

Creative work and affect: Social, political and fantasmatic dynamics in the labour of musicians

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Abstract

How can we understand contradictory identifications within work to which one is passionately attached? This article explores how seemingly competing accounts of the self at work can not only appear side by side within the self-presentation of creative workers, but also how dominant patterns within the daily socio-economic realities of creative work are reproduced through faux-contestations of them. Following Glynos and Howarth, I will argue that such transgressive notions often recall earlier historical arrangements that have been displaced by current dominant social grammars, or were vital components of the institution of current social hegemony. In a study of musicians, I analyse how alongside dominant logics of employability and virtuosity, traditional notions of artists' craft and autonomy drive counter-identifications that allow dominant social logics to fill the gaps in the indeterminacy and ambiguity of everyday lived experience. By applying an understanding of discursive logics to creative work, this article seeks to contribute to literatures spanning work in the cultural industries, identification, affect and transgression at work, and commons and immaterial labour.

Keywords

affect, creative work, enterprising selves, freelance work, precarity

Introduction

In the context of the gradual but steady dismantling of the legal and institutional anchors of job security, wage standards, income equality, work-time regulation and union

representation, we have seen a wide variety of flexible work practices arise of which much is low paid and precarious. This has not been limited to low level service work but ranges from blue-collar shop floor work to white-collar professional work. In coming to terms with the challenges this poses for understanding the role of work in contemporary society, some have suggested examining the cultural industries as an example of a sector in which such forms of work have long been rife, and where the labour supply has been largely undiminished by such adverse working conditions (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012; Lash and Urry, 1993; Ross, 2003, 2009).

This is of particular interest given that in the last two decades, several influential commentators have argued that developed economies are increasingly reliant on creative work and business ventures in the cultural industries (Florida, 2002; Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999). As De Peuter (2011: 418) points out, any such movement of developed neoliberal economies towards the creative is driven by ‘the organized disenchantment with the mass culture and work patterns typifying Fordism’. This creative turn should not just be understood as a reinvigoration of specific sectors, but more fundamentally as a shift in how work is valorized and how surpluses are generated. De Peuter argues, after Hardt and Negri (2001), that the shifting focus towards the creative economy has epitomized fundamental changes in the structure of capitalism, namely the growing centrality of rent-seeking (rather than profit-seeking) capitalism, an increasing commodification of the common and a proliferation of immaterial labour (see also Gill and Pratt, 2008).

The effects of these changes have been foreshadowed within the cultural industries, having been deeply entrenched for longer, and for this reason there has been wide interest within creative labour across management and organization studies, sociology, media studies and social geography. Commentators have picked up on a variety of different aspects of creative work that have wider significance for current developments in the world of work.

Much research has focused on contesting overly rose-tinted views of creative economy policy and the technological utopianism that preceded the dotcom boom. One such aspect of creative labour that has been picked up in the literature is widespread precariousness and casualization of creative labour (Morgan et al., 2013; Ross, 2003, 2009), which has been widely documented in order to counter the excessively optimistic picture painted of creative labour by policy-oriented researchers (see also Hesmondhalgh, 2012). Another salient aspect of creative labour that has been picked up on is the specific functioning of its labour markets, which relies strongly on reputation and networking (Blair, 2001; Lee, 2011). This has led commentators to foreground the notion of social capital in this respect (Antcliff et al., 2007; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012).

Other aspects of creative work in particular concern the ways in which aspects of public use and value become commodified and valorized within capitalist dynamics. Drawing on autonomist Marxist theory (Hardt and Negri, 2001; Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 2004) has allowed commentators to analyse the ways in which works performed and produced as part of collective social endeavour become appropriated under market relations, and spaces in which they are performed often become commodified in the process (De Peuter, 2011; Harvey, 2012).

Other aspects that have been highlighted in the literature concern the specific nature of creative labour. One aspect of particular importance is the distinctive role of

professional autonomy within creative work (Banks, 2010a; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012; Oakley, 2009). Banks (2010a) argues that autonomy is a defining feature in creative work, and that it is best understood as mapped along an axis of art and commerce. For him, creative labour resists the abstraction and standardization that capitalism can enforce upon other forms of labour due to consumers' demands for visible authorship. This tension remains in creative labour, as workers mostly independently negotiate it in complex ways. This does not just concern autonomy at the level of ideas and authorship, but it also touches on the production process. In this respect, several studies have noted the continued importance of craft labour (Banks, 2010a, 2010b; Hughes, 2012; Sennett, 2009). Creative labour resists industrial methods of production and is often based around strong commitment to process, method, aesthetics and a strong identification with the end product. In urban contexts, artisanal and craft-based forms of productions have resurged in the sectors of food and clothing, among others, often with a strong focus on creative distinction.

There is on-going research into the experiences of creative workers with respect to these salient aspects of their labour, and to what extent there is a detrimental effect on their quality of working life and wellbeing. There is a need to further investigate the ways in which some of these aspects that are specific to creative work interact with one another, and how they can be understood as part of the discourse of creative work and the lived reality of workers within it.

A number of commentators have emphasized the need for further study of the empirical realities of creative work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012; Ross, 2009), and especially in relation to mostly urban environments in which they take place (McRobbie, 1998). This is relevant given the high propensity for urban areas to gentrify in conjunction with a high prevalence of creative work (Harvey, 2012; Zukin, 2010). In particular, there remains a need to study the ways in which these various aspects become woven into the fabric of daily life, and how they become embodied within everyday lived realities of these workers.

Many aspects of creative work stand in apparent contradiction to one another. For example, creative workers' attachment to autonomy sits uneasily alongside the need for collaboration and the shared capacity of means of production that characterizes much creative production. Another question that could be raised is how the strong self-identification with one's output is managed alongside appearing flexible and employable within rapidly changing and chaotic labour markets.

Gill and Pratt (2008: 27) point out that much recent empirical research on creative work that has drawn on autonomist Marxism, which while very much focused on affect, has tended to overlook notions of hegemony and transgression:

When juxtaposed with the growing body of empirical research on cultural work, however, the autonomist tradition has both added insights and thrown up tensions. The notions of 'immaterial labour' and 'affective labour' that are so central to this work are rather ill-defined and not sharp enough to see the ways in which cultural work is both like and not like other work. Moreover, the emphasis upon affect as positive, transgressive potential has made it difficult for autonomist writers to see the other roles affect may play – not simply in resisting capital but binding us to it. A fuller understanding needs to grasp both pleasure and pain, and their relation to forms of

exploitation that increasingly work through dispersed disciplinary modalities and technologies of subjecthood.

