Routledge Research in the Creative and Cultural Industries

CREATIVE WORK

CONDITIONS, CONTEXTS AND PRACTICES

Edited by
Erika Andersson Cederholm, Katja Lindqvist,
Ida de Wit Sandström and Philip Warkander

Creative Work

How do creative workers work? This book brings together insights from a range of relevant disciplines to help answer this significant research question.

Featuring case studies from the European context, contributors tap into the experiences and practices from creative workers, demonstrating their attempts to navigate a changing environment which affects spaces, identities, and professional roles. As cross-disciplinary re-thinking of work, labour processes and management practices in the creative and cultural industries, the book offers perspectives on the importance of highlighting creative work as a phenomenon and practice beyond a particular industry, market, or public sector. Providing an opportunity to expand our conception of what creative work is, the book draws on studies of a range of activities, practices and sectors that are usually included in the cultural and creative industries as well as ones that are more untraditional.

The result is a volume that will interest students, practictioners, and scholars with an interest in the creative industries.

Erika Andersson Cederholm is Professor of Service Studies at Lund University, Sweden.

Katja Lindqvist is Associate Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

Ida de Wit Sandström holds a PhD and is researcher at the Department of History at Lund University, Sweden.

Philip Warkander is Assistant Professor in Textile Management at University of Borås, Sweden.

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Contributors

Malin Andersson is a Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Strategic Communication, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Mikael Bergmasth is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Brigitte Biehl is a Professor at Berlin School of Popular Arts, SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany, and a Researcher at the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics at FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany.

Claudine Bonneau is a Professor at Université du Québec à Montréal, École des sciences de la gestion, Département d'analytique, opérations et technologies de l'information, Montréal, Canada.

Monica Calcagno is an Associate Professor at the VSM Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Venice, Italy.

Rachele Cavara is a PhD Student at the VSM Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Venice, Italy.

Erika Andersson Cederholm is a Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Jörgen Dahlqvist is a PhD Student at the Malmö Theatre Academy, Lund University, Sweden.

Nada Endrissat is a Professor at the Business Department, Bern University of Applied Sciences, Bern, Switzerland.

Malin Espersson is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Cecilia Fredriksson is a Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Eva V. Hoff is an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Carolyn Hunter is a Senior Lecturer at the School for Business and Society, University of York, York, United Kingdom.

Sara Kärrholm is an Associate Professor at the Department for Arts and Cultural Science, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Nina Kivinen is an Associate Professor at Uppsala University, Division of Industrial Engineering and Management, Uppsala, Sweden.

Marie Ledendal is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Strategic Communication, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Katja Lindqvist is an Associate Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Anna Lyrevik is a Senior Lecturer at the Malmö Theatre Academy, Lund University, Malmö, Sweden.

Marije Miedema is a PhD Student at the Centre for Media and Journalism Studies and the Knowledge Infrastructure Department, University of Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands.

Marthe Nehl is a PhD Student at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Kent Olofsson is a Composer and Professor of Performing Arts at Stockholm University of the Arts, Stockholm, Sweden.

Charlotte Østergaard is a PhD Fellow at Malmö Theatre Academy, Lund University, Malmö, Sweden.

Ida de Wit Sandström is a Researcher at the Department of History, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Filippa Säwe is an Associate Professor at the Department of Urban Studies, Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden.

Nathalie Schram is a PhD Student at the department of Professional Learning and Technology at the University of Twente, Enschede, the Netherlands.

Viviane Sergi is a Professor at the Department of Management at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montréal, Canada.

Carina Sjöholm is an Associate Professor at the Department of Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Sara Malou Strandvad is an Associate Professor at the Department of Arts, Culture and Media, University of Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands.

Svenja Tams is a Professor at the School of International Business, Bremen City University of Applied Sciences, Bremen, Germany.

Jessica Tanghetti is an Research Fellow at the Department of Management, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy.

Federica Viganò is a Researcher at the Faculty of Education, Freie Universität Bozen – Libera Università di Bolzano, Brixen-Bressanone, Italy.

Philip Warkander is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Business Administration and Textile Management, University of Borås, Borås, Sweden.

Sima N. Wolgast is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Psychology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

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Erika Andersson Cederholm
Katja Lindqvist
Ida de Wit Sandström
Philip Warkander

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Introduction

Erika Andersson Cederholm, Katja Lindqvist, Ida de Wit Sandström, and Philip Warkander

"Think of all the activities that must be carried out for any work of art to appear as it finally does", writes the American sociologist Howard Becker in the introduction of his book *Art Worlds* (1982, p. 2). The sentence captures a particular perspective of work in relation to the work of art. It illustrates a way of researching creative work that considers and illuminates the many and often mundane "activities that must be carried out" in the field of art. This is a perspective that adds nuances to the notion of artistic work, complementing the often romantic and popularised image of the individual artist engaged in creative flow. This multifaceted view of work is also the perspective of this volume, where we consider creative work to include a multitude of activities besides creative processes, as such. This could be work that does not necessarily require a particular form of artistic skill but is related to managing, supporting, enabling, mediating, and enterprising creative work.

Still, the image of "creative flow" plays a vital role as a counterpoint to the more instrumental and mundane work matters in the creative industries, creating meaning as well as tensions within such work. Creative work is a concept that has gained wider meaning in society today. "Creative work" or "being creative" are terms often used to describe and characterise the ideals of today's working life. The terms have been used descriptive as well as prescriptive, to epitomise paid as well as non-paid work that is considered creative, and is often innovative and entrepreneurial (Scharff 2016). Separated from a clear connection to remunerated work, sometimes more broadly as in the phrase "engaging in creative activities", creative work has also come to symbolise positive change and a desirable lifestyle. Creativity has been described as a moral and cultural imperative, shaping urban development as well as ideas of individual fulfilment (Hawkins 2017, Reckwitz 2017). Along this vein, creative industries have been seen as both a driving force and an expression of progress and development, in line with what has sometimes been described as the culturalisation of economy and economisation of the cultural and creative sectors (Loo 2017, White 2017).

The notion of creativity thus seems all-encompassing as well as elusive. But what about work? In his short introduction to the concept of work,

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Fineman (2012) states that on one hand, what counts as work is personal and idiosyncratic, while on the other hand, this construction is culturally conditioned. Work is inherently social, and at the same time it is a necessity for putting food on the table, as Fineman points out. Pietrykowski (2019) clarifies that the boundaries of work and non-work changed radically with industrialisation and labour markets, and the subsequent changes to the lives of humans and structures of modern society. Evidently, "work" can mean a lot of things, but usually the word denotes some effort. Suzman (2021) points to the many social aspects of work that impact individuals as well as society, and to the important economic forces that work constitutes in contemporary society. "Work" is closely related to words such as "labour" and "job", and is usually seen as the opposite of leisure. Both these terms indicate efforts in exchange for pay (as in the term "wage labour"). Research into labour has traditionally taken a critical/emancipatory approach to relationships in work contexts structured as markets (Abfalter and Reitsamer 2022). However, the practices and understandings of creative work extend beyond wage labour.

One of the foundational ideas of this volume is to explore the fuzzy domain of work in the specific context of creative work. We will shed light on the notion of creative work as unconstrained to a particular industry, market, or public sector. The ambiguity embedded in the concept of creative work serves as both background and subject of this volume. The various chapters set out to explore and analyse conditions, contexts, and practices of creative work, ranging from arts and literature to fashion, the digital games industry, ecological entrepreneurship, and wellbeing. The volume embraces different dimensions of creative work, such as performing creative work, working in creative industries, being creative at work, the creation of artistic work, or the framing of certain professions, groups, and places as "creative".

The different contributions explore and analyse practices and experiences, conditions, and contexts of creative work using various perspectives stretching from artistic research and humanities to social sciences. Established professions and fields of creative work as well as more contested or unrecognised ones are represented in this volume and challenge our understanding of the concept, its boundaries, and its status. Some of the questions raised include: What are the central concerns and considerations among actors engaging in creative work? How do ideas and narratives of creativity play out in the everyday working life of these actors? How is creative work organised, negotiated, and presented? How do dimensions of place and space play a role in the everyday practices of creative work?

Creative work as a research field

The creative field is an increasingly popular subject for academic research. Beginning with early publications in art history on individual artistic work and oeuvres, today there are numerous titles offering multidisciplinary

approaches to cultural and creative work, creativity in work, creative economy, the geography of creativity, and many other themes. Since new disciplines and increasingly cross-disciplinary publications have made overviews of research trends related to creative work difficult, we will only indicate some areas of recent development that relate to the multidisciplinary approach in this book.

Both historical, geographical, sociological, and economic studies have looked at creative work now and in earlier times. Sociologists and economists, for example, have studied the production and consumption of arts. In studies of the production of art and related works as well as goods, individual as well as collective creative work is central. Research on how creative work practices change over time has been mapped by, for example, Barrett (2014) and Abbing (2019). These publications have broad disciplinary perspectives on creative work as it is embedded in specific historical contexts. The societal focus is central to many recent publications on contemporary creative work, linking topical challenges such as racism and marginalisation and how these are reflected in contemporary creative work contexts (Campbell 2021; Morrow 2018; White 2017). Geographers have for several decades shown interest in the creative economy and its spatial manifestations and patterns (Cameron 2019; Courage and McKeown 2019; Fernandez-Pol and Harvie 2020; Fusco Girard, Baycan, and Nijkamp 2016; Komorowski and Picone 2020; Landry 2008).

There is an increasing number of titles published on innovation, management, and entrepreneurship in the creative field (Beckman 2021; Burnard and Loughrey 2021; Campbell 2021; Faltin 2019; Foster 2018; Pellegrin-Boucher and Roy 2019; Piber 2020; Wagner et al. 2016). Many of these revolve around antecedents of creativity or are written as handbooks on leadership of creative organisations and creative professionals in cooperation (Cashman and Garrido 2020; Foster 2018; Hewison and Holden 2011; Kolb 2016; Ratten 2022; Varbanova 2017).

Collaborative relationships in creative work have also been explored in ways that link organisational and managerial aspects of work (Czarnota-Jedrzej 2018) with broader societal trends that have generated interest among urban planners who try to stimulate the creative economy as a regenerative force in metropolitan development (Leorke and Owens 2021; Price and Hawkins 2018). In such publications creative and cultural industries are often described as tools for economic development and societal regeneration (Breitbart 2016; Chapain and Strykjakiewicz 2017; Jelinčić 2017).

Studies of creative labour often depart from a critical Marxist analysis, whereas studies adopting the concept of "creative work" can be included in a broader theoretical span. This stream of research builds on an understanding of creative work as a heterogeneous practice characterised by aspirational work and precarity, as well as self-fulfilment and subversive potential (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Several titles also discuss creative work

indirectly, through discussions of the change in the cultural, creative, or art markets overall. Some of these overviews have a policy perspective (Ateca-Amestoy et al. 2017; Bonham-Carter and Mann 2017; Beauregard 2018), others address the role of technological and media innovation (Bouquillion and Moreau 2019; Casey 2016; Halegoua and Aslinger 2016).

Departing from the multifaceted concept of creative work, this volume links individual practices and experiences of creative work with the rapidly changing conditions and contexts of this work. The various contributions offer a number of different theoretical perspectives on individuals engaged in creative work; in particular the relationships and embeddedness of creative work in relational networks and how these are experienced by individuals. Several of the chapters in this volume explore the phenomenological aspects of creative work rather than offer causal explanations for individual experiences. This focus is in line with several recent publications (Wagner et al. 2016; Belli 2019; Carr 2019; Deamer 2020; Burnard and Loughrey 2021; Campbell 2021).

Creative Work: Conditions, Contexts and Practices offers insights from creative professionals in their attempts to navigate this changing environment which affects spaces, identities, and professional roles. Rather than seeking to explore a specific domain of creative work, this volume offers varying perspectives on a diverse field, linking macro-level changes in technology, economy, and work markets to the individual perspectives, emotions, and strategies of creative professionals. In this way, macro-level studies of the creative economy complement studies of specific creative fields.

The agency and contexts of creative work

In a society where creativity is a new zeitgeist (Hawkins 2017) or imperative (Reckwitz 2017), this edited volume explores and explains the relationships, structures, and contexts of professional creative activity—of creative work. As we have depicted above, publications on creative industries and more generally the creative economy have grown substantially in the last decade, but analyses of individual or collective creative work have not been studied to any significant extent through case studies in a range of contexts, using a range of perspectives.

The volume is published in the Routledge Research in the Creative and Cultural Industries series and contributes to this growing multidisciplinary research field by addressing some of the same cultural and creative industries—such as film, music, and cultural festivals—that have already been explored in previous titles in this series. Important themes within the series have been the focus on cultural management, art markets, and co-leadership in culture, which links contributions in this volume with existing volumes in the series (Henze and Escribal 2021; Lazzaro, Moureau and Turpin 2021; Reid and Fjellvær 2023). What separates this volume from previous titles is the wider scope in terms of cultural and creative industries,

including case studies ranging from Swedish crime literature to seaweed farming, as well as the multidisciplinary approach to creative work, apparent both in the wide scope of represented research perspectives and the variety of the academic affiliations of the volume's contributors.

The different local and national cases that are discussed throughout the book provide a well-needed complement to a body of literature that usually takes its point of departure from an Anglo-Saxon context. Taking an actor-centred view on practices and experiences in creative work but also contextualising individual experiences, this volume complements the wide range of titles on the creative economy and on creative work on macro (society) and meso (industry) levels. The volume combines studies of creative work processes from participating professionals with analyses of the conditions of creative work in the creative economy, where precarity and project-based work seem simultaneously essential and limiting for professional careers. The volume offers insights into several occupations and fields in the creative and cultural industries, but also into areas that generally are not considered part of this industry, but increasingly position themselves as creative and/or cultural, as these industries have gained increasing interest.

The subtitle—*Conditions, Contexts and Practice*—and the keywords for the three parts of the volume describe the theoretical and analytical ambitions and contributions of the volume. The volume's three thematic parts differ in scope, and also in what level of creative work they engage with. The first part investigates structures and policies, the second the social and geographical context of creative work, and the third looks at individual practices and interpersonal relationships. In this way, the volume begins by unpacking the general conditions and terms of creative work (as stipulated on a macro-level) and ends by exploring the boundaries of creative work in regard to different industries, as well as the psychological wellbeing of creative workers and cultural agents.

PART I: Governing, organising and enabling

The first theme addresses issues related to how creative work is managed, organised, and facilitated on different levels of society, by different types of actors. For example, Katja Lindqvist's contribution analyses how policy-makers work to facilitate creative work across non-profit and for-profit activities in Sweden (Chapter 1), while Anna Lyrevik's case study discusses the dynamic relationships between policy, artistic research, and development work within performing arts institutions (Chapter 2).

While studies of public management of creative work often focus on governing and policy perspectives, it is less common to focus on public authorities as performers of creative work. Malin Andersson addresses this issue in her study of an innovation project when a Swedish municipality was creating and launching outdoor offices as a new form of green working

space (Chapter 3). The role of municipalities and local cultural policies in sustaining spaces and places for creative work is further discussed in Marthe Nehl's study of a self-organised artist-driven studio collective called REHAB Kultur in the city of Malmö, Sweden (Chapter 4). Nehl explores how creative space is co-constituted by different types of actors with both overlapping and differing interests. This is an example of how creative space and creative work can be seen as a contested yet collaborative space.

The contested character may challenge how creative work can be managed and organised, which is further explored in Jörgen Dahlqvist and Kent Olofsson's study of the collaborative theatre production process (Chapter 5). The chapter highlights the issue of who is considered the main creative performer in a creative production team. The authors use three case studies of Swedish theatre production to understand the different phases of artistic processes, showing that these allow for both hierarchical and flat structures, and that democratising creative agency adds aesthetic value for the audience.

While the aforementioned chapters discuss the roles of policy on various levels, or collaborative management of creative work, the next two chapters highlight the role of intermediaries or enablers of creative work. Using ethnographic materials from the Netherlands, Sara Malou Strandvad, Marije Miedema, and Nathalie Schram focus on the functions of a business support programme for self-employed workers in the creative and cultural industry (Chapter 6). The authors demonstrate how the business support program functions as a cultural intermediary that assists participants in navigating the in-between space of entrepreneurial expectations and a cultural landscape. Ida de Wit Sandström and Marie Ledendal address another type of intermediary—platforms for creative and cultural work—such as creative hubs or maker's spaces (Chapter 7). By focusing on the enabling role and everyday work performed by the managers of such platforms in Sweden, the chapter illustrates how creativity and creative work are encouraged and facilitated.

PART II: Sites, spaces and performances

The second theme addresses issues related to the emotional, embodied, and physical environments of creative work and how creative work is performed and negotiated in various affective–material contexts. Choosing to turn their attention to social media as a specific form of creative space, Nada Endrissat, Claudine Bonneau, and Viviane Sergi analysed how social media can operate as a new kind of workplace for artists, as a place to "work out loud", while at the same time demystifying the creative work process (Chapter 8). In a similar vein, Sara Kärrholm and Carina Sjöholm study the role of social media in the Swedish crime fiction market, presenting a more commercialised context (Chapter 9). Their chapter demonstrates how Swedish crime

writers appear to be at the forefront of crime fiction, not only when it comes to the issue of how to reach international audiences, how to promote books and author's brands through events, but also how to act as role models in the creation of a successful life as a writer.

The different types of workspaces that constitute creative work are further explored by Carolyn Hunter and Nina Kivinen, in their study of authors of children's books (Chapter 10). They explore how this category of writers experience their profession and their work practices, and the affective components constituting different types of everyday workspaces, such as writing spaces, talking spaces, and publishing spaces. Charlotte Østergaard is also considering the relational and human–material dimension in creating spaces of creativity in a study of how particular costumes, in specific situations, can become vehicles for relational encounters between humans and other forms of materiality (Chapter 11). This is illustrated with the project *Community Walk,* which was a part of the festival Walking Copenhagen—a festival concept that was developed as a response to the pandemic lockdown in Denmark. This chapter also illustrates a context that is often associated with creative work—the city. Indeed, the creative milieu and cultural vibrancy of cities form important aspects of policy making. However, the creative space of the city needs to be performed and enacted, which Svenja Tams and Brigitte Biehl demonstrate in their chapter on Berlin´s electronic music scene (Chapter 12). This chapter shows how creative production and career work is performed in practice, through site-specific and embodied performances of the creative city.

PART III: Relational work, enterprising and precarity

This third theme covers the working conditions and the inherent ambiguities of creative work, in both employment and self-employment. Previous research has highlighted the passion and intrinsic value of creative work, as well as the value of social capital for workers in cultural and creative industries, while simultaneously pointing at precarious working conditions. Short-term contracts, the insecurities of freelancing, long work hours, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life are some of the conditions that have been raised in the literature. Continuing this line of research, this theme addresses these issues from various perspectives. Philip Warkander has carried out an ethnographic study of the Swedish fashion industry to analyse the role of social capital in this relational and creative industry (Chapter 13). Malin Espersson, Mikael Bergmasth, and Erika Andersson Cederholm investigate working conditions in the digital games industry and show how game workers navigate between different value spheres (Chapter 14). The chapter sheds light on how the notion of passionate work blurs the distinctions between work and life when it comes to work tasks as well as personal relationships, sustaining loyalty and

friendship at work. It also shows how the passion for creative work obscures an individualised responsibility for precarious working conditions. As previous studies have shown, creative workers often resist unionising or show little engagement in work associations, despite precarious conditions. Jessica Tanghetti and Federica Viganò's study of performing art workers in Italy confirm this tendency (Chapter 15). However, they also show how this pattern has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Italian culture as a basis for their study, they examine the situation of performing arts workers and how the pandemic broke the tacitly-accepted rules of non-collectivism that had hitherto characterised the sector.

Also departing from an Italian context, Monica Calcagno and Rachel Cavara studied small and micro-entrepreneurs in Italy, with particular focus on the single case of a small Italian bookshop (Chapter 16). The chapter demonstrates how the entrepreneurial process, illustrated through the journey of one entrepreneur, moves through a sequence of complex changes and critical turning points, constituting financial and relational challenges as well as opportunities. In this process, the self-identification of the informant as a cultural agent (rather than merely as an entrepreneur) in the local community is shown to be of particular importance. Another form of entrepreneurial endeavour is illustrated in Filippa Säwe and Cecilia Fredriksson's study of the growing seaweed industry in Sweden, often labelled a sustainable and local type of product, thus interlaced with current and emerging social norms and ideals of working creatively as a green entrepreneur (Chapter 17). The final chapter in this third theme sheds light on the health issues involved in creative work. Eva Hoff and Sima Wolgast focus on the vulnerability entailed by working creatively, such as increasingly blurred lines between work and free time, performance anxiety, and a general lack of support for creative workers (Chapter 18).

The terms and conditions of creative work are interconnected with an overarching narrative, where stories of passion for one's work, sustainable lifestyles, and creative fulfilment are placed in front of financial stability and remuneration. These preconceived notions of creative work, as an expression of a complex and ongoing process, are continuously negotiated, often leading to a blurred line between work and free time. The two sides of this coin may lead to positive as well as negative consequences for the individual worker. This leads back to the core question of what creative work is, exactly: does it need to be carried out in traditional cultural contexts, or can the concept of creative work also be applied to an industry such as seaweed harvesting? What are the driving forces behind working creatively, if the work is not always paid? How can creative work be understood on different levels and from different perspectives, from the policy level to the perspective of the individual worker?

The volume contributes to multidisciplinary new knowledge on the conditions and settings for creative work in Europe. This becomes evident not only in the variety of theoretical underpinnings that are used in different

chapters, but also in how the chapters are structured. Different academic disciplines have different writing traditions, and so this volume, which contains texts by scholars from different research fields, reflects a wide academic scope in the framing of creative work, both theoretically and textually.

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Part I

Governing, Organising and Enabling

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1 Creative Work and Public Policy

Katja Lindqvist

In post-industrial society, creativity has become a universal remedy for a range of societal challenges (Reckwitz 2018). Policymakers increasingly design policies where the notion of creativity is central. This chapter takes a closer look at how policymakers seek to facilitate creative work, and why policy related to creative work assumes the form it does. The chapter draws empirically on a longitudinal study of cultural and creative industries (CCI) policymaking in Sweden as an example of the Nordic welfare state's approach to creative work. This approach is characterised by strong public support of creativity and creative work beyond the market (Harding 2022; Sokka 2022). The collection and generation of empirical data for the chapter was undertaken 2019–2021.

Creative work defined

Creativity is an inherent human ability that takes many forms and can be found in creative work as well as in other professional contexts and in everyday life (Hawkins 2017). Creative work, defined as work resulting in goods with aesthetic, cultural, and creative central elements, often recognisable by style and genre (Beck 2003), has been central to human society throughout history, and is linked to human imagination and social identity processes (Cassirer 1944). Creative work in this context is defined as activities undertaken as employed or self-employed individuals or business owners in the field of cultural, creative, artistic, or aesthetic production and distribution. Creative work is therefore understood as linked to creative goods or services either directly or indirectly (Becker 1982; Hearn and McCutcheon 2020). This definition is by necessity vague, as it is difficult to draw clear lines around the term (Alacovska 2019; Hearn 2020). An important aspect of the output of creative work is copyright, which regulates economic and legal aspects and holds potential economic value for the copyright holder (Towse 2010). The legal and economic aspects of creative work are important for the economic sustainability of creative professionals as market actors and are therefore also important for policymakers.

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What is meant by creative work in the creative field is usually linked to the content and form of creative production—in other words, related to aesthetic or artistic decisions rather than to economic or legal aspects (Rosenstein 2004; Bain 2005). This focus is most clearly discernible in core arts areas where the extent of originality is high (Taylor and Littleton 2008; Taylor 2012; Carr 2019). This is, according to sociologists of the arts, a result of socialisation processes in the creative field, which lead to the formation of professional identities (Bourdieu 1980; Hausmann 2010; Nielsen, Norlyk and Christensen 2018). Bourdieu (1985) has described two main markets for creative output: one restricted and linked to publicly supported institutions, and one large-scale linked to private financing. The character of these separate but interlinked markets directly impacts professional creative careers. As originality is a central element, the amount of time put into a creative process is not necessarily an indicator of the quality of its output (Mossetto 1993). The character of creative work leads to the work being undertaken under uncertain, and many times, precarious conditions (Lingo and Tepper 2013; Hearn 2020). Perhaps because of this, there is a certain level of cultivated hope and optimism among younger creative professionals entering the work market (Wright 2018; Bilton, Eikhof and Gilmore 2021). Undisputed are the low income levels of most professionals engaged in creative work, which have been a matter for policymakers working in the cultural domain for decades in Sweden.

Policymaking and creative work

Policymaking has been defined as government action aiming to solve societal problems through public programmes and activities (Page 2008; Head and Alford 2015; Larimer and Smith 2017). Policymaking today tends to address most parts of the life of individuals in developed societies and ranges from hands-off to hands-on involvement of government or other actors in many everyday situations (Bogason 2000; Knill, Steinbacher and Steinebach 2020). Public policy is, in particular, designed to step in where markets or the civil sector fail to function in a way that supports societal values or where market and civil sector solutions are unsuitable (Bakhshi, Cunningham and Mateos-Garcia 2015). Policymaking is largely determined by political decisions and negotiation processes. These are subject to institutionalisation processes and therefore may be difficult to change over time (Selznick 1957). Institutionalisation processes result in difficulties engaging in new types of organisational interaction, such as the horizontal cooperation that is often called for today. Therefore, policies and policy domains are complex systems that take time to evolve. Consequently, development of new policy domains means dealing with established policy domains, their boundaries, and path-dependence (Vrbek and Pluchinotta 2021).

The cultural and creative sectors include both non-profit and for-profit activities and entail a vast range of activities in the public, private, and civil spheres, often collaborating across them (Taylor 2015). Creative work can therefore be subject to public cultural policy as well as enterprise[1] policy (Vinodrai 2015). The growing importance and expansion of the cultural and creative sectors in European economies has been noted and acted on by governments and international development agents since the 1990s (DCMS 1998; UNCTAD 2010; EU 2018; G20 2021). This has led to an upsurge of cultural and creative industries (or sector) policies in the last two decades, complementing or replacing cultural policies (Creative Metropoles 2010; Gerosa 2022). The fast transfer of CCI policy across the globe has, however, resulted in doubts regarding the effectiveness of general policy concepts in specific contexts (Dzudzek and Lindner 2015). In fact, any causal correlation between the expansion of creative industries and related policymaking is unclear (Loots et al. 2021; Gutierrez-Posada et al. 2023). This has resulted in researchers as well as policymakers pointing out that policy needs to be adapted to national and even subnational conditions to be effective (EU 2012; Liu and Chiu 2017). At the same time, creative work is undertaken to a significant extent without any direct connection to public policy programmes.

Policymaking in relation to creative work in Sweden has traditionally taken the form of either cultural policy, employment policy, or general welfare support (Thelen 2019). During the early decades of the 20th century, creative work was marginalised as a public policy matter; a domain of the market rather than of government intervention. It was only with the economic boom and more ambitious welfare goals of the 1960s that culture was introduced as a policy domain by the Social-Democratic government. Formal cultural policy has existed since 1974 (Larsson, Letell and Thörn 2012). Thereby, culture is a younger policy domain than employment, financial, and social policy (Lindqvist 2022), but is older than environmental policy in Sweden (Hirsch 2001). Environmental policy exemplifies recent policy domains that address issues across several other policy domains (Head and Alford 2015), and individual policy domains seldom acknowledge the complexity of new societal challenges that call for government attention (EU 2018). CCI policy is another case in point (Sørensen, Lidström and Sandkjær Hanssen 2015), as it touches on matters within cultural, enterprise, and employment policy domains (Bakhshi and Cunningham 2016). This is due to actors in CCI often undertaking activities in their daily work that span more than one policy domain (Oakley and O'Connor 2015). Although CCI policy has been introduced in many countries since 2000, the understanding of creative work is still largely determined in policymaking by the objectives and confines of traditional policy domains, particularly those pertaining to policies related to culture and enterprise.

Cultural policy

Formal cultural policy in Sweden was established in 1974 as a voluntary extension of the welfare state extending beyond economic security (Lindqvist 2022). Creative work, accordingly, is not at the centre of Swedish cultural policy. At the centre is democratic access to cultural experiences and participation, including individual practice. In Swedish cultural policy, creative work is considered to be work undertaken by trained artists and creative professionals, and there is a specific area of cultural policy dedicated to professionals in this field. This policy subfield addresses issues related to the conditions of producing culture in Sweden, as policymakers have recognised that without professional artists and creatives, there is no guarantee of supply of diverse and high-quality culture to offer inhabitants in Sweden. In other words, creative work is, from the point of view of policymakers in this field, related to activities undertaken within the realm of publicly supported cultural activities. This means that individuals and organisations in the cultural field are considered relevant subjects of cultural policy to the extent that they are engaged in activities that are targets of cultural policy programmes or activities. Such activities take place either in institutions or projects supported by cultural policy grants and allocations, or in similar ways are results of cultural policy initiatives. Consequently, creative work is relevant for cultural policy action only to the extent that it fulfils cultural policy goals and prerequisites.

The objectives of Swedish cultural policy are stipulated by Swedish parliament. The current objectives are as follows (from the Swedish Arts Council's website, see reference list):

> *Culture is to be a dynamic, challenging, and independent force based on the freedom of expression. Everyone is to have the opportunity to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity, and artistic quality are to be integral parts of society's development.*
>
> *To achieve the objectives, Swedish cultural policy is to promote:*
>
> - *Opportunities for everyone to experience culture and education. and develop their creative abilities*
> - *Quality and artistic renewal*
> - *A dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, used and developed*
> - *International and intercultural exchange and cooperation in the cultural sphere*
> - *Equal access to arts and culture for children and youth*

Swedish cultural policy contains a range of commissions and other programmes that facilitate access to and the production of artistic and creative work, such as commissions for public art and national education in various

arts and cultural expressions, based on the above goals. In this sense, policy programmes securing democratic access to culture to a certain extent also offer work opportunities for professionals in artistic and creative fields. These work opportunities, including artist grants, are few in number compared to the totality of income for artists, and are therefore highly competitive. Individual grants, in addition, may not comprise contributions to pension funds, and may therefore not be acknowledged as work income for individual artists. The larger individual national artist grants, however, such as those distributed by the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, currently include such contributions.

Enterprise[1] policy, including regional development

Enterprise policy is what governments do to systematically support the development of business opportunities, including support for innovation, and is therefore linked to several other policy domains such as infrastructure, employment, and regional development (Warwick 2013). Within enterprise policy, the creative field is seen as one industry among many. Where cultural policy in Sweden supports arts, culture, and creativity beyond the market, Swedish enterprise policy aims to support entry into national and international markets and to foster the best possible conditions for pursuing creative (or other) enterprises. In other words, enterprise policy aims to help businesses develop and thrive. The Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation is responsible for government "matters relating to state-owned enterprises, enterprise and industrial policy, rural affairs, and regional development". Common enterprise policy tools include support for startups including incubators and accelerators; vouchers for innovation or internationalisation work; export facilitation; and venture capital support (Bakhshi, Cunningham and Mateos-Garcia 2015). Support for cluster development and innovation hubs in collaboration with universities and cluster agents has been another significant element in enterprise policy, much of which has occurred on the regional level (Solvell 2015).

Regional development is a policy domain that was previously separate from enterprise policy (or "industry policy". as it used to be called) in Sweden. Regional development as a policy domain links national governments to regional (subnational) governments in that it has become more and more a task delegated to regions and not the state. Since Sweden joined the EU in 1995, regional development policy has focused on supporting bottom-up regional development, shifting the emphasis of this policy domain from redistribution to development based on each region's own assets and conditions (Niklasson 2015). The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket, is the main partner for regions in implementing regional development plans including innovation and enterprises. On its website, the agency describes its role as "promot[ing] sustainable growth and competitive companies in all parts of Sweden … by supporting and

strengthening companies and regions". In recent years, regional development plans have increasingly defined culture and creative activities as important elements in regional development, alongside economic growth, a skilled workforce, and attractive living environments.

Employment policy

Employment policy in Sweden concerns issues relating to the labour market and labour law, including issues of gender equality and non-discrimination. The Ministry is also responsible for the work of advancing gender equality and human rights at the national level. The largest organisation of the employment policy domain is the Swedish Public Employment Office, which implements employment policy on an everyday basis; working with individuals who would like to enter the workplace, either through employment, self-employment, studies, or some other activity offered within general employment policy programmes. Closely linked to employment policy are the social security systems linked to unemployment, unemployment insurance in particular.

The threshold to enter the creative work market is relatively low, as there is no need for specific or large investments. At the same time, creative professionals have a high general level of education. This results in a work market that is highly competitive and fragmented, and professionals willing to accept poor and precarious work conditions. In contrast to industries characterised by large companies, the creative field consists of a large number of micro-businesses and self-employed individuals, and a very small number of large organisations, whether they be public or private. Altogether, this means that it is difficult to negotiate work conditions, and many individuals are willing to work part-time or for low income just in order to be able to work in the field (Lindström 2016; Van Assche and Laermans 2022). This characteristic of the creative work market makes it difficult to align with employment policy, since employment policy aims to match individuals with the needs of the labour market. This is probably the reason for the emphasis in policy on enterprise development and market access when it comes to the creative sector. From a policymaking perspective, developing business support for creative professionals and businesses is a way of strengthening the potential of creative professionals to access (labour) markets, as this allows creative professionals more tools to develop their own competence and their own business and work models. Developing employment policy, and in particular social security systems, is a much more complicated matter, and cultural policy cannot be expanded in order to support creative professionals without being criticised.

Developing better conditions for creative work at national and subnational level

CCI policy was introduced in Sweden in 2010 as a way of integrating cultural and enterprise policy through programmes and incentives facilitating

creative work as market venture. The first government action plan for CCI was signed by both the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Enterprise. In its implementation, however, Swedish CCI policy followed traditional forms regarding the division of commissions between agencies in either cultural or enterprise policy domains. Most commissions were coordinated by national agencies within the enterprise field (Lindqvist 2023).

Since the 2000 Lisbon Agenda of the European Union, the agency of regions in European countries has been strengthened in relation to the state, since regions have access to EU monetary support for development policy programmes. In Sweden, regions and municipalities have a high level of independence both in relation to each other and in relation to the national government, and all levy their own taxes. There are fewer policy domains at regional level than at national or municipal levels. Besides responsibility for healthcare and regional transport services, regions work in regional development including culture and business, aiming at enabling attractive living and activity conditions for tax subjects (individuals and companies). Just as on national and local levels, regional policy tends to be decided upon in functionally specialised committees and policy programmes tend to be implemented in functionally separated administrative departments. This means that creative work can be part of integrated regional development policy, but will probably be implemented by individual departments receiving specific commissions implemented by regional administrations.

Regional development policy implementation is also challenged because it is fragmented and distributed across national and regional levels due to what is called "big" and "small" regional policy (including quotation marks, such as in Dir 1999:2), respectively. As stated in the 1999 committee directive on regional policy (Dir 1999:2):

> *"Small" regional policies are allocated funds within expense area 19 Regional equalisation (utjämning) and development in the state budget. "Big" regional policy refers to activities within other expense areas significant for regional equalisation. Examples of important areas include the communication sector, the educational sector, and the state. Examples of important areas are national subsidy and equalisation systems across municipalities.* (Dir 1999:2, unnumbered pages. Translated by the author; quotation marks original.)

Even though the concept of equalisation has been replaced by the concept of development in later policy documents, the division of "big" and "small" regional policymaking points to the fact that many elements determining regional economic (and other) conditions and development fall outside of regional and local government control. Regional development is dependent on national policy priorities in a range of domains from infrastructure to education, which means that the regional effects of "big" regional policy are larger than those of "small" regional policies, although subnational

governments cannot greatly impact the former (Norberg 1999:16). "Small" regional policy tends to consist of business support using regional resources. As a result, when it comes to planning for creativity, governments at the national and subnational levels can make sure that hygiene factors are in place that facilitate the establishment of creative work, from cheap accommodation and digital as well as physical infrastructure to cultural and creative outlets in the form of cultural education for children and adults, whereas direct business development support can be developed more hands-on to the extent that creative work is prioritised as an industry. Accordingly, what regions and municipalities can do to support creative work is to a large extent dictated by national and municipal cultural, enterprise, and municipal planning policies; but on the margins, tailored support for business development can broaden the road to market engagement for individual creative professionals. This, however, largely builds on voluntary engagement from creative professionals as well as from municipalities and regions.

Limits of policymaking, crisis support, and new interest in integrated policymaking for the creative field

The COVID-19 pandemic had a massive impact on international cultural and creative sectors (OECD 2020; UNESCO 2021; Khlystova, Kalyuzhnova and Belitski 2022). With it, the income and working conditions of creative professionals became a topic of policy discussion worldwide. The inability of the Swedish welfare system (unemployment and sickness support) to secure a decent level of income for creative professionals also became apparent. Employment policy in Sweden aims to match individuals with the needs of the labour market. The Swedish welfare system was developed during a period of growth of Swedish exports in heavy industry, and bears clear signs of this history. Welfare insurance is based on an individual's income from employment *or* their income as self-employed individuals—but not both. This means that it is ill-suited to the way many creative professionals earn their living, often resulting in substantial income fluctuations over periods of time. Substantial amounts of public support were distributed to organisations and individuals in Sweden in order to secure the survival of the field in the period 2020–2022.

The drastic reduction in income for creative professionals in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic made policymakers realise the fragility of the creative economy. Besides substantial support to creative businesses and professionals, the Minister of Culture in Sweden commissioned several government investigations so as to have a better basis for future policymaking relating to conditions of creative work. The first government investigation commissioned in 2021 presented a number of policy measures to enable a restart of culture after lockdowns (SOU 2021:77). One of the proposals in the report of this investigation was to develop a ten-year national strategy for CCI. This was something that had been called for by public as well as private stakeholders since the

national government action plan for CCI in 2010–2012. A commission for such a national strategy was presented by the Minister of Culture in late 2021 (Dir 2021:100). In a press release on 5 November 2021, the Minister of Culture was quoted as stating that:

> *[t]he cultural and creative industries employ many artists and creative professionals in a range of areas. CCI is a sector that will have a significant impact on the development of society; for example within regional development, export and innovation, as broadly understood. We need a coherent and long-term strategy to promote a sustainable development of these industries in the coming years. With this decision, we take one of the suggestions from the government's official investigation on the restart of culture towards concretisation.* (Translation from Swedish by the author)

In the recognition of the complexity of professional careers and business models in the creative field, this ambition for a national CCI strategy comes close to the 2010 action plan for CCI, but goes further in that it indicates a need for more substantial horizontal coordination across policy domains; or, in other words, policy integration. This was perhaps the first time that policymakers explicitly pointed to the limitations of the current welfare system in relation to a professional group that does not fit within the taken-for-granted categories of actors subject to that welfare system. In the investigation report (SOU 2022:44) published in late summer 2022, CCI is described as a matter for cultural policy, enterprise, regional development policy, rural policy, education policy, as well as for trade and promotion policy. Another proposal in the restart investigation following the COVID-19 outbreak was for a second government investigation into solutions for a more integrated social security system for creative professionals in Sweden. This investigation was presented in spring 2023 (SOU 2023:30). As the parliamentary majority changed after the elections in Sweden in September 2022, it is still in 2023 unclear what the new government's view on the policy proposals will be. A policy or strategy initiated by one government may, due to ideological or other reasons, be downplayed by an ensuing government, and elections therefore represent a risk for any policy proposal (Lindqvist 2023).

Is an integrated policy approach to creative work possible?

The fact that a strategy is proposed by an investigation committee does not mean that there will soon be a policy in place along recommended lines. This depends both on political priorities and characteristics of the policymaking system and process. For one, the challenges of designing and implementing integrated policy are significant and demand a substantial effort on the part of government across several policy domains (Peters 2006; Skelley 2008). It is not enough that there is a proposed solution to a policy problem for a policy to be designed and decided (Kingdon 1984). There should not simultaneously be

other significant problems calling for decisionmakers' attention, since this might lead to the issue at hand becoming down-prioritised. From the perspective of creative professionals, and others who are concerned about the prosperity of CCI, what remains is the option of continuing to lobby for the importance of renewed policy initiatives to facilitate development of CCI. The investigation into a future integrated CCI strategy lists well-known challenges of integrated policy domains, such as silos in government administration. It has also identified important elements to address within a national strategy; in particular copyright legislation and remuneration regulations within the EU, the network structure of the creative field with flexible (precarious) employment and labour market, and the different conditions for CCI work in rural and urban areas. The development of an enterprise-oriented CCI policy—which has until now been the main focus of policymakers in Sweden since 2010—will strengthen support for business development and self-employed individuals working in the creative field. But it does not remedy the gap between welfare systems for employed and self-employed individuals.

The first challenge of policy integration or cross-sectoral policy coordination is that horizontal integration and coordination is difficult in structures with strong vertical chains of command and accountability (Bouckaert, Peters and Verhoest 2010; Tosun and Lang 2017; Baulenas and Sotirov 2020). It is much easier to argue for an integrated policy than to implement such a policy. Strong vertical chains of command secure efficient implementation of specific decisions in public administration but hampers horizontal coordination that involves more than one such chain of command (Greve, Lægreid and Rykkja 2018). Another challenge integrated policy support poses to development of creative work and creative enterprises is that policy needs to be general, and the creative field is characterised by a broad range of activities and areas with exceedingly different dynamics and conditions (Potts 2011; Hearn 2020). It has proved difficult to find general policy solutions to the many challenges faced by creative professionals making a living through non-profit as well as for-profit work (Tafel-Viia 2014; Lindner 2018; Lee 2020). Countries like Finland (MEAEF 2020; Baujard et al. 2021), Germany (IKKB 2022), and the UK (HM Government 2018) have developed long-term strategies and policy frameworks for support that stimulate bottom-up innovation and collaboration in both cultural and industrial creative areas instead of general, top-down support schemes implemented across the country. These are, however, in practice limited to the business (for-profit) sector. These strategies are designed as industry-specific enterprise policies, where CCI is divided into a number of sub-areas for which specific policies are developed.

Conclusion

So, to what extent is it possible to plan for creativity, in the sense of making policy to support development in cultural and creative fields across non-profit

and for-profit activities? From EU and Swedish policymaking, we have learned that providing support for either non-profit *or* for-profit creative work is easier than trying to support creative professionals who are simultaneously or interchangeably engaged in both. This is because of the general character of Swedish policymaking on one hand, and because of the lack of EU competence in the field of culture on the other. Designing an integrated CCI policy (which has been called for by many actors) where the individual creative professional is at the centre, is much more difficult than supporting either businesses or non-profit creative endeavours. This becomes visible when creative professionals become ill or unemployed or when their business fails: they suffer economically from their portfolio careers. A new CCI policy recognising this character of much creative work (Nijzink, Hoogen and Gielen 2017) would need to be transversal itself. An integrated CCI policy should also recognise the spillover effects of creative work in the form of tourist attractions, social cohesion, and cross-industry innovation. Even though separating policy into different domains is understandable, a coherent understanding of the close links between the multiple dimensions of creative work (that often end up in different policy domains, resulting in unnecessary hampering of creative work) would be valuable in the next generation of CCI policy.

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Note

1 There are several terms for this policy domain. Industrial policy is used in some UK publications, and economic policy has sometimes been used in titles of published research. The term used by the Swedish government for the specific domain of policy programmes, including support for competitiveness and development of businesses in Sweden, is enterprise policy.

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2 Creative Work in Performing Arts in Sweden

Dreaming of a Joint Performing Arts Lab

Anna Lyrevik

Introduction

A midwinter day's dream

The idea of a cross-organisation collaborative performing arts lab started emerging when I was introduced to the terms and conditions of higher arts education through a rector's assignment at Malmö Theatre Academy (MTA) at Lund University, Sweden. Suddenly, I was amidst conversations about teaching and artistic research as well as ongoing dialogues with professional performing artists in the region. In both exchanges, the future of the performing arts sector—for which the students of the academy are educated—was continually discussed. Often under debate were digital development, audience development and content development, and a concept started to mature in my mind.

The igniting spark to formulate the idea of a lab was an inquiry from a regional newspaper toward the end of 2016. The query was part of an initiative to publish a series of articles, presenting visions from people in the arts and entertainment field in Malmö. The areas covered were film, music, video/computer games, fashion, architecture, literature, performing arts, comics, art, media, food, and humour. As part of the performing arts sector, I was asked to envisage a dream project for the coming year: "If you could wish for a performing arts venture in Malmö in 2017—what would it be?"[1] My answer was:

> I want to see the start of a long-term professional performing arts laboratory in Malmö in collaboration between Malmö University, Lund University, Malmö's independent groups and institutions, as well as residence organisations and individuals. To experiment with what the performing arts of the future could be, based on an increasingly digitalised humanity, and that the role and conditions of public spaces and public discourse have changed in a fully medialised world.
>
> / … / The purpose is to expand the opportunities for experimenting and professional feedback and sharing with more than a close circle. This

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> would lead to Malmö being at the forefront of performing arts in Sweden, precisely because we are so good at collaborating and developing ideas and formats with different competences and perspectives.

The series of articles was published during the Christmas and New Year holidays under the heading "Malmö Dreams".[2]

Taking departure from the project of a collaborative performing arts lab, this chapter aims to illustrate and discuss the structural conditions for artistic development work in the performing arts sector. The chapter explores how two seemingly unrelated measures—shifts in cultural policy argumentation and the government's decision to introduce a doctoral degree on artistic footing in Swedish higher arts education (education policy)—may contribute to reshaping the (Swedish) performing arts sector in the future. The joint performing arts lab described in this chapter illustrates some central challenges in the performing arts sector in Sweden today: perceived policy tendencies leading to less time for and focus on artistic development work, the need to develop digital tools skills, and finding ways to integrate artistic research and its methods into the professional work of performing arts actors outside universities. I argue that artistic research and methods from within higher arts education can play a role in shaping the conditions for artistic development work in the performing arts sector—and therefore affect both cultural and education policy.

In the project descriptions in this chapter, I lean heavily on the material from the preparatory study, which was a collective effort.[3] As rector, and later as a dean, I was deeply involved in its implementation. This fact, combined with my years of professional embeddedness in national and regional cultural policy and cultural sector development, results in the chapter being written from an insider and practitioner's point of view. I draw from my lived experience, in a phenomenological sense; from both artistic and change processes, and from management work. My experiences within artistic higher education and research institutions, and in creative, artistic work during my years as a professional dancer, and the experience I gained working within the cultural sector and with granting authorities all inform the chapter.

Using a mixed theoretical and methodological framework, I explore first-hand experiences and collective processes, drawing on the concept of the reflective practitioner (Schön 1983) and the definition of "familiarity knowledge" as something other than theoretical and practical knowledge (Fjelkestam 2009), although I draw from all three.

Central challenges

Less focus on artistic development work

Most of the performing arts sector in Sweden is highly dependent on public funding. And even though the performing arts sector is relatively better

funded than, e.g., the fine arts sector, the working conditions have become increasingly short-term and insecure over the last few decades (Swedish Government 2018). Both institutions and independent groups have testified that opportunities for experimental work or more risk-taking productions have decreased.

The complexity of Swedish cultural policy has, as in many other countries, grown through more horizontal goals and efforts to integrate cultural policy into, for example, urban planning and sustainable development (Kulturanalys Norden 2018). This development has, among other things, resulted in reduced focus on, and room for, artistic development and in-depth work for performing arts actors. Perceived or expressed expectations of big audiences and more broadly-composed target groups from Swedish granting authorities on national, regional, and local levels, have also increased (Johannisson 2010). Representatives from regional performing arts institutions (among others) claim this has led to the mainstreaming of artistic content, through a focus on well-known and already-established names (e.g., artists, authors) and well-known works and other productions that already have broad public appeal (Lyrevik 2013, 2014). This change in production focus has resulted in less time for in-depth experimental work within performing arts institutions (Lyrevik 2012; Swedish Government 2018). A survey carried out in connection to the so-called "Artist Policy Review" (Swedish Government 2018), also confirms that many artists and artist organisations experience that funders' requirements for results, reporting, and follow-up have increased, while at the same time there is less openness for exploratory artistic processes (Swedish Government 2018). The development resulting in less time for experimental work in the performing arts sector seems, to some extent, to also be the case in other Western countries, but for a diverse range of reasons depending on local, regional, and national policies (e.g., Schneider 2017; Opara et al. 2019).

Developing digital tools skills

The technological digital shift has had a great impact in the performing arts, creating new artistic opportunities, but has also increased competition for competence and for people's time (Swedish Government 2021). Digital tools, with their performative possibilities that significantly simplify the integration of light, video, and multi-channel sound, develop rapidly. These tools facilitate where and how to project video on stage and so on, and are artistic means of expression that can both deepen the narrative and create richer experiences for the audience. Digital tools that enable the performing arts to move out from the traditional stage and create new audience encounters and new performance formats, like audio walks and artistic experiences using augmented or virtual reality are also in development. Through transmedia storytelling, where the artistic experience moves between different media (including live performances), new artistic experiences can be created

alongside the traditional visit to the opera or theatre building. In the field of communicative opportunities, digitalisation is seen as a game changer in all areas of society, and brings with it increased accessibility, but also competition for people's attention and time.

Additionally, the digital shift has been immensely accelerated and in focus for the performing arts during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022). For many cultural actors, the pandemic was a forced jump-start to make their activities available via digital channels, and find new formats to reach their audiences, leading to operational and competence development. The main obstacles were a lack of business models that enabled digitally-mediated cultural offers to meet their financial ends, and challenges related to expanding participation in online content (Swedish Government 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for performing arts institutions to get into the digital arena to explore and develop new formats, methods, and concepts for audiences of the (near) future. In many cases, as in Skåne (the southernmost region in Sweden where Malmö is located), cultural policy has incorporated digital possibilities into its objectives, not least regarding the distribution and reach of culture to more people, and increased participation.

Integrating artistic research

In Sweden, the artistic doctorate was written into the Higher Education Ordinance[4] in 2009, as part of the procedure to fulfil the European Bologna process requirements.[5] The introduction of artistic research at universities is a development in the opposite direction of cultural policy when it comes to opportunities for artistic development work, as its purpose is to provide more space for in-depth artistic exploration. So, while the policy demands placed on performing arts institutions grew and resulted in less time for and focus on artistic development work, a new artistic development space was created within higher arts education.

Since 2009, funding for artistic research from (especially) the Swedish Research Council has come to include not only research projects, but also pre- and postdoctoral positions. Today, the doctoral positions that are advertised in the artistic field, generally attract a great deal of interest from active artists in various fields.

In the development of artistic research within higher education institutions in Sweden, one recurring problem has been funding the artistic productions in which and through which doctoral students conduct their research. In performing arts, most artistic work is made through, and depends on, the collective effort of different professionals (e.g., light, sound, or costume designers; actors; dancers; singers; musicians; directors; choreographers; and/or scenographers). This is costly, but deemed necessary, to carry out one's own part of the artistic research. So, even though artistic research opened new opportunities in theory, there were still problems in practice: production costs are hard to finance fully through ordinary

government funding available to the higher education system. At the same time, general funding for artistic productions, on national, regional, or municipal level, cannot be used while employed full time at a university. If a doctoral student applies for and receives art funding, they must request a leave of absence from their studies to do the artistic production. The same applies to employed teachers/researchers.

The planned collaboration platform was a way to start developing more long-term collaborations that could be part of solving this problem for the university.

Dreaming of a joint performing arts lab

The idea of the performing arts lab emanated from three perspectives coming together. First, decades of recurring conversations in the cultural sector revolved around the fact that, over time, production conditions for the performing arts have changed towards shorter production processes and an increased focus on big/broad audiences, resulting in less time for experimental work.[6] Secondly, this perception of less time for experimental work within the performing arts sector coincided with the development of formal artistic research in Swedish higher education (from 2009 onwards), which in turn opened a path for a new type of in-depth work for artists within institutions of higher education. The third perspective was the impact that the technological digitalisation shift has had, and will continue to have, on the performing arts, creating both new challenges and opportunities (e.g., EMCC 2006; Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis 2015).

Exposing the dream of a performing arts lab in print, through the newspaper article series, triggered further discussion at MTA in the Spring of 2017. Eventually, this led us to approach the Office for Culture at Region Skåne for funding of a preparatory study to examine the prerequisites needed to make this dream of a performing arts lab come true.

Designing the collaboration

After some initial discussions at MTA, we decided to develop the idea of the performing arts lab. We contacted the regional Office for Culture for funding of a preparatory study to explore how and with whom a lab could be set up. It turned out that the Region had already developed a work procedure with formal collaboration agreements with universities on both research and other collaborative projects (Region Skåne 2022), so this was the form in which a preparatory study could be conducted. The Office for Culture recommended we focus on four performing art institutions that are funded and/or owned by Region Skåne: Skåne's Dance Theatre, Malmö and Helsingborg city theatres, and Malmö Opera, which were contacted and were all willing to be part of the study if the application was granted.

Starting points

Both Region Skåne and the participating performing arts institutions wanted to better understand the work that takes place within the universities after the so-called academisation of higher arts education, but also how they can take part in the knowledge production that takes place in these educational institutions. Therefore, one central interest in the preparatory study concerned the experiences and methods that MTA has developed through artistic research, such as methods of thinking through practice (relating to, e.g., Schön 1983) and methods for documenting artistic practice. Another interest was deepening the knowledge about the concepts of embodied, artistic, and discursive knowledge, concepts widely used in artistic research (e.g., Borgdorff 2012).

The preparatory study was therefore an attempt to find ways to integrate the artistic knowledge production that takes place within universities, with the artistic development work of cultural institutions. The project aimed to strengthen the development of regional performing arts in terms of sharing knowledge, networks, formats, methods, and learning for performing artists beyond the project owners, like independent groups and artists.

In the project description to Region Skåne, the outset of the preparatory study was described as follows:

> Today's heterogeneous, fast-moving, and digital world challenges and stimulates. The performing arts and educational institutions that are to constitute long-term, stable platforms for performers and the performing arts, and at the same time are expected to be involved in shaping the performing arts and the performing artists of the future, all struggle with these challenges. What will the performing arts of the future be from the perspective of an increasingly digitalised humanity? / … / In a world where migration, demographic, and climate change evoke images of completely different living conditions in the future? What arenas for public debate, visions and reflection can the performing arts offer in the future? (Theatre Academy 2017, 1)

The four performing arts institutions in the preparatory study all work, in accordance with their political assignments, with these questions and suggest artistic (or other) answers. MTA's task is to train professional performing artists (actors and playwrights) and thus also to develop artistic strategies, methods, and learning that will constitute possible answers to the challenges performing arts and performing artists face today and in the future. The participating institutions (MTA included) have broad assignments, and artistic exploration or more creative investigatory activities that do not directly lead to public or educational results are only possible to a limited extent.

The preparatory study partners expressed three main aims when they agreed to join the study: to have time and resources for artistic development

work to be able to better fulfil their respective assignments, to get more out of development work by integrating the artistic knowledge production and research that happens within universities with the development work of the performing arts institutions for their mutual benefit, and to explore digital tools for artistic development. The goal of the preparatory study was therefore to create a long-term platform for collaboration that expands the exploratory space and the opportunity for professional feedback and sharing in a way that is not usually possible in production-oriented performing arts institutions or in artistic research.

In August 2017, a collaboration agreement was signed between Region Skåne's Office for Culture and MTA (Region Skåne, 2022). SEK 200,000 was allocated for the preparatory study "Performing arts in a heterogeneous, fast-moving and digital world: format, methods and learning".

The preparatory study

MTA was responsible for the study structure, coordination, and implementation. The expected result of the study was a co-created plan and application for a long-term collaboration platform, enhancing possibilities for artistic development work and joint learning for all partners. A project coordinator was hired part-time to manage the planning, documentation, and idea content. During the preparatory study, a total of about fifteen meetings were held. Initially, MTA had individual meetings with the four institutions; thereafter, they held joint meetings with representatives from all four institutions. The meetings were attended by artistic directors, producers, a planning director, a dramaturge, technicians, pedagogues, an ensemble director, and communicators from the performing arts institutions. From MTA, the rector (later dean), several lecturers, a producer, and a project manager all participated. A few feedback meetings were conducted with the Region along the way. The process and results of the preparatory study were also presented in a seminar at the performing arts biennial "Bibu" in Helsingborg in May 2018.

To begin a joint discussion around complex matters, a relevant reference point is needed that all parties can agree on. For the preparatory study, a report by the Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis (2015) was used: "Societal trends and cultural habits—an analysis of the surrounding world". The report focused on five societal trends and cultural habits that particularly affect the cultural sector, and whose conclusions reflected and confirmed many of the starting points defined in the application. The first trend was a more heterogeneous society that provides different conditions for cultural habits. The second trend was a shift towards a more participant-controlled culture where it is easier for citizens to themselves create, be involved in, and shape culture. The third trend was a society of images where the ability to interpret images has become a part of the skills necessary to be able to participate in democratic processes. Fourth, large amounts of data on

people's cultural habits are being used to adapt (at present a commercial) culture to demand, which could lead to uniformity and a lack of innovative culture. And finally, the fifth trend; the cultural offering on the internet is increasingly adapted to the individual with the help of algorithms, posing a risk of people getting caught in so-called "filter bubbles" (Swedish Agency for Cultural Analysis 2015, 8–9).

In the first individual conversations each performing arts institution talked about its activities based on these societal trends, with emphasis on factors that were important for the institution's artistic development. Issues that came up in the conversations included: How can the performing arts act artistically in relation to the cultural changes brought by globalisation, digitalisation, mobility, demography, and climate threats? What will the performing arts of the future be based on in an increasingly digitalised world?

Early on it was clear that there were several common challenges that would be meaningful to address together. One of the prioritised challenges or opportunities was working with digital and interactive technology. How can this technology and these tools be used artistically? How can new technology develop narration in the performing arts? Each of the included genres (theatre, dance, opera) also had some challenges of their own, but the focus was to find relevant common topics, themes, and challenges, that were worth exploring together.

The study was conducted in 2017–2018 with the aim of exploring how the performing arts' unique live experiences could be combined and expanded with existing and upcoming digital and technical possibilities. The main question of the study was: How can the institutions artistically strengthen and develop the performing arts for the benefit of a more diversified and digitally-oriented audience? (Malmö Theatre Academy 2017, 2018).

One of the biggest practical challenges of the study was to get all the participants to meet often enough to not lose momentum when it came to ideas. As the group had several managers, all of whom had little spare time, this was not an easy task. The ability to share thoughts, analyses, and experiences in crucial survival matters with neighbouring performing arts professionals was expressed as greatly rewarding by participants. Genre crossing collaborations like this one were, according to the participants, not very common in the Swedish context.

The preparatory study was an exploratory process that gathered a collective analysis of the situation of the performing arts sector in Sweden, from people who have lived these changes. The total number of years of embeddedness and lived experience of how conditions have changed and what needs to be done to counteract those changes, was extensive in the partner group.

The performing arts lab—final project proposal

The result of the preparatory study was a proposal for a three-year project with the title "Connected stories: A development platform for the creation of

new stories and other audience experiences" (Theatre Academy 2018). The core of the project was to develop knowledge and understanding by exploring the performative properties of digital technology, and to develop dramaturgical and compositional models for a more complex and richer narration for the stage by using artistic knowledge and artistic research methodology. The project focused on three themes, "new audience encounters", "dynamics of difference" and "expanded stage narration", and was based on a view of knowledge that is practical, artistic, and transferable to others.

The theme *new audience encounters* dealt with the question: "How do we ensure that the performing arts are relevant in a globalised and digitalised world? The audience encounter is central to all performing arts. Based on the broad experiences of the participating institutions, the lab will investigate how to work in new audience encounters where different media collaborate in creating the artistic experience. Who is "the audience"? Viewers? Participants? Co-creators?" (Malmö Theatre Academy 2018, 3).

The theme *dynamics of difference* focused on "how performing arts today are intercultural in nature, which means negotiating between different cultural and artistic value systems. Due to the special nature of the performing arts, in which different forms of expression, art, and professional roles have traditionally collaborated, the performing arts are perhaps particularly suited for working interculturally. How can the performing arts use experiences from artists from different traditions in collaboration with diverse artistic expressions and new digital tools to create vital performing arts, where differences become a dynamic force for development through new encounters?" (Malmö Theatre Academy 2018, 3).

The theme *expanded stage narration* dealt with "the international discussion of new forms of storytelling, audience encounters, non-hierarchical working models, and new aesthetic expressions and investigates new media tools stemming from stage composition where the integration of text, acting, song, dance, choreography, music, video, light, space, and so on happens." (Malmö Theatre Academy 2018, 3).

The proposed performing arts lab platform was composed of several flexible but recurring collaboration modules consisting of workshops, digital labs, seminars, invited guests, openly accessible documentation, methods for joint reflection, and more (Theatre Academy 2018). Modules were directed at different professions within the performing arts, and the focus was on narration in "new" media like transmedia storytelling, integration of audial and visual narration, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR).

The preparatory study clearly pointed out that a flexible model was necessary to cater to all institutions taking part in several parts of the project, and to be able to adjust the content along the way from what is learned during the early phases, since no one can predict the outcome in advance. The flexible model also increases the openness to invite more parties in different parts of the collaboration and creates conditions for joint learning based on methods from the artistic research conducted at MTA.

When the final application was sent to the Region in September 2018, four out of five partners were still part of it (Skåne's Dance Theatre decided not to take part due to a change of leadership). The applied-for sum was quite high for a development project, but the cultural officers strongly supported it, since it involved the main part of the regional performing arts institutions and contained untested collaborative approaches. However, after the 2018 election, severe cuts were made in the regional culture budget, and funding from the Region for the three-year project was not granted.

Keeping the dream alive—alternative ways forward

In the summer of 2021, the Region reconnected to discuss the possibilities of furthering the ideas from the preparatory study. They were planning new calls for funding, due to some new arguments in their latest regional cultural plan for the 2021–2024 period (Region Skåne 2021) which were in line with the proposed lab.

In the cultural plan, a new objective had been added: "Stimulate new models, methods and collaborations for artistic experiments", which was concretised as follows:

> Experimental exploration contributes to renewing and developing art and culture. Constantly testing the artistic content and challenging people's notions of what art and culture are and can be a means of testing new ideas, models, methods, and collaborations. It presupposes an openness to innovation, new ways of working, and partnerships." (Region Skåne 2021, 12)

In the plan, the degree of concreteness in several of the action points had increased in relation to its predecessor, the regional culture plan for the period 2016–2020 (Region Skåne 2015). This applied, for example, to digitalisation, where the focus on content was clarified:

> Digital development provides new conditions for creating and taking part in art and culture. More cultural actors will be stimulated to explore how they can work innovatively with new designs and narrative forms through various digital solutions and moving images. (Region Skåne 2021, 20)

In early 2022, Region Skåne announced two new calls for project funding in line with the development at which the Performing Arts Lab was aiming: "Digital opportunities for new artistic methods, techniques and expression" and "Residencies for cross-disciplinary collaboration" (Region Skåne 2022). The granted projects in the digitalisation call were disseminated in a conference at the Inter Arts Centre in Malmö on December 9, 2022: "Artistic creation through digital tools" (Inter Arts Centre 2022), in which the

projects had realised some of the work envisioned in the lab application. One of the partners from the preparatory study, Malmö City Theatre, was one of the presenting project owners.

Effects of collaboration between artistic research, performing arts institutions, and regional policy

The prevalence of collaborations between artistic research and both artistic and other organisations seems to be growing in number in Sweden (Nyberg and Östlind 2021). As artistic research is making its way and finding its methods in different parts of the world, interest in the research and the impact of the research are growing (Prior 2018). Developments in artistic research and knowledge production have, as the preparatory study is an example of, aroused curiosity among cultural institutions and cultural policy actors in Skåne, which has paved the way for new types of collaborations. Since the culture officers at the regional level closely follow what happens 'on the ground', influences are sometimes, as this case indicates, acted upon more swiftly.

The ambitions in the preparatory study are intertwined in time and content with the fact that Region Skåne has tried new ways of achieving the complex goals that have been developed over time in cultural policy. One example is the renewed regional approach with collaboration agreements with universities on research and other collaborative projects. The Region has also (to date) introduced two new funding schemes connected to the suggestions from the preparatory study: "Digital opportunities for new artistic methods, techniques and expression" and "Residencies for cross-disciplinary collaboration".

The increasingly complex objectives of cultural policy and the enhanced demand for the artistic knowledge production that takes place within universities can be seen as part of the same tendency: a growing demand for collaboration between universities, policy actors and cultural institutions. Collaborations in new forms and in new organisational and thematic constellations—of which the preparatory study was an example—are likely to be something we will see more of in the future.

As we have seen, higher arts education, including artistic research, is part of national education policy, and performing arts institutions are part of cultural policy on the national, regional, and local levels. Since education policy and cultural policy to a great extent are two separate policy areas in Sweden, this chapter indicates that the overlap between education policy and cultural policy will be interesting to study. How might education policy and cultural policy in Sweden affect each other in coming years?

