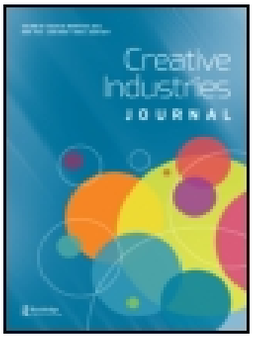

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The working life of musicians: mapping the work activities and values of early-career pop musicians in the Dutch music industry

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the working life of early-career musicians after technological innovations transformed the music industry. Based on in-depth interviews, a diary questionnaire study and post-questionnaire interviews with 17 early-career pop musicians aiming to build a career with their act in the Dutch industry, we investigate what day-to-day activities they perform and how they value these work activities. The analysis reveals that musicians perform a wide variety of non-creative work activities, including DIY and entrepreneurial tasks. Moreover, they spend over 40 percent of their time on creative tasks, and, remarkably, devote minimal time to social media. In addition, three accounts of value were identified which shape the way musicians perceive their work, as they understand their work in pop music as art, as a business or as a hobby, transcending the traditional art-commerce dichotomy. This way, the paper contributes to our understanding on the nature of work and how early-career workers perceive its value in the creative industries.

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Creative labour; musicians; music industry; popular music; work activities; values

Introduction

Technological innovations have drastically altered the working life of musicians in the music industry. As revenues from recorded music plummeted due to downloading and streaming (NVPI 2010; Marshall 2015), performing live has – again – become an important source of income for pop musicians (Wikström 2009). In addition, the web and new software offer opportunities to produce music independently, reach audiences directly via social media (Haynes and Marshall 2017; Morris and Powers 2015) and monetize these new forms of contact (Hughes et al. 2016). Due to these transformations of the music industry, early-career musicians can or have to take responsibility for more work activities in order to build a career: they can produce and distribute

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music (Morris 2014), are expected to carry out more business and managerial tasks (Hracs 2015) and aesthetic labour has become more important (Hracs and Leslie 2014). As a result, early-career musicians rely on new Do It Yourself (DIY) and entrepreneurial approaches to work in order to make a living (Young and Collins 2010; Bernardo and Martins 2014). However, the ways in which such musicians aim to build careers and enter the industry remain underexplored (Zwaan and ter Bogt 2009). In order to further our knowledge about what the work activities of early-career musicians look like within the contemporary music industry, in this article we use an electronic diary study method to systematically map their day-to-day routines.

In addition, the question remains how musicians understand their work within this transformed industry. Research has shown that musicians have difficulties with aligning the artistic and the entrepreneurial aspects of their work, and that they only see themselves reluctantly as entrepreneurs (Coulson 2012; Haynes and Marshall 2018). However, current research on early-career musicians reveals that artistic and entrepreneurial valuations of work might be becoming more aligned (Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018). The new generation of musicians is less hesitant to see themselves as entrepreneurs (Albinsson 2018) and to carry out the required entrepreneurial tasks. This shift in the valuation of work might be caused by the fact that, due to the changing industry, promotional and commercial activities have become inseparable from the artistic work of musicians, undermining traditional understandings of 'selling out' (Klein, Meier, and Powers 2017). As a result, the art-commerce dichotomy (Bourdieu 1993) might not be suitable anymore to understand how the new generation of musicians values their work, especially since its usage 'often results in a static binarism whereas practices are more fluid' (Haynes and Marshall 2018, 469). Therefore, in this paper we inductively map the different accounts of value (Gerber 2017) that early-career musicians rely on to value their work activities.

The purpose of this paper is thus twofold. First, we examine what work activities early-career pop musicians perform in the current Dutch pop music industry. In order to answer this question, seventeen Dutch early-career pop musicians participated in a week-long diary questionnaire study that mapped their work activities. This innovative research design provides the opportunity to investigate their actual behaviour in a natural environment (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli 2003), while overcoming possible biases resulting from inaccuracies with regard to recalled memories in retrospective self-reports (Andersen and Mikkelsen 2008). Secondly, we study how these musicians value these work activities. To do so, musicians participated in in-depth face-to-face interviews and short post-questionnaire interviews, providing us with the opportunity to pair and compare their actual behavior measured by the diary methodology with their valuations of their working lives. In this way, this study contributes to our understanding of the nature of work of early-career workers after the transformation of the music industry and the creative industries at large.