This article addresses precisely this concern around affect in creative work. This is done by applying the work of Glynos and Howarth (2007) on discursive logics to accounts from an empirical case study of musicians, in order to understand the ways in which dominant social grammars and potentially transgressive counter-identifications reproduce themselves within the working lives of creative freelance workers. Such affect is woven into the daily practice of work, the identifications that people construct in relation to their practice, the contexts in which they find themselves embedded and the surfaces upon which they project their ambitions, anxieties and desires. As such, this research aims to contribute to established literatures on the cultural industries and organization studies by introducing a concept of affect that operates both through and against dominant social practices within creative work.

This article seeks to contribute to the literature on creative work (Banks, 2010a; Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Lee, 2011; Morgan et al., 2013; Oakley, 2009) by considering alongside each other potentially contradictory aspects of everyday working life in the cultural industries, such as the desire for autonomy, a commitment to networking, accessing relevant labour markets, sharing resources and establishing oneself within communities of peers. By reading these through the lens of social and political logics, it becomes possible to interpret these as part of either dominant social grammars or political counter-logics, which work together to reproduce specific characteristics of creative labour (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012).

In addressing affect, this article will also contribute to studies that have used this concept to illuminate relations between identity, discourse and organization (Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010; Kenny, 2012; Kenny and Fotaki, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2008). Such work has highlighted how selfhood is produced not merely through the power of dominant discourses to exclude or marginalize alternative voices, but also through libidinal investments and transgressive gestures that occur in and through work and organizational spaces (Dashtipour, 2014; Ekman, 2013; Glynos, 2011; Glynos et al., 2014). This study seeks to extend such insights to freelance creative work, and introduce Glynos and Howarth's (2007) framework as a way of understanding affect alongside determinative discursivity. Finally, this article seeks to connect such understanding of affect with extant literature on commons, affective and immaterial labour (De Peuter, 2011; Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 2004) and wider discussions of emerging patterns in capitalist work organization (Harvey, 2012).

Case study: The labour of musicians

In order to evaluate the questions raised, this article will look at the role of discourse and affect within the creative labour of musicians through an empirical case study. The working lives of musicians are especially well suited for examining constitutive discourses of creative work, the identifications they give rise to and the role of affect within them. The dominance of for-profit organizations in this sector creates a situation where apparent contradictions in musicians' orientations and aspirations can develop. This is especially

visible in relation to popular music, where economic and aesthetic notions of value are often seen to be in conflict with each other. This is exemplified through music criticism and the glorification of creative artistic influence, but at the same time a prominence of market indicators, such as charts and industry award shows. Such tensions can also come into play lower down the food chain, where musicians feel they have to balance artistic musical pursuits against entertainment-focused work that is more likely to be well paid. It is easy to see how positioning oneself in a competitive labour market to such disparate ends can be challenging at the level of identity. I will explore such tensions in much greater detail within the data of this case study, after looking at some specific elements of the music industry and musical labour.

Issues facing self-employed creative workers are particularly visible in the field of music, because of a profound asymmetry between large and small actors in the field of production. The sector has long been characterized by a presence of large multinational corporations (major record companies), alongside a largely atomized field of small-time players such as independent labels, freelance musicians, promoters and venue owners. The lack of mid-sized firms is particularly striking. For self-employed musicians and small firms, this means that there is a high need for forging social connections, seeking out work opportunities and advertising themselves. At the same time, musicians often rely on alliances, peer networks and other forms of non-competitive association in order to stay active. The music industry is largely comprised of private sector organizations, primarily based on the exploitation of copyright (Wikström, 2009) involved in the use and distribution of recorded output. However, an additional form of production with associated income is live performance. This has grown significantly in recent years, driven by decreasing record sales, digitalization of music and an increasing public demand for large-scale music events, though an extensive grassroots network of live music production is maintained by promoters, musicians and audiences (Cluley, 2008). One defining characteristic of the music industry is the dominance of a few oligopolistic multinational companies and a proliferation of much smaller actors, mainly consisting of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and freelance workers. As such, there is no significant 'middle', which means that these few multinational companies have a disproportionate influence (Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Negus, 1999).

As a cultural industry, the music industry revolves around the production of texts whose primary value is symbolic (Hesmondhalgh, 2012), and which may combine to varying degrees market-based revenue with public subsidies. As O'Connor states, 'This is not simply a question of "art" and "the market"; this is part of it, but the market in "cultural commodities" has a long history and "artists" have long been at home with it' (2010: 9). The work of musicians can fall into a number of different categories: performance, composition, arranging, recording and engineering. Common to almost all musicians is the maintenance and development of their craft, which is done through regular and dedicated practice, both individual and collective. And finally, many musicians also teach in order to supplement their income. In order to work as professionals, musicians have to be highly adaptable. Umney (2016) demonstrates the lively and continuously negotiated nature of urban labour markets for performing freelance musicians, and the ways in which the institutional and legal environment shape the types of employment musicians seek. There is a strong influence on entrepreneurship (Coulson, 2012) and

being able to meaningfully resymbolize aspects of one's social context in order to connect with audiences (Toynbee, 2000).

The empirical case study for this article is taken from a wider ethnographic project in which the nature and conditions of freelance labour are researched, consisting of participant observation, interviews and documentary analysis. The data for this article comes primarily from 18 in-depth interviews, along with wider material that forms part of this research project, including 12 months of documented participant-observation, informal interactions and study of music media, industry reports and policy documents. The author is active as a musician in UK pop and jazz music scenes, and this has allowed for the development of first-hand insights into the nature of musical work, the particularities of the musical labour process and the political economy of music. All participants were informed about the nature of the research, and any accounts of incidents that may be of a sensitive nature have been left out.

In terms of sampling, a core number of musicians was selected and approached, all based within the west of the UK. After this, snowball sampling was used. The musicians interviewed for this research work as freelancers, meaning that they are not formally employed on salaried contracts, and instead rely on multiple clients for income. In order to focus strictly on professional musicians, only those who make their income from musical performance, composition, teaching and the direct coordination of any of these activities were interviewed. All interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed. Field notes and diaries were used to generate initial ideas and guide preliminary interpretations, as well as to provide insight into the contextual aspects of musical labour.

Social, political and fantasmatic logics

In order to conceptualize dynamics of identification and affect in the everyday practice of creative workers I will turn to the work of Glynos and Howarth (2007), who distinguish between social, political and fantasmatic logics in shaping social relations.

