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# **'Do you remember rock 'n' roll radio?'**<sup>1</sup>

## **How audiences talk about music-related personal memories, preferences, and localities**

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### **Introduction**

Music plays a multifaceted role in the everyday life of people. Music is used as an accompaniment to daily tasks and chores, as a mood changer or enhancer, or as a key to alternative, imaginary reality. Analyses of the use of music have tended to focus on the positive contribution it makes to everyday life, revealing how it can offer individuals a symbolic resource for shaping their personal identity, while providing tools for collective experiences and sharing of tastes in social groups (see Hesmondhalgh 2008 and Roy and Dowd 2010 for a review). Music also supports the inward and outward process of representation and projection of self (Larsen *et al.* 2010). DeNora (2000) has been groundbreaking in showing the diversity of how people integrate music in their daily lives.

Yet beyond the active choice of music and its instrumentality in processes of identity

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<sup>1</sup> 'Do you remember rock 'n' roll radio?' is the title of a song by the Ramones, released on Sire records in May 1980. Writing credits: the Ramones.

building, music is also ubiquitous in day to day life, from shopping trips to the supermarket to leisure time in cafés (Kassabian 2002). Our daily relationship to music is not always an active choice, but it can be serendipitous and mediated in a number of ways. Nowak and Bennett (2014, p. 427) developed the concept of ‘sound environment’ to explore how the consumption of music is supported by spatial, temporal and technological variables, and experienced through the body of the listener. Others emphasised how music taste development is impacted by socialisation processes (e.g. Holbrook and Schindler 1989, ter Bogt *et al.* 2011, Rimmer 2012, Willekens and Lievens 2014). These approaches allow us to think of the experience and meaning of music in everyday life as mediated by an assemblage of contextual, bodily, subjective, and social elements.

In this chapter, we apply what we know about music’s role and presence in the daily life of listeners to a study of how people remember using music in their past, the kind of uses and styles they recall and the role music from their youth continues to play in their lives today. While the study of music in the present day is by now well developed, studies on music memories are budding (Bennett and Janssen 2016). We aim to fill this gap by exploring – via a popular music memories survey – how cohorts born between 1936 and 2000 display different mediated relationships to music. The survey was conducted in the Netherlands and the UK and allows for elements of comparison between countries which are respectively peripheral and central in global popular music production (Verboord and Brandellero 2015). We also look at people’s relationship to music originating from their region or country of origin, and how they perceive and evaluate music from their local environments. In so doing, we broaden the spatial perspective on music taken by Nowak and Bennett (2014) to include the styles and sounds that are considered typical of the region or country where our respondents grew up – as opposed to a more immediate environment where listening takes place, for instance a shop or workplace. Through this we seek to understand how music mediates people’s relationship to their place of origin and how this relationship evolves during the course of their lifetime, while also paying heed to the meanings and values associated with these sounds.

We start by looking at the uses people make of music in their daily lives. We then look at the

relationship between music and memory and the type of memories music evokes. Finally we look at the bonds between music and place. Following a brief methodological section, we present the findings of our survey and draw our conclusions and ideas for follow-up research.

### *Music's role in the day-to-day life*

A number of seminal studies have given us key insights into the role music plays in people's lives in Western societies. In the field of psychology, Sloboda *et al.* (2001) looked at the functionality of music in people's lives, and how it contributed to the emotional state of listeners. During one week and at regular intervals, they prompted selected individuals to complete a diary, detailing their activities and the presence and function of music therein. They found that music had a positive impact on their emotional state, supporting them in being more focused, while also helping them to create appropriate conditions for different activities they were undertaking. DeNora's (2000, p. 53) interview-based research supported this notion of the individualist functionality of music in shaping the respondent's emotional state, and highlighted the social function played by music – for example, helping listeners to align their emotional state, or 'self-regulate', to the one required by a particular task or situation. As DeNora (2000, p. 48) stated, music was seen as engendering change, making things happen, and indeed addressing a need in a specific situation. Notable in this research is the finding that the temporality in which music in everyday life occurs is generally as an accompaniment to other tasks – few listeners just listen to music, but rather reported doing other things while listening to music (Sloboda 1999, DeNora 2000). Sloboda (1999) also found that most music listening was solitary and within the realms of the home.

