute by editing profiles of artists; and by sharing festival timetables with other visitors and peers.

in a field characterized by global competition, and while the festival itself remains true to its roots by acting as an 'incubator' for indie culture (and in doing so, draws a boundary around 'mainstream' popular music) its relational attitude is exemplary of the way in which Dutch indie institutions adapted the logics of participatory culture.

By doing so, they have contributed to the re-institutionalization and re-popularization of (Dutch) indie-folk. By saying this, I am not arguing for a simple homology between aesthetics and institutional politics. Indie-folk music is but one of the genres currently promoted by Dutch indie firms, and thus co-exists with metal, techno, free jazz, hip hop, post-rock and many, many other genres. Although all of these genres share roots in indie discourse, characterized by aesthetic values such as proximity and consensus building (Fonarow, 2006, Ch. 4), they do not all explicitly emphasize the somewhat romanticized version of widespread participation and collectivity common in indie-folk. This research nonetheless indicates that there is at least a *relation* between the abandoning of autonomy and punk ethos within indie-folk, on the one hand, and a move towards the promotion of music, like indie-folk, emphasizing the intimate character of musical creation, performance and experience.

5.5. Conclusions and discussion: Bringing authenticity back to music

The significant growth of indie-folk music over the last 25 years is seen, as one music critic aptly wrote, as a way for a new generation of folk musicians and fans to "bring authenticity back to music" (Jonze, 2013). Looking at the history of folk music, that seems a plausible statement. With the recording industry adapting an 'oligarchy model' in the first half of the twentieth century, popular music became a highly specialized and mass-produced commodity (Peterson and Berger, 1975). This paper has emphasized how popular music is reframed by indie-folk practitioners as a social experience rather than as a commodity. It is a strategy of a new generation, indeed, to bridge the modern *caesura* between producer, distributor and consumer, which is counter-hegemonic to the commodification – and thus mechanization and specialization – of popular music production and distribution over the last hundred years.

As this research indicates, respondents generally imagine and define mainstream popular music as mechanical, distant, profit-driven and mediatized. This indicates that indie-folk practitioners, in ways similar to their 1960s counterparts, aim to create fences between the broader categories of folk and pop music. More accurately, they tend to regressively define indie-folk as a genre by distancing themselves from the imagined mainstream, commonly associated with commercial pop music. This embattled stance causes indie-folk to function as a more authentic alternative to commercially successful music. Particularly within smaller (trans-)local music scenes, indie-folk is regarded as the antidote to mainstream pop, enabling practitioners to form communities and to celebrate music in more intimate and relational settings. Folk revivalism might be representative here of a nostalgic aesthetic emphasizing the inherently relational and interpersonal nature of popular music production, performance and experience (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p. 56).

In this chapter I suggested that the field of Dutch independent folk music should be characterized as participatory culture. This was observed in how digitization enabled musicians to educate themselves and, accordingly, to self-develop careers in music. Second, from the part of the audience, it was noted how Web 2.0 helps to create networks and establish (trans-)local music scenes – the social 'interstices' where aspiring indie-folk musicians often acquire experiences and knowledge necessary to become a professional in the field. Third, from the part of the gatekeepers, it was found that they reconciled with participatory culture, becoming platforms for the promotion and distribution of Dutch indie (folk) music. I have argued that the emergence of online participatory culture is not in opposition to corporate cultural production. In fact, the contrary seems to be the case, epitomized by the emergence of the "alternative mainstream", a semi-commercial zone 'within' the mainstream where bottom-up production converges with top-down distribution.

Moreover, this research has shown that Dutch indie-folk musicians and fans, in conjunction with their discontent with the mainstream, prefer to distance themselves from the oppositional attitude characteristic of former punk movements and scenes. They do so by adhering to participatory aesthetics and by emphasizing DTT over DIY, within their own networks, but also by collaborating with actors working within the confines of the (alternative) mainstream. This might be indicative, as Hesmondhalgh has previously suggested (1999, p. 57), of a longer history of independent music firms, characterized by a move towards professionalization and collaboration with corporate capital as a means to become both commercially and aesthetically sustainable.

However, this research indicated that the move towards professionalization within the field of Dutch independent folk music is constituted by other factors as well. First, it is because punk ideology is seen as 'out of sync'

with the deconstruction of autonomy by postmodernism, that is, with a reframing of authenticity in terms of sincerity and connectivity. Second, it is affected by the adaptation of online participatory culture by Dutch 'independent' music institutions, a form of institutional politics fitting indie-folk music, as it is structured around a set of participatory aesthetics. Last, while changes in technology made it easier for musicians to create and produce music themselves, they are still dependent on the distribution systems of both larger independent and established institutions. This was most evident in strategies to "stand out from the crowd" in order to attract the attention of gatekeepers in an increasingly competitive industry (Hauge and Hracs, 2010). Intermediaries thus remain crucial, enabling musicians to disseminate their music to international audiences and to gain the symbolic capital necessary to move from the margins to the center of the music industry. While digital technology thus lowered the threshold to create and produce music, it places musicians in a balancing act between abandoning their autonomy on the one hand and seeking ways to market their music without 'selling out' on the other.

Chapter 6 – Empirics

PURE TASTE IN POPULAR MUSIC: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INDIE-FOLK AS A PERFORMANCE OF "POLY-PURISM"[1]

1. An almost identical version of this chapter has been published in the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology.* DOI :10.1057/s41290-017-0033-y. To read the article visit: http://rdcu.be/t9gO.

A judgment of taste on which charm and emotion have no influence (although they may be bound up with the satisfaction in the beautiful), which therefore has as its determining ground merely the purposiveness of the form, is a pure judgment of taste.

- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), par. 13

6.1. Introduction

One of the central questions that emerged from scholars' application of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to the study of genre in popular music is whether the binary distinction between "high" art and "popular" culture can be maintained (e.g. Peterson & Kern, 1996; Holt, 1997; Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). Bourdieu (1984) discerned a hierarchy in 1970s French society both in the type of cultural goods consumed and in the modes of cultural consumption. On the one hand, a "legitimate taste" existed, requiring an "aesthetic disposition" or "pure gaze", which values form over function and "implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 31). In general, people who possess an aesthetic disposition experience art through "aesthetic distancing", most notably from immediate sensation and easy enjoyment, and by showing economic "disinterestedness". "Illegitimate taste", on the contrary, is characterized by a "popular aesthetic" that affirms "the continuity between art and life" and shows antagonism towards formal experimentation or, vice versa, displays a demand for social engagement, emotion and audience participation (ibid, pp. 32-34). Both aesthetics, according to Bourdieu (1993a), operate in a dichotomous power structure in which two fields of cultural production are in an antagonistic relationship: on the one hand, a field of "restricted" production in which economic profit-seeking is avoided and status is achieved through the production of "symbolic capital"; on the other hand, a field of "large-scale" production which involves "mass" or "popular" culture and in which profit-seeking dominates (Johnson, 1993, pp. 15-16).

These distinctions, however, are not carved in stone. It has been argued that various popular music genres, most notably blues, rock, bluegrass and folk, have gained status and artistic legitimacy during the past two decades (Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Van Eijck, 2001; Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010), as well as that hierarchies between the highbrow and lowbrow also exist *within* distinct music genres (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Hibbett, 2005; Strachan, 2007). This article similarly argues that the emergence and institutionalization of indie-folk as an industry-based genre (Lena, 2012) is part of the qualitative shift from snobbism to cultural omnivorousness as a marker of high-status (Peterson & Kern, 1996).

In this chapter, I specifically argue that the social construction of indie-folk is an example of the so-called "omnivorous paradox" (Johnston & Baumann, 2007, p. 178). This refers to a strategy of the cultural (upper) middle-classes in western societies, comprising openness to popular forms of culture on the one hand, while simultaneously drawing boundaries around highbrow cultural forms, notably those associated with high economic and symbolic capital, on the other. Previous research suggests that such a paradox is emblematic for an omnivorous taste characterized by eclecticism, diversity and a general trend away from cultural snobbery; the latter a form of exclusion no longer feasible for high-status groups due to various democratic tendencies in western society, including rising levels of education, class mobility, geographic migration, and counter-institutional currents in the art worlds and cultural industries (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Van Eijck, 2001; Lizardo & Skiles, 2012; Goldberg, Hannan and Kovács, 2016). The emergence of the cultural omnivore (Peterson, 1992) – the highly educated individual consuming a broad variety of cultural genres – is regarded as a reflection of these sociocultural shifts. And indeed, various studies point out that cultural omnivorousness is more likely to occur in relatively egalitarian societies such as the U.S. and the Netherlands (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010), or emerges as a trend in countries transitioning to democracy (Fishman & Lizardo, 2013).

However, a recurring argument emerging from research on omnivorousness is that underlying the *boundary spanning* activities of cultural omnivores is an exclusionary politics of *class distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984). In their study of gourmet food writing, Johnston and Baumann (2007), for example, have demonstrated that "authenticity" (and associated frames such as "simplicity" and "exoticism") is used as a frame through which high-status groups aim to legitimize and reproduce their taste. They do so by applying an aesthetic disposition to forms of popular culture (e.g., the hamburger), while drawing boundaries around dominant cultures associated with either snobbery (*haute cuisine*) or commercialism (McDonalds). Authenticity, in this respect, becomes the quintessence of 'quality' taste. Lizardo and Skiles (2012) similarly argue that omnivorousness is a variant of the aesthetic disposition described by Bourdieu in a postmodern context. They argue that high-status groups have mastered the skill to appreciate a wide range of cultural goods due to the decline in the power of (singular) cultural objects to signify high status. As a result, they legitimize and reproduce their taste, not only by consuming broadly, but also by transposing their aesthetic disposition to cultural objects associated with popular and vernacular culture. Thus, by authenticating popular and vernacular culture through applying the aesthetic disposition, they simultaneously engage in social distinction.

Recent research by Goldberg, Hannan and Kovács (2016) points into the same direction. By operationalizing omnivorousness on two different dimensions – (i) variety (operationalized as heterogeneous taste) and (ii) atypicality

(operationalized as a preference for transgressing genre codes) – they distinguish between two types of cultural omnivores: first, those who both consume broadly and defy genre codes (so-called "poly-mixers"), and, second, those who consume broadly but prefer to stay within the confines of established genre conventions ("poly-purists"). Goldberg *et al.* then demonstrate how a taste for *variety* decreases one's adherence to *atypicality*. They interpret this process as a performance by "poly-purists" to display that they have – or aspire to – high status. They do so by consuming a wide range of – preferably mobile – genres, while simultaneously appreciating, *within* these genres, those objects that are associated with refinement, complexity and sophistication. Poly-purism thus "constitutes a social display of refined cultural taste" (ibid, p. 230). It most likely reflects the taste of the highly educated cultural omnivore we know from previous research characterized by being "disproportionately attracted to *traditionally consecrated* forms of culture and the arts" (Lizardo & Skiles, 2012, p. 19; emphasis original). It explains the defensive attitude of poly-purists toward cultural activities that *span* boundaries excessively; specifically those cultural activities that span boundaries between 'authentic' art and 'commercial' and/or 'snobbish' culture. As Goldberg *et al.* argue, poly-purists are consumers who are capable of assessing cultural objects through their "categorical purity" (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016, p. 221). This is seen as a strategy of cultural omnivores to make their breadth of consumption socially meaningful, that is, to distinguish themselves from both commercial, snobbish and populist taste or, more accurately, from those objects within genres with a specific commercial, snobbish and/or populist orientation.

In this chapter, I argue that the social construction of indie-folk as a genre reflects a similar strategy. Indie-folk aficionados are expected to be poly-purists who, while being tolerant of eclecticism, provide distinction by using the value of authenticity as the quintessence of legitimate taste – that is, by drawing boundaries around the mainstream (commercial pop and dance), the highbrow (jazz and classical music) and the lowbrow (country and vernacular music).[2] Following this line of argument, the rest of this article proceeds as follows: first, a brief overview of research on genre will be provided, focusing on how indie-folk, over the past two decades, emerged as an industry-based phenomenon. Subsequently, research on indie music is reviewed, focusing on how indie-folk is part of the emergence of an indie music "stream" (Ennis, 1992; Hesmondhalgh, 1999; Hibbett, 2005; Fonarow, 2006; Petrusisch, 2008). After introducing data and method, the results of this research are presented, focusing on how Dutch indie-folk practitioners employ distinction while simultaneously adopting a politics revolving around inclusive folk values of egalitarianism and openness to diversity (Roy, 2010). In conclusion, I reflect on the implications of this study for analyzing the link between music and social structure, as well as its contribution to existing research on cultural omnivorousness as a marker of class distinction.

6.2. Theorizing genre in popular music

It has been argued that studying the link between musical structure and social structure is complicated by the emergence of a postmodern condition favoring hybridity over categorization (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Holt, 2007). Straw (2001) argues that the concept of "music scene" is both "flexible" and "anti-essentializing" and is therefore best capable of expressing the fluid boundaries upon which musical communities and their social identities are established. Hesmondhalgh (2005, p. 29) criticizes this view by emphasizing the importance of knowing how social and symbolic boundaries are drawn, "not simply that they are fuzzier than various writers have assumed" (ibid, p. 34). He argues that "genre" is a better candidate, for it has the ability "to connect up text, audience and producers" (ibid, p. 35) and thus to investigate the discourse in which youth, class and/or race-based politics are encoded. Moreover, by combining the concept of genre with Stuart Hall's notion of "articulation", Hesmondhalgh introduces a *set* of concepts with which the link between music and social structure can be studied without falling back into deterministic reflection or shaping approaches (characteristic of Birmingham subcultural theory) in which symbolic expressions were believed to either mirror or construct social identities.[3] Thus, instead of suggesting a purely homologous relationship between music and community, he enables us to consider the *multiple* articulations – "including 'homologous' ones" – of musical communities; or, more passively, that social identities can be multiply determined (ibid, p. 35).[4]

2. Following Vannini and Williams (2009, p. 3) I define authenticity as a socially constructed phenomenon, more specifically as a "marker of status or social control" (…). They argue that authenticity consists of "a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree an ideal or exemplar". Drawing from Peterson (2005, p. 1094), they thus argue that authenticity is a "moving target", first because the qualities people attribute to authenticity can change across time and place (= intergenerational differences) and, second, because authenticity is in the eye of the beholder, meaning that various social groups define authenticity differently (= intragenerational differences).

3. Hall defines the concept of articulation as "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage that is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (Hall, 1996 quoted in Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 33).

4. Hesmondhalgh gives the example of rap, which is, on the one hand, homologous with a 'black' urban community (reflected, for example, in

Holt (2007) has introduced a "general framework of genre" which gains further insight into how genres are founded, coded and commodified. He defines genre as "a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation and signification" (ibid, p. 2). In terms of how genres are established at the organizational (meso) level, Holt argues that they are most often *founded* and *coded* by members of "center collectives" (e.g., active fans, leading journalists, iconic artists) within (trans)local scenes. From there on, genres are "further negotiated" by actors working within the commercial music industry, mass-mediating them to mass audiences (ibid, p. 20). Collectively, they come to agree upon the establishment of a hegemonic term and a set of shared conventions including musical codes, values and practices. This corresponds with research by Lena (2012, pp. 27-55) who, conducting a survey of primary and secondary texts on the history of sixty market-based American music genres, discovered that a majority of musical forms follow a certain pattern in their development. This pattern is referred to by Lena as the *AgSIT*-model, emphasizing the embeddedness of genres in *Avant-garde* movements, which gradually evolve into *Scene*-based and *Industry*-based genres. This trajectory is followed by a *Traditionalist* phase, when the music is no longer seen as the 'next big thing in popular music' and is turned into cultural heritage.

The history of indie-folk as a genre followed the same pattern as indicated by Holt and Lena. What started as an avant-garde movement in the early 1990s gradually evolved into scene-based genres coined New Weird America (2003), free-folk (2003) and freak-folk (2004); genres which in turn were morphed into the commercially successful phenomenon of indie-folk around 2005 (see Keenan, 2003; Petrusisch, 2008 and Encarnacao, 2013 for historical overviews). The incorporation of new genres into the "folk music stream" (Ennis, 1992) indicates that "culture produces an industry" (Negus, 1998, p. 3), for it points to the institutionalization of new generic rules associated with the genre of folk. However, it also means that "industry produces culture" (ibid, p. 2): with indie-folk becoming an industry-based genre, Dutch musicians started to produce indie-folk for the national market, resulting in the formation of (trans)local scenes and fan-driven entrepreneurial activities (see chapter 5 of this thesis, 2016). I discuss these new generic rules in the results sections below. First, however, the genre of indie-folk will be situated in the broader field of indie music.

6.3. What is indie? Two strategies in preserving the 'myth' of authenticity

The origins of indie music could be roughly traced back to counterinstitutional movements in the international music industry, leading towards the establishment of 'independent' record firms and 'underground' music scenes in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Hesmondhalgh, 1999; Hibbett, 2005; Fonarow, 2006). Hibbett (2005, pp. 57-58), for example, points to the lo-fi and experimental productions of the Velvet Underground "as an edgier and poorly received alternative to the Beatles", and therefore defines their music as an early example of rock music that produced a certain kind of aesthetic homologous to the band's industrial politics. From there on, a historical lineage can be discerned to the counter-institutional politics of the international punk movements in the mid-to-late 1970s, the emergence of 'college rock' in the early 1980s, and the advent of 'alternative rock' in the late 1980s. However, with grunge music becoming a mainstream phenomenon in the early 1990s due to the commercial success of Seattle bands such as Pearl Jam and Nirvana, the term 'alternative' lost its embattled stance. "It is out of this Oedipal tradition", as Hibbett (2005, p. 58) writes, "and in rebellion against the all-too-efficient metamorphosis of what was 'alternative' into something formulaic, that an indie consciousness emerged".

Hesmondhalgh (1999) similarly observes how 'indie' first designated a (rebellious) political attitude, but how it gradually evolved into a particular style or genre. He describes how the term was coined in the mid-1980s by gatekeepers at the British music industry to describe a "more narrow set of sounds and looks" as an alternative to the more eclectic experimental aesthetics covered by the umbrella term 'post-punk', including "'jangly guitars, an emphasis on clever and/or sensitive lyrics inherited from the singer/songwriter tradition in rock and pop, and minimal focus on rhythm track" (1999, p. 38). Over the last two decades, indie music has turned into a global phenomenon that resembles the emergence of a distinct "music stream" (Ennis, 1992), a concept referring to a set of musical styles that "retains [its] coherence through shared institutions, aesthetics, and audiences" (Lena, 2012, p. 8). As an independent music stream, indie includes multiple hyphenated genres, such as indie-rock, indie-pop, and indie-folk.

Fonarow (2006, p. 26), more specifically, defines "indie" (i) as a "type of musical production" (associated with small labels operating within a distinctive web of 'independent' music distribution); (ii) as an "ethos" (rooted in

lyrics emphasizing 'street credibility') but, on the other hand, is a product of intertextuality, as it uses sounds – through sampling and parody – from other aspects of American culture.

the rebellious narrative of punk culture), and (iii) as a "genre". At a basic level, she defines the *genre* of indie as "guitar rock or pop combined with an art-school sensibility" (ibid, p. 40). Indie bands generally consist of a four-piece combo with electric guitar, bass, drums and vocals. The conventions of indie are structured around a set of key values including simplicity, austerity, technophobia and nostalgia (ibid, p. 39). Simplicity is at the core of the genre, producing the context in which the rest of the values operate. According to Fonarow, indie is characterized by the idea that music should be stripped bare to its purest form. This produces a set of stylistic conventions in regards to music production, performance and musicianship, including that (i) songs are short and direct; (ii) song structures are basic and streamlined; (iii) musicians are self-taught instead of being trained in institutional settings; (iv) guitar soloing is reduced to the minimum; (v) looks are modest, and (vi) live performances are perceived as immediate and direct while recorded music is seen as constructed and removed (ibid, pp. 39-51).

In his socio-linguistic analysis of the indie-rock genre, Hibbett (2005) draws a parallel between indie-rock and high art, arguing that the indie-rock community defines the genre in terms of an avant-garde aesthetic. By defining themselves as agents who possess a knowledge of the field, indie aficionados aim to maintain a hegemonic position within the field of popular music and distinguish themselves from those who 'lack' cultural capital. The expression of such a 'highbrow' taste has resulted, according to Hibbett, in the creation of a set of stylistic conventions revolving around avant-garde ideals such as innovation, experimentation, authenticity and obscurity with which indie-rock defines itself as the mirror image of commercial music production and distribution. Echoing Bourdieu's analysis of the "restricted" field of cultural production (see Introduction), Hibbett (2005, p. 60) argues that "indie enthusiasts [thus] turn to symbolic value, defending what they like as 'too good' for radio, too innovative and challenging to interest those blasting down the highway. They become the scholars and conservators of 'good' music".

By conducting a Bourdieusian analysis of the field of indie-rock, Hibbett provides insightful information into how the genre is not only a reflection of the community's 'taste', but also how it "satisfies among audiences a desire for social differentiation and supplies music providers with a tool for exploiting that desire" (ibid, p. 56). In so doing, he complicates the binary distinction between high art and popular culture by investigating the hierarchies *within* the field of popular music and by framing rock as a genre of music that over the past two decades has gained in status and artistic legitimacy. Similar to how Bourdieu (1993a) distinguishes between the field of "restricted" and "large scale" production, Hibbett argues that "indie rock is part of a dichotomous power structure in which two fields operate in a contentious but symbolic relationship" (ibid, p. 57). In the words of the author,

> [a]s an elite sect within a larger field, indie rock requires its own codes, i.e. cultural capital, and therefore can be used to generate and sustain myths of social or intellectual superiority. Obscurity becomes a positive feature, while exclusion is embraced as the necessary consequence of the majority's lack of 'taste'. Indie rock enthusiasts (those possessing knowledge of indie rock, or 'insiders') comprise a social formation similar to the avant-garde of high culture.

Hibbett, more specifically, distinguishes between "two aesthetic movements" that historically have been associated with the genre of indie-rock (ibid, p. 56). The first movement, epitomized by acts such as Smog (Bill Callahan), "Palace" (Bonnie 'Prince' Billy) and Lou Barlow's Sebadoh, is rooted in DIY ideology and aims to connote 'honesty', 'sincerity' and 'integrity' through the use of lo-fi recording techniques. By emphasizing the direct presence of production, lo-fi ironically aims to connote sincerity by suggesting its absence and "provides a space in which artworks seem to exist outside the conditions of their production, and a bastion from which the cultured few may fend off the multitude" (ibid, p. 62). This first movement, then, is infused with a postmodern sensibility, as expressed by lo-fi acts through the use of self-depreciative humor in the lyrics and artwork to paradoxically expose an interest in economic disinterestedness. Moreover, it uses parody to illustrate the heteronomous nature of its products and thus to obscure the boundary between advertising and art (ibid, p. 63). Adopting an ironical stance in production and performance practices is interpreted by Hibbett as a first – postmodern – strategy in preserving "the myth of authenticity" (ibid, p. 64) in a field in which consumers are increasingly more reflexive about the artificial nature of music production and performance (*cf.* Fornäs, 1995).

The second movement associated with indie-rock is referred to by Hibbett as 'post-rock' and provides a second strategy in preserving "the myth of authenticity". Epitomized by acts such as Sigur Rós, Mogwai and Godspeed You! Black Emperor, it is characterized by a "fuller, more richly embodied sound" created through the stylistic conventions of more elaborate instrumentation (including strings, winds and other classical instruments), ambient sounds and environmental soundscapes, narrative fragmentation, the heavy use of multitrack recording techniques and theatrical performance practices (ibid, pp. 65-66). Such attention to "*how* things are represented, not just *what*

is represented", as Hibbett writes (ibid, p. 67), demands aesthetic distancing from members of the audience, "and distinguishes post-rock from what Bourdieu considers popular art". Post-rock shares its critique of the corporate end of popular music with the first (lo-fi) movement, which is exemplified, for instance, in the way Godspeed, on one of their alums, compares the music industry with the war industry. Unlike the first movement, however, post-rock does not take an *ironic* stance in criticizing the heteronomous nature of popular music production, but instead returns to a more 'modern' approach by constructing a symbolic universe in the lyrics and art work that postulates "an alternative system of meaning" (ibid, p. 69). By permeating the lyrics and art work with "a constant element of hope", or a "deep sense of obligation to go on trying", post-rock suggests a "renewed seriousness", as Hibbett argues (ibid, p. 66) – "a restoration of grandeur, beauty, and intensity to what had retreated into a flatter, more self-reflexive form of expression". The construction of a fictional universe through language and visual representation thus makes post-rock a genre, which aims to go beyond the striving for irony and self-reflexive consciousness characteristic of postmodern lo-fi. As Hibbett concludes (ibid, pp. 68-69),

> [p]ost-rock is not postmodern. Rather, it assumes a more traditional role in which art becomes a privatized sphere of reality, seen in opposition to a world debased by common values. Political or apolitical, post-rock artists, like the literary Modernists, endeavor toward alternative systems of meaning, seeking unity through myth and symbol in the face of disrepair. Within these richly symbolic, highly politicized narratives the argument for indie authenticity is preserved.

By defining post-rock as a "privatized sphere" which stands "in opposition to the world" (Hibbett, 2005, pp. 68-69), the distinction between 'independent' and 'mainstream' is brought back into the picture. However, during the past two decades, various scholars have complicated this binary distinction. Conducting a qualitative case study of the institutional politics of British independent record labels, Hesmondhalgh (1999) found that indie firms display a tendency to distance themselves from the punk ethos upon which they were originally established and instead aimed to build commercial partnerships with major record firms (often framed by the indie community as "selling out"). This is interpreted by Hesmondhalgh as a more fruitful approach in an "era of pragmatic acceptance of collaboration with major capital" than remaining true to obscurity and autonomy; a strategy resulting in marginalization ("burning out") (ibid, p. 53). Indie record firms building relationships with commercial partners thus forms a "protective layer" between the opposing poles of corporatism and independence. Doing so, they provide indie bands the opportunity to first collaborate with "pseudo-independents" to attract the attention of the fan base and to potentially make the transfer to the pop mainstream without necessarily compromising their indie aesthetics (ibid, pp. 53-55).

A similar argument is put forward by Van Poecke and Michael (2016), who found that Dutch indie-folk musicians partner up with commercial firms operating within the "alternative mainstream", a platform where bottom-up production and top-down distribution converge. They suggest a link between institutional changes as a consequence of the advent of "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006) on the one hand and, on the other, the emergence and institutionalization of (popular) musics, like indie-folk, structured around a set of "participatory aesthetics" (Turino, 2008). The adopting of a participatory framework in performance practice is framed as a strategy of the community to criticize the mechanization, specialization and homogeneity characterizing mainstream music production. On the other hand, it is seen as a strategy of indie-folk practitioners to distinguish themselves from punk ethos, which is framed as the construction of a dogmatic master vocabulary creating a rift between (heteronomous) culture and (autonomous) subculture. Dutch indie-folk aficionados present themselves as "true ironists" (Rorty, 1989) by using participatory aesthetics such as harmonious singing, egalitarian stage set-ups, the downplaying of musical virtuosity and soloing, and the use of metaphor and polysemy in language. They do so to create 'openness' and to achieve reflexivity, rather than framing the genre's aesthetics as a "final vocabulary" (ibid.). These aesthetics reflect an ideology revolving around (folk) values of egalitarianism, sincerity and communion (Roy, 2010). The distancing from mainstream pop and punk relates to Hesmondhalgh's work referred to above, namely that indie-folk is a "double articulation" of the (upper) middle-class, first, against the 'dogmatism' of former subcultures and, second, against dominant cultures associated with high levels of economic and symbolic capital. The emergence and institutionalization of indie-folk as a genre, in other words, reflects both the generational *and* class politics of a genre community associated with the cultural (upper) middle-class. I elaborate on this argument in the sections below, after first defining indie-folk as a genre and introducing data and method.

6.4. What is indie-folk?

Similar to how Hibbett observes a fragmentation of categories within the genre of rock music, Petrusich (2008) perceives that there are marked differences in aesthetics and institutional politics between the various folk genres listed above. Regarding the institutionalization of contemporary folk in the U.S. popular music industry, she writes how in the early 2000s,

> most of the artists and bands (…) were tucked under the umbrella of 'New Weird America', which flowed into the slightly more descriptive 'free-folk', which became 'freak-folk', and subsequently evolved, as more and more diverse artists were swept up in the wave, into the catchall 'indie-folk' – even though the differences between psych-infused free-folk like MV & EE and acoustic indie-folk like Iron and Wine seem profound enough to warrant at least two distinct, hyphenated prefixes (ibid, p. 239).

Thus, despite its linear trajectory (see above), the field of independent folk music currently consists of two subfields, with the more "restricted" *free-folk* field on the one hand, and the more commercial (or "large-scale") *indie-folk* field, on the other. These sub-fields, as mentioned, have developed their own aesthetics and differ in institutional settings: the former placing premium on 'music for music's sake', the celebration of autonomy and therefore existing mostly outside of the boundaries of the commercial recording industry; the latter placing premium on economic standards, a more conventional understanding of the (pop) album and song structure, and being located at the heart of the international music industry.