This framework has the benefit of allowing for the conceptualization of shared norms and social grammars of everyday work within lived experience without reducing these to straightforward intentions on the part of interviewees. As such, it allows the researcher to retain possibilities for capturing and reflecting on hesitations, doubt and apparently contradictory sentiments and to consider the social and political complexity that such data might reflect. In this sense, Glynos and Howarth's framework allows us to respond to Gill and Pratt's (2008) call for studying the role of discourse, affect and transgression within creative work, as mentioned above. Crucially, Glynos and Howarth's notion of political logics allows us to conceptualize the affective attachment to and peripatetic transgression of shared norms. Allowing for the affect and identity work behind normalized social practices is especially important in understanding freelance workers. Their consistency of working life does not reside here within a formalized employment relationship, or even what may be called a psychological contract. The fabric of the freelance working life resides within the lived relationship with the process and output of one's labour, and the internalization of one's place within the broader socio-economic context (encompassing both markets and networks of production). For these reasons, it is important to draw on a conceptual and methodological framework that allows such dynamics to be carefully understood.

Glynos and Howarth place their work within the theoretical work of Laclau, Lacan and Heidegger in order to reconceptualize epistemological and methodological approaches to the study of power, hegemony, politics and fantasy within specific social contexts. The authors present a systematic epistemological framework for social science research based on explanation and critique, which combines ontical (what exists) and ontological (what makes them possible) categories. In doing this, Glynos and Howarth's approach aims to provide a way of resolving the deep paradigmatic schism between positivist approaches modelled on the natural sciences and aimed at discovery of causal mechanisms, and interpretive approaches based within the hermeneutical tradition aimed at contextualized self-interpretations. Their framework navigates this by basing itself within a negative ontology, which holds that social relations are radically contingent: 'from this perspective, practices are governed by a dialectic defined by incomplete structures on the one hand, and collective acts of subjective identification that sustain or change those incomplete structures on the other' (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 14). In this way, their framework allows for the study of human behaviour and social grammars alongside the affective attachments and investments that give them their consistency and inevitability. In approaching the study of a specific social object of analysis, this approach allows us to understand how certain practices and regimes constitute that object. The key to conceptualizing this constitutive process is Glynos and Howarth's notion of logics, which provides a grammar of explanation and critique to the framework.

Glynos and Howarth argue 'the logic of a practice comprises the rules or grammar of the practice, as well as the conditions which make the practice both possible and vulnerable' (2007: 136). This tension is cast in their framework as the relationship between social and political logics, and this tension becomes a surface through which affects within a certain discursive frame are articulated. Such affects may take the form of transgression, defense or ambivalence, to name examples.

Social logics for Glynos and Howarth (2007: 137) refer to the rules and norms that are evident within social regimes and practices. These social logics are a function of the contextualized self-interpretations of social actors, as they are shared across those embedded within social practices. Political logics, on the other hand, concern the radical contingency within social logics. They can best be characterized as the diachronic axis of a social practice or regime, as opposed to the synchronic axis that is represented through the social logic: 'political logics account for the historical emergence and formation of a practice by focusing on the conflicts and contestations surrounding its constitution' (Glynos, 2008: 5 **FAQ: 1**). Political logics therefore describe the processes that naturalize and sediment social logics. At the same time, they represent an instability at the heart of a social logic, in pointing towards unrealized potentiality, contradiction or inconsistency within the fabric of hegemonic social practices (see Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 141 onwards). This is the case because the very historical institution of a social logic also presupposes the possibility of dislocation of that social practice. Political logics represent 'the means to explore the conditions of possibility and vulnerability of social practices and regimes by focusing on the latter's *contestation* and *institution*' (2007: 15). This ambivalence will be used in this article to trace tensions within the accounts of interviewees, which reveal how their identification with work, its outputs and its market embodies ambiguous and contrasting elements. In this way, political

logics can also be used to open up a space of critique in relation of that which is being studied, since it allows the contingency of social relations to be perceived.

Within this framework, a third set of logics are distinguished: fantasmatic logics are supplementary to the relationship between social and political logics. These underlie the tension between social and political logics. Inspired by psychoanalytic theory, the notion of the fantasmatic logic is used to denote the specific ways in which the disconnect between the hegemony of social logics and their radical contingency (political logics) is obscured. The fantasmatic relationship concerns the way in which a subject is 'gripped' by ideology (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 145), through the libidinal investments it makes in it. Fantasy concerns the way in which the malleability and incomplete nature of social logics is disguised and explained away through utopian or dystopian visions of one's situated self-interpretation within a constellation of logics.

In the course of analysing the empirical data, this framework of logics was used both methodologically and conceptually, to distinguish the different affective modes contained within the relevant discourses.

Social logics were conceptualized as expected or self-evident modes of behaviour and visible norms of conduct and transaction within interviewees' accounts, supported by data from participant observation and diaries. Social logics are understood here to operate on the surface of the interviewee's discourse, through the dominant signification of people's accounts. Social logics are a grammar that structures action and self-understanding of subjects, and as such would feature strongly in the account that interviewees give of their behaviour and their agency. However, this is not to say that interviewee narratives do not reveal more than was intended. As political logics are understood as the limit of social logics, this is the precise point at which they are employed in the analysis.

Political logics were used in identifying moments where breaks in the broader narratives of interviews were visible, or where interviewees appeared to contradict themselves. Such moments of dislocation provide a momentary glimpse of the radical contingency of social arrangements. Given that political logics are understood as both an instituting *and* a transgressive logic, sensitivity was maintained to the way in which apparent contradictions in the narrative, ambiguities, asides or humorous remarks could be thought to relate to dominant social norms. Conceptualizing political logics within the data therefore necessitated reflecting on how seeming contradictions can become written into dominant identities and practices, and how transgressive counter-narratives can function to prop up the social hegemony of those norms.

Fantasmatic logics were used only across the data, to speculate on broader ideological tenets that held up the sense made throughout the accounts. Due to space constraints, the analysis below will be restricted to social and political logics.

Analysis: Logics of creative labour

In the next sub-sections, I will use these logics as a heuristic for analysing musicians' accounts of their work, in order to explore how social hegemony and political possibilities are knotted together within freelance musical labour, and how fantasy underpins the identities of musicians.

Social logic: Employability

Many freelance musicians are engaged in cultivating, maintaining and marketing a variety of different skills in order to get work. Here is an example of a jazz musician in such a situation, describing his various areas of expertise:

teaching work, compositional work, and what else do I do . . . like theatre work, so it's mainly about dipping your feet into as many bowls of water as possible basically just to keep afloat and have work.