Theory

The work activities of early-career musicians

Workers see their work in the creative industries as attractive because of the high status of the fields they are active in (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2013). In addition, their

work is characterized by uncertainty, which functions as the lure for such a career, as one avoids the predictability of routine work. However, the downside of this uncertainty is that, due to an oversupply of labour, workers face a high risk of failure (Menger 1999). As a result, workers feel that they pay for their freedom to work where they want and in the way they want with economic insecurity (Hermes et al. 2017). Due to this economic insecurity, workers have to make flexible, long and unpaid hours and have precarious career prospects (Haynes and Marshall 2018; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2013). Workers in the creative industries, and especially early careerists, are faced with a high degree of mobility, function as the promotor of their own work and often juggle multiple occupational roles and unstable sources of income (Bridgstock 2005; Hennekam and Bennett 2016). Under these circumstances, workers need to perform a wide range of tasks themselves: they must perform marketing, publicity, networking and financial activities, in addition to artistic, problem-solving and communication tasks and tasks related to new media (Hennekam and Bennett 2016).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Together, literature on DIY musicians and entrepreneurs helps to understand the tasks that early-career musicians perform in the current industry. Relying on the overarching activity categories as used by Hracs (2015), in Table 1 an overview is provided of the discussed activities, summarizing our current knowledge from both lines of research. By investigating the activities and perceptions of musicians, we examine to which extent these DIY and entrepreneurial practices are indeed predominant in the Dutch music industry.

Valuing work in music

In line with the work of Bourdieu, a widely shared (and much debated) understanding is that a binary opposition exists in art fields between a more autonomous pole and a

more heteronomous pole (see for example Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018). On the one side, artists produce *l'art pour l'art*. Here, art and earning money are seen as conflicting activities. On the other side, artists have an explicit market orientation and they understand success as the ability to establish an income (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007). This dichotomy is reflected in the discourse of the music industry (Negus 1997; Frith 1991), and has been a recurring pattern throughout the history of pop music: 'the relevance and prominence of the "art versus commerce" debate in popular music has varied across genre, era, and artist, but it has persisted as a sign of popular music's acceptance as "serious" art' (Klein, Meier, and Powers 2017, 223).

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

In other words, the art-commerce dichotomy might not be suitable anymore to understand how musicians value their work, as reality might be more fluid (Haynes and Marshall 2018). This might especially hold for young musicians, as Bennett (2018) argues: 'The balance is not necessarily between staying pure (or authentic) or selling out; it is more about how to make something that is a minority pursuit (and probably destined to stay that way) economically sustainable, or at least as sustainable as possible, alongside other short-term work opportunities that young DIY cultural entrepreneurs are able to take advantage of' (150). Moreover, Miller (2018) showed that not every amateur or semi-professional is building towards a professional career in music. A lot of musicians aspire a position of 'sustainable semi-professionalism' (15) and create 'music on a long-term basis without seeking a professional music career' (6). These musicians might value other aspects of their work in music and take pleasure out of participating in a music scene (Crossley and Bottero 2015). For example, indie bands do not necessarily want to earn a living with their music but enjoy making music for their leisure as a social bonding practice and to gain recognition (Rogers 2008). Again, the focus on other values is especially relevant for young musicians, as research has shown that they pursue a career in music because they value creativity and the music community (Threadgold 2018), or because they want continue making music and improve their skills and obtain social capital (Lombana-Bermudez and Watkins 2020).

This emphasizes the importance of adopting a theoretical approach that leaves analytical room for a variety of valuations of work in music.