Keenan (2003, p. 32), who coined the term "New Weird America", observed the eclectic and pluralistic tendencies of early free-folk acts such as MV & EE, Six Organs of Admittance, Sunburned Hand of the Man and Charalambides, by describing their music as drawing on an "intoxicating range of avant-garde sounds, from acoustic roots to drone, ritualistic performance, Krautrock, ecstatic jazz, hillbilly mountain music, psychedelica, archival blues, and folk sides, Country funk and more". Encarnacao (2013) uses the less normative term "new folk" and defines the music produced and disseminated within the restricted free-folk field as part of the discourse of rock music. He refers to new folk music, associated with acts such as the ones listed by Keenan, but also those of Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Smog/Bill Callahan, Animal Collective, Joanna Newsom, Devendra Banhart and CocoRosie, as music that aims "to denote acoustic tendencies and the use of traditional, pre-Tin Pan Alley song forms and techniques in rock practice" (ibid, p. 8).[5] More specifically, he sees new folk as part of the discourse of punk music, as many of the associated acts are (or have been) connected with independent ways of producing and distributing music. Moreover, they combine punk aesthetics, such as lo-fi production and recording techniques, free improvisation, using expanded or very minimal track structures and putting self-imposed limitations on singing and playing, with folk aesthetics, including the preferred use of acoustic instruments such as the guitar, the banjo and the mandolin, multiplicity of voices, and harmonious singing (ibid, pp. 8-9); therewith reinforcing romantic tropes of domesticity, community, amateurism, and spontaneity (ibid, p. 240). In Goldberg's terms, they are producers of contemporary folk music who score high on "atypicality", as they span boundaries between 'traditional' folk and various other established genres, including classical music, punk, electronic music, and hip-hop.[6]

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5. Some of the acts mentioned by Encarnacao have signed records deals with some of the bigger 'independent' labels (CocoRosie with Seattle's Sub Pop – parent company: Warner Music Group – and Devendra Banhart with Nonesuch – owned by Warner Music Group). Thus, although these acts started their career within the 'restricted' free-folk field (and were involved in 'lo-fi' production), they have been able to make a crossover to the (semi-) periphery of the commercial music industry. The distinction between 'restricted' free-folk and 'large-scale' indie-folk is therefore somewhat blurred, which is why in the context of this article both categories are referred to as 'indie-folk', a more neutral term that covers current trends in the global field of folk music the best.

6. Arguing that *producers* of contemporary folk music score high on atypicality, while arguing in this chapter that indie-folk practitioners are poly-purists seems paradoxical and deserves some further explanation. Goldberg *et al.* argue that *variety* "relates to the enactment of multiple social identities" (2016, p. 218). It are consumers who, for example, prefer both country music and opera; both fast food and fine dining; both lattes and bird-hunting (ibidem). In doing so, they span boundaries as they consume items that are commonly associated with multiple – class, racial, and gender – identities. In contrast, *atypicality* "concerns noncompliance with cultural codes" (ibidem). It relates to *crossing* of genre codes – for example, by mixing rock with classical music, or by mixing Korean food with Mexican food. Goldberg *et al.* subsequently argue that poly-mixers prefer culture that both spans and crosses genre boundaries. Poly-purists, on the contrary, sample broadly but are averse of mixing genre codes; that is, they like both Korean and Mexican food, but prefer not to eat kimchi on their tacos – so to speak. Goldberg *et al.* finally argue that poly-purism seems to be "a social display of refined taste" (ibid, p. 232). By this they mean that poly-purists are capable, by means of the aesthetic disposition, to distinguish between refined (that is, authentic, pure, artisanal, etc.) culture and culture with an explicit commercial, snobbish and populist orientation. It is therefore that they score low on atypicality, as they dismiss cultural items that span boundaries excessively. Here the argument, however, becomes slippery, as Goldberg *et al.* seem to suggest that poly-purists reject innovation *by all means*. As I argue in this chapter (see 6.6.2.), it should be emphasized that authenticity is a social construction, meaning that cultural items, like indie-folk, can be perceived as authentic also when they are eclectic and intertextual. Atypicality, as understood by Goldberg *et al.*, particularly concerns the transgressing of boundaries between luxury goods (which score high on economic capital) and prestigious goods (which score high on cultural capital). Intertextuality, however, is not necessarily similar to atypicality; also when a cultural item consists on the basis of blended genre codes it can *connote* authenticity. As I argue in this chapter, indie-folk practitioners indeed define

Thematically, the music of new folk acts revolves around lyrics telling anthropomorphic stories about nature, the pre-industrial and animal life, as well as about the innocence of childhood or being transgender. Although some of the new folk acts, such as Charalambides, and Animal Collective, rarely advance a narrative, or use narrative fragmentation as a stylistic feature (ibid, p. 236). Thus, when applying Hibbett's theoretical framework described above, it could be argued that acts (previously) categorized under the umbrellas of 'free-folk', 'New Weird America' and 'freak-folk' use a combination between a postmodern (lo-fi) and modern (post-rock) approach in preserving the "myth of authenticity". While using postmodern recording techniques to create a sound that is both bedroom and backwoodsy, they return to a more modern approach in their poetry, performances and art work – which evoke a romantic mythos that is antagonistic to a mainstream society perceived as corrupt, commodified and infused with postmodern irony and cynicism (Keenan, 2003; Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a).

Music produced within the more commercial indie-folk field, on the other hand, should be seen as part of the discourse of pop music. Although indie-folk acts such as Bon Iver, The Lumineers, Fleet Foxes and Mumford and Sons make use of the same folk aesthetics as their experimental counterparts (most notably acoustic guitars and harmonious singing), their recordings are more hi-fi produced, albums and songs are more structured, and voices are less limited or even upfront. Thematically, indie-folk is less politically charged and more concerned with autobiographic storytelling revolving around the expression of either melancholia (Bon Iver) or happiness (Edward Sharpe) – that is, a more 'expressivist' poetry emphasizing sensitivity, subjectivity and inwardness (see Van Rooden, 2015).

In the remaining sections, I will illustrate how the genre category of indie-folk is indeed parceled into two subdomains: a subdomain consisting of agents who frame indie-folk as a form of popular culture and a subdomain consisting of agents who consume indie-folk by assimilating it to the aesthetic disposition and consume it as a form of high art. Below I will further elaborate on these findings, however after first introducing details about data analysis and the results it generated.

6.5. Methodology[7]

Analysis was carried out using a combination between "thematic narrative analysis" and "interactional analysis" (Kohler-Riessman, 2005, pp. 2-5) and mainly focused on the questions associated with interview topic 2, including questions on how respondents attributed stylistic criteria to indie-folk music; what acts should be in-, and excluded from the genre, and personal (dis)preferences in regards to musicians and bands both within and outside of indie-folk (see Appendix 2). The interview excerpts associated with interview topic 2 were coded inductively ('in vivo'), resulting in a list of codes emphasizing the discursive strategies of Dutch indie-folk practitioners. These discursive strategies were visually presented using the *Atlas.ti* network function (see figures 6.1., 6.2. and 6.3. in Appendix 3). Because the interviews with gatekeepers were not primarily focused on questions about genre classification, analysis focused on the interviews with musicians and audience members. Excerpts taken from these interviews, however, were complemented with fragments from interviews with gatekeepers, as they play a key role in establishing links *between* production and consumption practices. The results are presented below, which are structured in three parts, focusing (6.1.) on how the authenticity-commercialism dichotomy crosscuts the genre of indie-folk, parceling it into two separate domains involving indie folk as 'high' art and 'popular' culture; on (6.2.) how a taste for indie-folk reflects a taste for 'quality' culture, and (6.3.) on how symbolic boundaries are drawn around a snobbish and populist aesthetic.

6.6 Analysis of judgment: indie-folk as a tool of social differentiation

6.6.1. Aestheticizing the commonplace: indie-folk as high art and popular culture

If indie is defined as music that is stripped bare to its purist form, then indie-*folk* could be seen as an even more radical version of indie music. Both audience members and musicians generally define the genre as "real" and "authentic", and support this classification with terms such as "unpolished", "without glamour" and "no nonsense" – or,

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authenticity along the lines of innovation, meaning that 'folk' is only labeled as authentic when it spans boundaries between conventions that are part of the folk idiom and conventions that are associated with other established genres within the indie stream, including rock, electronic music, and hip hop. Rather than employing a politics of 'anything goes', however, indie-folk practitioners erect symbolic fences between authentic culture and culture that is either to posh, popular or populist. Spanning boundaries between 'authentic' folk and 'inauthentic' pop or dance music thus seems unlikely.

7. See for a detailed elaboration on data collection section 1.5. of this thesis.

more actively, as "simple", "primordial", "ordinary", "from life itself", "more pure", "emotional", and "honest" (see figures 6.1 and 6.2 in Appendix 3). More concretely, the valorization of authenticity is connected to "real instruments", most notably the acoustic guitar, the violin, the tambourine and the banjo; to looks that are "casual", "just neat", or "everyday", and to musicians who act "sincere". The realistic and serious stance with which indie-folk is produced and consumed is reflected, furthermore, in the preference for "little drums", "constancy of rhythms" and meandering guitar techniques such as guitar "strumming" and guitar "picking", reflecting, as one respondent explained (Tonnie, 40, male, Middelburg, professional musician), the routinized and repetitive practices of everyday life itself. On a narrative level, it is reflected in the representation of everyday themes in the lyrics, including themes about discordant and emotionally-laden events in life.

Focusing more closely on how *musicians* define indie-folk (and thus on the production-side of the genre), it is particularly worth noting that they define their lyrics as a form of poetry. Indeed, indie-folk lyrics could be best defined as either lyrical or "narrative poems", the latter type referring to a form of poetry in which the narrator tells a story either from a first or third person perspective and with sentences typically phrased in the past tense (Jahn, 2005). Stories about communion (e.g., family, friends, love relationships); discordance (e.g., relationships breaking up; sickness, death); the otherworldly (e.g., the sublime forces of nature, dreams, the sub-consciousness), and history (e.g., traditions, customs, religion) are key representations. Here, we also witness the 'historicism' underlying contemporary indie-folk. As some of the musicians explain, folk music is evaluated in terms of how it is grounded in tradition and ancient history, so that it contains "infinite depth" rather than being a commodity:

> (K): For example, a record like *Wolfgang Amadeus* by Phoenix [2009 album by French indie-pop act, NvP], I think is really amazing. (…) It is a record you can play endlessly, it's not just candy. But the real link for me is, if I listen to a Stanley Brothers' song, or Bob Dylan, that it has infinite depth, because it, eh, it is truly sustainable. I just said, Phoenix, it's not candy, but eh, folk music, it sometimes exists for more than 1000 years. A church hymn, for example, I think it's amazing when someone can convincingly sing this today, and touch people. Such a song has infinite depth.[8]
>
> — (Kim, male, Utrecht, professional musician).

However, alongside the functional aspects of lyrics, what matters most *is the way in which* stories are told. Musicians describe their lyrics as "intelligent" and "not stupid", and explain how songs should be "cryptic", "a bit vague" or infused with "poetical abstraction", rather than conveying their meaning "in an obvious way", as Djurre and Otto explain:

> (D): What I think is a nice one is "The Unknown Character" [one of his songs, NvP]. I was with someone in a relationship, who was handing me in a way I could not really deal with, and then I say: 'You gave me a bouquet of question marks. Told me to keep them in a vase, make sure you water them enough'. And then I had this image of a question mark in a vase, with the dot below water. And then they all pretty much hang out. (…) But you can also say: 'Don't keep me waiting, I miss you'. But I don't think that is beautiful, it does not appeal to me. (…) I always try to create a certain level of poetical abstraction in what I sing and not just like: 'I'm in pain'.
>
> — (Djurre, male, 36, Amsterdam, professional musician)
>
> (O): I see myself both as a folksinger and a singer-songwriter. So I am not entirely a folksinger, otherwise I would only use the codes of folk music. (…) But I'm not entirely a singer-songwriter either, because I refuse to write… like Joni Mitchell, for instance. Then people look at it, as if they are watching a soap series. Like: 'O, look at me, what happens to me!' (…) But a really good singer-songwriter, what I think is really interesting, who also has this folk feeling, when they evoke the folk feeling, then the song is also about you. Then you listen to it, and you see it, and then it is like looking in a mirror. (…) Some singer-songwriters, when they sing about being ditched by a girl, then I think: 'O, how sad for them'. While, when I listen to Leonard Cohen, then I always think he is singing about me: 'O, how sad for me!'
>
> — (Otto, male, 36, Amsterdam, professional musician)

8. Interviews were originally in Dutch; excerpts have been translated by the author.

In the first excerpt, Djurre explains how he aims to convey the meaning of his song metaphorically, that is, by encoding the message in such a way that it contains aesthetic value. In the second excerpt, Otto distinguishes the folksinger (Leonard Cohen) from the singer-songwriter (Joni Mitchell). Whereas he sees the folksinger, like himself, as a singer-songwriter by occupation, he at the same time distinguishes between folk and singer-songwriter as two distinct *genres.* The difference between the two genres is perceived in the way in which stories are told: whereas the singer-songwriter tells the story from a personal perspective (as if it were a soap series), the folksinger allows his personal message to be more universal – that is, more *detached* from direct sensation.

Focusing on the *reception* of indie-folk shows how the genre is consumed not only by showing economic disinterestedness but also through "aesthetic distancing" (Bourdieu, 1984). Indie-folk is generally experienced by audience members by creating a setting in which they are "closed off from the world", meaning that they prefer to listen to "laidback" indie-folk by breaking with the routinized structure of their daily lives. This is most notably achieved through "active listening", so that respondents – like reading a book, or drinking a glass of wine – can be "carried away" or slide into a "dream daze". This is contrasted with other, more up-tempo genres such as rock, electronic dance and commercial indie-folk in the style of Mumford and Sons, which are generally more listened to *while* conducting everyday routines (Van Poecke, forthcoming). This is also confirmed by some of the gatekeepers, who classify the indie-folk audience as experiencing music in a contemplative state of mind:

> (M): Yeah, one time, someone wrote in a newspaper headline: 'A contemplative festival'. So these are particularly people who also go to litera… well, book readings. Eh… a peaceful audience, so at our festival you won't be seeing any stage dives, you know, that kind of stuff. It could be, of course, because I think we have an audience that can handle that kind of music pretty well, but it also needs to be a kind of synching feeling, and I notice that when I program a band that plays extremely loud that… I personally think that is really cool, but… it doesn't really go berserk. Thus, acts that require a contemplative state of mind, it just works better.
>
> — (Michel, 43, male, Den Haag, festival director)

Thus, while the 'common(s)', the 'common man' and the 'commonplace' are key representations in lyrics, performances and art work, the way in which indie-folk is consumed is by creating a setting that "implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 31). This corresponds with research arguing that cultural omnivores are consumers capable of appreciating music *aesthetically*, that is, by assessing music by means of the aesthetic disposition so that form is valued in separation from function (Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Lizardo & Skiles, 2012; Goldberg *et al.,* 2016). As this study indicates, members of the Dutch indie-folk audience are part of the cultural (upper) middle-class (see Methodology section), a fraction in society that achieves distinction by actively criticizing highly commercialized and mass-produced music, while transposing the aesthetic disposition to the consumption of 'lowbrow' folk (Roy, 2010). The ability to assess folk music through applying the aesthetic disposition is particularly appropriated by members of the second sub-group: the somewhat older respondents endowed with "objectified" and "institutionalized" markers of cultural capital, including (high levels of) education and familiarity with a wide range of more experimental and obscure indie(-folk) acts (*cf.* Lizardo & Skiles, 2012, p. 18). The construction of indie-folk as a genre that is counterhegemonic to the mainstream reflects the antagonistic relationship between 'authentic' folk and 'commercial' pop (e.g., Ennis, 1992). However, this study indicates that the authentic-commercial dichotomy also crosscuts the genre of indie-folk itself, parceling it into two separate fields – avant-garde oriented indie-folk and indie-folk with a commercial orientation – each having its own actors, institutional politics and conventions.

Dutch indie-folk musicians, gatekeepers and audience members generally share a taste for a broad variety of cultural disciplines and musical genres. They are avid readers, foodies and (art house) film enthusiasts, and almost without exception claim not to watch television, aside from documentaries and TV series – that is, the more narrative and 'quality' art forms (cf. Johnston & Baumann, 2009 on 'foodie' culture and Lavie & Dhoest, 2015 on 'quality' television) (see Figure 6.3 in Appendix 3). Interestingly, similar distinctions are made within these disciplines between more 'authentic' styles and genres (such as "art house movies", "literature written in a journalistic manner" and "sustainable food with quality") and genres that are considered too commercial and/or snobbish (such as "very simple commercial movies", "reality TV" and food that is "too green" or "green in a very idealistic manner"). Zooming in on their musical preferences, they share a broad taste for genres ranging from folk to rock, jazz, hip hop, bluegrass, Americana, world music, funk, rockabilly,

electronic music and classical music. Within the community, however, a clear distinction can be made between a sub-group favoring the more commercial approach of indie-folk acts such as Mumford and Sons (and associated indie-pop acts such as Coldplay), and a sub-group preferring the more avant-garde indie-folk in the style of MV & EE, Six Organs of Admittance, CocoRosie and Animal Collective.

The difference between the two groups is that members of the first sub-group, of which the majority are adolescents and early adults, have a taste for indie bands, such as Coldplay and Muse, which have managed to make a crossover to the mainstream. Members of the second group, on the contrary, are somewhat older (most of them are in their thirties and early forties) and have a taste for indie-folk acts at the avant-garde end of the genre. Members of the first sub-group, however, remarkably define indie-folk in the style of Mumford and Sons as a more authentic version of indie-pop. They prefer this type of indie because of the use of acoustic instead of electric instruments, because looks are more modest, and because the lyrics and artwork emphasize "community" and "coziness". Yet most importantly, because indie-folk acts such as Mumford and Sons and The Lumineers stay within a certain "format", mostly by building up songs towards reaching a climax, as Julie explains:

> (J): This is something I have with other bands as well, but also a little bit when it concerns The Lumineers. It is just relaxing and it is really about the music. Yeah, it brings a sort of coziness, a certain atmosphere. I think this is also very true when it concerns Mumford and Sons. That it reaches a sort of climax.
> (N): What do you mean with a 'climax'?
> (J): Well, for example… The song "The Cave" by Mumford and Sons, I think this song is amazing. With the stamping, then it is almost impossible for me to remain seated, and then at a certain moment the song goes faster, and then it is increasingly louder… I am not familiar with those terms, but with these guitars, and then at a certain moment, you see everyone in front of you… dancing and stamping.
>
> — (Julie, female, 25, Oostvoorne, sales person)

While respondents of the first sub-group are mostly unfamiliar with indie-folk acts operating at the avant-garde end of the indie-folk genre, respondents of the second ('avant-garde') sub-group actively criticize the more commercial indie-folk spearheaded by Mumford and Sons, who are remarkably often labeled as "Coldplay with a banjo", as Bas illustrates:

> (B): Mumford and Sons, I really hate it. I think it's just a pose, there is nothing unique about it. I think it is Coldplay with a banjo. Really disgusting. The mimicry, it is not particularly warm, it is not focused on performing a real song, it is only aimed at scoring.
>
> — (Bas, 48, male, Amsterdam, booker/agent/festival organizer)

The framing of Mumford and Sons in such a way shows how members of the second group regard indie-folk with an overt commercial orientation – and mainstream popular music in general – as being too "scripted", "commodified" and "structured". Instead, they prefer music – indie-folk included – which is "unconventional", "experimental", "dynamic", a "little squeaky" or, as Robert explains, which is more "layered" and has more "depth":

> (R): I have to say that I don't like Mumford and Sons. They are framed as a folk band, I also think so, but their music, it doesn't appeal to me. (…) In general, I miss some depth in popular music. The layers I was referring to… I am not really surprised by it. I don't… Sometimes, I analyze the lyrics, then I discover: 'Wow, this seems really simple, but it is really deep, this is a really great metaphor!'. But this, I think, is completely missing from popular music.
>
> — (Robert, 23, male, Utrecht, University College student)

Musicians and audience members within the second ('avant-garde') group commonly define indie-folk as "artistic guitar pop" and strongly associate the genre both with lo-fi and post-rock music in the style of Sebadoh and Godspeed You! Black Emperor (cf. Hibbett, 2005); with electronic dance music in the style of acts such as Caribou and The Knife, and with neo-classical music in the style of Nils Frahm and Ólafur Arnalds. In the distinction,

in short, between the two groups within the genre of indie-folk – associated, respectively, with the sub-fields of "large-scale" and "restricted" production – we witness the distinction between a popular aesthetic valuing function over form, and a high art aesthetic characterized by a preference for formal experimentation. Similar to the general image of indie as the mirror image of commercial pop and synthetic dance and techno (Fonarow, 2006), members of both sub-groups, however, define indie-folk as the antidote of "mainstream pop" and "electronic dance". The former category (mainstream pop, linked to acts such as Justin Bieber and Snoop Dogg) is defined in bourgeois terms ("commodity", "money", "hype", "fast food") and is regarded as "very artificial" and "glamorous". It is associated with "the average pop listener" as well as with acts such as Lady Gaga that cultivate the artist's identity through the extensive use of personae. The latter category (electronic dance and techno music) is defined as "synthetic" and "glittery", indeed because the approach with which music is produced and performed is regarded as "purposefully instrumental", meaning that it is meant to "effectively" create "euphoric trance" for the "big masses". Indie-folk, which is regarded as more "pure" and "authentic", being the antidote. The fact that both subgroups define their version of indie-folk as more authentic in comparison to the mainstream emphasizes the graded nature of authenticity as a method of evaluation, as it is used by two different – and to a certain extent oppositional – groups *within* the field of indie-folk *for the same reason*, that is, to distinguish from acts that are considered to be exemplar of mainstream popular music production.

6.6.2. Indie-folk as a marker of 'quality' taste

A recurring theme in the discourse of musicians and audience members belonging to the second sub-group referred to above is the relationship between experimental indie-folk and what respondents themselves refer to as "postmodernism". Analysis indicates that respondents associate "postmodernism" with concepts such as "deconstruction", "contingency", and "relativism", as well as with taking a reflexive stance to nostalgia. Folk music should be contemporary in the sense that it is eclectic, that both acoustic and electronic instruments are allowed, and that it is characterized by the use of new techniques and sound effects such as "noise", "distortion" and "fragmentation". These are seen as innovations to the genre existing next to more traditional stylistic conventions such as "polymorphous singing", "little drums" and "guitar strumming". The preference for innovation and experimentation explains the negative valuing of taking a restorative approach to nostalgia. It is argued that contemporary folk should not *restore* the past, but should *upgrade* the past to the present:

> (D): In music I think it is cool to not work from a specific idiom, I don't think that is really interesting. I also don't think it is interesting when, for example, a bluegrass band plays bluegrass music from the 1920s. They exist, well fine, but I don't think it's interesting. It becomes a sort of attraction. But when you do something new with it, electronic beats for instance, then something starts to happen. (…) What I think is interesting is that it plays with certain expectations. So that you hear a banjo playing, but you start thinking: 'Is this folk?'. It's not really folk, it's not really classical music either, but what is it? What is happening here?
>
> — (Djurre, male, 36, Amsterdam, professional musician)

Here, we see how Djurre frames the copying of the past in traditionalist folk and bluegrass music as an "attraction", while taking a reflexive stance is seen as experimental, innovative and challenging. Authenticity is thus achieved, according to Djurre, by negotiating between adhering to a folk idiom on the one hand and by renewing the idiom on the other (*cf.* Peterson, 2005). Musicians particularly encourage the incorporation of stylistic conventions associated with neo-classical music and electronic music into the genre, particularly to create a more "ambient" sound. Thus, while strongly criticizing electronic music "for the big masses", the incorporation of electronic influences into the folk idiom is encouraged. This corresponds with aforementioned research by Fonarow (2006, pp. 57-62), who found that indie enthusiasts assess music in terms of *quality* rather than in terms of genre or style. As musicians and audience members explain, indie-folk is music that is "primordial" or created with a "fundamental attitude". Both songs and performances, moreover, should be "sincere", meaning that they should "match with the one who performs". It is believed by Dutch indie-folk practitioners that such a primordial way of creating music is not exclusive to indie-folk but can be achieved in almost any genre. It leads to the construction of oppositional pairs such as The Knife vs. Armin van Buuren,

Kanye West vs. Snoop Dogg, "accessible jazz" (e.g., Michael Kiwanuka) vs. "jazz without lyrics" (as a reference to strictly instrumental jazz), and more traditional classical music vs. experimental classical music in the style of Bill Ryder-Jones and Nils Frahm:

> (R): For example, there is Bill Ryder-Jones, the guitarist of the Coral, and he, he left the band, but he made an album by himself. It is classical music, but always with arrangements of his own. Yet sometimes it is a classical piece for piano and strings, but then a song transforms into a screaming guitar solo. And that is something I really like, that those kinds of things are mixed. But I also listen to the more experimental end of classical music, the more minimalistic spectrum of the genre, and then I end up with someone like Nils Frahm.
>
> — (Robert, 23, male, Utrecht, University College student)

A similar discourse is produced by gatekeepers, who generally claim to use quality, rather than style or genre, as a method of evaluation, as explained by Bas:

> (B): I don't think we have a genuine style. I think that, at the best, we have quality as style. Quality. I am now working on organizing a new festival (…). It is oriented at venues of 400 people max, three days, and it is about what we refer to as 'intrusive quality', which also is the sub-title of the festival. Thus, quality you cannot escape from, which for some people is too confronting. But on the other hand is pure, authentic, urgent. I think that is the binding element, and not necessarily… yeah, I mean, in terms of style, acts like Lonnie Holley [American folk artist, NvP] are far away from Damien Jurado [American indie-rock artist, NvP], or Adrian Crowley [Irish indie-folk artist, NvP], or Sleep Party People [Danish post-rock/dream pop/ambient act, NvP]. These are all bands we include in the line-up, but there is a certain uniqueness, which we think is very interesting. (…) We are not focused on: 'We are still looking for a rock band or a…' It is just to, yeah, sell it, because people need particular frameworks, to evaluate, or, how do you say, to guide them. In this respect, you need to work with them, because people need frameworks.
>
> — (Bas, 48, male, Amsterdam, booker/agent/festival organizer)

Here, we see how genre is used both as a tool to organize and classify music and as a marketing tool. Underlying Bas's classification practice, however, is a process of social distinction. In the construction of "intrusive quality" as a method of evaluation, we see how he erects symbolic fences between himself and those who 'lack' quality, that is, those who are not capable of evaluating multiple styles and genres of (popular) music through their "categorical purity" (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016, p. 221). This corresponds with the aforementioned claim by Goldberg *et al.* (2016), who argue that poly-purists consume heterogeneously, yet by cherry picking those cultural items within genres that are considered refined, sophisticated, more complex or prestigious. Contrary to Goldberg *et al.*, however, I argue that the ideology of 'quality', and associated frames such as authenticity, urgency and purity, are *socially constructed* phenomena. By this I mean that even the most experimental and eclectic music is capable of *connoting* purity and authenticity. More accurately, I mean that the distinction between 'authentic' and 'commercial' music is made based on how the former is less formulaic than the latter. This complicates the distinction made by Goldberg *et al.* between "poly-mixers" and "poly-purists". While it is undoubtedly true that Dutch indie-folk aficionados are mixers by showing a strong preference for eclecticism, innovation and formal experimentation, they are first and foremost purists – or even snobs – in the sense of appreciating the more 'authentic' – that is, innovative – acts within genres, while disqualifying music that is produced, disseminated and consumed within the (alternative) mainstream, which is regarded as overly structured. Simultaneously, they distinguish from a taste that is homogeneous or "mono-purist", expressed by how they actively distinguish themselves from traditionalist bluegrass practitioners. Music is only considered to be 'authentic', then, when it transgresses conventions by being eclectic, and thus by spanning boundaries. Spanning boundaries, however, by mixing techniques, sounds and styles associated with various genres at the experimental end of the indie stream (rock, punk, post-rock, hip-hop, electronic music, experimental classical music, etc.) rather than adopting a politics of 'anything goes'; for example, by mixing indie-folk with commercial pop or traditional classical music. This indicates that poly-purism not only reflects a broad taste for *consecrated* forms of culture, but also a more

experimental taste, as discussed, for the more 'authentic' objects within established categories. The distinction between poly-mixers and poly-purists, in fact, seems to be somewhat obsolete in the context of a musical landscape that is parceled into numerous (sub-)categories and in which innovation is achieved through eclecticism and nostalgia (*cf.* Reynolds, 2011). This forces high-status consumers to consume broadly, yet by singling out those items within genres that match their 'quality' taste. This is measured in terms of how music is more "pure" or "authentic" – or how it deviates from the standardized mainstream, as well as from music which is associated with snobbism and traditionalism.

6.6.3. Turning need into a virtue: distancing from snobbism and traditionalism

Zooming in on the politics of boundary drawing, analysis shows that, next to drawing boundaries around mainstream pop and electronic dance and techno music, both musicians and audience members erect symbolic fences between 'authentic' indie-folk (and associated indie genres) on the one hand, and genres that are either associated with traditionalism or populism, like country and *Schlager*, and snobbism or aestheticism, such as experimental jazz, funk, metal, and classical music. While indie-folk is appreciated because it connotes authenticity and simplicity, traditionalist genres are criticized for being "too simplistic". Snobbish genres, on the other hand, are criticized for emphasizing technical skill and a purely ceremonial nature of music performance, while indie-folk, at the same time, is defined on the basis of how it incorporates techniques, such as distortion and improvisation, historically associated with the musical avant-garde (*cf.* Hibbett, 2005). The drawing of symbolic boundaries suggests the antagonistic relationship between the Dutch indie-folk community and musical communities that either prefer to consume more 'lowbrow' or 'highbrow' forms of music.