Such diversity in skills, even for musicians who specialize in a certain genre or platform, is common. When freelancing, a musician's ability to cater to diverse demands and contexts is something that advantages them over their peers. This concerns not only musical abilities and repertoire, but also as an *interpretive* repertoire that allows them to make the 'case' for getting a gig to a potential client. In such cases, musicians pride themselves on their ability not only to scope out opportunities and get their foot in the door, but also on creating opportunities themselves. In the following excerpt, a musician talks about how he approached a venue owner for a gig:

Interviewee: And he seemingly was throwing money at bands, I mean it's . . . it's you know.

Interviewer: Yeah, it doesn't happen much [Crosstalk] . . .

Interviewee: It does not happen basically, you know? So actually, I made that job. I actually approached him and I said, 'Well you see, you've been called [venue name, which explicitly emphasizes live music]. You've mentioned the prospect of having music all day.' So I said, 'Well listen, myself and my friend would be happy to come in to do some lunch time slots for you if you want?' and he was more than enthusiastic about it, provided that we played the kind of covers he wanted us to play, which we never ended up doing.

In this excerpt, the interviewee, a session piano player, describes how an entrepreneurial attitude is necessary to create possibilities for paid engagements. His account shows how having a feel for nascent demand is a key part of working as a musician, along with a willingness to submit to the demands of the employer, the occasion, and the audience.

This ability to create opportunities for paid work is often linked by musicians to their abilities to create rapport with crowds, their musical skills, their repertoire, and promoting themselves, among other things. Below, a musician gives an account of how live performance is reliant on and linked to self-promotion and salesmanship:

So I guess, say for example in September when my masters is finished I would probably see myself maybe in what I think I will earn 60–40 in terms of teaching and playing. Now, under those two things comes a lot of other stuff like – say for example when you are playing, probably 20 percent of that or half of that being, half of that 40 percent is going to be advertising

myself and the skills needed in forming contacts. Putting your name out there, getting a pretty website, yeah, keeping kind of in touch with people and then kind of advertising people with what we already got, that I find that is probably the largest part of or a huge part of playing publicly, chasing people up to try and make contacts and then chasing up to get gigs and contacting people and venues that you've tried to contact already – it takes a lot of time. And I guess maybe once you're at a certain level that might be okay if you got a huge amount of contacts but, I envisage it will take a lot more effort if I really want to get into that.

Here, this session musician gives a detailed breakdown of which types of labour make up his income. He also describes how 'playing', income from live performances, is reliant on a large amount of self-entrepreneurial activity: gaining and maintaining a reputation within the club circuit, approaching venues in various ways, crafting PR materials and so on. He also intimates that such work continues even when one becomes fairly well established, and that it must be considered as inherent in the playing of music for a living.

Jazz musicians are the ultimate merchants of employability as their core skills lie in improvisation, which opens them up to a wide variety of work. Their specialization, performing jazz music, is often a specialist occupation that is highly competitive and therefore often low-paid, whereas other styles might be more lucrative but also further away from their primary interest. This can make for a sharp division of one's labour:

You're partly playing because you enjoy it but it's a strange mix because actually, ultimately, you're playing for people's enjoyment. Because it's no good playing, getting right into your own stuff if there's no one enjoying what you're doing because . . . I don't know, there's some degree of interaction you have to have with the people that are listening . . . But, yeah, and I know from other people sort of who have gone a bit further down the road in terms of using their performing skills as a kind of more viability in making lots of money and they do have to play a lot more of the poppy stuff, you know? Some of them enjoy it. I mean, there was a drummer I knew who got a contract, signed with an indie band. He actually loved it but he is an incredible jazz player as well so he just sort of, for him it's more of kind of like – this is what I love and this is what I do for a job. It's kind of, you know, in terms of playing jazz and then playing the indie stuff, the whole thing is, it's just a performing pool, you know, to make the money out of it. But I think for myself, if I'm advertising myself as a performer, I would put on the advertising, happy to play any styles, you know? I put that, 'I play classical', I put that 'I accompany', I put that, 'I can play weddings', whatever, that kind of stuff. That's not an accurate description of what I would really like to do all the time but I have to make myself available. I can play classical stuff and I can play pop stuff so I'll advertise on that, you know.

This musician starts out here in his account by emphasizing the importance in internalizing, as a performing musician, the demands of the audience. He makes a link between catering to the whims of audiences and financial success here, and goes on to explore how to manage the perceived tension between 'what I love' and 'what I do for a job', citing an example of another musician who has been able to fully separate these apparently competing conceptions of one's work into different engagements. I will explore this tension in more detail below, under the topic of political logics. The signifier 'job' is here used as a way of indicating an instrumental activity, for the sake of economic

ends, as opposed to aesthetic choices. A job implies an employer – this is a powerful metaphor that directly connects to the logic of employability. Within this excerpt, we can see a self-evident assumption of the need to be employable for musicians, of being seen and perceived as multi-skilled in the market.

Representative of other accounts, this musician expresses the sentiment that employability is something that creates artistic freedom, through the stable employment and concomitant income it brings. As such, for him the notion of being a professional jazz musician is tied up with being a versatile entertainer. This is exemplary for how the theme of employability runs through the accounts of musicians in this research, with the notion of audience and consumer demand taking a self-evident role in their understanding of their work, or as one interviewee puts it: ‘there is a degree to which you have to make yourself, what’s the word viable, saleable and yeah . . . be the jack of all trades’.

The notion of employability can be understood to operate as a social logic, given that it is clearly present in interviewees’ self-interpretations. Employability emerges here as a set of skills and sensitivity towards what potential employers and audiences might want. To be employable means to hold out a certain desirability to those groups, cultivate a performative stance that reflects this, and be able to create opportunities for paid work. This is perhaps an obvious point, given that paid jobs are needed to provide for oneself, but goes further than that since this logic works in an anticipatory way, thereby shaping their development.

Political logic: Craft

At the same time, the unequivocal embrace of being ‘valued in the market’ represents a problem for many musicians, something that undermines their credibility as serious artists. The notion of the ‘market’ is often equated with a levelling of aesthetic quality, and of a blatant commodification of music to satisfy the lowest common denominator. To acquiesce to market demands too far means ‘selling out’ one’s ideal artistic vision in favour of the sole draw of money and fame. We find examples of this in Cluley’s (2008) account of the labour of independent musicians, who are emphatic in their attachment to independent record labels and a do-it-yourself ethic in everything from recording, production, merchandise, distribution to gig promotion. This identification is very much based on the assumption that major record companies epitomize the standardization and commodification of music, suppressing rather than representing aesthetic and political ideals of autonomy and creativity. The ‘industry’ is here synonymous with an abandonment of creative ideals and taking pride in one’s craft, for the sole purpose of the instrumental rationality of musical market success.