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

Data and methods

We collected data from seventeen early-career musicians. We aimed for musicians who are actively trying to build a career with their act in the music industry, and who, in other words, cannot be understood as pure amateurs,[1] but are not established musicians either. In order to reach this group, our population consisted of musicians who performed at the 2018 edition of the Noorderslag Festival. This renowned showcase festival is widely perceived in the Netherlands as the place where the new generation of talented (pop-rock) musicians is presented to representatives of the Dutch music industry (Van Vugt 2018). We employed a purposeful sampling strategy (Flick 2007) in the following manner: first, in order to include only early-career musicians, established acts who performed on the two main stages were left out of the sample. Second, as music careers are shaped significantly by gender (Berkers and Schaap 2018), we aimed for a gender balance. However, rejections to our interview request led to a sample of ten respondents who identified as male and seven who identified as female.[2] Third, we included musicians from different regions in the Netherlands to achieve a geographical spread. All sampled musicians have made their first steps in the industry: all have been performing regularly and most have released their first album and signed with a booker or manager. At the same time, they do not yet have a sustainable career. An overview of the participants with more background information can be found in Table A1 in the appendix.[3]

In order to investigate how in general these musicians perceive and value their work activities, face-to-face interviews were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured and included topics such as 1) their career history, 2) the description of their work activities, 3) their reflections on the industry, 4) their reflections on their

work and 5) the financial aspects of their work. Interviews took on average 66 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. Second, in order to investigate what work activities they carry out, participants filled out an online diary questionnaire for about a week. This contained questions about which work activities the participants performed, which could be selected from a list or added manually. In addition, they were asked to report how much time they spent on these activities and how they sort the activities in order of their perceived usefulness. Lastly, participants were asked to respond to five Likert questions using a five-point scale that measured whether they perceived the day as useful, stressful, busy, fun and as causing insecurity. On average participants filled in the diary questionnaire 6.17 out of 7 days (min. 5, max 7) and in total 105 days were measured (14 days are missing). Third, a ten-minute post-questionnaire interview was conducted via telephone. Here, the goal was to investigate how these musicians perceived their past work week and how they valued the performed activities. Extensive notes were taken during the conversation that were turned into short reports.

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

Results

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

Activities

Of the 105 measured days, participants report that on 11 days no activities relating to their musical career were performed. On average they invested 1498 minutes in their music career (min. 635, max. 3361), which accounts for 245 minutes, or 4.08 hours per

Table 2. Overview of the reported work activities.

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

day. This means that on average musicians invest 25 hours per week in their musical career (min. 6.25, max. 56.02).

During the measured days, the largest amount of time (41 percent) was spent on *creative activities* such as rehearsing together, writing songs, rehearsing alone and performing (Table 2). Participants understand these activities to be the foundation of their career in music: 'Music comes first. It is the most important. … In the end, your music needs to be good and ideally it is something unique' (16). It may be no surprise that three activities that were ranked in the first quartile as experienced as most useful were activities revolving around the creative aspects of their musicianship such as performing (average ranking of 0.94, done by 59 percent of the musicians), rehearsing together (0.85, 71 percent) and composing (0.74, 71 percent). Musicians felt that they often did not have enough time for creative work, which is in line with earlier research reporting that only a small part of their work involves making music (Hracs and Leslie 2014; Morris 2014). However, the results from the diary questionnaire suggest that musicians manage to reserve time for what they like to do most.

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

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

> If you want to start with something, you often have to do it yourself. In the beginning, you have to get gigs, and arrange that you can record music, that you release it, and maybe can get a label. … You just have to start a small company, and see that you are organized, because the assistance comes only later, I think. (8)