Next to the genres of mainstream pop and electronic dance and techno music, metal and hard rock are commonly criticized by indie-folk practitioners because they are associated with "false" emotions, most notably aggression, in comparison to more 'authentic' emotions such as cheerfulness, melancholia and depression. Moreover, metal and hard rock music is criticized, because these genres are associated with a very "ceremonial" and "technical" style of performing through extensive guitar soloing and drumming. More lowbrow forms of music, most notably country, *Schlager* and vernacular music, are defined as "carnavalesque", whereas high art-infused genres such as jazz and classical music, are framed as "rational" or as "elitist stuff". Thus, while country music is considered to be "too simplistic", both jazz and classical music, as Ronald explains, are defined as "too technical":

> (R): Yeah, MV & EE [American free-folk ensemble, NvP]. That kind of music for me is very interesting, because it connects to… both the way I would like to experience music and the way I play music myself. (…) You know, you can listen to classical music, and then it really is about the repetition of certain patterns, and subtlety as well, that things are repeated. But on the other side of the spectrum it is improvised music, eh… yeah, which maybe is more lively and it is about interaction between musicians. For me, that is interesting to do, and I find it really interesting to look at it when I go to concerts. With Matt Valentine and those types of musicians, I think it's really interesting what happens there, because things happen that are unexpected. And you notice that they [the musicians, NvP] also don't know. It's not about technical perfection.
>
> — (Ronald, male, 41, De Bilt, visual artist and lecturer)

Here, we see how improvisation is encouraged by Ronald, however only when it serves the goal of celebrating music *collectively*. This is contrasted with a style of improvisation more common in jazz, which is initiated 'for the sake of musicians'. Indie-folk, in other words, operates in a *flirtatious* relationship both with lowbrow forms of music, like country, which recall the ideology of folk as "music of the people", *and* with genres, such as jazz and classical music, which require a preference for innovation, formalism and experimentation (cf. Peterson & Simkus, 1992). It too, however, maintains a *defensive* relationship with both genres: with country because it is considered to be "*too* simplistic", and with forms of jazz and classical music because they are framed as "*too* experimental", "*too* technical" or "*overly* composed" (emphasis added). The way indie-folk operates in a double bind with both the lowbrow and highbrow is reflected in the way respondents define country as a "guilty pleasure", while experimental jazz is seen as unknown territory yet a field to be conquered:

(M): Real diehard country music, as in Willie Nelson, I think that is really annoying and also a bit simplistic. I don't like to be associated with that, I guess. (…) Now folk music, of course, is typically American as well, but somehow I feel that there is less to it and that… No, I absolutely don't like it and that is why, when some music leans towards country, then I immediately… I can appreciate it, secretly, but then it becomes a sort of guilty pleasure, because I actually don't allow myself to like country, even if I secretly like it.

— (Matthijs, male, 26, Rotterdam, Ph. D. student)

(E): For example, music like jazz… It can go in every direction, the way I see it. If you use a compass, it can go 360 degrees and every song can be really unpredictable. And folk music, on the contrary… it can be unpredictable as well, but it is not as predictable as pop and not that structured. But it creates a lot of opportunities for me. (…) The jazz genre is something I want to be more familiar with, and eh… immerse myself in it, a little bit. It's a little project.

— (Esther, female, 29, Groningen, front office employee)

From the part of musicians, the double bind relationship with genres that require considerable cultural capital (in the form of knowledge and musical skill) is reflected in the way they, on the one hand, frame indie-folk as music that is "intellectual", "artistic" and "contemplated". On the other hand, it resonates in the way they *negatively* define their preference for participatory aesthetics, such as the *downplaying* of musical virtuosity, *limited* guitar soloing, playing improvised music *collectively* – that is, by criticizing a very individualistic, "macho", "technical" and/or "ceremonial" style of performing which is more common in institutionalized genres such as jazz and classical music. Yet, it also echoes in the way musicians define their strategy of producing participatory music as a means to compensate some of their "limitations" as a musician, as Mink and Tessa, respectively, explain:

(M): I can't really stand it when, I always refer to it as a kind of macho type of music, and I always think about it in this way when it concerns jazz, or funk, or that kind of stuff. I can appreciate music when it has these influences, but if it is only like 'hear me going!' – it's of course a bit biased – but then I'm like: 'Try to create something nice together' instead of 'Yeah, this really grooves!'. That, I don't particularly like.

— (Mink, male, 27, Rotterdam, musician/student)

(T): So it [indie-folk, NvP] is pop music that is contemplated, taking into account my own limitations [giggles]. I am not extremely good, namely, in playing the guitar, so there are other things I am good at. And those are just a few things.
(N): What are those things you are good at?
(T): I can play a sort of strum or pluck the guitar in a very fast way. So, something like: 'um te, um te, um te, um te, um te'. And then you don't have to do a lot, but it is totally crazy. Yeah, it is not heavy finger-picking, but yeah, it is something I have practiced.

— (Tessa, female, 28, Utrecht, musician)

Participatory aesthetics, in short, reflect a politics of 'making a virtue of necessity'. The indie-folk community distrusts the all too technical, rational and ceremonial, while acknowledging the constraints of being unable to be involved in highly presentational performance practices (see on the difference between participatory and presentational aesthetics: Turino, 2008). Indie-folk, therefore, could be best defined as a *hybrid:* it has incorporated aesthetic criteria historically related to the high arts – experimentation, innovation and economic disinterestedness on the production-side; aesthetic distancing and formalism on the reception-side – while at the same time remaining true to a popular aesthetic which entails a vision of art that is purposeful, emotional, and socially engaged. It flirts with *l'art pour l'art,* yet regards music that is just being technical as too elitist or snobbish. Doing so, indie-folk adheres to the roots of folk as music of the 'common' man. This ultimately boils down to the conclusion that indie-folk is a 'rising' genre, constructed by cultural omnivores having or aspiring to high-status.

6.7. Conclusions and discussion

This article has studied the social construction of indie-folk in the Netherlands. Doing so, it has discussed the "double articulation" of indie-folk representing a segment of the cultural (upper) middle-class in Dutch society: first, to dominant subcultures of former generations (most notably "dogmatic" punk culture); second, and most importantly, to dominant cultures associated with high levels of economic and/or symbolic capital. It has been argued, more specifically, that the construction of indie-folk as a genre reflects the class politics of the cultural (upper) middle-class in Dutch society – more accurately, of a group of adolescents and (early) adults aspiring to high-status. This corresponds with sociological research emphasizing how, also in a postmodern condition favoring hybridity over categorization, some forms of music, like indie-folk, are an extension of community and social identity; how musical structure, even while being eclectic and intertextual, is homologous with social structure (cf. Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

In fact, this research has emphasized how indie-folk practitioners, particularly those showing a strong interest in experimental music such as indie-folk, strongly criticize commercialism and homogeneity in the production and consumption of popular music. They achieve distinction by drawing boundaries around mainstream pop, hip-hop and electronic dance and techno music. At the same time, they *span* boundaries both with the highbrow (notably with experimental forms of classical music) and the lowbrow (notably with country and bluegrass and electronic music), yet without turning their taste into 'anything goes'. They do so by consuming a broad palette of (sub-)genres within the indie music stream, which are considered to be more pure and authentic in comparison to the mainstream. Authenticity is determined by the ability of producers to create eclectic, experimental and innovative music, and thus through the spanning of boundaries between (indie) genres. As well as by putting an emphasis on *how* music (particularly its lyrical aspects) is created, rather than on *what* the music purposefully represents.

Underlying the boundary spanning activities of indie-folk practitioners, then, is a politics of boundary policing, preventing heterogeneous taste from turning into "mono-purism" or "poly-mixing"; hence, losing its capacity to provide distinction. Indie-folk aficionados can only make their consumer practices socially meaningful when exploring multiple forms of innovative music, yet by staying within the confines of the indie music stream. This corresponds with former research indicating that cultural omnivores are tolerant towards popular and vernacular culture, while simultaneously adopting an exclusionary politics of class distinction (e.g. Johnston & Baumann, 2007). The emergence and institutionalization of indie-folk as an established genre within the indie music stream is thus part of the rise of the cultural omnivore (Peterson, 1992), yet seems to reflect a desire for something more authentic, pure and delineated in a cultural landscape dominated by heterogeneity, diversity and the commodification of culture.

Indie-folk, in this respect, could be, on the one hand, seen as the *product of postmodernity*, a type of society characterized by increasing diversity, heterogeneity, fragmentation and the commodification of culture, as well as by a critique of the dogmatic ideology and somewhat snobbish attitude of past subcultures. Indie-folk, however, also seems to be a *response to postmodernism*, for it returns to emotion, engagement, sincerity and to either realist representations of the 'commonplace' and the 'common (man)', or to otherworldly representations of a romantic mythos, as alternative systems of meaning. The construction of such a "new seriousness" in indie-folk (*cf.* Hibbett, 2005) could be seen as a strategy to 'bootstrap' constructions of meta-authenticity and irony more common in postmodern genres such as lo-fi and self-conscious avant-garde rock and pop (*cf.* Hibbett, 2005). It explains the preference within the indie-folk community for *participatory* aesthetics, reflecting an ideology revolving around democratic values of openness, engagement, inclusiveness, egalitarianism and connectivity. The emphasis on participatory aesthetics in contemporary indie-folk, however, also indicates the inability of indie-folk practitioners to "refract" economic capital in terms of maintaining the logic of autonomy (Johnson, 1993, p. 14). This seems to be generally indicative of the emergence of indie as a distinct domain within the global music industry, located at the interstice between the avant-garde and commercialism, and therefore forced to form commercial partnerships (see Hesmondhalgh, 1999). Participatory aesthetics such as the use of "more poetic" language, however, require considerable amounts of cultural capital, and are only effective in the context of a community of which members possess the knowledge and knowhow to recognize and decode associated conventions. This research therefore emphasizes that a cultural (upper) middle-class taste extends in indie-folk.

By demonstrating how indie-folk aficionados are cultural omnivores, this research has contributed to research associating American roots music – most notably blues, bluegrass, rock and folk – to the taste and lifestyle of the cultural omnivore (Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Van Eijck, 2001; Hibbett, 2005). On a theoretical level, this research indicates that cultural omnivorousness, rather than being a trend of a so-called post-Bourdieu era, is part

of the ongoing historical narrative of a Kantian aesthetics emphasizing the disinterested nature of artistic evaluation (Bourdieu, 1984). As an aesthetic ideology emerging at the end of the eighteenth century, it resonates in contemporary indie-folk. In fact, this study emphasizes that Bourdieu's work on the relationship between culture and social class remains crucial (*cf.* Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Lizardo & Skiles, 2016). Rather than seeing omnivorousness as the blurring or even the erosion of social boundaries, it shows how music is a relevant resource and tool in the drawing of boundaries between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" taste. More specifically, it shows how distinction is achieved by the display of economic disinterestedness by producers, gatekeepers and consumers; although it should be added that producers and gatekeepers are increasingly more pragmatic about collaborating with corporate capital (*cf.* Hesmondhalgh, 1999; see chapter 5 of this thesis). Most importantly, this research shows how distinction is achieved through the application of an aesthetic disposition or "pure taste" to popular culture (Bourdieu, 1993b). This relates to Bourdieu's remarks in *Distinction*, arguing that high-status groups in society have the ability "to constitute aesthetically objects that are ordinary or even 'common' (…) or to apply the principle of a 'pure' aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life, in cooking, dress or decoration, for example" (1984, p. 40).

Furthermore, this study has emphasized how indie-folk practitioners are a particular kind of cultural omnivores, namely poly-purists (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016). They have familiarized themselves with a wide variety of (sub-)genres within popular music, and have acquired the skill to choose among these (sub-)genres those styles and acts that match their 'quality' taste. They can assess and define music in terms of 'quality' by assimilating it to the aesthetic disposition, allowing them to appreciate form in separation from function. They have acquired and mastered this skill by being socialized as members of the (cultural) upper middle-class and by growing up in a postmodern condition marked by diversity, eclecticism and cultural abundance (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Lizardo & Skiles, 2012). This "ontogenetic history" (Lizardo & Skiles, 2012, p. 8) explains their preference for a variety of 'refined' cultural objects, including experimental indie music. Thus, when aiming to answer the question, "Who are poly-purists?" (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016, p. 230), this study indicates that they are highly-educated (early) adults, born in the heydays of postmodernity, with a strong interest in authentic – that is, less formulaic – popular culture. Their interest in 'quality' culture reflects their aspiration to seek a dominant position in society, that is, to maintain or gain status within the dominated fraction of dominant culture (Lamont, 1992).

Finally, this study suggests that a taste for 'quality' music resonates in various other cultural disciplines, including film, television, literature, and food. It may be assumed, therefore, that the findings of this article regarding experimental indie-folk correspond with research on *foodie culture* (Johnston & Baumann, 2007; 2009), *retro-vintage fashion* (Michael, 2015), *alternative cinema* (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016) and *quality TV* (Lavie & Dhoest, 2015). Future research needs to assess, however, whether there are relations in the types of goods consumed *between* genres and similarities in the modes of consumption of these goods *within* genres.

Chapter 7 – Empirics

"What Might Have Been Lost": The Formation of Narrative Identity among the Dutch Indie-Folk Audience[1]

1. A shorter version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in *Popular Music and Society*, 41(5). DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03 . The title, "What Might Have Been Lost", is derived from the song "The Wolves" by Canadian indie-folk band Bon Iver, released on their first album *For Emma, Forever Ago* (Jagjaguwar / 4AD, 2007). The song – and the chorus specifically – refers to the coping of front man Justin Vernon with the loss of his girlfriend and evokes a strong melancholic feeling.

And I wrote this song about it, cuz I didn't care about any worthless photographs.

- M. Ward, *Hold Time*

Fiction cannot be completed other than in life, and life cannot be understood other than through stories we tell about it.

- Paul Ricoeur, "Life: A Story In Search of a Narrator" (1991)

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter I investigate the role of "independent" folk music (indie-folk) in the formation of self-identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience. I do so by studying the daily use of indie-folk songs through in-depth interviewing and by defining the reception of indie-folk as a form of "narrative practice" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, pp. 70-71). This means that self-identity is primarily understood as a "practical project of everyday life" grounded in everyday talk and interaction (ibidem), while broadening this definition by including the role of musical narratives in the process of identity formation. Independent folk music is defined here, somewhat broadly, as an umbrella term that covers multiple newly established genres within the "folk stream" (Ennis, 1992) – including free-folk, New Weird America, freak-folk, and indie-folk (see Keenan; Petrusisch; Encarnacao and chapter 4 of this thesis for historical overviews). Although there are marked differences in aesthetics and institutional politics between these various subgenres (see chapter 6), independent folk music could be generally defined as a narrative art form, a genre convention adhering to the traditional understanding of folk music as a genre rooted in oral tradition and storytelling (see Bohlman, 1988).

By applying a practice theory-based approach to the study of indie-folk in everyday life, this chapter builds upon – and sympathizes with – the work of DeNora (1999; 2000). DeNora has convincingly demonstrated that (popular) music is effective in the social organization of everyday life, as it is, for example, used by individuals as a tool in guiding daily habits, customs, and routines, and as both a tool and a resource in processes of self-perception, self-understanding and self-definition. DeNora therefore refers to music as a "technology of the self" or, more accurately, as "a key resource for the production of autobiography and the narrative thread of self" (2000, p. 158).

However, in researching music's role in composing identities, DeNora strongly focuses on 'formal' sonic qualities such as rhythms, tunes, melodies, harmonies, and styles. As I discuss in this research, musical narratives, however, also play a crucial role in the shaping of the self. I therefore suggest that narrative should be included in the definition of self-identity as mediated by "semiotic particles" (Negus, 1996, in De Nora, 2000, p. 62). The work of DeNora, moreover, has been criticized by Hesmondhalgh (2013, pp. 11-57), who argues that her account of music as a resource for aesthetic agency is overly optimistic. According to Hesmondhalgh, people are often fiercely *constrained* in constructing a healthy and coherent sense of self, "not only by social and historical factors (…) but also by their own personal biographies" (ibid, p. 41). More specifically, Hesmondhalgh suggests that some of the traits of contemporary, capitalist societies are constraining people's identities, as they are characterized by social inequality, the commodification of self-realization, high levels of ontological insecurity, and the favoring of loose connections over strong ties, hence transforming "the self into an individual enterprise" (ibid, p. 43). It is because of the constraining influences of social structure that Hesmondhalgh calls for a critical understanding of the role of music in the regulation and mediation of emotion and self-identity. He does so by incorporating the broader sociological-historical perspective, while at the same time adhering to "the undoubted truth that people do have some freedom to shape their own cultural practices" (ibidem).

By arguing for a broader sociological perspective in studying self-identity, Hesmondhalgh's work relates to a strand of research within the field of practice theory, in which self-identity is conceived of as the product of *both* autobiographic storytelling *and* the rule-like discourses of cultural institutions which provide the conditions, procedures, and resources under which self-identity is mediated and constructed (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, pp. 96-97). That is to say that the analysis of identity formation centers on the interplay between "discursive practice", on the one hand, and "discourses-in-practice", on the other (p. 104). Holstein and Gubrium specifically argue that, in the context of postmodernity, self-identity is "increasingly constructed at the intersections, or institutional 'nodal points', of specific communication circuits, whose language games serve to differentiate the modern centered *self* into the postmodern condition of communicated *selves*" (p. 69; emphasis original). Pessimistically, this postmodern condition could lead to a "crisis of confidence" in the ability of the self to create a sense of self-constancy and coherence (p. 56). More optimistically, however, narrative practice allows the individual to use the word "self" as a representational horizon and, accordingly, to *strive towards* a sense of self-constancy and coherence; even while *experiencing* self-identity as narratively fragmented (p. 71). In the context of the present study I argue that indie-folk, of which narrative themes are centered on representations of community, connectivity and belongingness, indeed provide resources for coping with the experience of narrated time as discordant.

The rest of this chapter is organized in the following way. In the theoretical sections, Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity will be explained, first, because Ricoeur's theory allows for a layered analysis of the formation of narrative identity as a triple mimesis, and, second, because Ricoeur is one of the few theorists who sees the *fictional* story to co-exist with autobiographic storytelling and social interaction as a crucial mechanism in the shaping of the self.

Accordingly, Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity will be both criticized and augmented by drawing attention, respectively, to the constraints of his theory in the framework of postmodernity and to an investigation of the role of *musical narratives* in the construction of self-identity. After introducing data and method, the results of this chapter are presented, which are structured in three parts, focusing on (7.4.1.) the reception of indie-folk as a private ritual initiated for the purpose of "holding time still" (*cf.* Negus, 2012); (7.4.2.) the use of indie-folk as a resource for "reading the "me" in life" (*cf.* DeNora, 2000), and (7.4.3.) the role of indie-folk as a mechanism in coping with the experience of narrated time as discordant.

7.2. Theorizing popular music and narrative identity

7.2.1. Ricoeur on the role of fiction in the formation of self-identity

Over the past three decades, various scholars working within the humanities and social sciences have emphasized that narrative is both a "tool to examine identity development as well as the vehicle by which identity is constructed" (McLean *et al.*, 2010, p. 166). Recurring themes emerging from the range of academic works in this area (see for overviews Habermas and Bluck, 2000; Brockmeier, 2002; Wertsch, 2010; McAdams, 2008; McAdams and McLean, 2013) are the beliefs that (i) the self is storied; (ii) narrative identity is age-related and only starts to develop in late adolescence; (iii) narrative identity is intrinsically linked with the process of autobiographical remembering (and forgetting), and (iv) both personal memories and narratives of the self are "psychosocial constructions" (McAdams, 2001,p. 101), meaning that they are both embodied and embedded in social practices. McAdams and McLean (2013, p. 233) therefore define narrative identity as "a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some sense of unity and purpose."[2]

Narratives, obviously, are not the only tools humans use to memorize life experiences and to understand and define themselves, and exist next to visual images (e.g., photographs, home videos, drawings) and more unconscious forms of non-textual "habit memory" (Wertsch, 2011: 24). Even when narrowing thing downs to accounts, narratives exist next to chronicles, annals, poems, and theories (ibid; see also Brockmeier, 2002: 22-26). However, it has been argued that particularly narratives are crucial in autobiographical remembering, as they create a symbolic space around the different artifacts and provide life with meaning. In the words of Brockmeier (2002: 26), "if I do not only want to count the photographs from my past collected in that shoe box and not only name the persons they show, but also want to point out why they mean anything at all to me, then narratives become the hub of my account." Moreover, narratives have "the distinctive capacity to give shape to the temporal dimension of human existence" (ibid: 27; see below).

Research within the field of media and memory studies has pointed to the fact that self-narratives are embedded in and mediated by (popular) culture (e.g., Brockmeier, 2002, 2010; Van Dijck, 2007; Wertsch, 2011).[3] It has been argued, therefore, to go beyond the understanding of memory as an 'archive' (as something that is stored somewhere inside the human brain and can be retrieved at any point in time), and to instead define memory as a social practice, which is both locally and historically mediated by cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, rituals, and archives (Brockmeier, 2010). Sociologists of (new) media and popular music have accordingly argued that also popular music has become an important institution that produces and disseminates discourses that mediate personal memories and self-narratives (e.g., Van Dijck, 2007; Van der Hoeven, 2014). Their research, however, particularly focuses on how the popular music industry affords and constrains *collective memory* practices as well as on the formation of *cultural identity.* The popular song, however, is an effective mnemonic device of itself (Bohlman, 1988, p. 15) and it almost always has a narrative component in the musical setting (Nicholls, 2007). This indicates that also on a more personal and intimate level popular music narratives should be seen as affordances in the formation of self-identity.

2. According to McAdams (2001), life-stories are part of the broader notion of personality. More specifically, he argues that personality consists of three levels: (i) dispositional traits ("I consider myself to be someone who prefers to be in the background"); (ii) characteristic adaptations such as defense strategies, social motives, and coping mechanisms ("When engaged in a position of authority, I construct a coping mechanisms that camouflages my insecurity"); (iii) integrative life-stories ("I prefer to be in the background because I never learned to be in the front"). In short, "personality is a complex patterning of traits, adaptations, and stories" (McAdams, 2001, p. 112).

3. The claim that we need to go beyond the conception of memory as an archive is further elaborated by Brockmeier based on theories developed within neuroscience (notably within neuropsychology and neurobiology). In a nutshell these theories indicate that it is problematic to support the claim that we are able to locate memory somewhere inside the human brain as well as that it is increasingly more difficult to argue that humans are able to retrieve 'real' memories. Instead, research points out that memories are just as much the result of the human imagination, therewith blurring the distinction between 'real' or 'experienced' and 'false' or 'imagined' memories. Furthermore, even when seeing remembering as something that takes place inside the human mind, neuroscientific research suggests that memory is not a fixed entity but rather a process, meaning that autobiographical memories are constantly edited depending on the changing social context (2010, pp. 19-26).

Although it is thus acknowledged that self-narratives are "psychosocial constructions", there is still very little *empirical* evidence on how memories and identities are mediated by (popular) culture (notable exceptions are, as mentioned, studies by Van Dijck, 2007 and Van der Hoeven, 2014). As McAdams and McLean (2013, p. 237) also argue, "(…) future research on the development of narrative identity would benefit from a broader consideration of the role of culture."

In an early contribution to the debate on narrative identity, French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1988[1985]) has nonetheless argued for the primary role of *fiction* in studying people's identities. It is the fictional narrative, according to Ricoeur, which opens up an imaginary world of themes, events, characters, scenes and plots that may come to fuse with events, themes, scenes, and plots unfolding in everyday life. Although much of what Ricoeur has written has become commonplace within the debate on narrative identity (see, e.g., Negus, 2012), his theoretical insights on the role of fiction in the mediation and formation of narrative identity have been rather ignored. As I deal in this chapter with the question of how *musical narratives* mediate people's personal memories and identities, it is therefore worth exploring his ideas in further detail.

Crucial to Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity is the link between *time* and *narrative*. In the words of Ricoeur, humans only make sense of "the ordinary experience of time" as it is "refashioned by its passage through the grid of narrative" (1991c, p. 338). Drawing from Aristotle's analysis of Greek tragedy (*Poetics*, c. 335 B.C.), he more specifically argues that it is through the operation of "emplotment" (*mythos*) that we are able to cope with the phenomenological experience of time as something that is in constant flux yet durable and remaining (1991e, pp. 21-25).[4] That is, by constructing chronological stories with plots organized in space and in time – stories, for instance, with a beginning, a middle and an end – we synthesize the heterogeneous into successive events and are subsequently able to draw a "configuration out of a succession" (p. 22). Narratives, in short, create "concordance" whereas the temporal experience of life as such is messy, fleeting and chaotic ("discordant"), and thus *lacks* any sense of causal and thematic coherence. Hence Ricoeur's definition of narrative as a "discordant concordance" (1991f, p. 195).

In the construction of narrative identity, it is furthermore possible, according to Ricoeur, to distinguish a threefold mimesis. The first level of mimesis – *mimesis1* – is related to what he calls "the pre-narrative qualities" of everyday life (1991b, p. 142; *cf.* Schatzki's notion of the "teleoaffactive structure" that organizes people's behavior in social practices: see section 1.5.3.). As Ricoeur suggests, daily life is already *narratively prefigured*, as it consists of a repertory of narrative elements, "which we have always already understood when we enter a fiction" (p. 141). Such elements include actions (instead of mere physical movements), as well as projects, intentions, motives, and reasons. Due to the pre-narrative qualities of the everyday, life, in the words of Ricoeur, could be seen as "*an activity and a desire in search of a narrator*" (1991a, p. 435; emphasis original).

The second level of mimesis – *mimesis2* – relates to the act of "emplotment". It designates the translation of the experienced pre-narrative qualities of everyday life into explicit narratives, including autobiography and fiction. In Ricoeur's terms, it is the "grasping together" of all the heterogeneous events and existents into an organized plot (1991b, p. 146). The (life) story should be seen as a "concordant", since, paraphrasing De Mul (2005, p. 254), all the elements within the plot are connected and there are no elements unrelated to the plot. However, as Ricoeur suggests, self-narratives are always unstable since "concordance is never without discordance", meaning that time – in the form of disruption (*peripeteia*), excessive pride or self-confidence (*hubris*), or unfortunate mistakes (*hamartia*) – continuously breaks through our attempts to domesticate it (1991e, p. 32).[5]

The third and final level of mimesis – *mimesis3* – refers to the act of reading, that is, to the moment the reader

4. This is what Ricoeur refers to as his first aporetic of time, namely that there is a gulf between objective (cosmic) and phenomenological (lived) time – which can only be bridged by narrative. It exists next to two other aporetics, namely (i) that we experience time as divided between past, present and future yet can only access the past and anticipate the future in the here and now (this is what Ricoeur calls "the paradox of the triple present"), and (ii) that narrative or narrated time is a "discordant-concordance", by which Ricoeur refers to the quality of time to continuously break through our attempts to domesticate it (1991c, pp. 340-341).

5. A body of literature established within the fields of developmental and cognitive psychology suggests that the ability to compose a concordant self-narrative is age-related and only starts to be formed in late adolescence and young adulthood (see e.g., Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 2001; McLean, et al. 2010). Research within developmental psychology indicates that this has largely to do with changing, and sometimes also disparate, social relations and societal expectations during the teenage years and early twenties, urging adolescents and young adults to integrate conflictive situations into an integrative story, as well as to make commitments to their, if only temporary, position in the adult world (McAdams, 2001, pp. 102-103). Research within cognitive psychology furthermore indicates that the integration of the multiple relations, expectations and roles into a configuration or self-narrative requires the advent of formal operations, which enables the adolescent to engage in hypothetical-deductive thinking: the ability of abstract thinking, hypothetical reasoning and the classifying of heterogeneous items (ibid). According to Habermas and Bluck (2000), it is therefore only during the late adolescent years that people are able to fully develop the social-cognitive tools that are necessary to understand and present the self in biographical terms – that is, to start composing life into a story. This implies that identity is different from 'the self' or a 'sense of self'. In the words of McAdams, "[t]o the extent that a person's self-understanding is integrated synchronically and diachronically such that it situates him or her into a meaningful psychosocial niche and provides his or her life with some degree of unity and purpose, that person 'has' identity" (2001, p. 102).

(or hearer) fuses with the writer of the life story. According to Ricoeur, fiction plays a crucial role at this level, since the individual often recognizes him-, or herself in the fictional story and accordingly integrates narrative fragments into the evolving life story.[6] Thus, while *mimesis1* refers to the narrative *prefiguration* of everyday life, and *mimesis2* to the narrative *configuration* of the life story, *mimesis3* implies the "*reconfiguration* of a life by the way of a narrative" (1991a, p. 430; emphasis added). The fact that the self-narrative is mediated by fiction, then, implies that it is to a large degree fiction itself. This is not to say, as Dennett (1992) has argued, that narrative identity is a "theorist's fiction", but because self-identity, in the words of Negus (2012, p. 485), is "realized as much through the 'fictional' as it is through the 'factual'."

7.2.2. Narrative identity in the postmodern condition

One of the constraints of Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity is that he places premium on *linguistic* narratives, as well as that his notion of "emplotment" is connected to the very typical kind of narrative belonging to the modern Western tradition (De Mul, 2005, p. 256). According to De Mul, this kind of narrative has little similarity with other media such as, for example, films, computer games, and music, and therefore he argues to broaden Ricoeur's theory by incorporating non-linguistic narratives. Moreover, although Ricoeur defines the narrative as a "dynamic whole" or "discordant concordance", he remains faithful to Aristotle's notion of the unifying plot and even defines narrative identity as "the primacy of concord over discord" (1991b, p. 427). As De Mul contends, postmodernist society is characterized by contingency and heterogeneity, which might result in what Gergen (1991, pp. 73-74) has referred to as "multiphrenia" – the "splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments." In De Mul's words (2005, p. 256), "the concordant unifying narrative Ricoeur is talking about is no longer able to express the fragmented identity of the postmodern citizen [and] new narrative structures might be better capable to express and to make livable the new forms of identity."