Beyond music's functionality in the immediacy of its consumption, it also provides a resource for respondents to shape their self-identity and social presentation (DeNora 2000). In this way, it helps to shape and foster relationships between individuals sharing similar tastes (Bennett 2004). As Roy and Dowd (2010, p. 187) put it, '[p]eople use music to define who they are individually and collectively'. It serves to shape one's own identity and to communicate it to others (DeNora 2000, Roy and Dowd 2010).

The meaning of music plays an important role in this identity building process. Textual analysis pays heed to the content of music, its lyrics and sounds, whereas a more contextual

perspective explores the ‘set of relationships’ between the people taking part in a performance, the audience, the context, and the interactions taking place between all these elements (Small 1998, p. 13). From the latter perspective, it is not possible to reduce music to one singular meaning (for example, through textual analysis) but rather music should be understood as having multiple, contextually-bounded and embedded meanings and interpretations.

### *Memories of music*

The complexity of music and its multidimensional and multimodal properties (Stevens 2015) makes the study of its relationship to memory particularly informative. When experienced directly, music can in fact trigger a varied reaction in the listener, as auditory, expressive, visual, evocative responses to its performance are noted. What then do we remember about our relationship to music in our past? On a more general level, music-related memories and experiences from youth appear to be more powerful than those from later on in life as they more deeply captivate emotions and stir up nostalgic responses, as shown by Krumhansl and Zupnick (2013). What the authors also found is that the music of certain generations ‘lives on’ more strongly in the preferences of their children – in particular the music from the late ‘60s and early ‘80s. Explanations for these ‘reminiscence bumps’ were sought in the intergenerational transmission of preferences, as well as the endurance of a ‘classic rock’ and higher quality status which is often associated with music from the 1960s (ibid.).

Previous investigations into how music is remembered have pointed to the fact that memories of the material dimensions of music (lyrics or rhythms for instance) are usually accompanied by associated emotional and contextual recollections. In a study of how adults remember melodies and songs from their childhood, Krøjgaard *et al.* (2017) found that the earliest memories of songs usually have positive connotations and relate to typical rather than extraordinary events in people’s lives – for example, remembering a parent’s evening lullaby before bedtime. Music also provides a powerful trigger for remembering conspicuous autobiographical details and events (Cady *et al.* 2008 cited in Krøjgaard *et al.* 2017, p. 211; Davidson and Garrido 2014 cited in Stevens 2015, p. 264). Interestingly, Sloboda (1999) found that the function most associated with an active choice of music listening (as opposed to experiencing music played in a bar or shop) was reminiscent of cherished past events.

DeNora (2000, p. 67) tells us that music also acts as an ‘aide-mémoire’, it helps us to recollect the past: ‘[t]he past “comes alive” to its soundtrack’. When we recollect or listen to music from the past, the experience of listening to it then gets relived. Such recollections conjure up an ‘alchemy’ of different situational elements, ‘such that the music *was* the mood, and the mood, the music’ (DeNora 2000, p. 67, original emphasis). In a sense, music becomes a co-constituent of the experience, and the experience can be triggered again and relived through music. In this sense, music of the past is, according to DeNora (2000, p. 66), a ‘choreography of feeling’.

Yet memories of music are not only about what we listened to and how we recall it. Music as a mediated cultural form also triggers recollections of the media used to access it – and how these have changed over time. Thus, while earlier generations relied on radio, magazines, and music television to access their music, increases in purchasing power and changes in music consumption made it possible for listeners to buy their own vinyl and later on CDs. Nowadays the options for listening have increased further, with digitisation and the dematerialisation of music: music can be listened to online or carried around with portable music players (Sassoon 2006, Shuker 2008, Gopinath and Stanyek 2014). Different socialisation contexts can be linked to different media forms, yet how they have impacted the recollections of music fans remains an open question.

### *Music, place and authenticity*

While music is clearly important to listeners on a personal level, how listeners attribute meaning and value to popular music more generally revolves around the notion of authenticity (see Peterson 1997). As first argued by Regev (1994), popular music is believed to invoke a different set of aesthetic appreciations than more classical forms of art (such as opera or chamber music), one in which the transmission of emotions is filtered less through stylised, art-induced performances, and more through performances that are perceived to be ‘real’ and ‘true’ to the personality of the performer. Particularly institutional evaluators of popular music tend to draw on aesthetic criteria and discourses that highlight authenticity: the more ‘authentic’ music is, the better it is evaluated (Van Venrooij 2009). Yet, the conceptualisation of authenticity is not without problems due to its multidimensional nature