The preparatory study shows that artistic research questions and methods (education policy) seem to have an impact on both cultural policy and artistic practice, which indicates that the overlap between education and

cultural policy will be more interesting to study in the future. One complication is that, at government level, Swedish cultural policy was separated from education policy in 1991.[7] This means that the two policy areas, since then, are not generally coordinated at the national level.

The case of the described project shows the slow evolution of discourses and contexts, sometimes leading to paradigm shifts. In this case (the preparatory study), at least as an indication at the regional level, where changes in policy and calls were made in line with the findings and suggestions in the preparatory study the Region had funded some years earlier, and where education policy and cultural policy interact.

The preparatory study had a special focus on digital technologies and performing arts. This chapter highlights the digital shift, which will continue to influence performing arts in the future. To what extent will new technological innovations change the perception of what performing arts can be in the future? Interesting work is being done in different parts of the performing arts sector, but we are still awaiting the shift toward mainstreaming the digitally-integrated transmedia experiences dreamt of in the proposed performing arts lab.

Notes

1 E-mail of 2016-12-02 from journalist Jonas Gillberg at the regional newspaper Sydsvenskan.
2 http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2016-12-28/malmos-scenkonstliv-drommer-om-dramalabb-mff-musikal-och-twitter-opera, accessed 28 December 2016.
3 For a complete list of participants in the preparatory study, see https://portal.research.lu.se/sv/projects/f%C3%B6rstudie-scenkonst-i-en-heterogen-snabbr%C3%B6rlig-och-digital-v%C3%A4rld-, accessed 26 October 2022. Kathrine Winkelhorn, project coordinator, and Jörgen Dahlqvist, senior lecturer at MTA, deserve special mentions for their contributions to the study.
4 Chapter 6, Section 5.
5 See the European Higher Education Area and Bologna process, accessed 11 December 2022. http://ehea.info/index.php
6 I have been involved in these conversations through my roles in granting authorities, cultural institutions, municipal and regional cultural administration, and as part of the Swedish dance community.
7 With the formation of a Ministry of Culture from the former Ministry of Education.

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3 Creative Work and Social Innovation

The Case of Innovating in an Open-Air Museum

Malin Andersson

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Amsterdam promoted the annual "Outdoor Office Day" in collaboration with a firm that produces outdoor offices for citizens and visitors (Nature Desks 2021). This rather new idea and public service, offering city space and equipment for outdoor offices, arrived at a time when work, health and nature were on people's minds more than ever. The advertisement for the event stated that many work from home, referring to the COVID restrictions that made office staff meet and work digitally, rather than in the ordinary workplace. In addition to this, the city implied that it is healthy "to take your work outdoors" (ibid.).

Finding new ideas like this, to innovate, and to emphasise creativity in communication, are parts of an explicit ambition in many public institutions today. But, considering that public institutions are often thought of as rigid and routinised, can such organisations really be creative? There is a discursive change towards innovation, in for instance how the EU encourages and financially supports rural firms to develop new ideas for rural sustainable development (Andersson 2021, 2019). Municipalities and cities state a need to develop new ideas in relation to change, like the pandemic's effect on office work and meetings. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to understand how officials do and talk about innovation in a public management context. The following questions surface: how is innovation defined, managed, and presented between the municipality management and the implementation level? The chapter focuses on one case of innovation that is being developed in a middle-sized city in Sweden: outdoor offices and conferences in an open-air museum.

Theoretical outlook

Over the last decades, the notion of innovation has also gained more attention in management theory (Bilton and Cummings 2014, 73). The word innovare, from Latin, means to renew. It is therefore closely related to the notion of creativity. Innovation can mean to break free from established norms and do things in a new way, where "the new" should be of value to

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someone, in one way or another. Creativity can refer to the creation of a completely new product, or to the capability of coming up with ideas, or to renew something.

According to classical innovation theory, innovations emerge in disruptions of previously established markets, and through crisis that terminates that previous structure. Innovation is a concept that is associated with such "creative destruction" and with entrepreneurship (Schumpeter 1994). In this theory, it is assumed that innovations have an economic dimension and that they are driven and can be assessed by a market. For something to be called innovative in that sense, the novel thing or process entails some new, improved value for the consumers in that market. It is also common in classical innovation theory and practice to use technical terms, and to focus on inventions of things in the realm of engineering. This text focuses however on the creation of new ideas and the development of public services. Public organisations are permeated by norms and values about what creativity and innovation are. Thus, doing innovation is a discursive practice that is enacted within a specific social and cultural context.

Literature on social innovation

The meaning of innovation has changed and expanded over time. Today, innovation is more often understood in terms of social processes and collaborative achievements (Aasen and Amundsen 2013). The term social innovation has emerged because a new idea might not always be a product, an artefact, or a commodity. It can also be a new way of doing things together. Social innovation is about developing new processes, rather than inventing new products (Nählinder 2013). According to social innovation theory, change emerges via a series of events. Innovation tends to occur "incrementally", meaning that it emerges in small steps, based on existing structures and resources (Aasen and Amundsen 2013, 44).

In the political science literature, there is a wide range of themes related to social innovation, such as governance, participation, public management innovation, living labs, innovation labs and anticipatory innovation (Vorre Hansen and Fuglsang 2020). One set of studies investigates new thinking on governance, democracy, and the involvement of citizens (Lund 2018), while another stream focuses on the conditions required and different methods employed for social innovation (Mulder 2012). There is also management research that explores similar and overlapping themes, such as the public service logic (Engen et al. 2021), co-worker-driven innovation (Aasen and Amundsen 2013, 124) and service innovation (see also below, Kristensson, Gustafsson and Witell 2014).

Research on innovation in the public context is still relatively scarce (Nählinder 2013; Nählinder and Fogelberg Eriksson 2019). Social science research on innovation is however growing and some themes can be identified, such as organisational structures for innovation, innovation culture,

innovation management and co-working for innovation (Aasen and Amundsen 2013). In the public sector, innovation is hardly ever as radical as the creative destruction theory claims. Social innovation research shows that new ideas tend to emerge in collaborations across different boundaries, in between different fields of knowledge or professions, and across different forms of divisions and organisations. The innovative capacity of organisations and open innovation, is said to build on the combination of knowledge and people's ability to learn from each other, collaborate and co-create value (Aasen and Amundsen 2013). The correspondence between existing knowledge about social innovation and its everyday practice is however skewed, while empirical research on innovation has been neglected (Aasen and Amundsen 2013, 273).

Since the 1990s, European authorities have encouraged partnerships between private and public actors, paired with encouraging entrepreneurial leadership (Osborne 2006, 379). It is often debated whether innovation in the public sector can be governed in accordance with a market logic, as in the private sector. Having said that, new commercial or non-commercial products and service products can be an outcome of public innovation processes, with for example new digital geographical information system interfaces, new payment and ticket systems or new types of events. Within public management, social innovation processes often have social purposes. Management of the public sphere is in most contemporary European countries done in a context where citizens are thought to be served based on paid taxes, and according to a distribution model that is decided by the democratic system and via current political roles.

Literature on service innovation

One type of social innovation that is often mentioned in public management is innovation through public service user involvement. One example is when a division of social work implements new methods for social inclusion, or when the division of city buildings designs a new project process for ensuring sustainability assessments across all aspects of its activities. The concept of service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2018; Grönroos 2019) addresses the importance of co-creation of value between service producers and customers. Improving value, as experienced by customers or clients involved in this co-creation, is sometimes termed service innovation (Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers 2015; Jonas et al. 2018). The concept comes from marketing theory, and, in the context of public services, this theory emphasises co-creating value with citizens who pay taxes to fund municipal services (Grönroos 2019). A service innovation is according to this school always depending on that the users experience an improved value. Engen et al. (2021) argue that the notion of service logic in public management constitutes a shift, because value has until recently been produced with weak involvement from citizens in welfare services (ibid., 3).

Critical perspectives on innovation

One stream of literature focuses on the everyday practices of doing innovation. Because innovation has an obvious and important social dimension, there is a need for a contemporary critical social theory that assists an understanding of the different actors involved and the social interplay between them. Sociologist Hartmut Rosa argues that the time dimension has been neglected in theories about human interactions in general (Rosa and Trejo-Mathys 2013; Rosa 2019) and he states that humans increasingly seek out innovations, and therefore the world is being perceived as changing at an ever-accelerating speed. (ibid.). Richard Sennett (2007, 2011) takes a similar approach in his critique of Western capitalist culture and the contemporary cultural appraisal of constant change and flexibility. Change takes place more frequently he states, and the world economies are therefore bound to move ever faster. The human perception and construction of time is transformed in itself, and that affects how humans view the future, Rosa (2019) argues.

Rosa (2019) discusses why innovation has gained so much attention in recent years and concludes that it is because we experience time as accelerating. This causes new experiences of new problems which need new solutions (Rosa and Trejo-Mathys 2013; Rosa 2019). The argument resembles Sennett's (2007, 2011) much earlier observations of the Western economies and job markets, where he finds that growth, efficiency, flexibility and innovation are terms put at the centre of Western culture (Sennett 2007, 2011). Also, Reckwitz (2017) argues that corporations and institutions are in a constant mode of finding new ideas to motivate their existence, while individuals tend to get stuck in an ever-accelerating loop of reinventing themselves accordingly. Rosa (2019) is sceptical to how much attention is being paid to the notion of innovation today (ibid., 370) and argues that this is connected to social acceleration, a speeding up of society that will and already has caused different crises in the environment, in democracies and in people's minds (Rosa 2019, 308, 412).

To sum up, the research field of innovation has been dominated by technical and prescriptive studies. The sociological dimensions of innovation practices could be more elaborated, where Rosa's concept of resonance (ibid.) is helpful. Resonance is the dialectical relationship between people's actions and the world, a concept that he suggests can improve our lives.

Resonance is a view of social life as an ongoing dialogue with the world, in which people need to carefully consider their plausible responses. Understanding innovation from this perspective, people's new ideas, actions and creativity are not only seen as originating in individual action, but they also constitute responses to change, and are formed by dynamic social and cultural contexts. Innovation is thus understood as social responses to change in the world. This chapter departs from this perspective, together with the understanding that innovations are collective processes

that emerge out of complex socio-cultural processes (Aasen and Amundsen 2013, 273–291). This puts the practice of doing innovation in focus. Innovation is a term that is often used in everyday talk about new products and services, but also in talk about renewal processes and social change. This discursive practice, people's actions, and speech acts, convey certain terms, meanings, and views about the world (Hall 2001).

Methods

To study processes of realising an idea in real-time and on-site, the author collected qualitative empirical material from texts, observations, and interviews. This fieldwork took place during 2021, in communication and meetings with the museum project leader. The texts were collected from the municipality's webpage, while observations were conducted in the outdoor office prototypes in the museum. Seven officials at different levels in the municipality were interviewed for 30–45 minutes. Their respective roles were as follows: the head of the city, the head of the cultural division, the leader of the city's innovation network, the head of the open-air museum, two museum developers/culture pedagogues, and one prototype-tester/museum visitor. All participants were introduced to the research context and offered anonymity. All of them gave consent and were also informed about access to and the storage of the material. The interviews were partially transcribed, and the quotations used in the analysis have been translated by the author. The analysis of the data followed a two-step process of initially identifying empirical themes and reoccurring patterns. In the second step these categories were related to previous studies and to Rosa's thoughts on social acceleration and innovation.

The case of outdoor offices and conferences

In 2020, the city in question had been awarded second place in a prestigious international innovation award. By the early summer of 2022, a month-long international city expo took place, and the theme of that whole occasion was to demonstrate a capacity for urban innovation. Several innovation processes had been financially supported and promoted during months of planning and large meetings. In spectacular events and exhibitions all over the city, most of the municipality's divisions presented their innovations at the expo. The case study presented in this chapter is one of these innovation processes.

The open-air museum is located in the city and the history goes back to 1798 when the area was acquired by a local governor, who built a country house and a park on the property. Generations later, in 1918, the area was given to the city as a gift from the owner, on the premise that it should be open to the public as an open-air museum. Entire city blocks of the old city centre were moved to the museum centre. Today, the museum has been developed into

an open-air museum with a large botanical garden, several meadows for cattle and old farm buildings, including a restaurant and an open-air theatre. The museum hosts several events and conferences annually and co-operates with many local entrepreneurs.

During the pandemic the museum experienced a large increase in visitor numbers. Their outdoor conferences became increasingly popular due to the indoor meetings restrictions. In April 2020, the museum received funding to develop the idea of outdoor conferences and offices. By the spring of 2021, the preparations for the city expo had started, and the museum was in full swing of testing all new innovations.

The why of municipal innovation

The municipality hosts a homepage that is dedicated to the theme of innovation across all municipality divisions. An explicit aim, regularly stated by the public officials, is to "respond to big challenges" and to improve the city for the citizens. The intention is to share information about all the innovations that are funded, including the idea in question, discursively framed as "solutions to challenges". The webpage informs about the status of each idea, a potential "innovation", and how the innovation can solve problems. For instance, the webpage states that:

> … [this is] one of Europe's most innovative cities and one of the reasons is that we believe in collaborating with the world around us to solve our challenges. / … / Maybe you have ideas or suggestions that can help us solve them? / … / We work for a slightly smarter, more sustainable, and caring city – one challenge at a time. (City webpage)

Around 15 challenges are addressed. One of the tabs on the homepage groups all the ideas together, a total of 298 activities. Each of the initiatives is represented by an image and a short description. A three-grade scale indicates the project's status, for instance the mode of "being explored". Others are categorised as being "under sharp testing", meaning that the idea is in the process of being tried out as a "pilot" or a "prototype", on a small scale. The state of being "under realisation" means that the innovation is fully developed and implemented in practice. For instance, the division of social work presents an idea of how to create more attractive living conditions for the elderly in the municipality, by mitigating loneliness. Another idea, coming from the cultural division, is to make the municipality's music teaching more individual and a third idea, expressed by the health division, is to promote psychological wellbeing among young people.

This chapter focuses on one of these innovations, which is really comprising two interrelated ideas: the outdoor office and outdoor conferences at a time of distancing. This is motivated by a need for space to do office work "side by side with entrepreneurs, students and researchers", among citizens,

public-sector employees, and local business communities. What is considered new here, is thus both an offer to do office work in the outdoors and a venue for people who normally do not work together:

> … the museum is evaluating and testing an idea for an outdoor office in the open-air museum's green cultural-historical environments. The goal is to create a co-working space outdoors, where meeting spaces are combined with individual workplaces. (City webpage)

The outdoor conferences had been tested a few times already before the pandemic. According to the museum developers, the activity quickly became increasingly popular in the COVID-restrictions period. This event and the experiences of a real change in the demand for outdoor museum visits, is also described as the starting point for the innovation project, by the project leader. The description on the homepage adds to the explanation, not only for why the outdoor conferences were funded, but also why and how the outdoor office is being developed and tested: "… the view of where and how office work takes place has changed. We see a future scenario where outdoor offices have their given place as one of several satellite offices, next to the home office and the workplace office".

This approach to an innovative use of the open-air museum area, conveys that there has been a norm change in citizens' approach to office work and meetings in the post-pandemic time. These new norms form certain expectations for the future of office work. It is based on the idea that office workers might have already discovered the possibilities of working both outside their regular offices, and doing office work in the outdoors, during a long period of meeting restrictions and "distance work".

The COVID-19 pandemic is thus one dimension of how the ideas came about. In addition, and with reference to work-life research, the project leader states that outdoor activities are healthier. She says that "… the sustainable workplace of the future is a hybrid of outside and inside", expressing a sustainability dimension that is referencing the long-term well-being of office workers. Moreover, several hedonistic values are put forward as desirable, such as experiencing nature in the open-air museum gardens, whilst working.

From a top-management perspective, innovation is constructed as a culture that has certain goals to solve challenges that have to do with office work health and life quality, which also includes the environmental aspects of life:

> … my role is to create innovation muscles and find a method and a structure for working with innovation and to create a culture / … / In general, we need to both solve problems and improve the working conditions for our co-workers …, /…/ We don't do innovation just for the fun of it, we do it because we see major challenges, and for increasing

> the quality of life of citizens, also to protect the environment and health and so on, and we must find new solutions for solving this. (The head of the city)

The capacity to implement new ideas and to do innovation work is here matter of responding to challenges in new ways. Doing innovation work in public management, then, constitutes a response to the outer world, as Hartmut Rosa (2019) suggests. Here, the COVID crisis-related health problems and the office work-related problems of individual isolation and stress are formulated as the risk.

Attracting new visitors is one challenge, changing established traditional norms that surround office work is another: "The bottom line is that innovation is about daring to challenge our present working methods", the manager states. In this sense, the why of innovation work in public management is also about responding to change in the more social and cultural sense.

The terminology used relates to citizens and museum visitors as a market: "… we also give the business a completely new niche, which in turn can serve as a springboard for new visitors to discover the open-air museum and the botanical garden". Besides this, the innovation work is a matter of challenging and opposing "old ways" of how services should be offered in a museum, and this is expressed on both the management level and the operative level.

Co-creative innovation work

The homepage offers a step-by-step guide for innovators, where both citizens and city staff can start innovation processes by downloading a template. Potential participants are asked to fill in a questionnaire, mapping her or his ideas and thoughts. This invitation to citizens is further explained in an interview with the head of the city, who says that "we can't do it by ourselves, we have to involve our citizens and our enterprises".

Several types of collaborations are being described by interviewees as a necessary condition for realising creative ideas and projects. For instance, the project leader has found inspiration to the outdoor offices and conferences in a regional development research project in another municipality. An EU-funded project in that city was initiated by a social science researcher a few years ago, and over time they have become collaborating partners with the open-air museum. In the annual Outdoor Office Day, several researchers hold open lectures about their projects and the benefits of outdoor office work. Another collaborative partner, involved in the museum creative process, is a local office design firm that designs and produces outdoor office furniture and office prototypes. One of the museum developers points out in an interview that discussing and trying out several different prototypes together with this firm has been key for the creative process, and visitors take

part in testing these prototypes, as an example of yet another collaboration partner. While different types of knowledge in separate fields of expertise and experiences, viewpoints or cultures, often are crucial conditions for generating ideas and realising innovations, collaborations constitute a key feature of innovation practices (Mačiulienė and Skaržauskienė 2020). Even though the empirical data emphasises that ideas of non-public actors and citizens are put forward as crucial resources in the creative process, the material says very little about any support or reward from the municipality, in connection with the citizen involvement.

Innovation work as learning

The innovation network leader describes several criteria for deciding which project ideas get financial support. Some ideas are classified as innovative according to a certain standard, while ideas that do not measure up get no financial support. In that sense, the definition of what constitutes an innovation is clear. There is however considerable confusion about the definition of innovation in the total amount of interviews. The head of the city defines innovation by pointing out its meaning to the user:

> I define an innovation as something new, something useful and made useful. It's easy to find and assess something as being new and useful, but it's very common that we don't go any further, in other words that the idea hasn't been made useful, so not having scaled up and not having implemented the idea in real life. And an innovation isn't happening until it's been implemented, and you've brought home the effects / … / We have to make the idea of the outdoor conferences and outdoor offices useful. The vision is to have a co-working area with ten or fifteen outdoor offices and outdoor conferences. It must be integrated as part of the museum's ordinary operations. (The head of city)

In this meaning of the word, it seems impossible to know when something is innovative, until the creative idea has been used. If we view this definition from Rosa's (2019) perspective, what might these outdoor offices and conferences be a response to? What is the municipality assuming that the users want? Two themes were identified in the material, as responses to challenges in the outer world: health issues and digitalisation.

Innovation in response to health issues

The head of the city emphasises that the city works with innovation using a special methodology, in a systematic and structural way. Not just any random idea can get financial support, and with reference to the outdoor offices and conferences he continues: "I love the idea, I think it's fantastic and very good, and it could never have arrived at a better time / … / we talk a

lot in the city about the previous approach to work, and that it's connected to a place". In one sense, testing the idea is bound to a certain place, because some places are constructed as more appropriate for outdoor offices and conferences than others, the open-air museum and garden being one example. The idea is however not only connected to that specific site: "The new thing now, is that work is a matter of delivering on a certain mission, you have a specific assignment in focus. So nowadays we talk about the place-independent working life", one manager states.

Rosa (2019) argues that innovations have to do with a contemporary imperative in modernity related to "bringing more world within reach" (Rosa 2019, 369), meaning that people aim to optimise their time. This is because we tend to wish to experience more things during our life-course. This phenomenon has been termed "bleisure" (Unger and Uriely 2022), referring to a combination of business activities and pleasure/leisure activities (similar to "bizcation", or "workcation"). The outdoor office and conference can be understood as such a flexible and value-adding proposition where citizens can optimise their time by being healthier, while working in a place initially assigned for leisure activities. The user is assumed to be able to work from anywhere, at any time. Also, this implies that the good office worker should strive towards becoming healthier and more effective at the same time. The heightened interest in the outdoors seems to have come about alongside an increased focus on health issues, reinforced by the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, this can be understood as a response to social acceleration and peoples' experience of time, which in a way contradicts the work health theme.

Innovation as response to digital nomadism

It is not only the office, as the place where people used to work, but also the work task that is in focus in this new approach, the head of the city argues. Some contemporary jobs come with the option of spending work hours outside of the initial job location, or office work on the move. The idea here, is that office work is no longer place-bound, so hypothetically it can be done anywhere. People are assumed to have become digital nomads (Richter and Richter 2020), wanting to do office work inside or outside, sitting in so-called satellite offices, or in co-working spaces. Today, after the pandemic, many office workers still work from home several days a week.

The head of the city tells the story of how he himself, during the pandemic, started to do outdoor office work occasionally. While being explicit with this novelty in his own work situation, his staff, colleagues, and followers on social media had initially reacted in a slightly negative way. The mobile work situation was however described as something important to pursue and address:

> But I do this to signal that it's ok to do so! And the point of all this was to change our working conditions for the better. We've had all of our work

> meetings outside during spring and I always post that on social media / … / Sometimes one has this old approach to work, with Luther sitting on our shoulder, saying that it should be hard and wearisome, like work in the era of farming and factory work /…/ but the relaxing and comfortable sides of working, for instance in the gardens, that belongs to the new image of work.

It is said in the public management innovation literature that digitalised economies require rapid transformations, and that municipalities achieve those via management methods such as "agile leadership" and "anticipatory innovation" (Voß and Simons 2018). The former, to be a flexible leader for innovation, is demonstrated by the manager, so the digital development has caused changes that the city responds to. The leadership method of forecasting changes for innovations, before any change has happened, was presented in a large meeting as an ideal for the municipality, although that is not a strong theme in the rest of the empirical material.

In this management context, development of the digital technologies used for office work, plays an important role. It is not certain that Rosa (2019) would describe the new image of work in terms of "relaxation", or as an example of a norm of optimising time and a response to the acceleration in society (Rosa and Trejo-Mathys 2013). Humans' approaches to work have changed in parallel with the development within digital-driven mobility. There are now, for many, more possibilities than ever to commute and combine work with leisure-related travel. The municipality's emerging interest in the idea of outdoor offices and conferences as part of the public services, can be thought of as answers to changes in the digital landscapes. The efforts to change public norms, values, and attitudes towards working life can also be regarded as a response to increased digitalisation. Although, still, it is clearly not easy to change public perceptions surrounding office work.

Creative work as a learning process

Another emerging theme in the material is the process of learning. Much inspired by business life, the municipality's management team offers different test arenas for residents to try and experiment with prototypes. Voluntary testers are invited to book the outdoor offices in a session free of charge. In exchange, the participant answers two questionnaires, post-visit. At the time of the fieldwork, visitors can test two office prototypes: one standing desk and one desk with a chair. One prototype is placed in the middle of a field, next to the cattle in the open-air museum. Another similar prototype is placed by a field of apple trees, and a standing outdoor desk is mounted on a tree. The testing process is a way for developers and managers to gain insight into visitor's experiences and to pilot-market the new services.

The interviews show explicit ambitions to create a culture of testing and experimenting. This is done through a discourse of fearlessness, courage and risk-taking. For instance, one manager forcefully asserts that the notion of testing is vital. He says he appreciates a character of bravery and that risk-taking is a very important criterion for "being innovative" and "for any idea to fly". The city management grants people from the staff annually with an award, called The Mistake of the year:

> The greatest challenge in all innovation work is the organisational fear of making mistakes. Especially in the public sector, we're raised and educated that we cannot make mistakes. We have the authorities, we have media, we have politicians who are reviewing us all the time: "DO NOT make mistakes!" And if you do, you risk ending up on the front pages or something. / … / So, creating cultural change is a major challenge, it's difficult, but important, to test in a small situation and make mistakes, and adjust, and then finally we'll decide and assess whether this idea will be scaled up or not. So, to realise the action capacity and imaginativeness with colleagues in the city, we've developed a model for measuring the effects of an idea. This will be the basis of our assessment, whether the ideas are going to be invested in further and thus scaled up. We talk a lot about effect-measuring, and not everything is measurable in terms of figures, that's how it is, but we nevertheless need to be able to communicate and argue for why we choose to, for instance, perhaps invest half a million crowns in this idea of outdoor offices.

Here, a fearless culture of failure is explicit. On one occasion, a staff training day was arranged for 500 city managers, with the purpose of teaching the right conditions for innovations. The staff was encouraged to be bold and dare to make mistakes. With respect to specifically outdoor offices and conferences, the head of the city emphasised the importance of decentralisation and to give the project leader and developers the freedom to test ideas:

> … to test this rather crazy idea [outdoor offices] / … / not everything will work out, all development is built on making mistakes, to make mistakes, and it's not the mistakes themselves that are interesting, but the experience you gain from making mistakes / … / So we have to have an organisation where we make mistakes, otherwise we can't develop / … / we've even started to have an annual award called the mistake of the year, and this is because we really want to show that we're serious about this culture.

The head of the city argued that the public life in general is extremely controlled by external reviewers. Therefore, they must "go the extra mile", trying to be bold, even if "… it's not the mistake that's interesting, but the learning process". Again, conducting the innovation work in this context

puts emphasis on co-creation as a learning process between the municipality staff and visitors. Testing and mistakes are here being presented as fundamental parts of innovation in the municipality. Schwarz and Bouckenooghe (2021) note that there has been an emerging focus on innovation as a learning process within organisations in general, and that failure is often regarded as a necessary condition for future success.

They find, however, that the literature on organisations and innovation could benefit from a more nuanced discussion about the role of education and knowledge in innovation. A nuanced perspective, they suggest, should not only view failure as a basis of success. While experiences in the form of a "trial-and-error attitude" are idealised, the role of scientific knowledge tends to be downplayed. Schwarz and Bouckenooghe (2021) find this to be of relevance in organisations where there is a strong push towards innovation, because an overly strong focus on risk-taking does not always lead to success. Real failures can ultimately lead to negative outcomes. In public contexts, where public resources are scarce and need to be employed effectively, organisation and innovation should always be coupled with expert knowledge, they argue.

Responsible resonance?

Looking back in time, sociologist Richard Sennett (2007) describes two established approaches to public institutions. In the 18th century, an ideal institution was expected to be strict and predictable, run by routines. This form of strict organisation was considered good in the sense that it symbolised a sense of order. Over time, a different approach emerged, opposing the strict bureaucracy. In contrast, the new view considered routinised work as mundane and harmful to the human soul. Public institutions have often been described as stagnant and producers of hardness and apathy (compare Herzfeld 1993; Paulsen 2016) and therefore creativity might not be the first thing that comes to mind when we think of public management. But as I have shown here, and others before me, it is no longer only capitalist worlds and commodities that are applicable to understand creative work and innovations, but also public institutions (see also Andersson Cederholm and Hall 2020). One important aspect of innovation in the public context studied here, is that the renewal processes are emphasised to be collective achievements.

What are these ideas and innovation practices responding to? The proposed value of outdoor offices and conferences is that they are new for citizens and visitors, and they bring in new income to the public museum. Moreover, the innovations promise more efficient use of existing resources and are said to create better work health for the public. As well as answering to a demand for more efficient use of public resources, another explicit response that the municipality seems to communicate, is to present itself as innovative. This place-branding strategy aspires to attract businesses,

re-visitors, and new citizens. In the case studied here, new and additional ways of using and commercialising a since long established public space, are presented as a new public service. The additional and alternative use of the open-air museum area is expected to increase the efficiency of public spending and the new service products bring in more money to the museum. The services function also as interactive marketing because new visitors might discover the place as a destination for future return visits. The space in question already conveys a certain meaning to visitors: it is well known for its nature, history, and recreation, but not for office work. The innovation work increases the chances to engage and fulfil that original mission, thus teaching citizens about nature and local history. From an economic perspective, the innovation is a new, hybrid commercialisation of an existing resource.

This focus on innovation can be understood as an example of yet another commercial idea that reinforces an accelerating modernity. The outdoor office is indeed in line with the argument that humans of today can (and therefore do) optimise their time, trying to live several lives in a shorter time, by living as effective as possible. To do both work and leisure activities during office hours does in a sense seem very stressful. Further, it blurs the boundaries between work and private spheres of life.

The accelerating quest to address changes, risks tweaking our understanding of time, and this will make humans even more stressed, Rosa (2003) argues. So, is the proposed value of office work in an open-air museum a blind spot to invisible norms that "work should be fun", or to an assumption that the outdoors is always somehow better than sitting inside an office? The innovation in question promises to target stress. To sit in the tree-office or do team building with colleagues in nature is presented as a way to deal with burnout. So, assuming that outdoor offices and conferences are indeed healthier, they can also be understood as the kind of "careful response" that Rosa prescribes as the remedy for social acceleration (Rosa 2019, 443).

From the public management perspective, the innovation work is about communicating a culture of courage, rewarding staff with awards and exposure on the website. It also offers inclusion in special social networks for innovation. The ideas challenge established norms about office work, which is generally expected to happen indoors, and it is an innovation that simultaneously promotes place, and place independence.

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4 Creative Work and Working Space

Marthe Nehl

Negotiating artists space in a local setting

Space is part of the infrastructure required by daily artistic work, and is therefore a decisive factor in the often-precarious conditions of cultural workers (cf. Bain and McLean 2013; Cnossen and Bencherki 2019; Pasquinelli and Sjöholm 2015; Razzoli et al. 2020). As art and culture have become an integral part of urban—and particularly neighbourhood—development, space for artistic work is receiving new attention. Popular policy strategies originating from the US and the UK, such as cultural planning, creative placemaking, and cultural districts (cf. Redaelli 2019) suggest artists have a variety of functions in these development processes, but insufficiently address the prerequisites and conditions for cooperation; especially on the part of artists and cultural workers. Critical takes on these strategies, portray artists simplistically; either as short-term and interchangeable instruments of an unsustainable revitalisation policy (Ratiu 2011), or as long-term and deeply-embedded agents of sustainable urban development (Kirchberg and Kagan 2013; Kagan, Kirchberg and Weisenfeld-Schenk 2019). However, this oppositional dichotomy obscures the question of the artist–subject's autonomy, which not only restricts (Hebert and Szefer 2013), but also blocks the view of other, in-between positions (Borén and Young 2017). In the spirit of pleas for a less polarising discourse, Rotterdam-based artist Jeanne van Heeswijk (2012) asserts that she likes "being an instrument" if it allows her to promote "self-organisation, collective ownership and new forms of sociability" (2012, 79). For her, it is "[t]he artist [who] will have to decide whom to serve" (ibid., 78). I understand this position as, among other things, an expression of dissatisfaction and a call to spur on and experiment with relationships and spaces beyond art.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to unpack the multifaceted relationships between artists and cultural workers and a municipal housing company, who co-organise a neighbourhood art space. Building on the idea that space and precarity are closely linked, and a curiosity regarding the different roles and practices of art and cultural practitioners in the "mundane everyday world" (Borén and Young 2017), I look at *REHAB Kultur*

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(est. 2017), a still young collaboration between cultural practitioners and the public housing company (*"Malmö kommuns bolag"*, hereafter MKB) in the southern Swedish city of Malmö. As a post-industrial, medium-sized city, Malmö has many things in common with other European cities, including the challenges inherent in engaging arts and culture beyond attractiveness and image renewal: to nourish and protect cultural production environments, and facilitate cultural education over the long term. By examining these phenomena at the neighbourhood level, this case study contributes to the discussion of how cultural production may be anchored in the city. In the following sections, I expand on the particularities of the city and the situatedness of the case in question.

REHAB Kultur (in the following only REHAB) is located in Malmö, Sweden's third-largest and fastest-growing city. The diversity of its 350,000 inhabitants finds expression in various aspects of everyday life (cf. Foroughanfar 2022), but also in social fragmentation, high unemployment and crime rates, segregation, and unjust economic conditions (Möller 2021). "[E]verybody who knows the city also knows its poverty and inequality" (Holgersen 2014, 31). Transformed from an industrial area to a post-industrial globalised technology and service-oriented city (Nylund 2014), Malmö is often showcased as exemplifying what it means when neoliberal approaches don't replace—but *build upon*—Sweden's social democratic heritage in (Baeten 2012, 22), leading to challenges in public housing (Baeten et al. 2017; Gustafsson 2021; Grander 2017). As a municipal housing company with a politically-elected board, MKB has to balance different, seemingly contrary ideas like "being socially responsible" and "striving for business-like principles" (cf. Gustafsson 2021, 109).

In the old industrial district of *Norra Sorgenfri*, where cultural life flourished in former industrial buildings, it is easy to see the challenges in balancing and protecting development with and through culture. Here, affordable space still allows various associations to run non-commercial, self-organised studio and exhibition spaces. Alongside a large-scale redevelopment programme, years of dialogue between planners, developers and researchers, and representatives of artists and cultural workers have taken the initiative to protect and even promote cultural life in this area (cf. Brag et al. 2014). REHAB has its roots partly in *Norra Sorgenfri*, where it existed since 2014 under the name *Circulationscentralen* (CC), and has represented the voice of artists and cultural workers in these dialogues, hosting them at their premises. However, the fact is, that the redevelopment scheme leads to artists' displacement. Realising that the renewed quarter would not accommodate the needs of independent, self-organised artist collectives, cultural actors search for affordable space at the outskirts and in the harbour area. CC actors, however, take a different path and move to the east, to the adjacent residential area *Östra Sorgenfri*, where housing and few commercial spaces in the area are almost entirely owned by MKB. CC splits into an artist-run gallery (Gallery CC) and REHAB.

According to Peck and Tickell (2002), the ways in which local neoliberalism is embedded in the urban policy vary, and attention to historical and geographical processes is required. Since 1990, art and culture have played an increasingly influential role in Malmö's regeneration strategy (Möller 2021). As a result, cultural life in the city has changed. In addition to structural changes like the new concert and congress centre, the city of Malmö has launched a *Cultural Strategy* and a corresponding *Action Plan* with the aim of fostering "sustainable development of the entire city" (cf. City of Malmö 2015). The strategy addresses the improvement of working conditions for artists, encourages artistic collaborations with the private sector, and makes children and youth the primary beneficiaries of cultural projects in Malmö. The strategy is outdated, and the scarcity of studio space has reached a critical point, which puts it high on the local cultural authority's agenda (cf. Gillberg 2022). Möller (2021, 445–446) notes a lack of attention to the ways in which cultural aspects are intertwined with the neoliberal, entrepreneurial turn of Malmö's development, and a critical examination of the role of artists is, accordingly, not to be found. Entangled in local politics, I analyse the negotiation of roles, functions, and conditions of artists and cultural workers, and MKB in the context of Östra Sorgenfri, drawing primarily on Doreen Massey's (1994, 2005) concept of relational space, which is outlined below.

Organising (a) relational space

Although many empirical studies, as I will show in a moment, point to multiple roles of artists, either–or thinking is deeply embedded in institutions and reproduced through a variety of discourses. While it is repeatedly underlined that autonomy is to be understood in relative terms (e.g., Fraser 1996; Abbing 2002; Hebert and Szefer 2013) constant conflict with the institutionalised ideal of art prevails (Abbing 2023) and suggests an artist stripped off all relationships and context.

However, numerous empirical studies suggest the necessity of overcoming the limiting binary of artists as either instrumentalised or autonomous, and instead attend to their multiple roles and relationships both with and within the urban context (Markusen 2006; Bain and Landau 2018). Thomas Borén and Craig Young (2017) for example, uncover a variety of relationships between artists and urban planners in Stockholm, Sweden, that are neither clearly in resistance to nor in agreement with planners, but exist rather in what they call a relationship of "mundane dissonance". McLean (2014) engages with the contradictory role of artists in a Canadian regeneration project, and illustrates how they, despite their complicit role, potentially create leverage through what she calls "cracks of the creative city", and Bain and Landau (2018) identify artists as urban visionaries, resisters, collaborators, and intermediaries in Berlin.

With an interest in artists' roles, this chapter addresses the question of space for artistic or cultural work, and links this to time, since interim uses of spaces or ephemeral cultural events such as festivals are common, and spatially embedded long-term concepts such as ownership and cooperative use are rather rare (Bain 2018). Boukje Cnossen (2018) presents space as the ground for self-organisation, which allows for a politicised view on creative production, and shows how organisations endure through active engagement or "tinkering" with physical space, and stabilise temporary and flexible workscapes (Cnossen and Bencherki 2019). Sociologists Damiano Razzoli et al. (2020) show how space serves artists' needs to "frame and anchor" their work, as well as to belong somewhere. Being geographically situated, even if in the perceived periphery, strengthens an artistic career (Pasquinelli and Sjöholm 2015), and collective agency to mobilise around shared concerns and to negotiate precarity in the first place (Bain and McLean 2013, 94–95). The organisation of artists within a collective is therefore a starting point, but not a guarantee for secure access to studio space. However, the implementation and daily practice of long-term use of space concepts ultimately depends heavily on the local context and the respective conditions and political frameworks. In practice, space is often taken for granted, and the struggles to obtain it obscured or excluded from policy. Hence, artists and cultural actors are often on their own, relying on personal networks (Alacovska 2018) to maintain basic infrastructure.

To break free from the binary thinking outlined above, I draw on "relational thinking" and Doreen Massey's attempt to "reimagine either/or constructions" in favour of an interconnectedness (1999, 12) to give room to mutual, yet unequal interests and roles, entangled in a neighbourhood development process. Following the spatial turn in cultural, social, and organisational studies, space is socially- and materially constructed, and spatially anchored (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994, 2005; Soja 1996; Fuller and Löw 2017). Thinking of the social as dependent on the spatial (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996; Massey, 2005) leads to a notion of *relationships* as "necessarily embedded material practices" (Massey 2005, 9). Organising REHAB as a socio-spatial process consists of relations to and between people, ideas (policy) and the space itself (REHAB premises and neighbourhood). Massey's self-proclaimed alternative approach (2005) emphasises *multiplicity* and *difference* in thinking of space as process. Multiplicity makes room for different, heterogeneous world narratives, and opens up a new perspective on spatial politics. In space as "sphere of possibility" (2005, 10), different narratives, ideas and practices co-exist. Applied to the small scale of the neighbourhood, the simultaneous needs, visions, and interdependencies of the different local actors constitute a *relational space*. Multiple perspectives—here first and foremost artists cultural workers and the housing company—can be interwoven and interdependent, and this approach seeks acknowledgement of differences in a situation of mutual dependency (Hebert and Szefer 2013, 13).

Relational thinking is linked to a process ontology. Bringing these ideas of relationality, multiplicity, and process together implies understanding policy documents and agreements and practised space as the outcome of relationships *so far*. By foregrounding "being in process" Massey makes the case for multiplicity, or the heterogeneous co-existence (2005, 10) of people, spaces, buildings, ideas, and politics. Spatial functions are therefore not decided upon only once, but remain constantly open to people, ideas, and uses that are never fixed but always subject to negotiation (Massey 2005; Landau et al. 2021). For space, this means an indeterminacy and openness to difference and change (Massey 2005, 11) and requires sensitivity to differences and the tensions those differences create (Landau et al. 2021). In order to continue to analyse the interconnections that have so far constituted REHAB, I'll elaborate shortly on the methods used in this study.

Studying a neighbourhood art organisation

To understand REHAB as an ongoing, socio-spatial process consisting of relationships to and between people, political ideas, and the space itself, I apply a close reading of the context (Bell and Orozco 2020). The body of data comprises official policy documents, 11 semi-structured interviews (conducted between 2019 and 2022, including artists, MKB, and cultural and social work departments). Additionally, neighbourhood walks, photography and field diary entries were used to account for potential changes in the neighbourhood. Additionally, the local "Cultural Strategy 2014–2020" and related "Action Plans" (City of Malmö 2016, 2019) were analysed with a focus on working conditions, spatial development, and the role of artists in the city.

Artists, as Bain (2005) and others pointed out, present a diverse group, and during my inquiry, I met with a friendly group of artists and creative workers, mostly white middle-class and queer people, with various artistic and professional skills. Some artists were just beginning their careers and others were known across the city and beyond, and the artists' creative practices may best be captured under the notion of *hybridisation* and the *blurring of boundaries* between previously-defined artistic spheres (Abbing 2023, 310). Musicians, either with degrees from music school or self-taught, playing classical instruments, or electronic and experimental instruments, textile artists, fine artists with art school degrees, artists working in public art, sculpture, murals, and participatory processes, often working in intersections to education. Some were also working in crafts and magic, and when I write "'artists" in this chapter, it includes all of the above. In Abbing's account, the process of hybridisation is characterised by less antagonism, and less disdain for mainstream art, but also by disparate, smaller scenes, niche practices, and the phenomenon of *mutual featuring* in, e.g., music productions (cf. 2022, 310). I spoke with "old" and "new" members of REHAB, some of whom were part of a preceding collective and

part of the idea development process, and others who joined when the first ideas of REHAB had already materialised. I conducted interviews with artists at REHAB, where they rehearse, sketch, paint, build, meet, sculpt, plan, and administrate. To grasp the processual, I visited REHAB repeatedly to talk about past ideas, day-to-day challenges, and future dreams. I asked about tensions and conflict underpinning REHAB and learned about the possibilities to thrive as artists—both organising collectively and in collaboration with other local organisations. The findings are presented and discussed in the upcoming section.

REHAB: Organising creative work differently

REHAB is written in glowing letters, marking the entrance of the building in the residential area *Östra Sorgenfri*, which has been open since 2017. Located on the ground floor, the premises are surrounded by a pizzeria, a falafel shop, and a new playground across the street. Compared to other studio collectives' locations, this space is both centrally located and embedded in the residential neighbourhood, and it is organised collaboratively with the municipal housing company MKB. Slightly biased from other cases, I gazed around expecting signs of conflict, but can only capture a poster stating "Malmö should not be like Stockholm" and "freeze rents", distributed by a leftist organisation addressing housing issues across the city. I interpret those as an indicator of a sensibility to gentrification issues. I continue to wonder what gentrification means in the ongoing production of space (Massey 2005), and what else keeps this production going.

"Sorgenfri breathes culture and artistry" is a marketing slogan in the window of the local MKB office. That MKB works culture and sustainability not only when it comes to marketing, but politically, is desirable, since the city-wide cultural strategy calls for access to, and participation in, the production and consumption of cultural offerings (City of Malmö 2015). REHAB, as a joint project with artists and cultural workers, is interesting for many reasons. In an interview with MKB, it becomes clear that the pull factor is especially effective in attracting new cultural actors through the visibility of other actors, and its effect on the tenant's neighbourhood experience is valued: "when it comes to the galleries and REHAB, it's participating in those events that we arrange during the year, which are meant to attract our "customers" to be a part of, and experience their area—their home—in a different way". Beyond this instrumental interest, and in accordance with the city's cultural strategy (cf. City of Malmö 2017, 11), MKB has practical interests in REHAB. According to the strategy, in terms of long-term urban development "[…] professional artists and cultural players should be included […] with an emphasis on social aspects, such as in the development of forms and methods for citizen dialogue, consultation processes and area development" (ibid.). Artist's social capital brings with it the possibility to initiate other relationships in the neighbourhood, since they

are active and present through activities at REHAB, which are part of the neighbourhood's public sphere.

For the artists, collaboration with MKB is interesting above all as a reliable provider of space. One artist stressed that proximity to a municipal housing company could be beneficial for (non-arts related) career plans. Throughout my meetings, I understand the organisation of REHAB not simply as a non-political affiliation with a public housing association, but rather a somewhat strategic step to not only point out deep-seated shortcomings in the cultural–political system, but to suggest and test an alternative. From this point of view, REHAB may even present a claim for artistic and cultural work under good conditions. This is argued for in a particular way: building on their own experiences of precarious work, the artist mobilises the narrative of precarity to justify their engagement with MKB: "Artists sit in bad premises and earn little money, but at the same time are so extremely important to a city, but are pushed out further and further away, that's off. It really is a loss for the cities when they do so, it has to be solved in some way. But like with everything else, it's the economy that matters". In this last sentence, the artist points to the economy of place in which access equals economic capital or the ability to pay (a higher) rent.

Commercial and/or political?

REHAB's particular management of financial constraints includes a negotiated subsidy system (see finding 2), and a simple commercial activity. The latter is not unusual in self-organised or independent cultural organisations: running a bar, playing concerts, or as in this case, offering simple services like renting out meeting space. The rental happens in a non-profit context, and money is reinvested into "[…] better conditions for the cultural workers in the house", as stated by their official webpage. Those commercial activities should not interfere with their work as artists, either by steering their work or by taking up too much time: "if we sell post cards, artistically speaking, something got lost". Furthermore, renting space produces a platform where (ideally), actors who want to work in the vicinity of artists, operating in the cultural sector, or professionals like architects, who are attracted to artists, rent the premises. Some actors hope this would create leverage for influence, that "it's usually decision-makers who come here, so we have the opportunity to influence them a little bit". In day-to day terms, active artists and cultural workers at REHAB take care of the rental depending on their capacities and individual needs, as maintenance and service work is paid in the form of hourly wages to artists, who then pay for their studio spaces.

The question of whether, and in what form, a commercial component is possible, led to the separation of the former collective *Cirkulationscentralen*. Those who rejected the entrepreneurial attitude formed an artist-run gallery,

and others welcomed the idea of "another place". Contrary to the accusation that commercial activities are in contradiction to what it means to be an artist, another artist describes that he appreciates this model because, unlike many funding schemes, it is quite straightforward; as it is obviously commercial but transparent about the distribution of money. Eventually, the commercial and the political appear closely intertwined and interdependent. The commercial rental of meeting space is invested into producing REHAB as an organisation that provides an alternative to exploitative and insecure spatial conditions of artistic and cultural work. The next paragraph unpacks the reasoning that underpins the negotiated subsidy system upon which REHAB is built, and elaborates on how this is put into practice.

"Socialrabatt" and "Service exchanges"—formalising a conflictual collaboration

Artists and cultural workers exploit the otherwise rather troubling instrumentalisation concept in this neighbourhood redevelopment process. Rather than contesting it, they emphasise the potential positive effects they may have on neighbourhood development: "people want to be where artists are, that's where it is cosy. […] People make money from the fact that the artists are present in central locations in the city. So, you have to take advantage of that, and make sure that the artists also get a part of it". As in this statement, the artists make it clear that they are aware of their role, which gives them negotiating power in MKB's process, which also has levers. According to MKB, the lowered rent for artists and cultural workers enables them to demand return services, which have proven advantageous for them over time:

> [W]e found some ways to also ask for "counter-performance", like an exchange of services. It doesn't have to be about money or proper rent. If we lower the rent, we give them [artists] a discount, we ask for an exchange of services, so they need to work in some of our arrangements, or have an open house, in some or the other way find an outreach to the people living in our apartments. […] and this "exchange of services" is one way for us to formalise it.

The above indicated that conceiving of artists as powerless and instrumentalised, and housing associations as powerful, as the established binary idea suggests, does not necessarily simply lead to exploitation of those assumed to be powerless. Furthermore, such thinking is unconstructive in informing action, and I prefer to unravel the arguments further to explore the interdependent relationship (Hebert and Szefer 2013, 13).

At the heart of this "formalised relationship" are therefore two fundamental needs and different motivations: the artists' need for space on the one hand, and MKB's goals for neighbourhood development based on arts

and culture, on the other. Politically informed, the latter opens up space for artists, and the possibility for MKB to incorporate artists' knowledge and skills into their processes. To meet these mutually dependent needs, the artists are bound to the spaces, and MKB is bound to the artists and cultural workers. But to place cultural activities visibly in the neighbourhood, MKB doesn't specifically depend on the artists at REHAB. Rather, it is the artists who willingly respond to the service exchange and free themselves from external accusations, such as being gentrifiers, or at least position themselves in a way that works for them. In the next section, I will look more closely at the tensions that arise for the artists from the collaboration.

Bringing change—"A fine line to walk"

As indicated above, the instrumental role of art and culture in neighbourhood development is not fundamentally denied, but forms a basis for (sometimes conflicting) service exchanges. Regarding the artists, it works as a two-fold mechanism: both as a dynamic exchange with room for agency and leverage—but ultimately also assumes the form of neighbourhood change, in which the artists consciously position themselves. To understand REHAB's social embeddedness, understood as intensities of different relationships with local urban cultural actors, business owners, and residents (Bain and Landau 2019), or its role in the social heterogeneity of space (Massey 2005), I asked the artists active at REHAB whether they had any concerns about their role in the neighbourhood. Two artists mention a group of elderly people. Questions like "what if we weren't here?" appear, but then one of them said "we as artists need space, too". Relating to their interconnectedness in a gentrification wave, the artists express an inward orientation to the community around them, rather than an interest in attracting visitors from beyond the neighbourhood:

> I can sometimes feel maybe a little conflicted, because we don't want it to become a neighbourhood for only young artists and young families that want to move in. We don't want to be part of that, we just want to support this community, do things for them. That can sometimes be a fine line to walk. Also seeing how … like [other neighbourhoods] being gentrified slowly but surely, and I guess maybe it is hard to avoid, but I think we are all hoping we can be a part of keeping this community [intact] and doing things for them and not for people to come here and visit, but do things important for people here.

As an example of the *social dimension* of local embeddedness (Bain and Landau 2019), the above statement of an artist indicates an inward orientation to the *internal functions* of the neighbourhood; in this case both the local community, but also to the supportive community of artists.

Such practices of anchoring may spur more long-term relationships, contrary to fast-paced neighbourhood regeneration (Bain and Landau 2019, 2). Furthermore, other than SoHo, a case Sharon Zukin (1989, 2011) uses to exemplify the role of artists in urban change, the residential neighbourhood *Östra Sorgenfri* is much more regulated than a central district in New York City. Nevertheless, tensions accompany the artists' day-to-day work of organising REHAB. Several artists express their concerns and slight feelings of guilt, specifically regarding the elderly. Before the artists and MKB founded REHAB and engaged with the space, it was rented to ABF (a workers' education association) where elderly people living above the premises of REHAB socialised and participated in activities. The seniors continue to have a regular get-together with coffee every Friday, and this tradition is something REHAB values and protects. In addition to these conflicts, there are further aspects that shape REHAB as place of artistic and cultural work, and which partly distinguish it from other places, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

"A work environment with a little more social awareness"

REHAB, as a workspace for artists and cultural workers, has qualities that, in many respects, correspond to existing studies on shared spaces. For example, as in the quote below, it is clear that the space helps to create a sense of professionalism that is often lacking in artists due to a lack of recognition (cf. Bain 2005). An artist states that the most profound difference is:

> being able to work under decent circumstances as an artist. […] This is a workplace, I go to work, and this is my work, and it is a nice presentable place where you can take potential clients. I think giving yourself that dignity, giving that worth to your profession is important, even if it is not the most common profession, and not the most well-paid profession.

The statement also indicates an appreciation of the possibilities of professional development beyond the artistic career; a space to encounter "potential clients". Furthermore, in the sense of Bain and McLeans' (2013) emphasis on "doing it together", artists use the shared space to tackle precarity, like insecurities caused by the irregular job market. Since available jobs cause competition and work is organised rather informally through social networks (Alacovska 2018), tensions between need and willingness to support one another are not improbable. Recognising this, an artist explains, REHAB functions as an "employment agency" for cultural workers. In practice, projects acquired by individual artists are tapped for opportunities to integrate other colleagues, since some artists are more experienced and successful in writing grants and proposals than others, and new possibilities for individual or collective projects open up.

Supporting each other this way may relate to the lack of organisation experienced among artists and artist collectives in Malmö more broadly, where a typical experience is described as "mushroom picking behaviour": "If you have found a good spot in the forest, you keep silent and enjoy it by yourself", an artist explains. Some artists mention the absence of collegiality outside REHAB, and express a need for a more socially aware cultural politics. In this vein, I interpret REHAB as a position emphasising the need for supporting and caring daily work (cf. Alacovska and Bissonnette 2021), and its dependence on safe space for continued connectedness to unfold. A musician describes:

> I've been working collectively, even though I didn't have this collective space all my life. It's always been working with friends, like all my bands, we started projects as friends in the first place and then as colleagues. It is kind of natural to me to fit in in some kind of environment, with pitching in with what you are good at.

Another artist explained that the collective space and the possibility of supporting each other with "what you are good at" has contributed to the recognition of one's own work in a different way, to recognising one's work and knowledge in a different way—through mutual recognition—something other studio spaces would not have allowed.

Service exchanges as policy and a playground

Above, I illustrated how REHAB as a space is organised and organises operations between MKB and the artists today, or at least over the course of my data collection. This last finding attends to how REHAB is organised in relation to local cultural policy, and attends to REHAB's situatedness in "space-time" (Massey 1994). I close the analysis with an illustration of what a service exchange inspired by this strategy may look like, and turn to the making of a neighbourhood playground.

The challenge of the spatial, in my understanding of Massey (2005), is to not exclude time as in past events, but acknowledge what is coeval and was coeval (cf. 2005, 78–79) in the process. My data shows that the idea to collaborate did not just appear, but resulted from long-standing relationships between municipal actors and developers, and artists and cultural actors over the course of almost a decade. These long-term relationships also provide part of the basis for the local cultural strategy. According to Möller (2021), Malmö's cultural policy is also built upon globally-circulating ideas of the Creative City, which is evident in formulations in the local cultural strategy, encouraging the use of arts and culture as resource for (sustainable) development:

> The city's cultural policy can no longer be regarded as concerned only with a strictly defined cultural sector. If sustainability is to be reinforced,

> artistic and cultural expertise have to be regarded and utilised in more and new ways. That is why a cultural strategy for the whole city of Malmö is needed whose activities, in combination and with the help of art and culture, can reinforce the city's development towards sustainability on all levels. The culture strategy applies to the whole city of Malmö's organisation. (City of Malmö 2015)

Both global ideas and local practice in *heterogeneous co-existence* constitute space (Massey 2005, 10), and inform future practices. The playground next to REHAB is the result of a joint process and collaboration between MKB and REHAB, the city's cultural department, Malmö's museums, the city's archive, two local schools, a local women's association, two city planning sections, and neighbourhood inhabitants of various age groups. It presents the Action Plan for the Cultural Strategy's incentive to "include professional cultural players in development processes and consultation processes and area development" (2016, 11). Through formats such as movie screenings, book clubs, sculpting, school visits, picnics and soup evenings, around 250 people were involved in a period of three years (2018–2020), and the artists contributed their skills. An MKB representative shared that the book circles were "great fun and really different" for the housing company. An artist, on the other hand, shared that the recurring meetings made it possible to create relationships of trust, so that eventually the needs and concerns of vulnerable groups materialise in the final architecture of the playground. McLean (2014) reminds us that a critical discourse is quick to dismiss collaborations like these without recognising their potential to critique and change from within. She points to the "small acts of consciousness raising" (2014, 2170) that emerge in conflictual collaborations; within which, as this example shows, alternative, bottom-up organisation of spaces and the processes involved in their design can be tested.

Concluding discussion

This chapter presented service exchanges as a form of a mundane practice (Borén and Young 2017) and an example of organising a neighbourhood creative workspace. The findings suggest that instrumental functions of arts are not refused but strategically used in service exchanges, and resources and power are unequally distributed between the cultural practitioners and the housing company, but this this does not necessarily mean one-sided exploitation. Instead, there are reciprocal, continuously negotiated "service-relations", which I propose to call "service-entanglements" in order to draw attention to the process in which, and through which, new entanglements and services continuously arise and constitute the space over the long term.

In the analysis of interdependencies of conflictual interests, I find: a) an entanglement of transparent commercial transactions next to; b) a political claim for better working conditions; c) a formalisation around

acknowledged dependencies; d) inward-oriented practiced solidarity; and e) relative stability despite an openness for change. Surprisingly, however, the conflicts are not downplayed, but openly discussed and form the basis for service exchanges. MKB profits from the image renewal and relies on the artists' local activity to demonstrate their commitment to social sustainability and to serve the residents an enjoyable living experience. Requiring the artists' complicity, both parties assume their role with caution and constantly negotiate advantages and disadvantages, thereby creating and maintaining spatial conditions for less precarious work. Commercial activity is often frowned upon, but creates the possibility for artists to embody an alternative to the otherwise often austere places of cultural production. Ultimately, the negotiation of service-entanglements presents the relational process through which REHAB is produced and where further conflicts, learning moments, and opportunities arise. Finally, it adopts a differentiated view and profound understanding of the reality of artists and cultural workers. In what ways do individual artistic projects become commercial or consciously separated from commercial activities? What spatial requirements are entailed? If the goal is to integrate artists into different areas of development, as envisaged in the Cultural Strategy (2014–2020), the question is what can be learned from this example and what needs to be considered in the future.

Bingham-Hall and Kaasa (2017) warn that collaborations with public housing companies bear the risk of entailing limitations on the freedom of artists to decide upon, or to explore processes without a clearly-defined goal. This case indicates a tendency for joint projects (playgrounds or neighbourhood festivals) where MKB creates a setting or context for artistic contribution, but those events are limited, and the private studio space offered by the collaboration gives room for independent work. I cannot say anything about the actual distribution of individual artist's time, but I do get a sense that some artists carry more organisational responsibility than others. Whether and how this is related to the negotiated service exchanges on which the collaboration is based, is also a question that, for now, remains unanswered.

Finally, I return to and scrutinise the argument of space as a critical foundation for any form of social or cultural organisation. While tools and skills such as workshop facilitation and reading circles facilitated by artists and cultural workers certainly played a role, the meeting space at REHAB must be understood as the backbone of the process; necessary for it to unfold and for shared ideas to materialise. Here, participants could gather recurringly over the planning period and share not only quick visions and ideas, but see deeper-rooted knowledge exchange materialise in the neighbourhood in the form of murals, photographs, and finally, in the playground itself. Not only has the playground developed in this process, but the presence of art and cultural workers in the neighbourhood has become increasingly entrenched. What this does not make clear, however, is to what extent the local cultural

actors are networked and organised with other actors in the city, and how and whether the REHAB example can serve as seeds for grassroots activities in other places. An artist told me that he distributes the idea in the form of lectures to interested actors, but where and how the ideas are implemented exceeds my current knowledge. Piecemeal activities cannot change anything in the long term, but alliances and coalitions must be formed in order to be effective beyond the local context (McLean 2014; Hollands 2019).

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5 Strategies for Creative Agency in Performing Arts

Jörgen Dahlqvist and Kent Olofsson

In this chapter we intend to discuss creative agency in performing arts. Performing arts is a diverse artistic field that includes many art forms, such as theatre, dance, and opera. Performances are produced and presented in a variety of contexts that span from traditional spoken theatre in national, regional, and municipal institutions to independent, experimental productions in smaller venues and in festivals.

In these art forms, creative agency is often associated with individual professions. In theatre, the playwright has historically been regarded as the main artistic subject. This changed during the 20th century; in the book *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), Hans-Thies Lehmann shows how the hegemony of the dramatic text was challenged during the 20th century, as other ideas on how to *do* theatre became prominent. This has led to the emergence of other professions, as directors, composers, choreographers, and dramaturges have joined the playwright as creative agents in the making of performances (Turner & Behrndt 2008; Mitchell 2009; Roesner 2014; Trencsényi & Cochrane 2014; Goebbels 2015; University of the Arts Helsinki 2022).

In *Art Worlds* (1982) the American sociologist Howard Becker draws a distinction between an artist and the people who help facilitate the creative process while finalising the artwork. He writes that it is "important to know who has that gift [of being able to create art] and who does not, because we accord people who have it special rights and privileges" (Becker 1982, 14). These privileges give access to networks and respect among peers. In Becker's definition, an artist is a person "who performs the core activity without which the work would not be art" (Becker 1982, 24) and adds that artists "[work] in the center of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome […]. The people with whom he cooperates may share in every particular his idea of how their work will be done" (Becker 1982, 25). This division matters "not only because we appreciate and judge work differently, but also because artists' reputations are a sum of the values we assign to the works they have produced" (Becker 1982, 23).

The social outcome of Becker's observations can be recognised in an example from actor Petra Fransson's dissertation *Omförhandlingar* (Fransson

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2018). She poses the question if an actor is considered an artist; the blunt answer is no. She drew this conclusion from an experience she had when she initiated and funded a performance within her doctoral studies. When the production had premiered at the theatre and it was time to thank everyone, Petra was only credited as an actor in the ensemble, not as the initiator and producer, which was the case. Instead, the director of the performance was praised for her artistic work and for her vision when staging the performance. Petra writes: "It was as if I myself almost forgot my contribution as an initiator and project owner, maybe the theatre director also forgot" (206). She was merely seen as an interpreter of the director's artistic ideas, not as an artist with her own agency to initiate the project.

There is also another, maybe more existential, aspect to this agency. In *Everyone is Creative* (Runco 2004), Marc A. Runco claims that personal creativity is "manifested in the intentions and motivation to transform the objective world into original interpretations, coupled with the ability to decide when this is useful and when it is not" (Runco 2004, 22). Allowing artists more agency would not only give the artists credit, but it would also offer increased possibilities for them to express themselves artistically. Many of the artists we have worked with have had the same interests as we do when it comes to finding novel ways of expressing themselves as artists. This has made it important to explore how to make room for the input of others in the artistic process.

The discussion in this book chapter departs from three theatre productions all produced in different contexts, the first by an independent theatre collective, the second by an independent theatre institution, and the third by a regionally-funded institution. The focus in these performances has been to explore new formats in theatre through intermedial and interdisciplinary staging where technology, choreography, visual elements, music, and sound design have been important elements: the different art forms and media were not just implemented to complement a narrative script but were included as important communicative elements intended to add to performances' poetic outcomes. Through these cases we have a deepened understanding of the importance of contributing input to the artistic work for individual artists, the artistic team, and in the end, for the audience. Since there is an economy linked to artistic work, it is important that this contribution is recognised and accredited. In order to achieve this, one also needs to understand that these processes are complex, and that the creative agency can vary at different stages of an artistic process for the various artists involved.

Creativity in performing arts

From our insider's perspective, we consider creativity to be the ability to solve artistic problems and challenges; both individually and in groups. When looking for collaborators, we search for artists and co-creators who are innovative in their approach to the art form and open to new possibilities

of expression. It is important that they are receptive to other people's ideas but also able to provide input regarding what is to be communicated to an audience.

However, we recognise that there are other ways to understand and define creativity (cf. Runco & Jaeger 2012; Glăveanu & Beghetto 2021). In *Creativity and the Performing Artist* (2017), Paula Thomson and Victoria Jaque define creativity as being novel, useful, and as having authenticity and aesthetic appeal. Here, the focus is on the presented work. For these authors, "creative" is a label of quality concerning the result. This definition relies on outside experts to evaluate whether the criteria necessary for the outcome to be labelled "creative" are fulfilled. It is important that not only the composer, the choreographer, the director, or the playwright provide a sense of inspired authenticity to the production, but also the performers who are presenting the work of art through their performance.

In their book Thomson and Jaque refer to different theories of creativity, which we will briefly outline. "Distributed creativity theory" explores how creativity is distributed within a group. The psychologist Glăveanu proposes that we shouldn't attribute creativity to a certain person or culture, but rather understand it as something which is distributed in the relational space between the two. Creativity should be seen "not as a 'thing' but as an action in and on the world" (Glăveanu 2014, 9). Trust is required between the artists in the group for a good working climate to emerge. It is important that all members of the group contribute to expression, but whether this happens or not is up to the individuals. When it works, the whole group experiences "a flow (a positive feeling of effortless performance) and each member of the group has equally joined in the experience" (Glăveanu 2014, 12).

"Social network theory" deals with groups that are organised hierarchically, as most traditional theatres are. This could be used to understand clusters where members know each other's skills and where knowledge of each other gives the group stability. This creates a tie from shared experiences between the members—while at the same time, there also needs to be enough difference among the performers to achieve something new. These links facilitate creativity, however, innovation emerges "when these networks also include outside artists who are not part of the small world network" (Glăveanu, 13). Weak ties between the members afford creativity because they enable a shared set of skills and experiences while simultaneously providing novelty to the group. If the ties become too strong, they will instead constrain creativity.

The "system model theory" deals with how the individual relates to/in social and cultural processes. This means that creativity needs to be performed within the social and cultural sphere to be recognised. This theory could be used as a lens to understand how a performer is embedded within a system, but also how "socially constructed entities […] can be assessed as creative organisations in the same way the systems model describes individual creativity" (14).