Business activities accounted for 16 percent of time spent, with most of the time being taken up by administration and finance. One musician told: 'we are all freelancers, we all have our own company. So you need to be able to do bookkeeping, know what reasonable prices are if you replace someone at a gig: the practical daily stuff you need to deal with' (2). Furthermore, musicians are expected to carry out marketing activities such as maintaining their social media and networking. In opposition to reports that social media require musicians to interact continuously with audiences, in our sample the role of social media is limited. While these musicians are still in the beginning of their career and perhaps have not reached a large online audience, remarkably they do not feel that they have to be 'always on' (cf. Hracs and Leslie 2014). Rather, musicians feel pressure regarding how to look active on social media in less eventful weeks and are afraid that they don't have relevant content to share: 'I think it is super boring to see an artist making videos about himself. … For smaller artists I always think 'why are you doing this', because I don't think that there are a lot of people who find this interesting' (10). Moreover, musicians believe that the impact of their social media activity is limited and perceive it as relatively useless (general posts 0.24, audience interaction 0.31). Here our findings confirm research showing that musicians struggle with monetizing social media outreach or building an audience online (Haynes and Marshall 2017). Indeed, in order to stand out online for audiences in an oversupply of acts, these musicians report that they need resources that they have not acquired yet: 'I see that bigger artists can easily grow bigger through social media, but smaller artists suffer because they have a hard time reaching the mainstream social media' (10).

Lastly, *technical activities* accounted for 7 percent of time spent, including all activities regarding selling merchandise and logistical activities such as building up for sound checks and instrument reparation. While grouped under technical activities (e.g. Hracs 2015), musicians perceive recording to be creative and technical at the same time, and see it as a very useful (average ranking of 0.83) and fundamental part of their work: 'these days it is normal that everyone produces their own music. … Everyone has a laptop with Logic. So, when you are writing you are immediately recording or producing. … Yes, it becomes an artistic thing instead of just a mean' (3). It is therefore remarkable that the experienced importance does not result in a larger time investment (4 percent of time spent). This might be a explained on the one hand by the fact that activities vary week per week depending on which phase in the cycle of recording, releasing and performing an act is in, but on the other hand

by the fact that several musicians nevertheless feel that, in addition to home recording, they depend on recording studios and producers to get their recording quality to a level that is accepted by the music industry.

The reported work activities are shaped by the conditions of the music industry. Of course, DIY and entrepreneurial work practices have been present in the music industry before. Yet, as predicted by research on DIY and cultural entrepreneurship (Haenfler 2018; Hracs 2015), the musicians here have become responsible for a wide range of management and business activities, due to decreased industry support. In addition, technological advancements such as social media or home recording software make it possible for musicians to perform activities for which they previously depended on the industry. Furthermore, music industries are organized locally (Marshall 2013) and their local conditions enable and limit behaviour. The Dutch music industry is relatively small compared to mainstream music industries (Everts and Haynes Forthcoming), as the live music industry contributes annually €581 million, and the recorded music industry €385 million to the economy (PWC, 2019). However, a combination of governmental and commercial initiatives (Van Vugt 2018) provides a lot of opportunities to perform live for young musicians (Gielen et al. 2017), making it attractive to focus managerial and business activities on getting access to a small group of gatekeepers who regulate this circuit for live performances. As a result, these musicians prioritize a specific set of work activities such as performing live, networking, building a team with people who have connections within the industry and discussing topics in meetings that might help them to get acknowledged by these key actors (see also Everts and Haynes Forthcoming).

At the same time, the position of early-career musicians in the Netherlands is precarious (Von der Fuhr 2015). As most of the participating musicians (14 out of 17) cannot live from their work in music and the opportunities for funding are limited, they perform the 25 hours of work in music on top of other work necessary to financially sustain themselves. This creates an unsustainable situation: several musicians report that in the long run they cannot continue with earning little and making long days. As a result, their experiences are exemplary for work in the creative industries, as they report unstable sources of income, facing difficulties with managing their time and a perceived lack of long-term career prospects (Hennekam and Bennett 2016; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2013). However, at odds with this understanding, our sample reports to be quite satisfied with their work. In general, they perceive their days as relatively useful (mean 4.06 on a 5-point scale, standard deviation 0.84), fun (3.83, 0.71) and less busy (2.78, 1.09), stressful (2.51, 0.94) and as causing insecurity (1.86, 0.85). This goes against literature that suggests that workers in creative industries experience high levels of insecurity (Menger 1999; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2013), and that young musicians have to build a career while they have low levels of capital, which will make them more insecure (Scott 2012). These counterintuitive findings might be explained by the fact that the work satisfaction compensates the unstableness of their situation (Abbing 2002) and that musicians are happy that they can pursue their goals in music even though they might not be able to make a living out of it (Bennett 2018; Threadgold 2018).