McAdams (2001, p. 115) has argued that the postmodern conception of the self as text is consequent with theories of narrative identity. As he writes, "the postmodern self is like a text, a narrative that continues to be written and rewritten over time" (ibidem). However, according to (skeptical) postmodern theorists, the 'problem' of the self in postmodernity is that it is constructed. The postmodern condition, marked by plurality and heterogeneity, as well as by the commodification of self-realization, results in a decentering, multiplicity, fragmentation, mediation, or even 'death' of the self. In the words of Gergen (1991, p. 7),

> The postmodern condition more generally is marked by a plurality of voices for the right to reality – to be accepted for legitimate expressions of the true and the good. As the voices expand in power and presence, all that seemed proper, right-minded and well understood is subverted. In the postmodern world we become increasingly aware that the objects about which we speak are not so much 'in the world' as they are products of perspectives. Thus, processes such as emotion and reason cease to be real and significant essences of persons; rather, in the light of pluralism we perceive them to be imposters, the outcomes of our ways of conceptualizing them. Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold.

The 'death' of the self, then, concerns the 'death' of the self as perceived by modernist pragmatists such as George H. Mead (1934, p. 135), who saw the self as arising "out of social experience and activity." In the postmodern condition, the self is *saturated* by the social (Gergen), or becomes a collage of floating signifiers (Baudrillard) and therefore consciously – and continuously – doubts whether thoughts, feelings and emotions are 'real' or mediated. The postmodern self looses his self-determining freedom (see chapter 2.2.), meaning that the subject is "not any longer a 'speaker' of language but *subjected to* language (…)" (Timmer, 2010, p. 37; emphasis in the original). The postmodern subject, in other words, looses his agency or "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1984) as an 'Archimedean standpoint' from which to construct a stable notion of the self, yet is paradoxically capable of continuously construct-

6. The integration of fictional elements into the evolving life story relates to Nelson Goodman's theory of "world making" – which influenced Ricoeur in developing his theory of narrative identity (see 1991d, pp. 117-136). The theory of "world making" implies that we humans 'make' the world by constructing symbolic systems, such as language, in which we 'live'. Similarly, Ricoeur argues that we 'live' in the self-narrative we construct, as it is mediated by fiction.

ing and reconstructing its self-narrative.[7] In this cultural condition, irony, as Gergen remarks, becomes the primary framework of meaning against which the subject fails to construct a sense of coherence and self-constancy.

McAdams (2001, p. 116) has argued, nonetheless, that it is matter of cultural debate how true the postmodern framing of the self *empirically* is. As a narrative psychologist, he suggests that "postmodern theorists may have exaggerated the extent to which contemporary Westerners believe they have little control over identity and the extent to which they experience their lives as in constant flux" (p. 116). He argues that a "totally modular view of selfhood would seem too extreme, given people's phenomenological experiences of, at minimum, some degree of integration in daily life and given the naturally integrative power of narrative itself" (p. 116).

Lahire (2011[2001], p. xviii), on the contrary, argues that actors in the current cultural condition could be multi-socialized and multi-determined. First, because each individual's dispositions of thinking, feeling, believing, and acting potentially is the product of a plurality of (heterogeneous) socializing experiences and, second, because individuals nowadays straddle in a plurality of social contexts. Consequently, they are not always able to make a synthesis of external actions and events, on the one hand, and internal (embodied) dispositions, on the other. A relevant empirical question, according to Lahire, then, is whether or not the habitus is still a unifying principle (able to integrate heterogeneous events into a single outlook on the self), or that experiencing "out of placeness" or feeling "maladjusted" increases in contemporary societies (ibid, pp. x-xi).

Both the work of McAdams and Lahire are in line with the empirical work of Holstein and Gubrium (2000), who argue that it is in and through "narrative practice" that people construct their identities (p. 104). As discussed (section 7.1.), Holstein and Gubrium have reframed the skeptical proclamation of the 'death' of the self by envision a "new ending" of the story of the self in postmodernity (ibid, p. 10). More specifically, they argue that notions such as 'truth' and 'authenticity', including the authenticity of the self, are no longer 'vertically' defined in relation "between a grand narrative and the objects or matters it references" (ibid, p. 70). Rather, they argue the self is 'horizontally' or, better still, 'relationally' constituted by the *multiple* authenticities the subject distracts from *various* discourses which provide parameters for self-definition. As such, truth and authenticity are always plural, locally established, and constantly contestable. According to Holstein and Gubrium, they only exist in relationship with an "interpretive community" to which the individual belongs and in which she or he is situated; contrary to the modern notion of the self that was defined as a "social structure" (Mead, 1934).

Holstein and Gubrium eventually 'end' their new story of the self in what they refer to as "interpretive practice" – the shaping of the self on the interplay between "discursive practice' and "discourses-in-practice" (2000, p. 96). A definition of the self, in which the notion of "discursive practice" refers to the everyday practices of reality construction (the 'hows' of self-definition); and the concept of "discourses-in-practice" to the building blocks (symbols, narratives, rules, conventions, etc.) which provide building blocks for the construction of self-identity (the 'whats' of day-to-day storytelling) (ibid, p. 94). As with the modern self, this version of the self thus still defines *itself* through the mechanism of daily conversation. *Unlike the* modern self, however, the 'new' postmodern self increasingly becomes a "cottage industry", as 'conversation' is increasingly dependent upon and mediated by social discourses, particularly of the "pop psychology vernacular" of what is referred to by Holstein and Gubrium as "therapeutic culture" (ibid, pp. 80-81).

According to Nicoline Timmer, the value of sociological research of the kind conducted by Holstein and Gubrium is that "[i]nstead of just concluding or simply positing that we are mediated and fractured, the focus is on how we still *do* try to make sense of our selves, *even when* fractured and mediated" (2010, pp. 41-42; emphasis in the original). Empirical work focusing on how people construct identity in and through "narrative practice", in other words, grants subjects some narrative agency – that is, in Timmer's words, "the ability to navigate through different discursive communities and assemble their own story of the self" (Timmer, 2010, p. 41). Like the skeptical postmodernist version, this vision of the self still implies that it is mediated by discourse, "but instead of surrendering to a form of linguistic determinism, the focus is on language *use* and for that what is needed is a conception of the self as language user, or: as *storyteller* (ibid; emphasis in the original). Following this line of thought, this chapter investigates how members of the Dutch indie-folk audience construct their narrative identities *in practice*, as well as how they use the narratives of indie-folk songs (as discourse-in-practice) as building blocks in constructing identities. This, however, first implies that we need to pay attention to a theoretical investigation of the role of *musical* narratives in the regulation and mediation of narrated time.

7. In the postmodern condition, the self has become a reflexive project, rather than a fixed entity. Due to pluralism and contingency the subject, according to Giddens (1991, p. 29 & p. 36), constructs a so-called "as-if" environment – "a shared – but unproven and unprovable framework of reality." A shared "as-if" reality gives subjects a sense of trust and ontological security, and provides resources for a concordant narrative of the self. However, because reality is in constant flux, it is continuously challenged by – and vulnerable – to discordance, as this chapter also demonstrates.

7.2.3. Narrative identity and popular music

Theories applying narratology to popular music are marginal.[8] A notable exception, however, is Negus' study of the relationship between narrative time and the popular song. By extending the work of Ricoeur to an investigation of the role of the popular song in mediating the human comprehension of phenomenological time, Negus (2012) claims that the popular song functions as a bridging mechanism in constructing personal identities. Popular songs, however, tell stories differently than most novels, plays, and movies. As Negus suggests, this is mostly due to the fact that popular songs generally express a *cyclical* rather than *linear* notion of time. On a narrative level, this is most commonly reflected in the use of repeated choruses or due to storytelling (which reflects everyday language use rather than the construction, in retrospect, of an organized plot); on a more 'formal' level, as inherited from folk and blues idioms, through the use of pentatonic, circular tunes. Due to the expression of circular rather than linear time, the popular song thus expresses and narrates our lives differently – that is, more incoherent, less 'emplotted'. In the words of Negus (p. 495),

> [s]ongs place events before us in sequences. But they do not necessarily order or establish causal relationships between events. (…) Songs enable singers to narrate stories in a way that can emphasize the very fact that life (unlike most novels, movies, and plays) does not seem to have much of a plot most of the time. If life has no plot – if the plot is created through narrativizing the discorded events in our lives – then perhaps songs come closer to articulating how plotless time is experienced.

Throughout his chapter, Negus furthermore provides suggestions for future research on how the popular song might be distinctively constitutive of narrative identity. One suggestion is to define the reception of the popular song as a "contemporary ritual of plotless time" (p. 492). According to Negus, the expression of circular time might enhance the human desire for "gestures and actions that allow cyclical temporal experience" (p. 492). An example would be the use of the mp3-player in the setting up of a private ceremony in public space initiated for the purpose of "holding time still" (p. 493). Finally, Negus argues that such ritualistic – and thus to a large extent non-utilitarian – listening behavior might increase in a postmodern world characterized by the experience of accelerating social time due to new communications technologies and consumer marketing (p. 494). "The cyclical popular song and the way it can be endlessly replayed", he writes, "offers a ritualistic experience, providing retreat from the anxieties of time compression and speed, a recurrent moment of redemptive eternity or 'mythical' time in the present" (p. 494).

Translating Negus' work to the topic of this study, it should be emphasized that folk music might be an exception to the rule that the popular song expresses cyclical rather than linear time. This is because country and folk songs are generally structured around a carefully crafted and linear story (Negus, 2012, p. 498; f.11). Traditionally understood as a genre rooted in oral tradition and storytelling (Bohlman, 1988, Ch. 2), the lyrics of traditional folk songs are "narrative poems", most notably ballads and epic verses. This refers to a type of poem that "tells a story", which is told either from a first or third person perspective, and of which sentences are typically phrased in the past tense (Jahn, 2005). However, as Negus argues, even folk ballads and epics are intersected with repeating melodies, rhythms and refrains, and therefore suggest cyclical time rather than linear teleology.

This is probably even more the case with contemporary *indie-folk* songs, which aim to consciously evoke the cyclical nature of ordinary time and of which narratives do not frequently present coherent stories. As mentioned earlier, there are marked differences in aesthetics and institutional politics between the various folk genres. Generally, a distinction can be made between commercial "indie-folk" or "folk-pop" and experimental "free-folk" and related genres such as "freak-folk" and "New Weird America" (see chapter 6 of this thesis). Characterizing music at the experimental end of the spectrum is that recordings are not created following the structure of a typical pop song, in which a sense of musical narrative is evoked by using the verse/chorus/bridge form (Encarnacao, 2013, p. 21). Instead, artists such as Six Organs of Admittance, Charalambides and MV & EE define their work as an "unfinished" process, rather than an as end product, and aim to disrupt linear time in their recordings either due to

8. One of the reasons is that theorists working within the field of musicology have argued that narratives and music are so fundamentally different that it is highly contested whether music can be narrative at all (see Meelberg, 2006 for a theoretical overview). Nattiez (1990, p. 257), for instance, has claimed that, due to the ontological differences between music and stories, affording an interpretive grid consisting of *sounds* and *words*, respectively, "music is not a narrative and that any description of its formal structure in terms of narrativity is nothing but superfluous metaphor." Nattiez' formalistic account of music as a non-narrative art form, however, is purely based on instrumental music. Nicholls (2007, pp. 300-301) therefore suggests that instead of focusing on Western art music solely, narrative theory should be applied to popular music too, since the popular song almost by definition has a narrative component in the musical setting.

the incorporation of techniques like noise and musical distortion, or by capturing "real" time in songs "by placing premium on the live, the spontaneous, on improvisation, but also on the imperfect" (ibid, p. 21).

All this is not to say that experimental indie-folk rarely advances a narrative. In fact, the music released by acts such as Devendra Banhart, Animal Collective, Midlake, Smog/Bill Callahan, and Joanna Newsom is more closely related to the 'traditional' understanding of folk music as a narrative art form. However, even the narratives produced by these acts are occasionally fractured and fragmented. This is because lyrics consist of slogans, words and phrases, rather than being well-rounded stories (Animal Collective); because albums consist of a large number of (very short) or very extended tracks (Banhart), or because there is a lack of repetition in text due to the use of long strophes (Newsom) that give the impression of through-composition and only occasionally work towards reaching a sense of narrative closure (ibid, pp. 210-211).

Indie-folk music at the more commercial end of the spectrum, including acts such as Bon Iver, Grizzly Bear, Fleet Foxes, and Mumford and Sons, on the contrary, is produced by following the more conventional pop/rock album structure and verse/chorus/bridge (or verse-bridge) song structure. Dimensions of albums are conventional, tracks fall within a durational range of 3-5 minutes, and albums are mastered so that beginnings and endings are clearly delineated (ibid, p. 23). Despite the more conventional structure of recordings, many commercial indie-folk songs, however, are characterized by the performance of fragmentation and discordance. First, because language is often cryptic due to the extensive use of metaphor and polysemy in language. Second, because they are thematically often concerned with the evoking of personal memories about discordant life events and related heavy moods and emotions, most notably melancholia and self-pity, through which the singer-protagonist aims to reflect on the experience of time lost.[9] Indie-folk songs, in other words, generally represent the primacy of discordance over concordance; although frequently they represent agentic, and "typically" American, stories characterized by the accomplishment of the (singer-)protagonist to control his or her fate after experiencing disruption (see McAdams, 2006 on his notion of the "redemptive self" as typical to American culture). This is something the (singer-)protagonist manages to achieve through the seeking of interpersonal connections in the form of friendship and family (see McAdams and McLean, 2013, p. 234). The fact that new folk music is "overflowing with sentiment" (*cf.* Timmer, 2010) allows listeners to (re)connect with feelings and emotions, to regulate heavy moods such as melancholia and depression, and to cope with the experience of discordance.

Following Lahire, I argue in this chapter that discordance is not only a characteristic of indie-folk songs, but also something that constrains the construction of a coherent sense of self. Following McAdams and Holstein and Gubrium (see above), I, however, argue that the integrative power of narrative is crucial in *coping* with the experience of discordance. In the sections that follow, I elaborate on this argument, after first elaborating on data analysis and the results it generated.

7.3. Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction (section 1.5.), the interviews were conducted following the epistemology of "active interviewing", referring to a type of interviewing that defines the setting of the academic interview as an "interpretive practice" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997, p. 113). This means that rather than only focusing on the 'whats' of the interview – the content of questions and answers – the *interaction between* interviewer and interviewee takes central stage, so that the interview itself becomes a site at which knowledge and meaning is produced. This is not, as discussed previously, to direct interviewees into preferred answers and predetermined research agenda's, but "to explore incompletely articulated aspects of experience" (p. 115). The phenomenon of linking the role of (indie-folk) music to experiencing discordance in the evolving life-story turned out to be an example of such a difficult to articulate aspect of experience, yet was brought up (unexpectedly) many times during the interviews and resulted in a further exploration of the role of discordance in the construction of self-identity.

Analysis of the interview material was carried out using a combination of "thematic narrative analysis" and "interactional analysis" (Kohler-Riessman, 2005, pp. 2-5). References to indie-folk albums and specific song titles within the interviews were included in the interview transcripts. Lyrics were accordingly analyzed on possible similarities between musical narratives, on the one hand, and themes in the self-narratives of interviewees, on the

9. Fonarow (2006, pp. 77-78) argues that the genre of "indie" is part of the ongoing historical narrative of Purito-Romanticism, as it is characterized, for example, by a fetishizing of sensibility, pathos and melancholia (see section 2.3 and note 16). This is particularly true for indie-folk, of which narratives, as discussed in this chapter, revolve around expressions of discordance and related heavy moods and emotions, most notably melancholia.

other. Analyzing the material first showed that the reception of indie-folk results in ritualistic listening behavior aimed at "holding time still" (*cf.* Negus, 2012); second, that respondents use indie-folk narratives as a resource for reading the self (*cf.* DeNora, 2000), and third, that the musical narrative functions as a healing image when experiencing a turning point (*peripeteia*) in the evolving life-story.

A limitation of this chapter is that it focuses on the impact of *linguistic* musical narratives on subjectivity and self-identity, whereas indie-folk's narrative discourse is constructed through multiple media, including lyrics, music, performance, autobiography, prose, and art work (Nicholls, 2007). When aiming to apply narratology to popular music these elements should be taken into account, since they too are the interpretive resources we use in shaping the self we live by. However, due to the exploratory character of the study presented in this chapter, occasionally pointing to similarities between the narrative themes of indie-folk songs and themes in the interviewees' self-narratives, it was decided to focus on the role of linguistic narratives. For future research, it would be valuable to further examine homologies between musical narratives and self-narratives, taking into account that self-identity is constituted on the basis of both linguistic and non-linguistic narrative particles.

7.4. The reception of indie-folk as narrative practice

7.4.1. Holding time still: indie-folk as a ritual of plotless time

DeNora (2000, p. 53) found that people use musical material in their daily lives as both a tool and resource for regulating "the parameters of aesthetic agency" – that is, to shift moods, to manage energy levels, to regulate emotions and feelings, and to get on with daily routines, habits, and customs. During the interviews, respondents were accordingly asked to describe how they used (popular) music – particularly indie-folk music – in their daily lives. This was done by asking them to describe an average day in the week, and what such a day looked like in terms of turning on and/or listening to music during specific moments of the day, from waking up in the morning to going to sleep at night. It turned out that most of the interviewees listen to multiple styles of (popular) music throughout the entire day, and in many cases even explicitly asked to put on quiet or relaxing music during the interview, or to arrange the setting of the interview in a coffee house annex music venue if they preferred not to meet at home. Doing so, they presented themselves as musical omnivores (e.g., Peterson, 1992) who were able to connect various styles of (popular) music to specific moods, energy levels, emotions, feelings, and cognitive states.[10] The following interview excerpt, taken from the interview with Renske (28, female, artist, Amsterdam), is exemplary for the way respondents described their weekly days:

> (R): When I wake up, I never turn on music, but if I would turn on music, I think I'd go for something quiet, something I can start the day with. It could be Manu Chao, because if I listen to that it makes me cheerful. And if I step on my bike, I'd probably go for Thomas Azier [Dutch electro-pop artist, NvP], so I am at work as fast as possible. If I bike back home, probably again Thomas Azier, or at least something like that, and if I return home and start to prepare dinner, probably … Arcade Fire or Dire Straits. And yes, if I would go out that night, then I would turn on something more up-tempo, probably Mø, a Swedish singer. And I would probably dance to house music, and … afterwards, before I go to sleep, I would listen to a Bob Dylan song.
> (N): Okay… What Bob Dylan song? [Both laugh]
> (R): Eh… yeah… good question [long pause]. It could be "Don't Think Twice It's Alright". Yeah, it could be everything. Actually, when it comes to Bob Dylan, it doesn't really matter what I listen from him, I think his voice is very relaxing, as if someone is talking to you.[11]

Here we see how Renske distinguishes between "up-tempo" genres, notably dance and rock, on the one hand, and "relaxing" music (e.g., Bob Dylan-style folk), on the other. The more up-tempo genres are accordingly linked to "integrative practices" (Schatzki, 1996) such as working, studying, traveling, cooking, and eating,

10. Drawing from Goldberg, Hannan and Kovács (2016), the indie-folk aficionados interviewed for this study could be best defined, as discussed in chapter 6 of this thesis, as "poly-purists": cultural consumers who sample broadly, but who – on the basis of their aesthetic disposition – are able to assess cultural objects on the basis of their "categorical purity". This makes the consumption of indie-folk a performance of social distinction, particularly of a community that is part of the cultural upper-middle class in society, drawing boundaries around overt commercialism, snobbism and populism.
11. Interviews were originally in Dutch; excerpts have been translated by the author.

while folk music is linked to a more "disinterested" state of mind through which Renske aims to put her mind to rest and to *refuge* the cyclic nature of "within-timeness" (Negus, 2012, p. 495).

When focusing particularly on the use of indie-folk in everyday life, analysis indicates that respondents – rather similarly to the everyday use of popular music in general – distinguish between "up-tempo" forms of indie-folk and what they refer to as more "quiet", "laid back", "sad", and "melancholic" indie-folk. In doing so, they indicate using the former type of indie-folk predominantly for the purpose of re-energization or creating "positive" or "uplifting" moods, as well as for the purpose of navigating through more labor-intensive routines such as cleaning the house, preparing for going to work, and studying. This is explained, for example, by Frans (20, student, Terheijden), who claims to listen to indie-folk – particularly to Mumford and Sons – exclusively while studying:

> (N): Because you are saying: 'I listen to Mumford and Sons in the background or for instance while studying'. Do you listen to other kinds of music during other moments?
> (F): Yeah, I usually do. For example, when I wake up, I start the day with the same Coldplay album. The album *A Rush of Blood to the Head.*
> (N): Every day?
> (F): Yes, every day, always. It's in my cd player and I only have to press play when I wake up. And then I listen, yes, not to the entire album, but always the first four or five tracks. And when I return home from school, yeah, I usually don't start studying immediately, but I first listen to music, or when I'm taking a shower or when I'm in bed before sleeping, then I put on an album and then I fall asleep, and that kind of stuff. But when studying I actually only listen to Mumford and Sons. I like that a lot.

The more laid-back indie-folk, on the contrary, is generally listened to when respondents want to seal themselves off from the surrounding world. This is explained by Renske when asking her to elaborate on listening to indie-folk alongside her preferences for electronic and rock music:

> I like to pay more attention to it, I guess. (…) I like it when I purposely put on that kind of music, to really listen to it. And not that I'm still preoccupied with… that I need to go grocery shopping in the meantime, or that I… I don't know, need to feed the cat, or … clean the house, or run from room to room in the house, and actually miss the momentum of the music. I like to really sit down on the couch, with a cigarette and a glass of wine, so I can really listen to the music. Similar to reading a book, that's also something you don't really do in between things.

Much like smoking a cigarette, drinking wine, or reading a book, the more laid-back style of indie-folk is used for more laid-back activities so as to create a setting in which respondents can block out disturbing sounds and/or withdraw themselves from daily life. This generally results in the construction of a different musical setting, so that they are able to fully 'grasp' the music. That is, while up-tempo music is often played digitally (using mp3) or used as a form of background music, laid-back indie-folk is frequently played on CD and occasionally on vinyl. Moreover, when indie-folk is purposely put on to create a refuge from everyday life, respondents often stated that they intentionally prefer to listen to the entire album, with the songs in the right order as intended by the producer – unlike the potential of skipping through online playlists or using the shuffle modus. Here, we see how "laidback" indie-folk songs, unlike more up-tempo forms or music, are effective devices in setting up a "literary mode" (Alexander, 2003, p. 215), which is aimed at escaping the routinized – and occasionally referred to as "hectic" – nature of ordinary time. As will be emphasized below, this allows respondents to be involved in more reflective processes of priming, mental time traveling, introspection, daydreaming, and self-definition.

While up-tempo indie-folk is linked to the regulation of integrative practices, respondents reference "laidback" or "melancholic" indie-folk as a companion to "dispersed practices" (Schatzki, 1996, p. 91), most notably to the practices of reflecting, memorizing, daydreaming, explaining, and imagining.[12] It is used, more accurately, as a vehicle with which they are able to break with the experience of ordinary time as cyclical and repetitive and to "hold time still" (*cf.* Negus). It is indicated as a state of mind during which respondents, often involuntarily, start to evoke and reflect on past memories and associated (heavy) emotions. This is explained, for example, by Ronald (41,

12. Schatzki (1996, p. 98) defines "integrative practices" as "the more complex practices found in and constitutive of particular domains of social life." They are contrasted with "dispersed practices" including "describing, ordering, following rules, explaining, questioning, reporting, examining, and imagining" (ibid, p. 91). According to Schatzki, dispersed practices can take place within and across different domains of everyday life.

visual artist/art teacher, De Bilt), who engages in "mental time travelling" (Williamson *et al*, 2011, p. 270) while listening to the repetitive "free-folk" music of the late Jack Rose (1971-2009) – as if imaginatively riding a train:

> (R): Of course, music also takes you on a journey, I believe. Which is not definitive, you know. You can't say that this music is definitive or fixed, but it is still open. Although I think, regarding Jack Rose, that it takes you along with it. That's a different kind of infinity, you know? So to dwell on things, openness, and filling it in yourself. But you can also put the music in motion and go along with it. And also, yeah … … experience new things.
> (N): Do you mean that you take this music with you on a journey? So when you go traveling? (…) Or do you see it as a metaphor, to go on a journey?
> (R): Well, it sets my mind in motion. And I get the feeling as if my body moves and I stumble upon many things. Things indefinable. Landscapes within you… It could be everything. That you… have to think involuntarily about vacation, about friendships, about certain memories. (…) There's a sort of cadency in that kind of music, maybe that's it. You know, things that repeat themselves, a certain rhythm that seems to work, that almost seems in sync with your own heartbeat. Or with a train. (…) The music of Jack Rose, that is what calms me down.

In this excerpt, Ronald compares the experience of listening to folk music with riding a train; a connection similarly made by many other respondents. The spaces of travel – subway stations, train stations, and trains – are returning sites and spaces throughout the interviews. Analysis shows that up-tempo indie-folk is occasionally referenced by respondents as a tool to "freeze" the experience of accelerating social time. As described by Maarten (34, IT specialist, Amsterdam), who explains his experiences of listening to the music of Vampire Weekend as follows:

> (M): Some music… if you listen to it, in the train and you look outside, for instance, the world changes.
> (N): How does that work in your case?
> (M): Ehm… well, yeah. What I occasionally find a bit funny is that when you, for example, walk around in a busy train station or Utrecht Central Station, where people walk by each other and it is very hectic, so to speak. Yeah, then it's like… You have these movie images, where everything is put in slow motion, that people then… And that you walk among them slowly yourself, something like that.
> (N): Do I understand correctly that you are saying that you see yourself like being in a movie?
> (M): Yes… not that I think like being in a movie, but it's more like a cinematic experience. (…) Like a movie soundtrack that is able to change the tone of the movie.

The music of Vampire Weekend could be characterized by drawing on a range of styles, including American blues, Appalachian folk and Afro-pop, characterized by the use of repetitive rhythms and pentatonic melodies. According to Maarten, it is this type of music that enables him to transform the experience of accelerating social time – typical of hectic train stations – into something more 'tangible'. The cyclical temporal experience enhanced by music allows him, more accurately, to put time in slow motion. This corresponds with Negus' suggestion that the popular song holds the capacity to "hold time still".

Analysis furthermore indicates that laid-back indie-folk is particularly listened to by respondents during the hours they spend on traveling (before and after work) – for the purpose of relaxation and letting off steam, as well as for the purpose of "introspection" (DeNora, 2000, p. 62). As one respondent metaphorically explained, "to visualize your life as a kind of train ride" (Rolof, 30, health care worker, Utrecht). The more emotionally-laden and narrative indie-folk, then, seems to be effective in the process of "priming", when music brings back waves of emotions and (past) relationships (DeNora, 2000, p. 65). As Maarten explains, he often starts to feel "sad" and "melancholic" when listening to emotionally-laden indie-folk in the style of acts such as Animal Collective and Bright Eyes, mainly because he gets overwhelmed with what he refers to as "whiffs of memories". A similar experience is described by Jacco (35, freelance journalist, Utrecht), when explaining what occasionally happens to him while listening to the music of Animal Collective:

> (J): Real folk music just… that can be seen as songs with protagonists who come across something, those are well-rounded stories. In the case of Animal Collective, it's more like a feeling, and for example a sentence like "open up your mouth". That's on *Merriweather Post Pavilion.* Or ehm… "support your brother". I think at least in the case of Brother Sport, those are terms like, yeah… in one way or the

other, they stick. And I know that… For fun, I one time searched for what those people [the musicians, NvP] say about the album, and they say it's an album about family, family relationships, having children, et cetera, it's a sort of theme.

(N): And you are saying that sometimes you need to think about those phrases?

(J): Yeah, or think about them… They pop into my mind.

(N): During what kind of moments does that happen?

(J): Yeah, I don't know… probably when I… just walk around… When I"m not doing something very concrete, when I walk staring in front of me, or when I"m on my way, sitting in the train or something… And I don't have other music with me (…) Sometimes then a certain melody or phrase from a song appears, because they are good at inventing such slogans, a sort of calling out a sentence, and repeating it extensively.

In this excerpt, we see how Jacco first distinguishes between "real folk music" (which is concerned with "well-rounded stories") and contemporary folk music, which is about "feelings", "slogans", and "sentences". In the song "Brother Sport", to which Jacco refers, the extensive and repetitive use of slogans such as "support your brother" and "open up your throat" results in lyrics that are fragmentary and cryptic yet suggest the story of family members coping with the loss of the father. From the perspective of Jacco, this results in an example of "involuntary musical imagery" (INMI), namely when he indicates that narrative fragments involuntarily pop into his mind when sitting in the train.[13] It has been argued that in circumstances of INMI people tend to use musical imagery as a memory trigger, that is, as a resource to associate music with past memories (Williamson *et al.*, 2013, pp. 270-71). This seems to be the case with Jacco, as he links the musical exposure with his experience of contemplating family relationships and future expectations such as "having children". Thus, although this research also shows that respondents frequently put on music to *voluntarily* recall and relive past memories – particularly self-defining memories about discordant life events (see below) – the above indicates that autobiographical memory is often evoked on a less utilitarian level.