These dynamics can be further analysed using Glynos and Howarth’s notion of political logics. It is useful here to return briefly to an earlier quote, in which we can see the social logic of employability and this political logic of craft side by side:

Interviewee: It does not happen basically, you know? So actually, I made that job. I actually approached him and I said, ‘Well you see, you’ve been called [venue name, which explicitly emphasizes live music]. You’ve mentioned the prospect of having music all day.’ So I said, ‘Well listen,

myself and my friend would be happy to come in to do some lunch time slots for you if you want?’ and he was more than enthusiastic about it, provided that we played the kind of covers he wanted us to play, which we never ended up doing.

We can see here in a very short excerpt the way in which two logics play out in relation to each other. The musician describes how he scopes out dormant demand in the market, and how he then goes about creating a paid job after convincing the club owner. He professes adapting his group’s abilities to cater for the precise audience demands (‘the kind of covers he wanted us to play’) – but then in a jocular way, asserts his artistic license to wholly abandon that commitment (‘which we never ended up doing’). I argue that the latter turn in conversation points to the political logic of craft.

The political logic of craft often came up in this research when musicians indicated that being too instrumental is akin to selling out one’s credibility, dignity or moral principles for a fast buck. Take the following example of a musician on playing function gigs:

Interviewer: Is that something that bothers you? [Doing function work where the actual music is less important than the image of having jazz musicians playing]

Interviewee: Yes, it is, it’s completely the wrong attitude towards music but then you sort of become a prostitute to your business because you get paid more for that sort of thing and you have to take it because if you don’t take that then someone else will and it’ll never come again. Well . . . it might do but you’re less likely to have it, but it’s a vicious game. It’s not very good to be honest, I should probably just become a banker! It’s something worth going at though, if you love it just keep ploughing through and trying to make things work.

The interviewee here, a jazz bassist, uses the metaphor of prostitution here to emphasize the shamefulness he perceives in performing in situations where the musical text (see also Hesmondhalgh, 2012) itself is less important than its context (here, the look of the band). The analogy is powerful and revealing in this case. The responsibility of musicians, he seems to imply, is *moral* rather than merely driven by the economic necessity of subsistence. This is then immediately linked into a narrative that draws on the social logic of employability: not doing such gigs means potentially losing a valuable contact in terms of future function gigs.

This denunciation of economic considerations came up more often. In the following excerpt, a film and TV composer describes how location is important to get well-paid jobs, but also considers such considerations somehow too instrumental:

London is really where you need to be, or Los Angeles, you need to go where the work is essentially. Whoever’s got the most money, that’s where you should go (laughs). That’s horribly cynical and you know mercenary way of thinking, but that’s the reality.

Here again, we see that economic considerations of labour markets and remuneration are cast in a dubious light, suggesting that aesthetic dedication to the art itself should be primary. But in doing so, this excerpt shows a key role of the political logic: it undercuts

the dominant social logic. Here, the interviewee manages to convey in just a few sentences how one is necessarily driven by economic consideration, *even though* that is wrong. The social logic dominates, but it is nevertheless inhabited and contradicted on the surface by the political logic.

Such pronouncements on ‘selling out’ one’s credibility and integrity are and have long been commonplace among musicians (see Becker, 1951). What emerges from such statements is an idealized image of professional values internal to being a musician, formulated to spell out what differentiates the artist from the market actor. It relies on the well-worn idea that professionalism for creative workers can only exist at an arm’s length from the market. While freelance musicianship relies on money earned from function and club gigs, record sales, publishing and private teaching, such activities are presented as somehow detrimental to the creative process. This recalls visions of the notion of craft, in which one pursues a given task with a dedication that is internal to the process of production, and only disciplined by peers (Banks, 2010b; Sennett, 2009). This resonates with analyses of communities of practice as involved in the pursuit of internal goods that operate according to their own sets of negotiated standards, norms and rules. Value is here signified within the context of a central practice that organizes the community of practitioners, and has been conceptualized as an alternative economy by some academics (see Banks, 2007, 2010b).

In the above analysis, the political logic of craft is mostly presented as something that *transgresses* the social grammar of being employable, being subject to the economic demands of the market in a committed and proactive manner. However, there is also a sense in which this political logic of craft *makes possible* the logic of employability. As a concept, employability relies on the definition and assessment of skills and standards of professionalism, which are primarily the product of the historical development of music as a discipline, and the promulgation of the aesthetic standards to which musicians are held by their peers. These are not grounded within an economic notion of value, but rather an aesthetic and community-based ethos. As such, craft is vital in the institution of employability as a social logic, because of the need for distilling and reproducing the skills that the market rates musicians on. In this way, we can see the complex role that political logics play in relation to hegemonic social practices.

In the next section, I will explore aspects around collectivity further.

Social logic: Virtuosity

While much of the literature on creative work highlights the centrality of autonomy (Banks, 2010a; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012; Oakley, 2009), this study’s subjects placed a stronger emphasis on collective aspects of work. These musicians demonstrated a strong reliance on local networks of peers such as promoters, record labels, club owners and those who own key resources such as studios and PA equipment. In a wider sense, this is indicative of how music is manufactured in a complex set of relations, relying heavily on stratified local networks. Almost inevitably, these networks become bound up with musicians’ social lives. In a job with no set working hours outside of performance (when most other people are off work), the distinction between work and free time becomes blurred.

Some scholars have argued that advanced capitalism is increasingly commodifying aspects of social relations that were not previously considered to be work. This implies a

gradual move towards immaterial rather than material forms of labour (Lazzarato, 1996). The labour of musicians lends itself exceptionally well to a reading through the prism of immaterial labour, since it satisfies its two criteria of symbol-making (re-signification of earlier fragments of meaning) and affective labour (intersubjective work necessary to connect meaningfully to others). Creative workers who identify strongly with their work migrate relatively fluently across these realms of work and life (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012). This is not a by-product of their work life; their position in a network of social significance is *necessary* for them to re-signify the content they produce, and reflected in their emotional investment in it.