(Peterson 1997, pp. 205–220). In industrially produced music, authenticity is, arguably, to a large extent fabricated through the utilisation of carefully selected image building features (clothing, hairstyles, etc.) and symbolically potent narratives that help to create personae. Authenticity is thus far from an endogenous, unchangeable quality rooted in sounds, but rather the result of historical and spatial collaborative processes of shared memory and heritage work. One of the key elements in this fabrication of authenticity is the ability to draw upon a spatially bound lineage. The stronger the (alleged) attachment to a certain place, or the more vividly the art of an artist resonates with a place of origin, the more believable music is often perceived to be. This pertains to all kinds of popular music, whether it concerns, for example, country music (Peterson 1997), rap music (Cheyne and Binder 2010), or specific local scenes (see Cohen 2007 on Liverpool). Media can play a big role in how these associations are transmitted to audiences (Gopinath and Stanyek 2014). To date, we know relatively little on how music audiences negotiate these geographical connotations in their perceptions and preferences of popular music, and the extent to which one's own origin shapes these understandings. Comparing listeners from a country with a rich, globally recognised history in popular music (UK), with those from a more peripheral country that lacks such a pioneering role (Netherlands), enables us to explore how audiences perceive local traits and how attachment to place is mediated by music.

## **Methodology**

The data was collected via an online survey hosted by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, in collaboration with the University of Liverpool, University of Ljubljana and University of Vienna as part of the Popular Music, Cultural Memory and Identity project POPID (cf. Brandellero *et al.* 2014). The survey was advertised through Facebook, local newspapers and music magazines, as well as circulated locally. For this chapter we only consider the respondents in the Netherlands and the UK. In total, 1,170 people filled out the survey in these countries. However, many respondents only filled out part of the questionnaire or only scrolled down to the end without answering questions. We excluded all respondents who did not fill out one single question on memories. This left us with 738 respondents. Almost half of this sample filled out the Dutch version of the survey, 37 per cent filled out the English version that was distributed in the UK, and 13 per cent filled out the English version

distributed in the Netherlands. Consequently, the majority of the respondents are Dutch (53 per cent), followed by British persons (35 per cent). The remaining group consists of Belgians, Germans, Irish, Americans, and 21 other nationalities. Some people identified as Scottish, Welsh, or having double nationalities. There is a reasonable balance between sexes: 52 per cent women versus 48 per cent men. Since our goal is to study generational differences we also asked for the birth year. Unfortunately, 46 individuals did not provide us with this information. 103 Individuals were born in the period between 1936 and 1959, 178 between 1960 and 1975, 236 between 1976 and 1990, and 174 after 1991 (the youngest persons coming from the year 2000).

The survey consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. For the analysis presented here, we rely on open questions that asked for the earliest memory in relation to music, the most memorable experience in relation to music, and the characteristics respondents associate with music from their region or country and country of origin. Music tastes and affinities – as well as their evolution from youth to the present – are also probed. We have some quantitative measures that ask about perceived importance of locality, and the extent to which they like local artists.

We coded the answers inductively. That is, we first went through the data to give descriptive summaries as labels. In the second round, we tried to find overarching themes among these labels, which could be co-occurring themes (e.g. places of memory, and persons involved in the same memory). Then, cross-referencing the various types of themes, we identified the final theoretically relevant themes. We then ordered the answers according to cohort and established how dominant the themes were among the different cohorts, highlighting some differences by nationality.

### **Earliest music memories**

Most of the earliest memories are mediated, either by people or by media. The precise shape these mediations take differs across generations. Clearly, over time, the possibilities to come into contact with music have increased, which is reflected in the memories produced.

Memories are often about the first contact, many times about a significant contact (deep love

for a music), and sometimes about a mediating contact (when music is the soundtrack to life events). Genre and style preferences vary by birth cohort, but as Smith (1994) pointed out, we note a temporally more persistent attachment to music of one's youth, compared to sounds of previous or later generations.

We also find that most music memories reported fit into the mainstream spectrum of music tastes. There is little in the way of sub-cultures and niche tastes here, nor do we hear about memories where music, lifestyle and fashion come together (see Hebdidge 1979). Most music acts mentioned are Top 40 and well-known, smaller acts are not remembered by name but rather through the venues where they played (smaller local stages or pubs), which are mentioned as places of performance and conviviality. We do, however, hear about the social dimension of music tastes, as a number of characters populate these memories, from family and close relatives to friends and communities.