7.4.2. Reading yourself in indie-folk, or, seeing the bigger picture in the tiny

Similar to how DeNora describes the intention of people to use music as a resource to identify "the me in life" (2000, p. 69), analysis shows that respondents use indie-folk as a mirror of the self.[14] Typical of indie-folk as a narrative art form, however, respondents explained to recognize themselves in the lyrics as much as in song structures. Exemplary in this respect is how Robert (23, University College student, Utrecht) explains his love for the music of the American indie-rock/indie-folk band Midlake, particularly for their second studio-album, "The Trials of Van Occupanther" (2006). Revolving around the story of a somewhat eccentric scientist named Van Occupanther, this album is a typical example of one of the core conventions of the indie-folk genre, in which acts such as Midlake have redefined the album "as an autonomous text or narrative, rather than simply a collection of songs (…) linked only by the time and place of their production" (Hibbett, 2005, p. 59). In the following interview excerpt, we see how Robert explains how he read himself in the lyrics of the title song:

There is this beautiful excerpt, for example, that says … "Talking with *the* friends". With an emphasis on *the*. That is what the lead singer says, namely talking with *the* friends, not with *someone's* friends, but with *the* friends. (…) It's actually about … his wife, so "My wife was talking with *the* friends". So he is talking about how his wife is talking with *the* friends. But he is not talking about *his* friends, or *her* friends, but *the* friends. And it's not really explicit what the relationship is between *the* friends and his wife or himself. But because he doesn't use "his" or "my" friends, or "her" friends or "our" friends, he creates an enormous distance between himself and the friends. And that is what makes him sort of an outsider.

(N): Yes, and … is that… Is the role of observing, in this case the singer of Midlake, is that… something that is important to you when listening to music?

13. The phenomenon of "involuntary musical imagery" (INMI) refers to "the experience of a piece of music that comes unbidden into the mind and repeats outside of conscious control" (Williamson *et al.*, 2013, p. 259).

14. Regarding song structures respondents for example recognized themselves as a "laid back person" and linked this to their preference for "laid back folk music" (Zende, 25, student, Rotterdam). Others saw themselves reflected in the "playful" and "taboo-breaking" music of CocoRosie (Peter, 26, dancer, Arnhem), or relate the "playful", "sincere" and "straightforward" music in the style of CocoRosie to their own personality (Nick, 53, chemical analyst, 's-Gravendeel).

(R): Yes, yes. First of all, I recognize myself a little bit in the role of observing. (…) And identification in music is something that I find really beautiful, which for me is a way to discover my own position, to analyze myself. And to talk about my own emotions, or to talk about them differently, or to recognize – this is what I recognize in myself, and to learn more about myself.

Later on in the interview, Robert refers to one of the song lines saying, "Let me not be too consumed with this world." Similarly to the way other respondents used indie-folk to "hold time still", this phrase especially has special meaning for Robert as it enables him to "freeze" time. Moreover, it enables him to reflect upon his position *in* the world rather than being fully consumed *by* the world – a world which is defined by Robert as "demanding", "pressing" and "media-saturated". Moreover, Robert goes deeper into the subject of how he uses music as a tool for self-understanding and self-definition, which he does not simply define as a form of mimicking – using music as a *mirror* of the self – but rather as a "dialectical process" between his own personality on the one hand and his preferences for indie-folk on the other:

It's dialectic in the sense that, also my own identity, my personality has a certain preference… Yes, I have a certain identity and music has a certain identity, and those two can match and affect each other. And that is why I recognize certain things in folk music. (…) If I must choose between those two and say which one is the most important, I think it's my own identity, my own "I", my own way of saying and doing things, and that folk is something that fits to that. But the other way around, it is also… to some extent they affect each other. Folk music also reinforces, as mentioned, new ways of looking at the world. Certain phrases which are inspirational. And that too can change the way I see myself, it can change myself.

From an emic perspective, Robert here explains how, by reflecting upon the lyrics of an indie-folk song, he is not only capable of *reading* but also of *changing* himself. From an etic perspective, this links to Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity, in which he describes the formation of narrative identity, as discussed previously, as a dialectical process during which the storyteller comes to a fuller understanding of himself or herself through the process of "reconfiguration" (*mimesis3*), "the intersection of the world unfolded by fiction and the world wherein actual action unfolds" (1991b, p. 148).[15] In the two interview fragments, we witness such an aesthetic moment, when Robert points out that he comes to a more global and thematic understanding of himself through the fictional. That is, when he reads himself in the lyrics and defines himself as someone who takes time to see the bigger picture in the tiny.

7.4.3. Rock bottom riser, or, the indie-folk song as healing image

When asking respondents what it is that draws them to indie-folk music they most frequently mention the lyrics. Some of the respondents even explicitly draw a comparison between listening to indie-folk and reading a book or novella (as discussed above), and quite a few of them characterized themselves as being "text-oriented". This corresponds with an analysis of the broader musical and artistic preferences of the interviewees, which indicates that they distinguish from electronic music, are often avid readers and (art house/indie) film enthusiasts, and almost without exception do not watch television, aside from ("quality") drama series and documentaries – that is, the more mimetic and narrative art forms (see chapter 6.6.2., particularly figure 6.3. in Appendix 3).

With reference to indie-folk, respondents frequently stated that they are particularly drawn to the genre because the lyrics are "poetical", "metaphorical", "cryptic", or a bit "vague", and due to their "openness" create space for imagination and interpretation – that is, for the projection of personal 'facts' into the imaginary world that unfolds in and through the music. More accurately, most of the respondents explained how indie-folk narratives often produce "poetic images", and how such images accordingly instigate a process of what Ricoeur calls "iconic augmentation" – the ability of creative language to *augment* reality so as to invite the reader (or hearer) to dwell into the creator's story world and to *participate* in the process of constructing meaning (1991d, p. 123).

Zooming in on this process, analysis points out that respondents frequently use poetic images in coping with "nuclear episodes" in life (McAdams, 2001, p. 108), episodes during which the concordant self-narrative is (abruptly) disrupted (*peripeteia*) and needs to be recomposed. As can be deduced from the interviewees' narra-

15. In cultural anthropology, and related disciplines such as folkloric studies, the distinction between etics and emics refers to the "application of our theories in analyzing others' behavior and institutions" (etics) and "the interpretation of others' worlds as they appear to them" (Jardine, 2004).

tives, they frequently experienced depressive times throughout their lives during which lyrics – revolving around similar memories from the part of the singer-songwriters – were of particular significance. Respondents indicated to have incorporated fragments from those musical memories into their own personal memories and biographies, thereby becoming integrated within their "embodied narrative habitus" (Smith, 2007, p. 395).

Analyzing the interviewees' narratives on "nuclear episodes" provides information both on *how* musical memories mediate respondents' autobiographies, as well as on how they have used such narratives in coping with discordance. The following interview excerpt taken from the interview with Ronald, during which he talks about the music of Bill Callahan/Smog, first provides information on the 'hows' of autobiographical remembering:

> (N): You were just saying: "The images that I get from his music, or the metaphors, they really stick to me". Could you maybe explain how that works?
>
> (R): (…) Yeah, he makes a sort of still lives, I guess, a number of elements he puts together, and which is really well fabricated. (…) If it's just right, it remains. He doesn't pull out too much, and he just tells enough, which forms an image, or something like that. Now that I think about it, but I can't really explain it…
>
> (N): No, no, but that's also a hard thing to do… But can you try to explain what kind of images you get from his music?
>
> (R): Well, I think they are healing images. That I can place myself… Not that I can place myself within his memories, but that he settles in my memories, that it becomes part of my memories. That's it. They almost become my own memories. Yeah, I think that's it. You have experienced all kinds of things throughout your life, and that's becoming part of it then… (…) For example like… talking about your grandfather or grandmother. That you memorize lots of things you saw on photographs. And those become memories you may not have even experienced yourself. It's the same with music. At least with Bill Callahan I experience it like that. Sometimes it's inside your head all of a sudden. Yeah, that's kind of funny.

Here, we see how Ronald first explains how the song is able to produce a "still life", and, second, how his memories are blurred by the musical memories on which the song is based. Furthermore, Ronald interprets the poetic images he distills from the songs as "healing images", thereby referring to the fact that they are not only capable of – involuntarily – evoking the past but also to "heal" personal and somewhat painful memories about the past. Pushing the interview a bit further by asking Ronald to provide examples of such "healing images", he refers to the Bill Callahan song "Rock Bottom Riser" (2005), a song telling the story of someone who finds himself 'rock bottom' but is saved by some of his family members from 'drowning' in his own self-destructive behavior. For Ronald, the song has produced a "healing image" of the importance of family members during depression. In so doing, Ronald refers to some of the major narrative themes in indie-folk music referred to above. Despite the fact that indie-folk songs, as discussed, are agentic stories narrating the accomplishment of a protagonist controlling his fate during discordance, they often emphasize intimacy, belongingness, and community (McAdams and McLean, 2013, p. 234). From the part of the hearer, the emphasizing of interpersonal connection through friendship and love seems to result in the visualization of a "redemptive self" (McAdams, 2006), providing agency in times of discordance and ontological insecurity.

Being is his early forties, Ronald is able to develop "metaphorical interpretations" of the stories told in the songs, that is, to see them as "productive references" (Ricoeur, 1991d, p. 123) and to subsequently integrate them as "healing images" within his own personal biography. This corresponds with research indicating that metaphorical interpretations of stories emerge and increase after adolescence (Habermas & Bluck, 2000, p. 759). The relatively small sample of respondents taken for this chapter obviously complicates the comparing of age groups. However, analysis does suggest that the narratives of younger respondents are more focused on future expectations than past memories, more specifically on the difficulties they face in dealing with social pressure, societal expectations and the excitement of new relationships and love affairs. Especially the younger female respondents expressed to suffer from extensive worrying behavior, as explained by Julie (25, sales person, Oostvoorne) and Sophie (23, student, Apeldoorn):

> (J): I am really struggling with… what I really want. What I just said, do I want to pursue a career, or do I want to… well, find peace and migrate as fast as possible and a small house. It is really bad… My boyfriend, sometimes he thinks I am crazy, because it changes every day. Sometimes I am a few days

like this, and then it can change all of a sudden. And yeah, maybe it has nothing to do with music, but I think the peace, that is really in Mumford and Sons and folk music. I think it is.

(S): Well… "I'll find strength in pain" and "I will hold on hope"… those kind of lyrics [referring to son lines from songs by Mumford ad Sons]. I have always been a huge worrier, I always think about a lot of stuff, and I am easily hurt by other people too. And then I find comfort in those lyrics, as a sort of reassurance.

(N): Because they sing those kinds of things, that is what comforts you?

(S): Yes, a sort of power, I guess. To… I have to, I should not worry about what other people think and do.

Here, we see how Julie creates a linkage between herself worrying about the future and her preferences for "comforting" indie-folk. When asking her to elaborate on why particularly folk music comforts her, she explains that it often contains images of hope and finding redemption in the (near) future. As, for example, in Mumford and Sons' "Lover of the Light" (2012), which tells the story of a man searching for hope in an ill-fated love affair. Moreover, both the songs and video clips depict images of rural landscapes which, according to Julie, emphasize "peacefulness" and which, most importantly, relate to one of her future scenarios in which she found cheap housing somewhere in a backwoodsy area far away from the city and developing a professional career. Here we see how the oftentimes framed as 'synthetic' or 'manufactured' pop music of Mumford and Sons (see previous chapter) is indeed able to connote (second-person) authenticity, as Moore (2002) has remarked (see section 3.1), since it contains slogans that give Julie a sense of self-confidence and agency in times of being involved in processes of enculturation and self-authentication. In ways similar, this is the case for Sophie, who refers to Mumford and Sons' "The Cave" (2010), as it contains the lyrics "I'll find strength in pain" and "I will hold on hope". In everyday life, Sophie uses these song lines to find strength in coping with her worrying behavior. As the interview later on reveals, she has somehow even morphed the lyrics into a famous Nietzsche-phrase:

(N): But when you worry about something, is it then that those song lines of, for instance, Mumford and Sons, are literarily inside your head, or is it different?

(S): Yes, I think subconsciously, that the text is somewhere inside of me and… Yes, certain quotes, are always inside of my head. And if I am in such a mood, then I think, let's listen to music, and most probably I end up listening to folk music.

(N): You are saying 'the quotes are inside my head.' Maybe this is a difficult question, but can you quote them?

(S): Well, I know… This is probably not a line from a song but… 'When you are struggling, you get stronger.' (…) I don't know where it's from, but this is something that is inside my head very often.

Alongside all these interpretations of the way musical narratives mediate memories and autobiographies, analysis provided many accounts of album titles, songs, song titles, slogans, phrases or even single words that were linked to memories about the experience of (coping with) discordance. These episodes included both high points, low points, and turning points, and were linked to memories ranging from the birth of a child to the loss of a friend or parent, the illness of parents, the breaking up with a boy or girlfriend, marital separation, or, as Renske explained, to the moving of one place – in life – to the other:

(R): Particularly I like … songs, through which you start to experience something. (…) That it brings you back to a certain period in life, when you … when something happened and it … makes you think about that, a certain memory.

(N): Could you maybe give an example, of music… which brings back memories of something beautiful… or less beautiful

(R): Yeah, there is this song "Sweet Carolina" ["Oh My Sweet Carolina" , NvP] that I really like. (…) That particular song, it triggers something, but actually the entire album [*Heartbreaker*, NvP] does the same thing.

(N): And could you maybe explain which memories you link to that album?

(R): (…) It relates to the moment that I studied at Art Academy, and then I left Utrecht, and I … I was about to say goodbye to that piece of Utrecht and was going to live somewhere else. So that was very typical of that particular moment in my life, which ultimately disappeared. (…) I regretted it a lot that that moment was over. So that I needed to take a new step in life, and this album was really emblematic for that particular part of life that I enjoyed so much. Thus, it is really typical of that really joyful period, which has turned out to be a bit sad because I had to say goodbye.

The song "Oh My Sweet Carolina" (2000) by alt.country and indie-folk musician Ryan Adams tells the story of a protagonist travelling from one place to the other, while he yearns to return back home. In the interview excerpt, we see how Renske links the album and the particular song to a turning point in life, not just because the music was there the first time through, but rather because there are similarities between the narrative theme of the song and a theme in Renske's evolving life story. Now the song contains special meaning, as it triggers memories related to "that really joyful period in life, which has turned out to be a bit sad." This means that the song has become melancholy-impregnated, for it relates to a self-defining memory during which "something" – a place in life, friends, relationships and with that, a part of the self – was lost.[16] The song has become a "device of prosthetic biography" (DeNora, 2000, p. 66) and is voluntarily played by Renske when she is searching for time lost. Additionally, the narrative, revolving around the theme of moving on in life (and passing through time), has produced a healing image referencing the reassuring feeling of homecoming.

7.5. Conclusions and discussion

In this chapter I have investigated the role of indie-folk in the construction of self-identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience. It shows that musical narratives are crucial tools and building blocks in the formation of self-identity. Respondents indicate that they have incorporated 'snippets' of musical narratives into their evolving life-stories. This could be seen as a realist illustration of how people incrementally spin their "narrative thread of self" (DeNora), a process characterized by the mediation of the factual by the fictional. On the level of everyday life *(mimesis1)*, it turned out that indie-folk, much like other types of music, is effective in the organization of everyday life, that is, in the regulation of routines, habits, and customs; in the changing and regulation of moods and energy levels, and in terms of connecting with emotions and feelings.

This chapter, however, also showed that musical objects vary in the aesthetic agency they provide actors in everyday life (*cf.* DeNora, 2000). While more up-tempo forms of music have turned out to be 'devices' that are effective in the *regulation* of routines and associated ends, projects and affects (*cf.* Ricoeur on everyday life's "pre-narrative qualities", or Schatzki's similar notion of the "teleoaffactive structure" that organizes human behavior within integrated practices), more "laidback" genres, like indie-folk, allow for the creation of a "literary mode" with which actors are able to *escape* the routinized – and frequently framed as "hectic" and "time-consuming" – nature of ordinary time.

On the level of the reconfiguration of the life-story *(mimesis3)*, it followed that fragments of indie-folk songs afforded respondents to memorize episodic particulars from life, to include narratives of indie-folk songs in autobiographical memory, and to use fragments of indie-folk songs for the purpose of self-understanding and self-definition. These are processes, nonetheless, which have turned out to be highly private, involuntary, and mediated by discourse, rather than exclusively arising out of social input. This suggests that self-identity is and remains a form of interpretive practice, although it increasingly arises out of the multiple discourses, including those produced by American pop culture, that are at play in everyday life (*cf.* Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

This research furthermore shows that the current social condition is frequently framed by respondents as "hectic", "pressing", "consuming", "time consuming" and "media-saturated". This seems to suggest that postmodernity functions as a background framework of interpretation in and against which respondents situate themselves (*cf.* Timmer, 2010). Indie-folk songs, characterized by the expression of cyclical time and a "laidback" atmosphere, have turned out to be effective devices in coping with the experience of accelerating social time, as they allow respondents to get into a literary mode, which accordingly allows them to be involved in processes of priming and mental time travelling and, hence, to momentarily step "outside" of everyday life. The reception of indie-folk repeatedly takes the form of ritualistic listening behavior during which respondents aimed to "hold time still" (*cf.* Negus, 2012). The 'freezing' of time is linked with the need of respondents to voluntarily evoke and relive past (self-defining) memories, but is primarily associated with the desire to momentarily break with the routinized nature of daily existence – that is, to de-accelerate the experience of ordinary time as repetitive, accelerating, and consuming.

Indie-folk, as a narrative art form, could be seen as a *product of postmodernity*. The genre is eclectic and inter-

16. Independently of its clinical definition as a depressive disorder (DSM V), melancholia could be defined as a mental and emotional condition associated with the feeling of "loss". Typical to melancholia, however, is the feature of not knowing exactly what has been lost and what exactly causes the sadness and "grief". It is this characteristic that sets melancholia apart from mourning, where the "object" of loss can be explicitly identified and consciously evoked (Clewell, 2004). Moreover, what characterizes melancholia, in comparison to grief, is that the sadness or grief is directed to the self. Since people invest their libidinal energy in objects and persons throughout their lifetime, the *loss* of such an object or person automatically results in a loss of the self (see Koopman, 2016). The feeling of "loss of the self", after the loss of a loved person, is clearly expressed by respondents in this study.

textual as it builds upon aesthetics 'borrowed' from existing canonized genres within popular music; because lyrics mostly revolve around coping with the experience of disruption in the life-story, and because it has incorporated postmodern sonic qualities such as noise, distortion, repetition and narrative fragmentation – all of which suggest the primacy of discordance over concordance. This is also true for the self-narratives of respondents, since these narratives, too, are characterized by a movement oscillating between temporal narrative coherence and disruption. This indicates that the identities of respondents are constrained by their own autobiographies or self-narratives, of which the emplotment *(mimesis2)* is marked by the (frequent) experience of psychic difficulties due to the occurrence of nuclear life episodes in the evolving life-story (*cf.* Hesmondhalgh, 2013).

Rather than 'merely' being something that occurs in the life-story, the experience of discordance seems to be indicative of how the social "dwells" in the individual (*cf.* Lahire, 2011). As this research has focused on researching the formation of narrative identity among one particular interpretive community, and, more specifically, on how members of this community use the discourse of American popular music to construct their narrative identities, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to draw firm conclusions about whether identities are plural and how individuals cope with the experience of multiplicity and fragmentation. Nonetheless, this research did occasionally point to the fact that feeling "lost" or "out of place", and the subsequent search for a new "fit" in society, occurred due to geographical and occupational mobility. These are occasions that might be particularly experienced by "precarious workers", of which quite a few respondents that took part in this research – the ones that were employing creative and/or flexible labor – could be associated with.[17]

In conclusion, this leaves the impression that the construction of a more or less coherent sense of self is experienced by respondents as highly challenging. This is not only due to 'internal' factors such as experiencing psychic difficulties after a discordant moment in the evolving life-story, but also due to the struggle with 'external' social factors such as accelerating social time and the experience of "cultural shocks" (Lahire, 2011, p. x) as a result of, most notably, occupational and geographical mobility. At the same time, however, this research has indicated that indie-folk narratives are able to produce "healing images", which respondents have used as a coping mechanism in the struggle with discordance. This indicates the integrative power of narrative, enabling the individual to create a feeling a coherence and self-constancy, and to provide ontological security.

Lyrics of indie-folk songs are frequently "overflowing with sentiment", most notably with heavy emotions such as sadness and melancholia. It seems that this "melancholic structure of feeling" (Timmer, 2010, p. 44) characterizing indie-folk allowed respondents to cope with traumatic experiences and a subsequent loss of the self. Particularly because many indie-folk songs revolve around themes of communion, connectivity, and the intimacy of family and friendship they allow for a more relational understanding of subjectivity and self-identity (*cf.* Gergen, 1991; Timmer, 2010). That is to say, that subjectivity, within indie-folk, is presented as something that arises out of social interaction, as a 'product' of interpersonal and intimate relationships. This interpersonal sense of subjectivity allows hearers to visualize a more 'modern' version of self-identity, which suggests that indie-folk, apart from being a product of postmodernity, also is a *response to the cultural modality of postmodernism*. Although there is no explicit critique of postmodernism in indie-folk, the emphasis on affect and intersubjectivity is very different from a postmodern aesthetic in which irony, pastiche and parody have been celebrated as dominant aesthetic features (see Hibbett, 2005) and in which the subject is generally framed as a "mere node within self-governing and semiotic systems" (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 284). It could be argued, then, that the formation of narrative identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience is the product of two related interpretive resources (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 71) – of both a postmodern struggle with discordance and a modern desire for constructing a coherent and stable notion of the self over time.

17. A relatively recent report by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau) on class inequality indicates that 14% of the Dutch population is part of a category labeled "Precarious workers" (SCP, 2014, pp. 291-292). They are not part of the so-called "precariat" (of which 15% of the Dutch population is part), as precarious workers are slightly better educated and have more social and cultural capital in comparison to members of the precariat (lowly educated workers, who are poor in economic, social, and cultural capital). Nonetheless, precarious workers score low on ontological security as they are often unemployed (or temporarily unemployed due to freelance labor) and are not able to take a mortgage.

Chapter 8

General conclusions and discussion

Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical.

- Friedrich W. Schlegel, *Athenaeum,* fragment 116 (1797-98).

At a time when the individual tends to be ever more commonly conceived or dreamed of as an isolated, autonomous, responsible being endowed with reason, opposed to 'society' and defending his or her 'authenticity' or 'singularity' against it, sociology has the duty more than ever before of bringing to light the social fabrication of individuals and proving that the social is not reducible to the collective or general, but dwells in the most singular folds of each individual.

- Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor* (2011[2001])

In this Ph.D. thesis I have investigated the production, distribution, and consumption of independent folk music (indie-folk) in the Netherlands, within the time frame 1993-present. It aimed to answer the central research question how and why folk music reemerged as an industry-based genre by investigating: (1) the affordances that allowed the genre to reemerge; (2) to what extent, how and why folk music has been re-institutionalized within the Dutch music industry; (3) what the role of indie-folk music is in the formation of self-identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience, and (4) what the link is between the formation of indie-folk on the one hand and broader social dynamics on the other.

I have chosen this topic because the public reemergence of folk music ever since the early 1990s, evolving into an industry-based genre coined indie-folk or folk-pop in the mid-2000s, is remarkable within the frameworks of postmodernism and reflexive modernization in which the concept of authenticity has been problematized or even discarded. Whereas "[m]odernism is nostalgic for authenticity, or utopian about the cultural practices that might someday make authenticity possible", as Haselstein *et al.* (2009, p. 13) remind us,

> [p]ostmodernism abandons nostalgia for irony, consigning itself, either with *jouissance* or resignation, to the realization that everything is (…) simulacrum (Baudrillard), or pastiche (Jameson). Authenticity does not make much sense in a culture of copies. The self, once assumed to surpass presentation, turns out to be a performer; the well-designed artifact reveals itself to be a commodity; rebellion is just a pose. The derivativeness of all gestures and objects calls into question the filial logic motivating avant-garde rebellion (…). In postmodernism, history ceases to provide normative or aesthetic orientation and is replaced by a critique of the ideological functions of historiography or an ironical affirmation of the ever-shortened cycles of retro-fashions posing as novelties.

The re-popularization of folk music, revolving around tropes of depth, affect and engagement, thus seems to be diametrically opposed to a postmodernist discourse emphasizing depthlessness, the waning of affect, and detachment (Van den Akker, Gibbons & Vermeulen, forthcoming). The return of folk music, in other words, seems to be a revival of both the ethics and pathos of authenticity – of the return of a nostalgia for the real (Foster, 1996; Kuspit, 2006; Timmer, 2010).

How should we understand this return of authenticity? Can this question be answered, indeed, by framing it as a *symptom* of "reflexive modernization" – as a strategy of social groups in society, who once again want to "cut through the wound of reflection?" (Bendix, 2000, p. 8) Is it a symptom of "retromania" (Reynolds, 2011) – of a nostalgic longing for a past that has disappeared due to increasing levels of reflexivity? Are indie-folk songs, then, 'naive' rather than reflexive objects? Are indie-folk practitioners 'naive' in their search for authentic objects – did they forget what it is to be a reflexive subject? Or is the reemergence of folk music exemplary for the "informed naivety" that characterizes contemporary audiences in their search for a romanticist notion of social authenticity, representing a leap out of the 'cage' of postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a; Timmer, 2010)?

In the concluding chapter of this thesis I aim to answer these questions by summarizing and synthesizing the results of this study, and by accordingly framing them within ongoing debates in contemporary (aesthetic) theory on "post-postmodernism" (e.g., Foster, 1996; Timmer, 2010; Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a) and the "new authenticity" (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009). In doing so, I wish to outline how the re-popularization of folk music is embedded within changes in the cultural industries and society at large, and how the results of this research contribute to ongoing debates in the sociology of popular music and related fields such as the sociology of arts and culture, aesthetics, cultural sociology, literary theory, and narrative psychology. First, however, I wish to say a few words about the results of this thesis in regards to the *factors affording* and the *(class) politics underlying* the reemergence and re-popularization of folk music in the Netherlands.

8.1. The "distorted mirror" – The link between indie-folk and society

In this thesis I have investigated the production, distribution, and consumption of Dutch indie-folk by using the Cultural Diamond as a "heuristic device". This implies that I have assumed that the reemergence, re-institutionalization and re-popularization of folk music in the first decade of the twenty-first century reflects developments within wider society, but that this reflection occurs in complex or in systematically distorted ways (Alexander, 2003, p. 34).

Distortion occurs, first, because art is filtered through and possibly altered by a production and distribution system and, second, because it is appropriated, interpreted, created, evaluated and consumed by audiences

who form social groups (ibid, p. 33). This implies that art is not only part of an *institutional* context but also of an *intellectual* context (ibidem) in which it is consumed by a specific group of individuals who, in terms of shared background characteristics, form an interpretive community. It is this context, indeed, which represents the "properties of the mirror that determine its (mis)reflections" (Desan, Ferguson & Groswold, 1988, p. 9, in: Alexander, 2003, p. 34). It was the aim of this thesis to specify the properties of those (mis)reflections.

Thus, rather than framing the current social condition as dominated by a general *search for* or *culture of* authenticity (see, e.g., Taylor, 1991), I have investigated the link between 'indie-folk' and 'society' as *mediated* by processes of production, distribution, and consumption. It has turned out that indie-folk is embedded within the *institutional* context of (trans)local music scenes contributing to the formation of scene-driven industries that together make up the alternative mainstream, a subdomain within the professionalized field of musical production rooted in the institutional politics of indie culture. In regards to the *intellectual* context in which indie-folk is embedded, it has turned out that indie-folk is mostly produced and consumed by a group of individuals belonging to the cultural upper class in Dutch society, that is, a group of individuals who (wishes to) belong to the cultural elite. At a broad level, this means that the link between indie-folk and society is 'distorted' by the fact that the social domain or cultural performance of indie-folk is constituted by a group of individuals who are part of a generation born in the heydays of postmodernity (roughly between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s), who form a predominantly white audience, and who maintain or aspire to have a high status in society. Thus, a typically romanticist construction of (social) authenticity, rooted in the ideology of community, seems to be associated with this specific group of individuals. In the sections below I further elaborate on these findings.

8.2. Why 1993? – Explaining the advent of indie-folk in participatory society[1]

Drawing from the production of culture-perspective, this thesis has illustrated that digitization is one of the factors affording the reemergence of folk music in the Netherlands *(subquestion 1)*. While the production of culture-perspective emphasizes the importance of 'outside' factors such as, most notably, technology and copyrights regulations in the production of innovation in popular music, it centers analysis on music produced within the institutional realm of the *recording industry*. It has been argued, however, that innovation occurs due to the practices of actors (semi-professional musicians, amateurs, active consumers) operating *outside* of the boundaries of the recording industry. Therefore, I have combined insights developed within the production of culture-perspective with insights developed within practice theory. Within practice theory, the consumption of media within the current new mediascape is seen as a form of media production in its own right (Ardèvol *et al.*, 2010). As such, it is emphasized that "the logic of field might be disrupted by the evolution of contributing practices" (Warde, 2017, p. 125). Within the context of this research, this means that existing logics within the professionalized field of musical production could have been disrupted due to the evolution of DIY and consumer-driven practices due to the advent of digital technologies. Once such domestic and/or scene-embedded practices are 'domesticated' within the music industry, it could be expected that they contribute to changes in the institutional practices of gatekeepers operating at the professionalized field of musical production.