Using a term put forward by Virno (2004), I will argue that in addition to the social logic of employability, freelance musicians' labour is structured by a social logic of *virtuosity*, which is primarily located in the social context in which immaterial value is produced. In the context of intellectual property and embodied stage performance, a notion of labour based on a circumscribed end product, a clear labour process and a separable set of tasks is not helpful. Rather, creative labour necessitates responding with fluency, sensitivity and skills to the efforts of others, in harmony with the wider social context. This can be seen in musicians' reflexive awareness of their investment in a wider peer network. For example, they depend on promoters and agents for the gigs and tours that they are offered, and on their peers to spot opportunities for paid jobs or forms of association that help build a reputation. They often rely on fellow musicians' equipment to perform and on contacts and favours to do their recording at below-market rates. Such networks are carefully built up over years of local involvement and rely heavily on association with musicians and intermediaries, on one's perceived standing in terms of musical ability and artistic credibility. These networks are strongly hierarchical but rarely acknowledged as such.

The presence on the scene and being heard by other musicians is vitally important. In the following quote, a jazz musician describes how he considers both performances with musicians that he does not know very well, as well as simply attending gigs, as central in maintaining his professional musicianship:

Ok, for me the reason, how it's worked is I just got to college and became friendly with [local jazz musician], the guitarist who runs the [name] Jam, and just being friends with him and obviously seeing, he's older than me, and just seeing the way he blags things basically and talks to everybody, and just has a confidence and a love of music, and that sort of thing just opened my eyes and being able to talk to anybody and ask stuff so, I mean the jam session's a case in point because we do it as a residency at the moment and we get guest tutors that come down and there's some great modern guys in the pipeline, and it's just little things like that where you're playing with all these different people, and they'll remember that they played and eventually hopefully you'll get to work with them because they know you've played and they know that you can hold down a sort of form, so if they're really desperate, because that's what it is, if they're really desperate and they just get someone, that's when you've got a foot in the door. Because that happens, what gigs have I done that have just been last minute? . . . none really come to my head but there's all sorts and you just get more from it. So it's good to pursue, you don't have to really be like on your game all the time but being present is a big thing about it so it's something I'm thinking about now, there's a gig, you know [famous UK jazz musician]? They're playing at [local jazz club] tonight and I don't know whether to go or not, and I'm just

thinking will it be good for me to go. Not just for listening because I'm not a fan of that music anyway but just because [famous UK jazz musician] is a name and just to be present might be a good thing. So that's something I need to think about. I don't know, that's just a few things I've been taught.

Social logics operate on the surface of discourse, through the dominant signification of people's accounts. In this quote typical for many other interviewees, the musician argues that it is not so much his abilities that get him employed, as it is his presence within a social network. He is self-deprecating about his abilities, since 'hold[ing] down some sort of form' would not be considered nearly enough for a musician at his level. He makes the point that 'being present' in social networks with other musicians is crucial for him to get hired. He distinguishes this from 'being on your game', which he associates with approaching people directly for opportunities ('blag[ging] things', 'asking for stuff'), which is much more like the social logic of employability discussed above.

In this sense, the structuring logic of the social network plays a role that is separate from the logic of employability, in that it embeds the musician within a community of peers who have formed an assessment of them, fomented in the form of a reputation. But this is not based on musical performance alone. The fact that he says this is what he has 'been taught' illustrates how it is a sedimented practice that structures musicians' actions.

Musicians also engage in mutual favours to maintain a relationship with peers. One example of this is to invite other acts to share a performance slot. This allows bands to create allegiances, something that may be beneficial in building a reputation. Virtuosity is here the ability to operate as part of a common ground of peers and audiences. We can see an image emerging here of the music scene as a kind of commons: sharing means of production, based on a non-economic concept of value. Through the prism of virtuosity, music is presented as something that is to be judged not as something defined by market popularity or profitability, but by aesthetic and social value. Here a label owner describes the main ideas behind the record label she runs:

The ethos of the label is, what I really wanted to do is I suppose to bring together the musicians and the bands that are doing kind of similar things musically and I suppose create our own scene for that kind of music and I think to a certain extent we've achieved that. Of the four core bands on the label, [names bands], there's a real family feeling about it and a lot of the musicians you know, they'll record together, they'll play a lot of the same gigs together. If a band is a member down then a musician from another band will stand in and dep [cover] for it. So I love that, we've achieved that, and that was the initial thing. What I really like about it, things I couldn't have foreseen, but they seem to be working now. I never saw the label as an entity in its own right, it's always about the bands, but actually it's quite different. The label is an entity made up of those collectively and as one succeeds in one area, the others are perceived to be doing well by proxy, and combined, it's difficult to explain, but combined all of their profiles are rising, if one good thing happens for one band it reflects on everyone.

By referring to the record label as a family, stressing the collaborative aspects between musicians and using the metaphor of a synergy between musicians, a specific idea of community comes to the fore in this excerpt. The label owner describes how resources such as studio access are pooled, and how platforms and opportunities such as tours and

significant gigs are shared between label mates. This extends to labour as well, in that musicians form part of a common pool of labour by learning each other's repertoire and replacing each other when needed. Statements such as this outline a social norm of how musicians as peers co-exist and how they connect to audiences. The scene, cast elsewhere in the interviews as a site of competition (employability) or a professional discipline (craft), is here understood through the metaphor of community.

However, in order to operate as part of such mutual common ground, one must be attuned to what is considered desirable, both for peers and for audiences. While social connectedness is something that musicians accept as a necessary and important part of their everyday working lives, its centrality relies on being *recognized* within such networks. While virtuosity represents the normative push for connectedness, such networks rely on the judging and ranking of peers, and therefore on individualization and exclusion. For this, the notion of autonomy within one's work is a necessary supposition. While functioning as a constitutive element of virtuosity, such individualization also represents the limit of the grammar of virtuosity. I will therefore explore this notion of autonomy as a political logic within the following section.

Political logics: Autonomy

As such, this social logic of virtuosity finds its roots as well as its apparent contestation within a political logic. Coolness and social desirability in aesthetic terms often rely on critical exclusion, the ranking of artists' work against each other, and strongly stratified networks in which endorsements are not easily extended, as they would have immediate implications for one's own standing. This jars significantly with a view of the music scene as a mutualized, common ground that operates on principles of equality and inclusion. At the same time, virtuosity as a widespread social practice can only function through the necessary naming, individualizing and storying of individual reputations, work output and aesthetic contributions. In this, we can see a similar dynamic of constitutive and transgressive dynamics that typify political logics for Glynos and Howarth (2007).

This political logic within musicians' discourse crucially revolves around the individuality of creative work. This dynamic is strongly based within the concept of the 'authentic' artist, which can be readily recognized in the interviewees quoted by Oakley (2009). While musicians commonly define their work through the rapport with their audiences, and the collaborative activity they engage in with peers, they can also be observed attributing the essence of musicianship to individuality. In interviewees' responses this came up as 'expressing myself' and 'doing my own thing', which resonates with Oakley's (2009: 288) respondents as a personal commitment to fulfil one's responsibility as an artist.