To understand why these early-career musicians did not perceive their work negatively on a day-to-day basis, it is therefore important to look at the ways in which these musicians value their work.

Values

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

Pop as art

The most dominant account of value is the pop as art account, which could be compared to what Bourdieu (1993) calls the autonomous pole and Gerber (2017) a vocational account. For these musicians, artistic autonomy is often fundamental as they want to make the music of their preference: 'we only make music for ourselves. Because we like it' (5). In opposition with recent research that showed that commercial and artistic values in the music industry are aligning, especially for younger musicians (Albinsson 2018; Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018), musicians who draw from this account of value oppose commercial values. Often, they are not willing to make concessions to increase their appeal. To them, music should be a personal expression and they emphasize the pleasure of writing music and playing live. Several of these musicians feel that the type of music that they make limits their chances at becoming financially successful: 'it was never my intention to make money with it and get rich. Also because it is not realistic, especially not with selling your records' (9).

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

> Ideally you can just be yourself. … It feels artificial to think about your image. Quite quickly that feels like branding or marketing. That feels very far away from why you make music in the first place. Those are two opposite things, and I cannot do both things at once. (3)

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

possible, musicians rather opt for a marginalized position within the boundaries of the music industry than performing additional business tasks. This results in an organization of work where they aim to do as little themselves as possible, similar to the DIY culture as described by Threadgold (2018) where musicians 'choose poverty' (1) and keep overhead low so they can continue focusing on creative work.

While these musicians are not optimistic about the chances of earning a living with their act, they perceive opportunities to continue being active in the music industry, without having to compromise their artistic ideals. Either this is caused by the fact that they see sufficient space to continue with their act by focusing on their artistic goals rather than to look for commercial opportunities as an entrepreneur, or because they are satisfied with their marginalized position within the boundaries of the music industry. Remarkably, this value repertoire is not confined to musicians active in genres that can be understood as being forms of restricted production (Bourdieu 1993) such as folk or indie, but also for musicians active in more commercial genres such as pop or electronic but who nevertheless are not optimistic about their chances for commercial success. In addition, no distinction was found regarding the usage of this account of value between musicians who participated in forms of music education and self-taught musicians.[5]

Of these musicians, a small group hopes to use the recognition that they achieve with their music to obtain other jobs within the industry. In this way they can continue making music without compromising their artistic ideals, remain part of the industry and earn an income, which could be compared to the credentialing account as described by Gerber (2017). They aim to write toplines (writing songs over beats produced by others) and music for commercials and other artists. While this is not a pure form of l'art pour l'art, artistic integrity remains important for their credibility and their motivation of why they want to be part of the industry in the first place. As one musician told:

> Because you are presenting yourself all the time to the outside world, people get the feeling of: that guy is doing good things. That way you create a certain status that you can use pretty well for other activities. I have created my job as a consequence of the things I achieved with (my act). (12)

Pop as business

The second account of value is more commercially oriented, comparable with the heteronomous pole (Bourdieu 1993) and the pecuniary account (Gerber 2017). These musicians want to earn a living with their music, and they see opportunities to obtain a position in the music industry where they can become financially sustainable. Moreover, they mention that they will quit music if they do not become financially successful. Often, they aim to make music that is attractive to large audiences and believe that artistic and commercial goals can go together. While they believe that staying true to artistic ideals will benefit them economically in the long run, at the same time, some musicians are willing to reconsider their approach if their attempts to reach an audience are unsuccessful. So, in opposition to the previous account of value, the musicians here do manage to align artistic and economic values, confirming the trend found in recent research (Albinsson 2018; Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots

2018). Again, this value repertoire transcends genres, and is both used by musicians who studied music and who were self-taught. So even though these musicians are more commercially oriented than the musicians who draw from the pop as art account, they do not seem to be active in a different (or more commercial) part of the music market. Rather, they differ based on how they perceive the opportunities that are embedded in this market.

