The New DIY

Musicians as Entrepreneurs in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studied how Dutch pop musicians make use of intermediaries in the digital age. By means of conducting fifteen semi-structured in-depth interviews, several views and implications on careers in music in 2017 have emerged. This study adds up-to-date information to the ongoing debate between scholars whether digitization has caused disintermediation or reintermediation. Results show that the possibilities the online sphere has to offer, are frequently viewed as a new way to establish a career in music, as amounts of clicks, plays and views can feign popularity that might attract fans. However, live performances cannot falter, nor did respondents of this study know how to actually establish that online popularity they spoke off. Furthermore, the Dutch music industry is considered a secluded place, where traditional gatekeepers (i.e. radio-DJs and television producers) decide who gets the chance to stand on the national stage of traditional channels. Besides traditional gatekeepers, new gatekeepers have emerged with the rise of popular internet platforms like Spotify and Facebook. Digital playlist curators and algorithms call the shots in the online sphere. As a result of this complex partly digitized, partly still offline landscape, musicians still extensively use intermediaries during their careers. The DIY-career model is outdated, as no musician likes to do everything themselves, because they feel like they still need networks and skills of established industry professionals. On the other hand, artists like to stay independent and in control of their own career. Therefore, a new business model (The DIY Entrepreneur) has emerged, in which musicians 'cherry pick' whom they want to work with, how they want to work with them, and on what basis they want to work with them (i.e. based on Bourdieu's alternative capital).

KEYWORDS: *Dutch music industry, DIY, Cultural Entrepreneur, Intermediation, Alternative capital*

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1 Introduction

With the boom of the digital age, the global music industry has seen many changes. Online social networks, online distribution platforms like iTunes, online streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music, cheap and accessible recording equipment and software: this and many more tools have emerged in the past two decades. However, the music industry has been in transition for over 30 years now. In the late 1970s, music sales began to tumble, after decades of constant growth (Burnett, 1996, p. 45). The industry regained its former popularity when the compact disc entered the stage. The CD, officially released in 1982, caused the global sales of recorded music to grow from roughly $12 billion in the early 80s, to $29 billion in 1992 (Sen, 2014). More developments took place in the 90s, when the music industry discovered how to make revenues off musical rights, concretised as royalties (Burnett, 1996). When audio technologies, business models and networking converged with computing technologies, things started to change even more drastically than before. However, things not only changed for the music industry and the major labels that dominated the global sector, but also for musicians, who suddenly had more access to everything only industry professionals used to have access to.

In the past years, many scholars have elaborated on how the digitisation has transformed the way in which musicians try to make their way to success, and the potential decline of the industry's role therein. Technologies would have democratised the access to for instance distribution networks, recording software and a musician's audience (Fox, 2004; Arditi, 2014; Leyshon, 2001; McLeod 2005). On the other hand, scholars argue that this sense of disintermediation is an illusion and artists still need mediators for a successful career in music (Jones, 2001; Leyshon, 2001; Kretschmer, Klimis & Wallis, 2001; Galuszka, 2015; Hracs, 2015; Arditi, 2014; Young & Collins, 2010; Tuamola, 2004). To shed some light on this discussion, I will conduct a research based on in-depth interviews with the only source that could actually provide an answer that counts: musicians. This study will focus on professional Dutch pop musicians, who started their career somewhere over the past two decades. In these interviews I will focus on whether musicians feel like the digital age has made a disintermediated industry possible, and whether digitalisation boosted their independence as a musician, their social media practices, the actual impact these activities have on their careers, and other career-related topics. In this thesis I will endeavour to answer the following overarching research question:

How are Dutch pop musicians using intermediaries in the Digital Age?

1.1 Scientific & Societal relevance

Intermediation in the music industry is a topic that has been studied frequently. However, a study with a specific focus on Dutch pop musicians based on in-depth interviews is lacking, although this is a relevant topic anno 2017. A number of scholars have studied literature or specific cases about recent technological changes in the music industry, but did not get in touch with musicians to inquire them about their views on this matter (Arditi, 2014; Bailey & Bakos, 1997; Leyshon, 2001; McLeod, 2005; Tuomola, 2004). To know how technology has truly changed the musical landscape for artists, it is important to move away from written information and – simply – ask how musicians manage the digitised music industry. However, in Toronto, Brian Hracs (2011; 2012) devoted a great effort in researching the independent music scene; he conducted many interviews with independent musicians and workers in the industry, and studied career risks and change in the industry through technological developments. Hracs' studies are in line with the purpose of this research, but he neglected the signed musician in the digitised landscape. On top of that, his studies are focused on the North American music scene. The focus on both signed and unsigned musicians, as this thesis will hold on to, is rare. Young and Collins (2010) studied both groups on an interviews-basis, but their research was located in Australia. The Australian music industry, supposedly, has a complete different dynamic than the Dutch scene. By means of interviewing both dependent and independent artists, this study will reveal whether it is easier to make a career as a signed artist, or that being independent is an advantage nowadays.

As mentioned, this thesis will focus on the Dutch pop music industry, which has, due to geographical and linguistic reasons, a completely different dynamic than Toronto, Canada, or Australia. The above-mentioned studies were conducted in English-native countries that are 200 times The Netherlands' size. Koos Zwaan and companions have already studied the Dutch pop music scene in several ways and perspectives – questionnaires with musicians about how to break through in The Netherlands (Zwaan, ter Bogt & Raaijkmakers, 2009) and interviews with artist & repertoire managers of big players in the industry on what it takes to be noticed nowadays (Zwaan & Ter Bogt, 2009) –, but no interview-based research was conducted so far to reveal new insights on musical practices in the Dutch digitised music industry.