These theories are general models for understanding a group's working methods, and how individuals interact within this group. There is additional research on non-hierarchical and flat working structures in performing arts. In the anthology by Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (2011), the contributors write how different modes of creativity in research could inform interdisciplinary performing arts. In *Devising Theatre and Performance* (2021), Leslie Hill and Helen Paris provide performance exercises for emerging artists as they develop their creative practice. In their book Matthias Rebstock and David Roesner depart from the term "composed theatre" (2013) and discuss alternative means of organising theatrical work. Stefan Östersjö has discussed artistic methods for intercultural collaboration (2020), and how assessments of artistic quality are carried out within art worlds (2019). Our contribution to this research area is an insider's perspective on the creative agency between different artists during the production process in a theatre production.

A model of the process in intermedial and interdisciplinary artistic practice

In the book *Creative Collaboration* (2000) Vera John-Steiner describes how collaborations can change over time. As an example, she shows how the cooperation between the philosopher Will Durant and his wife Alma changed over the years. Initially she fulfilled the function of a secretary, assisting with an 11-volume book series on Western history, but was later credited as a co-author. This change is also true in our practice in relation to other artists. We have a long practice of interdisciplinary work, having collaborated for more than ten years. At first, the artistic outcome was defined by the working methods and expressions of the institution at which we presented our work, which also affected how we regarded collaboration with others. Later, the productions became increasingly more difficult to categorise and this has also nuanced the way we understand creative agency.

In the article "Shared Spaces" (Dahlqvist & Olofsson 2017) the idea that collaboration takes place in different spaces—physical, conceptual, and communicative—is presented. These spaces afford the practical needs of different art forms, allow for a shared conceptual understanding, and discuss how different elements in the performance are blended to create meaning for the audience. In *Composing the Performance* (Olofsson 2018) elaborates further on how a conceptual framework affords a common understanding of the themes of performances. In this framework, associations, ideas, and drafts are collected, which are later structured into a dramaturgy which includes all art forms and performative elements.

However, this doesn't take the agency of artists into account. To do so we needed to study performances to be able to understand how the artistic process could afford creative work. Based on an analysis of the three cases presented in this chapter, compared with the artistic work in our earlier

productions, we suggest a model that has eight distinctive phases, which include all artistic work from the first idea until the result.

The first two phases involve key persons in the production, but by the second phase, artists and personnel other than the project initiators are involved to contribute ideas and creative input.

Conceptualisation

The first phase focuses on the ideas of "theme", "format", and "medium". In this context, the theme should be understood as the thematic exploration in the project, the format as what we are aiming for artistically, and the medium is how it will be represented in the theatre space (for example through dance, composed music, mediated storytelling, or situated acting). The outcome of this work is often what is then used in the applications for funding or in the pitching material directed to a theatre, and the work is done by the project owners.

Planning

In the second phase, the artistic team is determined. Deciding which artists will be involved is crucial to learning what can be achieved, artistically. Additionally, here all the conditions that affect the project are identified: In which venue will the production be performed? How much time do we have to do the project? How much time is there for rehearsals? Can all artists work in the production all the time? In this phase, a budget is also decided to determine what is possible.

In the next two phases we work in a more hands-on way with what will become the actual performance.

Thematic content

In this phase, we share thematic associations, drafts, scenography models, and inspirational material that could be of interest in understanding the project and theme. Together we map out a first interpretation of how to represent the theme through the material we have gathered.

Performative content

In this phase we collect temporal material which relates to the artistic medium with which we are working. The material could be text fragments or audio-visual try-outs. If we are trying out new mediums, we also do workshops with actors, dancers, or musicians to understand how we should work together and to ascertain whether there are certain conditions we need to consider.

The two phases above cover a type of creative work that differs from the work in the first two phases. In the first two phases of conceptualisation and

planning, the focus is on thematic ideas, and on expanding the notion of how theatre could represent this theme. In the latter two phases addressing thematic and performative content, the focus is on what can be done artistically and on trying to find solutions to problems. Here we rely on the expertise of each person involved to come up with ideas.

The next phase concerns the first draft of the production's structure.

Transforming the content into structure

In this phase, the dramaturgy and the composition of the performance are drafted.

The dramaturgy of the performance in this phase is in states of becoming in the different productions. When starting with a dramatic text, the dramaturgy is quite fixed from the beginning, and in productions that are devised the dramaturgy can come late in the process. How the dramaturgy and the work on structure are organised also affects how creative the work will be. The more open the structure is, the more everyone is invited into the process of creating the outcome. This will be discussed in more detail in the three cases below.

The two phases that follow are more directly directed towards the final performance.

Pre-production of materials for the rehearsals

In this phase, we prepare the work by producing work material for rehearsals.

Rehearsals

In this phase, we rehearse together or separately in smaller groups, shaping the performance.

For us, the actual performances are also an important part of the ongoing process, and to a greater or lesser degree we encourage changes also after the premiere of a production.

Performance

Even after the work is premiered it is possible to offer creative agency to the performers. When performing before an audience, the artistic work needs to be calibrated through the audience's response.

Conceptualisation and *transforming the content into structure* should be recognised as the work that constitutes a generator or initiator for the artwork. An understanding that the artistic process is not a single continuum, but a process made from different phases allows for a more detailed understanding of how creative agency is distributed and enacted by the artists involved in the artistic process.

Agency through open-ended dialogue

Död åt välfärdsstaten was a performance initiated and conceptualised by the both authors. The production was multidisciplinary and consisted of theatre, storytelling, video, dance, and music. On stage during the performance were three actors, two dancers, four musicians, and one video technician. The production premiered in 2018 as part of the Transistor Festival in Malmö.

The performance addressed the dismantling of the welfare system in Swedish society which has taken place in recent decades. The performance tried to locate the ideologies behind this change, and the performance was therefore based on famous speeches by Swedish politicians from the 1930s until recently. Methodically it explored how storytelling and musical composition could be blended with choreographed movements, and how this could inform the development of new methods of interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the summer of 2017, as part of the conceptualisation and planning phase, we applied for funding for a transdisciplinary performing arts project. While waiting for a reply on this application, we decided to start to explore the thematic content. Together with the jazz musician and singer Lise Kroner, we developed an audio–visual composition that was performed live at an interdisciplinary performing arts festival. The music was largely improvised, although songs by Lise were integrated into the overall form. In addition to this, we created a visual track from various political speeches by Swedish politicians which was performed along with the music. This work contributed to the structuring of the dramaturgy and composition, and to both the thematic and performative content of the final performance.

When the project was granted funding in the winter of 2017, there was not yet a choreographer in the project. In January, Lidia Wos, a dancer and choreographer, was contacted and told about the project and the ideas behind it. Lidia immediately became interested and agreed to join the project. When this was done, she contacted a dancer. At the same time, we brought in actors and continued to initiate and deepen the collaboration with the musicians. At this point, we all began working with material that could be used in the performance.

At first, the different art forms—theatre, dance, and music—were rehearsed separately. The work was led by the two authors and Lidia separately. We had meetings once a week, where we briefed each other on the progress and discussed details of the overall structure. This process gave a large amount of freedom to all the participants to come up with material which could later be integrated into the overarching structure. After a while, everyone met in joint rehearsals where the ideas were tried out. When rehearsing, the two authors, together with Lidia (and later Linda Ritzén, one of the actors), functioned as external observers to keep track of the coherence and meaning-making of the performance from an audience's perspective. This function was changed and distributed as needed during rehearsals.

Even if the concept, the planning, and the dramatic structure were already decided before most of the artists joined the work, the production had such a porous structure that it was easy to incorporate everyone's ideas into the proceedings. The artistic problems that occurred when trying to integrate the different art forms were solved through open-ended dialogue, where all artists together tried to find ways to incorporate as much as they could of the ideas that emerged from the practical work.

Agency through negotiation

På spaning efter den tid som flytt (In Search of Lost Time), which premiered at Orionteatern in Stockholm in 2019, was a stage adaptation of Marcel Proust's seminal series of novels (2019) put into a theatre monologue. The production was presented by the theatre as a dramatisation of Proust's 4,000-page attempt to put into words everything in existence that cannot really be put into words—a work about time, space, memories, consciousness, and senses—and about love, death, happiness, ambition, politics, and war. But most of all about what it means to be alive and to bite off more than one can chew (Orionteatern 2021). Orionteatern is an independent theatre in Stockholm which aims to produce experimental and unconventional productions, leaving room for artistic freedom for the artists working at the theatre.

The artistic team for the performance included a dozen people, with all the functions normally found in a traditional theatre production: director, composer, scenographer, costume designer, video designer, and technicians. Many had worked together before, but not in this constellation. What differed from other productions was the presence of two directors, Maja Salomonsson and Nina Jeppsson, who shared artistic leadership. The latter was also the actor who would perform in the piece. This created a special working situation, with one artist directing from the stage within the performance, and the other sitting on the outside keeping an eye on what is presented to the audience, as directors traditionally do.

The conceptualisation started with Jeppsson and Salomonsson reading all four thousand pages of the seven-volume novel, a work that went on for months. They selected sections and passages in Proust's text that they found particularly interesting and captivating, and at the same time they framed important themes that resonated with them. Interestingly, they tended to select the same parts of the text. The reading process resulted in hundreds of pages of selected material. This material was sent to the other members of the artistic team.

The director Maja Salomonsson elaborates on this process during an artist's talk:

> We had meetings with the artistic team where we just presented everything that had excited us, and what we had found in the text:

> everything that had touched something in us, and everything related to that. All the images we had gotten. And then this resonated further in the other artists, and in the different art fields. This created a common collective reading, where everyone could continue to associate. (Nina Jeppsson & Maja Salomonsson, artist talk moderated by Hanna Nordenhök, May 19, 2021)Orionteatern 2021

From this shared collective understanding of the text, the artistic team started to imagine possible solutions for the music and scenography as well as for costume, light, and video design. The work that took place while producing the *thematic* and *performative content* of the performance was truly non-hierarchical. In interviews the directors said that the overwhelming and almost impossible undertaking of staging this monumental novel also gave them a sense of artistic freedom. The fact that there was no formulated idea on how to do the work from the start and no preconception of what kind of performance it would eventually become meant that each artist in the team was responsible for carrying out their own artistic visions. The associations to Marcel Proust's universe formed the imaginative world of the performance and this was manifested in the images, costumes, video projections, and in the music composed for the performance.

Simultaneously, the next phase started where the collected ideas and associations were to be transformed into a dramaturgical structure. The two directors began writing a narrative script for the performance based on the selected texts they had derived from the novel and the material that the artistic team had proposed. Now they had to make decisions on what to include and not and maybe more importantly, how these scenes should be staged. Salomonsson wanted to use more parts of the text, while Jeppsson aimed at other solutions. During a personal conversation, Nina Jeppsson says:

> I, as director and dramaturge and actor, tried to talk about [doing things in] another order. [For me, it had] more [to do] with composing with spatiality, dynamics, different tempos, and movements. The text [was] just one of the materials. What holds the performance together is the cavities and the differences in-between. (Nina Jeppsson, personal conversation with Kent Olofsson, September 17, 2021)

These differences in the view on how to select and stage the material led to a process of negotiation. In conversation, both Salomonsson and Jeppsson say that they had parts that they thought were especially important to stage in a certain way. This decision was made through long discussions, where both argued as to why their specific idea was the right one. Salomonsson said that she felt that Jeppsson had an advantage in that she was the one on stage with an "insider" perspective, i.e., a more direct connection to how an idea of staging would work for the actor on stage.

However, this process would prove to be fruitful once rehearsals began and had been going on for some time. It resulted in a performance where the different parts strongly contrasted each other in an organic yet unpredictable way. The spoken parts were contrasted with sections where dance, music, video, and light would be the key elements.

In a conversation, Maja Salomonsson remembered thinking:

> Now we are collaborating and both of us need to compromise—and it can turn out bad when two artists must compromise. Instead, it was like a third person now emerged, between [the two of] us and [the others] in the artistic team. (Maja Salomonsson, personal conversation with Kent Olofsson, September 16, 2021)

This case shows how different phases in the creative process can benefit from diverse and fluid working structures and hierarchies. The performance was a collaborative artistic effort, even though a large part of the process was negotiating artistic ideas for the staging. Through these negotiations, a new autonomous identity emerged from the shared imagination of all members of the artistic team, and helped to integrate different ideas.

Shared agency

Loneliness is an existential question that took on a whole new meaning during the pandemic when everyone was expected to social distance from other people. The idea with the performance *I ett fält av guld* (2021) was to explore how this enforced solitude affected our ways of relating to each other. This was created through a web of different stories, which together created a greater narrative of the lonely times of lockdown. The production premiered on the digital play channel on Örebro Teater's web page in February 2021. The performance included the entire ensemble of actors at Örebro Teater.

All the conceptual and structural work was done before meeting the actors, as was the planning. The first table read was also recorded digitally, and a short demonstration video was produced so that the theatre could react to the concept. Returning to the processual model presented above, the first six phases were completed before rehearsals began with the actors. This workflow doesn't deviate from traditional theatre processes, where everything is decided upon before meeting the actors. What differed was the fact that this performance was to be rehearsed and presented through Zoom. This, however, did not please all the actors. In a conversation with one of the actors, she confessed that her notion of theatre is that it is a collaborative art form, where actors explore the intentions and motivations of different fictional characters. In her mind, this project was exactly the opposite.

When rehearsals began, the actors were invited to influence the process by being asked how they wanted to work and if there were things they were interested in trying out in this format. And through this, the actor mentioned above found her way into the process:

> My creativity came when I was able to create the character. It is interesting. I remember when you said that the result should feel intimate and authentic. It is easy to think that this means creating a character close to oneself, or to perform my own personality […] this doesn't work so well for me. In this project I instead found pleasure in developing a character and asking myself who she was. I also imagined what had happened before and after each film sequence. […] I just immersed myself in this person, and this was creative. (Katarina Krogh, personal conversation with Jörgen Dahlqvist, April 1, 2021)

Through the work, the actor was encouraged to try out new things. This meant exposing herself to situations that felt awkward at the start, such as being "in character" and filming with a cell phone and a selfie stick inside a shopping mall. The format liberated her from many of the constrictions she would have been under during a regular theatre production:

> This was so new for all of us, so no one knew the answers. The only way to work was to test things yourself, and through this, creativity emerged. […] I can experience that there is right and wrong in how to do theatre. What a process should look like. All the way from the first table read to the eight-week time frame until rehearsal. There are so many unwritten rules that we just follow. (…) I think it is a limitation that all of us are having preconceptions on how things should be and what a process should look like. (Ibid.)

In the conversation after the production, the actor said she was happy with the collaboration, and when asked to elaborate on the factors influencing success, she said:

> The way you led the rehearsals made it work. Please note that I don't use the word director. It didn't feel threatening that you appeared as an image on the screen to watch me do things. Except for that one time when I was supposed to cry, then I didn't want you there. (Ibid.)

For the actor, the position of director has hierarchical connotations. When she describes the work climate she instead focuses on certain qualities as "affirmative" and "positive". She also describes how she discovered that she had agency in the process:

> I realised that [you] are not going to tell me what to do, or have a lot of opinions, so there is just a manifold number of possibilities for me. It became fun to try things out. It became a joint effort to come up with ideas. (Ibid.)

In this process, a shared agency emerged between the actor and the playwright/director, which emanated from the themes the performance was addressing. The format and the medium were new to both parties, so there were no pre-existing methods to lean on—the aesthetics needed to be invented through the process itself. Despite not being the initiator of the project, the actor could form her process and was encouraged to express herself artistically. She felt creative in being able to pursue ideas and working methods, but also in being able to transgress the initial awkwardness of acting in public in the shopping mall. Even though she didn't know how the result would turn out, she became confident in her own creative output.

The importance of creative agency in collaborations

In this chapter we have presented a model of how to understand our artistic processes. What has become evident to us is that the process is complex, and it changes during creation and iteration phases. Even if there is a fixed structure, it doesn't mean that this is a static process. Rather, the different phases in the process are plastic and changeable, and allow for both hierarchical and flat structures, depending on what is needed at the time.

A more nuanced understanding of the artistic process gives space for creative agency to the participating artists and other professions in theatre. The strategies we have presented have given agency to the artists in the collaborations in various ways. Artists and other personnel join during different stages of the process, but still contribute to a high degree to the artistic outcome. The design of the project process affects the way the collaboration has been enacted. We have shown that it is possible to distribute and share the decision-making between the different agents of a production. These strategies question the hierarchies between the different professions without relativising or diminishing these functions in the actual work.

By creating a creative space where agency is in focus, the aesthetic outcome will also change. Opening and democratising the processes enables more perspectives to be considered in the artistic work. This means that the performance will be filtered through a manifold of voices rather than through an individual artistic subject. We believe that this leads to a richer expression; one where more people invest their artistic ideas towards the result. Changing the ways that we work will also allow for new formats to emerge within the performing arts field. The democratising of creative agency therefore adds aesthetic value for the audience.

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6 Creative Work and Business Support

Entrepreneuring in a Liminal Space

Sara Malou Strandvad[1]*, Marije Miedema, and Nathalie Schram*

Introduction

While the cultural and creative sector is praised in policies as well as academic research for developing innovations and thereby contributing to economic growth, working conditions in this sector remain a concern. Substantial research has documented how creative work is precarious due to job insecurity, low pay, and an ever-increasing influx of new entrants (Banks et al. 2013; McRobbie 2015). To address this paradox of creative work being seen as central for societal development but an unsustainable form of employment, creative business support programmes have been introduced, commonly presented under the heading of cultural entrepreneurship (Strandvad 2023). Several initiatives have been set up by both arts educational institutions and professionals working in the cultural and creative industries to enhance artists' cultural entrepreneurship and improve their business skills (Kuhlke, Schramme, and Kooyman 2015). Yet, while the number of such programmes has been steadily growing, there is little research documenting their functions and how creative workers benefit from them.

This chapter contributes to filling this knowledge gap by answering the question of how a business support programme functions as a cultural intermediary to help artists as cultural entrepreneurs navigate the liminal space in which they find themselves. We do this by examining the case of the largest Dutch business support programme for self-employed creative professionals. The Netherlands is particularly interesting because of the flexibilisation of the labour market (van Andel and Loots 2021; Been and Keune 2022), which means that the majority of people working in the cultural and creative industries are self-employed. Approximately 73% of the workforce in these industries are "zzp'ers", an abbreviation for Zelfstandigen Zonder Personeel [self-employed without staff] (Heyma et al. 2018). This correlates with an increasing number of workers in the cultural and creative sector who have marginal earnings, that is, earnings that are less than two-thirds of the average gross earnings in the Netherlands (Been and Keune 2022, 6). In 2018, more than half of the workers in the cultural and creative sector had

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marginal earnings (ibid., 8). The COVID-19 pandemic increased the precariousness of many self-employed creatives and the relief funds that were introduced for this group were not accessible to everyone and were often insufficient to pay all the bills, which meant that many had to use up large parts of their savings, often meant for their pension (Betzler et al. 2021). This exacerbated the already insecure position of most cultural entrepreneurs.

The business support programme of our study is *Cultuur+Ondernemen* (C+O), a name that can be translated as Culture+Entrepreneurship. We studied this programme in 2020–2021 by interviewing a sample of artists who had followed a cultural entrepreneurship course offered by C+O. In addition to interviewing artists, we interviewed three staff members of C+O, read the course materials, and attended a workshop ourselves.

To contextualise our analysis and discussion, the chapter builds on three existing case studies of business support programs for cultural and creative industries (Munro 2017; Haugsevje et al. 2021; Robinson and Novak-Leonard 2021). On this basis, we highlight how business support programmes act as cultural intermediaries, guiding participants through the cultural policy landscape and innovation agendas, and how they also provide emotional support to participating artists navigating this policyscape (Mettler 2016). The notion of the cultural intermediary originates with Bourdieu (1984), who introduced it in *Distinction* to describe the new petty-bourgeoisie that emerged in France after 1968, taking up new employment positions in the cultural field, providing symbolic goods and services. Others have since further developed the concept and seen it as an indicator of a postmodern era (Featherstone 1991), using the term to portray a broader and growing group of new employment positions in the cultural field, mediating between consumption and production (Nixon and du Gay 2002), mixing high and popular culture and framing cultural goods for consumption (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2012). By describing business support programmes as cultural intermediaries, we aim to enrich the existing literature on cultural entrepreneurship, cultural intermediaries and business support for creative workers, by signalling how the business support programmes contribute to the construction of a particular version of the artist as an entrepreneur.

Based on the review of previous empirical research on business support for artists, we present our case study and methodology, followed by an analysis of our findings, where we establish C+O as a cultural intermediary by looking at its position in the policyscape and how the staff provides emotional support. In doing so, we will argue that the business support programme and the artists involved operate in what we refer to as a liminal space, positioned uneasily between the cultural sector and an innovation agenda in the wider economy. With the help of creative business support programmes, cultural entrepreneurs may be able to bridge the gap between these domains, but this remains an ongoing process for the participants in our sample. In the discussion, we contextualise these findings by positioning

our study in relation to the flexibilisation of the labour market, emphasising the inherent fallacies within the current policyscape. On this basis, we conclude that current business support programmes are changing the name but not the game; supporting artists and portraying them as entrepreneurs without changing the structural conditions.

Business support programs as cultural intermediaries

While a growing number of business support programmes for self-employed cultural and creative workers have been developed in recent years, there is still little research investigating how these programmes work and how creatives make use of them in their practice. A few exceptions include a study of a Scottish creative intermediary agency (Munro 2017), a Norwegian study of support for practitioners in the creative industries (Haugsevje et al. 2021), and a study of an entrepreneurial training programme developed for artists in the city of Nashville, Tennessee in the United States (Robinson and Novak-Leonard 2021). Despite differences in geographical locations and policy contexts, the authors all draw attention to friction between existing policies and the structural needs of artists, and they moreover highlight the emotionally supportive role that creative business support programmes play.

Facilitating support in a complex policyscape

Robinson and Novak-Leonard (2021) research how artists use entrepreneurial training to intertwine art and business and extend their practices into their communities, pointing out how entrepreneurial artists are situated in a complicated political landscape that they cannot change due to a lack of clear organisational structures that limit their ability to improve their artistic practice. While the study concludes that "the majority of our interviewees felt more confident in their work" (ibid., 15) after receiving entrepreneurial training, the conclusion also suggests more critically that the narrative of artists' practices as intrinsically motivated and fulfilling is damaging to artists; "their work does not have to be priced well enough to financially support them" (ibid., 16). Similarly, Munro (2017) highlights that the staff at the creative intermediary agency were well aware of the difficulties of pursuing a creative career, but; "there was limited potential to change things" and the agency de facto upheld a skills and employability agenda as well as the belief that "with enough drive and determination, anyone can succeed within the creative industries" (23). Similarly, Haugsevje et al. (2021) found that the public support system in place in Norway was not very helpful to creative professionals, as most creative businesses did not meet the criteria for innovation policy schemes, nor did most of the creative practitioners meet the criteria for subsidy schemes under the Arts Council. Based on interviews with 15 facilitators who work in mentoring programmes or as managers of co-working spaces

aimed at improving networks between producers as well as between producers and the policy level, the study concludes that the work of facilitators papers over "the cracks of a policy regime not sufficiently in line with the needs of artists and creative microbusinesses", thereby enabling ill-fitting policies to remain in place (ibid., 12). Thus, like the other two case studies of business support programmes, this study reiterates that cultural entrepreneurs are placed in a policy environment where their chances of success are limited. The similarities in these findings underline the paradoxical position of cultural entrepreneurs within the creative industries. From the outside they are praised for their innovative nature, but from the inside it remains difficult to pursue a creative career.

Not just business, but also emotional support

Following the fact that self-employed creatives operate in a challenging landscape, Munro's study highlights the need for emotional support, which is provided by the business support programme (2017). In the analysis of how the Scottish agency assists with business support, Munro shows that, in practice, consultants have a primary role in providing emotional and therapeutic support. To conceptualise the role of business support staff, we draw on Munro's suggestion to see them as cultural intermediaries who perform a core task of organising and mitigating the precarity in the creative economy (2017). Following the tradition in the sociology of culture to analyse the role of intermediaries in cultural production processes (Bourdieu 1984), business support staff can be seen as a particular type of cultural intermediary, performing an affective and therapeutic function (Munro 2017), and, moreover constituting networking entrepreneurs themselves (Haugsevje et al. 2021). Based on these suggestions, we consider the cultural business support programme C+O as a cultural intermediary. Specifically, we examine how they add value to the practices and goods produced by the participants by framing these products differently from what artists themselves do, emphasising the connection between consumers' needs and desires and artists' work (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2012).

Moreover, we draw inspiration from the Norwegian study that proposes to view the business facilitators themselves as networking entrepreneurs, connecting artists with an innovation agenda (Haugsevje et al. 2021). As existing research on creative business support programmes shows, policymakers' response to cultural entrepreneurs is inadequate because they do not register as subsidised cultural institutions or sizable creative businesses – the two options in the political framing of the cultural sector (Banks and O'Connor 2021; Comunian and England 2020). The three existing studies of business support programs for artists highlight the policy context in which they operate. This suggests that attention to the policyscape and the design of the business programme is crucial to understanding the role of this type of intermediary.

The starting point for business support programmes in the cultural and creative industries is that the participating artists find themselves in a situation that they would like to change, emphasising that entrepreneuring is an emergent and processual event. This implies that these entrepreneurs are in an in-between state, which Garcia-Lorenzo et al. (2018) describe as "liminal entrepreneuring". Based on interviews with 50 nascent cultural entrepreneurs, this study of cultural entrepreneurship showed that the artists were constantly negotiating and reconstructing their personal and professional lives in an attempt to move into a more stable position. What happened instead was that they often got stuck in a liminal state where they ended up repeating their journey to reach that state over and over again (ibid., 381). During this "everyday liminal entrepreneuring", cultural entrepreneurs "experiment with new relationships and alternative visions of themselves, and (re)connect with entrepreneuring ideas and practices in a new way, using imagination and organization-creation practices" (ibid., 389). In these transitional phases, cultural entrepreneurs can seek the help of business support programmes that are set up to guide them through these phases and reframe artists as cultural entrepreneurs, but that is not something the study by Garcia-Lorenzo et al. addresses. Yet, by being involved in creating a potential transition away from a liminal state of affairs the business support programme as a case of cultural intermediation creates links between creative content and its monetisation. By highlighting how C+O facilitates this process, we aim to show that the notion of liminality is not just bound to entrepreneurship, but is also strongly connected to the policyscape, and that it may be difficult to freely navigate in this space (Callander and Cummings 2021).

A study of the cultural business support program Cultuur +Ondernemen

The case that we studied is the Dutch organisation Cultuur+Ondernemen. This organisation positions itself as a *knowledge centre* for entrepreneurship in the cultural sector. This means that the organisation develops and shares knowledge and connects its participants with the experts, advisors and mentors within its network. In doing so, it offers the most comprehensive business support programme for creative professionals in the Netherlands. In its programme, C+O provides cultural entrepreneurs with knowledge and training on how to improve their business skills, focusing on issues such as how to attract more clients and how to charge fair fees.

Cultuur+Ondernemen has its roots in a fund established in 1936. The organisation's board included representatives from the government and artists' associations, and its purpose was to sustain artists with a stable income. Later, they also introduced a loan for unforeseen expenses and hired the first social worker to provide mental support to artists. From 2004 to 2012, C+O advised the municipalities on the allocation of the WWIK subsidy for artists

and offered business courses to the artists who used it. The WWIK or *Wet werk en inkomen kunstenaars* [Law work and income artists] was a fund that artists could apply to in order to receive extra income, around 700 to 1,000 euros a month, depending on their situation. Artists were allowed to earn money on top of this, without repercussions on the size of the fund, so that they could invest in their artistic practice. Following the financial crisis, around 2012, Dutch state funding for the arts suffered massive cuts, which meant that C+O had to shift its focus to advising and educating artists on how to become fully self-sufficient, rather than providing them with an income through the WWIK. Although C+O's services are still partly funded by Dutch subsidies, they also work with private companies such as the NN Group, one of the largest insurance and asset management companies in the Netherlands. By collaborating with this company, C+O is able to offer its courses for a lower fee, thereby increasing the inclusivity of its program. Finally, C+O also receives requests from municipalities to offer their courses to talented cultural entrepreneurs from their area, in which case the municipality covers a large part of the course fees.

Our research focused on a sample of artists who participated in their course "Route Ondernemerschap", which can be translated as "Route to Entrepreneurship". The research set out to investigate how self-employed artists organise their work, how they earn an income, and how the content of their work relates to its monetisation. For this research, we interviewed 13 artists with different artistic backgrounds and levels of experience, ranging in age from early 20s to early 70s. The interviews were conducted by two research master students (the second and third authors), both of whom have a fine arts education and have worked as cultural entrepreneurs themselves. Being able to incorporate their experiences created a mutual understanding in the interviews, which encouraged "value judgements and comparisons with others as a means of eliciting the participant's own position" (Naudin 2018, 5). In addition to these individual interviews with artists, this chapter includes findings from a group interview with three senior staff members at C+O, focusing on how they perceive C+O's role in supporting artists and their own role within the organisation. Together, these empirical observations constitute the foundation for the analysis, in which we explore how C+O functions as a cultural intermediary supporting artists manoeuvring in a liminal space. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, all names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Analysis: Supporting entrepreneurial practices

The support programme offered by Cultuur+Ondernemen assists participants in creating a sustainable business around creative content. The name of the course, "Route to Entrepreneurship", clearly indicates a movement, a journey or a path on which someone or something travels. Participants sign up because they are in a situation that they would like to change to increase

their income from their creative work. As one of the participants in our research, a cultural text writer, explains about his current situation: "There aren't that many opportunities on the labour market anymore, so I was actually forced to become a cultural entrepreneur" (Kamiel, interview May 2020). When asked why he signed up for the course, he explains: "Because I hoped I could increase my turnover a bit" (interview May 2020). This state of affairs can be described as liminal entrepreneuring (Garcia-Lorenzo et al. 2018), where activities are characterised by an in-betweenness and "boundary-spanning" to extend the scope of their practices, moving from artistic practice to arts entrepreneurship (Callander and Cummings 2021, 749). Through the analysis of our interviews, we noticed that all of our participants sometimes referred to themselves as entrepreneurs but also as makers, artists or creative professionals. They navigate the space between the categories of entrepreneurship and art, adjusting their identities from being independent artists to also seeing themselves as entrepreneurial brand managers and business owners. The following two sections illustrate how the participants, together with the business support programme, operate in this liminal space.

Help to potentially leave the liminal space

As the "route to entrepreneurship" is a popular programme, there is a selection process and a limited capacity of 12 participants. Anyone can apply online, but after a round of interviews, participants are selected on the basis of their motivation, career stage, and willingness to change their current practice. The selection is therefore not focussed on artistic skills but on the potential of the applicant to develop as a cultural entrepreneur and the extent to which the course can impact their career. This may also explain why, in the feedback that C+O receives from the participants, almost all report that the course has had a lasting impact on their artistic practice. Already through the selection process, the programme ensures that the training is able to construct value as selected participants open themselves up to intervention, paving the way for the programme to add value to their practice in the form of reflection, suggestions, and emotional support (Strandvad 2009). It can therefore be argued that participants are selected based on their position within the liminal space, and thus their potential for change through the programme.

The first two weeks of the course are centred on identifying the needs and aspirations of the individual participants. By focusing on personal leadership and the essence of their artistic practice, the course begins with a focus on developing the soft skills necessary for entrepreneurship: who am I as an entrepreneur and what is the story I want to tell? One of the staff members explains this choice as follows; "financing is actually the final step of your entrepreneurial development, with the result that you will be able to find the money" (Course coordinator, interview September 2021). The next step is to

figure out how the participants can create an audience for their creative practice. Even though the course does not directly address the artistic practice and content that participants produce, the trainers and coaches advise participants to change and modify the way they approach and present their work. This way, the programme demonstrates a subtle form of governance, providing space and advice to reflect on one's own practice in order to take responsibility for managing oneself. Madelief mentioned that the course required her to change her mindset from thinking, "I need something", namely money from potential clients, to "I have something to offer" (Visual artist, interview March 2020).

While the course "route to entrepreneurship" focuses on the individual's journey, shaped by the qualities of each participant, these individual journeys still develop within the confines of the course. With its fixed structure, the course composes and defines cultural entrepreneurship in a standardised format. When participants join the course, a certain mediation of their practice takes place, generating an altered version of what they were already doing by framing and presenting it differently. This means that while individual participants are at the centre of the course and receive personalised coaching and feedback, it is not their own ideas of what they need that are the leading element in the support provided. Rather, the programme decides which topics and aspects are important and need attention from the participants. Yet, even if the business support programme provides an opportunity to think differently about one's resources and strategies of action, and to consider possible futures and trajectories for one's creative practice, these still need to be put into practice by the participant. It is up to the participants themselves to do something with the tools they are given. This means that the business support programme outlines ways of adding value to the participants' practices by framing them differently, but the participants need to implement this new framing and thus ultimately construct this added value themselves.

In between public funding and commercial sales

Even when cultural entrepreneurs are taught how to sell their work and charge fair fees, they may still need to rely on subsidies to support their artistic practice. Public funding as an alternative to selling was a topic that came up in our interviews with both staff and participants, although few of our participants had received arts funding. To get funding, you need to be able to write clear project proposals that can get through multiple rounds of review. But because cultural entrepreneurs are not always familiar with the language necessary to persuade commissions, boards, or policymakers, it is often difficult to apply successfully. Douglas, a visual artist who makes installations, has experienced this more than once; "In a conversation, I am quite good at expressing what I want to say, or what it is about, or what it is I need. But when I put it on paper, I almost always get the same response; yes,

we understand where you want to go, but we see it is not detailed enough" (interview April 2020). This suggests that cultural entrepreneurs may not only need guidance on where to find the money, but also hands-on advice on how to sell their story to get funding.

However, when it comes to the subsidies that finance art projects, it is not uncommon in the Dutch funding system that there is no possibility to include an income for the artist in the budget. This was confirmed by our participant Phlox, who remarked "I didn't really earn money from that subsidy, it almost cost me money" (Breakdancer, interview September 2020). While funding for the arts is legitimised by positive factors for society, critics of the current Dutch cultural policy have noted that the producers of these artistic goods often do not receive compensation for their work (SER 2017). Moreover, our interviewees highlighted that funding comes with strings attached. For example, Jacinto, a DJ in his mid-40s, described why he was reluctant to accept funding for a long time: "I wanted to keep my freedom and subsidies come with a lot of restrictions. People give you money, so they expect something in return, also content-wise, and you have to account for every step you make" (interview September 2020). As recipients need to account for their spending and document the impacts of their project, our participants found that public funding was a lot of extra work and did not always pay off. Thus, while individuals may have clear and strong intentions to implement changes in their practice, this can prove difficult as self-employed artists operate in a landscape where they have limited "ability to attack" (Robinson and Novak-Leonard 2021, 6).

Discussion: Changing the name but not the game

As previous research on the role of business support programmes has shown, our study confirms that such programmes have few possibilities for changing structural issues. Creative business support programmes may guide cultural entrepreneurs through the maze of business and bureaucracy, but may ultimately be of limited help in radically changing the situation for most self-employed creatives. This reflects what cultural studies theorist Angela McRobbie has argued; that the hardship of creative work, which can be seen as a way of accumulating authenticity early on in a career (McRobbie 1999), often does not constitute a rite of passage leading to a different situation, but becomes a permanent condition (McRobbie 2002). In other words, they may be ready to implement an entrepreneurial re-routing of their work, but this may not necessarily lead them to a different situation as the landscape of the cultural and creative industries remains the same. In our analysis of how C+O operates as a cultural intermediary within the liminal space in which the participants find themselves, we arrived at the same conclusions. Business support programmes may have changed the name, but not the game; artists and creative professionals now call themselves cultural entrepreneurs, but they still have to operate in the same political and economic landscape. To

discuss this, we will highlight the ways in which C+O is embedded in larger socio-economic infrastructures.

The artists in our study find themselves in a labour market with an increasing influx of entrants, not least from arts education programmes that produce so-called bohemian graduates (Faggian et al. 2013). This leads to a situation where, as Ashton (2013) describes it, art students' main concern becomes "getting a job rather than the conditions of that job" (481). This leads many to opt for self-employment. As a study of Dutch cultural entrepreneurs laconically puts it: "our informants felt the chips happened to have fallen in such a way that they found themselves working as independent professionals" (Hermes et al. 2017, 96). Other studies have classified this type of entrepreneurship as "unintended" (Essig 2015), "accidental" (Coulson 2012), or "forced" (Oakley 2014).

None of the participants in our study live exclusively from their artistic work. They rely on side jobs, funds, social welfare, or other income streams such as their partner's income. This means that they are experiencing a form of underemployment (Denning 2010) in the sense that their productive capacity is under-utilised or at least not generating a sustainable income. Confirming what other studies on cultural entrepreneurship in the Netherlands have documented with statistical data, the portfolio careers of the creative entrepreneurs in our sample mean that this group experiences greater risks in terms of lower job security and higher chances of unemployment (van Andel and Loots 2021; Been and Keune 2022). As Ulrich Beck has pinpointed, the financial stability of "lifelong full-time work" in the global North has shifted to a "risk-fraught system of flexible, pluralized, decentralized underemployment" (Beck qtd. in Denning 2010, 85).

This raises the question of whether business support programmes that aim to support cultural entrepreneurs tap into a feeling of personal failure that reflects "the neoliberal ideology about choice and self-making" (Hermes et al. 2017, 94). Because of the strong connections between their artistic practice and identity, failure in creative work can also be experienced as a personal failure, explaining the need for emotional support. Some of our participants expressed that they thought little of their own work before the course, but treasured the trainers' validation of their work during the course. Rozemarijn stated, "they gave me the tools, but also an acknowledgement, which I really appreciated. An acknowledgement like 'hey, you're doing really great!'" (Visual artist/designer, interview June 2020). This supports the finding from Munro's study of a creative intermediary agency that a key feature of the business support program is emotional support, reassuring participants that they are not alone in experiencing challenges (2017). Thus, the affective support suggests that participants can improve their individual situation by buying into the training.

Would it not be more beneficial to change this system rather than emotionally supporting individual participants in the difficulties they face because of the discrepancies in the cultural policyscape? One way to change

the challenging situation for artists is through structural funding, similar to the previously offered WWIK. Within our sample of artists, we observed structural funding in the form of social welfare schemes (Anemona), pension benefits (Madelief), and a municipality-run funding scheme for self-employed citizens (Kamiel). While the three participants who received this structural funding were operating in the liminal space and were interested in a course on cultural entrepreneurship, we found that they were less vulnerable in times of crises, and were able to make choices that could benefit them in the long run. As Kamiel stated, "In difficult periods, like now [during the COVID-19 lockdowns], you have that safety net [from the funding scheme that was in place before the pandemic]" (interview May 2020). This gives them a greater chance of exiting the liminal space and paves the way for a sustainable long-term form of entrepreneurship. Such funds thus create circumstances in which entrepreneurs can cross the liminal space and move towards sustainable careers. Still, as we discussed in our analysis, most of the existing project-based subsidies are not ideal. Moreover, there are many prejudices surrounding arts funding, both from politicians and the general public, as well as from artists themselves. Around the time the WWIK ended, artists were seen as "subsidy devourers", as our participant Rozemarijn (visual artist/designer, interview June 2020) reminisced. This mindset still exists today. Furthermore, given the previous budget cuts for the creative sector, it is unlikely that politicians would be open to handing such large sums of money directly to artists. Therefore, it can be argued that structural subsidies, such as the WWIK, which is similar to a Universal Basic Income, could be very helpful for cultural entrepreneurs to build a strong foundation for their practice, both artistically and economically. However, the political and social world might not yet be ready for its (re-)implementation.

Although these structural issues in the cultural sector cannot be solved by offering business support to cultural entrepreneurs, a solution may still lie in the business support programme. C+O is a unique case study because it not only provides business support but also has an advisory role for policymakers. Through their courses and consultancy function, they gain knowledge from the participating cultural entrepreneurs regarding what issues they face and what kind of policies and support systems are needed to solve them. This information is then used by C+O to advise governmental bodies on the current state of the arts and cultural sector. Although their power is limited, they collect the individual voices and bundle them into a narrative that is voiced by a leading organisation in the cultural sector, thus giving the narrative more prominence. In this function, their role as a cultural intermediary not only adds value to the work of individual entrepreneurs but also has the potential to influence cultural policies for the better. They mediate not just between production and consumption (Nixon and du Gay 2002), but also between artists and policymakers, highlighting that cultural intermediation takes place not only between artists and consumers but in a wider political landscape.

Conclusion

Through a case study of the Dutch knowledge centre for entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sector, Cultuur+Ondernemen, this chapter has investigated how a business support programme functions as a cultural intermediary to help artists as cultural entrepreneurs navigate the liminal space in which they find themselves. In the analysis of the case study, we show that the training programme requires the participants to be open to the suggestions of the trainers and coaches and that the help of the programme consists in providing a different framing of the participants' activities. Our analysis also documents that participants appreciate the recognition they receive from trainers and coaches. Lastly, our analysis emphasises that participating artists are genuinely interested in generating income from their entrepreneurship and that they prefer this to applying for funding to sustain their artistic practice.

We acknowledge that our research was limited in the number of participants and was only involved in their practices for a short time. Its aim is to be interpretative and not to provide generalisations. Nevertheless, it corroborates findings from previous studies of creative business support programmes by highlighting the emotional support that trainers provide to participants alongside business support, and by emphasising that the support programme is placed within a wider policyscape. Our analysis shows that it is difficult for a business support programme aimed at cultural entrepreneurs to change the existing structures in the cultural and creative sector and that the political agenda moreover restricts what a support programme can do as a facilitator. Ultimately, the training on offer is confined by certain needs that adhere to the neoliberal idea of the artist-entrepreneur. This means that training in business skills does not fundamentally change the situation of the participants. In fact, it may uphold a vicious circle of taking responsibility for challenges that are structurally conditioned.

The case of business support programmes draws attention to how cultural entrepreneurs are positioned within the wider economy. Participants come to the support programme to gain tools to increase their income and thus create more stability. But even with the help of the business support programme, artists as entrepreneurs may only be able to escape their precarious situation through a re-categorisation from struggling artists to cultural entrepreneurs. Thus, creative business support programmes are used as an attempt to circumvent underemployment in the cultural sector. The support programme functions as a cultural intermediary that adds value by facilitating cultural entrepreneurs to redirect their practices, ideally leading them away from precarity through a liminal space of rethinking their existence between art and entrepreneurship and settling on a sustainable business practice. Yet, we show that although individual cultural entrepreneurs benefit from the course, the issues in the cultural and creative sector are structural and therefore cannot be solved by offering business courses alone. Rather than

suggesting that artists lack business skills, we argue that they suffer from the changing government rhetoric that allows policymakers to evade responsibility for this growing group of their citizens. Changing this situation requires more radical solutions than just business support. For example, funding that is similar to the conditions of the Universal Basic Income or revisions to educational systems might be alternative ways of addressing the issue of precarity in creative work. These remain topics to be explored in future research.

Note

1 All authors contributed equally to this chapter.

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7 Platforms for Creative Work

Ida de Wit Sandström and Marie Ledendal

Going for creativity

> This is an institution for prototyping, learning, development, organisation. It is a hub that gathers several different initiatives. It is a go-to base for these sorts of operations. "Creative" is such a worn-out word, but I cannot find a better one.

In the quotation above, the managing director is reflecting on the makerspace where he works. Over the past decade, the former industrial building has housed creators, entrepreneurs, and cultural workers, and simmers with life from early morning until midnight. Today the building holds machinery, working spaces, and meeting facilities. Individuals and collectives come here to test and develop creative ideas, and to find different kinds of support, but also to give lectures, workshops, and produce events. It is a platform for creative and cultural work.

This chapter takes an interest in the world of platforms for creative and cultural work. Platforms for creative and cultural work started to become popular in the late 20th century, and have grown rapidly over the years (Browder, Aldrich & Bradley 2019). The phenomenon originates from business models for start-ups and entrepreneurs, such as incubators, science parks, germinators, and accelerators (Hackett & Dilts 2004; Hannon 2004). Alongside the maker movement, another start-up trend appeared in the wake of the 1990s dot-com era. The trend was facilitated through enhanced knowledge sharing within physical as well as virtual environments, and an increase in collaborations, as well as access to and decrease in the cost of technology that previously was mostly restricted to research and development facilities (Löfgren & Willim 2005; Browder, Aldrich & Bradley 2019). Collectives with roots in the tech movement who had crossed over to the do-it-yourself movement started to take form and resulted in so-called makerspaces, creative hubs, hackerspaces, tech shops, and fab-labs (Seravalli 2014); a development that has been described as "the next industrial revolution" (Anderson 2012).

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The construction of the services and design of platforms for creative and cultural work are multileveled in nature and can vary from more intangible elements to more tangible facilities. Some offer support structures for starting or scaling up new business ideas or initiatives, writing funding applications, mentorship and networking structures, know-how platforms and pay-it-forward systems, participatory learning, and learn-by-doing structures or prototyping. Others function more as machine parks for hardware tools, traditional crafts, production, woodwork, metalwork, textiles, or ceramics. Still others offer software tools, high-tech labs with 3D-printers, CNC routers, and laser cutters, as well as providing spaces to operate a wide range of activities from more individual projects to larger events and stage performances, including everything from art galleries, fashion shows, and music events, to new media (Mommaas 2004; Hackett & Dilts 2008; Feld 2012; Seravalli 2014; Goswami et al. 2018; Browder, Aldrich & Bradley 2019; Shivers-McNair 2021). The borders between different sorts of platforms are often blurred, but compared with more traditional business incubators, makerspaces and creative hubs tend to have a more direct emphasis on the production process in combination with knowledge-sharing. Also, the platforms exist as private businesses, in universities, schools, and as municipality-funded institutions like libraries and culture establishments, as well as free-standing creative hubs (Phan et al. 2005; Thompson 2017; Bergman & McMullen 2020). They differ in size from incorporating only one building up to entire city blocks, and can be found everywhere from silicon valleys to former manufacturing industrial areas (Mommaas 2004).

Over the last two to three decades, the platforms have grown, altered in structure, and to some part in focus, and become appealing to a broader audience. Today, platforms can vary from the more traditional incubator structures to more creative and prototype-centred makerspaces or their like, as well as to alternatives that bridge these different structures (Bergman & McMullen 2020). Furthermore, the structure of the platforms is dynamic in the sense that the mission and operational procedures often change over time (Phan et al. 2005). Science parks and incubators are often a result of a public–private partnership, a structure that also can be observed within the platforms on which this chapter focuses.

In the ethnographic research project that this chapter builds on, we have mapped different platforms for creative and cultural work in the region of Scania, Sweden. The common denominator for the platforms is that they function as places for prototyping and/or presenting, as well as platforms for entrepreneurs to identify, evaluate, and exploit opportunities. The chapter takes its point of departure in these platforms, aiming to shed light upon and discuss the work of the professionals who handle and manage them. What do they do? How do they go about stimulating and fostering creativity? What skills does their work require?

Through narratives of and about the work of these platform professionals, the chapter illustrates how creativity and creative work are encouraged and

facilitated. The main contribution of the chapter is the identification and discussion of two core practices in platform professionals' narratives of how they enable creativity and cultural work. We reflect upon how creativity is thought of as a project that requires different kinds of administrative and material support, which the managers of these creative clusters, incubators, and makerspaces provide. Furthermore, we introduce the idea that platform professionals can be understood as a contemporary guild, whose actions, and use of language and terms illustrate the creative imperative of our time.

Following this introduction, we summarise previous research on platforms for creative and cultural work, as well as the wider societal context within which they are situated. The next section is devoted to a discussion of the practice theory approach that departs from, and the method of narrative ethnography that we have used for our analysis. Hereafter, we account for our empirical material, delving into the material, providing illustrations, and exploring analytical themes. A short concluding section closes the chapter.

Background and previous research

Platforms for cultural and creative work have aroused considerable academic interest. Looking at previous research within the field, several studies have been carried out in relation to managerial perspectives of and processes around incubators and science parks (Hackett & Dilts 2004, 2008; Hannon 2004; Phan et al. 2005; Bouncken & Reuschl 2018). Others have been engaged in identifying characteristics, similarities, and differences between platforms (Hannon 2004; Bergman & McMullen 2020). The complexity of the many different kinds of platforms and their different requirements has been said to complicate the development of best practices and cause different structural and managerial challenges. Although this chapter hopefully contributes to the understanding of managerial practices at platforms for creative and cultural work, we primarily situate it within a stream of sociocultural research that depicts and discusses how different areas, industries, occupations, and phenomena form and are formed by a creative ethos.

Creative and cultural work are frequently found in descriptions of contemporary and future economies and lifestyles (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Mommaas 2004; Löfgren & Willim 2005; Florida 2006; Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011; Löfgren 2014; Holman 2015; Merkel 2015; Thompson, Parker & Cox 2016; Reckwitz 2017; Browder et al. 2019; Lavanga et al. 2020). Sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2017) draws a picture of creativity as a moral imperative; an idea that includes private self-expression as well as the economic realm. Reckwitz describes the requirement of producing something dynamically new as the organising principle in Western societies and traces it back to around 1970. During the 1990s, the "new economy" was introduced as an umbrella concept to describe several phenomena that were considered to have changed. At the core of all the "new" was that the boundaries

between creative, cultural, and commercial fields no longer seemed as clear as they had been before. Cross-fertilisation between sectors and competencies had become more common. This boundlessness between culture and economy has often been described as a sort of "culturalisation" of the economy (du Gay & Pryke 2002; Löfgren and Willim, 2005; Stenström 2009; Strannegård 2009). Culture and economy have, of course, had common points of contact before, but the cultural elements have become more visible in the new economy and have come to affect more sectors than before (Stenström 2000, 2009; Strannegård 2009). This has meant that creativity and cultural work—at least to some extent—have been loaded with new meaning. Business economist Emma Stenström (2000, 2009) argues that ideas of enterprising today often approach conceptions of art. Enterprises and enterprising are approached from aesthetic viewpoints, which leads to two contradictory tendencies, where art is de-aestheticised and non-art is aestheticised in parallel processes. All this requires new practices and competencies, as well as more and new interpreters (cf. Löfgren 2003; McRobbie 2009, 2015; Andersson Cederholm & Sjöholm 2014).

Understanding practices through narratives

To understand the work of platform professionals, we take inspiration from practice theory. Practice theory can be described as a loosely connected school of thought that focuses on everyday doings and sayings. In line with Reckwitz (2002), we understand practices as language, actions, bodily practices, routinised mental activities, know-how, things, and motivations. Within practice theory, the social is placed into patterns of individual practices; a line of thought that Reckwitz (2002) traces back to the socio-cultural perspectives of Bourdieu, Giddens, and Foucault. It is a form of cultural theory that links individual actions to collective structures of thinking and meaning, closely connected to an interest in different phenomena in everyday life and different lifeworlds. The thought of practices as a nexus of doings and sayings here functions as a tool to outline and understand the social and cultural order of the context that platforms for creative and cultural work make (cf. Schatzki 1996). To capture and understand these practices, we use narrative ethnography as our method.

Narrative ethnography builds on concepts and methods that have been developed within the humanities, social sciences, and cultural studies and combines the field-based methods of ethnography with narrative analysis (Gubrium & Holstein 1999, 2009). Ethnographic methods aim to understand people's ways of being, and cultures' different ways of functioning using qualitative methodologies. The goal of the ethnographer is to "write the human"; that is making different social worlds comprehendible by putting activities, structures, and expressions into words (Fangen 2011). Ethnography is often described as close and lengthy studies of social life patterns, but there are many ways to do ethnography, as it is a wide,

multi-faceted, and cross-disciplinary field (Marcus 1998; Hannerz 2003; Pettinger 2005; Crang & Cook 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Narrative analysis is, simply explained, the compilation and analysis of different stories, commentaries, and conversations from everyday life, where interpretations of others' selves and their social lives are analysed (Abbott 2002; Johansson 2005; Boje 2001). In this chapter, we do not do narrative analysis on a detailed language level. Instead, we take an interest in stories about the simple and everyday life, which in themselves mirror and construct larger contexts. The idea that the professionals who handle and manage the different platforms are part of a larger context where the forms and ideals underlying their work are negotiated through different practices works as an entry point for us, allowing us to identify and understand the order that organises the platforms for cultural and creative work, and the collective and symbolic structures in which they are embedded. We regard the narratives of and about the work of platform professionals to be of central importance in outlining the socio-cultural world of platforms for creative and cultural work (Abbott 2002; Boje 2001).

Material

The results presented here are based on material that has been created through online observations and interviews with persons holding key positions at creative platforms in the region of Scania in Sweden. The selected samples of creative platforms consisted of the five most prominent platforms that we have identified in the region after having mapped creative clusters, incubators, and makerspaces in the selected geographic area. When listing, we have included creative clusters; incubators; science parks; makerspaces; fab-labs; collective platforms; co-working spaces; and arenas for art, culture, and stage performances to widen the scope. We have included environments located in larger, medium-sized, and smaller cities, as well as in villages. The common denominator for the chosen platforms is their claim to act within and towards fields of creative and cultural work.

The analysis of the creative platforms is based on materials from the organisations' webpages, social media platforms, and news articles as well as other electronic sources. From these sources we could conclude that the environments differed in terms of funding, structure, and management, as well as in staff resources. Furthermore, the platforms also differed in terms of the activities and functions they offer. Some platforms were described as milieus that offered professional business coaching, structures, and support regarding funding applications. Whereas others were described as collective workshops, providing different tools and square meters to work in; but with no information on any structures supporting start-ups or business ideas. Although labelled differently, the actual difference between the milieus is not always crystal clear.

The chapter's main material builds upon interviews that have been conducted with three managing directors, one project leader, one project coordinator, and one producer employed by five different creative platforms within the Scania region. The interviews were conducted during 2019–2020, using a semi-structured questionnaire with open-ended questions to allow the respondent to add additional insights. The interviews took one hour on average, and were conducted in Swedish, face-to-face, recorded by audio, and transcribed. Here, the respondents are kept anonymous: we have chosen to call them "platform professionals" throughout the text, and quotes from respondents are attributed with general descriptions. The quotes have been translated into English and slightly edited to increase readability.

In addition to these interviews, we have also interviewed one entrepreneur with experience being a participant in several different start-up and incubator environments. The main objective of this interview was to gain a basic understanding of how work structure, working life, and working practices of platform professionals are experienced. Additionally, online observations have been conducted to widen the scope of the empirical material concerning the current debate surrounding creative spaces and creative platforms in mass media in Sweden. The observations have consisted of news and debate articles in national and regional press, as well as blogs, social media platforms, radio and TV programs, and podcasts that discuss news items, today's society, and creativity, as well as culture. However, in the following sections we adopt an emic approach, giving priority to platform professionals' own understandings.

Returning to the initial questions: what is it that platform professionals do? How do they go about stimulating and fostering creativity? What skills does their work require?

Creating space

> A lot of my work is being the boss. The boring things, the authoritarian, the frames for what we can do. Leading the different parts so that they keep within the given framework is a big part of my job. Plus, a lot of administration, a whole lot of reporting, a lot of fund-chasing and fundraising, writing applications, helping others write applications, talking about this place with different people … and at the same time trying to work strategically together with my colleagues, trying to run the operation towards a participatory principle. (Managing director)

The platform professionals describe their working days as varied. They move between administrative tasks, networking events, and strategic considerations. At times, work can also be very hands-on. For example, when asked about the rest of the day the project leader told us that she was going to spend the afternoon painting walls and second-hand furniture in one of the building's working spaces. A new project was about to be launched and the

first step in initiating it was to prepare the space. "First, we will paint", she said, "then we will see what becomes of the initiative". Her statement points to two central characteristics in the work of platform professionals; the first one being their responsibility to organise and maintain physical spaces for creative and cultural work. The platforms provide physical space; namely, offices, meeting facilities, and workshops. Many also house and provide access to different kinds of machinery. The way the platforms were organised in relation to how the participants could access the physical space differed slightly between the platforms in the study. Some platforms allowed for more private spaces—similar to an office or an office desk of one's own—and only parts of the space were dedicated to more shared spaces, whereas others leaned toward a structure where all space was common space. In the interviews, platform professionals referred to how the physical space allows participants to conduct larger projects, project a more professional approach to clients or collaboration partners, and create the possibility of having a place to belong to—somewhere to meet like-minded individuals. In short, the spaces provided participants with the possibility of not having to work from one's kitchen table. These aspects have also been discussed in previous studies, and point to the idea that physical space can act as a generator of possibilities for participants (Bergman and McMullen 2020).

The second aspect that the above statement of the project leader points to, is the fluid condition that characterises platforms and the work that is done there. Being a platform professional entails a lot of loose ends and insecurity. One managing director describes working at a platform for creative and cultural work as a sort of process where it is difficult to anticipate the future:

> [W]e do not know what companies will stay here. Companies move in and out. We do not know who will want to do things here. We must seize opportunities when they come. (Managing director)

Platforms for cultural and creative work are presented as spaces for constantly ongoing change. Seravalli (2014, p. 9) argues that makerspaces could be considered "a permanent prototype that can be transformed and shaped by the activities entering and developing in the space". Seravalli explains that the ever-changing nature of makerspaces demands makerspace designers to constantly try out different activities, foster alliances between activities already existing in the space, and undertake efforts to attract new participants to the space. Makerspace designers also need to mediate and respond to evolving situations, and restructure activities in accordance to emerging opportunities. Although Seravalli (2014) focuses solely on makerspaces, this demand for flexibility also applies to the platform professionals we have interviewed. The fluid and self-organising character of a platform operation includes dimensions that are hard to capture or plan for. "Plans are good", says one managing director—a sentiment echoed by a colleague who works as a project leader at the site—"but you also have to be able to take the cases as they come".

Some projects will work and grow, while others will turn out to be dead ends. One managing director underscores participants'—"the enthusiasts, carriers of the idea"—own responsibility, pointing out one of the key skills in his line of work, namely the possibility and ability to delegate the execution and responsibility of projects to others. Rather than initiating or executing projects, platform professionals' work consists of paving the way for creativity.

> There must be some sort of facilitator. Not result owners, but enablers. We are a facilitator … That is our frame. Meetings. Knowledge. Research. Events. Funding. Putting in people who can help in shaping a concept. Putting in people who are damn good at negotiating. (Project leader)

Platform professionals facilitate creativity by organising and providing economic, organisational, physical, and social frameworks. Without frameworks, they argue, there is a risk of missing opportunities and new collaborations. We will now go into two of the everyday practices that platform professionals perform in order to enable and help develop creative activities and projects. The first practice regards helping participants refine their idea (s) and make them feasible, and the second one concerns creating collaborations. We will start with the refinement of ideas.

Peeling the onion

> A lot of conversations are about "what do you mean, what are you thinking, how are we going to be able to do this?" And sometimes we pick up a ball saying, "let us do this" and "ok, if we are going to do this, how should we go about it?" So, it is a lot about asking questions. (Project leader)

Asking questions is described as a central practice in platform professionals' work: a tool in the facilitators' toolbox for enabling creativity. Raising questions concerning goals, execution, needs, and opportunities appears to be important in relation to all activities and at all stages of the process of different projects. However, asking questions is described to be of particular importance in the selection of initiatives or projects. Depending on space and resources, some platforms have developed protocols for acceptance while others choose to apply a more flexible approach.

One managing director describes how her organisation has developed and implemented a system with different support so as to better sift between applicants. The change is explained as a shift from a grassroots approach, where creative workers have been appointed organically, to a more formalised system with established selection criteria and levels of engagement. Shifting systems entailed that previously-appointed creators and entrepreneurs had to re-apply for their space in and access to the platform;

something that created considerable tension within the organisation. "Some became very scared and suspicious, and it started a painful process that has lasted through a whole year", the business manager tells us. "Many had to leave". In contrast to the formalised process with defined criteria and questions that she applies, another managing director describes a more inclusive and organic selection process. This managing director says that new initiatives must fit within one or more of the platform's broad key themes. However, if an initiative falls outside of them but is considered interesting, the platform might consider supporting it anyway; "we do not have a ready-made road map".

Bergman and McMullen (2020) argue that makerspace managers can either act as active brokers who facilitate and communicate opportunities, or as passive brokers who deliberately do not facilitate such engagement. These two different approaches are also applicable in the selection and acceptance of participants. To get new entrepreneurs acquainted with the environment of and structure within the makerspace, managers can either try to ease new entrepreneurs into the social and technological environment through guidance and networking, or leave the acclimation process to the entrepreneurs themselves. Both examples discuss the rigidity or flexibility of the management approach. Whereas the first managing director seeks control and insight, the latter argues that the process itself must be given the reins.

> [Q]uite often we get proposals that I find extremely cheesy and poor, that cannot become anything. Then I must brace myself and think that I do not have anything to do with that.

Despite an apparently more relaxed approach, the managing director has developed strategies in order to sift between projects. The strategy, again, boils down to asking questions.

> Then we will schedule a meeting to talk about the needs and opportunities. Sometimes we have to say no, they can be too extensive and would interfere with other operations. Or we might think that they are not feasible. It does not happen often, but sometimes one must ask people to downsize their ideas, take them down a notch. Sort of "we will do a pilot; we will do one event first, and then we will see if we can conquer the world next week instead". And we almost never turn anyone down, we do not have to do that, the building is not full. (Managing director)

The differences in approaches and protocols can be derived from the fact that platforms for cultural and creative platforms—specifically municipally-funded ones—are relatively new. Roles and practices have not been set in stone, and there is no "how-to book" for managing these types of platforms. Rather, it appears that they are still being tried out and developed. During their interview, the managing director with the relaxed approach called for

research that can lead to the development of protocols for best practice, as was also suggested in Bergman and McMullen (2020). However, in contrast to what Bergman and McMullen argue, the narratives in our material do not show that the platform professionals act as active *or* passive brokers, but rather both, depending on the specific activity or project. In the initial stage, the practice of asking questions seeks to identify opportunities and assess needs, and the professionals take on a more active role. They continue to ask critical questions after an initiative has been accepted in order to strengthen the carrying capacity of the specific activity and/or project, but seem to take on a more relaxed approach.

> I hear that you are saying this, this, and this. Ok, we can start with that tomorrow—but what is our dream? Where would we like to land? It is like with athletes—you can say "I am going to the Olympics". But then you must go to the sports centre every day to practise. (Project leader)

Asking questions is a tool for professionals to help individuals and collectives at the platforms refine their ideas and make them feasible. It is also a way to point out and place responsibility for different activities and projects, as well as their execution, on their initiators. In this process, the professionals underline their role as facilitators, switching between different levels of engagement. As stated, the platforms offer resources for creative ideas to take form and thrive through the facilitation of a physical framework; that is, office spaces, meeting rooms, and different kinds of technical equipment. But even more important, according to the professionals, is the social framework that they can offer as a node for different networks and collaborations. Having peeled the onion, another practice takes over. A recurring theme in the stories about the professionals' work is their role as facilitators of connections and conversations between different actors (cf. Browder et al. 2019).

Connecting people

This leads us to the second of the two practices that we have identified—namely the practice of connecting people. An important part of platform professionals' work is to organise and take part in more formal meetings for knowledge transfer and collaboration.

> I am an initiator. Organising, getting things going. Find who is going to do it, get them on board. Educated coach. Working a lot with values and methodology. Omnivore. (Project manager)

In taking part in these meetings, platform professionals function as lightning rods, taking in information and ideas that they can later use and spread to their respective networks. One of the platform professionals stated that

access to a physical place is often the main reason for approaching the creative platform. The second most important aspect is not money, but rather structure and networking so as to provide support for "doing things in the right order"; of how to create an event; marketing, pricing, or how to use a machine, etc. The platform professional describes a set-up of a milieu where the experience and knowledge of the individuals in the different projects and initiatives in the house collectively constitute a knowledge bank that concerns these matters. Again, networking—or linking different people to each other—becomes key in facilitating this knowledge transfer. The platform practitioner's role can, accordingly, be argued to be rooted in the idea of the collective do-it-yourself movement, and peer-to-peer learning structures. But this occurs through facilitating the structure itself, rather than necessarily being the go-to person regarding specific knowledge or know-how.

Another example of utilising more formal meetings as a structure to facilitate creativity concerns financial support. One of the platform professionals informed us that in relation to financial support, the platform generally does not fund the initiatives. The budget for running the organisation does not cover the ability to fund projects and larger events. Another platform professional expresses similar sentiments, and adds that they are "very dependent on the projects marketing themselves; that they also seek funding". However, during the interviews, set-ups are described where applying for funding is supported in different ways. The platform professional can support projects in applying for funding, providing information and insight on where and how to apply, but also when it fits with the platform's aim to take part as a co-applicant in a funding application. Furthermore, platform professionals point to the importance of initiating meetings between different persons or initiatives. Meetings between parties that may be interested in applying for funding together, or between parties where one party has experience in applying for similar funding that someone else is interested in, where the former party can support the latter party in the application process. The set-up furthers the platform practitioner's role as "a facilitator of networking". This is a role platform professionals can hold due to their recurring contact with all the different projects, their understanding of their aims and visions, as well as through updating their knowledge on the project's different applications.