The oldest cohort is the smallest group, and also generates the narrowest scope in terms of memories. Given the nature of memories that are mentioned, we, however, think this is not an artificial outcome, but is related to the context in which this group grew up. The memories of the pre-1960 listeners confine themselves mostly to radio and sometimes vinyl, listening – or even dancing – together with parents, friends, and occasionally siblings. Singing along and dancing to music – alongside talking about music – are seen as 'consumption rituals' (Larsen *et al.* 2010, p. 680) which help the consumer appropriate music and imbue it with a layer of personal meaning.

For the oldest cohort, music consumption is still very much confined to the house, but it is a shared experience nonetheless – possibly due to the limited availability of listening devices at the time. Sassoon (2006, p. 1331) describes the changes to music devices available to the average household since the 1950s. He notes a shift from the predominance of the radio (at home and in the car) to cassettes and CDs as improvements in sound amplification also came along. Parental divisions of labour are still quite conservative judging by the number of times that women are reported doing house work while listening to the radio. From the 1950s onwards, the transistor radio made the mass medium of radio portable, which enabled

teenagers to listen to music outside of the living rooms of their parental homes and thus to break free from the bonds of the generation gap between them and their parents (Wall and Webber 2014, Gencarelli 2014). For the older cohorts, pirate radios often provided greater variety and more tailored listening than was available on mainstream media (Willis *et al.* 1990), and we find traces of a number of these pirate radios in our survey (e.g. Radio Luxembourg, Radio Veronica).

The persons born between 1960 and 1975 grew up in a period when television entered society. Consequently, their memories include many recollections of first-seens on music programmes such as Top-of-the-Pops and Ready Steady Go (UK) and Top Pop (Netherlands). Respondents report having seen Abba, Blondie, Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody, but also forgotten idols such as the Bay City Rollers. What also changed was the growing versatility to discover music resulting from increased affluence (more people report buying singles and albums) and new sound carriers of which the cassette tape invokes the strongest memories. Many listeners note their experiences with making tape compilations or being socialised into music via the tape collections of their parents. Recording and copying to tapes was a cheaper alternative to the purchase of music during the recession years in the '80s (Willis *et al.* 1990). The availability of even basic technology for DIY recording and mixing suddenly turned music consumers into producers of their own compilations (Willis *et al.* 1990).

The emergence of the car in this cohort's memories signals affluence and the flexibility of the cassette player to play the songs that you – actually, mostly the father – want to hear. From this generation onwards, cars will be regular places of music discovery, or bring people to holiday destinations where different music is found. Since the arrival on the scene of the Walkman in 1978, it has become possible to be transported by one's favourite music anywhere, anytime (Hosokawa 1984, Sassoon 2006, Gopinath and Stanyek 2014), and the experience of music on the move is also reported in our survey.

On the face of it, not much changes for the next generation: parents and their music selections remain important, radio and television still manage to impress (though increasingly via MTV or local music channels), and vinyl and cassette tapes keep their place in the tool kit

(supplemented by the CD). It is not surprising that this cohort reports greater flexibility with listening to music, as well as a greater variety of listening devices. UNESCO's (2000) 1980 statistics on the evolution of the radio ownership in the Netherlands and the UK show the figures per 1,000 inhabitants to be 650 radios in the former and 950 in the latter. By 1997 these figures had increased in both countries, to 980 and 1,443 respectively. CD players were also widely available, with figures for 1996 showing that in the Netherlands there were 95 CD players per 100 households, compared to 140 in the UK (UNESCO 1998).

Yet, variation grows in the memories that are kept. Various respondents mention schools as loci for reminiscence (music education), while in the Netherlands the televised children's choir *Kinderen-voor-Kinderen* gets several mentions. A number of female respondents report that as seven-year-olds they were 'absolutely obsessed' with the Spice Girls. It seems that music was becoming increasingly catered to younger audiences, and thus memories changed accordingly. Perhaps related is another trend: whereas behaviours were previously mostly about listening, seeing and buying, there appears to be a growth in active musical interactions. For some respondents this might be related to the rise of music talent shows in the 1980s and 1990s such as the Dutch Playback show (1980s) and Soundmix show (1990–2002) and the British Stars in their Eyes show (1990–2006). Respondents mention dancing (in living rooms), singing along, music-making, play-backing, playing air guitar, and trying to breakdance. The memory of making one's own mixed tape evokes nostalgia of the former self, the technologies and situations in which these compilations were made (see Jansen 2009).