This can be seen in the interviews as musicians talk about their ambitions and their attitude to the wide variety of gigs they are working at. Some musicians express the view that they feel the need to artistically express themselves creatively regardless of the gig:

I know I can play things that are completely adequate and the people would think, oh that's a little bit jazz. And that's not what I want to do each time because I don't want to sort of create

something, I want to play something new. I wanted to try something out but I know, if I've had a really bad day or I've got a cold or whatever I could go and play something entirely adequate entertainment [sic] and some background music or whatever.

In this excerpt, the interviewee associates catering to what he perceives as the audience's tastes with what he somewhat derogatively calls 'adequacy' here. He seems to imply here that pandering to the whims of audiences leads to mediocrity, and does not constitute 'creat[ing] something'. Going beyond this requires a personal striving for more, for artistic originality. The interviewee emphasizes this by using the first person ('I want to') several times here, which seems to indicate that self-identity plays a strong role in this.

It also came up in the way that musicians described their attachment to the musician's life, emphasizing that they couldn't envisage themselves doing anything else. Here we can see the narrative hinting towards origins, the idea that one is predisposed to a life of music and unique in that sense:

I have never envisaged myself being in an office job. I would do it if I had to but I just . . . I feel like I need an outlet to get some sort of creativity and it's bizarre. So if I don't go for a long time without playing the piano sometimes I get a bit funny.

This was a common type of statement in interviews, expressing an almost innate need for creative effort. The interviewee here uses the metaphor of an 'outlet', suggesting creativity is bottled up within him. He also suggests that he has never imagined himself working a conventional job rather than a creative one, which is again a common theme among creative workers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012). This discourse of innate creativity is very different from the notions of craft, or social virtuosity, or economic savvy that we see elsewhere in the interviewees' discourses. However, it is not dominant in their account. It sits uneasily alongside ideas that stress the importance of efforts in the social scenes and marketplace that musicians are active in.

Some interviewees also stress the individuality of their musicianship, as we can see below:

It has been a very weird and lovely trip being a musician in [town] because I have never been one to overtly sell myself outside of just actually performing. I have always been very adamant about the fact that everything I do in terms of selling myself should be on stage and just on stage. Like I had no idea . . . I mean, people started coming up to me and they knew who I was because I was playing with a certain outfit. I didn't know who the hell they were. That's when I realised, actually, you don't have to be . . . you don't have to sell yourself in every corner in order to get a reputation, right?

What is notable about such excerpts is that they appear alongside those stressing the collective nature of music making. The function of the political logic is precisely this; it seemingly contradicts the dominant social logic, but at the same time it inhabits it. In doing so, it points to the radical contingency at the heart of hegemonic discourses that structure working life. We saw above that the political logic of craft occupies the point where the felt need of being employable becomes overwhelming for interviewees, where pressure of the market is felt to clash with the care necessary for creative labour. This

interviewee states that ‘selling myself should be on stage and just on stage’, meaning that his ability and individuality as a musician should speak for itself, rather than having to ‘sell yourself in every corner’ by ‘being on the game’ (to quote an earlier interviewee).

In a similar way, we here see how the social logic of virtuosity, of being embedded within and reliant on a social commons, runs into a contradiction at the point where internal hierarchies and processes of exclusion make themselves felt. The interviewee is here making a point of the distinguishability of his musicianship, but undercuts this by stating that it is his association with a certain outfit that gives him visibility. We can understand this as a tension between the social logic of virtuosity and the political logic of autonomy, which channels the dissatisfaction of musicians of being reliant on their social networks. At the same time, the social logic of virtuosity is crucially reliant upon a specific notion of individual autonomy, that allows reputations and individual contributions to be characterized and appraised.

Discussion

The case analysis above has sought to focus on the role of affect and discourse within creative work. In the case of musicians, we saw how using Glynos and Howarth’s framework of discursive logics can help to place into perspective various aspects of creative work that have been documented in much prior empirical work, and show how they may shape the identifications of creative workers. In the case study above, the notions of social and political logics, in particular, provided insight into how various key conceptions of musical labour together underpin the subjectivation of working musicians, and do so in very different ways. This provides important insight into the identifications that structure people’s relation to their work and the context in which they perform it. In particular, it brings out specific normative pressures that structure day-to-day activity, as well as constitutive or transgressive influences in relation to these social grammars. As we have seen, such tendencies can work both to contest and to reinforce social norms.

I have argued that how musicians represent their labour to the outside world is guided by a social logic of employability, in which they internalize the gaze of the market in how they orient and behave within their work locale. Here, the notions of entertainment and audience enjoyment become important, as are client perceptions related to skills. These notions are well represented in the accounts musicians give of their work, since they are well aware of the behaviours they themselves cultivate in response to the experienced need to be employable. This fits with a wider view that musicians adapt to the specific demands of their labour market and create market visibility for themselves that reflects this (Coulson, 2012; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012; Umney, 2016).

However, this study shows how the role of employability in structuring musicians’ behaviour is complex, as it is partly countered and partly reinforced through a political logic. Here, musicians often express a sense of guilt at becoming employable, or making life or career decisions that can be seen in the light of employability. From these expressions, a contradictory orientation can be seen. The social logic of employability is here peripatetically interrupted by a political logic that inhabits the social logic, which is much more embedded within the self-identities of musicians than their actual behaviour. It destabilizes the hegemony of the employability imperative, but at the same time its

insistence allows the subject to maintain that it is not defined by the social logic in question, the social imperative of being employable. It allows certain identity work to be positioned *against* one's behaviour. This operates in an analogical way to how cynicism ironically upholds workplace compliance (Fleming and Spicer, 2003), and links to recent research on the ways in which affect plays a role within identification processes at work (Dashtipour, 2014; Kenny and Fotaki, 2014; Glynos et al., 2014). The logic of employability is interspersed in such a way by a logic of craft that it lets musicians view their labour as primarily performed for their community of peers, rather than following the vagaries of the market. In short, it allows the worker to reframe their labour through a rationalized set of intentions, thereby replacing determinative pressures from the social context for an agential view of the self. That this tendency is not limited to musicians but is more widely the case for other freelancers is borne out by Storey et al. (2005), where we can see that an ethos of enterprise is a strong normative imperative for freelancers, and moreover more widely reflected in what Du Gay (1996) has called 'enterprise culture'. Driven by a desire to be entrepreneurial, the media freelancers studied by Storey et al. (2005) reproduced the discourse of enterprise even through their shortcomings; for example, by blaming the inability to obtain work on market failure rather than a hiatus in their skillset. The notion that work is not merely performed for economic necessity but is rather a reflection of a lifestyle or an artistic temperament can also be seen widely among creative workers (Hesmondhalgh, 2012; see also Morgan et al., 2013). Like many aspects of work in the cultural industries, we can see aspects of this reflected in the wider contemporary economy as well. The tension between a social logic and a political logic that functions in a transgressive manner will sometimes be exploited in organizational settings. In order to cultivate market niches, organizations have started using the lifestyles of employees (Endrissat et al., 2016), their professional and social identifications (Ross, 2003) and even deeply intimate aspects of their self-identity (Fleming, 2014) to strategically position themselves. This reflects a way in which anti-corporate political logics are used to essentially maintain the status quo in aid of corporate interests.