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

> I believe in taking responsibility for the financial risks. [Music] is something I really like to do and I think that it is a privilege to make music instead of having a boring office job. I take the risk so I can do something for the rest of my live that I really like to do. (12)

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

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

> Image is something that can reinforce your music … and that if you do not make a conscious choice you miss a huge opportunity. … People can get interested in your music because they see a photo and think 'that looks interesting, I am going to listen to that'. (4)

Some musicians within this commercial orientation aim to circumvent the traditional industries, whom they distrust, displaying the anti-industry attitude of DIY musicians (Bennett 2018; Threadgold 2018). They enjoy being independent and working for themselves. These musicians do not want to depend on labels and managers, because, most importantly, they take up a considerable percentage of the incoming revenues:

> We could have chosen to immediately sign with a label, but then you give up a large share of your revenues. I think that bands do that too quickly. … Then it is difficult to remain entrepreneurial, because you can use these revenues to make new products. (11)

Consequently, they perform a lot of tasks themselves, such as administration, strategic planning, but also the production of tours and recording of music. With minimal resources, they aim to realize sufficient revenue streams in order to make a living in music.

Pop as a hobby

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

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

> Yes, I still see it as free nights out. You go somewhere and you get food, you get drinks. You have a fun night with, yes with my [friends]. And you can make music and people like it. It's just a lot of fun to do this. (6)

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

Concluding thoughts

The first aim of this article was to provide an answer to the empirical question of which work activities early-career pop musicians perform in the current Dutch pop music industry. The sampled musicians invest on average 25 hours per week in their

careers in music and, remarkably, managed to reserve most time for creative work. Furthermore, they carry out a range of non-creative tasks such as managerial activities and business activities of which most prominently meetings with their band members and doing their administration. Deviating from earlier research, these musicians spend minimal time on social media, which, in addition, they do not perceive to be very useful as they lack funding to build a significant audience online. In general, their experiences mirror understandings of work in the creative industries (Hennekam and Bennett 2016; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2013) except for the fact that the work satisfaction of these musicians is higher than expected. The use of the diary questionnaire, which showed the varied set of work activities these musicians perform to cope with demands of the music industry, adds to research on the generalist skills workers need to survive in the precarious labour markets of the creative industries (Bridgstock 2005; Hennekam and Bennett 2016; Lingo and Tepper 2013). Secondly, we asked the question of how musicians value these work activities. The analysis revealed three accounts of value that musicians draw from when reflecting on their work that affect the way that they perceive and organize their work: pop as art, pop as business and pop as a hobby. The reported variety in the accounts of value used by musicians to account for their work progresses our understanding of the motivations of workers in the creative industries and the way workers navigate the existing artistic and commercial logics in their markets (Schediwy, Bhansing, and Loots 2018; Eikhof and Haunschild 2007).

In addition, based on these findings, we have formulated two main theoretical takeaways. First, the analysis shows the importance of inductive research that considers the diversity of worker's experiences in the creative industries. Depending on the value repertoires musicians draw from, they display different perceptions and approaches that intersect with and deviate from existing understandings of work in the music industry. In line with literature on DIY musicians, we see that artistically oriented musicians (pop as art) sometimes chose not to perform business tasks, several commercially oriented musicians (pop as business) show anti-industry attitudes, and hobbyists (pop as a hobby) emphasize the communal aspects of their activities in music (Rogers 2008; Threadgold 2018; Haenfler 2018). At the same time, other commercial musicians, artistic musicians and hobbyists collaborate with a team to outsource tasks, which is more in line with literature on entrepreneurship (Hughes et al. 2016). In addition, commercial musicians enjoy the entrepreneurial aspects of their work. These results suggest that primarily relying on concepts such as DIY and cultural entrepreneurship will highlight some aspects but conceal a variety of experiences found in the current industry. In the same manner, using the art-commerce dichotomy conceals a variety of approaches to work in music. Even though they all are active in the same market, artistic and commercial musicians disagree on whether artistic and commercial goals align or not, and hobbyists embrace other values such as friendship. Furthermore, by acting as semi-professionals in a professional environment this last group transcends the amateur-professional dichotomy. In other words, by relying on the discussed concepts and dichotomies, theoretical models adopt a rigidity that does not do justice to the experiences of these musicians. Here our research contributes to literature that critiques the use of deductive concepts such as entrepreneurship

(Oakley 2014), and to literature that argues that art fields should not be conceptualized as consisting out of an art-commerce binary (Franssen and Kuipers 2013; Haynes and Marshall 2018).