As this research has shown, new opportunities to self-create, self-produce, and self-distribute music due to the advent of digitization have contributed to the reemergence and re-popularization of folk music. Digital technologies were predominantly embraced by early adopters – i.e., active consumers, DIY musicians, amateur organizers – operating within (trans)local scenes. This perhaps explains why 1993, the year the Internet became available for a broader public, has been framed as crucial in the emergence of new folk music revolving around lo-fi recording techniques and bedroom aesthetics (Encarnacao, 2013). It most definitely explains why scene-based genres like free-folk, freak-folk and New Weird America were supported by a network of musicians, who began "to telegraph between each other, forming alliances via limited handmade releases and a vast subterranean network of samizdat publications, musician and fan run labels and distributors" made possible by "home publishing and CD burning" and the "globe-spanning reach of the internet" (Keenan, 2003). In short, the advent of digitization explains why folk music, usually 'dwelling' under the radar of the mainstream, rose to the surface after the advent of Web 2.0 adhering, like folk music itself, to ethics and aesthetics of participation.[2]

1. *Cf.* Peterson (1990; "Why 1955?") on why the popularization of television in 1955 was pivotal in the advent of rock 'n' roll music as a fledging new genre in the American recording industry.

2. I am not arguing, however, for a technological determinism. Although digitization definitely has been a contributing factor to the rise of – 'online' and 'offline' – participatory cultures, the reverse is also true. That is to say that new – and more accessible – technologies also are the product of countercultural forces in western societies ever since the revolutionary 1960s. Digitization, in other words, did not only contribute to

Also in the case of the Netherlands, digital technologies have contributed to the formation of (trans)local indie-folk scenes, forming participatory cultures behind Web 2.0. With their practices of self-production, self-organization and self-distribution, amateur organizers and fans turned entrepreneurs foregrounded scene-driven industries. Musicians have used the knowledge and knowhow they have acquired within scenes to gather a crowd and to further develop their careers in music business, as well as that most of the Dutch institutions crucial for the promotion of indie (folk) music – e.g., 3voor 12, Incubate festival, Snowstar Records, Crossing Border festival – have roots in DIY practices and/or online participatory culture.

An important finding of this research is that self-organization is a practice mostly employed by members rich in cultural and social capital. As they score high on social capital, active consumers are able to form artistic interstices (Bourriaud, 2002) where music can be experienced in intimate and interpersonal settings. They are capable of achieving this, as they, due to their networks, can rely on "relational attributes" (Nicholls, 2009) such as trust, loyalty and a sense of duty. Self-organized activities can exist and be sustained due to these relational attributes, but relying on others is also what makes scene-embedded practices *precarious*. Once trust, loyalty and/or a sense of duty disappear, the activity disappears with it. This seems to occur particularly among social groups of which individuals, like some of the respondents participating in this research, are oftentimes subjected to occupational and geographical mobility (see below). Due to these factors, their self-organized activities are not always sustainable. This illustrates how the emergence of a network or participatory society (Castells, 2003; Uitermark, 2014) not only *affords* but also *constrains* practices of self-organization and self-distribution *(subquestions 1 and 2)*

As this research has illustrated, a few Dutch indie-folk acts (e.g., Mister and Mississippi, Lucky Fonz III, Blaudzun) have been able to make a transfer to the mainstream by signing contracts with major labels, indicating that indie-folk, also in the Netherlands, has turned into an industry-based phenomenon. Although indie-folk, obviously, remains a rather marginal phenomenon within the context of a music industry dominated by the major (international) sales successes of pop and dance acts like Armin van Buuren, Tiësto, Hardwell, My Baby, Caro Emerald, and Jacco Gardner (Buma Cultuur, 2017).[3] Nonetheless, the emergence of a national market for indie-folk indicates that the formation of indie-folk as a new domain within the (alternative) mainstream should be seen as the result of media convergence understood as the synthesis of both a "bottom-up consumer-driven process and a top-down corporate-driven process" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18) *(subquestion 2)*.

Indie-folk growing into an industry-based genre, however, is counterintuitive given the fact that folk music (as a 'way of life') is often defined in process terms *and* because the *genre* of (American) folk music originates in leftist political movements and therefore connotes anti-capitalist political consciousness. Indie-folk becoming a commercial phenomenon in the mid-2000s hence is a crucial factor in the fragmentation of the genre, currently consisting of a subfield dominated by a mostly teenage audience preferring commercial indie-folk acts and a somewhat older – and 'avant-garde' oriented – audience feeling catered by indie-folk acts at the experimental end of the genre.

8.3. In and out of sync with both modernism and postmodernism – Indie-folk and the construction of a 'new' authenticity in popular music

While the professionalized field of musical production is and remains a dualistic structure consisting of a heteronomous and autonomous pole, respectively, this research has indicated that autonomy is defined by Dutch indie-folk practitioners in *relational* (Doing Things Together) rather than *oppositional* (Do It Yourself) terms. The *aesthetics* of indie-folk could be best defined as a participatory or relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002), emphasizing the egalitarian, inclusive, sincere and open character of musical creation, production, performance and consumption. Self-organized activities within (trans)local scenes, such as living room concerts and small-scale festivals, reflect and contribute to the establishing of the genre's aesthetics. Adhering to the participatory ethos of the 1950s 'hootenannies', the organizers of such events consciously frame their music as a *social activity*. This is a tactics that is counter-hegemonic to an imagined mainstream producing and disseminating popular music predominantly for economy's sake. Large-scale production is perceived as alienating, which causes the problem of which authenticity – that is, redefining music in relational terms – is the solution.

Rather than counter-framing indie-folk as 'for music's sake', Dutch indie-folk practitioners underscore the *inter-subjective* nature of musical creation. This is not only reflected in the use of a participatory framework in

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the emergence of a 'participatory' society, but is also a product of counterinstitutional currents in western societies which have contributed to the establishment of ethics (and aesthetics) of participation (see Aupers, 2004).

3. Although it should be added that the latter three acts (My Baby, Caro Emerald and Jacco Gardner) have both included blues, country and folk elements into their pop-oriented music, and could therefore be seen as part of the 'retro'-trend.

performance practices, but also in the *institutional politics* of musicians and Dutch indie labels and firms, emphasizing connectivity over autonomy. On the one hand, this could be seen as a form of pragmatic realism: musicians and firms collaborating with major capital ('selling out') is a strategy that is more sustainable than remaining true to obscurity ('burning out'). On the other hand, however, distancing from religious DIY-ing, as one respondent aptly remarked, also is an example of how the social dwells in the discourse produced by the interviewees participating in this research.

The aesthetics of and institutional politics behind indie-folk echo the typically romanticist understanding of art as being in-dividual or un-divided (Van Rooden, 2015ab). That is to say that music is not seen as *independent from* society (as a turn 'inwards') but as a symbol of a society that is built upon democratic values of egalitarianism, participation and openness (and is thus also a turn 'outwards'). Music, in other words, is defined as *ontologically* relational, rather than merely existing within the relational structure of the music industry (ibidem; Bourriaud, 2002). Such a romanticist understanding of art as 'co-creation', of art as a tool to enhance or even build community, is seen by indie-folk practitioners as more 'in sync' with the current social condition. Alongside digitization, adhering to postmodernist ontological assumptions of social reality as contingent rather than permanent forms a second factor in the reemergence and re-institutionalization of the genre *(subquestions 1 and 2)*.

Tapping into a romanticist discourse of art as co-creation is a fruitful strategy after postmodernism has blocked the way to a modernist understanding of art as a tool for avant-garde – punk-like – rebellion. Autonomy in a strictly modernist sense – art existing in isolation from society – is seen as 'out of sync' with the postmodern critique of the metanarrative. The fact that indie-folk practitioners are critical of autonomism (without being anti-autonomists either) explains the redefinition of authenticity in terms of sincerity (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009). In a sense, this new authenticity is thus infused with a postmodern sensibility, exemplified, for example, by the way indie-folk musicians are informed by Derrida's notion of deconstruction, and are therefore critical of dogmatism, essentialism, and ideology. Consequently, they have appropriated postmodern aesthetics, such as pluralism, distortion, and fragmentation; and use more 'open' stylistics such as the metaphor, producing multivocality rather than teleology.

However, apart from being a continuation of postmodernist aesthetics, the construction of a new authenticity in indie-folk represents a return of modernism – for it seems to abandon irony (the idea that nothing is real) for nostalgia (the belief that 'something' is real). However, although musicians, gatekeepers and consumers appropriate the past, indie-folk should not be seen as a symptom of retromania (Reynolds, 2011). Although I have consciously framed the social construction of indie-folk as the *re*emergence, *re*-institutionalization and *re*-popularization of folk music, it seems too naive to simply frame the current folk revival as a manifestation of retromania – that is to say, as the formation of yet another retro-fashion posing as a novelty, or as the *rejection* of postmodernism by naively reviving a pre-modern past. Without denying the truth that for some indie-folk is a fashion item, framing indie-folk as a pastiche would ignore the fact that the construction of indie-folk also seems to be a *response to* and offers a *revision of* postmodernism *(subquestion 4)*.

It is more obvious, in my opinion, to frame the current folk revival as an example of a "renewed seriousness" in popular music (Hibbett, 2005). This renewed seriousness is reflected in the way musicians return to a more modern approach in the creation and performance of their music. They do so either by returning to realist/socialist tropes of the 'commonplace', the 'commons' and the 'natural' (e.g., by constructing narratives about communion, nature, 'ordinary' things, and 'real' emotions), or by symbolically constructing mythological worlds 'beyond' the here and now and which "endeavor toward alternative systems of meaning, seeking unity through myth and symbol in the face of disrepair" (ibid, pp. 68-69). Moreover, it is reflected in the way both professionals and amateur-organizers, not literally yet effectively, frame their venues as "irony-free" zones (see on this concept by American novelist David Foster Wallace: Timmer, 2010, p. 163), where music can be performed and experienced in a *small-scale, social* and preferably *non-mediatized* – that is, more 'human' and more 'real' – setting. What makes this renewed seriousness 'new' is that it does not take an *ironic* stance in critiquing the (socially) constructed nature of popular music, for example by using pastiche and parody as stylistics, but because it takes a more *serious* stance. As such, it is a "restoration of grandeur, beauty, and intensity" in popular music, and opposes the "flatter, more self-reflexive form of expression" (ibid, p. 66) common in genres like punk, lo-fi, grunge, pop, and post-punk *(subquestion 4)*.

By framing the construction of a new authenticity in indie-folk as both a negation and a continuation of both modernism and postmodernism, indie-folk could be seen as part of the "neo-romantic" turn in the arts and cultural industries, which, in turn, is part of the emergence of a "metamodernist" paradigm (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a). It oscillates between a nostalgic longing for authenticity, expressed by the adoption of multiple modernist frameworks (most notably realism and symbolism) in the production and performance of music, and a postmodern

reflexive attitude recognizing "the risks and lures of nostalgia" (Hutcheon, 1998). Within this framework, metamodernism is indeed romanticist as it oscillates between a modern desire for something 'deeper' and a postmodern knowledge concerning the fact that authenticity is artificial by nature.

Arguing that metamodernism is the "dominant cultural logic of contemporary modernity" (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010b), however, would seem to imply that it is constructed by a dominant social group in society, who have re-appropriated modernist aesthetics as a means of showing off their discontent with aspects of postmodernity, including the commodification and mediatization of culture. Like Naturalism in the French literary field was once a response to and offered a revision of Symbolism, turning to simplicity and sincerity instead of aestheticism and oppositional autonomy (see Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 67), metamodernism (as an aesthetics) should, as I will argue, be seen as the reflection of a pure aesthetics responding to the postmodernist adagio of anything goes. Being part of the restricted subfield within the field of cultural production, its aim is to counter a more synthetic, flat and self-reflexive way of producing, disseminating, and consuming culture.

8.4. Occupying a 'commons' – From purism to poly-purism as a performance of social and cultural distinction

In this research I have demonstrated that the *consumption* of indie-folk is part of the qualitative shift from snobbism to cultural omnivorousness as a marker of high-status. This is consistent with former research indicating that musical genres such as blues, rock, bluegrass and folk, have gained status and artistic legitimacy during the past two decades (e.g., Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Van Eijck, 2001; Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). Moreover, this is consistent with former research indicating that authenticity, and associated frameworks such as simplicity, sincerity and exoticism, are used by individuals rich in cultural capital as a frame through they aim to legitimize and reproduce their legitimate taste (e.g., Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Goldberg *et al.*, 2016).

In this research I have demonstrated that Dutch indie-folk practitioners are "poly-purists", a specific type of cultural omnivores who consume a broad variety of (mobile) cultural genres yet by evaluating within those genres those items that are considered to be more pure or authentic. Rather than adopting a politics of 'anything goes', they thus assess cultural objects on the basis of their "categorical purity" (Goldberg *et al.*, 2016, p. 221). They do so by transposing the aesthetic disposition to forms of ordinary culture and, consequently, by drawing symbolic boundaries around genres – or, better still, around items within genres – that are considered to be either too posh, popular, or populist. In doing so, poly-purists present themselves as today's snobs, as their front-stage behavior demonstrates an 'open' attitude for lowbrow culture, while their back-stage behavior reflects an exclusionary politics of class distinction. This is also known as the "omnivorous paradox" (Johnston & Baumann, 2007), a strategy employed by Dutch indie-folk practitioners who, while promoting ethics of participation, provide distinction by framing authenticity as the quintessence of legitimate taste – that is, by drawing boundaries around overt commercialism (e.g., pop and dance, Hollywood cinema, Reality TV), overt snobbism (e.g., punk, jazz, and classical music), and overt populism (e.g., country, *Schlager*, and populist politics).

Bourdieu has convincingly demonstrated that the ability to develop a pure taste should be associated with the cultural elites in western societies, who use a Kantian aesthetic to show off their more civilized, that is, more 'disinterested' artistic mode of cultural consumption. Authors like Berlin (1999) and Campbell (1987) go even further back in time, and argue that the Kantian aesthetic has roots in Puritanism, a particular branch of Protestantism characterized by valuing simplicity over the superfluous. By conducting a socio-historical analysis of European Romanticism, Campbell (1987, 208) has defined purism as the "ideology of a new artist class." Emerging in Europe in the aftermath of the French and Industrial Revolutions, it became the taste of the new middle classes (the romantics) who, on the one hand, rejected the traditional (snobbish) ethic of the aristocracy and, on the other hand, the emerging utilitarian and material (commercial) culture of the *nouveau riches*. The emergence of a pure taste in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in other words, reflects a split *within* the dominant classes between the cultural and the economic elites (*cf.* Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 1992). It has been argued that this "Purito-Romantic" ideology (Campbell, 1987, p. 208) resonates in indie discourse, as it is characterized, amongst others, by a distrust of authority, a preference for the unmediated and simplified, and the valuing of austerity and abstinence over the glamorous and artificial; although the divine within indie is "displaced onto the experience of 'true' and 'authentic' music" (Fonarow, 2006, p. 28). Indeed, I have found that Dutch indie-folk practitioners have developed a pure taste on the basis of which they consume popular and (historically) lowbrow culture (e.g., popular music, TV, cinema, fast foods) by assimilating it to the aesthetic

disposition. As such, they make distinctions, both across and within genres, between items that are considered authentic (i.e., sincere, primordial, organic, deep, etc.) and items that are perceived as too commercial (synthetic), snobbish (formalist, experimental) and/or populist (ordinary).

It is therefore that I have argued that cultural omnivorousness, rather than being a trend of a so-called post-Bourdieu era, is part of the ongoing historical narrative of a Kantian aesthetic emphasizing the 'distanced' nature of artistic evaluation and consumption (Bourdieu, 1984). As an aesthetic ideology rooted in European Romanticism, it resonates in the discourse of indie-folk. With the difference, nonetheless, that within the context of the current social condition, purism translates into *poly*-purism. This can be explained by the "ontogenetic history" (Lizardo & Skiles, 2012, p. 8) that 'produces' contemporary consumers. As individuals growing up in a post-modern condition marked by pluralism, diversity, globalization, and the commodification of culture, they have mastered the skill to sample broadly; while being socialized as members of the cultural upper-middle class has provided them with the disposition of being 'picky'.

An ongoing debate within research on omnivorous taste revolves around the empirical question of how to measure omnivorousness (e.g., Peterson & Kern, 1996; Lizardo & Skiles, 2012; Goldberg *et al.*, 2016). Earlier contributions to this debate (e.g., Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996) have suggested that cultural omnivores adopt a politics of openness, marked by combining the consumption of high arts with consuming popular culture. More recent contributions, however, seem to suggest that cultural omnivores are attracted to the more consecrated and canonized forms of culture (e.g., Lizardo & Skiles, 2012), and even that omnivores avoid the consumption of items that span boundaries between the highbrow, popular and lowbrow excessively. It is therefore that Goldberg *et al.* (2016) have made a distinction between two types of cultural omnivores – poly-purists and poly-mixers. Thus, by adding 'a-typicality' (a preference for transgressing conventions) as a second prism next to 'variety' (heterogeneous taste), Goldberg *et al.* have outlined a more detailed picture of what omnivorous taste potentially implies.

This research has contributed to this debate by suggesting that poly-purism, apart from being a performance of social distinction, is a manifestation of cultural omnivorism that is popular among a group of mostly highly educated late adolescents and (young) adults growing up in postmodernity. For these consumers, consumer society is part of their habitat and thus of their habitus. Poly-purism, in this respect, could be seen as a strategy employed by this particular social group in western societies to not only provide social and cultural distinction but also to cope with the alienation produced under postmodernity; a strategy that manifests itself in the authentication or 'purifying' of items – and icons – of consumer society. The transposing of the aesthetic disposition to ordinary items could explain the 'upgrading' of fast foods like the hamburger into authentic forms of *haute cuisine* (Johnston & Baumann, 2007; 2009); the fascination for 'retro-vintage' in everything from foods to fashion and furniture in Hipster circles (Michael, 2015); the transformation of TV into quality TV (Lavie & Dhoest, 2015); the aesthetic valorization of mostly industrial metropolitan areas among artists and members of the creative class (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005); the transformation of those ('ugly') areas into gentrified areas full of bio-organic beer pubs, hamburger joints, hot dog spots and coffeehouses; and the reviving of music that is frequently played in those 'small-scale' venues: coffeehouse-folk. Thus, although this research has not primarily focused on measuring omnivorous taste, the results seem to suggest that the consumer adopting a class politics of 'anything goes' is a postmodern version of the cultural omnivore, whereas the contemporary omnivore is part of contemporary modernity characterized by a (metamodern) oscillation between modernism (aestheticism) and postmodernism (pluralism).

8.5. What about the artwork itself?

In this research I have both investigated how Dutch producers, distributors and consumers *authenticate* folk music – i.e., how they construct authentic 'objects' like indie-folk songs – and how consumers use music in their everyday lives and in the process of identity formation *(subquestion 3)*. This implies that I have not only investigated social judgments of taste (see above), but also the consumption practices of members of the Dutch indie-folk audience (*cf.* Warde, 2017, p. 105).

Drawing from practice theory, I have defined consumption as a dispersed practice that occurs on many different sites in everyday life (Warde, 2017, p. 86; f. 7). Music, within this framework, is something people not merely consume, but use as a tool in the organization of social life (DeNora, 2000). I have investigated, consequently, how the consumption of (popular) music – indie-folk included – is operative in a multiplicity of practices, including cooking, traveling, studying, and working practices. In doing so, I have been able to get a better understanding of how (popular) music helps constituting the teleoaffective structures – particular ends, desires, moods,

emotions – that organize habitual behavior both within and across practices (Schatzki, 1996). Moreover, I have been able to contribute to debates within (cultural) sociology on the empirical question of how and to what extent habitus, as Bourdieu once suggested, is still a "practice-unifying and practice-generating" principle (1984, p. 101; see also Lahire, 2011; Warde, 2017).

Arguing that habitus is both a practice-unifying and practice-generating principle implies that it is assumed that 'class' conditions (social) behavior; that behavior, in other words, is both embodied and embedded in social practices. By focusing on how interviewees use (popular) music in everyday life, analysis thus moves away from social judgments of taste as units of analysis and centers analysis, instead, on the more phenomenological accounts of the use of (popular) music in daily life.

This research indicates, nonetheless, that there *is* a relationship between the typically Kantian mode of cultural consumption employed by indie-folk consumers (see above) and how they use indie-folk songs to create a more 'disinterested' emotional atmosphere and state of mind in their daily lives. While 'up-tempo' genres, like rock and electronic dance music, are used by respondents *while* conducting routine activities; as well as to regulate and instigate moods, associated energy levels, goals, and emotions, the more 'quiet' indie-folk – similarly to classical music – is used to *escape* from the repetitive nature of everyday life. Hence, more 'laidback' indie-folk affords cultural omnivores to create a "literary mode" (Alexander, 2003, p. 215) with which they are metaphorically able to hold time still.

This finding is relevant for sociology in two – interconnected – ways. First, it raises questions about the theoretical and empirical question on whether or not the artwork (the 'text') itself matters. Second, it is illustrative of how phenomenological accounts of the social are formative for the consumption of (popular) music.

While focusing on investigating practices of production, distribution, and consumption, this research did show that pop songs are "affordances" (DeNora, 2000, p. 39). That is to say, popular songs afford actors certain things, because they are made of particular 'materials' and 'textures' – like "a ball, for example, affords rolling, bouncing and kicking in a way that a cube of the same size, texture and weight would not" (ibidem).[4] In this research I have found that the more laidback and narrative indie-folk, in contrast with, for example, metal or techno music, allows respondents to seal themselves off from the environment. They do so by organizing "rituals of plotless time" (Negus, 2012) – in train stations, while traveling, or while creating a relaxing atmosphere in the house. Interestingly, the need to organize such rituals is determined by experiences of the social. As this research has illustrated, respondents frequently framed the experience of social time as hectic, (time) consuming, demanding, pressing, and media-saturated. To momentarily escape from experiences of social saturation (Gergen, 1991); that is, to 'freeze' time rather than to have the feeling of being consumed by the 'world', the consumption of indie-folk has turned out to be an effective coping mechanism.

Moreover, this research has indicated that cultural objects indeed vary, as Griswold has argued (1987, p. 1105), in their "cultural power" – "the capacity of certain works to linger in the mind." As she argues, some works of art are richer in cultural power than others, for example because they are multivocal and therefore sustain rich meanings and a variety of interpretations (Alexander, 2003, p. 281). Indeed, in this research I have found that indie-folk songs are praised by consumers because they are more narrative than other pop songs and, more specifically, because lyrics are poetic and polysemic due to the frequent use of metaphor. The use of 'open' language is framed as in tune with the current social condition, but also because it allows respondents to 'dwell' in the story worlds unfolding in the lyrics, that is to say, to leave room for interpretation and to integrate semiotic particles within the life-story. The ability to 'read' music poetically, however, not only relates to the cultural power of the 'texts', but also to the fact that indie-folk consumers are rich in cultural capital. This points to a homologous relationship between the structure of the 'text' and the social structure in which the interpretive community is embedded (*cf.* Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

8.6. A progressive, fractured poetry – Narrative identity in contemporary modernity

Throughout the various chapters of this thesis, I have defined the aesthetics of indie-folk music. It has been argued that the aesthetics of 'commercial' indie-folk is embedded within the discourse of pop, whereas the aesthetics of 'restricted' indie-folk is embedded within the discourse of indie. At a very basic level, this means that the

4. The concept of affordances – originally developed by the American psychologist James Jerome Gibson, is appropriated by DeNora (2000, pp. 38-41) in her study of how agents use music as a tool to organize their social lives. She argues that different forms of popular music, as they are made up of different 'materials' and 'textures', afford actors certain things, like rock music affords venting while classical music affords relaxation.

former has appropriated more conventional aesthetics including hi-fi production and recording techniques and a more traditional understanding of album and song structures. The latter is located at the alternative mainstream and has combined folk with punk aesthetics including lo-fi production techniques and the framing of music as an unfinished *process* rather than an end *product*.

As discussed previously, the aesthetics of the more restricted indie-folk could be best defined as a combination between postmodernist and modernist aesthetics. The music is eclectic and consists of typically postmodern stylistic including musical distortion, noise, citation, and (narrative) fragmentation. These techniques aim to connote the spontaneous and discorded character of musical production; the idea that music, like social reality itself, as some respondents adequately phrased it, is never 'finished'. Thematically, as well as visually, indie-folk is more nostalgic for authenticity as it emphasizes depth, affect, and engagement (Van den Akker, Gibbons & Vermeulen, forthcoming). Depth, for example, is created by the fact that folk music connotes nature and historicity, therewith counterbalancing the 'flat' and 'synthetic' products circulating within the recording industry. Moreover, depth is suggested by the crafting of an expressivist poetry that evokes heavy emotions, of either "heavenly joy" (e.g., Edward Sharpe) or "deadly sorrow" (e.g., Bonnie 'Prince' Billy). Engagement, finally, is achieved by the writing of topical songs revolving around current social crises, like the refugee crisis, yet most notably by embracing an ethics (and aesthetics) of participation. The combination of a modernist nostalgia for authenticity and a postmodern reflexivity regarding the constructed nature of authenticity is, indeed, what makes contemporary folk a return of romanticism, once defined by Schlegel as the "oscillation of [modern] enthusiasm and [postmodern] irony" (De Mul, 1999, pp. 9-14).

The return of romanticism in contemporary folk music should, however, be regarded as a *return with a difference*. Schlegel once defined romantic poetry as a "progressive universal poetry." With this definition, Schlegel aimed to think of art as a "small reflection of the being un-divided of the world as such" (Van Roodden, 2015a, p. 174). As a reflection of the world as un-divided, the artwork was conceived of by the romantics as a tool to build community and to stimulate citizenship; almost like a virus transmitting a disease. Art was able to do so, most notably by training the sensibility, the emotions and feelings of its spectators. Although this romantic understanding of art as a "progressive universal poetry" recognizes the fragmentary nature of social reality and of art itself (since the artwork is defined as a fragment of the world as being un-divided), it simultaneously carries out a modernist telos to turn society into a universal piece of poetry.

The narrative poetry that characterizes contemporary folk music, on the contrary, could be best conceived of as a progressive, *fractured* poetry. It is 'progressive', as discussed, because it uses stylistics such as the metaphor, which enables consumers, as one interviewee remarked, to "affect to have a certain effect." This is a typically *romanticist* conception of engagement, as it emphasizes the importance of crafting a more open form of language, a form of language which invites the spectator to *participate* in the creation of meaning, rather than using a final vocabulary. The critical attitude towards dogmatism at the same time explains why the poetry characterizing contemporary folk music is of a *fractured* kind. Formally, this is evident from the fact that lyrics frequently consist of words, slogans and phrases rather than being well-rounded stories. Thematically, because 'stories' frequently revolve around personal experiences of discordance: disruptive moments in the (singer-)protagonist's life-story and the expression of related heavy moods and emotions, most notably of depression and melancholia: the feeling that a certain something has been lost due to experiences of rupture *(peripeteia)*.

Similar to the musical poetry characterizing indie-folk, the self-narratives of indie-folk consumers oscillate between narrative coherence and disruption. Drawing from Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity, I have been able to investigate how personal life-stories are mediated by fictional (in this case: musical) narratives. Ricoeur defines the self-narrative as a "discordant-concordance", by which he refers to the quality of time to continuously break through our attempts to domesticate it (Ricoeur, 1991c, pp. 340-341). As this research illustrates, the life-stories of respondents are indeed marked by discordance or the occurrence of nuclear episodes (McAdams, 2001, p.108) – disruptive moments in the life-story including both high points (e.g., the birth of a child), low points (e.g., the death of loved ones), and turning points (e.g., the breaking up with/by a lover).

Nuclear episodes, obviously, are an integral part of life itself, which, as Ricoeur has suggested, is narratively prefigured and therefore includes the need of coping with fatalities. As this research has indicated, the accounts of discordance in the self-narratives of respondents, however, also seem to be indicative of how the social dwells in the singular folds of individuals (see the second motto of this chapter).

An ongoing debate within the fields of sociology, philosophy, and (cognitive and narrative) psychology revolves around the question whether habitus, in a social condition marked by multiplicity and the commodification and diversification of culture, is still a "practice-unifying and practice-generating principle" (see above). It has been argued by many scholars that people in postmodernity increasingly engage in a variety of practices. As

Warde (2017, p. 92) reminds us, the "[p]ursuit of variety, a current trend identified as cultural omnivorousness (…) results in a continual expansion of the set of items conventionally defined as part of a decent and normal life." As the above indicates, the aesthetic disposition of indie-folk practitioners allows them to scan a broad variety of genres and to cherry-pick those items within genres that are the most pure. This suggests, when analyzing social judgments of taste, that 'habitus' selects those items within a multiplicity of genres that are considered to be more authentic, that is to say, more 'refined', 'layered', 'deep', 'complex', etc. Although it should be added that this research has centered analysis on one particular cultural performance ('indie-folk'), and consequently has not explicitly observed how individuals straddle in a multiplicity of practices, the discourse analyzed did suggest that Dutch indie-folk consumers achieve to fabricate a 'coherent' taste. On the one hand, this indicates that there is still cultural hierarchy – "that rewards internal to practices are partly a function of the complexity of the particular practice; and second, that the external rewards to be gained by any individual are a function of the prestige of the practice" (Warde, 2017, p. 93). On the other hand, however, it remains true that individuals who represent themselves as person's performing a legitimate taste often rely on the *performance* of consistency and that coherence is thus "itself contested and subject to social struggle" (ibid, p. 95).