Similar contradictory dynamics apply to the relations between the individual and the collective for creative workers. In the case study, the second major social logic revolves around the means of production for musical labour. Here we can see how musical collectivities and the collaborative aspects of musical performance and production are highly significant in guiding the behaviours of musicians, who stress the importance of establishing contacts, being seen, allegiance to ethical working practices (such as independent scenes and record labels), among others. I have drawn a parallel between these practices and autonomist research (Harvey, 2012; Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 2004) that emphasizes the commons as the primary site of production within post-Fordist economies, and how capital seeks to appropriate such commons for the extraction of surplus-value (De Peuter, 2011). This is more widely reflected in creative work and the ways in which intellectual property and urban geography are valorized (Harvey, 2012; Ross, 2003; Zukin, 2010).

The use of the concepts of social and political logics help to further illuminate how the expropriation of commons can be inadvertently facilitated by the producers themselves. In the case study, the social logic of instrumental networking and cooperation is counteracted on the surface: musicians' accounts of their labour are often based within a

deep-seated attachment to autonomy, which is a common theme among creative workers (Banks, 2010a; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012; Oakley, 2009). Whereas their behaviour more strongly suggests that musical labour is a joint undertaking, heavily reliant on a social context and shared resources, musicians cultivate identity work that more strongly reflects solitary labour, which casts music as a personal project (resonating with notions of the project of the self and self-actualization, see also Ekman, 2013). I have suggested that this political logic of autonomy is indebted to a romanticized notion of creative work, which is itself a foundational narrative at the heart of the social logic of virtuosity, making it possible to individualize and hierarchize musicians' output. This in turn makes it possible to become what an interviewee above called 'a name', with which one might want to be associated. In this way we can see how the political logic of autonomy both institutes and undercuts the social logic of virtuosity.

This dual movement reflects the way in which affect is riven through both the daily practice of creative work and the identifications that sustain it. In recent years, the theory around affect has been used in studies of work and organization to demonstrate the complex ways in which processes of subjectification and identification shape selfhood and social arrangements in the world of work and organization (Kenny and Fotaki, 2014). Studies have picked up on the complex role of transgression of social norms (Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Stavrakakis, 2008), the role of desire in identification (Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010; Kenny, 2012) and fantasy (Ekman, 2013; Glynos, 2011), among others. The notion of affect has allowed researchers to conceptualize libidinal investment within discourse, and refraction of images of the self through idealized (or vilified) images that are introjected from the wider social context in which people find themselves. Affect allows for the continued co-presence of seemingly contradictory elements, tensions and ambiguities.

We can extend these insights into Boltanski and Chiapello's (2007) work on the way that capitalism has historically adapted to critiques external to it, evolving to incorporate the vocabulary and imagery of critique in order to neutralize its fundamental threat to capitalist value accumulation. Through the discursive logics framework of Glynos and Howarth (2007), such ideas can be mobilized in understanding the complex roles of discourse in structuring selfhood and social practice. Political logics here relate to the radical contingency of hegemonic social practices, which can take the role of defending or propping up the social order (such as through a referencing of origins), or it can transgress that order continually. A further understanding of the role of fantasmatic logics can point to the ways in which an underlying consistency is giving to such contradictions, paradoxes and parallels. Fantasy plays a key role in 'covering over' those moments where the radical contingency of the social manifests itself. Further implications can also be drawn for the use of discursive logics within ethnographic fieldwork. In particular, the notions of affect and fantasy are potentially relevant here. Recent contributions have explored the importance for researchers of taking affect into account (Kenny and Gilmore, 2014; Lapping, 2013).

The study presented here shows how seemingly competing accounts of oneself can not only appear side by side within the self-presentation of creative workers, but also how dominant social patterns within the daily socio-economic realities of creative work are reproduced through faux-contestations of them. Glynos and Howarth (2007) argue

such transgressive notions often recall earlier historical arrangements that have been displaced by current dominant social logics, or even how political logics were vital components of the institution of hegemonic social logics. We saw in the study of musicians that traditional notions of artists' craft and autonomy drive counter-identifications of the research subjects, but at the same time inhabit dominant social logics to fill the gaps in the indeterminacy and ambiguity of everyday lived experience.

The aspects discussed in this article demonstrate how social and political logics can shape the work ethic of freelance workers, on the level of lived social practices as well as the constitutive level of subjectivity. In some cases this is problematic, such as the way in which musicians' primary orientation to their peers allows behaviour to follow the pressures of employability relatively unhampered since 'the heart remains in the right place'. This is potentially damaging, as it enhances self-exploitation (for evidence among other freelancers, see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2012: 220–234). At the same time, however, the 'romantic' fantasmatic logic allows behaviour to follow the pressures of social virtuosity since individuals ultimately construe their work as expressions of individuality. But this is also potentially beneficial since it allows for a breeding ground for making common cause.

This article points to the need for a better understanding of lived experience and work context as a prerequisite for political action. The freelance workers in this study display an attachment to conflicting ideals that have a strong relation to their labour, and also have far-reaching implications for how they construct social commons and solidarity with others who share their plight. We can see that historical notions of the artist as someone who struggles alone, or as an outsider from civil society, *work in part to explain away the fractured identities* of these workers. They also, crucially, function to take *onto the self* the responsibility for the exploitative conditions of their working life. Such a situation is, however, produced by the structural conditions of working in a laissez-faire labour market. This ideological function notwithstanding, there is much reason for optimism when it becomes apparent how alternative notions of value are constructed in work contexts and peer networks, where means of production and work efforts are shared on the basis of peer recognition, barter and mutual favours.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Tim Kuhn, Associate Editor, and three anonymous referees for their helpful comments. Sam Warren and Phil Hancock also provided valuable feedback on an earlier draft of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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