For the youngest cohort, some forms of mediation have clearly become out-dated: television, singles, and cassettes are less prominent. The most remarkable trend, however, is the emergence of concerts and festivals. Some persons report having seen their first concert at the age of 8 to 12 years old. Here music is also 'on the go', as a soundtrack to daily life events – the morning bus commute to school, a trip to a friend's house by bike.

### **Attachment to local music**

When respondents were asked about what they saw as typical characteristics of the music

originating from their region or country of origin, a number of key themes emerged. The most frequent characteristic of local music mentioned was language. Whether it is Dutch, English or German, language is obviously seen as a clear marker of locality. Importantly, for the British respondents, language is often used as a criterion, but here as a positive one ('I tend to prefer lyrics in English, so the country of origin has a bearing on that!', female, UK, born 1972). Despite their self-proclaimed openness to all kinds of music, language other than English is often perceived as a barrier. Accents and use of local dialects further embed music in place and make it more recognisably from somewhere (cf. Grijp 2007, Van der Hoeven *et al.* 2016). Dialect or accent variations were often mentioned by Dutch respondents as being typical features of local music – the former combined with mentions of simple, humorous lyrics and the convivial carnival heritage of the Southern parts of the country. Secondly, traditional instruments are also a form of local identifier, binding music to local traditions and sounds, yet it is the guitar that gets mentioned the most, usually in a pop-rock context. Respondents from different countries highlighted strikingly different features of local music: different 'regions of the mind' were evoked (Peterson 1997, p. 215), incorporating potent images and signifiers of traditions. For instance, respondents from the Netherlands were more likely to mention 'farmers' music' and the countryside, or the 'eelsound' ('paling sound') of the fishermen village Volendam and its successful pop artists. In the UK, class distinctions were raised, particularly references to a working class rawness in the sound of music originating from the North of England, linking back to the area's urban and industrial heritage. Linked to this, the themes evoked by the lyrics were also diverse: while in the Netherlands 'songs of life' (levenslied) were seen as typical, UK respondents mentioned lyrics offering a social and political commentary on society. The characteristics were also presented in an oppositional way: music from country or region x is more real, raw, down to earth than, say, more mainstream music. While most respondents named characteristics, some could not easily express what made local music local – 'it just "is"' was the answer. More generally speaking, Dutch respondents tended to be more critical of local music ('corny', 'slick', 'whiney' were some of the adjectives used), in contrast to a more positive appreciation from nationals of other countries. In Scotland and Wales, however, local music was more likely to be associated with more ancient folk traditions and instruments. This does not necessarily mean that listeners find the place of origin of musicians important

for the music they listen to. The answers to a closed question on a 5-point scale (from 'very important' to 'not important at all') indicate that two-thirds of the respondents find place of origin not important at all. Only a small minority (5 per cent) of the surveyed listeners state they think it's quite important or very important. Most listeners, however, emphasise in their explanations that music is a 'universal language', 'good music is good music', and that they do not care about the place of origin 'as long as the music is good'. Some answers even express some indignation at the very suggestion of difference: 'As if New Orleans is more important than Oosterwolde' (male, NL, born 1956).

In line with dominant discourses of tolerance and taste relativity as found in studies of omnivorousness (Ollivier 2008), many listeners seem to feel uncomfortable with making explicit statements on value depending on origin. When they do come forward, three argumentative styles are used. Some, but not many, make explicit evaluations, but these tend to be positive ('I love Bulgarian choral music', female, UK, born 1982) rather than negative. Then there is a group which argues that insights into the music's origin and background deepens their listening experience and ultimately their appreciations. Some respondents evoke the cultural heritage imbued in local music, or make broader statements about how 'ethnic heritage' in music engenders a sense of pride of place, no matter the origin or genre. Another suggests that:

I believe that (non-popular) music can convey the identity of a region or nation. Much like blues music reflects the oppression and inequalities of its time. Music from other regions can help to narrate the history of a place. Whether that be through lyrical themes, musical styles, or typical production values. (male, UK, born 1985)

This line of argument echoes the findings of previous research on how popular music forms part of the growing reservoir of cultural expressions which people associate with cultural heritage, challenging more traditional high-brow or canonical definitions (van Dijk 2006, Bennett and Janssen 2016).