Again, when moving away from social judgments of taste as units of analysis and focusing on how consumers use popular music in everyday life and the construction of self-identity, then the empirical question of whether habitus is still a unifying principle is more difficult to answer. This is, first and foremost, because this question implies an observation of both the *volume* of and the *commitment* to practices (ibid, p. 94). As this research has only implicitly produced accounts of how the consumption of (popular) music occurs in a multiplicity of integrative practices, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to draw steady conclusions about the question of whether or not the self is fragmented – understood as the experience of instability and stress due to an individual's (detached) involvement in a multiplicity of disparate practices and heterogeneous networks (Warde, 2017, p. 95). Nonetheless, this research did indicate that occupational and geographical mobility are factors that cause discordance, resulting in temporary feelings of out-of-placeness and maladjustment (*cf.* Lahire, 2011). It has been suggested that such feelings seem to occur among social groups consisting of individuals who employ creative (and flexible) labor and are therefore part of the category of precarious workers that scores high on ontological insecurity

Although concordance thus seems to be an *achievement* rather than an *external permanency*, this thesis suggests that skeptical postmodern views of self-identity as fabricated by the social seem too extreme. Postmodern views emphasizing that identities are linguistically determined deny, as critics have argued, the fact that people are agents or storytellers, drawing inspiration from others through social interaction and through engaging with forms of popular culture providing resources and procedures under which identity is mediated and constructed (e.g., Best & Kellner, 1991; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Timmer, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Moreover, they deny "the naturally integrative power of narrative itself" (McAdams, 2001, p. 116).

Indie-folk narratives are either highly agentic stories and/or stories of communion: the former privileging the "accomplishment and the ability to control one's fate"; the latter revolving around "the degree to which protagonists demonstrate or experience interpersonal connection through love, friendship, dialogue, or connection to a broad collective" (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 234). Although indie-folk songs not frequently work towards reaching a form of narrative closure, and not always end 'happily-ever-after', the songs recurrently mentioned in the self-narratives of interviewees were telling, or at least suggesting, the importance of community in times of discordance. The fact that these songs were frequently mentioned by respondents seems to imply that musical narratives are of special meaning when individuals are being confronted with discordance. Indie-folk narratives produce, as one respondent aptly recalled, "healing images", with which consumers are able to recreate a sense of coherence, continuation, and ontological security.

The fact that indie-folk narratives revolve around tropes of agency, intimacy, caring and belongingness is consistent with research in contemporary literary theory in which it has been argued that a "melancholic structure of affect" dominates American fiction at the turn of the twenty-first century (Timmer, 2010). Particularly in the works of authors like David Foster Wallace and Dave Eggers it has been observed how protagonists struggle with their inability to connect with their inner emotional life (they feel 'empty' inside), as well as with the – paradoxical – experience of being overflowing with sentiment. It has been argued that the inability to appropriate feelings should be seen a symptom of postmodernism, which has deconstructed emotions as a media text or simulacrum. The 'loss' of being able to connect with feelings forms a background of interpretation in and against which protagonists in the stories of aforementioned authors situate themselves. Against this background of interpretation, a "new sense of self" is becoming manifest. In the words of Timmer,

> (…) the novels seem structured around *feelings*, more so than that they are centered around individual human psyches (however fractured). (…) Feelings, in these (…) contemporary novels, are not 'private' and 'inner' but neither are they 'free floating'; they are *interpersonal* (ibid, p. 45; emphasis in the original).

By re-connecting with others, a new subjectivity is sought for in these novels, which is framed by Timmer as a strategy "to move beyond what is perceived as a debilitating way of framing what it means to be human: the postmodern perspective of subjectivity" (ibid, p. 13). It is a strategy by which the fictional subject "re-humanizes" him-, or herself – and represents a shift from a solipsistic towards a more *relational* understanding and performance of self-identity (ibid, p. 46).

Similarly, indie-folk narratives represent a relational understanding of self-identity as arising out of social interaction. In times of – and potentially due to – experiences of discordance they, like the stories written by authors like David Foster Wallace, become tools in coping with the feeling of being fractured and fragmented (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). The appropriation of these stories is indicative of the ability of individuals (rich in cultural capital) to navigate through a multiplicity of story worlds, and to integrate narrative particles into their evolving life-stories. Simultaneously, it indicates that self-narratives are increasingly mediated by popular culture, producing typically American stories revolving around the notion of a "redemptive self" (McAdams, 2006).[5]

While markers of postmodernity, like the fragmentation of the self, have probably characterized other historical epochs as well, it has been argued that people in previous periods were capable of *responding* to the experience of life as incoherent by "constructing an affective unity around specific ideological terms" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 223). The advent of postmodernity represents a crisis in our ability to respond to this experience, as it is characterized by "the increasingly distant and precarious relations between affect on the one hand and ideology and desire on the other" (ibid, p. 221) The reemergence of folk music should be seen as a response to this crisis. It represents the emergence of a popular narrative with which individuals are able to re-anchor affect and to re-articulate commitment – to the self, the environment, and the community. The search for minor narratives that imagine a place of belonging is exemplary, perhaps, for the story of 'folks' in contemporary modernity.

5. Although it should be added that most of contemporary indie-folk musicians, as well as their audiences, are highly aware of the downside of the American dream and express their critique by emphasizing the dark-side, the zones in-between identities, and the continuous disruption of any particular (life) story.

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O Brother, Where Art Thou?, Joel and Ethan Coen, Buena Vista Pictures, 2000.

Appendix 1: overview of interviewees and their occupational and educational status[1]

	Name	Age	Residency	Profession	Education
1	David	52	Amsterdam	Documentary maker / journalist	Journalism
2	Menke	31	Bro (Czech Republic)	IT specialist	MA Roman Language and Culture studies
3	Robert	23	Utrecht	Student	University College (liberal arts and science)
4	Zende	25	Rotterdam	Student	BA Arts and Culture studies
5	Matthijs	26	Rotterdam	Student	MA Arts and Culture studies
6	Mink	27	Rotterdam	Musician/student	Arts and Culture studies
7	Frans	20	Terheijden	Student	High school
8	Stephanie	23	Leiden	Student	MA University (Greek language and culture studies)
9	Jamie	38	Amsterdam	Web designer	BA Fine Arts
10	Peter	22	Amsterdam	Student	Graphic Design (vocational)
11	Nick	53	's-Gravendeel	Chemical analyst	MA Chemistry
12	Rikke	33	Rotterdam	Musician	Art Academy
13	Jacco	35	Utrecht	Freelance journalist	MA Journalism
14	Rolof	30	Utrecht	Healthcare social worker	University of Applied Sciences (social work)
15	Tessa	28	Huis ter Heide	Musician/music teacher	Conservatory
16	Sjacquo	55	Utrecht	Statistical analyst	MA Mathematics
17	Esther	29	Groningen	Visual artist	MA language studies
18	Peter	26	Arnhem	Student	Art Academy (dance)
19	Wouter	34	Capelle a/d Ijssel	Software engineer	MA Technical Informatics
20	Maarten	34	Enschede	IT specialist /entrepreneur	University of Applied Sciences
21	Line	57	Rotterdam	Visual artist/technician	Art Academy
22	Sophie	23	Apeldoorn	Student	MA arts and culture studies
23	Mark	37	Utrecht	-	MA New Media and Digital Culture
24	Bas	48	Amsterdam	International booker / agent	-
25	Tonnie	40	Middelburg	Musician/music curator	-
26	Peter	37	Berlin	Music curator Independent music and art festival	-
27	Danny	24	Utrecht	Musician	Pop Academy
28	Samgar	30	Utrecht	Musician	Pop Academy
29	Geert	38	Leeuwarden	Musician	University (Philosophy)
30	Pierre	40	Utrecht	Functional specialist	MA Business Administration
31	Julie	25	Oostvoorne	Salesperson	MA Cultural Economics
32	Ronald	41	De Bilt	Visual artist / lecturer	Art Academy
33	Djurre	36	Amsterdam	Musician	Research Master Linguistics
34	Rik	40	Utrecht	Healthcare worker	MA Anthropology
35	Harmen	31	Groningen	Musician	-
36	Heta	28	Groningen	Musician	-
37	Otto	36	Amsterdam	Musician	MA Language Studies
38	Stefan	30	Utrecht	Musician / marketer	University of Applied Sciences
39	Kim	-	Utrecht	Musician	-
40	Harm	43	Rotterdam	Musician / visual artist	Art Academy
41	Renske	29	Amsterdam	Visual artist	Art Academy
42	Wouter	38	Groningen	Employee customer service	BA Dutch Language and Culture studies
43	Mijke	28	Groningen	Student	Pop Academy
44	Atze	37	Utrecht	Journalist / editor in chief independent music platform	Journalism
45	Anton	45	Amsterdam	Head buyer music store	Teacher Education
46	Ferry	-	Amsterdam	Independent label owner	Journalism
47	Don	42		Productmanager major music label	-
48	Loes	-	Amsterdam	Head business operations Independent Music and Art Platform	MA Cultural Studies
49	Michel	43	Den Haag	Festival Director / programmer	Medicine
50	Robert	41	Nijmegen	Programmer Music Venue	Cultural and social education

1. Some data are missing from this table as they were either not provided by respondents or were missing from the interview manuscripts.

Appendix 2: Topic list and interview questions[2]

Thank you for participating in this research

1. Short introduction research topic
2. Short explanation interview procedure

The concert (occasion where we met and decision for participating in research)

1. Did you like the concert?
2. Did you visit more concerts in the meantime?
3. Which ones? By whom? Did you like them?
4. Do you visit indie-folk concerts oftentimes?
5. Do you also visit concerts from acts that are associated with other genres? Why (not)?
6. What kind of concerts do you purposely avoid going to? Why?

Definition folk music

1. Who are your favorite folk acts?
2. You did you get to know these?
3. Which folk acts do you not like (so much)? Why?
4. What is 'folk' music, according to you? How would you describe the music?
5. What is it not? What is the difference between 'folk' and other genres?
6. What are the most important criteria for you for an act or band to be considered folk? When does a folk act play 'real' folk music?
7. What are the most important criteria for you for music to be considered 'real' folk music?
8. Are there acts that are currently labeled 'folk' but which, according to you, are actually not playing folk music?
9. Are there 'classical' folk music albums that should be included in any music collection? Which albums are these?
10. What are, according to you, the most prominent folk acts of today?

Musical taste formation

1. When did you started to become familiar with folk music?
2. When did this occur?
3. Who was involved in thus (family, friends, internet)?
4. What is, in folk music, that got your attention? Why did you like it?

Function of (folk) music in everyday life

1. What is it that attracts you to the genre of folk music?

    Proxy's, if respondents do not mention them by themselves:
    - Music itself? (characteristics?)
    - Musicians? (characteristics?)
    - Lyrics? Stories? (examples?
    - Style / clothing / symbols (examples?)

2. Interviews were originally in Dutch; questions have been translated by the author.

- Politics / idealism? (examples?)
- Authenticity? (what is authentic folk?)
- Nostalgia? (what is nostalgia? why important?)

2. What if I asked you to keep track of your musical behavior for one day and write things down in a diary – how would your day look like?

Proxy's:
- How often would you listen to (folk) music?
- What moments of the day?
- How? (digitally, cd-player, vinyl?)
- With whom? (individually, with other people, combination of both?)
- Do you talk about folk music with other people, for example friends?
- When, and what do you and your friends discuss?
- Do you share music with other people, both online and offline?
- How and through which kind of online channels?

3. What if you would visit a concert that day?

- How do you prepare for the concert?
- Would you take someone with you? Who?
- Who takes the initiative to visit a concert? You? Friends? Family?
- How do you experience the concert? (are you part of the crowd or more at a distance?)
- What do you do after the concert?

4. Do you also buy (folk) music?

- What do you buy? What not?
- What influences your decision to buy?
- What do you prefer? Digital – cd – vinyl?
- Why is it (not) important to 'own' music?
- What is the value of buying / owning music?

5. Do you play music yourself? Why (not)?

- What kind of music do you play?
- When did you decide to start playing music yourself?
- Which musicians are sources of inspiration?
- Do you also perform music in live-settings?
- Do you share music online?
- How does this work? What kind of online platforms? Do you have a (large) audience?

7. Does (folk) music influences certain elements in your (everyday) life?

Proxy's:
- For example the way you look?
- What kind of clothes you prefer (to buy)?
- Your outlook on life and society?
- Politics?

Cultural preferences and practices outside of (folk) music

1. What kind of cultural activities do you undertake alongside (folk) music? (examples?)
2. When do you decide to go to a museum, theatre, opera, etc.?
3. How do you get information about those kinds of cultural activities?
4. Is 'arts and culture' an important part of your life?
5. What are favorite television programs?
    - Do you often watch television?
    - When do you watch television?
    - How much? On TV or through Internet?
6. What kinds of activities do you undertake online?
    - Are you often online?
    - Would you be able to live without Internet / mobile phone?
    - What do you do (and not do) online?
7. What is you favorite type of food? Why?
    - Where do you buy your foods?
    - Do you also go out for dinner? Where (not)?
8. What are you political preferences?
    - What is, according to you, the most important political event of the last 15-20 years?
9. What are the three most important values in life?
10. What are issues in current events that worry you?

Personal information

- Age
- Occupation
- Educational level
- Educational level parents
- Place of residency

Thank you for participating and short explanation of what will follow after the interview

Appendix 3

Figure 6.1. Visual representation of how audience members define indie-folk: The labels 'ELECTRONIC MUSIC', 'MAINSTREAM' and the ones at the bottom left contradict indie-folk; the rest of the labels are associated with the genre

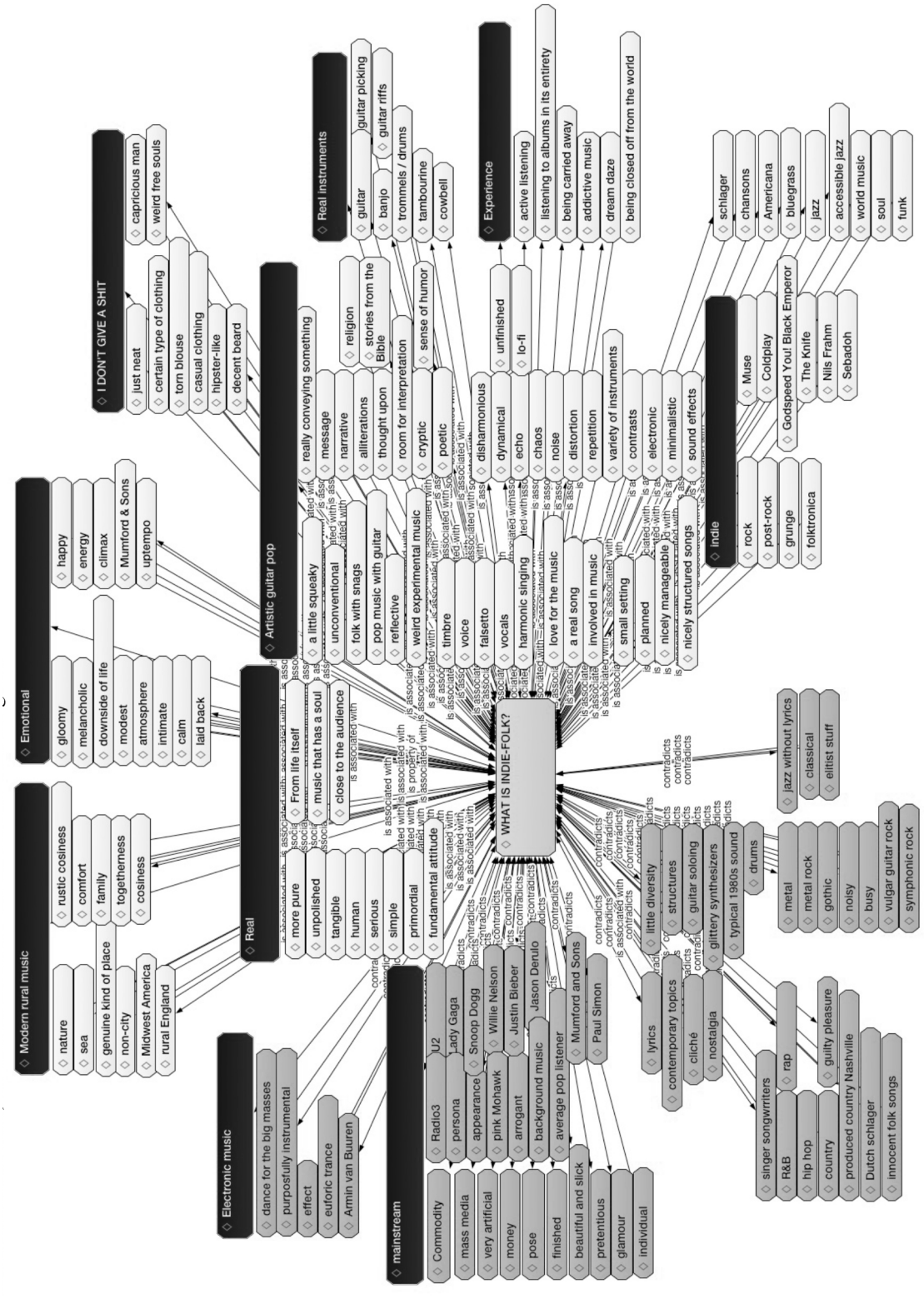


Figure 6.2. Visual representation of how musicians define indie-folk: The labels 'HYPE', 'DANCE' and the ones at the bottom left contradict indie-folk; the rest of the labels are associated with the genre

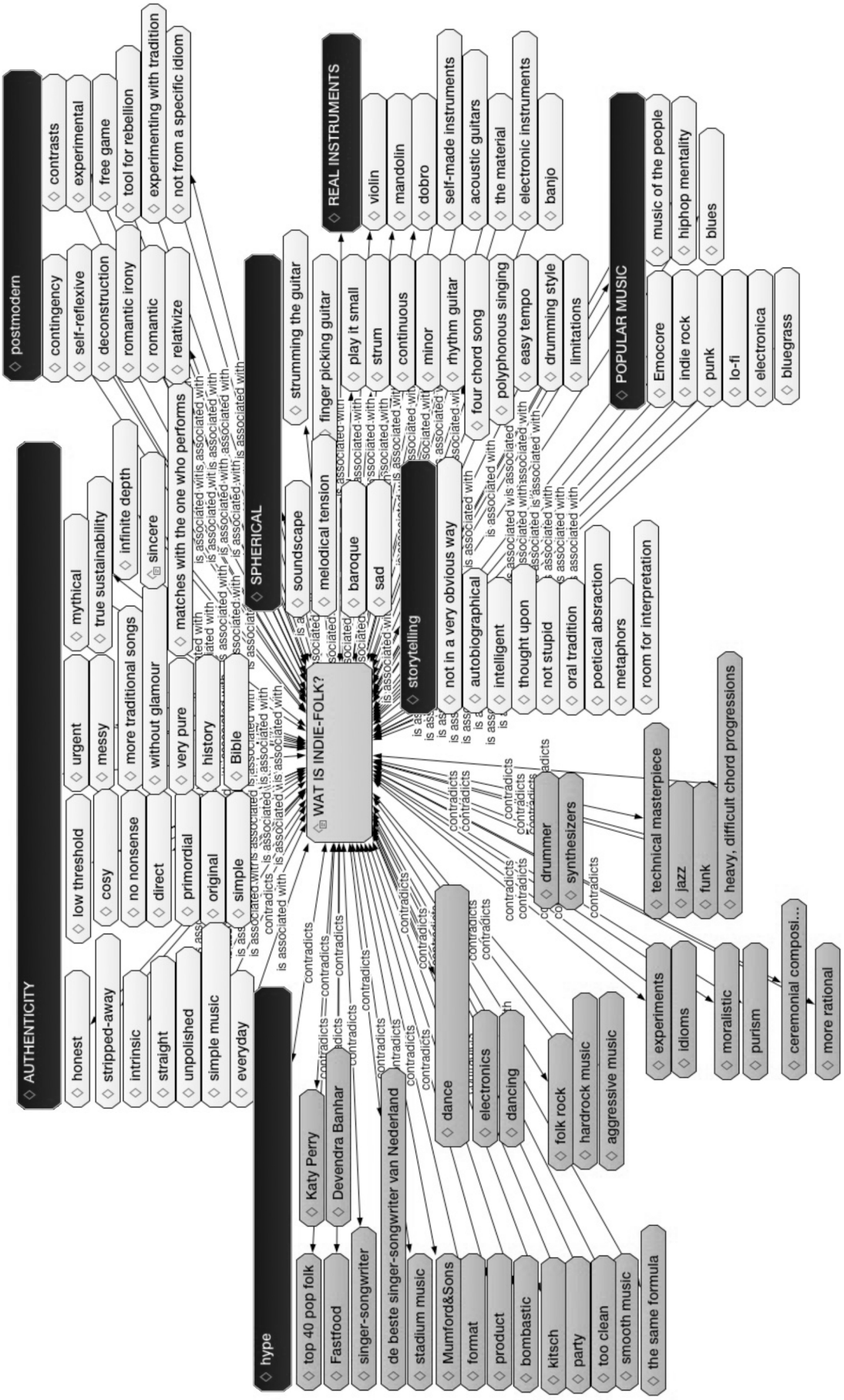
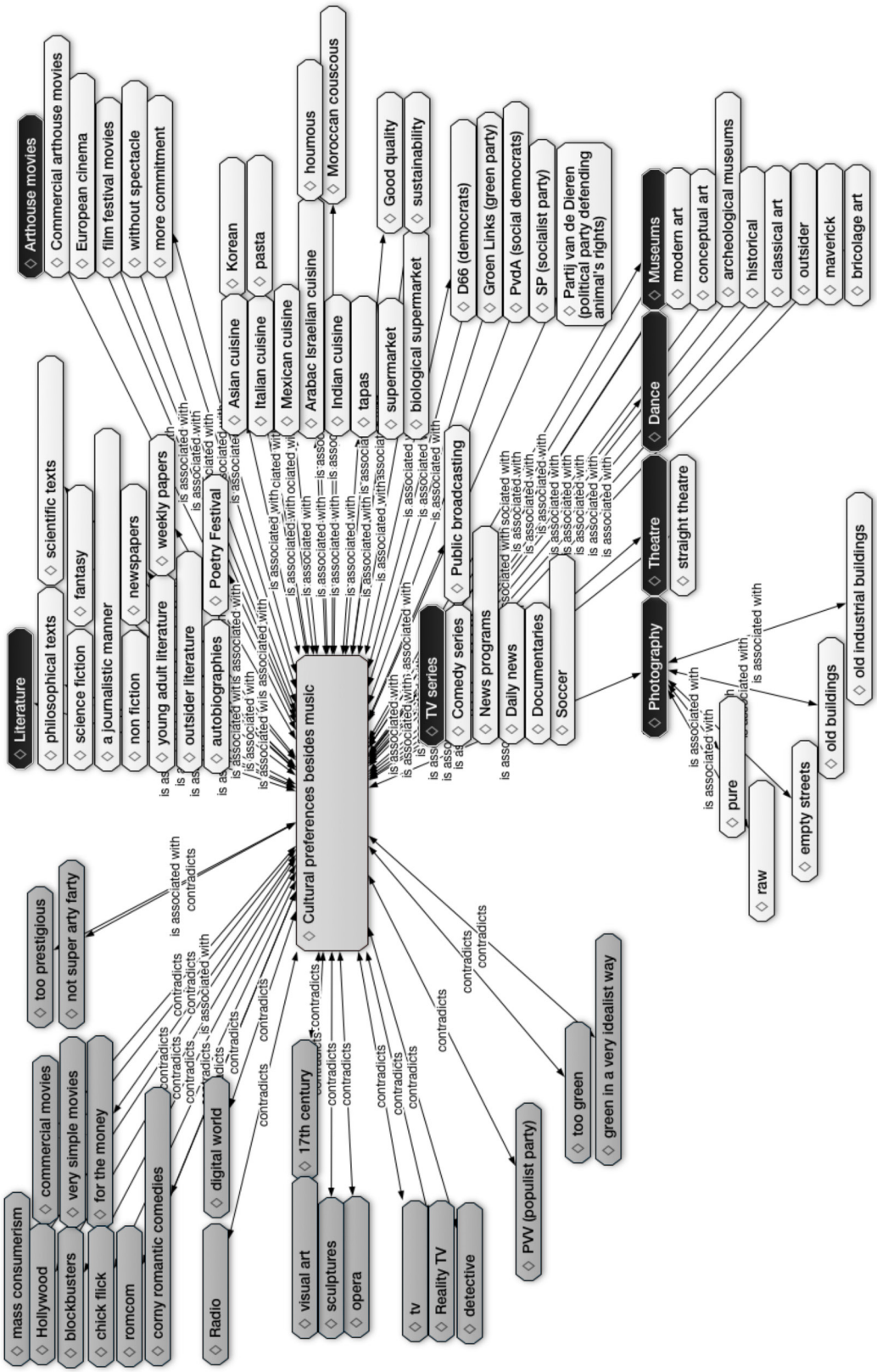


Figure 6.3.: Visual representation of 'broader' cultural and political preferences (and dislikes) of audience members



English summary

In December, 2012, the London-based indie-folk band Mumford and Sons was framed "the biggest band in the world" (Lamont, 2012). Taking into account that this labeling was mainly based on record-sales, that seems a valid statement. While their first studio album *Sigh No More* (2009) went multiple platinum (selling around 2,5 million copies world-wide), the group's second studio-album *Babel* (2012) sold a million copies in the first week of its release in October, 2012, hitting the number one position in both the U.S., the U.K., and the Netherlands. According to Spotify (Billboard, 2012), users streamed it "around eight million times" in the first seven days of its release. In doing so, Mumford and Sons echoed the international sales success of The Kingston Trio in the late 1950s, foregrounding the so-called "urban folk revival" (Rosenberg, 1993) in the early-to-mid 1960s.

'Folk' was the term used by the American music industry to launch a brushed off popular song genre in the late-1950s teenage market as a sophisticated alternative to rock 'n' roll dance songs and sentimental ballads that had climbed hit parades (Ennis, 1992). Roughly between 1958, when The Kingston Trio launched their version of the traditional folk song "Tom Dooley" and sold millions of copies, and 1965, when Bob Dylan 'went electric' at the New Port Folk Festival, folk music was a popular genre of music alongside jazz and rock 'n' roll. Bob Dylan foregrounded the heydays of rock music, causing folk music to go underground.

However, ever since the early 1990s folk music has made a comeback. The sons and daughters of the post-war generation once again revive folk music, or combine their passion for folk music with other, more contemporary genres like punk, hip-hop, free-jazz, pop, electronic music, and more (Keenan, 2003). They taught themselves to play the banjo, the guitar and the mandolin through YouTube tutorials; men started to grow a folk beard, and by adding layers to traditional folk music they constructed new genres.

The new labels are hyphenated, as in "free-folk", "freak-folk", "indie-folk" and "folk-pop", and refer to Americana and electronics as in "New Weird America", "American Primitivism" or "folktronica" (Petrusisch, 2008; Leech, 2010; Encarnacao, 2013). In ways similar to the 1960s urban folk revival – that is, through live performance, mass mediation and sales successes – the genre of indie-folk or folk-pop gained momentum around 2005/2006 with acts such as Fleet Foxes, The Lumineers, alt-J, Jake Bugg, and most of all Mumford and Sons, who became the genre's spearheads.

With indie-folk becoming an industry-based genre (Lena, 2012) around 2006, musicians, gatekeepers and audiences in the Netherlands started to become familiar with the genre and, similar to their 1960s counterparts, initiated their own version of the latest folk revival. The Netherlands is a relatively small European country with a population of 17.1 million people (CBS, 2017). It is located at the semi-periphery of the global music market, with the scope of music industry activities generally oriented toward global trends in pop music (Hitters & Van de Kamp, 2010). The transition of global music into a national context also holds for contemporary folk music: as this research points out, the global phenomenon of indie-folk has resulted in the formation of (trans)local scenes (Bennett & Peterson, 2004), fan-driven entrepreneurial activities, scene-driven industries, and a national market for indie-folk.

Research questions

In this research I investigate *how and why folk music reemerged as an industry-based genre and regained momentum in the Dutch music industry.* This results in the following subquestions:

1. What are factors affording the reemergence and re-popularization of indie-folk in the Netherlands?
2. To what extent, how and why is indie-folk institutionalized within the Dutch music industry?

As this research centers analysis both on how Dutch indie-folk practitioners (musicians, gatekeepers, and audiences) define indie-folk as an authentic object, and on how indie-folk is used in everyday life and, more specifically, in the formation of self-identity (that is to say, the subjective dimension of authenticity):

3. What is the role of indie-folk in the formation of self-identity among members of the Dutch indie-folk audience?

And finally – in terms of investigating the link between 'indie-folk' and 'society':

4. What is the link between the formation of indie-folk and broader social dynamics, specifically in regards to the re-popularization of folk music after the 'death' of (social) authenticity in post- or late modernity?