Thirdly, the platform practitioner's role as a facilitator of networking could also be viewed as a producer's role. Here, platform professionals act as a link between different projects and the external public; through, for example, producing larger public events hosted by the creative platform in which different projects can partake. This can either take the form of a more tailored specific event, with a clearer focus, or more general events. The platforms describe different structures in relation to conducting this type of event; from more of a focus on participants hosting almost every

event, to the platform practitioner producing some of these events, to having someone employed as a producer within the organisation. In the prior and the latter cases, the platform practitioner's role relates more to a support function in facilitating this type of co-hosted event through previously-mentioned internal networking channels between different persons and projects. Whereas in the third more middle-of-the-road option, the structure involves the platform practitioner taking on the tasks of a producer. However, one platform practitioner underlines that these types of actions are time-intensive, and because she has to prioritise working on the long-term strategy, vision, and goals of the platform, she has chosen not to do them anymore.

Apart from describing the more formal aspects of networking, platform professionals often returned to the importance of enabling informal contact surfaces, where different competencies and fields can be connected, enabling the exploration of common interests and possibilities. They describe how creativity and creative projects arise through small talk and the informal exchange of ideas. Informal communication can be defined as a type of communicative interaction that is not governed by strict forms and rules (Coupland 2003). Non-formal interactions take place near the water cooler, at the coffee machine or during lunch breaks, but also take place in formalised settings among unrelated individuals. "The informal network comprises spontaneous, emergent patterns, resulting from discretionary choices of the individual" (Stohl 1995, p. 65). Studies on informal communication have examined, for example, emergent networks, to better discuss less formalised and more natural forms of communication. Informal channels are generally better evaluated than formal ones, with informal channels often used to communicate organisational culture. Small talk creates connections; "small talk can be briefly defined as an informal type of conversation that is often followed by the proper discussion, negotiations, and other forms of formal discourse" (Bieleni-Grajewska 2017, p. 6).

> "Invite them". Put them at the table, give them coffee, and ask if all is good. Then it happens. (Project leader)

Despite a portfolio of different meeting facilities and machinery, it is the very mundane cup of coffee that is the platform professionals' number one tool to get the small talk going. According to platform professionals, getting together over coffee is the first step toward joint projects and great ideas. The importance that is given to small talk underlines the informal and self-organising character of the platforms, and the ideas and conceptions that form this context. In the next and concluding section of this chapter, we will linger on what this can tell us about how creativity is conceptualised.

In the age of creativity

In this chapter, we have focused on creative platforms and how creativity is facilitated in platforms for creative and cultural work in Scania, Sweden. One way to structure innovation and creativity that is intended to result from these platforms could, of course, simply be to allow participants to use the space and create connections on their own accord without any interference from management, leaders, or other professionals, or without any structures to increase output. To put it bluntly, their job is to facilitate networking and creativity through the possibility of "accessing a number of square meters and a cup of coffee". However, several of the platforms have engaged professionals to run them. We have aimed to understand the role of these platform professionals, to map how they help to facilitate creativity through these milieus.

More specifically, this chapter has aimed to provide some reflections on the work tasks of these platform professionals. From their narratives about their work, we have learned that the professionals' working days are varied, often including both strategic matters and more hands-on tasks. They write applications for funding and prepare physical spaces. We have understood that they perceive themselves to be enablers of creativity who facilitate creativity and cultural work through different practices; supporting rather than performing. From their narratives, we have identified and discussed two key practices—namely the practice of asking questions and the practice of connecting people. By asking the right questions at the right time, platform professionals act as friendly critics who help individuals or collectives get to the core of their ideas and make them feasible. Asking questions also helps identify opportunities and assess needs. Through the practice of connecting people, platform professionals gather and use their networks in both formal and informal contexts to strengthen the overall framework of the platform, as well as individual activities and projects. Both practices require coaching skills, social competence, and a willingness to prepare the scene but leave the responsibility of the actual execution to others. Keeping track of the bigger picture demands the ability to put together building blocks of different sizes and shapes into a totality that moves in the direction of innovation and growth. It also requires knowledge of when and how to restructure the pattern, to continually encourage growth and counterwork stagnation. Focusing on the overall goal requires that platform professionals do not get lost in detail or too engaged in specific activities, ideas, and projects. Some will grow and develop out of the platform framework, others will instead turn out to be dead ends. The task of the platform professional is to create a balance between openness and structure, exploration, and results.

Through narratives of and about the work of the professionals who handle and manage these platforms, this chapter illustrates how creativity and creative work are encouraged and facilitated at the chosen platforms.

They also tell us that creativity is thought of as a project that requires different kinds of structures, spaces, and support in order to come about and thrive. At the same time, creativity is presented as something amorphous and unplannable. Platforms for creative and cultural work are viewed as catalysts that facilitate and enable both structure and freedom. Platform professionals organise and maintain physical spaces for ideas to take form and grow, as well as a social space for collective thinking that is described as crucial for creativity. We would like to introduce the idea that the platform professionals can be perceived as a contemporary guild whose actions and use of language and terms illustrate the creative imperative of our time. This guild frames activities and business as creative, adding value to them as worthy points of attachment to the intended recipients. In this way, they are involved in qualification and function as mediators of conceptions and norms of and about creativity.

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Part II

Sites, Spaces and Performances

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8 Social Media and the Documentation of Creative Work

New Sites and Insights

Nada Endrissat, Viviane Sergi, and Claudine Bonneau

Introduction

In the era of the so-called creativity imperative (Reckwitz 2017) in which individual creativity translates into economic, social, and cultural capital (Townley et al. 2009), the motivation to be creative is surging and so are the normative expectations and social pressure. Valued for its ability to challenge, inspire, and transform existing routines and boundaries, creativity and creative work retain an "aura of mystery" (Bain 2005, 30) that tends to be romanticised. In recent years, documentaries and behind-the-scenes views such as artist studio talks have proliferated, offering insights into the process of creative production and inspiration for personal creativity to a broader audience (Ullrich 2016). At the same time, existing documentaries tend to feature world-renowned artists, feeding into the narrative of the "creative genius" (Bain 2005; Becker 2008) that reproduces the narrative of the extraordinary. The rise and imbrication of social media in daily life, on the other hand, provides creative workers new opportunities to present themselves and their work, allowing for new insights into the creative work process that so far have remained hidden in dominant discourses around creative work, thereby making the process of creative work(ing) more accessible to a broader audience.

In this chapter, we explore the opportunities that social media offers for researching and understanding creative work by turning to publicly available Instagram posts and analysing them as a new data source, providing insights into everyday moments of creative work. While documentaries and social media have already been mobilised to analyse creative workers' self-presentations (e.g., Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019), we argue that social media is not just a platform for self-presentation but also a new site where creative work takes place. It thus offers the opportunity to learn about the mundane practices constituting an important part of creative work—including those that are intangible or usually invisible. Doing so, our chapter introduces social media as a new *site* for creative work that offers new *(in)sights* into the process of creative work. We then ask: *What aspects of creative work do social media posts render visible?* And in

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the process of rendering them visible, *how does this enrich our understanding of creative work*?

Theoretically, we provide a historical overview of the myths surrounding artistic and creative work (e.g., Bain 2005; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019; Menger 2014), paying particular attention to how social media has impacted (the image of) creative work (e.g., Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Groys 2013). We then turn to social media as a new workspace (Bonneau et al. 2021) and highlight the possibilities that social media offers for learning about hidden aspects of work (Sergi and Bonneau 2016). Empirically, we draw from a qualitative data set that we collected on publicly available Instagram accounts belonging to artists and creative workers. Examining these posts, we find that creative workers are using social media to document moments of their work that otherwise tend to remain invisible. More specifically, these posts render *imperfections* visible, including doubts concerning their own work or struggles about how to take a piece of work further, present *incomplete* pieces of work, providing access to the creative process through its documentation, and expose instances of *impermanence* including fading moods of frustration and reflection as well as joy and excitement.

Our contribution to research is threefold. First, we contribute to existing debates around what defines creative work (Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019; Menger 2014) and how mundane practices and imperfections, incompleteness, and impermanence might be constitutive of it. Second, we contribute to the demystification of creative work by discussing how the documentation of incomplete or imperfect work reflects a do-it-yourself ethos that serves as encouragement, sparking interest and confidence among social media followers to engage in creative work themselves (Ullrich 2016). Third, we add to our understanding of social media as a new workspace (Bonneau et al. 2021) and critically reflect on how social media is not just an opportunity to document and share moments of creative work but also a technology that demands content generation as a new facet of creative work.

Literature review

Historical overview of the conditions and myths surrounding creative work

In Western societies, one of the first images of creativity and creative work appeared in the medieval Christian period when God was seen as the primary creator and (male) artists as receivers or mere "channels" of divine inspiration (Bain 2005; Ullrich 2016).[1] In the humanist tradition of the late Renaissance, the social status of artists was reconceptualised and given greater recognition. By the early 17th century, a shift had taken place that positioned humans as the measure of all things and acknowledged artists as the originators of their work. Individual creativity was increasingly valued and worshipped, giving way to the powerful mythos of the "heroic male genius" who possessed creativity as a rare and special gift allowing "him" to

express "himself" in extraordinary masterpieces (Bain 2005; Becker 2008; Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels 1973; Ullrich 2016). During that time, originality came to the forefront and for the artist to be true to "his" vision he had to isolate himself and withdraw from society. By the end of the 18th century, separateness was seen "as an essential quality of any true artist" (Bain 2005, 28). Such isolation was deepened during Romanticism when feelings, imagination, and genius were privileged over reason and rules (Bain 2005). Around the same time the powerful image of the starving artist as a "Bohemian rebel" was constructed, one who was willing to sacrifice status, money, and material comfort for the benefit of individual freedom and self-expression. Creativity, during the Romantic era, became the antidote to stability and conventional ways of living, glorifying instead the idea of precariousness and flexibility that continues to shape the image of the creative worker today (e.g., Eikhof and Haunschild 2007). Likewise, creativity remains associated with effortless insight, colloquially called the "A-ha!" moment, as illustrated by this quote from Steve Jobs: "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something" (Lucas and Nordgren 2021, 1). Similarly, the myth of the heroic lone male genius continues to be powerful even though it has been challenged from several sides. For example, Becker (1982/2008), in his landmark publication *Art Worlds*, argues that artistic work, rather than being the product of a sole genius, is the product of a collaboration between actors including artists, critics, patrons, gallery owners, jazz club owners, and audiences. This suggests that artistic work is as normative as it is creative, questioning the radicality and originality of creativity while also pointing to the general social, economic, and political conditions that influence its production, distribution, and presentation.

Changes in creative work brought about by the internet

In the modern era, museums and galleries played a decisive role by selecting which art was displayed and made visible to an audience, defining the power regime under which artistic work and creativity functioned (Groys 2013). The rise of the internet, and of social media in particular, fundamentally challenges these established ways by providing—in principle—unrestricted access to a platform. This allows artists to exhibit and distribute their creative work to a broad audience (Ullrich 2016), challenging the elitist approach of museums and galleries.[2] At the same time, unrestricted access does not automatically imply fame for everyone as attention is a scarce resource (Groys 2013). Thus, the more radical shift brought about by the internet vis-à-vis creative work might be that it has uprooted the former division between the production and the exhibition of creative work (Groys 2013). While creativity used to be practised in solitude, it is now brought to the internet and carried out under the gaze of others (Groys 2013).

This permanent exposure fundamentally challenges traditional subject positions of the lone genius but also of the creative work process per se:

> *creative work is creative because it takes place beyond public control—and even beyond the conscious control of the author. […] Only at the end of this period of absence is the author expected to present a work […] that would be then accepted as creative precisely because it seemed to emerge out of nothingness. In other words, creative work is the work that presupposes the desynchronization of the time of work from the time of the exposure of its results. Creative work is practised in a parallel time of seclusion, in secrecy—so that there is an effect of surprise when this parallel time gets re-synchronized with the time of the audience. That is why the subject of art practice traditionally wanted to be concealed, to become invisible, to take time out.* (Groys 2013, online)

With the rise of the internet, creative workers are no longer separate nor invisible but *connected* and *visible* to their audiences. In addition, the synchronisation of production and exhibition shifts attention from the final product to the process of its making, with the effect that *the documentation of the art making* becomes a work of art *in itself* (Groys 2013). In this sense, the internet accentuates a trend that emerged in the 1970s with the rise of avant-garde or performance art in which the making of the art through body-space-time interactions, often also involving the audience, is constitutive of the artwork itself.[3] It also marks the beginning of a rising interest in experiential encounters with artists, exemplified in the highly publicised 2009 MOMA hit exhibition: *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*. The exhibition parallels the rising interest in creativity and "being creative" in Western societies (Reckwitz 2017) leading them to look for inspiration in behind-the-scenes documentaries that feature individual artists at work in their studios (e.g., *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present; Still Life: Ron Mueck at Work; Gerhard Richter Painting; Ai-Weiwei: Never Sorry*[4]). However, while these documentaries may claim to present the 'realities' of creative work, there may be some level of editorial control and defaulting to more idealised representations focusing on megastar artists whose creativity stands out, thus re-continuing the traditional view of creative work as something "extraordinary".

However, such portrayals may be transcended by social media as it offers a broader representation of creative work that does not rely on the fame of well-known artists. As a result, social media may offer the potential for more *everyday representations of creative work* and for getting nearer to some of the experienced realities associated with it. That this might be a promising research avenue is suggested by a recent publication on how design professionals present themselves and their work in the twelve episodes comprising the documentary *Career Ladder* (Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019). Different from what the literature and popular media tend to purport, the

documentary suggests that designers do not consider their creativity as an "exceptional gift" but as a "skill that everyone has, to a certain extent" (p. 6). Far from seeing themselves as "Bohemian rebels or social critics who oppose economic and bourgeois values" (p. 7), the documentary suggests that creative work needs to be sensitive to economic demands. While design might differ from other creative industries such as painting or acting in that it is more customer- and market-oriented and less a calling to pursue "art for art's sake" (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007), the study is instructive in that it demystifies creative work, encouraging more research into first-person accounts that are produced without interference from a researcher and thus provide an unfiltered or backstage look at creative work. In the next section, we focus on social media as a new workspace for creative work and argue that publicly available posts that derive from voluntary, informal, and everyday use of social media provide a rich data source of everyday representations as well as insights into the processes and experience of creative work that tend to remain hidden.

Social media and the new myths around creative work

Research has started to explore how social media impacts creative work. Groys (2013), for example, notes how every artist has become a blogger. In a similar vein, Duffy (2017) and Duffy et al. (2021) document how creative workers use social media, focusing in particular on the possibility for increasing one's reputation and visibility through practices of self-branding. On the other hand, Duffy and Wissinger (2017) explore the mythologies about creative work in the social media age as they feature in popular media. They find that creative work tends to be portrayed as fun, free, and authentic (offering authentic self-expression and creative freedom). By positioning creative work as a labour of love, popular media circulate a new "mythos of passionate work" (p. 4661) that helps to "perpetuate an image of glamour […] as part of a "creativity *dispositif*" that both disciplines and incites cultural workers and aspirants" (Duffy and Wissinger 2017, 4652, emphasis in original) to pursue an online career.

Duffy's (2017) investigation takes on a further critical note in that she views sharing on social media as calculated activity that serves an explicit professional and economic end. It is worth noting that the creative workers she focuses on include new forms of creative work such as bloggers, vloggers, and Instagrammers who are monetising their visibility directly through sponsored posts and product placement. Studying workers who explicitly turn their visibility into financial gains could be considered as the "glamorous" side of creative work in the social media age. Yet, as we argue, not every creative worker who is posting on social media is doing it in the same way as, for example, Instagrammers. Artists and creative workers may post content without explicitly wanting to be influencers but rather to share ideas, get feedback, or document their progress on a piece of work. In other words,

these individuals use social media platforms in ways that are connected to what they do, but also in a more mundane manner—just like most users of such platforms do. For this reason, we wish to nuance, deepen, and complement existing analysis focused on marketing and branding by examining a broader array of practices that make different aspects of creative work visible. Far from considering megastar artists, we wish to explore the possibilities that social media affords by using publicly available data that artists and creative workers have posted about their work, focusing in particular on the more ordinary, mundane, and non-heroic as a gateway to a richer understanding of creative work. Building on the argument that social media is not only a stage where to present oneself but also a *workspace* (Bonneau et al. 2021) where ideas are crafted and progressively brought to light, where knowledge can be gained and reflexivity sharpened by sharing work to document, legitimise, or criticise it, we set out to explore *What aspects of creative work do social media posts render visible?* And in the process of rendering them visible, *how does this enrich our understanding of creative work?*

Methods

Data collection: working out loud posts as data source

Following our interest in the informal use of social media (rather than the mandatory use including corporate uses prescribed by an organisation), we have been exploring how artists or creative workers use social media in the course of their mundane work activities to document, share, and exchange about their work. We have named this practice working out loud (WOL), thereby emphasising the focus on work, rather than on self-presentation or branding (Sergi and Bonneau 2016). We define WOL as a "communicative and sociomaterial practice where individuals voluntarily turn to public social media platforms to share what is part of their daily work" (Bonneau et al. 2021, 51). Similar to informal watercooler conversations, WOL often addresses aspects of work that are taking place backstage or are otherwise left in the shadows. Such an approach values the mundane over the spectacular, the detail over the grand narrative, and has been inspiring other research on social media (re)presentations of specific professional identities, such as farmers (Riley and Robertson 2021). Here, we expand on this research by examining how social media and WOL posts offer a lens through which we can better understand the daily process and experience of creative work and therefore extend the discussion of the representation of creative practices beyond the dominant narratives found in popular media (e.g., Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019). This post[5] provides an illustration of a WOL post.[6] In it, we see a finished piece of work by a visual artist and a caption that details the process of its making.

As we can read, the post is not so much used to promote or sell the piece of work, but rather to give behind-the-scenes access to the practices and techniques they have employed to make it. In the combination of image and text, the post outlines how creative work is often unplannable, takes its time, and is not fully predictable. The artist admits how the process includes "messing around" and gives some guidance and advice about what smaller and larger pieces require. From a WOL perspective, posts like these are a vivid illustration of documenting and exhibiting creative work (Groys 2013) while also providing advice (in the sense of teaching) to one's followers.

We began collecting WOL posts like this by searching public Instagram posts rather than focusing on specific artists. Our inquiry was thus phenomenon-led (what are artists doing when they work out loud on social media?), rather than user-led (who is doing it and why?) A first step of empirical exploration inspired by digital ethnography (Hine 2015) led us to uncover what artists were sharing on Instagram. Instead of restricting the search by defining a priori keywords or hashtags, we explored what could characterise creative work in various settings and performed queries through Instagram's search engine by asking ourselves who could be narrating their creative work (e.g., a painter) and what kinds of words or hashtags this person might use (e.g., #oiloncanvas). As we progressively refined our definition of WOL, we also incorporated its dimensions into our data collection work (e.g., #workinprogress). Combined, these empirical, conceptual, and experiential aspects nourished our exploration in an abductive way and allowed us to immerse ourselves in the wide variety of experiences workers share when they talk about their work and their work experience on social media (Sergi and Bonneau 2021). Then, we gradually discovered a number of hashtags that would prove relevant to come back to (e.g., #artofinstagram, #artistatwork). However, rather than systematically collecting *all* posts found through these hashtags, we captured the instances that fit, broadly speaking, with our general interest in WOL. We thus conducted several rounds of data collection, from which we selected a corpus of 70 posts for our data analysis. Doing so, our examples reflect a purposive sample, opting for a thick data rather than a big data approach (Latzko-Toth et al. 2017).

Data analysis

We documented all posts through screenshots in an Excel file and compiled information about each instance (URL, date, how it was found, etc.), including a column with initial comments and labels. We then engaged in systematic thematic coding in an open and inductive manner. This included coding for the emergent themes related to our first research question, identifying what is rendered visible through the posts. Our analysis considered both the visual and textual elements of posts, using

the descriptions, hashtags, and comments to contextualise the pictures. This led to a list of different themes including the expression of emotions or political opinions, the context setting, the material used, etc. Next, we noted patterns and commonalities that allowed us to group the themes together. Here, we paid particular attention to the images that the posts revealed about creative work and to what extent they complemented or contradicted images of creative work, similar to Eikhof and Choduzkowski (2019) analysis.

We were particularly interested in images that were surprising or seemed to fundamentally differ from practices of conventional self-branding and self-promotion on social media. In doing so, we identified several posts that did not follow the presentation of the glamorous side of creative work as "fun" and "free" (Duffy and Wissinger 2017). Despite the fact that the majority of posts were formulated in a positive tone, we found instances of posts expressing negative elements, such as boredom, anxiety, or anger that we grouped together as expressing themes of *imperfection, impermanence*, and *incompleteness* in creative work, thus complementing our understanding of creative work and allowing us to address our second research question. It is important to note that these themes do not represent traditional categories such as those that grounded theory would bring to the surface, as they are not mutually exclusive (Charmaz 2006). In addition, our analysis rests on what is made present and visible in these posts and does not explore the artists' motivations or intentions. We do, however, consider the accompanying text and self-chosen hashtag. Below, we detail the three themes that we identified and provide illustrative examples that show how they extend existing images of creative work on social media. Table 8.1 provides a summary of the data interpretation process and our findings.

Findings: the "backstage" of creative work

Social media offers a platform to document, exhibit, reflect on, and promote creative work, thereby (re)producing particular images or myths about creative work. As outlined above, our focus here is on the "backstage" or behind-the-scenes lens of what WOL posts reveal about the work process and experience of it. We found several examples of posts that featured at the same time a piece of artwork and comments expressing gratitude to all the creative workers who willingly share their work on social media to help others get creative, learn, and be inspired, sometimes accompanied with hashtags like #artistappreciation or #creativeprocess (like this post,[7] which makes use of these hashtags). Looking at posts that use these hashtags quickly sets the stage for the insights that the following three themes reveal about creative work: moments of imperfection, incompleteness, and impermanence that undo the myth of the extraordinary creative genius. We now explore these three themes.

Table 8.1 Summary of findings

Elements of creative work rendered visible in WOL posts	*Conceptual theme that informs our understanding of creative work*
Publicly acknowledging specific aspects of the work that include: • Doubts or struggles concerning their own work • Pieces of work that can be considered a "failure" or "unsuccessful", e.g., strategies or choices that did not work out • Behind-the-scenes views that show the imperfection of the working conditions	Imperfection
What is visibilised on social media is often not the finished product (art piece) but the incomplete, unfinished work that is still in progress including • Prototypes or ideas that are presented to show how things develop (or fail to develop) • Reflections about the situation with a link to goals/intentions/milestones (sometimes not achieved) • Temporality	Incompleteness
Showing ephemeral/informal/ unacknowledged aspects related to the fleeting experience of work including • Evaluating momentary situations/choices • Expressing moods, doubts, frustration as well as joy, happiness, success • Re-evaluation of past decisions	Impermanence

Imperfection

The theme of imperfection features prominently in the WOL posts we have collected. It refers to all the elements that could be categorised as mistakes, mishaps, or processes that did not turn out in a way that satisfies the artist. Different from the general positivity bias and the glamour myth that is circulated in popular media (Duffy and Wissinger 2017), this theme provides an interesting counter-narrative: creative work, far from being an effortless "A-ha!" moment (Lucas and Nordgren 2021) is defined by many instances of imperfection and strenuous failed attempts. With social media's openness, it becomes interesting to note that these elements—inherent to any creative process—are made publicly visible. Posts exposing imperfection can also be about the final piece emerging from a process of creation, showing a result that can be characterised (and is sometimes characterised by the artists themselves) as "not good", "not

working", or a "failure", for various reasons, like the choice of material, the choice of technique, the execution, the working conditions, among others.

Even more, these elements can be acknowledged in a variety of ways. On occasion, such an acknowledgement is limited to being shown and shared, in a post that mainly presents the imperfection. In other posts, artists go beyond simply exposing the imperfection and use this imperfect result to reflect on the material dimensions of their practice, or on the challenges of artistic endeavour in general. Posts that showcase imperfections also allude to doubts artists may have as they progress in realising a piece, or the struggles they face or have faced (either materially, in execution, or emotionally).

Reflective notes can provide additional insights into the process of making including the struggles and doubts creative workers face. Some posts, like this example,[8] where the artist documents imperfections in a reflective manner, provide insights related to the practice of passing on knowledge/experience, but others include different relations to imperfections, like humour or anger, for example. As is the case with many posts on Instagram, hashtags also play a key role in characterising what the post makes visible. For example, we can find many instances of the use of the rather direct #makemistakes and #artmistake (like here[9]), as well as the hashtag #artfail (used over 29,500 times in early March 2023).

Posts that discuss mistakes or failures—for example, in drawing, painting or sculpting—offer another illustration of how parts of the creative work, like failed attempts and "starting over" that usually remain hidden from public view, are made visible through social media and provide the reader with a better understanding of what creative work entails: "starting over"—again and again (see this timelapse[10] for an example, where the artist writes "wanted to share this to show that all artists, no matter the level, have days where they mess up"). While a perfect finished product of creative work retains an aura of mystery, seeing the process of its making as well as its imperfections makes creative work more accessible, suggesting that creativity—far from emanating from a "genius"—is a practice that is defined by many failures and days when artists "mess up". The central message here is that creative work requires the courage to try it out, which can be exemplified by the use of other hashtags, like #daretocreate.

Incompleteness

Based on our data collection and analysis, sharing steps along the process of creating a new piece seems to be a habitual part of what artists and creative workers do on social media. Completed art pieces are, of course, featured on artists' feeds, but often alongside photos and captions that narrate the process of their creation. Such incompleteness can be revealed in many ways, by showing the initial ideas or prototypes where the piece started, the preparation needed before beginning the work (e.g., the setup necessary to start working on a new piece), and all intermediary states imaginable.

Intermediary states may also showcase strategies that are working, or approaches that may be failing. In this sense, showing the incompleteness of a piece may represent an occasion to also expose imperfections, pointing again to the vast array of elements that may be conveyed through a single Instagram post. A recurring theme in many posts is the idea that creative work is—by definition—*work in progress*. Indeed, the hashtag #workinprogress (and variations, like #wip and #wipart) appeared recurrently in our data collection. Making the link to the prior theme by pointing out that creative work does not only imply starting over but is constantly evolving and never really finished. In this sense, it contrasts starkly with the portrayal of creative work as easily marketable (Duffy and Wissinger 2017). On Instagram, one can find an abundance of posts that allude to this theme of incompleteness, and that discuss how creative work does not only entail a "final masterpiece" but really develops in small steps of continuous improvements, like this one.[11] Indeed, the hashtag #workinprogress (or #wip in its shortened form), used in connection to artistic endeavours abounds on Instagram, pointing to the widespread use of social media to share ordinary progress on creative projects.[12]

Another illustration of incompleteness can be seen in posts that describe projects that are not finished and may never be finished, like the making of this tenor ukulele.[13] Besides admitting that creative work involves many instances of incomplete versions, this post also highlights an element of temporality (here captured in the comment, "for a really long time … maybe one day I'll finish it"). What is interesting here is what Groys (2013) has noted about the changing nature of creative work through the internet: documenting the process of its making becomes an artwork in itself. In other words, the documentation of incomplete creative work not only provides an insight into how the process evolves but it also shows that documenting (as a form of exhibiting it) becomes part of creative work, suggesting not only a change in the *image* of creative work but also in its *nature*.

One could argue that photos of incompleteness, such as photos or videos of artists at work in their atelier are not new and have been part of exhibitions and books for many decades. However, what is different with social media platforms is that the possibility of making the process visible is now widely available to anyone, as long as they are users of the platform. Furthermore, such platforms do not impose limits on what artists and creative workers might want to share (except for when artwork gets censored—see footnote 2), allowing for the possibility of capturing and making public all steps of a process, either through photos or videos. Indeed, with other technical functionalities available to anyone, any artist can nowadays make a time-lapse video (an accelerated version of a long video) exposing the full process to anyone. While making such videos was possible in the past, it required technical knowledge and material that has now become accessible to a vast number of people through smartphones. The presence of such technology in artists' hands and pockets, combined with the ease of use and

plasticity of social media, has allowed more artists to show and talk about what they are doing as they are doing it. Coming back to Instagram, we can see many posts where artists and creative workers expose the incompleteness of a piece, and comment on where they are in their process, on how things are shaping up, if their plans and intentions are materialising as expected, or on the dead ends in which they might find themselves. Interestingly, in the process of showing and commenting on the work in progress, artists may also share tips and tricks to achieve a piece or an effect, which might include revealing the inner workings of a piece. This can be seen in the example of this sculpture,[14] where the artist shows its incompleteness while describing how the piece is being made. This casts creative work almost like a collaborative achievement, similar to what Becker (2008) had described. Rather than art worlds, social media is an illustration of *creativity communities* where creative workers interact with their audience and colleagues.

In this sense, exposing incompleteness through social media not only contributes to documenting in a mundane fashion the process of making a piece, but may help and inspire other artists. Furthermore, it can even expose aspects that may otherwise appear mysterious to an onlooker when considering a finished piece (like a finished sculpture). Similar to moments of imperfection, creative work in its incompleteness suggests a kind of *do-it-yourself* manual. Unveiling the process of its making can encourage others to engage in creative work themselves (Ullrich 2016), putting forth a democratised understanding of creative work that anyone is capable of engaging in.

Impermanence

The third conceptual theme we noticed in our material refers to all ephemeral and fleeting aspects associated with the process of creative work, aspects that accompany artists and creative workers as they are progressing, but that are not included in their finished pieces, or in what is produced along with the final piece (such as a formal description of a piece for a catalogue). These elements are a part of daily work and experiences, like thoughts and reflections on what artists are doing or dealing with in their overall practice (hence not reflections on imperfections or on a specific step in the completion of a piece), passing moods, expressions of doubts, frustration or joy, momentary feelings of having achieved something, or other reflections on what is lived from the artist's experience (see this post[15] alluding to impermanence in the form of reflection on one's artistic practice).

Posts on social media thus allow for the capture of elements that would otherwise leave no trace and remain unnoticed or that refer to the working conditions/setting that are part of the process but not inscribed in a visible manner into the pieces. Impermanence may also refer to all the elements that are tried out as variations in the process of working on a piece, but that may be discarded and not make it into the final piece, as suggested by this post[16] showing an experiment with unknown (at the time of the post) results.

Impermanence also refers to the ephemeral nature of social media visibility. Even if technically, WOL posts persist beyond their publication, so that it is possible to access them asynchronously by going back or by launching a search, their dissemination and access by other users are characterised by immediacy and instantaneity. Social media publications follow one another at a frantic pace on the user's feed, creating a continuous flow of posts. Indeed, older posts are immediately replaced by new ones and end up being relegated to more rarely consulted spaces. Artists and creative workers document things as they happen, in the action, knowing that they have no control over the pace at which they will disappear from their audience's view. This might challenge traditional ideas around art's permanence (Groys 2013), and it can also induce stress or anxiety among creative workers as they constantly need to update and produce new events to create a form of visibility amid social media's ephemerality. This is vividly illustrated in the following post,[17] which voices anxiety about the pressure to be productive and to post on social media as a new facet of creative work.

Conclusion

In the past, being an artist was often associated with the idea of working secluded and disconnected from society. Pieces of work would only be shared when finished, to have a surprising, unexpected effect (Groys 2013; Ullrich 2016). The new practices of sharing unfinished work and letting followers participate in the art work's becoming alter this view and fundamentally challenge the relationship between artists and their audience as well as their artistic self-concept. According to Ullrich (2016), artists like Mondrian, Beckmann, or Rothko would have never agreed to reveal their works in progress. It was essential to their sense of self as artists to remain independent. However, in today's creativity-driven society, scholars have claimed that artists are motivators, sources of inspiration, and guides for others to explore their creativity and become creative (e.g., Ullrich 2016). As we suggested in our findings, seeing *the beauty of imperfection* or *incompleteness* in behind-the-scenes posts renders creative work more accessible and less mystical. Those images might serve as encouragement to try it out for oneself, sparking interest and confidence among followers to engage in creative work. It reduces the threshold and status difference between artists and followers making it easier to identify with the artist. Given this shift in relationships, some speak of digital democratisation, where the documentation of incomplete or unfinished works in progress is thought to provide access to knowledge to those who did not have access before, promising that "people just like us can succeed if we put in enough effort" (Duffy 2017, 99).

On a more critical note, our findings also reveal that not only the image of creative work has changed but also its nature. In the context of social media, it has become somewhat of an imperative for artists and creative workers to

be connected and to show and share their work as part of their creative work. These practices, along with the changed relationship between author and community, promote new subjectivities, such as the entrepreneurial subject and culturpreneur (e.g., Flisfeder 2015; Loacker 2013). Artists are increasingly seen as independent enterprises and artistic values are fused with entrepreneurial ones (e.g., Duffy 2017; Eikhof and Haunschild 2007). As a consequence, art (creativity) and commerce (economy) are no longer opposing poles but merged in the realm of the debate about creative industries (Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Loacker 2013), while in practice, creative workers continue to experience the tensions that such merging implies (see in particular the post above that critically reflects on how creative work nowadays demands online engagement). Creative work implies creativity but also productivity —and the creation of content—not only for oneself and one's artistic practice but also for the social media platform.

To conclude, our findings make three contributions. First, we contribute to existing debates around what defines creative work (Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019; Menger 2014) and how mundane practices and imperfections, incompleteness, and impermanence might be constitutive of it. Second, we contribute to the demystification of creative work by showing that it is not the product of a creative genius but a mundane, often tiresome, and frustrating endeavour that is embedded in a community of followers and other creative workers that share, comment, and motivate each other, thus creating new images of artists as "one of us" (Duffy 2017) and suggesting that "creativity is a skill that everyone has" (Eikhof and Chudzikowski 2019, 6). Third, we add to our understanding of social media as a new workspace (Bonneau et al. 2021) by suggesting that *social media work* has become an *integral part of creative work* that entails writing blog entries, sharing pictures on Instagram, and uploading videos on YouTube (Groys 2013). The intent might be to receive feedback and advance one's work or to create a cathartic moment by sharing emotions or inner struggles. But the creation of online content for social media platforms seldom happens spontaneously and often relies on the orchestration of several elements and skills. It thus creates new demands on creative workers (Duffy 2017), for example by having to follow updates on apps, change platforms, and adapt their skills accordingly (Duffy et al. 2021) leaving less time for creative work. Yet, some have argued that blogging, vlogging, and Instagramming are, in fact, the "new models of creative work" (Duffy and Wissinger 2017, 4655) so that social media is not just a new workspace for creative workers to document and share moments of creative work but also a technology that demands content generation as a new facet of creative work not discussed so far.

To sum up, this chapter has illustrated the relevance of social media as a new *site* of creative work whose investigation in the form of WOL posts as data source provides *new insights* into the processes of creative work, altering the "myth" of creative work in the social media age.

Notes

1 In this section, we review research that has focused primarily on artistic work and the image of creativity. With the rise of the creative industries, the notion of creative work has proliferated, encompassing disciplines that extend far beyond the original notion of artistic work (such as painting, literature, or performing arts). While we acknowledge these differences, much of what we know about the myths pertaining to creative work has its origins in what the literature has described as artistic work. We therefore use artistic work and creative work interchangeably in this section (see also Bain 2005; Groys 2013).
2 However, the apparent openness of social media, compared to museums and galleries, may be limited by these platforms' policies, especially regarding content moderation—which might become an issue of censorship. See for example the cases of multimedia artist Stephanie Sarley and Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki, as described in the following articles: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/10/stephanie-sarley-provocative-art-instagram-blood-oranges-feminism-sexuality
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/oct/16/vienna-museums-open-adult-only-onlyfans-account-to-display-nudes
3 https://www.theartstory.org/movement/performance-art/
4 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2073029/; https://www.charbonartspace.com/ron-mueck-screening-yqax8; http://www.gerhardrichterpainting.com/#/the-film/; https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1845773/
5 https://www.instagram.com/p/BT7r7IMlPeS/?hl=fr
6 It would have been optimal to include some of the Instagram posts we collected directly in this chapter. However, due to copyright issues we were unable to do so. Instead, we describe in general terms some of the posts we found and refer with links to illustrative examples. We also include relevant hashtags that can be used by readers to look up posts like the ones we discuss in this chapter.
7 https://www.instagram.com/p/CRjfhOMDfRa/
8 https://www.instagram.com/p/CS-jx5xpNho/
9 https://www.instagram.com/p/CTzbethISPz/
10 https://www.instagram.com/p/B8M30m2gWF6/
11 https://www.instagram.com/p/CQe756bA2wk/
12 Indeed, the hashtag #workinprogress has been, at the time of writing this chapter, used on more than 20 million posts. These posts may not all be about artistic or creative work and may be used in ways that are not limited to describing an actual work in progress. As mentioned previously, uses of hashtags do not follow strict norms and users remain free to use all the hashtags they wish, in the manner they see fit for what they want to communicate with their posts.
13 https://www.instagram.com/p/CPH6N2MsfEU/
14 https://www.instagram.com/p/CUjBUp5rggi/
15 https://www.instagram.com/p/BSnydwDFL4h/
16 https://www.instagram.com/p/B4c_swpHp2K/
17 https://www.instagram.com/p/CTXe9-WI-eF/?img_index=1

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9 Crime Writing and Social Marketing as Creative Work

Sara Kärrholm and Carina Sjöholm

The Swedish crime genre is experiencing an intense period of change. In recent years, crime fiction has grown to become one of Sweden's largest cultural export areas and, through its international impact, has increasingly come to be used as a way to market Sweden and Swedish culture. Crime writers appear to be at the forefront when it comes to the issue of how to reach international audiences, how to promote books and author's brands through events, and how to create a successful life as a writer. To illustrate how the Swedish crime genre has become such a success story, we exemplify the export award the Swedish government has created for cultural and creative industries. Norstedts Agency won the prize for "The Millennium Books", a series of crime novels written by the journalist and crime writer Stieg Larsson. The books have been published in around 50 countries and sold over 100 million copies worldwide. They have also been filmed, and according to the Swedish government, the books and subsequent films have increased interest in Sweden and Swedish values (Sydsvenskan, 2 October 2019).

Nordic crime fiction has also developed into a transdisciplinary research field (Agger & Waade 2010; Arvas & Nestingen 2011; Berglund 2017; Bergman 2014). We would even suggest that the success of the genre has led to individual crime writers being used as role models for how a creative business should work, both locally and globally, e.g., in cultural political rhetoric (cf. Sjöholm 2013). This makes the crime genre specifically interesting to investigate. The aim of this chapter is to understand the conditions and limitations that crime fiction writers face in the contemporary Swedish crime book market. We will do this by focusing on some writers' experiences of working in the business of crime writing. The connections and/or tensions between the writer's building of a professional identity as a crime writer and his or her personal lifestyle are in focus. In this context, we address the issue of social marketing through digital media, and we have chosen to look more closely into some individual writers and their personal experiences.

This chapter is informed by our previous research on how cultural and economic spheres are joined in a specific kind of literary promotion that is characteristic of the field of crime fiction, as well as on crime fiction writers

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engaged in marketing of themselves as brands, but also in marketing their books and the places associated with them (e.g., Kärrholm 2014; Sjöholm 2011).

From our previous studies on the crime fiction industry, we have observed that the competition, demands, and collective amount of media buzz that writers generally need to fight their way through have intensified. There is also a higher demand for personal exposure of writers in the public sphere that can almost overshadow the interest shown in their work. Demands for writers, as well as other creative workers, to be visible on the market have increasingly come to also encompass visibility on social and digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube (cf. chapter 8 in this volume). In today's highly digitised book trade, marketing activities online and offline complement and reinforce each other, and there is no point in looking at one of them in isolation from the other (Thompson 2021, 181). Digital media has taken on an increasingly stronger role when it comes to fashioning authors' careers, publisher prospects, literary criticism, and reader behaviours, as well as public understandings of literature and literature's role in society (Murray 2018, 3). The activities that authors, publishers, agents and readers engage in at events such as book fairs or literary festivals can be seen as interacting with and complementary to the various activities authors engage in on digital platforms. These different arenas reinforce each other, and reinforce the overall impact and outreach of authorship. Social media channels are common and useful tools used by writers to engage their readers in a narrative around what the life of a crime writer can or should be like. This aspect of how crime writing is marketed as a personal lifestyle is one of the issues that we will address.

Points of departure, methods, and material

We have chosen to describe the industry surrounding crime literature as a field in its own right; which is, of course, related to and affected by the overall literary field, but which also follows a certain logic of its own. According to Bourdieu (1993, 2000), writers can be analysed as participants and stakeholders in the literary field, and are driven by habitus in the way that they position themselves in relation to other agents in the field. The concept of the literary field has been developed by the publishing scholar John B. Thompson to describe the publishing business. He argues that each segment of publishing (e.g., fiction, educational publishing, academic publishing, etc.) can be described as a field with its own intrinsic logic and organisation of different forms of capital (Thompson 2010). Like Thompson and Bourdieu, we underline the importance of the social relationships taking place within the field. The "field", as a concept, works well in analysing the relational aspects between writers and other agents in the business, and to analyse the genre as a space of complex power relationships and interdependency.

Another way of looking at the everyday life and experience of crime writers is by using the theoretical concept of "communities of practice" (Wenger 1998). This theoretical framework also approaches relational aspects, but from a perspective that stresses learning, meaning, and identity building. Communities of practice are formed as a voluntary way for people to network with others sharing the same type of everyday practice, at work or at play (Wenger 1998). This can be used as a complement to Bourdieu's field theory—in that this also acknowledges motives and qualities other than, for instance, gaining a position in the literary field—beyond how people behave in social contexts concerning their everyday practice (Broady 1998).

The method is based on an ethnographic approach, in which we have been following crime writers through different parts of the crime literary field (Ehn, Löfgren & Wilks 2016). We have analysed their participation in marketing their own authorships, in different literary events, social media channels, lifestyle magazines, as well as other aspects that make up their overall author brand and influence their everyday work situation (Czarniawska 2014). The purpose of these contexts has been to examine the authors' participation in marketing themselves in connection with the events. It has also given us the opportunity to research the market around literature—the author as a central figure, the hierarchies between different genres, materiality, and commerce—and to observe writers' staging in different arenas, to consider different literary events as an interplay between writers and a variety of actors, such as publishers, agents, organisers, and audiences. It has become obvious that the role of the author—independent of genre—has become so much more about being able to market both the books and the authors themselves (Forslid & Ohlsson 2011; Steiner 2019; cf. chapter 10 in this volume).

In an initial phase, we made netnographic observations of the social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram) of a group of 15 Swedish crime writers at a more general level (Kozinets 2010). We wanted the group to represent a variety of categories, such as new authors, established authors, authors of different ages, authors writing alone, and authors writing together, etc. From this larger group, we selected three writers that we investigated more in-depth for this chapter.[1] Camilla Läckberg is a best-selling author who has received a lot of attention—not least for her frank discussions of her writing in economic terms, which is often seen as controversial both by critics and other authors. We chose Emilie Schepp because she has succeeded as a self-published author, a marker that historically has not held high status in the fine literary cycle (see Fürst 2019). Finally, we exemplify the field with Jens Lapidus, who is a well-known and noted best-selling author who seems unaffected by the genre's status, since he already has a clear professional identity to lean on. These may serve as examples of different ways to deal with the everyday experience and challenges of being a crime writer and how they have used—among other things—social media as a way to build their personal brands and to reflect on their identities and daily work as crime

writers. When addressing the material, we have been interested in both the content of the marketing practices and the attitude that the writers seem to have toward them. We have, for example, noted whether the writer expresses exasperation or fatigue when talking about marketing practices as well as when he or she rather speaks of their trade in idealising terms. When the authors participate in marketing activities, these activities are constantly taking place in social contexts, and we stress that the idea of what it means to be a crime writer in Sweden today is under constant negotiation.

Social marketing channels—often designed to reflect the writer's individual personality—are used to enhance and nuance the images provided, for instance, in celebrity or lifestyle interviews (Kärrholm 2011). We have investigated how the writers conceive of the work they, or their marketing teams, do on social media, as well as about the most important people with whom these writers can interact.

To be a writer in a questionable genre

From our observations, we have found that crime writers are often, both implicitly and explicitly, addressing the subject of how to be a crime writer, and the conditions of writing. Writers often talk about ingredients of their fictional world, such as the places or characters, but they also talk a lot about the writing process, where they write, and they share their thoughts on what it means for them to be a writer. Alongside explicit comments about writing, ideas of what it means to be a writer are spread through texts and images that writers share on social media or in magazine features. In these activities, they perform what makes up the common dream about what it means to be a writer (e.g., Fürst 2020). When Pierre Bourdieu writes about the literary field, he means that there is a polarisation between a cultural aesthetic and a commercial pole, where symbolic battles take place to define who should actually be defined as "a writer" (Broady 1998). To gain status in the cultural-aesthetic pole, the author needs to be confirmed by his colleagues, while in the opposite pole, what counts is public success and selling, so there are different kinds of strategies to gain legitimacy (Bourdieu 2000, 324f; Fürst 2020). A consequence of what happens in the cultural pole is connected to how people who are engaged in selling books often envision their work as guided by something more noble than simple financial incentives. In spite of this, they find themselves limited by and obliged to follow the structures of the market (Miller 2007, 11). In the literary field, of course, as in other fields, there are a number of different value scales that are transferred (e.g., Fürst 2019).

While the general status of authorship is high, the status of authorship within the crime genre is more debatable (cf. Forslid et al. 2015; Söderlund 2009). In many of our observations, crime writers express ambivalence towards writing within a popular genre that is associated with low cultural capital, at the same time as they can express pride and positive feelings about

both the genre and its popularity. It is reasonable to reflect on what function the genre has as a forerunner. It is, for example, commercially successful, and an example of publishing functioning as a well-oiled industry. Because many Swedish crime writers have succeeded internationally, they have made popular literature visible in new ways. However, the crime genre is still considered controversial in some contexts in Sweden, and it is repeatedly stated that the sales figures have hit the ceiling. The status and ambiguity of the genre are constantly present in an interesting way, we have discovered, as a "ghost". So many crime writers, even the most successful, devote extensive time and energy to legitimising what they do. To be a writer, successful or not, in a genre which still appears to be controversial, works differently for different authors. For some, it has led to almost excessive "self-confidence". One example is Camilla Läckberg, who has long topped the best-seller lists but despite this, seems to feel the need to justify her writing. Then there are authors such as Jens Lapidus, who, through his expertise as a successful lawyer, does not feel the need to explain himself. It is a paradox that while the genre in some contexts is associated with low status, it has come to function as a governing body for parts of the book trade; not least through international successes.

Building a brand in dialogue with the readers

Camilla Läckberg is most well-known for her series about the journalist Erika Falck, and the police officer Patrik Hedström, stories which take place in Fjällbacka, a small former fishing community on Sweden's west coast. Since her debut, Läckberg has distinguished herself as a writer by speaking more clearly than anyone else about herself in marketing terms. She has created a story about herself which has stimulated a lot of media attention. In this way, she can be seen as an example of how brand production gains value beyond authorship.

Early in her career, Läckberg was featured in many interviews where she gave a thorough account of her own journey from debut to successful writer. Läckberg often talks openly about having the ambition to make money from authorship, and the image of being somewhat of a gold digger stuck to Läckberg's author brand; about which she has sometimes expressed fatigue. She highlights how skilfully she planned for her success as a writer from the outset, but also the hard work that lies behind her success. Relatively early in her career, Läckberg created a website and started blogging, which has been of crucial importance in building her brand. Gradually, she has supplemented this by being active on social media. The blogging and posting have been a means for Läckberg to control her representation in media through additions and corrections. Apart from her emphasis on parenthood and family life, she highlights the aspect of being a career woman and entrepreneur. This area is also one in which she consciously intends to inspire and act as a role model for other women and other crime writers.

She emphasises that she is proud of the promotional skills she has developed in selling her brand over the years. This is an example of a post on Instagram, after it was noted by the media that her company almost doubled its turnover due to book sales:

> Now I'll talk about the ugliest thing you can talk about as a Swede—money. I am proud that I have created and run a company that this year had a turnover of 60 million. A company and a success I created from scratch. A company I started after I dropped out of a career as a graduate economist and threw myself into the unknown. In addition, fully prepared to live on water and bread to work with my passion—money has never been my driving force. /---/ I'm so FUCKING (excuse the language) proud I did this as a woman, from a background without money and no contacts in my luggage, while I gave birth to and raising four children. And that I now as a woman am mentioned in the same sentence as Stieg Larsson and Henning Mankell. Yes. I'm proud. (Instagram, 14 July 2021)[2]

Läckberg has frequently returned to the issue that the dichotomies of high and low have always surfaced when she is featured by the media, and she often offers ironic comments about this through, for example, posts on Instagram. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that she also frequently comes back to expressing more romantic ideas that she has had about being an author since her childhood in what is often described as the exotic Fjällbacka, and how important it was for her to be able to call herself a writer by the formal standards set by the Swedish Writers' Union ("Deckarförfattarna", podcast episode 2, 2021). As she gradually has come to be acknowledged as a writer by other writers, she can be seen as participating in a community of practice with them. The dual emphasis on both motherhood and career development serves to make her a role model for women struggling to combine professional ambition with parenting; a struggle that is also a recurring motif for the heroines in contemporary Swedish crime fiction.

Some forms of interaction through digital media can cause intensified emotional responses when compared to face-to-face interaction. This generates feelings of closeness and possibly an idealisation of the person (Lindgren 2017). Crime writers, in this sense, are involved in creating the same kind of mechanisms in the interaction with readers as any other celebrity on social media platforms. Here is another example of how Camilla Läckberg communicates her ambivalence to friends and followers on Instagram:

> Forgive me again all friends, etc., to whom I currently do not respond to messages/emails. I am in my most extreme work period ever. My friends probably think I died, people who contact me at work probably think I am careless, my children probably think I was kidnapped by aliens, my

> husband thinks maybe I have divorced him and moved away without notification, my home thinks someone from "Hoarders" moved in, and my body wonders why it suddenly got a built-in airbag. Be patient, I'll be back to the planet again soon. (Instagram, 24 November 2019, Signed #WorkingGirl)

One consequence of Läckberg's open approach regarding her readers and her great exposure in various media has been that she has also experienced the downsides of publicity. On several occasions, Läckberg herself has spoken of the attention she receives in terms of high pressure, and left room for the debate as to whether too-harsh marketing can have its downsides. The onslaught has been about Läckberg as an author, an entrepreneur, as well as a private person. Sometimes, she has to ask followers to be careful with their language and show respect, which may be another reason for her need to demonstrate how intense her work situation can be.

Another case is the self-published crime writer Emelie Schepp. Her novels take place in the mid-sized Swedish town, Norrköping, and her protagonist, the special prosecutor, Jana Berzelius, is an ambiguous character with dark secrets. Schepp started out without a publisher and had to market herself. She has been remarkably successful at this, and her debut title sold over 40,000 copies which, in Sweden, is a lot. Her popularity among readers is evidenced by her win of the reader's choice Specsavers award at the Crimetime award event three years in a row (2016, 2017, and 2018). Schepp's case highlights the voyage that is implied to be desirable for any reader of crime fiction: the journey from an ordinary person, as she herself describes it, to a popular, bestselling, and highly esteemed crime writer. The fact that she has made this journey, and that she is now able to act as a legitimate player in the crime literary field, despite starting off as a self-published author, makes her story all the more compelling, as it represents how an individual can succeed against the odds (cf. Fürst 2020, 13).

Schepp actively uses her official Facebook page as a platform for social interaction with her readers. She uses different strategies to increase reader's involvement with her author's brand and in the activities directed toward selling books. One of these strategies is to write a personal response, something that can be very time-consuming, since she sometimes can receive several hundred reader comments on a single post. The fact that she has won an acclaimed reader's choice award can also be interpreted as, at least partially, a result of her intense work in creating these relationships with her readers. Schepp uses social media with the focus of having a channel to gain direct support from and interact with her readers. While many posts from her public appearances and, for instance, tours of different locations, may provide her followers with some insights into her as a person and market her as a lifestyle ideal, the emphasis is placed on her career as a popular writer and her personal journey of career-building within this particular profession.

Emilie Schepp is self-made, and her identity as a writer is what is centralised on social media, and there is very little of her private life that is shared in comparison with, e.g., Läckberg: "Even though I shop at ICA, I am always the author and brand Emelie Schepp" (Expressen April 6th, 2019). In particular her husband, however, is described as part of her team: "He is the strategist and the economist, I am the creative and imaginative one. We have become a really good team. Support is the best thing you can give each other" (Expressen Hälsoliv April 6th, 2019). This is a typical example of how private life and work are mixed, and help to manage the tension between creative work and commerce (Cederholm Andersson & Åkerström 2016).

Schepp and Läckberg are only two examples among many writers who have chosen skilful ways that a crime writer can use social media to shape the content of their authorship and gain a direct channel for communicating with their readers. There are also examples of writers that are not as active in using social media for these purposes, or at all. However, for the crime writers who want to become acclaimed by their audience and become bestselling authors, this competence seems to have become an expected feature, and social media platforms have become arenas where many crime writers are very visible.

Schepp and Läckberg personify writers who place a great deal of their overall focus on themselves as marketing agents in the pursuit of building and strengthening their author brands. Even if they stand out regarding how much they share about their own brand building, they are only talking openly about what has become an issue of great importance to most crime writers wanting to make it in the contemporary book trade. There are signs that this kind of openness has become more accepted in the field, possibly as a direct consequence of how successful (and therefore challenging) the industry of crime fiction production has become.

Crime writing as glamourous, yet hard, work

A common feature that is shown in interviews and in the posts shared by crime writers on social media is the presentation of life as a crime writer as one marked by both glamour and hard work. Camilla Läckberg, time and time again, returns to the claim that detective story writing is a craft. After another intensive work period, Läckberg and her husband took time off to travel to the Maldives for a couple of weeks before Christmas 2021. Soon there were negative reactions. In the press (e.g., Expressen Dec 8th, 2021) there were wild speculations about the costs per night, and from her followers, Läckberg received questions about the financing of their luxury trip. In one of her messages on Instagram, she handles it like this: "We can work everywhere, and we see ourselves as lucky to be able to work in this wonderful environment during these weeks" (Instagram, 9 December 2021).

Some writers also express romanticised ideas about their authorships through social media, for example by showing off writing cabins and other milieus where they can find inspiration. They also tend to report on quantitative aspects. Sales figures, how many countries their books have been sold to, and possible film adaptations are mentioned and compared in many crime literary events. This could be an expression of ways to show your success. Emphasis is also often placed on how and how much research writers perform for each novel they write.

There is an obvious fascination with production processes, how to write, where to write, and when to write. Many magazine reports and interviews are mainly about the author's creative process, emphasis is placed on the material surroundings or gimmicks of the process; for instance by showing their workplace, stationery, notebooks, or other materially-charged things. The conditions for writing are often staged: the place where the creation takes place and the gadgets that make the writing itself possible. Jens Lapidus is one author who, for example, on Instagram, alternates statements about the tribulations of writing with pictures where he sits and writes in different places around the world:

> Writing is a matter of [*sittfläsk*]. I must sit for many hours to feel good, but sometimes the special moments come. It happens when I least expect it, then the inspiration flows as if by itself, the story flows from the heart straight into the fingers and out into the computer. It is called flow, and I think many people experience it from time to time. For me, it happens far from every day, but I long for it enormously. When it happens, it's a magical moment. (Facebook, 12 December 2021)

Lapidus' career started with the book *Easy Money (Snabba Cash)* in 2006, which became one of Sweden's best-selling books and was made into a popular film. His crime novels since centred on Stockholm's criminal underworld. He has a background as a lawyer, which is often evoked in the context of his writing. His fiction has sometimes been called Stockholm noir, because of its resemblance to the hardboiled film tradition.

The quoted post is tagged with #mqstories, which reveals that it is in fact a commercial for the Swedish clothing company MQ. Lapidus frequently participates in modelling campaigns for different clothing brands and watches. His looks, and this type of advertisement—involving himself playing the role of himself—have become part of his author brand. The advertisement shows an example of how life as a crime writer can be used to sell products other than books. The text that is a detailed comment on the act of writing emphasises that crime writing is a part of what is being sold. In the case of Jens Lapidus, who is often seen in fashion advertisements where he portrays a masculine and classic ideal man, it has become part of his everyday job to manage the expectations and connotations that these advertisements add to his authorial brand. He has shown that he is conscious

about the implications when he, in 2016, participated in yet another fashion campaign for the department store Åhléns that directly questioned gender stereotypes in the fashion industry.

At the same time, he shares everyday situations with family and friends to strengthen his image as a "regular bloke"; for instance when he posts a picture from a pub round with friends (Facebook, 13 October 2021). Or when he talks about the writers' everyday life:

> A day of writing out in the summer house. I have a really good thing going on, I feel. The goal is to have a raw script ready before Christmas. Highly unsure if I will make it, but it can be made, with days like this. The calm. The silence. Only a few flies came to life after I turned on the heat the day before yesterday. Instant coffee and a Delicato Biscuit (there were actually two) increase focus. I think I have about 80,000 characters left (incl. spaces). (Instagram, 25 November 2021)

He also shares a variety of examples of his role as an expert on criminality and situations when he is hired or asked to make statements about this expertise. Another featured subject is his friendship with actors from the various film adaptations of his books. These posts show both a glamorous and unexpected part of his life as a crime writer. For the most successful crime writers, a career path is available that takes the authorship further than just the realm of writing and selling books into film writing and an expanded authorial brand; as an effect of the great success of Nordic noir as a transmedial phenomenon.

In a way, Lapidus presents himself as someone who leads an active life and who is engaged in many different issues besides writing crime novels. He leads a somewhat glamorous life but his down-to-earth way of sharing it with his followers turns him into someone who is, after all, an ordinary and likeable person. He is both just outside and still within reach as a lifestyle role model for his readers in a way that resembles what we have seen with many other crime writers.

Crime writers as role models

There are different notions of success and dreams of success, nurtured by individual writers as well as by the readers. We have seen that not only the books and events but also the authors become products themselves; for example through authors' exposure in lifestyle magazines and highlighted as interesting people, sometimes even promoted as ideals. The crime genre is distinguished both by its success and by the reverse side of success. Some researchers believe that there are simply too many crime novels being written, and that the current situation can be described as an overproduction (Berglund 2017), with the consequence that it becomes increasingly difficult to stand out in the crowd. Not everyone can be the new Stieg Larsson or even

Camilla Läckberg. In the middle of this scenario, crime writers appear as both successful lifestyle role models and as professionals fighting hard for their survival. There is an ambivalence that becomes visible in the dream of authorship that is being sold: you can also become a successful crime story writer—"you too can be like us"—but it is a hard job that requires specific qualities. What is sold is not only a fantasy about celebrity but fantasies about what it means to be a crime writer: for some people, crime writing can become a special way of life.

There seems to be some tension in the working lives of crime writers, between long days sitting alone at one's desk writing and intense periods of social interaction at events with readers, businesspeople, and other writers. Many of the writers seem to find it necessary to do a great deal of networking, both at these types of events and, for instance, via social media. Our study shows that these interactions can be perceived as both stressful and a welcome relief, providing a break from the lonely day-to-day life of writing.

Our findings also show that there is a high degree of competition within the field, while some writers also express the need for cooperation when it comes to certain work-related issues. Inspired by Thompson (2010) and Bourdieu (2000), this can be described in terms of power struggles and the complexities of social networking in the field of crime writing. The competition with other crime writers is sometimes highlighted in interviews and seminars, as well as in individual writers' social media posts; by, for example, the recurring activity of counting one's own success in numbers, as has already been mentioned. Meanwhile, there are also many expressions of how valuable contact and collaboration can be between writers. Some collaborate in different kinds of teams when writing, as we have demonstrated, but they also network through different channels. On platforms such as Instagram, it is also made clear that it is common for writers to comment and like each other's posts, and that some of them are actively friends both in and outside of the spotlight.

In this respect, the social relationships between crime writers can be described in terms of "communities of practice". Within the community, knowledge is shared in ways that participants find meaningful, both in regard to advancing their skills and for identity formation purposes (Wenger 1998). When crime writers engage in seminars and appear together at festivals, this kind of knowledge exchange is constantly underway and serves as inspiration and encouragement for individual writers. It gives them a sense of belonging comparable to the experience of any co-worker who shares a feeling of belonging with other people at the workplace. What marks the community of practice, however, is precisely the voluntariness of the community formation and the focus on shared practice; in this case crime writing and the experience of being a crime writer.

Crime writers, accordingly, are participating in struggles to increase their social, cultural, and economic capital within the field of crime writing, but

also the struggle of writing in general, and in voluntary ongoing social networking and identity formation that is tied to their craftsmanship and daily experiences of living the life of a crime writer. What is interesting in this latter aspect, is that the readers are also, in some sense, invited into this part of the crime writer's life through encouragement for them to explore their own possibilities of becoming crime writers and through writers sharing their knowledge about crime writing as a craft. There is an implicit offer for the reader to become a part of the community. This community building is also taking place despite or against the principle of overproduction. According to the logic of overproduction, it would be more reasonable to try to keep others out of the community, and even to stay out of it yourself.

Conclusion

Being a crime writer in Sweden seems to be a kind of balancing act, full of contradictions; or what we might call divisiveness. Through this study, we have tried to understand what relationships of power and tension look like between the authors and other actors contributing to defining the crime genre field in the book trade. Some writers are obviously trying to find a balance between the desire to become successful in a genre that may not have the highest status and the desire to be a high-status writer. When some emphasise that they exist outside "real literature", or are considered to be outside the literary field, it does not seem to be relevant to their readers. In fact, this manifestation of their exclusion may even, ironically, be used to gain additional prestige in the literary field.

We see a desire to be part of a celebrity culture where social media is used to illustrate the good life with flexible working hours; creative research methods such as exciting travel, and many kinds of meetings; and the opportunity to be personal and market your own lifestyle and unique projects while, at the same time, wanting to appear to be an ordinary person with whom readers can identify. There is also a balancing act between lifestyle and economic motives. There is no doubt that many writers are passionate about their work, and have a passion for their writing: as we have seen in our larger study, work and leisure tend to flow together. The authors highlighted in this chapter are very successful, but despite that, large parts of their everyday lives regarding writing requirements are quite similar to the situation of many others in the creative sector. In some contexts, we would point out that the crime writers' way of organising the work also serves as a model for other types of writers. In these circumstances, it naturally means a great deal that the whole genre is attributed a kind of legitimacy, not only by constantly topping the bestseller lists, but also through the Swedish government's export prize for cultural and creative industries mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Another balancing act is between the private and the professional. Writers are expected to share their private lives in order to have an impact

on the market. As we have seen in our examples, this can be handled in many ways, all of which have consequences for the perception of your brand as an author. There are also several examples of crime writers that stress the importance of personal integrity, and who are less willing to "sell themselves".

Yet another balancing act is about writing in a genre which, on the one hand, emphasises that everyone could become a crime writer, and on the other hand, shows that a lot of research and hard work is required. In our study of crime writers, it has been shown that the value of interacting with readers is something emphasised by almost everyone. We believe that this has been strengthened by the opportunities that social media has brought on. Camilla Läckberg, Emilie Schepp, and Jens Lapidus, as well as other writers we have followed, are clear examples of this, but they handle it in different ways.

It is sometimes difficult to discern which of all the different contexts is the most important when trying to describe the everyday reality that these crime writers are working in and the conditions they are working under. Is it the literary field as a whole that is rapidly changing and creating new conditions, or are the conditions specific to crime writing as a field on its own? Another relevant question is: are these writers' lives and posts on social media so different from any celebrities in our digitised society, where many would rather listen to influencer marketing through personal recommendations than to professional critics? These contexts naturally overlap in many ways. It is, however, interesting how crime writers are forced to deal with the conditions of success that are particularly notable in the crime genre. Even if these conditions could be applied to other genres—and possibly even to the literary field at large—crime writers seem to be the first to experience them, and in that way they become forerunners in the market when it comes to developing the skills and strategies used to deal with them.

Note

1 See the official Facebook and Instagram accounts for Läckberg, Schepp and Lapidus.
2 All translations are performed by the authors of this chapter.

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10 Creative Work and Children's Books

Carolyn Hunter and Nina Kivinen

Introduction

At first glance, a children's author's creative work might appear simple to describe: a writer, a desk and a computer or notebook and pen. It may include specific times and spaces, away from others, to write and edit words on a page, perhaps also illustrating these words. We can imagine that much of the writing takes place in the home, perhaps in between domestic tasks and childcare responsibilities, sometimes in solitude, an escape from everyday life. This creative process is where dreams come alive, where dark realities are described, where aspirations are pictured for young readers and stories are told for their loved ones to cherish.