A final, much more utilised narrative, reframes the centrality/periphery argument into the drawing of subtle symbolic boundaries. These respondents refrain from making general claims, but carefully frame their preferences for music from the US and/or UK in terms of

personal taste. Dutch respondents often conflate the ideal of universalism with some form of sequencing in which Anglo-American pop music tradition is the standard ('It doesn't matter, but I prefer...'). In these evaluative repertoires, 'bands from England are cooler and that also applies to Westcoast America' (male, NL, born 1989), while Dutch-language music has negative connotations that can even lead listeners to exclude them completely: 'As long as it's not Dutch-language, I can't stand that. Otherwise it is not something on which I select bands' (female, NL, born 1986).

In sum, there is a symbolic distinction being made between location as the geographical point of origin and the sense of place and locale evoked by music, which incorporates cultural associations, language, and memory and heritage work (Brandellero and Pfeffer 2015). For many listeners, language in particular is the quintessential element of popular music that is important as signifier of quality, and/or as the acceptable criterion to draw boundaries (in contrast to nationality, country, or other politically sensitive terms). While we found no systematic differences according to nationality or gender, the older cohorts seem to be more outspoken in their denial of the importance of locality. The greater acknowledgment of locality among the younger Dutch respondents may be associated with the increased recognition of domestic (including Dutch-language) artists in the 1990s and 2000s (cf. Van der Hoeven *et al.* 2016, pp. 49–50).

Another way of probing how individuals see the locality of music is by asking which musicians or musical styles listeners associate with their own country or region, and how they evaluate these. In general, people find it easier to come up with music related to their country (about half of the respondents) than to their region (around 40 per cent). Remarkably, younger cohorts produce many more mentions than older cohorts, both for national and regional associations (almost 60 per cent of the two youngest cohorts).

So what is mentioned by music listeners and how do they value this music? For British listeners, The Beatles stand out as the musical act that encapsulates local attachment and defines their popular music heritage. Respondents from all generations mention them (and not, for instance, fellow sixties legends The Rolling Stones who are hardly mentioned). Quite

often, the fab four are classified as typical for their region rather than country, which, admittedly, probably also reflects the fact that many UK respondents are from the Liverpudlian area. Another example which comes up time and again is folk music – sometimes specified in English folk, or Irish folk – a musical style that is both associated with the regional and country level. Representative for the country as a whole are particularly Britpop (which receives mentions in every cohort), but also a diversity of music styles such as indie, ska, punk, and dubstep. The generational differences among the British listeners mostly pertain to specific artists (e.g. Echo & the Bunnymen for the 1960–1975 cohort) and sometimes styles (e.g. Mersey beat for the eldest cohort).

Also for the Dutch listeners we find a mix of canonical names and generational preferences, but generally speaking the distinctions between country and region are more difficult to make. It is clear that some iconic sixties and seventies artists such as The Golden Earring (from The Hague), Cuby & the Blizzards (from the Northern province Drenthe), and The Cats as main representatives for the ‘paling sound’ from Volendam are mostly perceived as typical for a region. Another group of artists, sometimes clustered as ‘Dutch language singers’, have moving associations. For instance, deceased levenslied-singer André Hazes (born and raised in Amsterdam) is both associated with country and region, just like Guus Meeuwis, a contemporary mainstream singer from the south. At the same time, Marco Borsato, the most successful Dutch language performer of the 1990s and 2000s is strictly seen as national, just like the 1980s teenage phenomenon Doe Maar. The responses correspond closely to the most symbolic moments and canonical acts of Dutch popular music which have been the object of exhibitions, archival activities and publications on the part of amateur and cultural heritage institutions alike (Brandellero and Pfeffer 2015, Van der Hoeven and Brandellero 2015). The results suggest a strong, shared cultural memory among audiences as well.

Many listeners simply associate their country with *Nederlandstalig* (Dutch language), *smartlap* (tearjerker) or the related *schlager*. It is remarkable how consistent the various cohorts are in what they see as quintessentially Dutch or regional. Only when it comes to dance music (ranging from genres such as ‘happy hardcore’ to DJs such as Tiësto) do the

younger cohort distinguish themselves: this music style is hardly mentioned by earlier generations.