Indie-folk in times of retromania

The current folk revival, as it is grounded in a romantic ethic and aesthetics, is remarkable in the light of a late modern or postmodern discourse in which the concept of authenticity has been problematized or even discarded. It is believed that, due to increasing (aesthetic) reflexivity, more 'naive' and 'romanticist' constructions of "social authenticity" have disappeared. This refers to a form of authenticity, associated mostly with folk and rock music, grounded in the "expression of a magically dense community" (Fornäs, 1995, p. 276) and associated with democratic values of egalitarianism, connectivity and participation.

Scholars who have studied authenticity within the framework of "reflexive modernization" (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994) have argued that, after the emergence of 'self-conscious' genres like post-punk, avant-garde rock, hip-hop, and pop in the late-1970s and early-to-mid 1980s, musical creations and performances could no longer be fabricated by 'denial of the economy' (Bourdieu, 1993a) and consequently started to revolve around constructions of 'honesty'. By incorporating aesthetic features such as irony, pastiche, and parody into popular music practices, the music industry started to produce "reflexive objects" (Lash, 1994, p. 138) so that audiences were able to grasp the artificial nature of popular music productions and performances. These genres became the manifestation of postmodernism in popular culture, creating a rift between the 'true' folk authenticity of the past and the self-consciously constructed, but therewith 'honest', pop authenticity of the present. According to music critic Simon Reynolds (2011), this is a point in history at which popular music is caught into a 'cage' and starts to suffer from "retromania", the continuous recycling of the past. In times of retromania, popular music is no longer able to get *past* the past and history, hence, starts to (rep)eat itself.

In this thesis I develop a different argument. By combining insights developed within the production of culture-perspective (Peterson & Anand, 2004) with insights developed within practice theory (e.g., Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Sauvigny, 2001), I argue that the dismissal of (social) authenticity by postmodern theory is premature. Though the social construction of indie-folk is nostalgic and could thus be framed as a symptom of retromania, I develop the argument that the reemergence and re-popularization of folk music is a strategy of a new generation of musicians, gatekeepers, and audiences to *respond* to postmodern, that is to, to offer revisions of the more 'flat' and 'self-reflexive' manifestation of authenticity characteristic of postmodernism as the cultural logic of postmodernity (Jameson, 1991). The formation of this strategy is most clearly expressed by the return to values typical of Romanticism, most notably purity, sincerity, 'expressivism' and community; as well as to typical romantic stylistics such as the metaphor, the symbol, and the fragment. As such, the emergence of indie-folk is part of the "neoromantic turn" in the arts and cultural industries of the first decade of the twenty-first century, which has been framed as a strategy to move beyond postmodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a).

Chapter overview, results and general conclusions

This Ph.D. thesis consists of two theoretical chapters (chapters 2 and 3), one historical intermezzo (chapter 4) and three empirical chapters (chapters 5, 6 and 7).

In *chapter 2* I describe how a 'folk consciousness' originates in Romanticism, a 'cultural shift' occurring in early nineteenth century Europe. Specific attention is paid to answering the questions how and why folk music, ever since romanticism, is associated with the notion of authenticity and associated tropes such as simplicity, purity, and community. Building upon the works of Denisoff (1971) and Roy (2010), I furthermore demonstrate how the link between European Romanticism and American folk music was established during the first American folk project of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. At this time, the European project of nation-state building was imported to the U.S. to contribute to debates on race inequality. As a consequence, the second American folk project of the 1930s and 1940s, institutionally embedded within the setting of the Marxist and communist movements, was a reaction against the original American folk project and redefined folk music as a "real life reflection of real people" (Roy, 2010, p. 3). It is this interpretation of folk music that foregrounded the emergence of the 1960s "urban folk revival", which marked a point in time during which folk

music transitioned from being a vehicle in the expression of radical political conscious into a form of art music.

In *chapter 3* I first set out the debate of postmodernism in popular music, as it was established in the early-to-mid 1990s by cultural theorists such as Lawrence Grossberg (1992) and Johan Fornäs (1995). Accordingly, I argue that the dismissal of romanticist conceptions of authenticity by this particular branch of postmodern theory is premature by outlining the contours of the "neo-romantic turn" in the art worlds and culture industries of the 2000s and 2010s, as it was developed in a contemporary theoretical debate on "post-postmodernism" and the "new authenticity" (Haselstein, Gross & Snyder-Körber, 2009; Timmer, 2010; Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a). A review of this debate is meant as a stepping-stone to the presentation of the empirical findings in chapters 5-7, in which I – after a short intermezzo of the history of folk music in the 21st century (*chapter 4*) – demonstrate that a romanticist aesthetic extends in contemporary indie-folk.

In *chapter 5* I show how contemporary indie-folk pays tribute to the participatory ethos and aesthetics of folk music. On the basis of 48 in-depth interviews with Dutch indie-folk musicians, gatekeepers, and audiences I describe how they adopt an anti-capitalist stance and in doing so ground themselves in the romantic aesthetic ideology of (American) folk music. Contrary to the image of folk music as the antithesis of industrialization and technological development, I argue that one of the factors affording the public reemergence of folk music is *digitization*. I argue that the social production of indie folk is affected by a shift towards "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006) brought about by the rise of Web 2.0. It is noted how Web 2.0 helps musicians to educate themselves and to develop careers in popular music. Second, from the perspective of both musicians and gatekeepers, I demonstrate how participatory culture links their preferences for participatory aesthetics, decreasing boundaries between creators, distributors, and users. Finally, from the perspective of the audience, I describe how consumers actively contribute to the production of indie-folk by self-organizing small-scale events, enabling the establishment of (trans)local scenes, reframing music as a social experience. Along with Van Rooden (2015ab) and Haselstein *et al.* (2009), I argue that the emergence of indie-folk as a genre reflects a typically romanticist, that is, *relational* understanding of autonomy, emphasized by the way community members celebrate participation over presentation, and sincerity over authenticity.

In *chapter 6* I critically examine the participatory ethos of the Dutch indie-folk community by conduction a Bourdieusian field analysis of contemporary indie-folk and by arguing that underlying the participatory ethos of indie-folk lies an exclusionary political agenda of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). I show how the social construction of indie-folk as a genre is part of the qualitative shift from snobbism to cultural omnivorousness as a marker of high-status (e.g., Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Van Eijck, 2001). I specifically demonstrate how contemporary musicians, distributors and consumers are so-called "poly-purists" (Goldberg, Hannan and Kovács, 2016) – a type of cultural omnivores who consume a broad variety of genres, yet by cherry picking within those genres those items that are considered to be more 'pure' or authentic. By consuming music by means of the "aesthetic disposition" (Bourdieu, 1984), indie-folk is distinguished from music that is considered to be snobbish (e.g., jazz), populist (e.g., *Schlager*), and commercial (e.g., pop and dance).

In *chapter 7* I investigate the consumption of indie-folk by audience members, particularly how indie-folk contributes to the formation of self-identity. In this chapter I specifically demonstrate that the lyrics of indie-folk songs are both tools and resources in the construction of "narrative identity" (e.g., Ricoeur, 1988[1985]). I, for example, show how the consumption of indie-folk results in ritualistic listening behavior aimed at coping with the experience of accelerating social time; how respondents use indie-folk narratives as resources for reading the 'me' in life (DeNora, 2000), and how indie-folk songs provide healing images that are effective in coping with the experience of narrated time as discordant. In arguing for the central role of narrative in identity formation, this chapter contributes to existing research on music as a "technology of the self" (DeNora, 1999). It specifically emphasizes how narrative particles are building blocks in the construction of narrative identity, a process characterized by the oscillation between narrative coherence and disruption. In doing so, this chapter contributes to existing empirical research on the construction of self-identity in the postmodern condition and illustrates the integrative power of narrative, which seems to enable people to cope with (increasing) experiences of discordance and narrative fragmentation (Gergen, 1991).

In the general conclusion and discussion (*chapter 8*) I summarize and synthesize the results of this thesis and reflect on how the return of (social) authenticity in indie-folk is related to changes in the art worlds and cultural industries as well as to changes in wider society. I specifically argue that the emergence and popularization of indie-folk is a manifestation of metamodernism (Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010a) in contemporary modernity. It is constructed by a dominant social group in society (part of a generation born in the heydays of postmodernity and belonging to the cultural upper (middle) class in Dutch society), who, although without critiquing postmodernism explicitly, seem to have re-appropriated modernist aesthetics as a means to show off their discontent with aspects of postmodernity, including

irony, individualization, and the commodification and mediatization of everyday life. I argue that metamodernism manifests itself both at the production and consumption side of the indie-folk genre, and pay attention to the cultural power of indie-folk (Griswold, 1987). Finally, I demonstrate how this research contributes to current and ongoing debates within the sociology of arts and culture, more specifically within the sociology of (popular) music, and related fields such as aesthetics, philosophy, narrative psychology, sociology, and literary theory. I specifically turn focus on the question whether habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) is still a practice-unifying and practice-generating principle and draw final conclusions about how this dissertation contributes to the discussion of the fragmentation of the self; specifically on how narrative could be seen as a mechanism with which 'folks' in contemporary modernity are able to cope with experiences of discordance.

Nederlandse samenvatting

In December 2012 werd de Londense band Mumford and Sons uitgeroepen tot de grootste band ter wereld. Gezien hun verkoopsucces is dat een te verdedigen stellingname. Terwijl hun eerste album *Sigh No More* (2009) wereldwijd 2,5 miljoen keer over de toonbank ging, werden van hun tweede album *Babel* (2012) al meer dan 1 miljoen exemplaren verkocht in de eerste week van de albumrelease. Daarmee noteerden ze een nummer 1-notering in de Amerikaanse, Britse en Nederlandse hitparades en evenaarde de indie-folk band het commerciële succes van het uit Boston afkomstige The Kingston Trio, die eind jaren '50 een wereldhit scoorden met hun versie van de traditional "Tom Dooley".

Met het succes van Mumford and Sons en gelijkaardige acts als Bon Iver, Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros, alt-J en Jake Bugg groeide folk muziek in het eerste decennium van het nieuwe millennium uit tot een commercieel fenomeen; volgens de Amerikaanse popmuzieksocioloog William G. Roy (2010) een oxymoron, aangezien het genre historische wortels heeft in de Amerikaanse Marxistische en communistische politieke bewegingen en daardoor altijd een problematische verhouding heeft gehad met het commerciële segment van de muziekindustrie en met de opkomst van de westerse consumptiesamenleving in het algemeen.

Daarnaast is de hernieuwde aandacht voor en interesse in folk muziek opmerkelijk, gezien het feit dat binnen meer postmoderne academische kringen scherpe kritiek is uitgeoefend op de romantische constructie van authenticiteit. Met de wetenschap dat 'authenticiteit' een sociale constructie is, zorgvuldig gefabriceerd door *gatekeepers* die opereren vanuit het (economische) belang van de media en de muziekindustrie, werd het concept authenticiteit door postmoderne academici tussen aanhalingstekens geplaatst. Specifiek voor het onderwerp van deze dissertatie betekende dit, dat het als naïef werd beschouwd dat folk muziek de individualistische en door (massa)media gedomineerde postmoderne samenleving op utopische wijze zou kunnen omvormen tot een wereld die gebaseerd is op meer humanistische idealen van gemeenschappelijkheid, duurzaamheid, inclusiviteit, en participatie. Met de postmoderne kritiek op het grote verhaal van de *Summer of Love* – dit jaar precies 50 jaar geleden – boette, met andere woorden, ook het geloof in de utopische idealen van de folk muziek aan overtuigingskracht in. Hoe kunnen we de hernieuwde opkomst en populariserings van folk muziek dan verklaren?

Onderzoeksvragen en aanpak

In deze dissertatie onderzoek ik, op basis van 48 diepte-interviews met Nederlandse indie-folk muzikanten, gatekeepers (o.a. programmeurs, journalisten en eigenaars en/of werknemers van platenlabels) en consumenten, hoe en waarom folk muziek, normaliter een genre dat zich onder de radar van de 'mainstream' begeeft, wederom uit kon groeien tot een commercieel fenomeen? Ik onderzoek deze vraag binnen de context van Nederland, een relatief klein Europees land met een populatie van 17,1 miljoen mensen (CBS, 2017) en een muziekindustrie die zich karakteriseert door invloeden vanuit de Anglo-Amerikaanse muziekindustrue te domesticeren (Hitters & Van de Kamp, 2010). De domesticatie van Amerikaanse en Britse indie-folk binnen een Nederlandse context is het geval sinds 2005/2006, toen indie-folk uitgroeide tot een internationaal commercieel fenomeen. De hoofdvraag van deze dissertatie resulteert dan ook in de volgende vier deelvragen:

1. Wat zijn de factoren die ten grondslag liggen aan de opkomst en hernieuwde populariserings van folk muziek in Nederland?
2. In hoeverre, hoe en waarom is indie-folk geïnstitutionaliseerd geraakt binnen de Nederlandse muziekindustrie?

Aangezien dit onderzoek zich niet alleen richt op het onderzoeken van hoe en waarom muzikanten, distributeurs en consumenten indie-folk tot een authentiek 'object' maken, maar ook op de rol die indie-folk speelt (naast andere vormen van popmuziek) in het alledaagse leven van consumenten en meer specifiek in de constructie van hun persoonlijke identiteit:

3. Wat is de rol van indie-folk in de constructie van persoonlijke identiteit?

En ten slotte, wanneer het gaat om het onderzoeken van de relaties tussen de opkomst van indie-folk enerzijds en veranderingen binnen de muziekindustrie en samenleving anderzijds:

4. Wat is de link tussen de opkomst en re-popularisering van folk muziek enerzijds en veranderingen binnen de samenleving anderzijds – meer specifiek: hoe kunnen we de opkomst en re-popularisering van folk en haar romantische authenticiteitsconstructie begrijpen binnen de context van een postmodern discours waarbinnen de notie van een romantische authenticiteit geproblematiseerd, zo niet doodverklaard is?

Ik tracht deze vragen te beantwoorden door gebruik te maken van de Culturele Diamant (Griswold, 1994; Alexander, 2003) als heuristisch model. De Culturele Diamant is een metafoor die veronderstelt dat veranderingen binnen de kunsten (popmuziek inclusief) een spiegel is van veranderingen binnen de samenleving. De Culturele Diamant veronderstelt echter tegelijkertijd dat kunst niet een directe reflectie is van (veranderingen binnen) de samenleving, maar dat deze reflectie wordt vervormd, namelijk door groepen die kunst produceren, distribueren en consumeren vanuit specifieke sociale motieven. Op gelijkaardige wijze onderzoek ik in deze dissertatie hoe de opkomst en hernieuwde popularisering van folk muziek een 'reflectie' is van veranderingen binnen de samenleving. Specifiek richt ik me daarbij op de vraag hoe de hernieuwde (massale) interesse voor folk muziek mogelijk verband houdt met de meer algemene zoektocht naar authenticiteit, die we buiten de popmuziek ook kunnen aanschouwen binnen sociale domeinen zoals film, televisie, literatuur, mode, new age religie, reclame, architectuur en de voedingsindustrie (zie voor een overzicht: Aupers, Houtman & Roeland, 2010). Met andere woorden: wat zijn mogelijke relaties tussen de opkomst en popularisering van indie-folk enerzijds en anderzijds de opkomst van de Hipster (Michael, 2015), het gentrificeren van oude, industriële stadswijken (o.a. Cameron & Coaffee, 2005) en de hernieuwde aandacht voor vakmanschap (o.a. Van Tuinen, forthcoming) en het biologisch en ecologisch verantwoord produceren en consumeren van levensmiddelen?

Hoofdstukindeling

De dissertatie bestaat in totaal uit acht hoofdstukken. Naast een inleiding en conclusie houdt dat in: twee hoofdstukken die tezamen het theoretisch kader van het onderzoek vormen, een historisch intermezzo over folk muziek in Nederland en de popularisering van folk in het nieuwe millennium, en drie hoofdstukken waarin naast aanvullende theorie de empirische resultaten van de dissertatie worden gepresenteerd en bediscussieerd.

In hoofdstuk 1 (de inleiding) presenteer ik het onderwerp, de onderzoeksvragen en de doelstellingen van dit onderzoek. Tevens besteed ik ruim aandacht aan de theoretische fundering van de gebruikte methodologie, wat een combinatie is van inzichten voortgekomen uit het *production of culture*-perspectief (o.a. Peterson & Anand, 2004) en de *practice theory*-benadering (o.a. Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & Von Savigny, 2001).

De hoofdstukken 2 en 3 vormen tezamen het theoretisch kader van dit onderzoek. In hoofdstuk 2 onderzoek ik hoe de relatie tussen folk muziek en authenticiteit historisch gegroeid is, een onderzoek dat resulteert in een uiteenzetting van de opkomst van de Europese Romantiek aan het einde van de achttiende en het begin negentiende eeuw. Specifiek besteed ik daarbij aandacht aan de specifieke definitie die romantische als Friedrich Schiller en Friedrich Schlegel aan het begrip 'autonomie' gaven. Volgens hen was het namelijk niet alleen de rol van kunst om naar 'binnen' te keren (als *l'art pour l'art*), maar om een kleine afspiegeling te zijn van een wereld die niet gefragmenteerd is door industrialisatie en arbeidsdeling. Eenzelfde idee van 'relationele autonomie' (Van Rooden, 2015ab) – een kunst die relaties aangaat met de bredere samenleving – zien we heden ten dage terug in de Nederlandse indie-folk gemeenschap.

Vervolgens wordt op basis van het werk van Roy (2010) en Denisoff (1971) uiteengezet hoe het romantische project omtrent de 'esthetische opvoeding van de mens' (Schiller, 2004[1794-95]) een relevant politiek project werd in de V.S. en hoe aldaar 'folk' uitgroeide, eerst tot een politiek project (gedragen door de Marxistische en communistische politieke bewegingen) en vervolgens tot een popmuziekgenre. Als genre kreeg Amerikaanse folk mondiale bekendheid eind jaren '50 tijdens de zogenaamde "urban folk revival" (Rosenberg, 1993), een moment waarop folk tevens gelegitimeerd werd als kunstvorm door de meer formalistische en experimentele aanpak van *revivalists* als Dave Van Ronk en Bob Dylan.

In hoofdstuk 3 zet ik uiteen hoe de opkomst van een postmoderne samenleving en een bijbehorende postmoderne filosofie de constructie en legitimatie van een romantische authenticiteit onmogelijk maakte. Specifiek besteed ik aandacht aan de kritiek van de Britse muziekcriticus Simon Reynolds, die in zijn recente boek *Retromania: Pop culture's addiction to its own past* (2011) de stelling poneert dat alle vormen van popmuziek momenteel lijden aan wat hij noemt 'retromanie', een ziekelijke obsessie met het eigen verleden. Hierdoor is popmuziek (indie-folk incluis) niet langer meer origineel en authentiek, maar steeds meer nostalgisch, een ziekte

waaraan postmoderne kunst – met haar fascinatie voor alles wat retro, pastiche of parodie is – in het algemeen lijdt. Ik lever kritiek op dit werk door te beweren dat Reynolds zelf lijdt aan een vorm van retromanie, namelijk door van hedendaagse popmuziek te verlangen dat zij net zo origineel moet zijn als de muziek uit het recente verleden – én door te beweren dat indie-folk geen postmoderne pastiche is, maar eerder een genre dat is geconstrueerd *als reactie op* het postmodernisme als kunstvorm en op kenmerken van de postmoderniteit in het algemeen.

Na een kort intermezzo (in hoofdstuk 4) over de opkomst en popularisering van folk sinds begin jaren '90 (zowel in de V.S., het V.K. als in Nederland) presenteer ik in de hoofdstukken 5, 6 en 7 de empirische resultaten van dit onderzoek.

In hoofdstuk 5 besteed ik aandacht aan belangrijke factoren die ten grondslag liggen de opkomst van nieuwe folk-genres. Ik beargumenteer specifiek dat digitalisering een belangrijke rol heeft gespeeld in de opkomst van nieuwe folk. Hoewel folk muziek van oudsher gezien wordt als de tegenpool van technologische vooruitgang, beweer ik dat de opkomst van het Internet, en met name de opkomst van Web 2.0, de drempels heeft verlaagd voor muzikanten om muziek te produceren en voor consumenten om muziek te distribueren via de organisatie van kleinschalige evenementen. Met de Amerikaanse mediatheoreticus Henry Jenkins (2006) beweer ik dat de opkomst van indie-folk mede gedragen wordt door de opkomst van een (online) participatiecultuur; hoewel indie-folk daar eerder een 'offline' manifestatie van is. De nieuwe manieren van DIY-produceren en consumeren, mogelijk gemaakt door Web 2.0, sluit naadloos aan bij de ethiek (en esthetiek) van folk, waarin de notie van (publieks)participatie en democratische idealen zoals egalitarisme, gemeenschappelijkheid en connectiviteit altijd centraal hebben gestaan. Zo lijkt de opkomst van een nieuwe technologie, zoals in de geschiedenis van de popmuziek al vele malen eerder is gebleken, wederom aan de basis te staan van de opkomst en sociale constructie van een nieuw genre als indie-folk

In hoofdstuk 6 onderzoek ik kritisch de ethiek van participatie zoals die gepresenteerd is in het vorige hoofdstuk, namelijk door het discours van de 48 respondenten te onderwerpen aan een Bourdieusiaanse veldanalyse. Hieruit volgt dat de constructie van indie-folk onderdeel is van de bredere verschuiving van snobisme naar cultureel omnivorisme als een strategie van sociale distinctie (o.a. Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Van Eijck, 2001). Specifiek laat ik zien dat de constructie van indie-folk een voorbeeld is van de zogenaamde omnivorenparadox (Johnston & Baumann, 2007). Want hoewel cultureel omnivorisme enerzijds een gevolg lijkt te zijn van een steeds diverser en gelijker wordende (westerse) wereld, tonen verschillende onderzoeken anderzijds aan dat omnivoren weliswaar openheid jegens meer populaire en volkse vormen van cultuur tentoonspreiden, maar dat 'daaronder' een strategie van distinctie schuilgaat. Cultureel omnivoren consumeren weliswaar populaire en volkse cultuur, maar doen dat vaak op een hoogculturele wijze, namelijk door te consumeren op basis van wat de Franse socioloog Pierre Bourdieu (1984), in navolging van Immanuel Kant, de esthetische dispositie heeft genoemd. Meer recent onderzoek van de Amerikaanse sociologen Goldberg, Hannan and Kovács (2016) lijkt aan te tonen dat met name zogenaamde "poly-puristen" hiertoe in staat zijn. De poly-purist is het type omnivoor dat enerzijds 'breed' consumeert (bijvoorbeeld door zowel naar klassieke muziek als naar folk en hip hop te luisteren), als *binnen deze genres* de meest 'pure' of 'authentieke' items selecteert. Ik toon aan dat Nederlandse indie-folk producenten, distributeurs en consumenten poly-puristen zijn. Aldus draag ik bij aan sociologisch onderzoek naar de rol die popmuziek speelt in het proces van sociale stratificatie, en aan de popmuzieksociologie door te beweren dat de productie en consumptie van 'serieuze' en 'pure' indie-folk een (impliciete) reactie is op de meer postmoderne popmuziek van weleer, waarin ironie, pastiche en parodie dominant waren.

In hoofdstuk 7 besteed ik specifiek aandacht aan de consumptie van indie-folk en ga ik in op de rol die indie-folk speelt in het alledaagse leven en in de constructie van narratieve identiteit (Ricoeur, 1988[1985]). Ik laat onder andere zien dat indie-folk een belangrijke rol speelt in de omgang met discordantie. Omdat de teksten van indie-folk songs vaak gaan over omgaan met 'tegenslag' in het leven, blijkt dat specifieke songs – en soms zelfs specifieke regels of woorden uit liedjes – respondenten houvast geven in tijden van discordantie en verwante ervaringen van melancholie en depressie. Bovendien toon ik aan dat discordantie niet alleen inherent is aan het menselijk leven, maar tevens een sociaal fenomeen lijkt te zijn. Door toenemende flexibilisering van de arbeidsmarkt en geografische (en sociale) mobiliteit komen discordante levensmomenten steeds vaker voor in het leven van individuen, zo ook in de levens van enkele respondenten die deelnamen aan dit onderzoek. Door filosofen en sociologen wordt beweerd dat dit onderdeel is van leven in een postmoderne samenleving, die gekenmerkt wordt door diversiteit en pluralisme en dus bij het individu kan leiden tot een fragmentatie van het zelf (o.a. Gergen, 1991; Lahire, 2011[2001]). Op basis van het werk van de Amerikaanse sociologen Holstein en Gubrium (2000) en dat van de Nederlandse literatuurwetenschapper Nicoline Timmer (2010), beargumenteer ik dat postmoderne ervaringen van fragmentatie en gebrokenheid inderdaad waar te nemen zijn in de levensverhalen

van respondenten, maar dat indie-folk narratieven, die vaak draaien om de expressie van emoties en om de rol van de gemeenschap (familie, vrienden, naasten) in de omgang met discordantie, een meer moderne, dat wil zeggen: relationele vorm van identiteitsconstructie verbeelden. Op die manier is de productie en consumptie van indie-folk wederom te beschouwen als een reactie op het postmodernisme, namelijk door tegenover het idee van identiteit als (media)constructie een (modern) beeld te plaatsen van identiteit als een product van sociale interactie en *storytelling*.

In de algemene conclusie en discussie (hoofdstuk 8) vat ik de bevindingen van het onderzoek samen en synthetiseer ik deze door verbanden te leggen tussen de resultaten van zowel de theoretische als empirische hoofdstukken. Ik beargumenteer dat zowel de productie, distributie als consumptie van indie-folk onderdeel is van de opkomst van een nieuwe romantische beweging binnen de hedendaagse kunstwerelden en culturele industrieën en leg uit waarom indie-folk een manifestatie is van een 'nieuwe authenticiteit' (Haselstein *et al.*, 2009), die met de Nederlandse cultuurfilosofen Robin van den Akker en Timotheus Vermeulen 'metamodern' genoemd zou kunnen worden. Vervolgens besteed ik aandacht aan de culturele *power* van indie-folk (Griswold, 1987), of hoe indie-folk op 'materiele' wijze verschilt van andere popmuziekgenres. Ten slotte leg ik uit hoe deze dissertatie bijdraagt aan discussies binnen uiteenlopende wetenschappelijke disciplines zoals de popmuzieksociologie, de sociologie van kunst en cultuur, de cultuurfilosofie, de literatuurwetenschappen en de narratieve psychologie – met name waar het gaat om de discussie over de fragmentatie van het zelf.

About the author

Niels van Poecke (Terneuzen, 1983) studied Arts and Culture studies (BA, 2005), Sociology of Arts and Culture (MA, 2005) and Philosophy of Science (MA, 2007) at Erasmus University Rotterdam. After obtaining his MA degree in Philosophy in 2007, he became a programme maker for the Studium Generale of Erasmus University, which is where he organized academic and cultural events for students and the Rotterdam public. His MA thesis, *De tragiek van de tragedie* (2007) [*The tragedy of tragedy: On Nietzsche, Wagner and blues music*] was awarded with the 'Nationale Popscriptie Prijs 2007' and got published at Klement/Pelckmans publishers in 2008. Currently he holds the position of lecturer at the Department of Arts and Culture Studies at the Erasmus School of History Culture and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He teaches and develops courses in aesthetics, the philosophy of the social sciences and the sociology of arts and culture. He occasionally writes about sociology, aesthetics and popular culture for the webzine *Notes on metamodernism* and for the Dutch music magazine *Gonzo (circus)*.

Publications related to this dissertation

International peer reviewed journals:

Van Poecke, N. (2017). Pure Taste in Popular Music: The Social Construction of Indie-Folk as a Performance of "Poly-Purism". *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, 1-33.

———. (2017). "What Might Have Been Lost": The Formation of Narrative Identity among the Dutch Indie-Folk Audience. *Popular Music and Society*, 41(5).

Van Poecke, N. and Michael, J. (2016). Bringing The Banjo Back To Life: The Field of Dutch Independent Folk Music as Participatory Culture. *First Monday*, 21(3).

Book chapter:

Van Poecke, N. (2017). Broken Circle Rebound: New Regionalism and Vernacular Indie-folk. In L. Mutsaers, Tillekens, G. and Keunen, G. (eds.). *Made In The Low Countries*. London: Routledge, 2017.

Popular Press:

Van Poecke, N. (2017). Authenticiteit Nu: Over poly-purisme als metamoderne cultuurconsumptie. *Kunsttijdschrift Vlaanderen*, 364.

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In ways similar to the 1960s 'urban folk revival' – that is, through live performance, mass mediation and sales successes – the genre of folk music rose the surface of the global music industry once more during the first decade of the new millennium. The new labels are hyphenated, as in free-folk, freak-folk, indie-folk and folk-pop, and refer to Americana and electronics as in New Weird America, American Primitivism, and folktronica. Folk music gained momentum in the mid-2000s with acts such as Fleet Foxes, Devendra Banhart, CocoRosie, Bon Iver, and most of all Mumford and Sons, who became the genre's spearheads. Empirically focused on the position of indie-folk in the Dutch music industry, this Ph.D. thesis investigates how and why folk music – usually 'dwelling' under the radar of the mainstream – turned into an industry based genre at the turn of the new millennium. It contributes to a range of recurring themes within the humanities and social sciences, most notably to discussions about digitization and the advent of participatory society, the formation of narrative identity in contemporary modernity, and the shift from snobbism to cultural omnivorousness as a marker of high-status in western societies. Ultimately, it is argued that the re-emergence and re-popularization of folk music in the twenty-first century is part of the emergence of metamodernism as the new cultural dominant, as it responds to the flat and ironic culture we know as 'postmodernism' by returning to celebrations of depth, affect and historicity.