If we look more closely, the work of a children's author may be more entangled with those around them than our image of a solitary writer might first appear. Writing as a practice may also be an assemblage of affect, materialities and bodies (Gibbs 2015; see also Duff and Sumartojo 2017; Vachhani 2012). In other words, writing involves people, spaces and objects coming together, both in the actual writing itself and the promotion of the work. Being an author is precarious work (Gill and Pratt 2008; McRobbie 2015; see also Hoedemaekers 2018) with low pay and little security. A small number of children's stories have fascinated readers for generations, while a great many others will never reach an audience. School visits and other talks supplement authors' income and also serve as publicity for their books. Authors also may be invited to give talks at book fairs, cultural festivals and bookstores, reading from their books and answering questions from the audience.

This chapter is based on interviews of children's authors exploring how they experienced their work practices and their profession. We used an affective methodology both in terms of how the interviews were conducted and in how we analysed and represented the data (Timm Knudsen and Stage 2015). Affect refers to the intensities between bodies as they are impacted and impact others, which we explore here through the spatiality of their work. This chapter is based on how authors were affected by bodies within

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various spaces important to their work. We call these spaces: Writing spaces, Talking spaces, Fictional spaces and Publishing spaces.

Through these different spaces, we explore how affective encounters with audiences and publishers differed from the time spent writing. The encounters were often negotiated by the authors and other human and non-human bodies such as editors and publishers, the audiences and the books themselves. Not all authors felt the same way about these encounters: the expectations of the author which emerged formed various affects. To understand these different spaces of creative labour, in this chapter we turn to affect theory and specifically the concept of affective encounters with material objects and bodies (Bennett 2010; Stewart 2007, 2011). We will explore spaces of creative labour to show how space, objects and people form affective assemblages. This allows us to reflect on the agency of bodies within these spaces, asking whether they can enact a sense of control over the encounters (Michels and Steyaert 2017). We explore this by analysing how our participants inhabit, educate and entertain through these encounters. For many, they found the encounters joyful, but some authors experienced these spaces as disruptive, jarring and exhausting. Juggling different ways of being an author, many of the authors talked about the significant pressure that they felt in these contexts.

Spatiality and creative labour

The spatial turn in organisation studies (Beyes and Steyaert 2012; Dale and Burrell 2007; Hernes 2004; Kornberger and Clegg 2004) has been important in recognising that workspaces are neither stable constructs nor without material places without meaning. Many organisation scholars have been influenced in particular by the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) who introduced a trialectic view of space. Lefebvre approached space as simultaneously lived, conceived and perceived; that is to say that Lefebvre recognised space as continuously socially constructed through everyday practices. Our understanding and lived experience of space is influenced by imaginary concepts as much as it is by social conventions and the geometric dimensions of a physical space. Lefebvre can thus help us shift our focus from the study of space to the study of its becoming (Beyes and Steyaert 2012; Munro and Jordan 2013; Shortt 2015).

Beyes and Steyaert (2012) argue that many organisation scholars have not fully grasped the implications of a non-performative processual and performative view of space (see also Beyes and Holt 2020). A performative and processual view of space highlights that space and spatiality are never neutral but already embedded in gendered structures and other social norms (Massey 2005; Tyler and Cohen 2010). Beyes and Steyaert (2012) also encourage a shift not only in our language but also in our practice of researching spatiality. Not only does this shift our attention from stability and form to multiplicity and open-endedness, but it also forces us to recognise ourselves as researchers as part of an assemblage.

In this paper, we highlight spatiality in everyday practice, and therefore how spatial relations are embodied and affective. Space organises affective encounters in the intensities which shape bodies. The affective materiality of space is embedded in the movements and encounters of the everyday that simultaneously form our understanding of space and are integral parts of its construction (Jørgensen and Holt 2019):

> Being attentive to spacing directs the organisational scholar towards embodied affects and encounters generated in the here-and-now and assembled from the manifold (im)materialities. It emphasises the multiple registers of sensation and intensity often lost in the representational techniques of the social sciences. […] It provokes openness towards everyday creativity, experimentation and the potentials of transformative spacings. We thus propose to view organisational space as performed through the simultaneous and excessive coming-together of multiple trajectories along (and exceeding) the full range of the senses. (Beyes and Steyaert 2012, 53)

Affect has in recent years captured the attention of organisational researchers (see, e.g., Bell and Vachhani 2020; Beyes and De Cock 2017; Hunter and Kivinen 2022; Linstead 2017; Pullen et al. 2017). Building on Spinoza, affect is understood as the body's capacity to affect and be affected (Thanem and Wallenberg 2015; see also Anderson 2009). Affect can be described as an intensity that emerges between bodies and things through relationships and interactions, and as such affect shifts the attention to the in-between, the emerging and the entanglement of subject/object. In the study of writing, several authors have already noted affective flows in writing. Gibbs (2015) argues that writing as a method is affective, bringing together different experiences and rhythms, while Probyn (2010) explores affect when writing about shame. Building on their work, we expand on the creative work of being an author to include other activities which open up a wider understanding of how space, creative work and affect relate to each other.

Affect can be important in adopting an embodied understanding of spaces in becoming. Most of us can recall the feeling of entering a room and sensing it as a space, perhaps of conflict or happiness (Ahmed 2010; Hunter 2022). This paper aims to explore the affective dimensions of space within the work of authors, and how spaces provide opportunities for agency through the entanglement of spatiality, objects and bodies. In doing so, it studies the everydayness of work, of the mundane ways in which assemblages produce affect (Stewart 2007). We want to investigate the affectual experiences of the authors as they move between different spaces. In this, we want to know about authors' capacity to feel in control of their work, but also how the materiality impresses on them (Bennett 2010). We, therefore, aim to develop how encounters with space are "mutually enacting": they both shape the authors' work, while also being shaped by them (Dale 2005).

Space and affective methodologies

Our challenge was to gather information about the spaces in which the authors work and how they felt about their work. While we did do some limited observation of different spaces, like festivals and book launches, it was not possible for ethical or practical reasons to follow the authors into other spaces like schools and publishing houses. Also, much of their work takes place in solitary spaces in the home. Even if we could observe authors, this may not tell us about their affective experiences of the work as we as researchers would have potentially a different affect from our own position. As such, we had to find an alternative way in which we could understand their world. Specifically, we decided to use interviews to draw out their affective experiences.

We anticipated that our participants would be skilled in communicating about their work as an author. They work with words as their art, and many of them perform their writing as well as craft it in a written form. Creative practitioners are also encouraged to think about their presentation of themselves, marketing their work through their personal brands. When we began our interviews with them, we found that their articulation of ideas often transformed the interview, moving us in the process. We, therefore, felt that there was frequently an affective atmosphere (Anderson 2009; Beyes and Steyaert 2012; Michels and Steyaert 2017) which was produced during the interview, and was used to communicate the atmospheres and spaces in which they did their work.

We argue that the methodology we used was vibrant with intensities. In many ways "interviews" seem like an unsuitable word. Interviews have specific power relations embedded in them, where an interviewer extracts information from a participant, a concept embedded in positivist concepts of data and truth. Of course, there have been many critiques of this viewpoint, and we were specifically inspired by feminist critiques of these power relations. As a result, we found it more useful to adopt a conversational approach where the interview is seen as a co-constructed discussion around an area of mutual interest. From this co-construction moments were able to emerge. We expected that the authors would tell us about moving elements of their work, but we did not anticipate the interviews themselves to form affect.

Interviewing children's authors

Our study aimed to explore the working lives of authors as creative practitioners, specifically focusing on authors who write for children. Childhood presented an interesting dimension to the research as it is perceived culturally as a "magical" time, also often seen as "outside" or even counter to the serious, adult world of work (Grey 1998; Kavanagh 2013; Langer 2002; Rehn 2009; Russell and Tyler 2002). Therefore, it presented a context where we expected authors to have strong connections to their

work. Writing for children is therefore also an example of "affective labour" in producing cultural products which aim to entertain while developing children's subjectivity and educate them, or in other words, produce "affect" for readers. Interviews provided a useful insight into the viewpoint of the writer, for example exploring the interactions they had with readers during their work.

One aim of an affective methodology is to produce affective material (Timm Knudsen and Stage 2015). We draw upon interviews conducted in the United Kingdom and Finland: altogether, 19 authors were interviewed in the UK by one of the authors in English and 21 in Finland by the second author in either Finnish or Swedish. Pseudonyms were used for all of our participants. The interviews lasted between one to two hours. Mostly they were held one to one, except for three interviews which included multiple authors who wrote together or knew each other well (see also Lois and Gregson 2015, 2019). The interviews took the form of an unstructured conversation where the interviewee could steer the discussion. Because two interviewers conducted the interviews separately, a rough interview guide was prepared which included open questions about writing practices, the profession and the publishing industry. However, this was not followed in any particular order or used to limit the conversation to specific topics.

Most of the authors were identified through either research or snowballing techniques. We also recruited authors from book stalls at book fairs. Some of the participants had long careers and were very successful, i.e., their book sales were extensive or they had won literary awards, whereas others were just beginning their careers. Both the UK and Finland have strong national traditions of publishing books for children. As such, both countries have a developed network of authors, editors, publishers and funding from Arts Councils and foundations to support authors. We aimed to gather different accounts of writing for children, and of different ages (preschool, middle and young adult). This approach also meant that the authors identified with a range of ethnicities, genders, ages and socio-economic perspectives. It was also the case that many of the authors had multiple professions and sources of income. Common to many creative practitioners, some authors we spoke to had full-time jobs in related fields (the most common was in journalism, education and the arts) or wrote books for adults as well as children. Several of the authors also relied on alternative incomes from savings or family to make ends meet.

An initial analysis was made across all interviews to identify similarities and differences in work practices and opportunities. The data proved to be very rich, with the authors frequently giving long and detailed answers, which we coded in an emergent manner and then combined codes from the two sets into themes. Affects were traced in the analysis through rhythms, ruptures, assemblages and trajectories (Wetherell 2012). The two researchers spoke frequently during this period, comparing and reflecting on

the links between findings. This chapter embraces two analytical strategies for presenting affective data (Timm Knudsen and Stage 2015) to firstly use communicative content in the words of participants about affective experiences and secondly, to draw out affective understanding of space which emerged in their accounts. We found that interviewees drew on affective memories of different events, frequently describing ordinary, everyday moments.

Spaces, objects and bodies

Writing spaces

The home is often central to an author's work. Most of the authors we met primarily worked out of their homes, either on the kitchen table, on their bed or, if they were fortunate, out of a separate space like a study or a shed. As writing is a precarious occupation, more often than not fitting into the everyday life and homes of the authors.

> I usually start with a couple of hours. I've got my own study. Because my house is on three levels. I live on the first floor, but my study part is on the ground floor, so I like to keep that separate. (Catherine, UK)

> Then I come back and I work on the gallery just up there. During the morning I work standing up, I've just started doing that and then in the afternoon I work sitting down … Also I worked in the corner of my bedroom as I had done as a student so my work wasn't in the house, it wasn't everywhere. (Diana, UK)

Spatially separating writing was also an attempt to isolate themselves from distractions and the noises and disruptions of daily life. For some, separate office space was essential to build a distance from the home and underlined the professional attitude toward the labour of writing.

> Well, I hadn't been doing this for very long but I soon realised that I need an office. For me, it has been important to have a place where I cannot do anything else. If you try to write at home after the kids have gone to school, when there are lots of stuff lying around reminding you that there are things you should do, it didn't work (Florence, Finland)

> I've always worked in sheds. When we moved there wasn't anywhere really so I had the front room. It was quite noisy with cars coming past all the time and then trucks, a lot of trucks coming past too. Then our cat got run over and I just couldn't bear it, couldn't bear looking at these cars. I just put my head down and went out and built this thing in the garden in a state of mourning, it had a huge effect on me that. Even then I could still hear the cars. I don't hear them anymore. (Stephen, UK)

As shown in Stephen's quote, working from home had intensities, linked to memories of the spaces. The writing space needed to be built into the rhythms of the home.

> If I'm in the middle of a book, particularly coming up to a deadline or if I'm editing, then I'll basically get up, breakfast and wash. I'm not one who typically sits around in their pyjamas. I couldn't bear that. So, I work in a tidy study in my tidy house and I try and be at my desk for 9:30. I tend to work a pretty long morning. I'll have a break for a cup of tea. Afternoon, would tend to maybe do more admin-type things, but as I say, if I'm up against it with a deadline, then I'll be at my desk pretty much all day. I don't burn the midnight oil or anything because that just doesn't work for me … . Now having said that, I couldn't sit down and write if the house is messy. But I live on my own and I'm quite tidy, so the house doesn't tend to be messy. I have quite an ordered mind and I like a tidy desk. I don't like working—the place can get quite cluttered while I'm actually working on something, but it will always be tidied up at the end of the day. Always. (Oona, UK)

Writing competed with other "home" activities including childcare and domestic work. Where for some writers, childcare could be seen to disrupt the flow of their work; for others their work disrupted the flow of childcare. The house was therefore a negotiated space with other people and objects that would pull on the authors for attention:

> Being at home with kids can be not always the most intellectually stimulating thing in the world but when you're building a world in your head at the same time it just seems to—yeah, it been really enriching. (Pam, UK)

> … I shut out (the sound/the world). I don't need to hear people. Sometimes someone is pulling at me, needing to say something, and you say that you need to wait. Regardless of age [of children] actually because sometimes you are in the middle of a thought and it needs to be finished. On the other hand, you learn to hang on to the idea when you are interrupted. But the family learns as well, when that one sits there, you cannot expect service immediately. (Emma, Finland)

"Writing space" is characterised by familiar objects and routines, yet it has fluid boundaries that are constantly negotiated as children, childcare, partners and everyday life make themselves heard. For the authors, it is clear that the practice of writing is essential for their profession and therefore the spaces of writing were precious and they needed to be supported and protected. Writing spaces were in some sense their own spaces, where they could potentially control how, where and when to write, but also a space which was negotiated through encounters with family members.

Talking spaces

While writing was an essential part of their lives and their profession, most of the authors also presented their work to different audiences in "talking spaces". Book fairs and festivals often would be invitation only and seen as opportunities for authors to engage with children, parents, librarians and other authors. They usually involved some formal presentation with a reading and a talk, perhaps with activities designed to engage children.

> I would get invited to festivals all that kind of thing … in October 2013, I did 29 sessions in 16 days. Now, it nearly killed me and it taught me that actually I can't sustain that. But yes, then you could be doing—even last October I decided I would do—I would say yes to three—it tends to be usually based around libraries. So, I said that I would do three, and that was probably about six days' work. So, you'd maybe be in three sessions a day, which is quite tiring because you could be being brought round to different libraries and that kind of thing. (Oona, UK)

While public speaking was an important source of publicity and revenue, the spaces of engagement with audiences were very different from the predominantly safe writing space. Public talking would always bring the author away from actual writing and into unfamiliar and potentially stressful or worrying spaces.

> It is lonely and you feel very miserable, when there will be a book fair and you have just published a new book and you get no time and you don't get anyone to interview you and no time for it because it is only a children's book. You get five minutes to stand in a corner and read out loud. Because it is not a real book. This attitude that children's literature would be easier to write and worth less and being less valuable, it will live on forever. (Florence, Finland)

> I did some [festivals] because the first publisher I had, they were based in Scotland, so they got me gigs like the Edinburgh Book Festival and I did a lot of that sort of thing. It's not my favourite thing to do and I'm hoping I can offset my lack of it by concentrating on learning how to promote my books online. (Elaine, UK)

School visits form an important part of the income of many children's authors and as many have a background in education or performing arts, they could approach these school classes as stages set for a performance. With a clear script and appropriate props, school visits could be engaging meetings with audiences, or at least opportunities to learn from young readers. While some of the authors expressed enjoying school visits, others felt anxious about presenting their work in the school environment:

> I have never done [school visits]. I'm afraid of them. I'm happy to do visits to libraries because people come there voluntarily. But I feel anxious about school visits because the teenagers have to be there. And if they don't want to listen and then I would be trying something so, no, no, no. (Paula, Finland)

"Talking spaces" offered the authors with a different way to engage audiences with their work. However, they often had less control of these spaces, with some authors expressing concerns that they would be expected to entertain their audiences in a performance, which was a very different skill than writing a book. Audiences and the spaces of libraries and schools could create joy for some authors, but for others they expressed affects of loneliness and anxiety about these spaces. Interestingly, it also highlighted the importance of childhood in their work, both in their direct engagement with children in the audience and with the attitudes they encountered about writing for children. These attitudes in some cases also featured in other spaces, such as their engagement with publishers.

Publishing spaces

In addition to the spaces where authors wrote and performed their work, they also engage with publishing houses as organisational spaces. The authors had a freelancer relationship with these spaces, as their creative work was integral to the publishing process but the authors themselves are 'outside' of the publishing houses. In the United Kingdom, established authors wrote books under contract, the terms of which were for them to produce creative content in a fixed period, perhaps with an advance. However, many newer authors would write their manuscript out of contract and use an agent to find a publisher. In Finland even established authors would primarily work without a contract although their publisher would often informally agree on the next book project as the previous one was being delivered. As a result, Finnish authors would always be in direct contact with the publisher as agents were only used when negotiating translation rights with foreign publishing houses. In both cases, the relationship with the publisher was important for obtaining future work. For authors like Stephen, these working relationships would grow over time:

> I just went up to London with ten bits of [illustration] work and was treated completely differently. Well come in have a cup of coffee, chat, let's talk, oh you're writing stories as well, oh. I just had people start believing in me I think. They got me little jobs and they just grew and grew. (Stephen, UK)

In the UK, about half of authors use an agent who negotiates the terms for them. However finding the right agent could also be challenging, and changing agents was stressful for authors:

> So I went and talked to [a well-known agent] and she was just staring up. So then, I got signed with her but then I ended up doing loads of publisher-lead books because we really needed some income. So, the result is that I'm signed by my agent and she's handled about eight publisher-lead books for me over the past two years. She's not actually sold a book of mine yet. So it's really convoluted. People think—I certainly thought that it's you write a book you send it to an agent, the agent likes it or doesn't like it and if they like it they probably send it to a publisher and maybe ten publishers say no and one publisher says yes. Maybe that would be a standard way to go about it, but it really—it's far messier than that. (Naomi, UK)

Authors such as Naomi had to learn to negotiate the publisher and agent relationships, which required nuance and patience while their work became known. It also led to her writing publisher-led books, or where the publisher would offer a contract to the author for a prescribed book in a series usually under a different name. The publisher ultimately was in control over what books would progress, with many manuscripts crossing an editor's desk on a daily basis. In many cases, like in Stephen's quote above, the publisher-author working relationship was constructive and could last for years. Some authors expressed frustration with publishers, or where they felt publishers became frustrated with them, for example if they did not agree with how to handle a book release (Diana, UK). Others sometimes felt underappreciated or not respected enough by their publishers:

> I was called to a marketing meeting […] At first I was like, wow, now something positive is happening. I went to do meeting and realised in two minutes, there are three people there and the person who should sell this book, she hasn't read it. It would have taken her 15 min, 10 min to read it but she wasn't interested and asked me: how do you think we should market this? I was so furious […] I realised that the respect wasn't there as I had believed. When men in suits say something demeaning … but now I understood that this is a widespread way of thinking. […] We are realists and adults. We are professional in what we do. We take care of our finances and our families; we are not fools in funny hats. Overgrown children who play a little. I was shocked at the core, my identity. I thought I was valued [laughs a little] and that compensates that you cannot live on the sale of books. At least not if you write picture books. (Donna, Finland)

In addition to this, some authors talked about feeling uncomfortable in the publishing spaces themselves. One example of this came from Liz, who talked about how she felt that children's authors were sometimes less respected than other authors:

> There's a lot of [infantilisation] goes on of authors. There's an awful lot of you go and see them and they offer you tea and cake and they practically take you back to the tube because they don't think—they think for some reason once someone's written a book they won't be able to find their way home. There really is, it's really the oddest thing. (Liz, UK)

For the established successful authors in particular, the relationship with their editor could be one characterised by trust and even friendship. Their manuscripts would be cared for by someone who understood what they were trying to achieve. This space of trust could be very different from the corporate publishing spaces, where relations with publishers were always through an ongoing negotiation of expectations and identities.

Discussion

Despite the appearance of being a solitary pursuit, being a children's author required navigating different spaces and relationships with other people and objects (Duff and Sumartojo 2017; Gibbs 2015). In many of the examples, the authors joyfully immersed themselves into these spaces, for example, many of the authors organised their homes to allow for writing or they embraced school visits as an opportunity to meet children. In other examples, the encounters with these spaces caused unease for authors, for example public speaking in libraries or schools, feeling obliged to market their books in certain ways or negotiating working relationships with their publishers. We use this discussion to map out three different senses of agency through which authors often shifted as inhabiting, educating and performing. In the first sense, inhabiting refers to the assemblage within which the identity of an "author" emerges and where they have a sense of control over how they write. In the second, the authors discussed performing education as how their work can influence others, especially concerning children. In the third, the authors frequently reflected on the need to entertain, particularly around the promotion of their work and reaching out to audiences.

Inhabiting

Performing the identity of an author meant inhabiting being an author as both a professional self and through their personal lives. In the first case, authors discussed their relationships with editors and their agents, exploring publishing houses as a specific space where they negotiated the terms of their work. There was an assemblage between the space of the publishing, the book as an object in formation, and the bodies of the author, editors and agents. In Stephen's case, over time this interaction moved him from being an illustrator to writing his own books, with little jobs growing into more substantial contracts. Others sometimes found that the interaction with the

publishers positioned them as children's authors but in ways that undermined them. Liz's account of the publisher's infantilisation of authors is an example where the association with childhood seemed to position the author as less capable.

The second sense through which our participants felt they had a sense of control as an author related to their home lives. Because they predominantly worked from home, each author discussed negotiating this space with different objects and bodies. Childcare emerged as one of the key considerations, especially with the feminisation of being an author. Time was particularly important in this, as writing might happen in blocked-off moments when children were in school or asleep. They also used transitionary spaces and activities, such as walking the children to school and using the journey back to start thinking about their writing. Particularly for the women with children in our study, it was not always feasible to draw clear boundaries between work and home activities. Interruptions and leakiness occurred from both childcare and writing into each other. It could be just as challenging to leave writing behind as it might be to put childcare on pause.

Educating

In addition to the importance of having a sense of control over their work, many authors also had a desire for their work to influence others. Most of the authors expressed a deep passion for communicating with children. They reflected on their own childhood and love of books, which then motivated them to reproduce this for other readers. Educating largely took place within the books themselves, where books could inform or inspire readers, but also in entering different spaces associated with education like schools and libraries. The relational encounters with these material objects and bodies created affects between the authors and the readers (Vachhani 2012). Some of the authors did write non-fiction, which required extensive research into the area. However, fiction writing also required a significant amount of research. One space where the authors enacted this identity was in libraries, where they did their research. Frequently, they talked about having meaningful relationships with librarians, who may also promote their books to their readers.

Entertaining

The final way in which the authors entangled with spaces, objects and bodies was through entertainment. Entertaining largely emerged as authors promoted and marketed their books, by visiting and giving talks in various spaces like libraries, school visits and festivals. In promoting their work, the authors needed to engage and entertain audiences. To do this, authors would probably read from their work, but they may also bring in other forms of

entertainment such as fun activities, fancy dress, games, prizes, theatre or music. They aimed to bring the books to life for children and their audiences. However, authors also had a variety of affects, some who had backgrounds in entertainment in music or theatre were more comfortable stepping into this assemblage. Other authors expressed feeling uncomfortable, such as Elaine who talked about wanting to replace school visits with other types of online promotion. Undoubtedly the precarious nature of their income from writing itself (Gill and Pratt 2008) propelled authors into these related activities, often to make ends meet.

Conclusion

This chapter has contributed to the spatial turn (Beyes and Steyaert 2012; Dale and Burrell 2007; Hernes 2004; Kornberger and Clegg 2004) in organisation studies to examine how authors may feel different senses of agency within the many spaces they encounter. The relational encounters between the materiality and bodies in these encounters (Vachhani 2012) meant that at times authors felt in control of their work, while in other examples they felt encouraged, propelled or even pressed into inhabiting the spaces in particular ways. Affects were produced through these encounters, sometimes joyful but at other times uncomfortable. The spaces positioned them as an author where they felt degrees of agency in a variety of ways, including inhabiting, educating and performing. These spaces also reflect gender in becoming, adding to our understanding of working from home and in spaces where the boundaries with other "feminised" work such as childcare and domestic work are blurred (Massey 2005; Tyler and Cohen 2010). In this way, we look at these spaces as in becoming (Beyes and Steyaert 2012; Lefebvre 1973/1991), where there is a shifting sense of how authors relate to their work. Through this analysis, we have added a nuanced understanding of what being an author entails, moving the author from only writing as a solitary pursuit to seeing writing as part of how they connect to the world through physical spaces, material objects and other bodies.

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11 Performing Creative Work in Public

Charlotte Østergaard

Situating artistic research

This chapter is situated in the context of artistic research. In "Conditions for experimental knowledge exchange in collaborative research across the science and creative practice" Groth et al. write that "by investigating phenomena *through practice* rather than mere observation, one can capture the experiential nature of the practice and knowledge becomes transformational rather than documentational" (Groth et al. 2020, 5–6). Groth et al.'s argument builds on Tim Ingold's ethnographical studies of creative craft-making practices. Ingold suggests that the art of inquiry implies that "materials think in us, as we think with them" (Ingold 2013, 6). Building on Ingold, I suggest that artistic research implies that the researcher is actively and bodily engaged in the phenomena at study. *Through* practice the artistic researcher entangles with the experimental nature of the phenomena.

In "Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective" Donna Haraway writes that she "insist[s] on the embodied nature of all vision and to reclaim the sensory system" (Haraway 1988, 581). Haraway suggests that the researcher's vision is bodily situated and hence as a researcher, I cannot escape my embodied situatedness and entanglement with the phenomena that I study. Haraway continues that "the moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision" (Haraway 1988, 583). As I read Haraway, the partiality implies that artistic research is always conducted and studied from a particular perspective—in this case the costume designer's perspective. I would argue that in artistic research it is *through* my entanglement with the research phenomena that transformational knowledge emerges.

My artistic research practice is inspired by (post)qualitative research. In "What is (post)qualitative research?" Lesley Le Grange writes that "(post) qualitative research informed by an immanent ethics opens up pathways for all those involved in research to increase their power of acting, to express their generosity, and love the world (all of life)—it is an invitation to dance (just do)" (la Grange 2018, 9). Inspired by (post)qualitative research, I suggest that if the researcher invites participants into the research—as

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I do—the researcher has an ethical responsibility to distribute agency to the participants.

Introduction

In my artistic research, I study costume as a relational practice and investigate how particular costumes in specific situations can become vehicles for co-creational processes between invited participants and more-than-human materialities. I build my understanding of participation on Etienne Wenger's concept of "community of practice" (Wenger 1998). Wenger argues that practice involves "the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises. Participation in this sense is both personal and social. It is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. It involves our whole person, including our bodies, minds, emotions, and social relations" (Wenger 1998, 55–56). Building on Wenger, I acknowledge that participants will always be engaged in different communities, and thus I welcome the fact that participants actively bring knowledge and creative ideas that originate from these different communities into the research situation. Consequently, I invite participants to inform, engage with, respond to, disturb, affect and transform the creative process and the research situation.

In this chapter I will address creativity through the concept of co-costuming (in the sense that two people are connected through wearing a costume) by using the artistic project *Community Walk* (Copenhagen 2020) as research phenomena. Co-costuming suggests sharing creative material-discursive space. Through my active engagement in *Community Walk* I will investigate which relationships the co-costuming produced, including which transformative potentials the co-costuming has.

My research indicates that the co-costumed phenomena potentially generate surprising, challenging and creative entanglement between people. Additionally, wearing a costume in a public environment insinuates that other kinds of creative situations can emerge than those in our daily life. In the following I will unfold aspects of *Community Walk* to study which kind of relational and transformational knowledge the co-costumed phenomena have produced. In parallel, I will study the impact the co-costumed entanglements had on my role as researcher and costume designer.

Context – *Community Walk*

Community Walk was a part of the festival concept *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* developed by Metropolis. Metropolis is, as written on its website, an "art-based laboratory for art and performance in public space". *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* was developed as a direct response to the pandemic lockdown in Denmark: over more than 100 days (starting 1 May 2020), 100 different

artists walked for 12 hours in different areas of Copenhagen and live streamed on Facebook five to ten minutes each hour. The festival *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* was publicly announced, for example on social media, in newsletters and mentioned/reviewed in newspapers.

In *Community Walk* (30 July 2020) I walked for 12 hours in the central area of Copenhagen wearing a bright yellow costume that connected me to 12 different participants, co-costumed with one participant for an hour, followed by the next participant for an hour and so on. I chose to place myself "in the centre" as a co-costumed host and participant. Nonetheless, I had no prior knowledge of how 12 co-costumed experience would affect me physically, including how it would influence my ability to act responsibly as a host. Due to the pandemic, the Danish government advised everyone to limit the number of people included in one's immediate circle. It seemed constructive to invite participants that I knew and/or had collaborated with before. The participants consisted of one actor, one costume designer, one fashion designer, one scenographer, three choreographers and four dance artists. The participants had different European backgrounds and were in an age range between 25 to 56.

As a frame for *Community Walk,* I created five simple rituals that I repeated with each participant: (1) welcome ritual: greeting a new participant; (2) transition ritual; undressing/dressing, passing on the costume to the arriving participant; (3) "walking and talking" ritual: jointly and co-costumed navigating the urban elements/environments; (4) testimony ritual: the departing participant reflected on the past hour's walk (live-streamed); and (5) farewell ritual: greeting the departing participant. I invited the 12 participants to interpret and/or change the rituals.

During and after *Community Walk,* I collected the following data:

- Eight-hour video documentation. A videographer followed us and documented as much as possible of the 12-hour walk—which was not part of the festival's documentation.
- 30–60 minutes semi-structured interviews with each of the 12 participants.
- Two different kinds of testimonies: (1) the live-streamed video recordings and (2) a sound recording I had asked each participant to send me as an immediate response to their participation.
- My own embodied memories and notes written in the days after the event.

In the following I will quote anonymised statements made by the participants.

Costume terms

In the text I use three nouns to describe the bright yellow costume made from stretchy materials. *Jumpsuit* is the spacious loose-fitting part of the costume (created to fit 12 different body sizes) in direct contact with the wearer's clothed body. *The connection* is the attachment between the two wearers

(placed on the arms, the torsos and the legs). The length of the connection was approximately 1.5 meters. *The costume* is the "totality" of the materiality and the spatiality of the costume that includes the jumpsuit and the connection.

Theatre historian Aoife Monks writes that "when we speak of costume, we are often actually talking about actors, and when we speak of actors, we are actually talking about costume" (Monks 2010, 11). This suggests that there is an intimate relationship between the actor and the costume. Monks continues that "costume and make-up might mediate the relationship between the actor and the audience" (2010, 9). Hence, Monks suggests that "costuming" is a relationship between the costume, the actor and the audience. In the context of *Community Walk*, it seems important to expand the *costumed* state to *co-costumed*, since the embodied experience of wearing the costume goes beyond the personal relationship between one person and one costume.

Artistic researcher and somatic practitioner Sally E. Dean expands Monks' notion of costuming to include "a dynamic and important relationship among [...] performer, spectator and event/space/environment" (Dean 2021, 381). Dean highlights that "costumed" is a dynamic relationship that also includes the situatedness and specificity of the encounter. In the context of *Community Walk*, I like to situate performer, spectator and event/space/environment.

Even if several of the participants were trained performers such as dancers, they (and we) did not perform a pre-defined chorographical score and we did not stage performative acts. As mentioned, to be costumed often refers to the personal experience of how a specific costume affects a specific wearer. In *Community Walk* the co-costumed phenomena included the embodied experience and effects of two people entangled *through* and *with* the costume. Therefore, I name the participants as *wearers*, which includes my active position in the dynamic co-costumed entanglement (Figure 11.1).

The term spectatorship indicates situations that spectators acknowledge as events. For example, when a site-specific performance, a parade or street musicians appear in public spaces, spectators might not have any prior knowledge of the event. Consequently, passing spectators might watch, interact with or ignore the event. In the context of *Community Walk,* no spectators had any prior knowledge of the event or even of the festival. Thus, in this text I use the term *by-passing people* instead of spectators.

In the context of *Community Walk*, the only indications of site-specificity were the specific places where a new wearer entered the co-costumed entanglement. Consequently, the wearers only knew their specific starting and ending points, and even if I pre-planned a detailed route between the meeting points unexpected "things" caught our attention and thus changed the route.

Figure 11.1 Agnes Saaby Tomsen and Charlotte Østergaard exploring surfaces of Israels Plads, Community Walk, performance festival: Walk(k)ing Copenhagen, DK. Photo: Benjamin Skop.

Co-costumed intractions

Karen Barad suggests that in phenomena "humans enter not as fully formed, preexisting subjects but as subjects intra-actively co-constituted through the material-discursive practice that they engage in" (Barad 2007, 168). Building on Barad, Malou Juelskjær writes that material-discursive engagement is "relationally conditioned", and it is in "the causality […] between components [that] their [i.e., the different components] creation is understood" (Juelskjær 2019, 23).[1] This suggests (1) that each component influences, informs and constitutes part of the other components, (2) that each component—wearers, costumes, by-passing people, urban/nature elements and the event/space/environment—has agentic potential and (3) that each component is responsible for and dependent on the other components. This suggests that co-costumed intractions are inter-relational and imply interdependency between the components.

Barad further states that "relata do not preexist relations; rather, relata-with-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions" (Barad 2007, 140). Hence, the co-costumed phenomena do not exist prior to co-costumed entanglement. It is only in the active engagement and in the intra-actions between the different components that the phenomena can be investigated. Employing the wearers, the costume, by-passing people and urban elements/environment as components offers a tool to investigate which components

acted as creative obstacles and/or relational openings for the intra-actions and how these components in different ways informed, affected and transformed the co-costumes phenomena.

To conclude, Barad's concept of components suggests that in the urban environment the co-costumed phenomena affected the wearers in a phenomenological sense—as sensorial directedness towards, for example, seeing, hearing, touching and being affected by the fellow wearer, the costume, by-passing people and/or urban/nature elements/environment. In the following I will unfold specific situations of *Community Walk* to investigate how the co-costumed phenomenon created relationships that affected and transformed the wearers.

The co-costumed phenomenon

The frame for *Community Walk* was "walking and talking" (ritual three). "Walking" was locomotion from one meeting point to the next—physically sensing the co-wearer through the costume and jointly navigating and negotiating the costume, by-passing people and urban elements/environment. "Talking" was an investigation of what constitutes a community—where each participant shared stories that acted as entry points for the wearers' dialogue. In practice, several of the wearers reflected that the "walking and talking" frame was like two tracks of communication that battled to become driving forces. Wearer One reflected that the walking and talking frame "was a mixture of exploring the possibilities of the physical but also how much I could yield into the conversation". When walking side by side, the connection between us dangled and touched the ground, creating a subtle sensation of the different pavements, streets and park paths' structures and coatings such as cement, tiles, cobblestones, pebbles and grass.

In the interviews most of the wearers spoke about a not-so-pleasant sensation of public exposure and self-awareness while entering their part of the costume, their jumpsuit. On the other hand, Wearer Six reflected that "the casualty of relating to each other by walking and talking meant that we could zoom out from the outer gaze". Wearer One said that the conversations became "such an intimate experience where the space [the environment] became less relevant or imposing [and had the effect that] the self-consciousness disappeared naturally". In the interviews almost all of the wearers reflected that they registered a shift of awareness (from the exposure and self-awareness to a relational awareness), but none of them could report precisely when the shift happened.

Entering the jumpsuit orientated the wearers towards an outer gaze (a gaze that was not specifically defined and often not present) that blocked their awareness of the potential of co-costumed entanglement. This indicates that the moments of walking in a daily-life fashion and collectively, focusing on the dialogue, transformed the newly entered wearers' awareness from exposure and self-awareness towards a relational awareness. Moreover, it

seems reasonable to suggest that the attitude of walking and talking side by side created a trustful, intimate and playful atmosphere between the co-wearers.

Embodied conversation through co-wearing

The experimental and quite playful approach of the 12 wearers often emerged quickly after they entered the jumpsuit—especially after I, as a host, physically invited them to co-explore that the costume could carry our counterweight. This simple act invited the wearers to respond bodily. In the interview, Wearer One reflected that "because you are linked to another body, I think the costume invites and encourages you to test the edges of it [the costume]—how it stretches, how it sits on the body, and how we work together with gravity. You coexist and are co-dependent on another physical entity [the fellow wearer]. It's impossible not to respond. You must respond" (Figure 11.2).

In the quote above, Wearer One indirectly highlights the material and spatial dimension of the costume. For example, when leaning away from each other the connection and the distance between the wearers grew. Consequently, the costume's stretchable material created a spatial and inter-relational sensation. The wearers' embodied responses to the materiality and

Figure 11.2 Tanya Rydell Morton and Charlotte Østergaard tangling with column in front of Vor Frue Kirke, Community Walk, performance festival: Wal(k)ing Copenhagen, DK. Screenshot from video by videographer Benjamin Skop.

spatiality were informed by a wearer's individual impulses *and* affected a movement impulse from the fellow wearer, for example a pull or a drag on the material. Through the co-costumed entanglement, the wearers affected one another—they had to navigate and negotiate—and hence became interdependent.

In "Fitting threads: Embodied conversations in the costume design process" Susan Osmond introduces the term "embodied conversations" to "refer to the specific phenomenon of collaborative interactions [in costume fitting situations] that occur on and around the body of the performer in the costume design process" (Osmond 2021, 440). Osmond uses the term to highlight that the verbal and non-verbal, for example hand gestures and facial expressions, are equally part of the communication between the people present in costume fitting situations. With the concept of "embodied conversation" Osmond beautifully articulates that our language and communication, apart from what we say, include non-verbal articulations. Building on Osmond, I argue that the wearers' non-verbal articulations, for example the wearers' physical explorations, were part of their communication—and therefore I suggest that *embodied dialogues* include both the verbal and the non-verbal communication between the wearers.

As mentioned, several of the wearers perceived the walking and talking as two tracks of communication. On the other hand, it seems reasonable to suggest that walking and talking were not only interrelated but crucial for the intra-actions in the co-costumed entanglement. The physical invitation to co-test the costume became creative openings to co-investigate different ways of having embodied dialogues *through* and *with* the costume. The embodied dialogues expanded the wearers' awareness towards the stretchability and spatiality of the costume. The expanded awareness towards the costume transformed the wearers' relationship, which implied that their embodied dialogues became creatively more open-minded and playful.

Intra-actions with urban/nature elements

In specific situations the co-costumed state affected the wearers' relationship to urban surfaces and architectural programmes. In the interview, Wearer Three reflected that when entering Israels Plads, the square "invited me to lay down on the soft coating and the seating stairs somehow invited us to investigate how the different levels of the stairs affected the sensation of the pull between us". Due to the distance, the pull on the neckline between us became intense, and we found that we felt less uncomfortable around our necklines when placing our heads inside the jumpsuits. As a result, we could not see one another. Wearer Three reflected that "while I was laying down, I could sense how the direction of the pull changed while you [here referring to Wearers Three's experience of me] moved around me. And, when I was at the top and you were placed at the bottom of stairs, the sensation of the pull also changed depending on how we moved in relation to each other".

Stretching the connection away from each other, the wearer's sensation of the co-wearer's movement became amplified.

With seating areas (benches or stairs that offer an overview of the square) and areas for sports or physical activity (coated with bouncy and soft material), the architectural programme of Israels Plads focuses on social activities. Hence, the square is often populated with groups of people (different in age and number) socialising or exercising (playing football, basketball or skateboarding, for example) with friends and/or family. The square's atmosphere is relaxed with a voice-soundscape of people talking, playing and laughing. Hence, it seems reasonable to suggest that we followed the square's prescribed programme and were therefore particularly creative. On the other hand, the square's playful atmosphere created a sense of belonging (even if we visually stood out) that made us daring and inventive. The square's programme, for example the coating and levelled architectural elements, invited us to explore how different positions, including moving around or above each other, affected us psychically.

In the interview, Wearer Nine reflected that "in our daily life the urban environment and architecture [elements] often are transparent". For Wearer Nine, navigating co-costumed in the urban environment became "a playground that changed your perspective. Like if you are a person in a wheelchair some urban elements—that are invisible for many people—become visible obstacles. I think our awareness was sharpened because we were in an unusual situation". The co-costumed state orientated Wearer Six's awareness towards urban elements in a fashion different to that of their daily life.

As with Wearers Three and Nine, I experienced situations with all 12 wearers where urban/nature elements caught their attention, causing trees, street signs, lampposts, building columns, different kinds of roadblocks and other urban/nature elements to become sites of embodied dialogues. Situations where we co-explored how different elements allowed us to stretch the connection by, for example, moving around, tangling, hanging or leaning away from each other. Other elements, such as the wind, were momentarily present in specific environments and made us explore differently, in this case searching for ways in which we could catch the wind and transform the connection to a parachute. In these moments, it felt as if the wind directed our orientation and movements.

Through the playful attitude, the wearers became aware that the connection allowed them to tangle with each other and urban/nature elements/site in multiple ways. This suggests that in specific situations the co-costumed phenomena transformed the wearers' sensibility towards specific urban/nature elements/sites. As a result, the wearers' attention towards more-than-human elements was amplified. The wearers' intra-actions did not transform the element/site, but in specific situations the co-costumed entanglement transformed the wearers' relationship to the elements/site. The co-costumed phenomena transformed the wearers' embodied dialogues to become more open-minded towards tangling with multiple elements in other ways than in

their everyday lives, including in different ways than the other people present at the site.

Co-costuming as "theatre marker"

In *Konsten att gå* [the art of walking] Cecilia Lagerström writes that there is a growing number of artistic wandering-projects where walking is a central theme that will "invite the surroundings and passing observers to influence the wanderer" (Lagerström 2019, 22).[2] In relation to her own artistic practice, Lagerström introduces the term "teatermarkörer" (Lagerström 2019, 80)—which I suggest translates to *theatre marker*[3]—to describe, for example, that costume and make-up indicate that a performative (inter)event (ion) is occurring in a public environment. Lagerström suggests that using "theatre markers" is "to move something [an event] away from the usual [everyday] situation or environment" (Lagerström 2019, 48), which implies that the wanderer appears as stranger.

In the interview, Wearer One reflected that "the costume was a shield that allowed you to do other things than in your daily life". Wearer One reflected that it "felt like other people were both in the same universe and existing parallel to us". For Wearer One the costume acted as a shield for our embodied dialogues. At the same time our embodied dialogues communicated something to by-passing people whether we were aware of their presence or not. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that our embodied dialogues read differently from an inside (our embodied experience) and an outside (by-passing people observing/reading us as a kind of visual sign/expression) perspective.

In the interview, Wearer Two reflected that being co-costumed in an urban environment engendered a constant sensation of having "an outside observer observing". Wearer Two reflected that "we had the opportunity to take off the costume and blend in—whereas minorities cannot shed off their skin colour or identity (if it reads physically) and therefore they can't hide from the gaze of other people". Moreover, as a trained dancer, Wearer Four reflected that the exposure in the public space was a more vulnerable position than in the "comfort zone of a performative space". Wearer Two reflected that "the weirdness of being connected through a costume offered us the experience of exposure and a sense of not belonging that in a way questioned norms".

I would like to suggest that the costume acted as Lagerström's "theatre marker" in at least two ways. The costume acted as a shield that excluded the outer gaze and hence created an intimate relationship between the co-wearers. At the same time, as a "theatre marker" the costume exposed the wearers and excluded them from being invisible in the urban environment. During the embodied dialogues, the wearers' awareness was constantly shifting between their intimate relationship and the sensation of exposure/exclusion. In the context of *Community Walk*, I argue that the costume

transformed the wearers' creative embodied dialogues and, simultaneously, indicated that they were in an unusual situation. Additionally, the wearers' relationship to each other, the costume, by-passing people and the urban environment appeared to be a circular process of causes and effects.

For people passing by/walking by, the "theatre marker" indicated an unusual situation that made the wearers appear as strange. At the same time, the intimate relationship between the wearers potentially excluded by-passing people. In other words, by-passing people potentially read the co-wearers' embodied dialogues as ambiguous, which in turn potentially queered the co-wearers in the situation. The sensation of potentially being read as queer in the urban environment informed and transformed the wearers' embodied dialogues. The queering made the wearers reflect upon, for example, what we (as a more general we) do expect and accept regarding how others can look and act in public.

Intra-action with by-passing people

Several of the wearers had an urge to invite by-passing people into our co-costumed entanglement. The most successful encounters (between the wearers and by-passing people) seemed to be situations where the wearers focused on capturing by-passing people's attention (by making eye contact) while standing still. Often these situations happened at sites where a proximate relationship between the wearers and by-passing people could emerge. However, at Larsens Plads (an open waterfront with lots of people promenading), shorter encounters with several people were quite cheerful. Moreover, it was often easier to encourage people in smaller groups than a singular person to accept our invitation.

Proximity seems to be an important condition for building relationships between the wearers and by-passing people. However, in Østergade (a very busy pedestrian street in Copenhagen), when proximately passing and navigating other pedestrians, it seemed like people looked right through us or looked the other way. On other occasions, in environments with cyclists and cars where some people locomoted at a speed different to ours, we experienced that some people felt an urge to shout insults at us. Interestingly, these people were often young men in fast cars. Furthermore, many comments related to the bright yellow colour of the costume. Hardly anyone commented on the connection. This could indicate that the colour read more as a "theatre marker" than the connection. On the other hand, the connection might have appeared as too strange and hence it may have been easier to comment on the colour of the costume.

Lagerström writes that in her experience (when walking in urban environments), using "theatre markers" evokes or provokes a "diversity of reactions" (Lagerström 2019, 77) from spectators. This was also evident in *Community Walk*. In the urban environment the "theatre maker" transformed the wearers' visibility and readability in different ways than in their

daily life. By-passing people seemed to be affected and hence responsive to the ambiguous appearance of the wearers. In some situations, by-passing people ignored the wearers. In other situations, the wearers provoked some kind of reaction. The wearers could choose to invite, welcome or ignore by-passing people's reactions. However, in specific situations by-passing people's reactions transformed the wearers' playfulness into vulnerability and affected the embodied dialogues between the wearers.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the exchange between the wearers and by-passing people was a circular and dynamic cause-and-effect process in a constant state of flux—causing and affecting different or shifting effects. I suggest that the cause-and-effect was more transformational for the wearers than for the by-passing people. My own experience as wearer was that it was often hard to detect whether our embodied dialogue was a consequence of our playful explorations or a consequence of by-passing people.

The responsibility of active participation in the co-costumed intractions

In *Community Walk* I acted as an initiator, host and wearing participant. In *Community Walk* I, the researcher, had an ethical response-ability (Barad 2010) to make my fellow wearers response-able, for example by designing invitations and creative openings. As an initiator I created a simple frame (the five rituals) to clarify the circumstances. As a host I had the responsibility to make the wearers response-able, for example by initiating actions that informed the wearers of the strength and stretchability of the costume. As a participant my ambition was to position myself horizontally with my fellow wearers by inviting us to equally inform and influence the co-costumed entanglement. Hence, as a participant I had to be present and, at the same time, to a certain extent decentre myself, in order to open up the creative space to my fellow wearers to initiate intra-actions, including inviting them to change the rituals (frame).

As the consistent participant, I experienced that some rituals transformed during the 12 hours, especially the transition ritual of undressing/dressing. As a costume designer, in costume fitting situations and in the moments of undressing/dressing, I usually offer my assistance to a wearer and if requested and needed I accommodate them. However, in the costumed position I was unable to offer my assistance, which felt uncomfortable and somehow unethical.[4] On the other hand, I did not want to direct or dictate the transition ritual. Over time the transition ritual transformed from a practical transaction to a relational ritual between the departing and arriving wearer—like an open caring invitation to step into the co-costumed creative space from the departing to the arriving wearer, many of whom did not know one another prior to the act.

As wearer, I experienced that each wearer contributed with different perspectives and creative suggestions. However, the 12-hour co-costumed

entanglement was quite different from what I had imagined. I had expected moments of exhaustion, but my energy was constantly amplified by a new wearer. With every new wearer I and we had to explore how we could co-inhabit the costume. Consequently, I forgot daily actions like eating, drinking, and even going to the toilet. For my fellow wearers the experience was different. In the testimonies and interviews almost all of the wearers reflected that their one-hour participation was too short. Several mentioned that, as they were leaving, they had a heightened embodied sensation of playfulness. Despite the duration, most of the participants also reflected that the co-costumed entanglement transformed our relationship into a more playful one than in our prior interactions. They felt enriched and surprised that the co-costumed encounter made them (and us) bodily explore the environment in new ways, and several mentioned our dialogues as inspiring.

The co-costumed intractions were generally easy and creatively inspiring. However, some encounters were challenging. One wearer entered the co-costumed encounter dressed as the person's alter ego, which was pre-agreed. However, this persona sought recognition from the outside audience. The persona's desire somehow overruled the intention to co-explore the costume. Another wearer had an urge to perform, which somehow indicated that I had to act as an audience or witness. This action seemed to mimic a dance improvisation situation. However, as this particular wearer was leaving, we began to co-respond to each other's actions. In the abovementioned more challenging co-costumed encounters, I wondered if I as a host "did my job". On the other hand, as a researcher these challenging encounters offered knowledge regarding the consequences of who is invited, how the encounter is facilitated and the importance of duration.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have documented how *Community Walk* was a complex project that had multiple cause-and-effects implications—some of which I have unfolded above. In this concluding part I will point to some of the knowledge that this co-costumed phenomenon has produced. As researcher I acknowledge that the knowledge generated by *Community Walk* relies on the embodied dialogues that I had with my fellow wearers as well as that I am responsible for the interpretation and translation of the co-costumed phenomena.

Performative co-costumed interventions

As mentioned earlier, Lagerström's "theatre marker" indicates that in the urban environment the co-costumed wearers appear as visibly strange or queer, and in specific situations evoked/provoked multiple reactions from by-passing people. The question is whether *Community Walk* was a performance or a performative intervention? The interdependent relationship

between the wearers suggests that the main performative aspect of *Community Walk* was the wearers' embodied dialogues through and with the costume. In the co-costumed entanglement, the wearers co-creatively explored ways of inhabiting the costume.

In specific situations urban/nature elements/environment and by-passing people became obstacles or openings that transformed the co-wearers' creative intra-actions. This suggests that urban/nature elements/environments and by-passing people potentially performed as creative interventions on the wearers. On the other hand, it was only in specific situations where the wearers were willing and sensitive towards by-passing people and/or urban/nature elements/environment that they/these transformed to become creative obstacles or openings. However, the question is whether the co-wearers could escape the cause-and-effects of by-passing people's responses and/or urban/nature elements/environment. Whatever acted as cause or effect, in specific situations the co-costumed entanglement performed as creative interventions that were potentially more transformative for the wearers than for by-passing people and/or the urban/nature elements/environment.

As mentioned earlier, the transition ritual transformed. This example shows that I, the designer and researcher, entered the co-costumed entanglement building on my discipline knowledge, assumptions or/and expectations. In my practice as costume designer, I am often placed outside the wearing situation. Hence, in *Community Walk* I could not depend on my prior costume knowledge. As costume researcher, *Community Walk* amplified how I gained another kind of knowledge about the costume (that I designed), placed inside the co-costumed phenomena, than by merely observing or witnessing from the outside. Moreover, *Community Walk* acted unexpectedly and surprisingly as an intervention towards myself—the intervention expanded my perspective on costume in the sense that the unusual situation allowed me, the researcher, to detect implicit discipline and personal assumptions. Hence, as researcher and as human, *Community Walk* felt immensely transformative.

The co-costumed phenomenon

Throughout the text the costume has been present as a driving force and as a silent partner of co-costumed intractions. In "Following the threads of scenographic costume at PQ19" Susan Marshall uses the term "scenographic costume". Marshall writes that she builds her concept on what Patrice Pavis describes as "a kind of travelling scenography, a set reduced to human scale that moves with the actor" and what Donatella Barbieri refers to as a "three-dimensional world for the body in movement that tells a story" (Marshall 2020, 165). Marshall argues that scenographic costume "creates its own world" (Marshall 2020, 165).

I argue that the bright yellow recognisable jumpsuit (quite similar to loose-fitting sports/daily wear) and the strange connection (unfamiliar in the

context of daily wear) created a co-costuming "travelling world" between the wearers. I would argue that the stretchable and spatial quality of the costume became a "material tool" that transformed the wearers' relationship to each other, by-passing people and urban/nature elements/environment in a different fashion than their prior interactions. The co-costumed "travelling world" became the creative space for embodied dialogues between the wearers. Since the co-costumed "world" locomoted in the urban environment, the wearers' embodied dialogues were informed, influenced and affected by what they passed and tangled with. In specific situations, where the co-wearers were open-minded towards by-passing people and urban/nature elements/environments, these humans and more-than-human materialities transformed into agentic playgrounds in another way than in the wearers' daily lives.

In the context of *Community Walk*, in the 12-hour co-costumed entanglement, the wearers had multiple and not necessarily comparable embodied dialogues. However, throughout the *Community Walk* the wearers' sensory, associative and creative attunement was amplified by other humans and more-than-human materialities. It is reasonable that the components (the wearers, the costume, by-passing people and urban/nature elements/environment) were not necessarily in a horizontal relationship, as well as that the entanglement was not necessarily equally transformative for each component.

In this chapter, I hope to have documented that the co-costumed entanglements cultivated the wearers' "sociomaterial" (Tanggaard 2013) relation-spatial sensitivity towards each other as well as towards other humans and more-than-human materialities. I argue that *Community Walk* as a co-costumed phenomenon transforms the wearers creatively. The co-costumed phenomena were a critical as well as a speculative "world-making" process that invited the wearers to playfully co-reflect, co-respond, co-invent, co-sense, co-think and co-learn in the situation.

Artistic research perspectives

Based on the study of *Community Walk*, I would like to suggest that artistic research is a material-discursive practice where knowledge is, as Eva Skærbæk writes, "an ongoing co-creational and situational process enacted in dialogue between gendered embodied human being" (Skærbæk 2009, 63–64). Skærbæk's words suggest that artistic research challenges us researchers to bodily stretch ourselves towards the phenomena that we investigate. Through the practice, through investigating the phenomena, knowledge arises as "collective thinking" or thinking-with "companions in sympoietic" manners (Haraway 2016, 31). The collective thinking challenges the researcher, as Tim Ingold suggests, "not to look inside ourselves, to regress to a set of baseline attributes with which we are similarly endowed from the start, but to reach out to others who are—at least

initially—different from us" (Ingold 2016, 14–15). Hence, the embodied dialogues challenge us to co-think and to stretch ourselves towards different others (for example fellow wearers, other people, materials and spaces). Through the phenomena and through the co-creative entanglement with different others, we are challenged to re-think, sense-think, co-think and question our usual patterns.

As an artistic researcher, one must dare to "stay with the trouble" (Haraway 2016) by entangling with others through phenomena. In the entanglement I as researcher am confronted with, for example, disciplinary assumptions (embedded and embodied through, for example, education and practice) and ethical dilemmas that emerge in co-creative research processes with participants. I argue that artistic research challenges the researcher to stretch towards and reveal the dynamic tension that investigation fosters.

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Notes

1 Translated from Danish by the author.
2 All quotes by Lagerström are translated from Swedish by the author.
3 Marker can indicate a position in a place as well as the costume as a visual sign.
4 Uncomfortable in the sense that the situation reminded me, the costume designer, of my role in costume fitting situations. At the same time, the "transition ritual" situation was *not* comparable to fitting situations. Therefore I, as a designer, found myself in an unusual situation that made me wonder if I "performed my job correctly" or what the participants "expected" of my "role"—asking myself "what is my role?"

Unethical in the sense that I, as a costume designer, did not guide the 'transition ritual' as I would have done in more "traditional" fitting situations. In the first transition rituals the "costume handing over" created some uncertainty or awkwardness between the arriving and the departing participant.

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12 Urban Creativity as Site-Specific Creative Production and Career Work

Svenja Tams and Brigitte Biehl

Creative work and creative careers are closely interwoven with cities, as illustrated by the popularity of ideas such as "creative cities" (Landry and Bianchini 1995; Landry 2012) and "creative class" (Florida 2002). Behind these ideas is the argument that the creative milieu and cultural vibrancy of a city's lifestyle conditions—cultural life, tolerance, diverse subcultures, and non-traditional lifestyles—attract artists and other highly skilled creative talents. In turn, it is argued that these workers' pursuit of creative and other forms of knowledge work spurs cities' innovation and economic development within creative industries and beyond. This argument continues to shape the convergence of urban development and creative industries policies (Stevenson 2020; UNESCO and UNDP 2013; UNESCO 2020), notwithstanding its critics (e.g., Kagan and Hahn 2011; Peck 2005).

Although the creative milieu and cultural vibrancy of cities form important aspects of the creative cities hypothesis, these aspects are often lost in the process of translating the argument into policies and programs. As a result, we know little about what sustains the creative milieu and cultural vibrancy of cities and how they are implicated in the work and careers of creative talent. Our chapter addresses this issue by elaborating on the contribution of social constructionist thinking through the lens of creative production work and creative career work, as two particular forms of social and symbolic work (Lawrence and Phillips 2019). Furthermore, we use the notion of "site-specific performances" (Kloetzel and Pavlik 2009; Kloetzel 2010) to illuminate creative production and career work in urban contexts. We illustrate our argument with Berlin's electronic music scene. Zooming in on DJs, visual artists, and curators in this scene, we depict how they accomplish their creative production and career work in site-specific ways. We illustrate how they use, re-work, and perform unique cultural and aesthetic conditions and repertoires rooted in the iconic sites and historical identity of Berlin's celebrated and mysterious (underground) nightlife (Biehl and vom Lehn 2016; Biehl-Missal 2019; Paumgarten 2014).

Our chapter contributes to creative city and creative industries discourses with nuanced thinking about the social practices that draw on and sustain cities' cultural vibrancy and creative milieu. Our model of site-specific

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creative production and career work extends the prevailing structuralist approach to urban development, which focuses on facilitating creative workers' spatial proximity and access to resources. By proposing creative work and careers as entwined with the living, embodied, and site-specific aesthetic texture of cities, we highlight the importance of urban development working with creative communities in ways that enable these communities to "inhabit" (Hallett and Ventresca 2006) their city's unique heritage and identity. Thus, we shed light on a city's situated (i.e., unique) creative culture as a fertile material and sensory ground for creative production and career work.

What is the trouble with prevalent thinking about urban creativity?

Creative city policies remain muted about the relationship between cities' cultural vibrancy and creative milieu, and their ability to attract and host creative talent. This muteness can be traced back to the traditional aims of urban development. Grounded in modernist visions of progress and the aims of creating economic value and jobs, creative city development tends to focus on cultural and creative entrepreneurs as individual entities. These creative entrepreneurs are expected to produce tangible cultural and creative commodities by virtue of their creative, enterprising, and networking competence. Consistent with this entity view, the creative city policies foster urban creativity through structuralist approaches, such as institutional capacity building, asset mapping, skill development, networking, and digitalisation (e.g., Rudershausen 2020; UNESCO and UNDP 2013; UNESCO 2020). These approaches favour causal models, which explain economic objectives as predicted by the *attributes* of discrete entities (e.g., individuals, organisations, cities) and their relationships. Typically, cities are here conceptualised as geographic regions, where the *spatial proximity* of entities is seen to enable their network building, work, opportunities, and knowledge exchange. While this approach provides valuable insights, its means-ends-orientation is blind to the aesthetic aspects of cities.

Constructing urban creativity through creative production and career work

Understanding how cities' creative milieu and cultural vibrancy relate to creative work and careers requires different thinking. We find this way of thinking in a growing body of research, illuminating creative production and career work as historically, socially, and spatially situated (e.g., Alvarez and Svejenova 2002; Alvarez et al. 2005; Biehl 2020; DeFillippi et al. 2007; Grabher 2001, 2002; Julier 2014; Montanari et al. 2021; Reilly 2017; Svejenova 2005; Svejenova et al. 2010). Reflecting this situated view of creative work, we develop a model of site-specific creative production and career work. Our model (outlined in Figure 12.1) advances a view of urban creativity as a living process of social construction.

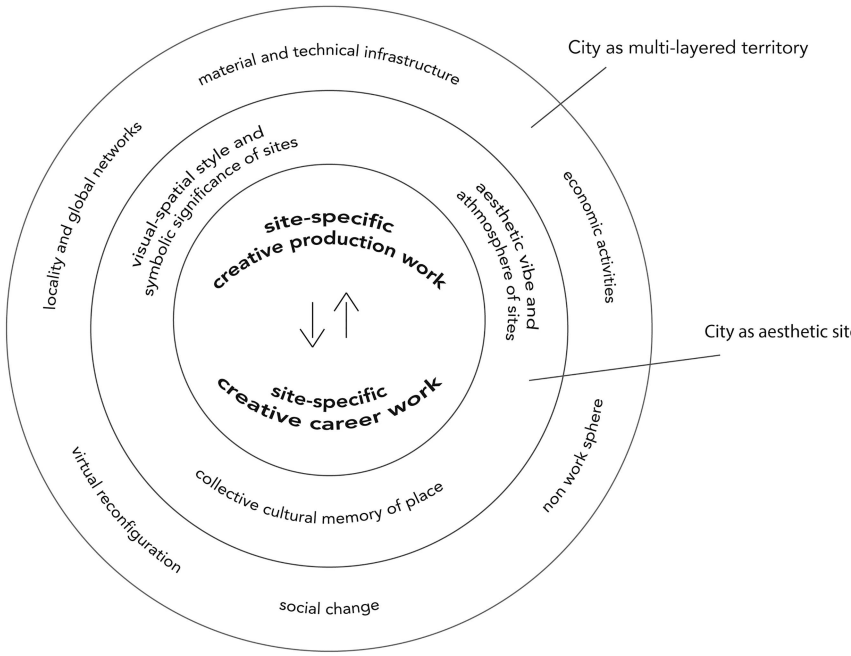

Figure 12.1 Urban creativity as site-specific creative production and career work.

We consider social construction through the lens of the (inter-)actions by which artists and creatives use a city's culturally shared sites and resources to inhabit this city creatively (Hallett and Ventresca 2006). For this purpose, we draw on Lawrence and Phillips' (2019) social and symbolic work perspective. Their approach resonates with emerging research on careers in cities (e.g., Tams et al. 2021). Lawrence and Phillips' (2019, 7) agentic approach to social construction in organisational fields foregrounds the social and symbolic work by which people "through language, interaction, and reflection, assemble social reality from their direct experiences and their inherited histories". They define social and symbolic work as the "purposeful, reflexive efforts of individuals, collective actors and networks of actors to shape social-symbolic objects" (Lawrence and Phillips 2019, 31). This definition has its intellectual roots in social constructionism's early focus on language as a means for constituting social reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Rorty 1967). Broadening social constructionism's early focus on language, Lawrence and Phillips (2019) propose social-symbolic work as shaped by three dimensions: (a) discursive efforts, which constitute social-symbolic objects through text and talk; (b) relational efforts, which bring social-symbolic objects into being through creative ways of maintaining, negotiating, transforming, and terminating interpersonal relationships, and (c) the material dimensions of producing and consuming texts and systems.

Given our aim of illuminating cities' creative milieu and cultural vibrancy, we extend the social and symbolic work perspective with an aesthetic lens on organisations (Taylor and Hansen 2005). Like the social and symbolic work perspective, an organisational aesthetics lens acknowledges the role of discursive, relational, and material dimensions in the social constitution of social reality. As a fourth dimension, it adds to these human beings' sensory experiences (Taylor and Hansen 2005, 1212). Thus, an organisational aesthetics lens recognises that human beings' purposeful and reflexive efforts emerge against the primordial background of their pre-conceptual, felt sense of being in the world. Therefore, the direct experiences and inherited histories, which shape people's conceptual and visual ways of meaning-making, as expressed in discourse (text, systems of text, visuals, creative artefacts), also comprise an aesthetic, sensory dimension, even though it has traditionally been overlooked in organisation studies. The sensory dimension of social and symbolic work gains importance (along with discursive, relational and material dimensions) when examining the fertile and raw ground of creative work, which forms the foundation of a city's creative milieu and cultural vibrancy.

Against this conceptual background, we next develop a finer-grained social-symbolic work perspective on urban creativity. For this purpose, we define core concepts and then apply them in the context of site-specific performances.