There are huge differences between nationalities in how much they actually like the local music they mention.<sup>2</sup> Respondents from the UK are much more likely to be positive about their music than respondents from the Netherlands, in line with the results from the open questions discussed earlier. Whereas about a quarter of the Dutch were very or extremely positive, among the Brits this opinion was shared by over 60 per cent. At the same time, only 5 per cent of the British respondents did not like the mentioned examples at all versus a quarter of the Dutch respondents. The latter particularly dislike the ‘levenslied’ and ‘schlager’ artists, which once more points at the position of peripheral countries: in modernist music styles, associations of epigonism often prevent artists from being perceived as typically local, and what is perceived as typically local is often seen as out-of-time (Regev 2013). There is also a cohort effect, however. The appreciation of local music shows a clear decline as cohorts are younger. The music that younger people mention as typical for their country or region is oftentimes not very well liked. Almost half of the people born between 1991 and 2000 likes this music ‘slightly’ or ‘not at all’, which contrasts starkly with the three persons (6 per cent) of the 1936–1959 cohort who state that. Again, this is related to the aversion of certain Dutch-language styles among our respondents. Of course, our data are not representative, so we should be careful to draw strong conclusions. We should keep in mind, for example, that Dutch citizens are overrepresented in the youngest cohort and British citizens in the oldest cohort. Still, an additional statistical check in which the impact of both factors is estimated simultaneously confirms the trends described above.<sup>3</sup>

### **Concluding remarks**

This contribution has explored how people recall personal music memories from their youth and how they relate their past and present-day music preferences to particular local, regional

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<sup>2</sup> For every musician or style respondents were asked to express their appreciation (on a 5-point scale from ‘extremely’ to ‘not at all’).

<sup>3</sup> We conducted a regression analysis with appreciation as dependent variable. Both cohort and dummy variables for nationality (UK, Netherlands, with Else as reference category) showed significant effects (controlling for the respondent’s sex).

and national identity signifiers. Early music memories are often associated with family and friendship bonds, and they trigger nostalgic reminiscing of family outings or holidays. These memories are often attached to a yearning for the domestic spaces where music was listened to the most back then: a friend's bedroom, or the old family car, for instance. Such memories are rendered more special by the fact they are imbued with the emotional attachment to relatives and friends, as well as the excitement of first-time experiences: the first trip to a music concert, listening to a song for the first time and resonating deeply with it. Past and present music preferences are also discussed by respondents in relation to their attachment to place and the extent to which they identify with them. Respondents were asked to reflect on whether they identify with music from their country or region of origin. Dutch and British music fans do not differ so much in terms of memories – although obviously the details are often country-specific, the gist of them is highly similar. Yet, the local attachment, and subsequent valuation of local heritage/signifiers, varies considerably between the UK and the more peripheral Netherlands. On the one hand, Anglo-American music is, generally speaking, considered more authentic – also among Dutch listeners. On the other hand, language forms a strong symbolic boundary that most music aficionados of pop-rock (which formed the lion's share of our sample) draw. English-language music is preferred by many British as well as Dutch listeners. The findings point towards shared imaginations of what is local about local music. Similarly, we find powerful reverberations of canonical and institutional readings of local and national music heritage among our respondents: better known and recognized acts are more often mentioned compared to lesser known ones, suggesting a strong shared musical memory among audiences. Nonetheless, while the names of smaller acts may be forgotten, many respondents still cherish the experience of gigs at local pubs or venues.

Our results also reveal generational differences in attachment to regional and national music, while also shedding light on how first experiences of music have become less convivial and more individualised in recent decades. Older generations appear less inclined to consider the possibility that place of origin adds value to listening experiences. They also generate fewer examples of what is typical for their place of origin.

Another striking finding is that most memories are positive in nature. Often they have a social element to them: they are connected to family, friends, holidays, and so on. This dominance of happy memories could be due to tricks of the mind, as insisted upon by Hesmondhalgh (2008, p. 338), but one can also argue that music has the power to overcome bad times. If asked to spontaneously produce the earliest memory (recall that we did not conduct in-depth interviews), apparently the positive outweighs the negative. It could also be that when we remember music, we remember how we changed with it. Less often do we find ‘mood management’ types of memories, as discussed by DeNora (2000). This may be because they are more difficult to recollect, as they are on a micro-scale and very much of the moment. Yet we do find more overarching retrospective views of music as uplifting in nature, transcending ephemeral troubles. Memories and associations seem to collapse into a broader sense of self-identity that incorporates, at the individual level, discovery, bonding and belonging, and, at the collective level, friends, family and media.

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