Second, our analysis adds to theory formation on the relationship between work activities and the perceptions of actors and the way they aim to take position inside fields. Earlier research has argued that work activities of musicians are shaped by the local context of the music industry (Tarassi 2018) and that 'the internal logic and the dynamics of participation in a world shape motivations, values and satisfactions' (Crossley and Bottero 2015, 53). Our research confirms these findings, as the results show that musicians opted for an organization of work in response to the specific conditions of the Dutch music industry. Therefore, it is important to stress that the experiences of these musicians do not reflect the position of early-career musicians in the industry at large, but rather reveal the importance of a focus on the localized conditions that shape the working lives of musicians. However, in addition to this eye for the local context, we suggest that it is important to take the positions that actors have within those fields and the opportunities they perceive into account, as our data shows that the positions that musicians strategically navigate towards and the chances they perceive to acquire these positions influence the way they organize and value their work. Gerber's model (2017) helps us to understand this but lacks a discussion of the way accounts of values relate to art fields and mediate structural factors. Based on this study, we argue that these accounts of value could be understood as, at least partially, the perception of the opportunities that are embedded in the field to achieve certain positions, or to use Bourdieu (1993), as the 'space of possibles' (64). According to Bourdieu actors perceive these experienced possibilities through '"vocations," "aspirations" and "expectations"' (64), to which we might add accounts of value. As a result, these accounts mark, in the words of Gerber (2017), 'the boundaries of legitimate artistic practice' (155) between which musicians have to navigate.

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

Notes

1. Of course, the distinction between professional and amateur musicians is problematic as it is hard to point out characteristics that separate the two categories (Miller 2018). We use the term amateur here to distinguish our sample of musicians from musicians who do not aim to participate within the music industry, like the ideal-type amateur with no peer recognition and no intention to achieve anything within the music industry.
2. Of the 31 musicians that were contacted, 14 refused to participate. Reported reasons for refusal varied, ranging from a lack of time due to recording and touring activities to a more general refusal to participate and/or respond. These musicians did not differ significantly from the participants in our study.
3. In our analysis data from the interviews of musician is referred to by an individual case number.
4. Overarching activity categories, based on Hracs (2015), in italics.
5. While this study aimed for a gender balance of interviewees, the interviews did not reveal a clear gender distinction with regard to performed work activities or expressed values.

Ethics approval

For this study, the Ethics Review Board of the Erasmus University Rotterdam has granted ethics approval.

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Appendix

Table A1. List of participants. Names have been removed and age has been transformed into categories to ensure anonymity. Genres and styles derived from Discogs.com.

Number	Gender	Age	Region	Label Type	Music Education	Genre/style
1	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Indie pop
2	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Major	Yes	Rock
3	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Pop
4	Female	21-25	Amsterdam	Indie	Yes	Folk
5	Female	26-30	Amsterdam	Self-released	No	Indie rock
6	Female	26-30	Eindhoven	Indie	No	Punk
7	Male	21-25	Nijmegen	Self-released	No	Rock
8	Male	21-25	Rotterdam	Indie/self-released	No	Rock
9	Male	21-25	Utrecht	Self-released	Yes	Electronic
10	Male	26-30	Rotterdam	Indie	Yes	Psychedelic rock
11	Female	26-30	Utrecht	Indie	No	Folk
12	Male	21-25	Rotterdam	Indie	Yes	Hip hop
13	Male	21-25	Almere	Major	Yes	Pop rock
14	Male	21-25	Utrecht	Self-released	Yes	Indie pop
15	Male	31-35	Hilversum	Major	No	Pop
16	Male	26-30	Eindhoven	Indie	No	Rock
17	Male	31-35	Rotterdam	Indie	No	Rock