Creative production work describes how creatives utilise, remix, and interweave sensory, material, relational, and discursive resources to bring creative objects and experiences into being. A social constructionist lens extends a means end view of creative production work as directed toward tangible outcomes. While creative production work certainly brings about creative commodities (products and services), these are not necessarily the initial or primary focus of creatives' engagement with social reality. In this respect, Grabher (2004) distinguishes two types of creative production work. One type reapplies, replicates and routinises prior creative learning to move "from 'one-off' to repeatable solutions". The other type is "a discontinuous learning regime that is driven by the maxims of originality and creativity" (Grabher 2004, 103). The latter type of creative production work was illustrated during the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though the lockdown made it difficult for performing artists to perform to audiences, we witnessed an explosion of creative experimentation in some artistic communities. Creative production work is an experimental and relational practice. Through playful, novelty-producing engagement with social reality, many creatives' production work intends "*to affect the social and symbolic world around them*" (Lawrence and Phillips 2019, 5). Informed by knowledge and skills (both explicit and tacit), which creatives develop over time through their engagement in creative project ecologies (Grabher 2004), this ongoing novelty-producing engagement with the world is non-rational, interpersonal, symbolic and experiential (Townley et al. 2009), and in

dialogue with the cultural heritage and the unique social and symbolic meanings of place (Biehl, 2020; Jones and Svejenova 2017; Montanari et al. 2021). Thereby, creative production work is closely entwined with audiences, who are often both consumers and co-producers of the creative experiences (Reilly 2017, 2018). While this dialogical aspect of creative production work fosters continuous novelty-seeking experimentation, it also bears a high risk of sunk costs if audiences fail to value creative work (Caves 2000). To manage these risks, creative production work is typically organised through temporary and episodic projects, which are part of more expansive fields of cultural production, as the broader context in which actors organise legitimacy, contracting and learning (Blair et al. 2003; Grabher 2002, 2004; Julier 2014).

Creative career work complements creative production work in that it also utilises, remixes and interweaves sensory, material, relational, and discursive resources to construct a creative career. Creative career work is a particular kind of social and symbolic "self work" (Lawrence and Phillips 2019, 104–112), essential for managing the high risk of project-based organising and bridging creative production work over time and space. Creative career work replaces individualised notions of creativity with an understanding of creative work as embedded in fields of cultural consumption and production (Blair et al. 2003; DeFillippi et al. 2007; Julier 2014). An agentic perspective suggests that careers are not simply structured by an external context but are co-creating this context through career owners' ways of interacting, learning, and constructing meaning (Tams and Arthur 2010; Tams 2020; Tams and Marshall 2011). It sheds light on the strategic efforts by which artists/creatives embed their work within these fields. For example, artists/creatives need to construct credibility to advance their creative production work. They achieve credibility by developing a unique style of work over time and in relation to their place and communities (Alvarez et al. 2005; Svejenova 2005). They also build visibility by showing up for events and building networks (Blair et al. 2003; Ekinsmyth 2002; Reilly 2017) and using their current work to build and signal transferrable competencies for future projects (Jones 2002; O'Mahony and Bechky 2006).

Furthermore, we propose the *city as an aesthetic site* to advance a nuanced understanding of the ways by which creative production work and career work utilise the material, sensory, social, and symbolic resources of a city's multilayered territory (Tams et al. 2021). Acknowledging the city as an aesthetic site extends the traditional conception of the city as a regional cluster of economic activities. Understanding the city as a multilayered territory (Tams et al. 2021) integrates a city's economic activities with other spheres, including the historical meanings of geographic locality and position in global networks, broader material/technical infrastructure, non-work sphere, virtual reconfiguration, and nexus of social change. In contrast to structural thinking focusing on spatial proximity in and across these spheres, social constructionist thinking attends to the ways by which people's

"positioning within and across these spheres situates their everyday work experiences over time" (Tams et al. 2021, 642). Thus, creative production and career work appropriate, reproduce and interweave the sensory, material, relational, and discursive resources afforded to them across a city's multilayered territory (e.g., Montanari et al. 2021). As we elaborate next, these resources comprise the visual-spatial style of a city's distinct architecture (Jones and Svejenova 2017), the symbolic significance of its distinct sites (Montanari et al. 2021), its embodied aesthetic vibe and atmosphere (Biehl-Missal 2019), and the collective cultural memory, which is inscribed in historical narratives/texts and kept alive through people's interactions (Biehl and vom Lehn 2016, 2021).

Creative production and career work in cities as site-specific performances

The notion of site-specific performance illuminates how creative production work and career work respond to a city's aesthetic and historical aspects. In performance studies, scholars speak of site-specific performances to analyse how artists sense and respond to the site of their work. We transfer this notion to suggest that, in urban settings, creative production work and career work connect aesthetically to a city's sites. The city is a touchstone for aesthetic, intellectual and emotional "readings" of place (Pearson 2010, 42). Thereby, the body and non-discursive, transitory social interactions in a place embody tacit ways of aesthetic knowing. Such tacit ways of knowing draw on sensory experiences with a site and engage in dialogue with a site, borne of being in the moment and open to the here and now of the site phenomenon (Hunter 2005, 374). They also embody cultural memory, including narratives, songs, dances, rituals, and symbols, which "*requires for its actualization certain occasions when the community comes together*" (Assmann 2010, 111). Thus, the notion of site-specific performance draws attention to communities' re-embodying disembodied forms of cultural memory when they bring spatial institutions (e.g., places, monuments, techno clubs, galleries) alive. Such site-specific performances also bring culturally resistant forms of knowledge alive, which a creative community constitutes through its interactions in specific sites. Here, performers know more in their bodies than they can express verbally (Böhme and Huschka 2009, 11). Thus, these site-specific aesthetic interactions situate creative production and career work in an urban environment. In turn, site-specific creative production work and career work (re-)produce the creative milieu and vibrancy of the city.

Methods

We use data from Biehl's previous studies and our ongoing collaborations with artists/creatives from Berlin's electronic music scene. The electronic

music scene is a highly relevant, everyday context for studying creative production work and career work as site-specific performance. Due to their expressive value, music and live events are at the core of the creative economy (Hutton 2007; UNESCO and World Bank 2021). As Weick (1974) suggests, such settings may provide fresh theoretical insights that often remain obscured in more conventional organisations. Our data comprised a range of sources: qualitative interviews with ten underground techno DJs, informal conversations with other stakeholders in eight clubs and venues (about blank, Berghain, KitKatClub, Tresor, Sisyphos, Wilde Renate, about blank, Pornceptual at Alte Münze), the researcher's reflexive interpretation of her own embodied participation on the dance floor, consistent with other auto-ethnographic studies of rave experiences (Biehl 2019, 344–345), visual and audio material (Biehl and vom Lehn 2016), conversations with a curator working with artists from Berlin's electronic music scene, and visits to six of her exhibitions. Further data was generated through media sources, blogs, and social network sites. Since aesthetic practices involve tacit ways of knowing, which are difficult to verbalise, researchers' first-hand participation is a recommended research approach (Foster 2013).

Grounded in the data, the aesthetic experience of the clubs was analysed with a tool from performance studies, which breaks down the situation into elements such as: space, movement, sound, people's clothing and style, and other performative expressions (Biehl-Missal 2019, 21; Biehl 2017, 166). This analytical approach addresses the challenge that aesthetic practices, such as embodied interactions, constitute "meaning in motion", which is fugitive and challenging to represent (in contrast to visual or textual artefacts).

Our interpretation of the data was also informed by both authors having worked with artists/creatives, who are external teachers, guest speakers and students on a "creative industries management" study programme. Within this context, we have taken notes about the ways by which artists/creatives talk about their work. Finally, further observations stem from the authors' work at an art school, where many staff combine creative performance work with research and teaching.

Berlin's electronic music scene as an aesthetic site

Berlin's electronic music scene is characterised by a particular "vibe" and "atmosphere" (Biehl-Missal and vom Lehn 2016). This scene is a part of Berlin's post-reunification "city identity" (Jones and Svejenova 2017; Montanari et al. 2021). The techno scene reproduces aspects of Berlin's city identity, in that its site-specific activities embody the city's unique cultural memory and sensory experiences (Paumgarten 2014, 69). Following the Fall of the Wall in 1989, the emerging techno movement "took place" (Klein 2004, vii), with rave parties embodying the social reunification of Germany (e.g., Denk and von Thülen 2012). Three decades on, Berlin techno clubs, such as Berghain, Tresor and others, are still embedded in the social and

historical tradition of a formerly divided and radical Berlin, as celebrated in popular media. For example, *Rolling Stone* (Rogers 2014) traces the "extreme nature of the Berlin club scene" back to its history:

> For the decades before unification, the city was poor and isolated, with little to offer economically. "Half of Berlin was walled in," Boris, a native Berliner, remembers, "and the city was politically aligned with the left; it had a very militant character, which expressed itself in a very aggressive, minimalist raw form of techno." […] In the past two decades, the city's tradition of sexual permissiveness, lax drug policing and left-wing, anarchist politics blended together to create the most sexually adventurous, unconventional party scene in Europe. The city's historical poverty meant high unemployment and large numbers of people with no reason to wake up early on Monday, fuelling the appetite for marathon-length parties and a dislike of closing times. "It's a fuck-off to the rigid capitalist version of time that is enforced in any other city in the world," says Wang. "They're truly saying that money is of secondary importance, that it's the experience that matters."

Dancing is a "mimetic practice" (Klein 2004, 245), expressing the rules and practices of a community. Berlin's techno clubs are characterised by their minimalist architecture, which differs from the sleek clubs in other parts of the world through the absence of mirrors and décor and an air of "industrial badassness" (Paumgarten 2014). In these spaces, dancers move en mass to the four-to-the-floor beat, stomping in strict time, often bare-chested. In so doing, they use body and movement to perform, keep alive and reproduce a specific working-class narrative of Berlin.

Techno nightlife attracts visitors from all around to world (Rapp 2009; Party Hauptstadt Berlin 2018) with decadent, weekend-long parties (Figure 12.2), which self-consciously are "opposing the capitalist version of time" (Rogers 2014). This climate breathes the "Berliner Luft" ("Berlin air"), which has been described by novelists such as Conrad Alberti and Theodor Fontane and works on people like alcohol or drugs: exciting, inspiring, relaxing, toxic, endlessly quivering, resistant and reluctant, defiant and rebellious (Craig 1997, 177).

Site-specific creative production work in Berlin's electronic music scene

The creative production work of artists in Berlin's electronic music scene is inherently entwined with site-specific meanings. Aside from DJs playing gigs, the work of members of this scene reaches into other genres, such as photography, painting, curating, and fashion. Working creatively in the techno scene requires soaking up and inhabiting the aesthetics of the unique club culture. This aesthetics is constituted jointly by clubs' location in abandoned

Figure 12.2 Sunday afternoon queue outside Berghain techno club, Berlin. Photo: B. Biehl.

warehouses and powerplants, and Berlin's collective cultural memory (Assmann 2010). For example, Berlin DJs' creative production work, including their self-presentation, expresses the egalitarian, experience-oriented spirit of techno as post-cold-war folk music and counter-culture open for people from all classes (Biehl and vom Lehn 2016).

In techno, musical styles are site-specific. When playing in Berlin clubs, DJs' work is characterised by both individual signature styles and site-specific links to the Berlin-Detroit techno music connection. This style of techno is more minimal and less progressive or melodic than in other cities. From time to time, DJs also include electronic tracks by Depeche Mode—a group that was widely celebrated in the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR), from which many artists in Berlin's Berghain club culture emerged (Biehl-Missal 2019, 26).

DJs whose work does not conform to the site-specific, tolerant, and inclusive atmosphere leave the Berlin Scene. For example, the South Korean DJ Peggy Gou, who also acts as a Louis Vuitton ambassador, was labelled

"alien" and ill-fitting with the Berlin style of dressing, which eschews luxury brands and "looking posh" (Hartmann 2021). Similarly, DJs, who mix misogynist rap tracks into techno tracks, or bring prostitutes and friends from commercial, cis-masculine Hip Hop culture, have left their Berlin techno club residencies and sought representations through an international booking agency.

The techno parties produced by the Brazilian-German collective *Pornceptual* draw explicitly from the "Berlin spirit". The sex-positive concept of Pornceptual's parties connects to Berlin's collective cultural memory (Assmann 2010, 112) in its revival of the bohemian, decadent subculture of Berlin in the 1920–1930s (Biehl-Missal and vom Lehn 2016), as portrayed by writers such as Christopher Isherwood (1935/1999) and, more recently, in the TV-show *Babylon Berlin* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uekZpkYf7-E). Against this historical backdrop, Pornceptual's sex-positive celebrations embody the spirit of tolerance that characterises Berlin's techno scene. In a similar vein, the party outfits designed by fashion brand NAKT commercialise themes from the gay subculture of Berlin's techno club scene, characterised by fetish wear, leather, black, a harness, and string underwear (Wouters 2019). Likewise, contemporary artworks in Berghain (2015), such as Wolfgang Tillman's sexualised body photography and Piotr Nathan's 25-metre Panorama "Rituals of disappearance", display the open-minded spirit that is deeply rooted in Berlin's history.

This site-specific spirit of the techno club is also evident in the creative production work of artists/creatives in the scene, who work in other genres. The art exhibition hosted at Berghain during the COVID-19 lockdown illustrates how club culture is interwoven with Berlin's wider cultural communities (https://independent-collectors.com/people/studio-berlin-boros-foundation-x-berghain). A famous example is the Berghain bouncer Sven Marquardt (https://marquardtfotografie.com/). Originating from the GDR underground scene, the trained photographer became an internationally famous artist personality on the tails of the "Berlin" and "Berghain" myth. Other bouncers-cum-visual artists play with the techno scene's aesthetics in the broader sense. The artworks of Nelson Jamal (https://www.instagram.com/nelsonjamalberlin) and Mischa Fanghaenel (https://www.mischapictures.de/) explore the themes of "darkness", "body", "urban landscape", and "nightlife". The Berlin-based curator Suzy Royal works explicitly with the darker Berlin vibe (https://www.instagram.com/suzy__royal/). Her exhibitions are site-specific in that she promotes artists, who, like herself, gather in the electronic music scene, and whose artworks connect to the nightlife and the aesthetics of a scene that values diversity and the underground. Consistent with the spirit of techno, she also stages many of her exhibitions in sites that are outside the purview of prominent art institutions, such as art studios, hair salons, backpack hostels, the converted fuel station of an industrial brownfield site, and a former factory site, often located in Berlin's rougher working-class neighbourhoods.

Site-specific creative career work in Berlin's electronic music scene

Likewise, creative career work in Berlin's techno scene is site-specific. As a social resource, clubs provide artists/creatives with opportunities for networking and developing future collaborations. Outside their own gigs, DJs regularly attend techno clubs to dance and meet people from the scene. The location of techno clubs in abandoned warehouses and power plants offers an enabling architecture ("Ermöglichungsarchitektur") (Rüb and Ngo 2011, 146). With techno parties often running 36 hours and spilling into Monday morning, this architecture facilitates constant movement and circulation, encouraging serendipitous interactions and encounters. The overall vibe resonates with the hedonic culture (Rüb and Ngo 2011), which people commonly want to "take home" with them (Nicholson 2014)—and indeed take forward and elsewhere. In the club, DJs meet fellow DJs, international party promoters, and music producers with whom they may collaborate artistically, by contributing to forthcoming EPs or albums, often in the form of remixes of tracks. In addition, the club enables collaborations among people in wider creative industries. Many staff members work in the club as a side job, in addition to daytime jobs, such as make-up artists for film shoots or editors of publishing houses.

In addition, creative career work is site-specific. Being associated with symbolically significant techno clubs can provide artists/creatives with the credibility for generating new projects (e.g., gigs, photo shootings for book projects, fashion shows, commissions, art exhibitions). For example, Norman Nodge, a resident DJ at iconic Berghain over the past 15 years, is regularly booked by promoters for gigs in cities worldwide, such as Paris, Seoul, L.A., and Sydney. While he has honed a unique style that dates to him entering the electronic music scene in the early 1990s, it is his association with Berghain, which lends additional symbolic capital to him—and his fellow resident DJs—being sought out by international party promoters.

Also, the career work of photographer-cum-bouncer Sven Marquart appropriates his association with symbolically significant Berghain and their joint roots in East-German counter-culture. He deploys his imposing physique, full-body-and-face tattoos, and mysterious silence about the criteria by which he admits people to Berghain to set himself in scene as the powerful man of Berlin's techno scene. His approach enables him to develop photography projects with members of the techno scene (https://www.deschler-berlin.de/exhibitions/15243/pack/works/), and beyond. These projects involve exhibitions in New York and Seoul, fashion shoots, and a collaboration with high-end fashion label Hugo Boss. For example, Hugo Boss commissioned him to produce a limited edition of T-shirts featuring his photography (Gorton 2014). Marquart's creative career work, blending a site-specific image of power and authority with conventionally repressed and queer aspects of masculinity, thus generates new collaborative opportunities beyond the techno scene.

Concluding discussion

This chapter set out to contribute to creative city and creative industries discourses with a nuanced understanding of the practices that sustain cities' cultural vibrancy and creative milieu, and how both feed creatives' work and careers. While these themes have long been recognised in creative cities discourse (Florida 2002; Landry and Bianchini 1995; Landry 2012), they are often lost in economic and sustainable development policies and programs. We explained this thinking-doing gap with the prevailing entity-based understanding of creativity, which roots creativity within the minds of creative people, and their discrete interactions in teams and networks. As a result, policymakers and urban planners remain all too often "at arm's length distance" from the aesthetic, sensory dimensions of culture and creativity within particular places. Seeking to transcend this thinking-doing gap in creative city policy, our chapter makes several contributions.

On a meta-theoretical level, our analysis advances a social-constructionist lens of creativity. This lens contrasts the prevailing entity view of creativity, where cities are seen to attract creative minds and facilitate creative actors' spatial proximity but, otherwise, are not seen to be implicated in creativity itself. The social-constructionist lens developed in our chapter situates creativity in the social and symbolic practices of a city's creative industries (DeFillippi et al. 2007; Grabher 2002, 2004). Our chapter supports a growing literature about the symbolic role of city identity in creative work (Biehl-Missal 2019; Biehl and vom Lehn 2021; Jones and Svejenova 2017; Montanari et al. 2021). More specifically, our agentic approach to the social construction of work and careers in cities (Lawrence and Phillips 2019; Tams et al. 2021) proposes urban creativity as accomplished through the ways by which artists/creatives' site-specific production work and career work appropriate, reproduce and interweave the sensory, social, symbolic, and material resources, afforded across a city's multilayered territory. Our analysis illustrates that this site-specific work connects artists/creatives and their audiences with the visual-spatial style, symbolic significance, aesthetic/sensory vibe and atmosphere of particular sites, and the city's collective cultural memory.

Our chapter also extends the economic conceptualisation of creativity as a tangible, knowledge-based commodity (e.g., creative products and services), characterising early definitions of the creative industries. Our analysis attends to site-specific creative production and career work in the multi-layered context of cities. It reveals that creative work is not only instrumentally directed towards tangible commercial outcomes, but rather/also about inhabiting and being in generative dialogue with the creative milieu of cities. Thus, locating creativity in the efforts by which artists/creatives inhabit the larger collective whole of their sensory, material, relational, and discursive environment over time provides insights into the *process of creating* that drives the creative life of cities and, thereby the broader ecology from which other artists/creatives' work emerges.

Beyond these meta-theoretical critiques, our analysis offers practical methodological implications for policy-making and urban development. These fields require a broader aesthetic perspective on the everyday social-symbolic work by which artists/creatives of a particular city construct their site-specific version of urban creativity. The case of Berlin's electronic music scene and its techno clubs illustrates that artists/creatives' site-specific creative production and career work draws on their embodied experiences of aesthetic, non-discursive and architectural aspects afforded by the multi-dimensional territory of that particular city. In turn, artists/creatives' site-specific creative production and career work reproduce the city's cultural vibrancy and creative milieu. While many studies rely exclusively on text-based materials, our analysis yields the insight that knowledge about urban creativity benefits from complementing text and words with a phenomenological interpretation of the ways by which embodied sensory and visual experiences in space are entwined with the collective cultural memory that is inscribed in a city's historical narratives. In this respect, our analysis of Berlin's electronic music scene is relevant to other creative fields. Following Weick's (1974) logic about the value of the special case, our analysis reveals aesthetic and site-specific affordances of creative work, which researchers may easily take for granted in more professionalised fields of the creative industries. Thus, developing an analytical sensitivity for aesthetic and site-specific affordances of creative work, which are difficult to grasp and often remain transitory and in-the-moment but leave their traces in human interactions, is relevant across fields, including highly professionalised fields of creative production. Indeed, attending to the non-discursive embodiment of creative work may point to contradictions with official discourses about creativity. In sum, our insights support site-specific, participatory approaches to urban policy-making and planning—not only to fulfil participatory ideals (Arnstein 1969) but also to make tacit, sensory knowledge of site-specific urban creativity visible (e.g., Manzini 2015).

The limitations of the present analysis point to future lines of inquiry. Despite the close entwinement of artists' creative production work and their audiences, we have not investigated the role of audiences as both consumers and co-producers of creative experiences. This interaction between the production and consumption of urban creativity requires further research. As the clubbing scene illustrates, we require attention to the underground, shadow aspects of urban creativity, such as power inequalities, drug use and lack of sustainability, which remain often overlooked in policy discourse about creative cities and the creative economy. Also, further research needs to examine the aesthetic implications of artists/creatives' leaving the creative milieu of cities to escape their intense competition, limited resources, precarious project-based work conditions, and high costs of living (Alacovska et al. 2021). While the virtualisation of creative production work enables remote work, our discussion prompts questions about the implications of losing embodied experiences of site-specific aesthetics for both project-based

careers and creative production. Scholarly analysis that informs the less comfortable aspects of urban creativity is critical for policymaking, including the corporate responsibility of actors in creative industries.

In conclusion, our study contributes to policy discourses about the creative city (Landry and Bianchini 1995; Landry 2012; Stevenson 2020; UNESCO and UNDP 2013; UNESCO 2020; UNESCO and World Bank 2021) and "creative class" (Florida 2002). While these discourses acknowledge the importance of a city's creative milieu, this aspect remains muted in the toolkits of urban development with their focus on skills, networks, funding, and enterprise development. In this respect, our analysis suggests that the efficacy of urban development interventions can benefit from strengthening creatives' experience, entwinement and use of their given creative field rather than disconnecting them from it. Paradoxically, grounding creative production work and careers in a city's embodied living aesthetic texture does not narrow their geographic reach. As Berlin's techno scene illustrates, its roots in the aesthetics of local architectural conditions and historical narratives increase the mobility of select artists who operate in global networks. Thus, viewing creative production and career work as site-specific performances recognises that their essential novelty-producing quality feeds on the aesthetic "vibe" of a place.

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Part III

Relational Work, Enterprising and Precarity

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13 Creative Work in the Fashion Industry

Philip Warkander

"She's not happy unless everyone around her is panicked, nauseous or suicidal", Andy Sachs (played by Anne Hathaway), succinctly summarised her personal assessment of her boss Miranda Priestly (played by Meryl Streep) in the fashion film *The Devil Wears Prada* (2008). To the film audience, Miranda was the epitome of a powerful and executive "gatekeeper" of fashion—briefly summarised as a key position in the transformation of garments into the symbolic value of fashion (Kawamura 2004)—and the commercial success of the film was in no small degree due to Streep's chilled interpretation of how the audience expected someone in a high position of power in the world of fashion media to act and behave. Adding to the film's popularity was the fact that it was based on a novel by Lauren Weisberger (2003), previously assistant to Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of *Vogue US*, which made it easy for many to interpret Streep's performance as a thinly veiled impersonation of Wintour.

When the film came out, *The Guardian's* critic Peter Bradshaw (2006) wrote of Streep's way of enacting her character, "Miranda has an emotional S&M relationship with the staff and the S is her prerogative; she bullies and humiliates them and they worship her in return". For the *New York Times*, A. O. Scott (2006) wrote a slightly more nuanced review:

> Several carefully staged, pointedly written scenes defend Miranda on feminist grounds. Other moments reveal her vulnerability, and she occasionally takes time from her daily routine of spreading fear and anxiety wherever she goes to extend meaningful and sympathetic glances in Andy's direction. She also explains that while her kingdom of couture may seem like a shallow and trivial place, it is also a domain where power, money and art commingle to influence the choices and aspirations of women everywhere.

What is clear in both the film and in how it was received is that the fashion world, and the people who work inside of its intricate and often complex networks, have been mythologised as a hierarchically organised system, where those in positions of power appear to exploit and humiliate their

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subordinates, often while being in aesthetically sophisticated surroundings. The appearance of these surroundings is in itself highly important, as they communicate the importance of the workers' explicit knowledge and understanding not only of taste itself, but of how it can be transformed into a commodity which brings commercial success to the company for which they work. However, the film could also be interpreted as underscoring the importance of being socially flexible and easy to work with, especially if you are in a subordinate position. Its storyline could just as well be explained as Andy learning how to navigate and interact with people within the fashion industry, developing a specific and industry-related vocabulary, successively understanding that in fashion, working is not necessarily limited to office hours, and that a cocktail party in many ways can be viewed as a combination of networking event and business meeting.

In this chapter, I will explore the essential but often tacit requisites for a career in the fashion industry. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to study the importance of social capital for actors who operate on a professional level within the creative part of the Swedish fashion industry, either on a freelance basis or as employees in various creative corporations. It is thus part of a larger field of research focusing on the organisation of work in the fashion industry. Regarding the Swedish context, Ann Frisell-Ellburg gathered material through ethnographic fieldwork on the working conditions of modelling in her PhD thesis (2008). Other studies on modelling as work (Entwistle and Wissinger 2012; Wissinger 2015) have explored the issues of exploitation of the human body in fashion's aesthetic economy. The myths surrounding the independent fashion designer have also been unpacked (McRobbie 1998; McRobbie 2016), while the role of the fashion photographer has been analysed in terms of stylistic expression based on different fashion markets (Aspers 2001; Warkander 2016).

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) recognised three dimensions of capital, all related to matters of distinction and part of what contributes to the system of social class: economic, cultural and social. They operate in interconnected and multifaceted ways, not always clearly distinguishable from one another and often visible to others primarily through the mediation of symbolic capital. Specifically, Bourdieu's definition of social capital placed emphasis on power struggles and conflicts. In other words, social capital can be considered a resource, often linked to how trust operates in a specific situation, and to a person's perceived trustworthiness.

By working creatively in fashion, often on a freelance basis and as self-employed actors, the informants in this study are simultaneously part of the creative class and the precariat. The latter is usually defined as a "multi-class category", consisting of people in a variety of professions, spanning a multitude of sectors. What unites them is a sense of uncertainty, often related to their private economy. Those who are part of the precariat also regularly lack the possibility to make long-term plans in life (Ross 2008). As the precariat is not a homogenous group, it has proven difficult to form a general

organisation—like a workers' union—that protects its members' rights. From an international perspective, the precariat is mostly made up of women, younger people, and immigrants, groups that by tradition are marginalised in the work force (Gill and Pratt 2008). Richard Sennett (2006) has claimed that this development is far from random but should be viewed as symptomatic for a time when more responsibility is placed on the individual instead of, as before, on society or large corporations. Now, it is primarily up to the individual person to maintain and update their professional profile and network. This connects to Bourdieu's view on social capital as both a kind of resource but also something that is continuously under negotiation.

The Swedish fashion industry employs approximately 60,000 people on a full-time basis, and 60% of this group works in retail (Volante 2019). This means that people who work creatively in this sector in Sweden are part of a rather niche group, where (in addition to being competent in one's field of expertise) personal networks and social skills are essential. This is further underscored by the fact that in Sweden, there are only two fashion design schools (and only one MA programme in fashion design). Fashion design education operates therefore not only as the introduction to basic design and technological practices, but it also facilitates informal networking and functions as the social foundation for a future career in fashion. To know the right people, as well as knowing how to behave in certain social situations, is necessary in order to not only gain entrance but also to have the possibility of successfully remaining in the industry.

Creative work in fashion is possible to define as an "aesthetic economy", as proposed by Joanne Entwistle (2002), who has suggested that creative work within the fashion industry primarily is expressed through aesthetics. Originally coined by Gernot Böhme, the concept refers to "an aestheticisation of the real" (2003). Applied to fashion, creative work demands an in-depth understanding of how aesthetic expressions can be transformed into commercially viable products, while also understanding how trend cycles affect and change the value of various aesthetic styles. At its core, this is interlinked with the most primary definition of fashion as being in a continuous state of change, always moving towards a new stylistic expression, where the dominant style is repeatedly being replaced with a new one. The symbol of "the latest" and the idea of "the newest trend" is constantly evolving, and being part of this aesthetic economy thus requires not only an interest in aesthetics but also an understanding of how trends operate and can be commercialised.

Change, as communicated through images, fashion shows and clothing design, thus constitutes the core of fashion, both as a cultural phenomenon and as an industry. According to Gilles Lipovetsky, this business model is based on the idea of "planned obsolescence" (1994). This model was first systematised in the late 19th century through the introduction of fashion seasons. In short, a fashion collection is considered outdated at the very

moment a newer collection is launched (thus replacing the former collection as "le dernier cri"). In comparison with the fresh, new lines of the spring collection, the silhouettes of the fall will automatically appear dated. And so on.

This chapter is part of a larger study on the working conditions and driving forces behind creative labour in the contemporary Swedish fashion industry. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork, carried out between 2016 and 2021 (Warkander 2019). The informants' names have been anonymised. I have also relied on my own experiences of working in this field, as for approximately 20 years, I have been working as a writer, editor and copywriter for various magazines and brands in the fashion and lifestyle industries.

"She could have been someone"

> I've thought a lot about this, because she is really intelligent, and she most definitively looks the part. She could have been someone. But that's not enough, socially she was kind of clueless, she was often late to meetings and not prepared, and it was often just awkward to be in meetings with her. She was just difficult to be in contact with.

In this quote, a former head of marketing for an important fashion industry platform explained her opinion on why a particular former editor of a fashion magazine hadn't been able to continue her career after the magazine had been cancelled. The person she spoke of had been somewhat established, famous to a larger audience via TV shows and to the fashion industry as a former fashion model turned editor. But, despite her vast knowledge of fashion, both historical and contemporary, and extensive social network, she hadn't been able to secure a stable position and had been forced to leave the industry to find ways to make a living.

What is apparent in this quote is that not only do you need to have the relevant skillset for your job, but you also have to be likeable, act professionally and be easy to work with. Writing about the concept of small talk in ethnographic studies, Henk Driessen and Willy Jansen (2013) have claimed that "small talk helps to establish, maintain, and expand the network of interlocutors. More importantly, it provides access to information that is difficult to get otherwise and could be central to understanding the local culture". To briefly sum up the arguments in Driessen and Jansen's research, small talk is viewed as having significant meaning in social interaction, both ritualised and informal, and thus it is often a necessary aspect when establishing a human connection between two (or more) individuals. This connection can then be translated into a form of mutual trust, which is a key component in business transactions and when working together in the same creative team, like the "backstage" information associated with the theories of Erving Goffman (1990). Having a well-formed "backstage relationship"

provides a solid foundation for the work that later is required to take place frontstage. In other words, the former editor might have been good at her job, but she lacked skills to make people feel relaxed and at ease, which might have influenced potential employers and made them hesitant to hire her.

"I only collaborate with people I could be friends with"

In the fall of 2016, I travelled to Istanbul together with three Swedish fashion designers. We had been invited by the Swedish Institute to talk about our respective work within the Swedish fashion system. The ambition was to establish connections and exchange experiences over national boundaries. Toward the end of our stay, the Swedish Arts Council arranged a meeting with design consultant Sven, who had lived and worked in Turkey for several decades. Before his move, he had been a significant agent in Swedish fashion, and had for a long time been one of the most influential people in this field in Scandinavia. During our informal discussion, he discussed the challenges he would meet as a Swedish designer working in Turkey, but also added that he still has clients in Scandinavia. When I asked which fashion brands he worked with, he avoided naming specific companies, and instead told me his general philosophy behind his current collaborations:

> I only collaborate with people I could be friends with. We must be on the same wavelength. If someone comes to me and wants me to do something and then begin by asking what it costs, then it won't work. If they instead ask me what I can do, that's another matter. Then it's about knowledge and that's more interesting to me.

Through his response, Sven underlines the importance of collaboration. *Who* he works with is just as important as *what kind* of work he does. Even though he discussed work relationships, he took care to contextualise them in non-economic terms, preferring to instead highlight the potential for a personal connection based on knowledge and expertise. Being in a foreign country, working on a freelance basis and being almost 70 years of age, Sven could be considered to be in a vulnerable position compared to the large Scandinavian companies he regularly has worked as a designer for, yet he presents himself as the one with the actual upper hand when outlining his conversations and negotiations with the companies. Present during this conversation was emerging fashion designer Laura, who continued the conversation about the social dimensions of creative work, based on her own experiences:

> At one point, I had a real crisis in production, it was an absolute emergency. So, I contacted other designers that I knew, and straight away [a Swedish designer] called me and gave me the names of people he

> thought could help me. And then it just continued from there, so many different people got in touch, and I received so much help and support that I was completely overwhelmed.

Both Sven and Laura demonstrated through their statements that—in their view—waged labour holds more dimensions than merely the financial. But there is a key difference between their narratives, linked to their respective experiences of working professionally in fashion. After more than 50 years in the industry, Sven viewed himself as having a senior position, thus choosing who he will be doing business with. His ability to independently choose is interconnected with status and confidence, accumulated during many consecutive decades of being active in the industry. Laura, on the other hand, would be best defined as a junior actor in her field. Even though she was selected to represent the Swedish fashion sector in Turkey, she still couldn't make a living from her business, which gave her a weaker and more subordinate position within the fashion system. Not being fully established made her vulnerable, and the sudden crisis in production could have meant the end for her brand, had not her peers responded with generosity and support. This also points to another aspect of both informants' narratives, namely the lack of competition from others, despite them both being in a saturated business.

"… you need to be a nice person to get ahead"

Photographer Sam has worked in fashion for approximately 20 years. Currently in his early 50s, he is signed to one of the most prestigious agencies in Scandinavia, which represents not only photographers but also stylists, hair and make-up artists and set designers. When asked how important it is to be socially skilled when working in fashion, he replied:

> There is no "social" difference between working in fashion and being in another industry. In general, in the workplace, you need to be a nice person to get ahead. The difference, I would say, is between those who have a permanent position and those who work as freelancers. As a fashion photographer, I'm a freelancer and so I need to be intuitive and easy to be around. Otherwise, it wouldn't work, I wouldn't be able to get the models to relax and then I wouldn't be a good photographer. Most people who work in fashion—and on freelance basis—are generally nice. Of course, throughout the years I have met a few that have been self-involved, not respecting when to show up, always being late and not prepared, but that behaviour is not rewarded and therefore you won't last long. If you work on a project-based basis, you need to make sure that people will want to work with you. I knew a stylist, that I worked with many times in the past and who was signed to [the same agency as himself], she had a good sense of style and she knew fashion but she was

> "flaky". After a few years, people were getting fed up and not really wanting to work with her, because it would also mean trouble, in one way or another. I don't really know what she does these days, I think she switched to working as an artist or something.

What Sam is saying is very much in line with general common sense. There are no social expectations that are specific to the fashion industry; the requirements for professionals in this field are the same as in other industries: show up on time, be prepared, be polite and do your job before the deadline. Phrased differently: It is not enough (as was the case of his unnamed former colleague) to be skilled at what you do—without necessary social skills, simply being good at your job is not sufficient to build a lasting career, because eventually people will avoid working with you.

During 2019, the number of people working in the Swedish fashion industry increased by 2 to 3% (the equivalent of 1,387 people). Primarily, this increase occurred in retail, both online and in actual stores, which means that the creative part of the business remained the same as before. The fashion industry is approximately the same size as the Swedish wood and paper industry, and about 25% smaller than the food industry. The gender division is 73% women and 27% men, nevertheless more men than women hold managerial and senior positions. But, compared to business in general, more CEOs were women, 32% in fashion compared to 19% Midby and Sternö 2020).

In addition to gender, age is another important variable to consider. Colin McDowell, senior fashion writer for *The Sunday Times*, has pointed out that there is an ongoing age and generation-related power negotiation regarding the relationship between fashion and taste, which often leads to the marginalisation of younger individuals within the fashion industry (Strauss and Lynge-Jorlén 2008). He viewed it as age discrimination, which in turn affects what is communicated as the dominant interpretation of good taste. Translated to the case of *The Devil Wears Prada*, the younger Andy was not listened to until she had adapted to and internalised the taste opinions of her senior, Miranda. However, I would argue that this would not necessarily be discriminatory per se but could also be interpreted as being a case of the more professionally experienced person having a better understanding of how the market operates, and of what kind of expression of "taste" that currently is commercially viable.

On a related note, Steven Vallas (2012) has studied the growth in employment opportunities within the "knowledge industry". He has stated that with the increase of job opportunities for the "knowledge workers" of the creative class, their loyalty has shifted from the employer to the profession in itself, which is closely related to the concept "boundaryless career", describing a flexible approach to work and employment (Crocitto et al. 1996). But far from everyone feels at home in this "knowledge society", which elevates a specific kind of more theoretical knowledge while

discarding practical skills. New divisions of social class are being drawn between those with higher education (and a specific kind of academic training and skillset) and those without.

But, as competition increases within the knowledge society and practical knowledge is becoming scarcer, this could easily change, as suggested by David Goodhart (2020). Goodhart has underscored the importance of the deindustrialisation process in the mid-20th century, which saw a rapid decline in traditional industries as well as a simultaneous increase in white-collar jobs. In Sweden, more than 43% of high school students choose to study at university level, compared to the 1950s, when only 5% even received the equivalent of a high school diploma. In the past few decades, the university system in Sweden has rapidly expanded: in 2018 the sector for higher learning had an annual turnover of 74 billion SEK, while approximately 400,000 students were enrolled (Sturesson 2006).

The expansion of the university system also includes the development of education in the humanities and the arts. At Stockholm University, it is possible to study fashion studies up to PhD level, while Lund University offers a three-year bachelor programme. This translates into more students receiving diplomas than the industry needs. To be competitive in the professional field, the new arrivals need to find ways to distinguish themselves from others with similar (if not identical) academic credentials. One way of doing this is by applying one's social capital and potential for small talk.

Working in fashion, many business encounters will not take place in the board room but will instead be discussed over dinner or drinks. Having business conversations in these kinds of spaces demonstrates that social skills and an understanding of aesthetics in many ways overlap with one another in the fashion industry. Often, work in creative industries will not appear as if one is working. Following this line of thinking, I would also argue that this is one of the reasons the creative sector in fashion was particularly hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only were people self-isolating at home, which meant that there was less consumer demand for new commodities, but also the essential, informal network of the industry had been eradicated, as events, openings and even restaurants and bars were temporarily closed.

These kinds of events have often been portrayed in media as superficial, not least in satires of the fashion industry such as the TV series *Absolutely Fabulous* (1992–2004) and the film *Prêt-à-porter* (1994). Additionally, the ability to be pleasant to anyone, and to be extroverted and social in general, has often been seen as potentially dishonest and deceitful behaviour. In Daphné du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (2003), the first Mrs de Winter is explained as particularly calculating and shrewd by outlining how she would adapt the conversation to fit others, which showed the reader that she was not to be trusted. Her own demonic character could thus remain hidden beneath her superficial social skills, invisible to those around her. More specifically, her outgoing personality was part of what made her appear evil to those who knew her.

Introspection and extrovert behaviour reflect different needs of a person, often expressed at different times during a lifetime, or even during a workday. It can also vary depending on professional requirements. Some jobs—such as writing, coding, and conducting research—are jobs often carried out in quiet solitude, while others—such as teaching and caregiving—have a natural social component. However, in recent years, a tendency to categorise personalities as either introvert or extrovert has prevailed in popular culture. Often, the introverted personality has been considered more sensitive and refined. This is due to the binary logic behind viewing someone's behaviour as either fitting into one or the other. Introverted behaviour is associated with intellectual endeavours, while an extroverted personality is considered as more focused on external events.

There is a gendered aspect to this, as the introspective intellectual is often considered a masculine type of personality, while a social and emotional personality is traditionally considered more feminine. This emphasises that there is a misogynist dimension to diminishing extroverted and social behaviour, which can also explain why the feminine fashion industry has often been portrayed as ridiculous and superficial in media.

Wanting to better understand the negative stereotype of superficial social interactions, Bronislaw Malinowski (1923) researched the relevance of seemingly mundane and insignificant speech acts, such as "how are you?", "have a nice day" and other forms of polite small talk. He concluded that they in fact are highly significant in establishing and maintaining social bonds between people. Conversations that revolve around the weather, sports or any similar kind of light-hearted subject function on dual levels: it passes the time, but it also ties people together, creating interconnections between individuals which in a way is fundamental in shaping a community. Important to remember is that this is done regardless of intention or awareness of the persons involved in the conversation. This kind of phatic expression is not, in the strict sense of the word, communicative, as no communicative content is shared. Instead, it is simply considered part of an everyday activity, and not much thought is put into it. But, when seemingly superficial conversations are carried out within the context of a seemingly superficial business (such as fashion), it may enhance external stereotypical views of fashion being shallow and devoid of any actual meaning.

"I just enjoy being by myself and not doing much"

For the average adult person, the modern day is roughly divided into three eight-hour sections: work, sleep and free time. However, according to Peter Englund (1991), in early modern times it was initially difficult to convince workers to take on more hours than they needed. Instead, as soon as they had made sufficiently to cover their basic expenses, they preferred instead to work less and to have more free time. In other words, the workers preferred to not only work less but also to buy fewer things, rather than work more.

Englund connects the developing economic system to emotions of dissatisfaction: uneasiness, desire, discontentment. As workers became accustomed to the modern system of working full-time, feelings of dissatisfaction became part of the modern work culture: "We lust for commodities we can't afford and long for places we can't go to, as compensation for a monotonous and under-stimulating full-time work", as Englund summarised the current situation.

In his study, Englund focused on the relationship between the production and consumption of commodities, or expressed differently, the complicated ties between work and free time. What becomes apparent, however, is the systematic rigidity of organised labour. Even if many people no longer, thanks to technological advances made in recent years, need to work eight hours a day, they are still required to be in the office during this time, as the system has not progressed at the same pace as technology. This has made the workplace even more social than before, as people are left to find other things to do with their time while at work, than simply working. For this reason, as the time spent actually working during the workday has significantly decreased, the capability of being social in professional environments has become even more important. This development is not demarcated only to the cultural and creative industries but has influenced many different kinds of professions.

The effects of the recent pandemic have challenged this modern way of organising time. As part of the need to remain isolated and not meet other people outside of one's own family, many who used to work at an office now have had to work from home, away from their colleagues. For many, the loss of a social context outside of one's immediate family has been challenging, while for others, it has been experienced as liberating. Not least in cultural economies, small talk may spark collaboration and improve creativity. When the possibility of chance encounters with colleagues in the pantry no longer exists, this potential also goes away.

Some, however, do not miss the sense of community. Freelance fashion photographer Karen explained to me, during an interview that took place at her remote country house in August 2021, that:

> I know it's not appropriate to say during a pandemic, but I have really enjoyed these past 18 months [of isolation] of doing nothing and just living out in the countryside. Almost no money is coming in, and I see almost no of my old colleagues, but I feel great. I don't miss any of it. I can relax and be with my cats and my hens and I don't miss the [social] events or the work at all. Actually. I still take photos, but for my own enjoyment. Of course, it's a bit worrisome to see how my funds are running low, but I try not to think about that, I'll manage somehow. For now, I just enjoy being by myself and not doing much.

When speaking of her experiences during COVID-19, Karen intertwines her experiences of working with socialising, and claims to miss neither. Instead,

what she has gained by being forced into this temporary pause is to rest from the need to be social, and instead she can relax with the animals she keeps on her small farm.

Connecting back to the focus of this chapter, socialising professionally can be superficially similar but experienced differently than socialising in a personal context. The conversations and discussion topics might be the same, but Karen experienced a need to perform a certain way and to engage socially when in professional settings. This is different from how she organised her time during the pandemic, when she was free from professional obligations. It is not financially sustainable for her to exit the fashion system completely, but similar to the early modern workers that Englund has studied, she expressed reluctance towards organising her time in a way that prioritised work and professional relations over free time and not having to be professionally pleasant. In this way, being socially pleasant in professional settings can be seen as draining, which again underscores how it is a form of work, even when taking place at an event or dinner party.

Concluding remarks

Speaking from an academic perspective, I have personal experience of what Sam is conveying in his outline of interactions in fashion, and the emphasis of being nice to your peers. I have had plenty of colleagues at various universities and departments who were excellent scholars but were lacking in interpersonal communication skills. This lack often led to them being (intentionally or not) marginalised within the institution. Also, in academia, it is not enough to be a leading scholar in your field, if your colleagues do not enjoy your company. In subtle ways, people who were perceived as difficult did not receive as many invitations to collaborations as those who were more "popular" within the department.

This personal experience supports Sam's argument that the importance of social capital is not specific to fashion—or to the cultural and creative industries in general—but is rather a shared experience, regardless of which professional sector you belong to. Not everyone has the same prerequisites, however, when it comes to being viewed as "nice", and variables such as gender, age and ethnicity may affect how others perceive and interpret your behaviour. However, there is one important distinction to be made, and that is by understanding these informal labour practices as infused in relational contexts. The freelance workers are dependent on good working relations with each other (the photographer being friendly with the stylist and also with the modelling agency, for example) but also with potential clients. This way, the creative part of the fashion industry is not only defined by its commercialisation of aesthetics but also by maintaining professional relations through the act of being social. This underscores how creative work is not only underpinned by professional competence but also by relational contexts (Alacova 2018).

The fashion industry is often portrayed in a way that differs from how it is described by those working inside of it. In movies such as *The Devil Wears Prada* it appears highly hierarchical and anxious, while those working in the industry describe it as relaxed and informal. This discrepancy is particularly noticeable from a Swedish perspective, as the Swedish fashion industry is very small, which over time has created an informal atmosphere for those that are on the inside of it. This is different from, for example, the American and British counterparts, as these industries are larger and thus more competitive. However, what unites all of these national industries is the relevance of the fashion professional's use of social capital, which functions as a kind of currency in professional situations. This also explains the discrepancy between how the industry is portrayed by outsiders and how it is described by those on the inside.

This capital is also used to create a desirable atmosphere in work situations, where colleagues (such as art directors, models, and stylists) need to be relaxed in order to perform. For this reason, it is not enough to only be skilled at what you do, you also need to be perceived as pleasant to be around. In small communities, such as the Swedish fashion industry, word travels quickly, and if someone has behaved inappropriately, this will be widely shared among co-workers and friends, and soon considered common knowledge. For this reason, social capital cannot be separated from one's professional persona, but should instead be viewed as an integral part of contemporary creative work and of the organisation of cultural and creative industries.

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14 Creative Work in the Digital Games Industry

Malin Espersson, Mikael Bergmasth, and Erika Andersson Cederholm

Introduction

Previous studies of work and working conditions in cultural and creative industries have highlighted the notion of "passionate work", implying that work is a devotion or a lifestyle, even a "calling" (Albinsson 2018). Critical perspectives in the field of creative labour have pointed out how the notion of passionate work may also reinforce precarious working conditions (Arvidsson, Malossi & Naro 2010; Bulut 2020; Gill 2002; 2014; Hesmondhalgh 2019; McRobbie 2016). Employees are often willing to work long hours because they enjoy their work, and they may devote much of their leisure time to creative work that is not being acknowledged as paid labour. In such work, boundaries between work and life intersect; both those related to the organisation of work hours and workplaces, and to social relationships. Distinctions between personal friendships, networks, and colleagues are often blurred, if they exist at all (Alacovska 2018; Conor, Gill & Taylor 2015; Gill 2002, 2014).

Departing from an analytical understanding of creative work as a "blurred" working environment, with indistinct boundaries between artistic work as a calling and an occupation, passionate work and paid labour, and work and life, this chapter focuses on creative work and working conditions in a particular industry in the creative sector: the digital games industry. The chapter is based on an ongoing research project on the working conditions in the digital games industry in Sweden (Forte, dnr 2020-00248).

The digital games industry is a type of industry in the creative sector that is often promoted as highly profitable (Ceasar 2020). It is also an industry that has grown expansively in Sweden. Over the last five years, the turnover in the industry has doubled, and the number of employees has increased by 70% (Nylander 2021). This context makes the industry analytically interesting, since it may reinforce the potential tension between creative work as passion, and the economic valuation of such work.

Through an analysis based on in-depth interviews with game developers, the aim of the chapter is to investigate the complexities and tensions involved in a working environment characterised by an ethos of passion. We will

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show how game developers experience and make sense of their working environment, and particularly how they understand and construct the notion of "creative work". The analysis demonstrates how different types of work are valuated and negotiated socially, morally, and economically. It details how the game developers attribute value to their everyday work tasks, but also how working conditions are negotiated and assigned value. Through the theoretical notion of "relational work", a concept with its origin in economic sociology (Zelizer 2005, 2013), we demonstrate how game developers (re)draw boundaries between moral, emotional, and economic value spheres (cf. Appadurai 1986). This illustrates how the game developers negotiate boundaries between different spheres in an interactive and situated practice, informed by structural conditions in the industry.

In a previous study (Espersson, Bergmasth & Andersson Cederholm 2022), we investigated how game developers experience work and working conditions through the ideals and norms of "creative work". In the present chapter we depart from these results and further develop an understanding of how work is valuated in the nexus between economic and moral value spheres. By theorising the intersection between different value spheres through the notion of relational work, this chapter adds knowledge on how the ongoing valuation of creative work is intimately connected to moral responsibility for the work. The chapter sheds light on how individual responsibility for working conditions is negotiated in the game developers' narratives and accounts, particularly how responsibility for working conditions can be obscured in this type of working environment.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, we present a theoretical framework of previous studies in creative labour on the notion of passionate work, more specifically in the context of the digital games industry. This is followed by a presentation of the "relational work" perspective represented by Viviana Zelizer (2005, 2013) and how this perspective can be applied to analyse how creative workers perceive and experience responsibility for their work—not merely the content of the work but also the working conditions. Second, we present a methods section, which details the context of the study, the data collection—mainly through interviews with game developers—and how the analysis was conducted. Third, we present the analysis, divided into three overall themes, followed by a concluding discussion.

Digital labour and relational work

Previous studies on creative labour in the digital games industry have demonstrated that the quest to be creative is often juxtaposed against economic profitability to demarcate a creative ethos (Chia 2019; de Peuter & Young 2019; Keogh 2021; Sotamaa 2021; Styhre & Remneland-Wikhamn 2020; Wright 2015). Some studies focus explicitly on working conditions in the industry, and have highlighted the ambiguity, or double-edged sword that illustrates game developers' simultaneous devotion to developing games, and

the implicit requirements to work long hours and be devoted to the company (Chia 2019; de Peuter & Young 2019; Peticca-Harris, Weststar & McKenna 2015; Wright 2015). Other studies have shed light on a gendered working environment that often disfavours women (Harvey & Fisher 2013; Johnson 2014). Research in this field has also demonstrated how an entrepreneurship and portfolio career emphasises flexibility, autonomy, and devotion (Harvey 2019; Wright 2015). This type of career model has paved the way for an individualised working environment fostering a reluctance toward collective solutions to challenges in such precarious working environments. However, some studies in the field of digital labour have pointed to a limited but growing interest among workers in union involvement (Weststar & Legault 2019).

In line with the aforementioned studies, we are interested in how the notion of passionate work is understood in the digital games industry, and how it affects workers' own understandings of creative work, as well as their understanding of working conditions. To investigate how game developers employed in the industry attribute value to their work, situated as it is between art and commerce, we have turned to economic sociology and the interactionist perspective of "relational work" (Zelizer 2005, 2013).

The notion of "relational work" represents an approach in economic sociology in the study of how boundaries between different forms of relationships, economic and non-economic, are negotiated. One of Viviana Zelizer's main arguments is that these spheres are always intimately connected, although there is a widespread and popularised view that the economy and the social sphere are separate. However, what is sociologically interesting is how people in various social contexts draw lines between various forms of social exchange, and how the ordering of economic and social exchange is pursued. One example of relational work is the boundaries being drawn between friendship-based reciprocity on the one hand, and business partners and market exchange on the other (Andersson Cederholm & Åkerström 2016; Mears 2015). Illustrative of how the relationship is valuated is the choice of repayment, or what Zelizer terms "media". This could take the form of working hours—or, in more informal relationships, subtle forms of reciprocal gift exchanges, such as favours and loyalty to colleagues in a pressing work situation. The media being used (or not used), and how boundaries are being negotiated between categories of relationships may be illustrative in understanding how different value spheres are separated or intertwined.

The notion of relational work has been applied in previous studies of creative industries to study the relational dimensions involved in a sector characterised by informality and a bohemian ethos (Alacovska 2018). In our study, we discuss how relational work can be used to identify how the moral dimensions of favour exchanges and friendship reciprocity are intertwined in economic relationships and formal work roles, and how this marking or blurring of boundaries may reinforce loyalty and an individualised

responsibility for the work situation. The individualisation of responsibility has been discussed in creative labour studies, for instance within the framework of neoliberal subjectivity (Scharff 2016). In this chapter, we analyse how the individualisation of responsibility is related to the relational work performed when digital game workers navigate different value spheres.

Methods, material, and settings

The study sample includes 27 interviews, mainly with game developers, but also with some actors who have insights into the industry, such as union representatives and leaders of educational programmes in game development. The game developers in question are employed in small as well as large game studios in Sweden, although most of them work for small studios. The digital games industry in Sweden is comprised of a small number of large companies, making so-called "triple A" games. Some of these studios are owned by foreign companies and are characterised by many employees and high staff turnover, but most companies (94%) of the total number of companies are small- or micro-firms, often labelled as independent, or "indie" companies (Nylander 2021). In our study, we have selected interviewees with varying experiences—they work in either small or large companies, or have experiences working in different types of companies.

We define the notion of "game developer" broadly and from an emic orientation. The profession consists of various subdisciplines, such as computer programmer, graphic designer, narrative creator, and others, but the common epithet "game developer" is used by the interviewees themselves in descriptions of their work. We have included game developers with varying positions, although most of them do not have a managerial role. A few of them have, or previously had, a management position, some have a team leader role, and two of our interviewees are directors of small companies but have worked many years in the industry as employed game developers. We have interviewed 10 women and 17 men, most of whom are in the age range of 25–45. In the Swedish digital games industry, 78% of all employees are men and 22% are women (Nylander 2021). The skewed gender distribution in the business is debated within the industry in Sweden, and is a topic that often came up in the interviews. The interviewees themselves point out that among those who are working as game developers, there is an even larger proportion of men than women, as many of the female employees work in administration, such as marketing or accounting.

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted for about 1.5–2 hours. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the interviews were conducted through Zoom, but four were interviewed at their workplace, and two in a public place. We have also conducted one full-day observation of a co-living community for indie developers and freelancers, and participated in the 2022 Nordic Game Conference for three days, as observers. In addition, we have analysed documents, such as job advertisements, media reports, and films

about the game industry. These documents are both products of the game industry, and reflections and critical comments about the industry.

All interviews and other conversations are anonymised, and the names used in this study are pseudonyms. The study has been approved by the Swedish ethical vetting board, as our study contains issues that are considered sensitive data, such as the interviewees' involvement in or opinions on union-related issues.

The analysis focuses on accounts (Scott & Lyman 1968), entailing that we analyse the mode in which the social reality of workers in the digital game industry is explained, narrated, and justified. In this way, we can discern how the actors relate to different value spheres and their accompanying social relationships. In the narratives, our interviewees relate various positions (sometimes conflicting positions) between themselves, their colleagues, management/the company, or the industry at large. In particular, we have focused on accounts of valuation, i.e., how making games is assigned a value or "worth"—economically, morally, and emotionally. We identify the boundaries being drawn between broad categories such as "creative/not creative", "good/not good", and "close/distant" or "formal/informal" work relationships.

The tensions of passionate work

The ideal of passionate work is ubiquitous in the digital games industry. In descriptions of educational programs for game development, and in educational marketing, the notion of passion is foregrounded. Companies seeking employees actively use the notion of passion in employer branding. In the following ad for a game studio seeking employees, one can read:

> Having fun while doing what you love. Feeling ownership of your work. Creative elbow room. Awesome gaming experiences. That's what it is all about.

The rhetoric of passion is not only a discursive market strategy, but also a common word used when workers describe their work. The notion of passion seems to be closely related to a sense of community; the sociality of "being a team". John has been working in the industry for several years:

> I think there is a certain element of… brotherhood, or sisterhood, in the games industry. Because it is a work of passion. Everybody who works together does so because they love what they do. And you all have a common goal, and that is to create entertainment.

The following analysis will elaborate on this topic of passion. But as the quote above illustrates, it also highlights the relational aspect involved in this work by showing how the content and values of work are intertwined with

the workers' understanding of work-related social relationships. We will particularly shed light on the tensions inherent in creative work through the following three themes: 1) *making games or making money*?, 2) *You need to keep calm… and carry on,* and 3) *passion and devotion—at what price?*

Making games or making money?

The distinction between passion and profit which is often referred to in the literature on creative work is prevalent in many parts of cultural and creative industries. This is also the case in the digital games industry, even though it is a highly commercial and relatively lucrative industry compared to other forms of artistic work in the fine arts. Nevertheless, artistic integrity is important for many game developers, and the passion/profit distinction is vividly negotiated in the industry and seems to work as a cultural and social ordering mechanism that ascribes different forms of value to the work.

The following account by Noah, a game developer, is an inside view of various distinctions within the industry, explained in terms of creativity.

> There are clearly different camps in the games industry. Because, today, this is a very big industry, that has been expansive for such a long time. But the original focus was creativity, and there was much more focus on the creative process of making games. I often say that they (the game workers) have more in common with cultural workers than with IT developers. Because there is much more focus on creativity, and how you experience the creative process and what you want to achieve with your work. Not making a product that will fulfil specific functions or services. That is not what's on your mind.

Noah describes what seems to be ongoing identity work in an industry that can be described as situated between art and tech. The ethos of the artist is important to highlight, while it also seems important to distinguish from a more instrumental, industrial mode of working. This is sometimes described in terms of lines being drawn between various types of companies, where the large triple A game studios represent a more industrial type of workplace, while you may find more space for developing a creative ethos in smaller, independent game studios. Noah talks from the position of a "we"—in this case an indie company: "we don't care about making money, we just want to do great stuff".

The ethos of the creative artist and the ideals and norms of creative work are narrated through the means of negative identification—we *don't* care about making money. The non-pecuniary interest is highlighted in a context where the game industry is regarded as one of the most profitable businesses in Sweden, and by juxtaposing the intrinsic value of creative work to instrumental values of being creative "on demand".

The joy of being creative is not merely related to the ideal of creative integrity and the ethos of the individual artist. Working as a game developer is, to a large extent, teamwork, and the camaraderie and sociality of the team is often highlighted as one of the precious values of the work. Moa, for instance, emphasises that what she values most in working in the games industry is the teamwork. Mats, another game developer, describes the close relationships at work and how social networks develop:

> In all game studios where I have been working, everyone has become good friends, and we have been socialising a lot, outside work as well. Then I think… many of these educational programs create many new job opportunities. So, if there is a circle of friends who got to know each other in school, and then you start working at different studios, these colleagues will continue socialising. So, it will automatically become a very strong network where you all know each other. In the end, there will be someone you know in every game studio.

This type of account is in line with a more public and general narrative around the games industry, where the tale of creation typically tells the story of a group of friends—primarily boys or young men who socialise by playing games—starting up a business located in some basement that quite suddenly grows into a publicly-listed million-dollar company. This is a narrative also being conveyed in public media, such as in the documentary aired on Swedish public television named "The Swedish Gaming Wonder" (Bjarneby 2021).

Working in the business, and the efforts involved in drawing lines between "making games or making money", are very much intertwined in relational work. That is, the boundaries being drawn between various forms of economic/moral value spheres simultaneously define specific types of social relations. The topic of friendship is a recurrent theme in narratives of ideal creative work in the digital games industry.

Still, although the morals embedded in the intrinsic values of creative work are present, narratives of "what things should be like" are being compromised. In descriptions of everyday work, we hear detailed stories of various forms of trade-off reasoning or "you just have to adapt" resignations.

You need to keep calm … and carry on

> Many times, I have seen people being so terribly disappointed when… at a certain moment in the production process they [read leadership/management/the company] have decided to "no, we cut here because we do not have time to do this". And they [read employees/colleagues] feel that their whole world is torn apart because they really believed in this feature, that it would change everything. So, these things happen, definitely. But I… I try not to be too emotionally involved in the project. I just strive to do my

> job. You have got used to these things… that you cannot take anything for granted. The process is very chaotic. You cannot count on that what you create will end up in the final product. You need to keep calm… and carry on.

Narratives and accounts of artistic pleasure and play, engagement, and autonomy are often framed in a sober "you need to keep calm… and carry on" narrative or spoken of in terms of resigning to practical and economic circumstances. It demonstrates how the artistic freedom is constrained by the workers themselves through self-discipline and adaptation to the internal logic of industrial and functional processes. This type of account differs slightly from the trade-off reasoning related to the boundaries between artistic freedom and the demand for more profitable games not being valued as highly in artistic and creative terms. The story above, exemplified by Mats, is rather about the working process, as such, and teamwork. In similar accounts of everyday work, it is discernible how various subdisciplines, such as the more technically oriented programmers will compromise with, for instance, the graphic designers or the creative narrators. What is visible in this type of compromise are disciplinary identities, rather than the creative ethos, as such.

There is another type of compromise discernible in the accounts of the digital games industry. This is not so much about the *content* of the creative work, but the *conditions* of the work. These accounts demonstrate the compromises between the joy of working as a game developer, and the harsh conditions, often defined by overtime and stress. John explains:

> It (the working environment) is very chaotic, very high pressure. You work very hard for relatively low payment. And then the game you make just must be successful. Then there might be pay-back for all your hard work. But it is very /---/ ungrateful in a way. You work more for passion than for your future career. So therefore, I was prepared to quit. And I was thinking "well, I can take a job as a consultant of some sort. Then I will make more money. It is not as exciting but… fuck it. /---/ I cannot take it anymore".

In John's trade-off reasoning, he decided to leave the company where he had been working until quite recently. But he still didn't want to leave the industry, so he applied for a job in another game studio as a game developer: "I decided to give this (new) place a chance and felt that 'finally, now I have found a place that really works'".

A recurrent theme in our interviews with game developers is their detailed and emotional accounts of the working environment. Our probing questions on how they experience the working environment often spark an elaborate story of overtime and pressure. Simultaneously, descriptions of a life-long passion for games, the playfulness of work, and the pleasures of friendship

and teamwork are abundant. The game workers' love-hate relationship with their jobs is expressed in various and ambiguous ways. Some quit their jobs, or decide to make an impression, put their feet down, or join the union; or in various other ways demonstrate their resistance to working conditions that they think exploit workers' passionate interest in creating games. Others, or sometimes the same individuals, do not mark such distance to the company/management, but (or also) identify with the company. Tom is the founder and owner of a small game studio:

> We are increasingly doing our own stuff because we can afford it now. We don't need to take order jobs anymore. /---/ So, we try to do what we think is fun, as much as possible.

Tom explains that the company where he works has been through a tough period where they had to do jobs for bigger companies rather than being able to develop their own games. He describes a highly competitive industry, and many companies face pressure from investors at the top, and new demands from the market. The quote above demonstrates how the idea of creative integrity is being negotiated, like the distinction we mentioned previously. But in this case, it is framed from the company's perspective, as Tom gives voice to the organisation, an organisation with only a few employees. The "we" in his narrative evokes another theme in our study: the experience of individual responsibility among the employees for the success or survival of the company.

Passion and devotion—at what price?

The economic pressure—particularly on small game studios—seems to sustain a working environment where overtime is normalised. The term "crunch" is a common concept used in the industry for unexpected overtime, occurring particularly in the pressing period before a new game is launched. "Crunch" is criticised both within and outside the industry. Swedish media has highlighted the normalised overtime in the digital games industry as a specific problem (Bergwall 2021), and our interviewees often spontaneously speak about the issue without even being asked about it. However, the way they talk about it displays ambiguity—both about overtime and hard work—and about who or what circumstances are perceived to be responsible for pressing working conditions.

In our conversations with the game developers we are told about the pressing times, and that the survival of the company may be at stake. Kevin describes a situation he frames as typical:

> The game industry is such an uncertain business, in terms of earning money. There is so much money in circulation, but you know, different companies… there are so many unsuccessful games that doesn't make any

> money at all. There is a high investment cost with a high risk of zero profit. And then there will be a lot of pressure from the top and it creates a lot of turbulence in the company. It creates the pressure that we need to make an impression, all the time. Management wants to appear strong in front of the investors. So, everyone lies about how things really are. And it trickles down, so everyone feels they must make an impression.

Responsibility for the pressing working situation is, in this case, attributed to an external source—the investors—that trickles down through management to the individual worker. Chris continues his story and becomes more specific, directing his critique towards the specific game studio where he has been working.

Several of our interviewees told us stories about how either someone they know, or they themselves have been burned out at work and had to go on long sick leaves. These stories are often about their own passion for the work and how very long work hours became normalised. But in the end, there were moments of realisation, entailing reflections and analysis of management's responsibility. Oscar is in his late twenties, and when telling us about how he was burned out on two occasions and had to be on sick leave for several months, his own explanation is related to the organisation, and how management had not learned to take responsibility for the employees:

> In my experience, those who have the role as managers are not really managers, they are people who just wanted to make games. Creators… creative people. They have just continued driving… at full speed. And I got the impression that they have not really reflected on "that's right, now I am the manager as well". So, people have just happened to be managers instead of wanting to take on the managerial role. It feels very chaotic. A lot like a start-up, but it is not that, not anymore.

Another example of employees giving voice to the overtime culture of the business is Mika's story. Mika is a game developer employed by a large company, and she explains that she has been working for several years in the business, devoted to making games. But her story soon became more critical, and she describes her current life situation as a single mother. She explains how difficult it was to combine parenthood and the pressure—both from the company and from herself—to work all the time. She realised that she couldn't go on working like this and she decided to actively engage in the union, trying to improve the working conditions at the company.

Hence, there are critical voices in the industry, and several of those in a management position describe how they work on issues around "crunch". Paul has a management position, and he talks about the crunch culture in the business and what it is like in *other* companies:

> There was a person in the team there [in another company] who was burned out, became ill, I don't remember if it was last autumn or this spring, but who is now coming back. But it was a team that… in other teams, where the planning is better and there are enough resources, these things don't happen that frequently, but more… and this is how I see it at our company while in other studios, they are really characterised by lots of overtime, every six months or so, or more. Everybody must work overtime. Like "I remember that day when I could go home and take a shower"… I mean, it's sick, I have heard so many stories, from people who have been working at such places. And this does not exist in our company. It is such a relief.

Paul seems to ascribe the cause for too much overtime to a lack of resources, and simultaneously attributes the problem to *other* companies.

The above stories do, in various ways, externalise negative working conditions—it is either the business culture, or the specific management, or the organisational culture that is to blame. However, what we find to be even more salient in the accounts we have been analysing is an internalised way of describing work overload. The cause of overtime and a pressing work situation seems to be highly individualised.

The ethos of creative freedom is precious, and working overtime is often justified as something that you decide to do for yourself because you are passionate about your job. Even among interviewees who are very critical of the crunch culture of the industry, and who may even be active in the union, emphasise the joy of working far beyond formal working hours. Working many hours *per se* is, to a large extent, normalised, as the work is also considered to be a lifestyle and passionate interest. The issue at stake seems rather to be the experience of choice. Some interviewees describe how they are longing for projects where they can decide for themselves when and where they want to work overtime, hence it is not overtime *per se* that they see as the problem. This line of reasoning is also illustrative in Michael's account:

> I think computer programmers are rather safe, because they can always get another job if their job disappears. So, if you take care of yourself, you will find another job. At least to me this has been a sense of security. If my employer doesn't want me anymore, I can always find a job somewhere else. So, then I will not work more overtime than… I can handle.

Michael's account illustrates the relatively secure position for some disciplines within the industry, such as programmers, whose skill seems to be constantly in demand. What is also illustrative is the *I will not work more overtime than… I can handle*. Deciding for yourself, and taking control of your time, is precious, and seems to be part of the ideal of creative work, no matter whether you are employed or self-employed.

However, it is clear in our analysis that the narrative of the boundaryless time of creative work has two sides, and is related to the content as well as the condition of the work. The bright side of the coin is represented by narratives that emphasise the passion involved in creative work, where game developers are constantly thinking about the next step in their work and find joy in artistic and/or technical challenges. This entails, as one of our interviewees explained, "having a notebook ready when watching TV or making dinner, to not let the ideas slip away".

But there is a flip side. Robin, who eventually burnt out, explains how he used to work long hours and even all night, sleeping a few hours on the couch at work from time to time. In his own analysis of the situation, he offers an explanation.

> You noticed, in the studio, that… those of us who worked longer hours, we were a bit favoured. There were many decisions that were made late at night and so, like we had been working until 11 pm and we went out and had a beer and… and decisions were often made then. So, I can imagine that those who did not work late were sort of left out. Because it was quite common that we were sitting there late at night and we just "okay, we need to change these things". And then we just carried out, changed the whole planning. And people came into the office the next day and just "ehh, what happened with the planning?" And we just "ehh, this is what we will do now, deal with it", kind of.

There is a social as well as a potential economic reward in working late and socialising with others who are also working late. The fear of "missing out" is, one may presume, particularly salient in an informal organisation, as is the joy of being one of the team, which clearly has an affective component.

Robin further describes how he didn't hand in taxi receipts when he was forced to take a taxi to get home from work by midnight. He was too ashamed to show that he didn't manage to finalise the job within office hours, and when he reported overtime, he "only reported *very* clear overtime". This demonstrates that in Robin's case, the idea of individual responsibility had turned into another form of affective component—self-blame.

Concluding discussion

In this chapter we have demonstrated and discussed the dynamic and contextual relational work of the digital games industry in Sweden, and how it highlights the complex moral and emotional economy that characterises this work environment. Work in this industry, as in many other creative industries, could be illustrated as situated in-between two different value spheres. One sphere is dominated by the instrumental value of the

market, characterised by a logic of economic profit and a calculable ethos. The other sphere is represented by the intrinsic values of creative work, encouraging an ethos of passion and devotion. Albeit simplified into two different value spheres, such an analytical image may shed light on some of the complexities in the industry and serve as a backdrop to our analysis. In our analysis, we investigate the overlapping in-between space of these two spheres—in popularised terms "art and commerce"—by analysing how boundaries are being drawn and/or blurred in a constant (re)ordering of different values. Since these value spheres are economic as well as social/moral, the analytical concept of relational work by Viviana Zelizer (2005, 2013) captures how the boundaries being drawn between economic and moral spheres are embedded in a simultaneous ordering of social relationships. This is a working environment that is, to a large extent, based on informal relationships and/or idealises such informality (cf. Alacovska 2018).

The first part of the analysis demonstrates how game developers negotiate and compromise between the ideals of "making games or making money" and how professional identities as game developers are being shaped in this process. The analysis highlights the moral values of being a creative and an "authentic" game developer, and illustrates an ongoing narrative of work within the industrial context in Sweden, where some actors differentiate from others, who are perceived as being "too commercial" (cf. Styhre & Remneland-Wikhamn 2020). We have shown how the distinctions being drawn between "true" and "not-so-true" creative work are also related to teamwork and the intrinsic value of friendship among colleagues. The second part of the analysis highlights the compromises being made in relation to the ideals of creative work. These are compromises that are connected to the industrial and technical process of work. While the accounts of such compromises primarily concern the *content* of creative work, the third section identifies compromises around the *conditions* of creative work; particularly those related to the notion of overtime—or "crunch".

The analysis highlights tensions and ambiguities. Passionate creative work has two sides, which are illustrated in various ways. Boundaryless work is intrinsically intertwined with the idea of creative work, opposing the control of formalised workplaces regarding schedules and other formalised requirements. However, when workers experience that they do not have control of either the schedule or the content of the work, the bright side turns dark.

Our analysis has demonstrated how the notion of responsibility is not only related to the *content* of creative work, but overflows into a responsibility for the *conditions* of creative work. Although some game developers attribute blame to external causes for pressing time schedules—such as financial pressure on individual companies or immature organisational cultures illustrated by the manager assuming a role as a "creative leader" rather

than the responsibility of an employer—it is obvious that individual employees see themselves as the primary agent responsible for their own working hours. This has an affective dimension to it; they are loyal to colleagues, and feel a strong sense of working camaraderie, as well as fear of "missing out" or being socially excluded. Another affective consequence is self-blame when workers do not manage to control their own working hours. The theoretical framework of relational work—which illustrates the dynamic boundary negotiations of the moral and economic nexus of creative work—sheds light on these working conditions. Relational work in the digital games industry seems to sustain the ambiguity of passionate work, and blurs the distinction between formal and informal responsibility, obscuring responsibility for working conditions.

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15 Creative Work, Precarity and COVID-19

Jessica Tanghetti and Federica Viganò

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of performing art workers' (PAWs) conditions by considering their 1) "invisible precarity" (De Peuter 2011; Comunian and Conor 2017; Alacovska and Bille 2020) and 2) individualism and lack of unionism (Saundry et al. 2007; Umney and Kretsos 2014; Ciarini 2015), highlighting how COVID-19 (C-19) emerged as a disruptive factor breaking the tacitly accepted rules of the sector. On the one hand, the pandemic and the connected interruption of activities made workers reflect on the precarity of their working conditions, granting them a voice to claim the protection of their rights. On the other hand, the sudden interruption of activities created the basis for making workers connect and talk to each other, overcoming individualism and developing new informal workers' groups that multiplied in the context of the pandemic.

The chapter starts with a literature introduction on 1) creative and cultural workers' (CCWs) precarity and 2) individualism and lack of unionism, adopting a Marxist approach. Then, we analyse these themes by adopting the case study of PAWs based in Italy. First, focusing on 1) precarity, we highlight the fragmentation and fragility of working conditions and the role of C-19 in raising awareness. Secondly, deepening 2) individualism and lack of unionism, we describe the (scarce) forms of collective bargaining in the performing arts sector in Italy before the pandemic, showing how C-19 triggered the emergence of many formal and informal workers' groups, focusing on the Lombardy region case study. In the conclusion, we reflect on the connections between the Marxist perspective and the fragile PAWs' working conditions, highlighting how C-19, seen as a moment of shock, might have disrupted, in the long term and not only for the emergency, the unfairly taken-for-granted paradigms of the industry.

CCWs, precarity and non-unionised workers

CCWs are a wide and heterogeneous category where a multitude of professionals, legal arrangements and working modalities coexist. Over the

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years, scholars have attempted to provide definitions which may be descriptive of this category of workers. According to the Creative Trident approach (Higgs et al. 2008; Cunningham 2011; Flew 2012), the creative workforce is collectively composed of three types of employment: 1) specialist—artists, professionals or creative individuals working in the creative industries; 2) embedded—artists, professionals or creative individuals in creative roles "embedded" in industries not defined as creative; 3) support—staff in the creative industries providing management, secretarial, administrative and accountancy back-up.

Creative work is also characterised by a high heterogeneity of legal arrangements through which workers operate in the industry. The paradox between the high level of education, knowledge and skills of this workforce (Bianchi et al. 2021) and its mostly fragile working conditions led scholars to develop different nouns and expressions to describe CCWs. Richard Barbrook (2006) has comprehensively catalogued them (Huws 2007), and his list includes "elancers", "bobos" ("bourgeois bohemians") and "cognitariat".

Inspired by a Marxist approach, and given the strong connection between personal and professional desires and ethos in the sector, our analysis would like to focus on a critical analysis of CCWs' working conditions rather than on subject formation. Adopting this perspective, we would like to focus on two aspects specifically, represented by 1) precarity as a unifying concept and 2) individualism and non-unionism in the sector. In doing this, despite our focus on performing arts, we refer to literature on CCIs in general, as we believe that all the concepts that follow largely apply to this specific segment.

Precarity as a CCWs' unifying concept

The fragile working conditions in the sector mainly represent a consequence of the neoliberal agenda, and the emergence of the "gig economy" (Prassl 2018): to respond to the flexible, project-based increased demand of fragmented companies competing globally, workers—driven by passion and in need of individual self-realisation (Hamilton 2012)—have accepted precarity as the everyday reality of working in CCIs. As Comunian and England (2020) argue, this reality and working conditions further stretched towards the lower denominator during the Global Financial crisis of 2008, where previous employees were often pushed to become freelance and self-employed to allow CCIs to bounce back (De Propris 2013).

The precariousness of the contractual arrangements is one of the main characteristics of creative work which falls in the category of the atypical, ranging from part-time working to short-term contracts, with self-employing and freelancing being the most frequent work status (Hesmondhalgh 1996; Blair 2003). Gill and Pratt (2008) use Negri's concept of the "factory without walls" to define precarious labour conditions, including "all forms of insecure, contingent, flexible work—from

illegalised, casualised and temporary employment, to homeworking, piecework, and freelancing" (p. 3).

Narrowing the analysis down to the category of PAWs, the situation seems even more problematic. Performing art work appears as an extremely precarious field of work, which forces artists to permanent self-exploitation without offering any secure employment prospects (Roselt and Otto 2014), also highlighting problems with job insecurity and unpredictability (Pasikowska-Schnass 2019). More specifically, EAIPA, the European Association of Independent Performing Arts, describes the general situation in Europe—highlighting high levels of insecurity, low incomes, a heavy workload, and poor pension prospects in a variety of European countries (Eder 2018, 2021). According to an analysis of PAWs' conditions across Europe (Eder 2022), the field represents an exceptionally precarious working environment, with low income, inadequate social security and a high proportion of workers at risk of poverty. Furthermore, less than a quarter of the respondents to the study can live exclusively from artistic work. Also, the study highlights the predominance of short-term working conditions: the performing arts workers interviewed work predominantly as freelancers (63.61%), 23.16% are in hybrid employment, 8.42% are employed full-time, and 4.81% are employed part-time. The situation of this working category became even more severe in the context of C-19, during which the income of PAWs in Europe deteriorated by 18.8%.

Adopting a Marxist perspective, it is clear how the neoliberal switch to "post-Fordism" and the introduction of more flexible and autonomous working modalities, instead of providing more freedom and recognition, made the balance of power shift from labour to capital, causing working conditions to become much less secure and more precarious (McGuigan 2010). Also, this fragility may contribute to making CCWs feel alienated, creating a discrepancy between their inner and intimate ethos and their professional behaviour. One of the clearest consequences of this is represented by the push towards individualism promoted by the competitive race for the next job, contract or gig (Ross 2009).

Individualism and non-unionised CCWs

The DCMS's (Department of Media, Culture and Sport in the United Kingdom) definition of the creative industries (1998) explicitly focuses on the individualist nature of CCIs, describing them as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent" (DCMS 1998: 3). For Lash and Urry (1994), individualism is the requirement of key workers in the CCIs to act as autonomous, reflexive and creative individuals that underlines the paradigmatic role of these sectors.

This individualism has resulted in less visible forms of solidarity and resistance that have been reported for other sectors of the gig economy

(Heery 2009; Tassinari and Maccarrone 2020). The effort to manage networking and portfolio careers leads the workers to the development of a self-marketing and self-branding approach (Dardot and Laval 2009; Gandini 2016), which does not foster the attitude towards a collective action (Bellini and Dorigatti 2019). This risk is concretely reflected in the low membership density within unions (Bellini et al. 2018).

Focusing on PAWs, many scholars recognised the generalised scarcity of trade unions in the sector (Saundry et al. 2007; Umney and Kretsos 2014; Ciarini 2015), and a limited number of experiences of from-below movements (Turrini and Chicchi 2013).

Individualism and the difficulties in developing associationism in the sector can also be interpreted in light of a Marxist perspective. Huws (2007) believes that CCWs are, on the one hand, agents of change: without new ideas, "the expansionary logic underlying capitalism cannot stand still due to high competition". On the other hand, the process of creation may also cause the destruction of other workers' careers, provoking consequences to their livelihood. In this context, this competitive pressure may obstruct traditional allegiances and solidarities in the sector. This can be seen as another example of the kind of alienation attributed to "proletarian workers" by Karl Marx, which strongly characterises the creative workforce (Huws 2007). Given this scenario, and the strong contradiction between CCWs' inner and working conditions, this workforce may feel "annihilated in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence" (Marx and Engels 1844). Thus, creative labour might be seen as alienated under capitalism and, as a consequence, the worker might be alienated from a natural feature of humanity and from other human beings in society (McGuigan 2010). The insurgence of awareness of these contradictions and of the consequent alienation may cause workers to disrupt the paradigms they got used to, building on new forms of connections and dialogue, with associationism and unions representing the main starting points in this sense.

Unmasking precarity: employment patterns and social protection of CCWs in Italy

In Italy, the most authoritative source of data on CCWs is Fondazione Symbola, which, since 2011, annually released the report *Io sono cultura,* focused on the status of CCIs: according to the 2021 publication, the sector in 2020 employed 1,445,600 workers, corresponding to 5.8% of the employment of the whole economy, among whom PAWs were estimated to be around 95.000. The report also shows a prevalence of "freelancers" (62%) in the sector, identifying seven sub-categories, even if with an unclear distinction between them (entrepreneur, self-employed, VAT holder, cooperative member, family business, short-term collaborator, occasional collaborations). Narrowing the analysis down to the

performing arts sector, freelancers represent 66% of the total. These numbers highlight the vertical disintegration of the sector, with few large companies (cinema, broadcasting, some few stable orchestras, or theatre companies) offering more stable jobs and a greater number of medium, small and micro companies who work mainly in non-continuous collaborative relationships feeding the large pool of freelancers, and increasing the fragmentation of the sector.

In this precarious context, C-19 further exacerbated the situation: data provided by the INPS Observatory (INPS 2021) show that the number of workers in 2020 fell by 21%. A closer look at the SIAE's Performing Arts Observatory[1] (the observatory is the data collection centre of the Società Italiana degli Autori ed Editori) makes it possible to quantify the losses in terms of events, spectators and audience expenditure: overall, in Italy, with reference to cinema, theatre and concerts, in 2020 almost 2.4 million shows were cancelled, corresponding to over 103 million admissions and 1.4 billion of total public expenditure (tickets, subscriptions and other expenses). Expenditure fell by 79%, with a negative peak for concert activities (-89%), which were particularly affected by the cancellation of major pop events.

In relation to social protection, the situation in Italy reveals a weakness in the welfare system for atypical categories in general and for CCWs in particular.

The criticality of social protection for this sector has its origin in a failure to recognise the specific status of these workers. In this regard, in the last decades there have been several interventions in the law regulating the performing arts sector (the so-called "Mother Law" n. 163/ 1985 *Nuova disciplina degli interventi dello Stato a favore dello spettacolo*), with the aim of developing funding schemes in favour of CCWs.

Italian CCWs, despite a few recent legislation advancements, obtain minimal social protection benefits, which differentiate them from workers in other countries such as France, which provides one of the best practices in Europe, with "intermittent performing art workers" benefitting from a social support system consisting of legislative simplification, and the possibility of claiming unemployment for every single day they were not employed. Other similar examples, based on a law recognising the status of the artist, can be found in other European countries: in Austria, with the Law on Social Security for artist (2001); in Belgium with the Finance Act 2002, recognising the social security for artists; in Germany, with the Artists' Social Insurance Act (1981); in the Netherlands with the Artist Work and Income Act (1998); in Spain with El Statuto del Artista (2018), to mention the well-established systems.

Beyond individualism: performing art workers' associationism in Italy

Despite the vulnerability of their working conditions, historically PAWs in Italy have lacked a proper representation of their interests and

bargaining power at the private, public, and political levels (Rizza 2005). Before the pandemic, they had been generally reluctant to join trade unions and to engage in collective action as, in order to cope with the fragmentation and pressure of careers, they mainly adopted a "self-reflexive approach" (Bellini et al. 2018). The pandemic has been disruptive in mitigating this individualistic approach, triggering a consciousness and collective solidarity. Just a few weeks after the beginning of the 2020 lockdown, many informal workers' groups emerged and multiplied over the following months, evolving in a few cases into formal and legally recognised collective organisations.

In reviewing the actors, formal and informal, that over the years attempted to represent PAWs' interests and to organise them collectively, we consider both trade unions/associations and groups of self-organised precarious workers/grassroots activists (Choi and Mattoni 2010). The main difference between the two categories is that on one side, there is a trade gatherer representing workers, while on the other are the workers themselves to represent their own rights. While activism is a connatural characteristic of trade unions, it is not possible to clearly distinguish between self-organised groups of workers and grassroots activists, as there is always a degree of activism also in bottom-up movements.

Also, there are some actors operating nationally, even if often with regional antenna organisations, and some others active in specific geographical areas. In this context, this study analyses the actors involved in PAWs' collective bargaining in Italy at a national level, before and during the pandemic, providing a focus on the Lombardy region.

Performing arts workers' collective bargaining in Italy before the pandemic

The performing arts industry is highly diverse and includes not only artists performing in front of an audience, but also those working behind the scenes. Thus, workers involved in the industry range from artists, performers, musicians, singers, actors, and dancers to sound/lights technicians, playwrights and theatre tailors.

Despite the width of the industry, a trade union exclusively dedicated to the representation of the interests of these workers has never existed in Italy. PAWs have been mainly included as sub-categories of wider trade unions, although their needs have always been very peculiar and different from those of any other category of workers.

In Italy, there are three main trade unions represented by CGIL, CISL and UIL, which created sub-federations encompassing a wide range of sectors and also including the performing arts industry, namely SLC-CGIL, Fistel-CISL and Uilcom-UIL.

Alongside this, over the years a few trade associations have been established, consistently smaller compared to these trade unions and in some cases, as mentioned above, incorporated by them. Some examples are

ANAP, National Association of Performing Arts; Assoartisti and Feditart, dedicated to artists' rights protection and trading; AIAM, focused on the operators in the music industry; AICAB, dedicated to comedians; AID, dancers' association; and CONDAS, national dance, arts and performing arts committee. These associations are characterised by having a focus on specific categories of workers, but their contribution to the bargaining process has always been marginal.

Also, some experiences of collective representation belonging to the category of non-union actors should be mentioned, which cover an intermediary role between the market and the state, for instance, mutual aid cooperatives or in some specific cases professional associations (Bellini and Lucciarini 2019). In Italy, we can name the Sindacato Operatori dello Spettacolo Musicisti-SOS, which nevertheless should be considered a proper association rather than a union (Turrini and Chicchi 2013; Bellini et al. 2018).

Also, the role of self-organised precarious workers' and grassroots activists' groups has been minimal before the pandemic. The most popular bottom-up group has been Cre. Sco (Coordinamento realtà scena contemporanea), a national organisation with regional antennas, established in 2010 with the intention to develop social solidarity in the performing arts and contemporary culture industries, while less popular and structured has been the movement MSV (Movimento Spettacolo dal Vivo), established in 2018 with the purpose of supporting organisations and professionals in the field, and of improving the social welfare regulation for the performing arts industry. It is reasonable to assume that some other informal groups also existed before the pandemic, but their popularity and role in the bargaining process have been so minimal that it is not relevant to mention them for the aims of this study.

C-19 and the explosion of performing art workers' movements

PAWs have been severely affected by C-19, experiencing a long-lasting impossibility to work and serious difficulties in replacing their activities through digital tools and platforms (Spiro et al. 2021). This immobility and time availability became valuable resources to connect with each other and share on common struggles experienced. Overcoming the generalised individualism that has historically characterised the sector, a cross-sector communication emerged, firstly through social media groups, resulting in a multitude of self-organised groups of workers and grassroots activists, which in a few cases evolved into legally recognised trade unions and associations. These groups tended at first to be very specific to the sub-category of workers (for example performing arts technicians, actors, theatre tailors), but also some wider groups emerged with the aim of protecting the rights of the workers in the performing arts industry overall. The objectives of these groups were not only to support workers in facing the impact of C-19, but

mainly, to study long-lasting changes for the sector able to substantially improve the structural conditions of its workers. Also, the groups generally aim for legal recognition of performing arts work, making it more visible to institutions and policymakers and better regulated.

Alongside the activities of the historical trade unions, new trade associations emerged during the pandemic with the aim to protect specific categories of workers taking into consideration the peculiarities of the industries they work in.

Based on an activistic approach, in March 2020 the inter-union network RISP (Rete Intersindacale Professionisti Spettacolo) was established, affiliated to the activist inter-union organisation Cobas. Focusing instead on sector-specific trade associations, UNITA (Unione Nazionale Interpreti Teatro Audiovisivo) was established in July 2020, dedicated to the protection of audiovisual theatre actors, founded by more than 100 performers. Also, a trade union specifically dedicated to the events/clubbing sector emerged for the first time, namely SILS (Sindacato Italiano Lavoratori Spettacolo) and one dedicated to technicians, called Artemis (Associazione Rete Tecnici e Maestranze Intermittenti dello Spettacolo).

The emergency also provoked an active response from sub-categories of performing arts workers, who developed groups which actively attempt to participate in the bargaining process at an institutional level. Examples are "Sarte di Scena" (Tailors on Stage), an informal self-organised workers' group focused on making the work of tailors working on stages and performing arts venues visible, or A2U Attrici e Attori Uniti (Actresses and Actors United), self-organised actors' group and "Lavoratori della Danza" (Dance Workers).

Bargaining locally: the case of the Lombardy region

In the previous paragraphs, we described the national workers' groups operating in Italy that emerged before and during the pandemic. In analysing them, we noticed that the large majority originated in the Lombardy region, with the founders mainly based and operating in the city of Milan. We found it therefore of particular interest, building on previous work (Tanghetti et al. 2022), to investigate the local dynamics of self-organised workers' groups and grassroots activists based in this area, also analysing the relationship between them and the local institutions.

The Lombardy region is at the heart of the Italian creative and cultural economy, and its CCIs generated €23.7 billion in 2021 (27% of the nation's total), employing approximately 344,000 workers (23.5% of the nation's total) (Symbola 2022). In this context, Milan represents the Italian city with the highest incidence of cultural and creative sector in the local economy: the added value generated by CCIs in the city counted for 9.7% of the economy in 2020, while the total number of workers in the sector was 9.8% of the total employment in the city (Symbola 2021).

Focusing on the performing arts workers' group originating in the Lombardy region (Table 1), it is interesting to note that almost all of them (except one, "Attrezzismo Violento") emerged during the pandemic. Suddenly, performing arts workers found themselves at home, without work and inevitably in front of a screen allowing them to talk to each other. Therefore, the pandemic played a key role in granting workers time to reflect, meet (mainly remotely), and discuss and share their common struggles, which was impossible before C-19 due to their hectic working lives. For the first time, workers had the opportunity to talk and to reflect on their working conditions, joining together in order to ask not just for support for the pandemic, but overall for long-lasting changes in the sector. The Lombardy region was at the heart of this phenomenon, due to the width of the local network and the concentration of CCWs in this geographical area, known for the significance of its cultural scene and for the primary role of Milan as a creative city. Some of the groups emerged there with the scope of operating only locally, whilst some others evolved into a national group. Interestingly, a degree of meta-coordination also emerged as many sectoral organisations started talking to each other under the umbrella of Coordinamento Spettacolo Lombardia (CSL). The coordination body allowed for shared discussion to take place in relation to future actions, but also to create a critical mass to engage with the city and regional policymakers. This also meant sector-specific organisations were no longer working in silos, and the level of collective lobbying power could increase.

The activities—thanks to the coordination of CSL—also resulted in collective manifestation as soon as the lockdown restrictions were lifted. The trajectory of development, from the more informal discussion to the more formalised association and activism in the square, is seen as a crescendo and an important step for performing art workers, to not only gain full self-awareness and transform it into public awareness, but also to open up the discussion with institutions to create change and dialogue that will inform the future development of the sector and its workers. Therefore, the move of many of them towards more formal structures suggests the need for longer-term sustainability of CCWs' rights and working conditions, rather than simply addressing the impact of C-19.

Also, as highlighted below, the C-19 pandemic did not simply expose issues of work precarity or lack of social security for the sector, but, more critically, it highlighted to many CCWs the invisibility of their work, professionality and skills. Therefore, with the easing of lockdown, the physical manifestation became a very important moment for CCWs to make themselves visible in the fabric of the city of Milan, but also visible nationally in the context of their contribution to Milan as an important economic, cultural and communication centre in Italy.

Using internet search and social media analysis, we mapped the protests and public manifestations occurring in the city of Milan in the period

May 2020–April 2021. We established initial protest started as early as 14 May 2020, with gatherings in front of the famous La Scala Theatre and with banners being displayed across many iconic buildings and cultural venues across the city from 24 May 2020. The first public protest in the iconic square of Piazza Duomo on 30 May, when the lockdown was eased, saw the participation of 2,000 workers. From these initial protests, more long-term ("stato di agitazione continua" lit. "continuous agitation state") initiatives started with garrisons of workers stationed in front of other key and iconic cultural and institutional venues in June 2020 like Palazzo Marino, Teatro Dal Verme, Piazza Castello. The Milan CCWs also joined a national demonstration in Rome on 27 June 2020. In July, the CSL staged a three-day garrison of workers at the National Social Security Institute (INPS) building in Milan until they were invited to meet the General Director of the Institute for the Lombardy region. Garrisons of workers and flyers distributions continued into the summer. In October, as new lockdown measures were introduced, other protests started taking place with garrisons of workers located in Piazza Duomo, Piccolo Teatro Strehler, and Milano Expo to include in December a garrison of workers in front of the offices of the regional administration (Regione Lombardia). In January and February 2021, the protests continued with protesters taking bicycles and skates under the brand "Cultural mass" and travelling across the city and its cultural venues, from the Milano Triennale and joining a national protest on 23 February 2021 with the title "un anno senza eventi" ("One year without events"). March and April 2021 saw the peaceful occupation of Piccolo Teatro Grassi as a permanent garrison under the banner "Piccolo Teatro Aperto", to incentivise dialogue and interactions across workers, audiences and institutions.

Throughout the protest and manifestations, the CCWs met very little institutional support and struggled to receive feedback and collaborations from the city and regional institutions. Local institutions and policymakers were exposed for not caring enough about CCWs—or maybe lacking awareness about their role and work structures—and not acting fast enough, when providing support. However, although the dialogue with institutions presented many challenges, for the first time the coordination of workers has allowed them to have a voice.

Discussion and conclusion

The chapter has reflected on the connection between individualism, precarity and CCWs in Italy, with a focus on the performing arts sector. While there is a broad range of intervention internationally on this theme, due to the lack of data and the way CCWs remain often hidden within the project-nature of their work, Italian CCWs are not often discussed in the literature (with some exceptions, see Arvidsson et al. 2010; d'Ovidio and Cossu 2017). Therefore, the first objective of the chapter is to make these unstable and borderline

legal employment frameworks and patterns more visible nationally and internationally.

The themes of precarity and individualism are emphasised by adopting a Marxist perspective, through which human and working conditions in the industry can be seen as the causes of a shift of the balance of power from labour to capital, causing also alienation to workers, due to the discrepancy between their inner and intimate ethos and their professional behaviour. In this context, C-19 emerged as a moment of disruption that has pushed the complex ecosystem (Comunian 2019; De Bernard et al. 2021) far from an equilibrium that has so far worked to the advantage of its industries, but not the workers they employ, putting the basis for enhancing working conditions and strengthening human dynamics in the sector.

We connect to previous literature in order to outline the conclusions of this study, specifically referring to Holling's (2001) adaptive cycle (see Figure 1). The model shows patterns of change in ecosystems through four phases: "growth" (r), describing the accumulation of resources in the system; "conservation" (K) of established patterns and resource distribution; "release" (Ω) of rigid structures and patterns and the redistribution of resources throughout the system; and reorganisation (α), where opportunities for change emerge and innovations contribute to the transformation of the system. The cycle has been used to reflect on economic shocks and the importance of adaptation and resilience by many authors (Simmie and Martin 2010). In our case, it is interesting to notice that the period of growth and consolidation pre-C-19 (phase "r" of the model) had been characterised by increased structure and connectedness only for employers and institutions that, thanks to the neoliberal agenda, have not been asked to take into consideration the welfare of workers as in previous decades (Filion 2013). Therefore, the conservation status (phase "K" of the model) had pushed CCWs to be more isolated rather than connected. Here, C-19 emerges as a moment of shock, contributing to the "release" (Ω) of opportunities, offering CCWs—despite stretching their livelihoods—the opportunity to rethink existing structures and to form new networks and collective movements to lead the reorganisation (α) of their working contracts and rights.

Nevertheless, the opportunity to abandon individualistic agendas and collectively bargain for better working conditions needs to be contextualised within the struggle for many workers to remain in the sector, and for some of their traditional employers to remain in operation.

The reorganisation is clearly experienced by workers as an opportunity to rethink the existing framework of employment and also the existing operational models of the industry.

In the case of workers in the city of Milan, the main reorganisation needs to also involve a rethinking of the city as offering inclusive and sustainable creative work to lead to a new potential for growth. The adaptive cycle here can shift from simply restarting a potential cycle of new growth to rethinking what growth is. Primarily, it can consider how CCWs' rights and care

towards their livelihoods (Alacovska and Bille 2020) might give rise to a new vision of the creative economy, which goes beyond GDP measures and instead engages with other indicators.

Note

1 https://www.siae.it/it/chi-siamo/lo-spettacolo-cifre/losservatorio-dello-spettacolo (Accessed: 18.04.2022).

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16 Creative Work and Entrepreneurial Creativity*

Monica Calcagno and Rachele Cavara

Introduction

I quit. It's not time for entrepreneurs like me.

With these words, the subject of the present study opened his last interview with us. What was said with the cold tone of a normal business update referred instead to the suffered decision to end his venture. In the last years, indeed, his creative, economic and social entrepreneurial aspirations did not align toward a common ground and were not navigated easily in the context of a micro-enterprise. The entrepreneur was constantly confronted with the difficulty of creating value in these different but intertwined domains of his activity: the creative, the market, and the social. For a long time, he leveraged the tension between these spheres as a tool to renovate his enterprise, but at a certain stage they clashed so deeply that it drove him to end the business.

The micro-business in question was established in mainland Venice in 2006 with the mission to become a cultural entity dedicated to narrative and theatre for young audiences, and it moved through a sequence of transformations that are exemplary of how micro-enterprises are often the result of a unity of contraries in entrepreneurs' activities and aspirations.

Our entrepreneur always acted in search of new (un)stable positions for his micro-enterprise. So much so that the entrepreneurial journey took the shape of a plurality of trajectories that were configured as contrasting tensions between opportunities and constraints on the one hand, and as a dynamic process of transformation on the other.

The chapter analyses this case study by isolating the entrepreneurial venture from the venture of the creative agent running it, and makes sense of the emerging vulnerability of a micro-enterprise struggling with limited economic margins and difficult control over the management logics embedded in the enterprise itself (à la Lindqvist 2017).

* This chapter is a joint endeavour. Author's names are listed alphabetically. Authors' credits: Calcagno wrote sections 2 and 5; Cavara wrote sections 3 and 4; Calcagno and Cavara wrote sections 1 and 6.

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The following chapter makes sense of the case to understand how entrepreneurs working in the creative industries find that the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial creativity clashes at times with the practices and processes of creative work.

Micro-entrepreneurs in cultural and creative industries (CCIs), combining creative work and entrepreneurial creativity

Scholarship on cultural and creative entrepreneurship emerged as a subfield of the general theme of entrepreneurship. With time, however, it has gained more and more relevance because of both (1) the growing economic impact of CCIs (UNESCO 2013), and (2) the symbolic, social, ethical, and aesthetic value that CCIs have for the whole economy (Caves 2000; Cunningham 2004; Potts 2009; Lhermitte et al. 2015; Crossick and Kaszynska 2016; Werthes et al. 2017; Cattani et al. 2021).

Notwithstanding the relevance of the entrepreneurial processes in CCIs, creative entrepreneurs have special conditions and often a micro dimension that justify special attention (Chang and Chen 2020; Chen et al. 2017; Swedberg 2006).

As creative agents, they are primarily involved in processes of cultural and symbolic creation driven by their autonomous thinking (see, among others, Cunningham et al. 2008). At the same time, they strive to make their ideas marketable, trying "to commercialize their creative products with the purpose to make a profit" (Chen et al. 2017, 3). Therefore, cultural entrepreneurs play multiple roles (DiMaggio 1982) and match different and opposed identities as producers of cultural and symbolic meanings for society (Jones et al. 2016), but are also fully in charge of their own sustainability (Lampel et al. 2000).

While entrepreneurship in CCIs has been growing as a field of investigation, creative entrepreneurs are still in need of real support while they struggle to match their economic goals and creative values (Werthes et al. 2018; Patten and Stephens 2022).

A possible way to make the reflection more impactful is to consider the condition of a creative entrepreneur as the sum—and the desired balance—of two dimensions: creative work and entrepreneurial creativity. In both dimensions, creativity is the key ingredient, but is aimed at achieving different purposes. On the one hand, considering creative business as producing cultural and creative value by delivering symbolic messages (Throsby 2008; Chang and Chen 2020), creative agents fundamentally aim to pursue their cultural, artistic, and social goals. On the other hand, they also act entrepreneurially, and use their creativity to generate and implement their ideas in terms of products, processes, and business models (Amabile 1996) to make their venture profitable.

In the process through which they balance their cultural and economic identities (Werthes et al. 2018) they face two challenges: the complexity of

the external environment, and the lack of competences supporting their strong motivation.

While the context urges them with multiple and different logics, offering sources but also constraints and limitations to their action, entrepreneurs working in the cultural and creative industries do not always possess the right skills and know-how to sustain their creativity at an entrepreneurial and managerial level. However, the micro size of their ventures forces them to embody both entrepreneurial and managerial roles (Leiserowitz et al. 2006; Sinapi and Juno-Delgado 2015; Calcagno and Balzarin 2016) in their prominent creative aspirations.

All these factors force creative entrepreneurs to renegotiate their goals and ambitions, in a process of revision of both their role as producers of cultural and symbolic meanings for society (Jones et al. 2016), as entrepreneurs striving to attain economic wealth (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001), and as managers immersed in processes and daily routines while they manage their businesses.

The case study: case selection, data collection and analysis

The study we present is "revelatory" (Siggelkow 2007; Yin 2014) of the difficulties that micro-entrepreneurs in CCIs may face in managing their creative/multifaceted nature and of how this, in turn, impacts their venturing over time. The case was theoretically selected for a number of reasons.

First, it granted a vantage point for observation of an entrepreneurial venture in its entirety, from its establishment to its end. Indeed, it ultimately tells the story of the failure of a micro-enterprise, which makes identification of the initial and final milestones of the entrepreneurial journey an easy task. This is important because only a complete vision of an entrepreneurial venture can actually reveal the definitive impact of patterns of entrepreneurial behaviour on it. Only such a case can reveal the medium-to-long-term impact of a decision made at a time t on the following timeframes $t + 1$, $t + 2$, and on the end of the enterprise, something otherwise difficult to observe in shorter windows of time.

Second, the case was particularly permeable. Permeability was essential to disentangle the entrepreneur's creative work from his entrepreneurial creativity. This was possible thanks to the trust and confidence that developed between one of the authors and the entrepreneur from the opening of the business onwards.

The combination of these two characteristics allowed us to collect huge amounts of longitudinal data from diverse sources:

1 the 16-year archive of the business, with documents from 2006 to 2022, including all business meeting minutes, hundreds of market contracts and personal diaries where *everything that popped up in our mind was written, in order not to forget it* (entrepreneur's collaborator 2018);

2 observations from

   a an immersive multi-year ethnographic study from 2006 to the end of the enterprise (Lingo 2020), which one of the authors was able to conduct thanks to the close relationship she established with the subject of the study, and
   b three rounds of ethnography, one in 2016/2017, one in 2018/2019 and the last in 2022, covering both extraordinary occurrences such as one-time meetings with professionals, and everyday working life;

3 fifteen semi-structured interviews held between 2018 and 2022 with the entrepreneur, his business partners, collaborators, and also a few customers.

Different data were analysed differently: through the archival material we reconstructed the detailed factual history of the enterprise (and coded facts according to whether they involved matters of creative work or entrepreneurial creativity). For example, the minutes of board meetings were significant in testifying the formal trajectory of the enterprise as the result of entrepreneurial creativity and creative work, whereas the personal diaries contained more information about the entrepreneurs' free rein in terms of cultural and social aspirations, not necessarily weighted with considerations on their entrepreneurial feasibility or sustainability. Observations were used to detect how things worked in practice (Watson 2011) before being codified in the formal documents of the business archive. It is a fact that observations facilitate the identification of otherwise difficult-to-observe patterns of behaviour (Mair et al. 2016; Rojas 2010; Yin 2014). Notes from the immersed multi-year ethnography granted access to distant-in-time entrepreneurial practices and made it possible to sort behaviour according to what pertains to creative work or entrepreneurial creativity, while notes from more recent rounds of ethnography focused on digging into entrepreneurial aspects identified as critical by the multi-year ethnography.

Finally, interviews added nuance about the entrepreneur's thoughts and feelings connected to his enterprise venturing. We talked together about his thoughts and feelings regarding some specific facts, we asked him to evaluate his business performance over time, and obtained explanations on the hows and whys of his behaviour. The adoption of multiple data sources supported not only the necessity of triangulating the data, but also that of disentangling the entrepreneur from his enterprise when we realised that a discrepancy was emerging between the "objective" representation of the enterprise performance and the entrepreneur's "subjective" thoughts and struggles around it.

In order to avoid the risk of the author's closeness to the entrepreneur causing her not to see certain things, the two researchers played different roles in the data collection and analysis phases, based on the level of confidence with the subject of the study. While the "high confidence" researcher

reconstructed and made sense of the history of the enterprise through archival research and the multi-year ethnography, the co-author played the counterpoint through observations and interviews, in a sort of tempered inside-out approach to the study of organisational dynamics of crisis (Bishop et al. 2018).

Mapping the entrepreneurial venture

We narrate the result of our inquiry in the form of a history of the micro-enterprise that aims at emphasising two aspects of it: on the one hand, the difference between the history of the enterprise venturing and of the entrepreneur's creative, economic and social aspirations on the other; then the entrepreneur's struggle between giving voice to his creative work or entrepreneurial creativity when they are substitutes and not complementary. In this way, the history is composed of a sequence of five phases, each of which is characterised by a change in the entrepreneur's stance towards his enterprise with its consequent struggles. Each change of phase comes from a change in the relationship between the enterprise venture and the entrepreneur's cultural, economic or social aspirations around it, or a change in his strategy regarding the implementation of creative work and entrepreneurial creativity, as we will make clear. What we observe is an entrepreneurial journey in which aspects that are successful at a certain point in time and in a certain domain become constraints to successful outcomes at other times and in other domains. The apparently contradictory trajectory results then from the complexity of matching multiple entrepreneurial roles and pursuing goals that are sometimes in opposition.

Phase one: 2006–2008

> *The bookshop is not a bookshop, but a business exploiting its activity by selling books and organising other cultural activities* (entrepreneur 2019).

The micro-business was founded in 2006 in mainland Venice as a cooperative with the aim of starting, managing, and promoting cultural services connected to narrative with a main, although not exclusive, focus on children and adolescents (Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws 2006). It was created by five partners - two booksellers, two theatre actors and one psychometrist. All partners had previous experience working with adolescents and were actively involved in commercial, cultural and educational activities provided inside and outside the bookshop (for example, in schools and public libraries).

At the beginning, the bookshop activities and the collateral theatrical and psychomotor activities were equally important, as indeed the cooperative form of governance was specifically chosen to hold everybody accountable for the overall performance of the business.[1] Although our player declared

that *in the whole history of the business a decision with which I did not agree was never made* (entrepreneur 2019).

The cultural, financial and operational sustainability of the business was initially achieved by the equal contribution of all members according to their field of specialisation: the booksellers operated the bookshop and the promotion of reading-related activities, the theatrical actors took care of animated lectures and theatre classes at the bookshop and in the city, and the psychometrist set up workshops in the bookshop and schools.

> *In its first years, the bookshop presented active space for cultural activities, since it counted a total of 230 square metres, 90–100 of which were dedicated strictly to the bookshop, and 70–80 square metres were devoted to extra activities. There was enough space even for psychomotricity. The first business plan presented the logic of conducting many cultural and social activities in the bookshop* (entrepreneur 2019).

Soon after, the president of the cooperative realised that *the workload was not the same for everybody* (entrepreneur 2019). In particular, he felt the weight of taking care of all the bookshop activities plus that of managing the operational activities of the cooperative as a whole, while other members focused more on their restricted area of action. This made him feel frustrated because he could not satisfy his cultural aspirations due to the urgency of having to manage the business, while the other members could focus on their own cultural goals.

Despite the fact that the business was growing financially in this first phase, the point of view of our entrepreneur was that *yes, the business was growing, but not at a satisfactory pace and in the right way for me* (entrepreneur 2022).

He started thinking that he wanted to grow at a faster pace both financially and culturally, not only from the point of view of profit but also from that of his creative work. As a consequence, he began scouting new locations that could better satisfy his cultural and social aspirations, the latter in particular.

Phase two: 2008–2016

The second phase started when the enterprise moved to a new location. In 2008, the cooperative moved the bookshop to a smaller and less expensive venue. The new place generously satisfied the entrepreneur's ambition to transform the bookshop into a place for social interaction because it was more centrally located in the territory where it stood.

The change can be synthesised into the claim *We do not sell books here, we create readers* (entrepreneur 2019 and again 2022). A brand new activity exemplifies what he means: reading groups with "young readers"

of diverse age groups (9–11 years, 12–14 years, 14+ years) were established and never abandoned in the following years. He met all the groups once a month until the very end of the enterprise, in meetings where they discussed topics that delved into the young readers' values and beliefs through narratives and stories (business partner 2019). The new venue thus represented a break from the past that gave the entrepreneur the opportunity to put better into practice his conception of narrative as a powerful tool of education and social communication, beyond the commercial outputs that an entrepreneurial venture must necessarily present.

At the same time, space constraints forced the partners *to conduct some activities that used to take place in-house outside the new location* (entrepreneur 2022). This choice also mirrored new financial issues. In particular, the two theatrical actors gradually reduced their work inside the bookshop, provoking a divide among business partners that never bounced back. In 2014, the separation was formalised in some significant board meetings. Although the overall business had been growing steadily since 2009—and collected the highest profit for cash flow in FY 2014—there was no lack of criticism around the gap in revenue contribution from the narrative and theatrical souls of the enterprise. Activities around psychomotricity were not a topic of discussion here because they always counted as a minor element of revenue. As of August 2014, book retails accounted for the main item of the company's revenues (Board of Directors, 15 September 2014). As of March 2015, the bookshop's sales volume had increased by 16% compared to the corresponding period of 2014, whereas revenues from the theatrical activities had decreased by more than 50% in the same time span (Board of Directors, 13 April 2015).

While the theatrical activities were drifting apart from the narrative side, the bookshop celebrated its success when it received the Andersen Prize as the best Italian children's bookstore in 2015. The prize gave the entrepreneur nourishment to push his personal plan for the cooperative further. *The Chairman briefly summarises the benefits for the cooperative arising from winning the Roberto Denti Prize as best childhood bookshop in Italy for 2015, in terms of new and bigger projects to be implemented* (Board of Directors, 24 August 2015).

He wanted to feed his creative work on cultural and social narrative projects further, while deciding to outsource the operational management of theatre activities (Board of Directors, 14 September 2015). In interviews, he admitted he did not want to continue taking care of the administrative and economic aspects.

Phase three: 2016–2018

During this phase, new narrative projects arose, scaling up the creative work of our entrepreneur, freed of the operative constraints and financial imbalance suffered in the past in the relationship with theatrical activities.

New projects included collaboration with local institutions on narrative education, the establishment of a publishing house dedicated to narrative for children and young adults, and collaboration with a strategic consultant about the future of the business. Working with institutions like universities, foundations and museums reinforced the entrepreneur's self-recognition as a cultural entrepreneur, beyond his commercial role, while the establishment of the publishing house was in line with his aspiration *not to sell books, but to pursue a cultural mission* (current business partner 2019).

At the same time, however, two unexpected breakthroughs occurred: first, he started developing the will to change his core business because he started aspiring to direct the bookshop towards an adult target and no longer to children and adolescents only. That meant aspiring to change the nature and identity of his business. He even hired a consultant to help him re-target the bookshop. Second, all these changes reinforced the narrative turn of the business, but increased the conflict with partners taking care of non-narrative activities, exacerbating the crisis. In September 2016, the cooperative came to an end, and our entrepreneur remained alone as its sole owner and director.

> *In response to a request by the business partners to terminate their relationship with the cooperative, the president proposes to take over the business* (Board of Directors, 5 September 2016).

September 2016 is a crucial date in the life of the company, a date the entrepreneur still recounts with sadness and regret as the biggest turning point in the history of his business. The takeover could have represented the opportunity to expand the freedom of the entrepreneur's creative work to a maximum degree, but instead it brought about negative consequences: (1) a downturn on the creative work side, (2) more managerial tasks (becoming so overwhelming that in 2017 the entrepreneur hired a new working partner to help him manage the bookshop), and (3) serious financial issues. The space lost its multilanguage dimension: *many micro activities we used to do simply disappeared because I did not have the moral strength to implement them* (entrepreneur 2021).

Cutting off the theatrical soul of the company meant giving up on summer camps, public readings, theatre classes and psychomotricity workshops. That, in turn, sharply reduced direct and indirect revenues from people attending those activities and concurrently buying books at the shop.

As a consequence, *the fact that 2017 and 2018 didn't go well from the financial point of view made the bank very rigid. They turned off the taps and started asking me to return the money* (entrepreneur 2019). The situation was so dramatic that our player even considered the option of closing down the cooperative and passing everything on to the publishing house (which was an independent organisational entity).

On the contrary, he decided to sustain his cultural project further, and approached the issue of financial and operative sustainability differently, by looking for new partnerships and—again—a new location. In December 2018, the bookshop was moved to an even more central location, in the context of a cultural and commercial hub promoted as a social and urban regeneration project. The location seemed to be perfectly coherent with the strategic course of the company, at that moment strongly based on the *idea of the bookshop as a social service to the community where it is located* (entrepreneur 2021).

Phase four: 2019–2022

The move to the cultural hub had, of course, to be financially sustained and the entrepreneur was forced to look for extra economic support. He signed a network contract with one of the biggest cooperatives operating in the Italian cultural industry. The financial support provided by the cooperative was so relevant that the entrepreneur changed his company's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to give full equal rights to the financing partner. As stated in the contract:

> *Participants in the network contract will respect the current terms and obligations in the realisation of projects to favour the common plan; they commit to periodically verifying the implementation of the network program through periodic analyses of project execution* (network contract 2018).

The new phase started with the expectation of entering into a strong partnership with the cooperative. The opportunity to provide services such as guided tours for children and young adults in the museum of the cultural hub was attractive from a cultural, social and economic perspective. The entrepreneur was excited to offer his narrative and educational activities to a wider urban community than his own and started negotiations with the museum and hub administrators to reach that goal. But things did not turn out as he had hoped. On the one hand, the hub had long and complex decisional processes and offered inadequate financial support for the educational activities provided, and on the other hand the network partner was not totally ready to be involved in those activities. Using the words of the entrepreneur, *the museum really likes our proposal for didactic activities, but when it comes to paying us, everything slows down* (entrepreneur 2019). As time passed by, cultural constraints were added to the operating difficulties, as the *financing partner expects something from us intellectually and we feel constrained by it* (working partner 2019). Creative and financial discontent cancelled the initial enthusiasm for this new phase. The entrepreneur lost his freedom to prioritise personal projects, and had to respond to the financing partner's pressure. On top of that, the years of pandemic exacerbated the

complex financial situation. Although the Italian government paid attention to independent micro-cultural enterprises, the financial support was insufficient to reach sustainability. Moreover, the decision to keep the bookshop open during then pandemic forced the entrepreneur to give up part of the public financial support allocated to closed retails. It was time to change again.

> *I have never wanted to participate in tenders because they force me to adapt creative ideas to the tender requirements, constraining my creativity. Anyway, last year I started to take part in them because it is economically super convenient* (entrepreneur 2021).

While public tenders partially satisfied the search for better financial sustainability, during the lockdown the entrepreneur and his working partner committed to the creation of new narrative projects, as *the lockdown gave us time to think* (entrepreneur 2022) and we realised that in the past *time was what we missed the most, being caught up in day-to-day operating tasks* (working partner 2021): for example, podcasts and book trailers, summer camps for adolescents and readings for adults.

The fourth phase is another turning point in the entrepreneurial venture. The sequence of changes clearly revealed the nature of the constant struggles of the micro-entrepreneur: the trade-off between nurturing his social and creative aspirations while trying to reach the financial sustainability of the business when this conflicted with his personal essence.

Phase five: looking to the future

> *The strength of this business is to create readers, that is, for us to create citizens with critical consciousness, ready to see things profoundly. It is not something commercial, but more ethical-philosophical* (working partner 2021).

The last phase opens at the beginning of 2022, when the bookshop is definitely declared financially unsustainable. The various aspects of the entrepreneurial journey emerged quite sharply during the last interview in April 2022. The entrepreneur evoked the choice of moving the bookstore to the cultural hub as the greatest mistake in his life, underlining the failure not only of the economic side of the project, but also of his cultural and social aspirations. The move was costly, and he did not find the managerial support that was initially promised to him by the cultural hub administration, in order to be able to focus on the content side of his enterprise. Collaboration was in general difficult to manage.

At this point, the entrepreneur made the decision to accept the offer to run the cultural hub's museum bookshop. In this way, the entrepreneur made a final, radical decision to maintain his cultural and social aspirations in a new

guise. That is, maintaining his creative work without the need to realise it through entrepreneurial creativity. The original bookshop closed at the end of September 2022.

The entrepreneur and his working partner both started new initiatives with some cultural and institutional entities, maintaining their identity as cultural and creative workers, but without bearing the financial risk of being entrepreneurs.

Discussion

The story we have narrated suggests that in the micro-organisations typical of CCIs, entrepreneurs build their venture not only through exploiting or setting up opportunities, but also by facing obstacles and transforming them into means that renew their entrepreneurial promises. In other words, the way micro-entrepreneurs in CCIs balance (or do not balance) economic, social, and cultural goals (Lampel et al. 2000) in times of uncertainty is sometimes by setting their own limits to creativity through financial security bonds, and then by breaking them to push the next phase of creativity and change, in a recurrent wave-like mechanism. The entrepreneurial story we have narrated shows indeed that entrepreneurial life is sometimes made up of ambiguous situations, where decisions seem incoherent and reflect the (im) possible match between opposing entrepreneurial logics.

This happens at each phase of the analysed entrepreneurial venture. If we observe the sequence of the entrepreneur's decisions and their effects on the life of the company and his own subsequent decisions, we see how the coexistence of apparently conflicting choices creates new obstacles to overcome, and how obstacles can become triggers to renew business strategy. This tendency emerges clearly in our last meeting in April 2022, when the entrepreneur makes sense of his current position and recognises the value of his story: *I have the advantage (and disadvantage) of having faced a crisis for many years now […] I had to reinvent myself many times. Being in a crisis makes you reflect more than others.*

Other examples are disseminated through each stage of the company. In phase one, the enterprise starts as a collective cooperative, preparing the ground for diversified financial, operative and creative support for the bookshop. Different partners play multiple roles and embody the many facets of the company (narrative, theatre, psychomotricity), facilitating access to more than one market (e.g., private clients, families and schools). This is supported by a large space where they implement many activities. However, the burden of managing the cooperative overcomes our entrepreneur's possibility to creatively embody his entrepreneurial and cultural role, preparing the field for a critical confrontation inside the cooperative and favouring the change towards relocation of the bookstore.

In the second phase, the match between cultural goals and financial sustainability seems to satisfy the entrepreneur and success is officially

recognised by both the market and the field gatekeepers (through the winning of the Andersen Prize). Nevertheless, tensions increase again in the company when cultural goals collide collectively, pushing the entrepreneur to lead the situation to the point of rupture. Notwithstanding, when the partners leave the company during the third phase, the cultural, financial and managerial consequences have a negative impact on the sustainability of the venture, forcing the entrepreneur to find other opportunities for sustainability that in the future will be detrimental. Financial sustainability is indeed damaged by the decision of the entrepreneur to go it alone.

During the fourth phase, the move to the cultural hub is made to once again nurture the entrepreneur's social role. The hub is meant to work as a place for cultural activities, engaging citizens and contributing to the social regeneration of the city. However, in the end this decision will be defined as *the worst decision I ever made, ever* (entrepreneur 2022).

What we observe at the end is a cultural project totally reshaped from its initial purpose. Cultural and social goals were pursued in other ways than those expected, as the entrepreneur pushed himself to experiment with new ways of nurturing his cultural and social impetus.

Entrepreneurial stories are unique combinations of decisions and actions, which can be made sense of only by immersing into them, in depth and ex post. If we observe them at a certain distance, we acquire a clearer image of the shared needs of entrepreneurs and common patterns of entrepreneurship. The issue of growth often emerged in our entrepreneurial story, when the entrepreneur explained his choice to move the bookshop to the second location, and finally to enter the cultural hub. The concept of growth for the entrepreneur had a dual meaning: economic growth in terms of business development, but also an increased reputation as a social and cultural actor. This double dimension emerged throughout the whole entrepreneurial venture. Every change was driven by this double aim, and every change was destined to let the trade-off emerge again and again. During the last move to the cultural space in particular, he was perfectly conscious of the risk linked to his decision, but balance seemed to be finally achieved. Being in a place devoted to hosting a cultural and social regeneration project could guarantee cultural reputation, while in the end the size of the shop would facilitate business growth and also enrich the cultural offer: *at least 120 square metres […] I tried to grow*.

A second issue is that of the business model.

In our story, every turn is signalled by a new business model (Sinapi and Ballereau 2016) that solved previous problems, but also presented pitfalls for our entrepreneur. In the first phase (2006–2008) the business model revolved around a cooperative company with four other partners, which was optimal from a financial perspective, but constraining for the intellectual aspirations of our player. In the second phase (2008–2016), the cooperative slowly lost coupling among the partners until the third

phase broke down (2016–2018), and the business model changed to a cooperative with the founder as the only employee involved in the job. That was good for the entrepreneur's intellectual realisation, but bad for the financial sustainability of the enterprise. The fourth phase (2018–2022) saw a new institutional partner entering the business, a new working partner and new Articles of Association and Bylaws that were meant to fix the debt position, but presented new intellectual constraints, even if the period of the pandemic saw a nice dip into creativity. The fifth phase implied a stop to the company's activities, but not to the cultural project. Looking for new partnerships in a cultural and social context seems to be the best possible compromise to relaunch the cultural project once again, without bearing the financial risk entailed in being an entrepreneur, but preserving his creative and social agency. All these changes seem to reveal the hazardous and irrational nature of our entrepreneur, but they simply make evident the fragile condition of micro-entrepreneurs operating in CCIs. Their micro size increases permeability to the external context, and they tend to be more exposed to all external turbulence, which impacts heavily on their activities and shapes their actions. In an attempt to escape this condition, they search for new solutions, changing their business model in a circular process of revision where their previous choices become the premises for new and opposing changes, where they struggle to find an (im)possible combination of creative aspirations and entrepreneurial success.

The entrepreneurial journey can thus be configured as a continuous process (Steyaert 2007; Hjorth and Reay 2022) of transformation where the opportunity of today becomes the obstacle of tomorrow, regenerating the urgency of the entrepreneurial venture as a process of dynamic search for new (un)stable positions. The entrepreneur moves through a sequence of changes where his entrepreneurial *modus operandi* is shaped by the dynamics of unstable positions in his multiple aspirations and domains of action, which constitute critical turning points perceived as new obstacles to overcome as well as triggers to prompt change.

A third and final issue is the value of the community as part of the resources needed in the entrepreneurial process (Chang and Chen 2020). Given the micro dimension of their ventures, cultural entrepreneurs perform their role in close connection with their community, both as a network of external relationships and as a group of partners pursuing a shared ambition. The community is thus strategic to reinforce their reputation as social and cultural players, and also influences their business. The story of our entrepreneur is partly misaligned. Every external and internal change, such as a new location for the bookshop or a reconfiguration of the corporate organisation, redesigned his community and had a visible impact on his business. Nevertheless, although maintaining the community was a strategic intention, making the change was a necessary condition in order to find new sources to sustain the entrepreneurial project.

Conclusion

Many enterprises share stories of difficulties that become opportunities, while triggering changes in a process of continuous regeneration, but, as the entrepreneur revealed to us, *it's not time for entrepreneurs like me*. Making sense of the quote means making sense of the challenges of cultural and creative agents working as entrepreneurs.

First, cultural entrepreneurs are placed in a hybrid area where market, creative goals and the social and political context (see Lindqvist, in this book) co-define their space for entrepreneurial action, creating struggles and tensions. If the market defines their competitive goals, resources and opportunities depend on their capability to navigate social and cultural domains where success cannot be exclusively defined in market reach. The ability to play all roles defining a coherent pattern of choices, makes cultural entrepreneurship a complex field of action where the search for novelty and creative thinking embedded in the cultural project (Wijnberg and Gemser 2000; Sherdin and Zander 2011; Jones et al. 2016; Calcagno 2017) takes place in institutional and political contexts that offer opportunities but also constraints to entrepreneurial freedom.

Second, the micro size of creative companies amplifies the complexity they face. This is dependent on both the financial vulnerability of the enterprise and the multiple roles of the creative agent. From the first point of view, the micro-enterprise cannot achieve the necessary stability to sustain its strategy in the long term. Struggling with the shortage of resources, the entrepreneur is forced to make choices by necessity, changing and revising them in the search for an impossible balance in the short term. From the second point of view, the entrepreneur has multiple roles to play, and does not always possess the right knowledge and know-how to make the right decisions.

Reflecting on what possible solutions are to support creative and cultural workers, we need to wonder if entrepreneurship is a necessary condition to work in a CCI. The end of our story suggests that creative work can be separated from entrepreneurship or, at least, other possible solutions can be suggested to sustain creative work with other means and resources.

On the theoretical side, our work identifies a need for reflecting on the relation between the creative nature of entrepreneurial work and the specific needs of cultural and creative agents acting also as entrepreneurs, providing a systemic perspective on how to set the frame to make creative work a sustainable entrepreneurial project.

Note

1 By overall performance we mean cultural, financial and operational performance.

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17 Creative Work, Ecopreneurship and Sustainable Lifestyles

Cecilia Fredriksson and Filippa Säwe

Seaweed stories: Creative ecopreneurs in marine markets

A female entrepreneur, Kate, describes her close relationship with a marine resource, seaweed. In her story, seaweed plays a key role in a life-changing decision to live a more sustainable life. Her decision also involves a creative working life, and she is currently developing various skin products based on seaweed. Kate has extensive experience harvesting seaweed in Sweden and other countries. Her close relationship with seaweed is an important part of the step from selling her services to others to developing her own seaweed business:

> Maybe that´s why I fell in love with seaweed. You come to a point when you stop eating fish. You stop eating everything. Because you can´t, you are so fed up with the state of the ocean. And then you find something like seaweed.

Seaweed has gained renewed relevance in the wake of a growing interest in alternative production and consumption (Chapman et al., 2015; Birch et al., 2019; Wendin & Undeland, 2020; Fredriksson & Säwe, 2020). This coincides with a widespread interest in the environment and the production of sustainable lifestyles. In this context, there are a number of women entrepreneurs who, for various reasons, have chosen to invest their time and work in seaweed. What kind of stories and practices are activated in the making of a sustainable and creative lifestyle? How is seaweed performed and described as a significant resource in green entrepreneurial practices?

The re-introduction of seaweed as a marine resource is often framed as an exclusive and natural product in small-scale local contexts. Today, local businesses based on wild-collected seaweeds are appearing in the entrepreneurial landscape (Monagail et al., 2017). In this chapter, we take our empirical and theoretical starting point in the practices of ecopreneurship in the making of marine markets. Ecopreneurship connotes a focus centred more on creating environmental and social values than on creating economic value (Isaak, 2002; Schaltegger, 2002; Schlange, 2009). The mix of drive,

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ambition, creativity, and risk-taking is often combined with environmental concerns, transformative change, and alternative business models (Dixon & Clifford, 2007; Philips, 2012). The "green entrepreneur" is portrayed as a key driver of environmental innovation (Beveridge & Guy, 2005). Instead of focusing on the psychology of entrepreneurial personalities, we are interested in the specific conditions and challenges that are reflected in the relationship between entrepreneurship, creative work, and the making of a sustainable lifestyle. How can we understand the practices and messy processes of ecopreneurship (Beveridge & Guy, 2005; Welter & Smallbone, 2015; O'Neill & Gibbs, 2016)? What kinds of stories do different ecopreneurs in marine markets produce about sustainability, seaweed, and the relationship between their business and the environment? How are seaweed practices framed and transformed as narratives in different settings?

The making of seaweed as a valuable resource takes place—and makes sense—in specific settings. Seaweed is related to different kinds of values and narratives, depending on context. To gain a deeper understanding of how these ecopreneurs cope with the tensions between different values, and how these values are embedded in what could be understood as the "agency of seaweed", we set out to analyse the performative dimensions of a number of ideological narratives.

When contemporary attention is focused on seaweed as a sustainable future resource, different ideas about seaweed's specific abilities are activated (Merkel et al., 2021; Hultman et al., 2023). Interest in harvesting and growing seaweed and algae in Sweden has increased, not least because of a number of large research projects that address seaweed's "climate-smart" benefits (Fredriksson & Säwe, 2020). Interest in foraging has also increased over the last two decades (Łuczaj et al., 2021). The phenomenon is often explained as "locally produced" and revolves around taking advantage of edible plants that can be found in the local area (Turner et al., 2011). Various foraging practices are often launched as part of a sustainable and alternative lifestyle. Harvesting seaweed by hand is hard work. In large parts of the world, this is a traditional and main source of income for those who live near the water. The work is mainly performed by women, and is today part of a global marine market (Msuya & Hurtado, 2017; Hedberg et al., 2018; Ramirez et al., 2020).

The production of seaweed as a sustainable resource involves sensemaking processes, shaped as scenes and storylines that carry specific meanings. In the process of sensemaking, different seaweed stories are produced and re-produced as narratives (Boje, 2001). In order to understand the relationship between entrepreneurship, creative work, and the making of a sustainable lifestyle, a mix of qualitative methods and materials has been used. Based on a series of ten in-depth interviews with seaweed ecopreneurs, we analyse how some of these actors relate to different values and to the potential of seaweed. Other sources are also added to the empirical base, such as media data and a questionnaire from the Folklife Archives at Lund University.

A sustainable service offering

When the Swedish family business *Tångkullan* market themselves on their website, they also describe what kind of person a "tångkulla" is. She is a "curious enjoyer of life who likes food experiences, likes to stay outdoors, and cares about nature and the oceans". She is also described as someone who knows that seaweed is a super vegetable and uses it in a sustainable lifestyle.[1] The family business offers hand-picked Swedish seaweed, genuine food crafts, and "experiences for a sustainable lifestyle" to private customers, companies, and restaurants. Hand-picked seaweed forms the basis of the newly-started business, which, in addition to marine food experiences, cultivation projects, seaweed excursions, and inspirational lectures, also arranges special training in seaweed foraging. It is also possible to book home visits, where *Tångkullan* comes to your home and "make[s] fun collaborations with seaweed in various forms".

The geographical genealogy of the business is emphasised as an important part of the offering. With roots in Öckeröarna and Dalarna, *Tångkullan* profile themselves as having access to both the Swedish west coast and to the part of Sweden, Dalarna, which is still considered a symbolic destination for the "typical Swede". The family business has also developed two food crafts using Swedish seaweed, where "Seaweed Power" is marketed as a "healthy organic meal drink with homage to nutritious Swedish seaweed". Here, seaweed is used together with apple and lime to give a "tasty acidity and fullness to the drink". Another product is "Seaweed Salt" which contains sea salt with a "hand-picked Swedish seaweed and herb mixture from Dalarna". On the website, it is possible to order the products for your own use, but there is also an opportunity to become a reseller.

The epithet *"tångkulla"* is composed of *"tång"* and *"kulla"*, where *"tång"* is the Swedish word for seaweed. A *"kulla"* is, in the Swedish language, an older dialectal name for an unmarried woman, previously common in several parts of the country, but today mainly used about women from the province of Dalarna. In the connection between a marine crop and a dialectical paraphrase for an unmarried woman, a narrative emerges that activates seaweed as a specific resource. The connection to place and gender also becomes a connection to a kind of practice: to be a *"tångkulla"* means to be an enlightened and conscious person with an active and sustainable lifestyle.[2]

The handling of seaweed is performed as an ideological narrative that provides an opportunity to deal with reflections on resources, values, and views on nature. In our interviews, we can see how seaweed is transformed into an exclusive product in a small-scale business that creates green value. When Lena, who has been running her own small-scale seaweed business for a few years, describes her vision of seaweed as a new raw material and a new industry in Sweden, she takes her starting point in a specific coastal destination:

> I want seaweed to be a new resource, I hope seaweed will become a new industry in Sweden. I want to have seaweed farmers along the coast in Bohuslän in a few years. I hope for a new market and a market in balance. That´s an ambition. I believe it´s healthy as well. And I think it's tasty and beautiful too.

Stories about "how it all began" often relate to seaweed as a sustainable resource for the future. Aware of this, Lena and her husband chose to resign from their jobs as librarians in Gothenburg to start a local seaweed business on the west coast of Sweden. Lena felt that there was no longer any creative energy in the life she lived. She longed for something else.

After reading an article in the magazine *Gourmet* about Swedish seaweed and food, they decided to start a small business together. Her experience is a story about creativity, hard work, and the ability to remain in constant motion, but it is also about a pedagogical mission. Breaking up from unsatisfying relationships and taking on new challenges are common themes in entrepreneurial success stories (de Wit Sandström, 2018). But unlike the economic-oriented entrepreneurship, Lena and her husband are mainly oriented around sustainability and the local environment. She describes her working life as an enjoyable and creative process of doing fun things and making new products:

> It's a fun job. You do fun things. You meet exciting people. You can be outdoors and enjoy nature and yes, there is a lot that´s fun! Also planning, writing texts, taking pictures, inventing new events, and collaborating with other companies. And making new products as well. Everything is very creative.

The word "fun" is repeated many times, and she further states that "everything is very creative". This is a description that characterises entrepreneurial practice: doing new things is fun and creative. Everyday action is seldom noticed in this way, but this is a person who suddenly encounters a whole new opportunity and experience in the moment. From an ecopreneurial perspective, her practice is based on creative self-realisation (cf. Reckwitz, 2017), rather than economic value. Here, creativity creates green value in a local context. But creativity also turns into an important key value for doing business.

Ecopreneurial practices produce different kinds of ethics, aesthetics, and moralities. When the ecopreneurs in our study reflect on issues of growth, value, and sustainability, different practices emerge. Defining oneself in terms of "green values" and engagement in "alternative" production and consumption is not a new or unique approach (Fredriksson, 2016). But practices of creative self-expression are related to specific considerations in the context of positioning in a society where individuals deal with risk-taking and environmental challenges as individual problems

(Beck, 1992). The aesthetic framing characterises the descriptions of the hard work of seaweed harvesting. But even if the work is hard, it is beautiful and enjoyable. Here, the aestheticisation of the work also functions as an important part in the creation of a sustainable resource and product. The ability of aesthetics to create value has, among other things, been described as a fundamental condition in the aesthetic economy (Böhme, 2003). The creative work described by our respondents can, to some extent, also be described as a kind of aesthetic work. As Ida de Wit Sandström (2018) has shown, the aesthetic work of small businesses is largely unexplored. The field of emotional labour is somewhat more explored, but a basic starting point for studies of both aesthetic work and emotional labour is the fusion of private life with working life (cf. Andersson Cederholm, 2014).

Working with seaweed as a natural resource

> It´s everywhere and nobody pays attention to it.[3]

Stories about how ecopreneurs discovered seaweed and then chose to invest are loaded with values relating to changes in lifestyle and visions about a more sustainable future. Some stories could even be interpreted as the beginning of a love story, where the passion for seaweed is ventilated through notions of sustainable development and lifestyle positioning. The close relationship with seaweed as a natural resource must be handled with care and respect.

Seaweed is a resource that can be harvested in different ways. It is often called the "forest of the sea", and today local seaweed farms are established along Sweden's west coast, but several of the local entrepreneurs choose to pick wild seaweed by hand. Lena believes it is important to keep the seaweed harvest at a reasonable level:

> We don´t want to pick too much. We don´t want to scale up the seaweed harvest. And we cannot either. Then we have to hire people, we need to have drying rooms. We must have showers for the staff. It's so much. We neither want nor can do that.[4]

Although a small-scale business strategy seems to be important from an environmental sustainability perspective, it is primarily one's own energy that sets the limits for scaling up the business in practice. Picking seaweed is described as very difficult work:

> It's damn cold. It's windy. And you have to go and cut pieces. In Sweden, we don´t have tides like in Norway, for example. There you can go dry and pick. Here we don´t have it, we have to swim. And besides, the seaweed must be picked in the spring. When the water is cold.[5]

The paradox between the elusive resource and everyday wear and tear seems to balance and legitimise the exclusivity of hand-picked seaweed. In order to create a broader market and expanded biomass with lower prices, large-scale cultivation is also required. The hand-picked wild seaweed that is harvested carefully and locally on a small scale risks becoming a decorative snack in slightly more expensive restaurants. Another alternative is to teach people to pick their own seaweed for their own needs.

As not everyone is able to pick seaweed by themselves, Lena and her husband have decided to enlist the help of female seaweed divers to meet the need. They are referred to as women even if they are men, in tribute to the women in Japan and Korea, where seaweed diving is a female-centred profession on the verge of extinction, the couple said in a newspaper interview.[6] Here, different narratives are mixed to ensure both the seaweed genealogy and the availability of locally harvested seaweed. The importance of local geography is extended to genealogy, which includes a specific interest in distant female seaweed divers:

> … it´s a very nice thing to talk about /---/ if you really know that they have swum around and picked this up in Bohuslän. It feels very genuine and somehow wonderful …[7]

This is the expression of the female entrepreneur, Mira, who, together with her husband, runs a shop and restaurant in southern Sweden. What is referred to in the quote is the seaweed sold in the small shop, which is picked by hand and delivered from the west coast. The wild-harvested seaweed is an important part of the business, and, even if seaweed is not that visible in the physical space, it is of great importance in conversations with customers and restaurant guests.

Some of the seaweed is sold as snacks, and Mira believes that "you do not need to have a bad conscience" because it is a very "healthy thing". The bags of snacks that are for sale in the small shop next to the restaurant are made of unbleached paper, and the brand is represented by the profile of a woman with ruffled seaweed hair. One of the snacks is described as "dried seaweed pops from Sweden", and states that the seaweed is "hand-picked" and "hand-cut" in Bohuslän. On the back of the bag there are also suggestions for the product's use and recipes.

The story of those who "swam around and picked it up" becomes a recurring and contemporary narrative in many of our interviews. Mira is not a seaweed diver herself, but she and her husband are in close contact with the divers. She sometimes finds it difficult to fit the seaweed products in among the food, since the store is quite small. Actually, she would like to have a special department only for seaweed products, but that place is still missing. Mira explains that an important reason for the presence of seaweed products is that her husband is very trend-sensitive, and he has been interested in seaweed and algae in his cooking for a long time. His close contact with

some of the divers has also been an inspiring driving force behind the introduction of seaweed into the family business.

In the same way that Lena and *Tångkullan* pay tribute to the female heroes who dive for seaweed, Mira expresses a strong admiration for the seaweed divers. This recurring narrative is embedded in different contexts and frames different seaweed practices.

The commodification of a natural resource

In a newspaper interview one of the female seaweed divers in Sweden describes how she balances her work in her own company with her work as an employed engineer. She has always had a strong attraction to the sea and water in various forms, and when she came into contact with the seaweed pioneers, she started working with them. She and several other seaweed divers along the west coast delivered algae through them to restaurants throughout Sweden. Now she runs her own company alongside her engineering job, and the mix of office and sea suits her perfectly. She describes the title Seaweed Diver as "the Swedish equivalent of Japan's Ama divers or Korea's Haenyeo, real powerful women!"[8]

She also says that she harvests small quantities of wild-growing seaweed in a sustainable way, and that the harvest is done by hand. This means that she goes out to sea with a knife and a net bag in a place with fresh and flowing water. Some varieties she can reach from land but others she has to dive down to pick. She never harvests whole stocks, and she only takes up what is needed. Depending on what she is looking for, she uses different harvesting techniques and the goal is that "the seaweed forest and its inhabitants will live on year after year".

Time spent below the surface is a moment to connect and be creative, described as "a total disconnection from everyday life" and that the only thing that exists is "just the sea and the place". This is something that requires focus; allowing everything else to be disconnected. The harvest becomes a kind of "meditation", where the experience is based on the fact that the place never looks the same and it is exciting to see the variation during the year. Weather, waves, temperature, and season play into her experience and everything grows in seasons. She describes the huge difference between a "February day with ice and the surface water has minus degrees and an hour-long dive in the warm September sea with fish swimming around you". During the dark times of the year, she harvests most on the weekends, but when the light comes back, we will find her "at the water's edge both in the evenings and early in the morning before I go into the office".[9]

What kind of knowledge facilitates engagement with seaweed products? There are several different aspects influencing how people engage with wild products and foraging. Foraging as practice is a particular form of engagement with the environment via wild products. Grivins (2021) has identified

four subgroups of foragers: (1) rooted foragers (motivated by the process, adapting traditional foraging knowledge); (2) lifestyle foragers (motivated by the process, adapting newly emerging contextual knowledge frames); (3) subsistence foragers (motivated by the product, adapting traditional foraging knowledge); and (4) commercial foragers (motivated by the product, adapting newly emerging contextual knowledge frames). The four identified groups act differently when collecting wild products relating to the type of motivation and adapted knowledge frames.

One of our respondents tells us that during a canoeing trip she suddenly looked down and then realised that she was floating on a potential product. The process of being in nature and, at the same time, relating to the environment by looking down made her recognise a potential resource beneath the surface. At the same time, she was aware of the new trends with wild food, weeds, locally-produced food, Asian food, and so on.

One way to understand this particular practice may be to combine two of the above subgroups: lifestyle foragers, who are motivated by the process, and have adapted new contextual knowledge frameworks; and commercial feed seekers, who are motivated by the product and adopt new contextual knowledge frameworks. Being both rural, and relating to, and living in, nature, and being urban and cognisant of different types of trends, our respondent creates an opportunity for herself to be creative both in terms of work (producing products) and lifestyle (processing a way of life). When she paddles a canoe and looks down at the same time, she is really adapting newly emerging contextual knowledge.

An alternative business model

> Seaweed and algae are about to break through in some way. It has become trendy, and we and have tried to use seaweed as fertiliser as well. /---/ we drive down with the car and load up down by the beach. /---/ It grows very well.

Mira says that she does not actually know if it is allowed to pick up seaweed at the beach because it is a nature reserve. But she can imagine that "you may have done it in the past" because the sea is so close. She also thinks it "feels fresh in some way", and she can't imagine that anyone would mind. But she also expresses that you are not really allowed to do it: "It should belong to nature".

Like Lena, Mira feels a responsibility to balance her use of nature's resources. The seaweed often ends up in a kind of borderland regarding what constitutes "nature" or who actually has the right to bring home washed-up seaweed from the beach. Using seaweed for your own needs is also a different matter than harvesting seaweed in a commercial way.

When Kate fell in love with seaweed, she was, as we could see in the introductory quote, "so fed up with the state of the ocean". She had stopped

eating fish and almost stopped "eating everything". Finding seaweed became some kind of turning point in her life-changing decision to search for a more sustainable and creative lifestyle. After completing a master's degree in marine biology, she started her own business a couple of years later. She says the choice between continuing with a doctoral dissertation and academic work or "spending the days outdoors picking seaweed and being in nature" was easy. Kate is currently developing new skin products based on seaweed, but these are not yet sold in Sweden. Since Kate grew up in another part of Europe, she also has other experiences integrating wild plants into everyday life.

> In Czechia we are used to picking our own herbs, mushrooms, and various wild plants. Not just one or two species as in Sweden, but maybe 20 different species. I have been picking wild herbs and plants all my life. In Czechia people trust plants so much more than people do in Sweden.[10]

The different practices in various countries and contexts when it comes to human-plant interaction, have, as previously mentioned, been studied in terms of foraging, picking, and gathering. Foraging, as a social and economic practice, is also a way for people to engage with their surrounding environment via wild products. When Kate describes her relationship with seaweed, she contrasts different practices against each other. In Czechia, you can buy seaweed "in every place that has a store" and "maybe 20 different seaweed products". She thinks it is "almost ironic" that people in Sweden—where nature is so accessible—are so afraid to take advantage of what grows wild:

> It´s maybe a little bit of fear. Can I do this? Can I eat this? How do I do it? People in Czechia are more spontaneous. It´s the difference. People get used to it, eating it. And I guess they can inform themselves, and trust what they find.

Kate further reflects on the lack of regulation in Czechia regarding seaweed. This is also the reason why, so far, she has only sold her skin care products on the Czech market. Seaweed has long been an ingredient in some skin products, but for Kate it was mainly a stay in Paris that really made her discover the product:

> I went to a store with cosmetics, and I saw the most expensive creams there. Actually, the most expensive cream in the world for women, is made from seaweeds.

Kate saw an opportunity to produce skin products from seaweed, and today she manufactures these products in her kitchen and exports them mainly to the Czech spa market. When asked if she has been courted by large cosmetics

companies to expand her market and production, she explains that the risk of no longer having the opportunity to be 100% sustainable meant that she decided not to take that step:

> For me it´s very important that everything stays a hundred percent natural. The only thing with plastic is the label, and I´m going to change that. You know I want everything to be recyclable and there´s no additives, no chemicals. I really want to make sure it stays clean and clear.[11]

The tension between economic value and environmental value stands out in her choice of business model. Her ecopreneurial practice is more focused on environmental value, and in this context it is embedded in the strategy of keeping track of the process to ensure sustainable production and products. By harvesting the raw material herself, manufacturing the skincare products at home in the kitchen, and keeping track of how the packaging is designed, Kate has taken control of both the process and the product. However, the alternative business model (cf. Philips, 2012) that Kate has created is also based on social and cultural values. Her close relationship with seaweed is also connected to her own life story:

> This is what I grew up with, my whole life. That was my first job when I was like ten, I picked herbs and sold them. When I´m sick I will have herb tea instead of paracetamol. All this is even my heritage. And then the seaweed creates these products.

Through her various ecopreneurial practices, Kate is working with seaweed as process, as a product, and sometimes as a form of cultural heritage and as a memory object. She harvests it in the sea, she picks seaweed from the beach, and she makes skin products. Working with seaweed means hard work, and in spring she works 12-hour days, five days a week. In July it "dies down"—she can´t pick any seaweed, and "people are just in summer mode". In autumn, she sells the seaweed and makes new products. Having your own business means freedom and flexibility in relation to family and private life. Kate thinks it is great that she can spend the afternoon with her kids, and work at night:

> You can be creative, it´s very pleasant and it´s never boring. You have to be on your toes, and you have to do different things every day. That is important for me.

Creative work can imply never being bored, since every day is different. This circumstance also seems to be related to shifting seasons. Since harvesting is only possible during certain parts of the year, Kate has developed her business by arranging seaweed safaris and various courses:

> I mean, that´s the easiest way if somebody wants to learn about seaweed. To do it themselves. Then I explain a little bit about the different species of seaweed, how to pick [it] sustainably, how to eat it, and how to cook it.

The newly-started business has expanded its ecopreneurship with practices that also include different learning processes and learning outcomes. Making seaweed a valuable resource takes place, and makes sense, as a creative learning experience. When seaweed becomes a learning object, the messy process of ecopreneurship will be framed and transformed as narratives embedded in different sustainable settings.

Crafting stories and seaweed as learning products

When a female blogger in Sweden describes her passion for seaweed, she describes herself as a hamster: "one who wants to collect and save in the belief that there will always be times when I need to use what I have saved". Mulching gives her a good reason to pack things in sacks and transport them home. Therefore, she went around half of Öland with two large bags of seaweed in the back seat of her car.[12] She also states that she has "a strong desire for seaweed" and that she often thinks about how happy she would be if she had unlimited seaweed to use for mulching. She lives inland and usually picks up seaweed in large bags with her car. She wants to learn more about seaweed and she has decided to mulch with seaweed in a limited part of the garden.[13]

The desire for seaweed knowledge is a demand that several of the respondents want to satisfy. For Mira, the shop owner, it is about giving the customer a push in the right direction:

> But you always have to explain how people should eat it, or what they should do with it, and so on. Because no one knows anything about seaweed. It's a pretty unknown area.[14]

In various stories about people's lack of knowledge, seaweed becomes a kind of learning objective, and a learning object, through which different strategies for communicating knowledge emerge. For Mira, it is more about educating the customer and encouraging a purchase, while other pedagogical strategies aim at educational missions by offering creative experiences in specific natural settings.

Lena explains that it is an important task for her to teach people about all the sustainable benefits of seaweed, and how to relate to nature in different ways without being afraid to pick and eat what grows wild. Her business offers, among other things, self-picking and seaweed safaris in combination with nature experiences and cooking with seaweed. One of the challenges that has become clear to her is the fear that many people feel about "natural food". It makes her sad, and she tries to teach people not to be afraid, to

"throw away the spice measurement" and instead pick food from "nature's pantry". She says that she herself feels very rich when she comes home with a bag of freshly picked seaweed: "it's a bit like finding a nice chanterelle place in the woods".

In our empirical material, we have found a third practice for transferring knowledge that cannot be related to newly-acquired contextual knowledge or "traditional knowledge", but constitutes a more institutionalised pedagogical practice where seaweed is activated as a creative mediator of knowledge about sustainability and nature. At the marine centre in southern Sweden, seaweed is a very tangible object of knowledge. Seaweed is found in the aquariums, then dried in different bowls and set up as a painting motif on the walls. The sea and the shoreline outside are not far away. Ann, who works at the centre, has a background as a researcher and she presents herself as independent and driven. She is hesitant about whether she sees herself as an entrepreneur, but describes herself, and others in the economic association, as "very passionate about what we do". Every week they are visited by several school children, who are then introduced to Swedish seaweed:

> We do not eat that much seaweed in Sweden. Maybe when eating Sushi. That's always imported seaweed. But we actually have it out here. Looking at that raw material is important when you are out with children. Talk about it and maybe try to taste it. Tell them that it is actually possible to eat. Many have eaten seaweed in connection with sushi. Or in other contexts. But they maybe never found out that it's actually the same thing that's growing out here.

To increase awareness of the importance of seaweed in the future, the centre turns to the younger generation. To overcome the fear of the unknown, the first step is to gain knowledge about seaweed. An important task is to ensure that everyone gets the possibility to become "sea-conscious". School classes are allowed to catch and examine seaweed along the beach outside and by the sea. Ann explains that the picture changes when you get closer:

> Many have the image of swimming in the sea. And then there are these scary things at the bottom that you do not want to put your feet on. But if you go out in waders, pick up seaweed debris and look in binoculars and see what it is and what animals live there. If you then talk about it and maybe taste a little of it, you get a completely different picture. Some people think it tastes really good, and others refuse to taste it at all.

In addition to the concrete experience of touching the seaweed and perhaps tasting it, visitors at the centre can also take part in the story of the seaweed's reproductive cycle, and learn about why the bladder wrack has blisters. Ann explains the "romance" of seaweed reproduction:

> It is the "life jackets" that keep the seaweed floating so they can reach the sunlight. Inside the small life jackets, you'll find the reproductive organs, and the plants are either females or males /---/ And what is so romantic is that in the spring, in May or early June, the bladder wrack releases its eggs and sperm synchronously in the light of the moon. The reason they do it at the full moon is that the eggs are heavier than the sperms. The eggs sink to the bottom and the sperm, as they are programmed to swim away from the light, also swim to the bottom since it´s a full moon. Hopefully they find each other.

Creative work settings: People, plants, and products

Through different narratives of being an ecopreneur in the seaweed businesses we obtained colourful, varied, and value-loaded clarifications on the relationship between people, plants, and products. The stories about seaweed are performed as ideological narratives that provide an opportunity to deal with reflections on resources, values, and views of nature. Our respondents are struggling to balance between the joy of harvesting wild resources and the risk that this practice over the long run will turn into yet another exploitation of limited natural resources. The stories are centred around the production of green value, where seaweed becomes a mythical creature and an exclusive product in small-scale businesses.

Further on, the stories told in this study can also be mirrored and related to findings in social media. Here, knowledge and experience about handling seaweed is shared in various forms. The framing is reiterative, echoing strong connections to themes like sustainability, cultural heritage, foraging, and creativity. Seaweed is often referred to as a gift from the sea, and as a natural resource with strong future potential and the engagement is decoupled from place and localness, per se. But the interaction between people, plants, and products is a complex and dynamic process:

> Engagement with wild products is not so much a result of the characteristics of local flora, as it is related to knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of the people engaging with wild products.[15]

The quotation elevates an inner dynamic relating to the relationship between people, plants, and products, where people involved in the process both connect and disconnect to localness in different ways. The ecopreneurs in our study have motivations similar to ordinary entrepreneurs—earning a living, following a passion, seeing a gap in the market—but for those agents, a profitable enterprise might be seen more as a means to an end, rather than an end in and of itself (Vlasov, 2020). Processes of self-realisation are constructed through agencies connecting and embedded in interaction with nature and localness; agencies with potentially more radical implications for societal change, such as being creative in a different form of economic

activity, escaping "the rat race" and teaching others to become sea-conscious while developing new products for the market.

Creativity turns into an important key value in doing business. Doing business with seaweed opens up different kinds of values related to the process (harvesting/cooking/refining) and to the product (food ingredient, additive, fertiliser, skincare). In the above stories, the processes and the products were related to newly-emerging contextual knowledge in conjunction with traditional foraging knowledge. We have seen how the creative work, described by our respondents, to some extent was described as a kind of aesthetic work and as creative self-realisation. When it comes to the marketisation practices of their creative work, these practices were described as educating the customer and encouraging a purchase or as pedagogical strategies aimed at educating children by offering creative experiences in specific natural settings in connection to nature. Being connected to nature involves aspects of "never being bored", since every day is different, and appears to be an important core value in this specific creative work involved in the marketisation of seaweed.

We have seen how the messy processes and practices of ecopreneurship also produce messy stories, where the making of seaweed into a valuable resource takes place in specific creative work settings. The stories are narrated towards the production of green value, where seaweed becomes an exclusive small-scale creative work product. The ecopreneurs cope with tensions between pleasure and joy in getting close to nature through a marine resource, and concerns about exploitation of a limited resource. The performative dimensions of the creative work settings provide opportunities to reflect on marine resources, values, and views of nature.

Through analysing the stories of seaweed, specific conditions and challenges became highlighted and reflected in the relationship between entrepreneurship, creative work, and the making of a sustainable lifestyle. We have shown how seaweed, as a natural resource, enables and unleashes creativity in the making of a sustainable lifestyle. The seaweed attracts new and more creative ways of entrepreneurship, including a long-term relationship with nature and transforms this relationship into an alternative business model. We have also seen how seaweed is activated as a learning product in pedagogical practices, and as a creative mediator of knowledge about sustainability and nature. The conditions and challenges being verbalised through the ecopreneurs' stories can be regarded as valuable stepping stones towards a more sustainable way of connecting to nature, where creative work plays an active role in the overall ambition relating to issues of sustainability.

Notes

1 https://tangkullan.se
2 ibid

3 Interview with Kate
4 Interview with Lena
5 Ibid
6 https://www.land.se/mat/de-sa-upp-sig-for-att-dyka-efter-tang-nasta-superravara/
7 Interview with Mira
8 https://www.hejalivet.com/nyheterblogg/together-louisehay
9 Ibid
10 Interview with Kate
11 Ibid
12 https://www.sarabackmo.se/tang-i-tradgarden/20211019/ Translated by the author
13 Ibid
14 Interview with Mira
15 Grivins 2021:521

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18 Creative Work and Mental Health

Sima N. Wolgast and Eva V. Hoff

Nearly 100 years ago, the British author Virginia Woolf wrote about the necessary condition of having money and a room of one's own to be able to write novels. Most women writers at that time lacked a room of their own. Due to predominant norms and beliefs about women not having the abilities, skills, or the "taste" needed for artistic achievement, women were systematically excluded from artistic and cultural fields. In her essay "A Room of One's Own" (Woolf, 1935), Woolf addressed the fact that women not only lacked a place to be creative in, financial stability, and a supportive network, but also that women who managed to be successful in their creative endeavours and achieved something extraordinary, despite these barriers, would still not be recognised for their work. Virginia Woolf pointed out important *structural level* issues (gender as a barrier); for instance the fact that most gatekeepers were men—referring to art experts such as gallerists and publishers—that predominantly exhibited and accepted men. She also identified *work conditions;* women did not have space, time, or economy for creative work, all factors that negatively impacted female artists. On an *individual level*, Virginia Woolf herself suffered from an affective mental disorder hindering her in her creative work.

Despite her critical analysis of what contemporary women were denied as artists, Virginia Woolf herself had some privileges from her affluent family background, which also serves as an account of her possibilities. Virginia and her siblings inherited money, enabling them to buy a house in central London where they could live after the death of their father. In a structural analysis, this could be an example of how the different conditions available for different artists also can influence their possibilities. If an artist has economic capital, they are less likely to have to worry about monetary issues and are more likely to be able to spend time and resources on creative activities, and are also able to consume the art and culture important to feed one's own creative processes. Participating in cultural activities might also lead to possibilities of building social networks that might constitute support in their artistic or cultural work careers.

Today, in the UK and other Western countries, the possibility of having "a room of one's own" is more likely for authors and other artists, but it is still

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not the case for all (European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual, EENCA, 2021). Economic uncertainty, exclusion from important arenas (Orian et al., 2017; Taylor and O'Brien, 2017; Wolff, 1981), and mental illness (Kyaga et al., 2013)—possibly all interrelated—are unfortunately still common among artists and cultural workers.

On all levels—structural, working conditions, and individual—there exist possibilities as well as impediments that we refer to as "vulnerability factors". We define *vulnerability factors* as conditions and processes occurring at different levels (from structural to individual) involved in creating risks for mental health problems in a specific sector. Previous research has outlined the precariousness of the working conditions for artists and workers in the cultural sector at the same time that working in the artistic and cultural fields is considered meaningful and coveted. The question regarding work conditions in the artistic and cultural fields is linked with an overarching narrative, where values of creative achievement are measured against financial stability and remuneration, which in turn are impacted by structural conditions for cultural and artistic arenas. The working conditions for artistic and cultural work are continuously negotiated, and may include blurred lines between work and free time, isolation, performance anxiety, and/or a lack of support. *The overall aim of this chapter* is to identify different processes and conditions that influence artists' and cultural workers' mental health, and it will integrate theory and research about different factors influencing both potential and vulnerability. *A second aim* is to pinpoint solutions for improving occupational health hazards in artistic and cultural fields.

We believe that a complex analysis of several processes operating at different levels is necessary to understand mechanisms having impact on mental health, some of which operate on a structural level of society (Wolgast and Wolgast, 2021). However, the focus of this chapter will be on *working conditions,* including a lack of resources due to self-employment and excessive demands, leading to performance pressure; and *individual-level* conditions, for artistic and cultural work, such as beneficial psychological factors but also predispositions that may function as vulnerability factors. In the construct of *mental health* we include both the absence of psychological symptoms such as stress, anxiety, and depression but also the presence of subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction (Figure 18.1).

Work conditions creating possibilities and vulnerabilities

Besides structural factors that influence occupational health in the artistic and cultural fields, there are also specific work conditions that interact with structural and individual factors that create both possibilities and vulnerabilities.

There are international studies demonstrating that the artistic and cultural fields are still marked by economic inequity and other forms of inequality, just like the ones Virginia Woolf pointed out. Economic uncertainty is still a

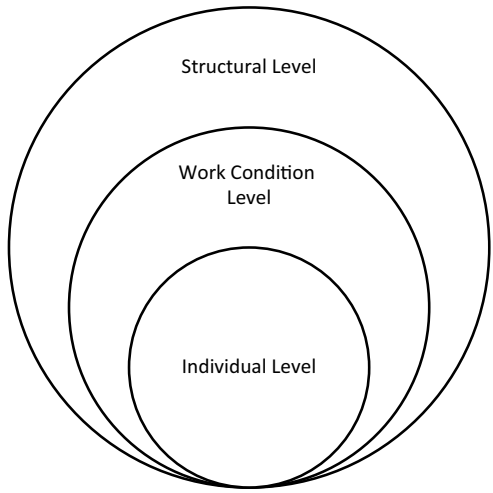

Figure 18.1 Several levels influence vulnerability and potential, which in turn influence mental health in artistic and cultural work: structural, such as norms, privileges, inclusion mechanisms, and financial distribution; work conditions, such as possibilities of autonomy, available job resources such as social networks, job demands, and adverse work conditions; and individual, such as abilities and capabilities but also individual weaknesses.

prominent everyday stressor, especially for certain artist groups. Women, minority ethnic groups, people with working class backgrounds, or functional disparities still experience barriers or exclusion mechanisms, denying them access to networks or fora for exhibiting or publishing art (Arts Council England, 2019; Orian et al., 2017; Taylor and O'Brien, 2017). Certain groups have also reported being met with the expectation that they will be willing to work without pay (Brook et al., 2018; EENCA, 2021). One hopeful sign, is that a recent study conducted in the UK concluded that there seems to be an increase in the proportion of artists who are women, Black, people with minority ethnic backgrounds, and LGBTA+ individuals (Arts Council England, 2019).

Similar results on uncertainty and stress have been found in Swedish research. In a report conducted by The Arts Committee in Sweden, 1859 individuals from different artist groups (authors, musicians, theatre workers, dancers, and filmmakers) responded to questions about the physical and psychosocial aspects of their work environment (Larsson, 2017). The report concludes that artists' working conditions are conducive to high stress levels. Some of the explanations offered included lone work, a lack of support, extensive work pressure or other external demands, a social climate characterised by conflict, or a work environment that did not allow individuals to express their opinions. The report shows that the experience of

discrimination is also a significant problem affecting artists' mental health. The artists reported experiences of discrimination concerning gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age.

In terms of working conditions, we identify possibilities inherent to the artistic and cultural fields. Important advantages can be found in theories as to why some professions experience high self-determination or self-directedness, which repeatedly have been found to predict work satisfaction, work engagement, and mental health (Baard et al., 2004; Gagné and Deci, 2005; Howard et al., 2021). Self-determination theory demonstrates that the degree to which employees can feel self-determined is highly linked to occupational well-being when the three basic psychological needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—are fulfilled. Self-directedness as a theme for creating satisfactory working conditions has also been discussed by other researchers, adding other factors such as job demands and resources into the equation of how engaging or challenging a job tends to be (Demerouti et al., 2001). Good mental health is more likely if the demands are reasonable and if there is enough support and adequate available resources. Mental health issues and even burnout have been linked to high demands and low resources. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) also linked the efforts of how much workers try and how much they succeed to influence the level of demands and resources with mental health outcomes. They coined the term "*job crafting*" meaning employees' actions to alter the job task (type and number of activities); the cognitive perception of the job (fun or too hard); and the relational boundaries, meaning who they interact with and who they can ask for help. In this way, workers play a part in adjusting their fit with their environment—at least in theory.

Because of structural factors, there will be individual variation in how much "job-crafting", as well as self-determination, is possible for different people due to, for instance, financial situations and barriers to inclusion.

Artists and cultural workers often choose their profession early in life and felt a call to be involved in the profession, and have therefore invested time and money in training and in obtaining experience in their field (often for a very long time), which means they have the first self-determination need fulfilled; namely, *competence*. Most artists and cultural workers also have a lot of intrinsic motivation and control over their work process, which constitutes the second part of self-determination—*autonomy* —with some exceptions, as is the case when structures work against some groups, for reasons we discussed earlier. Many artists are completely dedicated to art and are often not willing to make commercial compromises, as they might perceive it to diminish the status of their art. Even if external rewards do exist, and may sometimes play important roles, such as state-funded subsidies and recognition by gatekeepers, intrinsic motivation and feelings of autonomy concerning the contents of the actual artwork are essential for most artists (Abbing, 2008). There is, however, a new trend that might restrict artists' autonomy in a new way compared to the restrictions guarded

by more traditional gatekeepers. If artists hitherto have been restricted by a certain discourse promoted by the art connoisseurs that buy or exhibit their art, the influence of commodification now comes in a new form. Commodification is not a new phenomenon—during the 20th century it was controlled by art connoisseurs, and during the Renaissance, by patrons. Nowadays, commodification is connected to global imperialism and the globalisation of media culture, and has led to what Hanru (2014) calls a "single truth", with the predominant influence stemming from Western culture, including discourses described as Hollywood-style clichés and iconography that might constitute new barriers and demands for adaptation. At the same time, Hanru also describes some artists' works as embodying protests against this mainstream single truth, and his example of protesting artists including transnational artists living in exile and migration, who might have a strong driving force to protest against what is experienced as suppressing and suppressive norms.

The last self-determination need is *relatedness,* and there is a strong sense of belongingness to the artistic community for most artists—but with some variation, depending on the artistic branch and the status of the artist. There might also be some ambivalence in the artist's involvement in the community, because of harsh competition between professionals and also because of invisible impeding structures such as barriers and exclusion mechanisms which deny access to networks and essential contacts, leading to a lack of relatedness and belongingness which, in its turn, may result in risks of mental health problems.

Influence over the *demands* of the specific work tasks, which was the first job crafting dimension, is fairly high for most artists; perhaps less so for those working in performing arts and those performing in ensembles, but more so for those self-employed working on their own. A figural artist or writer can decide what to do and how much to do every day to some extent, depending on their individual financial situation; for instance whether they must have other jobs to support themselves.

The second job crafting dimension concerned decisions made over *resources*—how much help the artists will get from supervisors or co-workers. This is not as easy for self-employed artists to influence, as they might not interact with others that often—and when they do meet with gallerists or publishers, they might not be in a position to ask for much support—unless they are already well-recognised artists or have access to supportive networks. For cultural workers, or artists led by directors or other types of leaders, it might be more possible to acquire assistance or support. *Control over collaborative partners* was the third job crafting dimension, and this will also vary between self-employed and ensemble-working artists.

Thus, there exist health-promoting aspects of cultural work conditions, both possibilities for self-determination and to engage in job-crafting to optimise work conditions, even if actual opportunities seem to be unequally distributed between different art domains.

There are, as has already been discussed, also inherently negative working condition aspects in artistic and cultural fields, where economic uncertainty might be the most salient, and is certainly the one that has been written about the most substantially (Bille et al., 2017; Abbing, 2008; Mangset et al., 2018; Park and Kim, 2020). One recent study by Park and Kim (2020) demonstrated a link between state-funded subsidies and life satisfaction among performing artists. For most artists in the world, financial instability will influence artists' health in different ways. Reasons for mental health issues can also be discussed in relation to how artists and cultural workers arrange their work and their field's specific working conditions, such as a blurred line between work and free time, lone work, insubstantial feedback from the audience or from evaluators, and performance stress.

Blurred lines between work and free time

What does it mean for individuals to work in their favourite occupation? When work is inspiring, and the worker experiences self-determination and intrinsic motivation, as was just discussed as a benefit for artists and cultural workers, do they still need free time like other workers? Finding a work-life balance is likely to also benefit artists and cultural workers, even if there exists a myth about the perpetually working artist. In fact, a blurred line between work and free time can be another work condition that might not be conducive to health and well-being in the long run.

Among artists of all kinds, there exist different work habits, but a perpetually passionate, expressive work process is seldom the case, as periods of more rational goal-oriented problem-solving are necessary to complete creative work or performances (Brinck, 2010). Therefore, the cliché that artists are always driven by inspiration is not realistic; on the contrary, establishing work routines has been seen as important for most artistic fields. From interviews with authors (Perry, 2005), different ways of setting up work routines have been identified, such as having certain goals; for instance, for an author to create 3000 words a day or having rituals that help them reach a sense of flow in their work; which for some of the interviewees was as simple as sitting down after a cup of morning coffee, and becoming absorbed in their work. Also, in times in between projects there were also habits that helped to regulate work, such as practising a certain theme; for instance one painter decided to work only with the colour red for a few hours.

Among many artistic professions there are also occupational risks of receiving injuries when working in static or uncomfortable positions for long periods of time. Thus, breaks and limited working hours can be important—for example a musician who practices extensively might end up with problems with their arms or fingers if they do not warm up, rest, and stretch repeatedly. Among dancers, there are even greater physical risks if one fails to find a satisfactory balance between rest and work. Overtraining might lead to injuries and long-term consequences (Blevins et al., 2020).

There are many stressors that influence dancers to overtrain and not listen to their needs for rest, such as norms about "working through pain" and "the necessity of hard practice" to win job competitions. In their interviews with dancers, Blevins and colleagues found both adaptive and maladaptive ways of coping with stressors, and ways of respecting work-life balance. Ignoring injury, pain, and fatigue was reported to lead to worse performance or even burnout, while adaptive coping helped in maintaining balance and involved different types of relationships (family and friends) and engaging in hobbies other than dancing. To avoid harm, proactive injury management was advocated, involving massage and early interventions.

Apart from not having a sound work-life balance, both minimal contact with others as well as anxiety over meeting the audience can lead to stress.

Lone work and self-employment

In some art branches, such as writing and painting, the majority of cultural workers work alone for long periods of time. They will be left alone to develop their work, reflect upon their work, discard ideas, and come up with new ways of continuing the process without much input from others. For an artist, being alone, might in some stages of the creative process be a pre-requisite for genuine creativity, as Virginia Woolf asserted in "A Room of One's Own". Nevertheless, being left alone with doubts and fears about the quality and process of artistic work and lacking social networks might make people more vulnerable, and some researchers have explained the prevalence of mental health problems among, for instance, authors, and related this to the amount of lone work (Runco, 2007). Another explanation from Kyaga's (2013) research group found that authors, as a population, were over-represented in diagnoses of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and argued that people with these diagnoses also risk ending up being excluded or alienated due to their problems; and therefore their isolation might not just be a consequence of their choice of profession, but they might not have had a choice of anything but self-employment from the start. This might be particularly true for authors in register studies, as Kyaga and his colleagues used to obtain data, in which not only those who made a living from their writing were included but all patients who self-identified as authors, including those who struggled to support themselves and possibly never would be let in through any gates (to publish). Experiencing isolation can, nevertheless, be a factor influencing vulnerability among several types of artists. Lack of feedback and support are other aspects that are associated with lone work (with which we mean solo work with a negative connotation).

Little or late feedback from audience or evaluators

External feedback is important, and is often seen as motivating as it provides recognition for artistic work. However, the amount of available external

feedback or lack of feedback can also lead to vulnerability. The conditions vary substantially depending on which branch the artist or cultural worker is engaged in. Just as in the case of other possibilities, there will be differences between performing artists as musicians and actors and self-employed solo working artists. Depending on structural conditions, some solo working artists will have access to the networks, feedback, and support, that others lack.

However, most writers will work for years until their work is finished, before they receive any contact with reviewers at publishing firms. If they are desk-rejected at the start and left without any feedback, the time until their work reaches their final audiences will be even longer (Runco, 2007). Then they also have the uncertainty whether their work will ever pass through the reviewer's critical eyes at a later attempt. Some lucky debutantes and more established writers do receive evaluations after a long creative work period. There is likely to be some stress involved in having to invest in such a long working time before receiving any acknowledgement. Despite the existence of other outlets —in the case of authors, self-publishing and internet forums—the possibility of recognition is still predominantly controlled by established publishers. So even if everyone—or everyone who can afford it—may print their books, the work's spread is dependent on established contacts. However, contact possibilities between audiences and authors have changed substantially through the internet. Most authors today have web-pages and blogs/vlogs which give them other communication channels and opportunities to interact with their audience (Paton, 2009).

Most visual artists are also likely to work for longer periods until they meet gallerists or buyers who evaluate and offer feedback on their work. Today, the internet provides some opportunities for contact with the audience for visual artists and the arrangement of web-based exhibitions has existed for over 20 years. However, again recognition is still predominantly controlled by certain actors. Even if some old barriers have been broken by the introduction of technology, and participatory processes are facilitated by technology, some barriers are maintained, and new ones are created via the new economy of commodification (Papastergiadis and Lynn, 2014). This may mean that gatekeepers are no longer gallery owners or privileged artists, but might just as likely be corporation leaders who are experts not on art but branding commodities and trend-setting for a global market. Accordingly, artistic or cultural career advancement is still dependent on the recognition of others.

Composing musicians might also be left alone without feedback for some time, whereas those in ensembles who play with others often receive feedback frequently from fellow musicians before they meet the audience. Lack of feedback will not be as defining of work conditions for performing musicians, as they will often be given feedback earlier and possibly also meet audiences earlier on in the creative process. Similarly, actors might receive

feedback directly from their colleagues and the director early on in the process; something which gives them a less lonely process.

Getting feedback and meeting the audience can be tough, even if it does not involve a long waiting period. Performance anxiety has been found to be fairly common among performing artists as another factor contributing to vulnerability in their working conditions.

Stress in meeting audiences and performance anxiety

Admittedly, meeting the audience is a source of motivation, recognition, and meaning for most artists. On the other hand, among actors and musicians, there exist those who feel vulnerable because they feel stressed about being in direct contact with their audiences when they perform live. For some, this even creates performance anxiety. There can also arise a dilemma for artists as to whether they should focus on fulfilling the audience's expectations or be guided by their own inspiration, values, or truths.

Performance anxiety is experienced if the artist starts to fear public failure. Many forms of music performance, for instance, can be both physically and psychologically demanding, and sometimes performance anxiety outweighs the pleasure of playing, and feelings of apprehension and distress overwhelm the artist. The prevalence varies between different music genres, falling between 17%–70% in meta-studies (Papageorgi et al., 2013), where classical musicians often report more performance anxiety compared to modern musicians like pop and jazz artists. Performance anxiety can create health problems (Matei and Ginsborg, 2017) and also lead to other psychological issues, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy beliefs (individual beliefs in their abilities) which in a feedback cycle, contribute to performance anxiety (Papageorgi et al., 2013). Papageorgi and Welsh (2020) described four main themes when professional jazz musicians spoke about their experiences of performance anxiety and how they learned to handle it. The intensity of the performance anxiety experience was extreme, evoking feelings that one's nerves were out of control, that they wanted to run away or evoking feelings of anger and humiliation; negative emotions they directed towards themselves because they felt they had failed. The interviewed musicians perceived their anxiety to be rooted in feelings that their performance was not at the standard of which they knew they were capable. They also described how they, over time, developed coping strategies to deal with or at least decrease performance-related anxiety. Practising was the most essential way to prepare for a performance, but exercising and keeping fit also helped to reduce anxiety. Also, different relaxation and emotional coping strategies were experienced as helpful, and anxiety lessened over time as they matured as artists, and some experienced less anxiety or at least found ways of "controlling [their] nerves", or became less harsh in their self-judgement.

Performance anxiety can come in other forms. A lack of production after having received prestigious prizes has been mentioned as an explanation of

what may kill an artist's motivation. In fact, it can be linked to self-determination theory, which argues that the best quality will be performed by autonomous and intrinsically-motivated individuals, artists who decide to work on something for their own interest. If adjusting to outward criteria of evaluation (Piirto, 2005), an artist might get performance anxiety—for instance authors who received the Nobel Prize for literature have been found to be less productive after the prize, and the inferred explanation is the enormous pressure to produce world-quality and unique work leads to a loss of self-determination or a loss of their own intrinsic values that led them to their earlier success.

Apart from work conditions that are shared to some extent within each artistic field, there will also be conditions that depend on individual personality traits and even genetic factors that might be prerequisites (to some extent) for success as an artist, but sometimes also hamper the lives of the artists.

Health and other individual factors

In psychological research, individual differences have been described between different professions in terms of personality as well as mental health issues, which may partly be explained by vulnerability factors in structures and working conditions. In fact, in comparison to other branches, the prevalence of certain specific mental health illnesses is higher in some creative professions (Andreasen, 1987; Kyaga et al., 2013; 2011). In a large register study with over one million participants, Kyaga and colleagues (2013) found that creative professions—both artists and scientists—were more likely to have bipolar disorder (referring to a fluctuation between manic and depressive states) compared with the control group of mixed professions. However, in this study all other mental illnesses were less likely for the broad group of creative professions, such as unipolar depression (normal depression), anxiety, substance abuse, and the likelihood of committing suicide. There seems to be very little truth in the "mad genius" hypothesis if one looks at the whole population and all registered illnesses. However, Kyaga and his collaborators went further with their analyses and looked at writers in particular, because of earlier research, such as Andreasen's (1987) report from the Iowa creative writing workshop and her findings that participating authors were more often diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Schizophrenia refers in part to having surrealistic experiences, e.g., hearing voices. Kyaga et al. (2013) corroborated these findings, showing that the author group were diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder twice as often as the general population. Authors also suffered from depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and ADHD more often than the general population, and were more likely to commit suicide—in fact, suicide was more common even if those with diagnoses were taken out. There seems to be individualised vulnerability particularly among

authors, and on top of the challenges discussed earlier, working conditions consisting of lone work and delayed feedback, when taken together seem to constitute challenging aspects for writing artists. Some other differences found by other researchers examining different artist groups can also be noted; Rawlings and Locarnini (2008) showed that musicians, when compared to visual artists, had more attention problems.

Concerning personality traits, research has found that artists in general are more cognitively flexible, have more willingness to engage in boundary-transgressing experiences, and often have higher intelligence levels (Kyaga et al., 2013); but are also more egocentric, impulsive, and have higher asocial characteristics than other groups (Eysenck, 1993). Other general personality dimensions—the so-called "big five"—have been compared between artistic populations and others (Feist, 1998). Openness is often higher, conscientiousness lower, and emotional instability higher. It means that artistic populations are more curious and open to experiences and less orderly, controlled, and less willing to follow conventions but also more emotionally unstable and express their negative emotions and needs without adjusting to others. Artistic professions thus convey less conscientiousness, which actually might help in breaking habits and conventions in their artistic works. A Korean researcher notes that higher emotional instability, lower conscientiousness, and lower agreeableness (which they also found) seem to be a normative identity for artists, because these traits were related to higher life satisfaction in artists (Park and Kim, 2020). This is interesting, as higher emotional instability in other samples has been found to be related to low life satisfaction.

Regarding differences between different artistic fields, both visual and musical artists had more unusual experiences (Rawlings and Locarnini, 2008). Actors, on the other hand, showed more extroversion; and more precisely were less shy and showed less apprehension regarding how others would judge them.

In a Lund University study of gender differences (Hoff and Wolgast, 2023) on the link between creativity as a capability and reported subjective well-being, the findings showed that original creative output was linked to high subjective well-being in men but low subjective well-being in women. The result renders a need to pinpoint possibly implicit gender norms—so here, the structural level influences individual experiences. The findings showed that women who produced creative solutions that were evaluated as highly original (by external raters), but rated themselves as low on subjective well-being. Contrarily, men who came up with solutions that were evaluated as highly original rated themselves high on well-being. The results contribute to the discussion about how gender norms affect men and women differently. One way of interpreting the fact that creative original women described low life satisfaction, even if this was not studied directly, might be that these women had been less encouraged or even punished for their originality by different social contexts, compared to less-original women and compared to

original men. Women might be less encouraged to stand out and be original, and if they do, they might suffer from direct or indirect punishment from the social systems in which they exist, which may in turn result in lower life satisfaction, whereas creative and original men might be recognised for their work and even be seen as geniuses. Gender differences in creative output are seldom found in studies of the general population, but in the degree of recognition, there is still a male advantage; that is, more men are acknowledged and rewarded as artists (Baer and Kaufman, 2008). Future research should address the question of how the originality of different people is encouraged or discouraged.

Mental health problems as a source for creativity, or creativity as a road to mental health?

We cannot ignore the fact that there exists a myth about the "mad genius" in several creative branches—both scientific and artistic ones, even though the Swedish whole population register study did not find much of a relationship between individuals from creative branches and mental illness, except for authors. But minor instability, such as that captured in the term "emotional instability" appears to exist among a majority of artists and might even be a self-fulfilling prophecy—at least if we regard the results that show a positive relation between level of self-rated emotional instability and life satisfaction (Park and Kim, 2020). Emotional instability refers to being easily upset, angry, or sad. It might even be reasonable to ask whether emotional instability is an asset or a hindrance for creative populations. Sometimes the creative act in different artistic fields is described as inspired by personal difficulties or as something that resolves or helps one handle adversities or even trauma. Through the creative act, some creative individuals even seem to find peace of mind and mental health.

There are several authors who describe their experiences of bipolar disorder and depression; for instance the intellectuals Monica Coleman (who wrote *Bipolar Faith: a Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith)* and Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (who wrote *Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression*). There is the visual artist Louise Bourgeois, whose personal trauma of being brought up by a tyrannic father is related to some of her pieces of art, such as "Destruction of a Father", but also the healing of her emotional wounds through her huge spiders that she saw as a symbol for the weaving mother that mended carpets and souls. There are artists who suffered from mental illnesses and who have used art to process their illnesses. Others have used art to highlight structural inequalities; such as Lena Cronqvist, whose art often depicts power relationships, for instance patients in psychiatric care but also the power between adults and children. There is also Van Gogh's fluctuating mental health, which influenced his bold unusual ways of expressing himself in his art (too bold for his time, resulting in his inability to sell anything during his lifetime). For

some of these artists, severe psychiatric illness made them unproductive for some periods but it might still mean that during periods of recovery they could find inspiration to create from the experience of illness or trauma. The artistic processing seemed to have at the very least helped some artists transform negative emotions through art (Sawyer, 2005). Richards (1999) has put forward a hypothesis that some level of mental instability is advantageous for artists, but when it tips over into severe illness there is no longer a positive association between mental instability and creativity.

In relation to myths about artists, sometimes substance use has also been romanticised, regarded as a means for creativity. There have been controlled studies with alcohol, which did not find any convincing evidence of increased creativity (Norlander and Gustafson, 1998; Svensson et al., 2006). The amount of alcohol also will create different effects. A small dosage of alcohol may increase arousal, which will decrease inhibition. An intermediate or large dosage of alcohol acts as a depressant, which in fact can have benefits in some stages of creative work, such as free association and idea generation (often seen as existing in opposition to logical thinking). However, higher dosages of alcohol also tend to decrease the verification of ideas that is necessary for the realisation of plans (which depends on more rational thinking) and will therefore decrease the skills necessary for creative quality for musicians, authors, and visual artists in the long run. Nevertheless, there is an overrepresentation of alcohol abuse, particularly among authors (even among the Nobel Prize winners). However, it is difficult to draw a conclusion as to whether alcohol has been helpful or if it is more reasonable to state that some people have been able to be creative despite alcohol problems. Some studies argue that alcohol is used to handle existential anxiety after intensive creative periods (Piirto, 2005; Perry, 2005).

In life stories, individual experiences and personality will connect creativity and mental health; however, there are other factors inherent in the work conditions as well as structural conditions that also will play important roles in the mental health status of artists and cultural workers. Now, we turn to the last part of the chapter to consider ideas of how to improve artists' work situations. Can vulnerabilities be reduced?

Strategies for improving cultural and artistic work situations

When searching for strategies used by artists to handle different obstacles hindering them in their creative work, we found some existing useful models, not the least combatting loneliness and a lack of support networks and feedback sources. One way to overcome obstacles is by creating systems *offering mentorship* to artists during their education in order to provide platforms that can help build necessary networks.

Another way to change working conditions, in order to allow artists to create under more sustainable circumstances, is to *change the context* or setting where the artistic work is taking place. Some artists create art in

groups or in communities (e.g., Black Archives Sweden, 2021; *Konstkollektivet, 2021; Konstnärernas riksorganisation, 2021*), and many of these groups and communities have earned recognition in society. Recently the cultural council of Sweden (Kulturrådet, 2020) contributed over 17 million SEK of financial support for artists to experiment with collective solutions for creating art, with the intention of improving artists' working conditions. By creating a common social environment around the art process and the art exhibition, contemporary artists can create a context in which they can fulfil several needs, such as access to social networks, access to new creative ideas, useful feedback (from other artists), and access to different societal arenas (such as exhibition platforms, libraries, and other public places). The collective way of improving artists' work conditions can be an interesting area for further research, to understand how mental health is influenced by these collective solutions and initiatives.

In fact, such initiatives might function to overcome parts of the structural problems, as these new forms of social environments build new structures for artists to work within (An and Cerasi, 2017). An additional way of *building new structures* is to make art in co-creation with civic society (Miller et al., 2017). Such co-created artistic work can receive recognition, be promoted, and be seen as support for civic initiatives that aim to make art for the common good or specific community purposes. The collaborative practice by the visual artist Lucy Orta (2014) and her collaborator represents a kind of "activism for social justice". They—among other things—highlighted the social disappearance of refugees and homeless people and made them visible through their art projects, situated in peripheral urban places.

Co-creation ideas are also sometimes done in collaboration with municipalities, creating opportunities for members of certain communities and artists to co-create in order to highlight important societal issues. One of these new co-creating initiatives in Sweden is the "Anti-Racist Monument", a project that began in 2019, where some Malmö residents hatched the idea of an anti-racist monument in Malmö (Malmo stad, 2021). The Anti-Racist Monument project is based on the need for a common place in the city that embodies Malmö residents' experiences of racism. An anti-racist monument will create discussions about structural racism and offer the common experience of having lived in Malmö between 2003 and 2010, when the city was plagued by a racist serial killer. The monument will be constructed by a single artist or a group of artists and is scheduled to be completed in 2023. The project is run by the cultural administration in Malmö city, together with the initiators, artists, and cultural workers. During 2021 and 2022, different artists from minority groups and a platform for new drama, began working on a series of temporary public works of art. Artwork has been exhibited to Malmö residents continually during the project, and both artists and residents have been invited to participate in the process through, among other things, theatre, visual arts, film screenings, talks, exchange of experience, and informational campaigns. These are initiatives which model ways

of building new art and cultural arenas that may create opportunities for supportive and inclusive networks.

Conclusion

We have identified several factors influencing artists' vulnerabilities and possibilities (potential) at different levels that are interrelated and reinforce each other. S*tructural conditions* constitute beliefs and power-related conditions such as inclusion mechanisms that ascribe privileges differently, as well as the distribution of financial support, both of which will have an impact on artists' and cultural workers' possibilities and vulnerabilities. The second level constitutes *work conditions*, such as possibilities of self-determination and access to job resources, as well as vulnerabilities related to blurred lines between work and free time, lone work and self-employment, insubstantial or delayed feedback, and performance and audience anxiety, as well as excessive work demands, leading to mental health problems. Finally, *individual conditions*, such as psychological factors, may act as important prerequisites for creative work and other factors may act as impediments to it.

To be able to improve the conditions for occupational health in the cultural and artistic field, the detection of both possibilities and risk factors at all levels is necessary. Several of the work hazards could be reduced by forming new collective and inclusive networks, and thus creating alternative arenas for artistic and cultural work. Our example artist, Virginia Woolf, started the Bloomsbury group in 1905 together with her brother and sister, and ran network meetings in their home (Tate Gallery, 2021). This group functioned as a norm-critical intellectual forum for 30 years in the UK, and helped artists that lacked an inclusive community, such as female and/or homosexual artists. Having a sense of belongingness is likely to increase feelings of agency and self-determination.

The distribution of financial resources is another measure, which, for instance, has been found to result in higher life satisfaction in performing artists in South Korea, who are to a greater degree state-funded (Park and Kim, 2020). Financial stability may reduce negative structural influence on occupational health. A stable financial situation may also increase feelings of autonomy in the artist's work, as they are able to focus on artistic development. Job crafting is important for occupational health, including attracting resources (apart from salary, also people to collaborate with, and to get support and feedback from), and being able to adjust work demands to reasonable levels. The availability of individual support will, however, not always be adequate, as the negative influence of substance abuse and the rate of mental illness and even suicide is higher among some artist groups. Knowledge about psychological help and the availability of societal services is necessary. Perhaps offering special occupational health support programs for at-risk artist groups could be a possible part of city services. Even if

Virginia Woolf had her Bloomsbury group and a family that supported her, her mental instability—and possible other factors—led her to drown herself in the River Ouse in 1941 (Britannica Encyclopedia, 2021). To decrease the risks of such tragic ends for her fellow authors and artists of today, it is important to reduce vulnerability factors and strengthen work conditions within the cultural and artistic field.

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Epilogue

Erika Andersson Cederholm, Katja Lindqvist, Ida de Wit Sandström, and Philip Warkander

In three thematic sections and 18 different chapters, this volume has unpacked and explored the conditions, contexts, and practices of creative work from multiple different perspectives.

The first part contained case studies of how creative work occurs in structured contexts, which are currently being questioned and renegotiated both within creative production teams and between creative professionals and other professional groups enabling creative work. The chapters together point to new power and resource distribution, as creative work is redefined, particularly in policy contexts which themselves change due to new demands and priorities of policies and policymakers. In this sense, the first part of the book points to some of the perhaps less visible dimensions enabling creative work. The various contributions in this part were based on work experiences in the cultural and cultural policy field as well as on artistic and traditional scholarly research, illustrating the multi-disciplinary as well as multi-professional approach of this book.

The second part of the book contains contributions expressly discussing sites and spaces of creative work, digital as well as physical. The simultaneousness of digital and physical sites of creative work has emotional dimensions, which are being explored in some chapters. Increasing digitisation and digitalisation are important topics for practitioners as well as researchers, as they profoundly alter creative work, as digital production and physical production are inherently different even though they share similar elements. Space is also always relational and performative, which is shown through contributions based on artistic research as well as scholarly research.

Relationships are in focus in the third part of the book. The contributions here point to the negotiations regarding social status as well as decision-making power that are part of creative work, just as work in other industries. The chapters in this part of the book also highlight tensions between ideas and ideals of creative work on one hand and economic aspects on the other. It is possible that such tensions are particularly tangible in creative work, since the notion of the creative may stimulate specific expectations of such work being different from other types of work. In both the private and the public sectors, economic priorities must be made, but the basis for these

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priorities, however, differ. A conclusion from the third part of the volume is that relationships contain tensions and priorities which have economic effects that tend to be different for actors with more power compared to actors with less power.

Throughout the three parts of the volume, some recurring themes are discernible. Some of these are being discussed thoroughly, but some are emerging themes that we suggest could be further investigated in future research.

One theme that runs as an undercurrent throughout the volume is the symbolic power inherent in the concept of creative work. The idea of working creatively has a strong, almost mythical allure, often juxtaposed with work that is considered its opposite: repetitive, monotonous, and lacking in meaning, and without opportunities for self-expression. This myth holds several positive features, such as autonomy and flexibility, as well as that of a creative lifestyle, but may also reinforce and naturalise inequality, insecurity, and poor working conditions. It can thus lead to a kind of self-exploitation, where creative workers—whose work life is often project-based, and thus lacking in long-term security and stable working conditions—will work more than they should, for less remuneration than would be advisable.

Hence, the topic of precarity and unequal working conditions is the flip side of the coin and has been discussed in several chapters. However, there are some related issues around working conditions that have not been thoroughly investigated in the individual chapters. One is the issue of intersectionality, which is central to understanding work in creative fields, and hence could be a topic for future studies. The homogeneity of many creative sectors is an ongoing debate among scholars internationally (cf. Curtin and Sanson 2016; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor 2020). One variable is the complex relationship between creative work and gender, especially pertaining to the possibility for creative workers, specifically women, to have children and establish a family. Another variable is age; how does creative work affect the possibility of a secure and stable retirement? Are there differences between genders or between different creative fields?

The issue of intersectionality and diversity also relates to matters of language and social networks. In recent years, many European countries have experienced an influx of migrants, from both other European countries and other continents, but migration is far from a new phenomenon (Ali and Byrne 2022). How does the experience of migration affect individuals' and groups' access to and experience of creative work? Future research on the topic of creative work should include a greater degree of intersectionality, in order to better understand these questions, and to analyse the interplay between variables such as age, gender, and ethnicity in regard to creative work (Brydges and Hracs 2019; Villarroya and Barrios 2022). Questions relating to careers in creative work are closely intertwined with aspects of diversity and qualifications. Furthermore, is the situation different in different countries, and if so, how are these differences expressed and negotiated? In this volume, we have

discussed case studies from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK, but the focus has not been specifically on challenges related to diversity and intersectionality.

Overall, the various studies included in the volume are restricted to northern Europe and the Nordic countries. For instance, the first part of the volume focused on governing, organising, and enabling of creative work, and was addressed in seven chapters, of which six were based on Swedish case studies, and one used ethnographic material from the Netherlands. Moving forward, it would be interesting to see this theme explored in other regions and countries in order to analyse similarities and differences between the organisation of creative work in different parts of the world. This would further elucidate how the understanding of creative work is expressed in the way that it is organised on a macro level. The second theme, "Sites, spaces, and performances", explored in five chapters, had a more varied geographical outlook, but was still restricted to northern Europe. The third and final theme of the volume, on relational work, enterprising, and precarity, included six different studies, based on material garnered from either Sweden or Italy.

One issue that was raised in the Italian case, but has a wider relevance, was the effects following the COVID-19 pandemic on working conditions in the creative industries. It would be valuable to return to this issue in a few years to see whether there are any lasting effects of this crisis. In addition, the forced remote work that followed the pandemic has highlighted the transformative effects of a digitalised working environment. This is a theme touched on by several of the chapters, but it remains a topic for further investigation.

As mentioned previously, the increasing digitalisation of working life deeply affects the conditions and outcome of creative work. The digital creative economy has been studied for some time (Hartley, Wen and Li 2015), but with the COVID-19 pandemic, the cultural sphere also had to rethink their audience outreach and business models through digitisation and digitalisation (Brilli, Gemini and Giuliani 2023; Feder, McAndrew, O'Brien and Taylor 2023). The difference between digitisation and digitalisation needs more research, as the latter implies significant changes in both creative production and economic models of creative work. The increasing intertwinement of creative and technological elements in digital services also means that negotiations will increase regarding copyrights on one hand and income distribution on the other. For instance, we have seen examples of how the platform economy is used to frame precarious jobs and working conditions as creative and flexible in new ways (Nemkova, Demirel and Baines 2019; Kesselring, Freudendal-Pedersen and Zuev 2020). The increasing digitalisation calls for nuanced ways to describe and understand the complex web of social, cultural, and economic positions that are formed in and through creative work (Lazzeretti 2023). The various chapters in this book have illustrated some of the intertwining development of digital technology and creative work, but more remains to be highlighted.

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