As this study is based on musicians in The Netherlands, the societal relevance of this thesis will be mostly country-based. According to a report associated with Kunstfactor, Popunie and &Concept (Bork, 2007), already half a million of the Dutch population actively plays pop music, and according to a slightly more recent report by Kunstfactor (Deekman, Heimans & Volz, 2011) 2.400.000 Dutchmen and women actively play music. This number, however, includes a lot of amateurs and even musicians that only play at home, but this sum shows that The Netherlands is full of musicians. However, another large-scaled study called "Pop, wat levert het op?" (Von der Fuhr, 2015) teaches us that the vast majority of the professional musicians earns below the average income. Knowing this, it is significant to determine professional practices amongst musicians and see where there might be space for improvement, for a better financial position for Dutch pop musicians. On top of that, with an initial push from music collective Popcoalitie, the Dutch minister of Education, Culture and Science announced an investment of a total amount of €4.250.000 between 2016 and 2020 in the Dutch pop music culture (Bussemaker, 2016). In her letter, minister Bussemaker explains the importance of music, musical education and talent development in The Netherlands. The letter explicitly mentions that globalisation, technological evolution and digitisation have made networks more informal and faster, which causes changes for musicians (Bussemaker, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, Bussemaker (2016) states that "the role of traditional labels has changed, amongst other things because of music services- and platforms like YouTube and Spotify. These changes have an impact on the entire chain and business models." (p. 2). This governmental investment in the Dutch pop music sector proves that there is a considerable attention and concern about the development of pop music. This research will shed more light on the actual position of the musician in the current digital landscape, and therefore contributes to this national interest.

2 Literature review

        Not a single essay, research or thesis can be carried out without first diving deep into the previously done research. This part of doing research is not only important because the researcher will have a thorough knowledge of the topic after doing this, but also because reading into existing knowledge will identify the gap that is yours to fill. Another reason to write a literature review is to grant your study a solid foundation to link conclusions to, and go into discussion with. For a general and overarching understanding of what it means to have a career in music, I shall outline ideas of the music industry as a creative (or cultural) industry of David Hesmondalgh (2006; 2009; 2013), and the changes that have occurred due to technological development. Consequently, a paragraph about disintermediation in the music industry will follow, outlining the different existent beliefs of this concept. Finally, characteristics of a career in music, with a specific focus on the DIY-musician, and the notion of the 'cultural entrepreneur' will be discussed. The 'cultural entrepreneur' will partly be discussed in light of 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986), that is identified as an important incentive for independents.

2.1 The music industry

2.1.1 The Music Industry as a Cultural Industry

        But before we dive into the much-debated concepts of disintermediation in the music industry and the DIY musician, it is essential to first draw a framework to understand how the creative industries work. To do so, I will start with a brief historical overview of developments in the creative industries, placed in the perspective of the music industry. The cultural (or creative, although Hesmondhalgh (2013, p. 23) will not approve, I will use these terms interchangeably) industries are a collective name for industries that create informational or entertaining texts; texts varying from newspapers and books, to music, television and games. It is essential to not confuse the 'cultural industries' with the 'culture industries' in the way Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) pessimistically called mass culture; their theory is based on the notion that popular culture is massively produced to manipulate the passive masses. Hesmondhalgh (2013) ascribes three characteristics to the cultural industries to explain why they matter, as they "influence […] our understanding and knowledge of the world", "manage creativity and knowledge", and influence how we understand "the relationships between culture, society and economy" (p. 4-9). Hennekam and Bennett (2016) agree with Hesmondhalgh saying that "many policy-makers see creativity as

a driver of economic change, a source of competitive advantage, and an important aspect of economic survival and growth in post-industrial economies." (p. 31).

Between the late 1950s and the late 1970s the phonogram (any carrier of music, i.e. cassettes and vinyl) grew out the be a worldwide-established medium (Burnett, 1996). After this rapid growth, the music industry lost ground and got into a crisis in 1979, when sales fell between 10-20%. However, after a couple of years of 'struggling' the music industry came back stronger than ever before with the introduction of the compact disc (CD). In a little more than ten years the industry managed to more than double their worldwide sales up to $29 billion in 1992. The explosive popularity of the CD is obvious: a 'mere' 260 million were sold in 1987, countering 1.152 billion sold discs in 1992 (Burnett, 1996). Although the music industry has had some trouble during the second half of the 20th century, these problems stayed *inside* the music industry, that was – and still is – controlled by an oligopoly of six – now three – major record labels that vertically integrated the entire production process. These global majors (A.D. 2017: Warner, Sony BMG and Universal) only faced competition from the independent labels (or 'indies'), that managed more or less the same business, but on a small-scaled and local basis. However, with the emergence of the personal computer and the Internet, the problems and 'competition' of the established players of the music industry became to lie *outside* the industry itself, which made it far harder for the majors to handle the caused damage.

2.1.2 Thoughts on technological change

When in the 1990s the World Wide Web began to gain ground, more and more people had access to the then revolutionary amounts of data that were available online. Equal access to knowledge caused the information society, which is based on knowledge and information rather than industrial and agricultural features, to ran rampant. This meant two key changes for the creative industries, and thus the music industry (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 315):

- The internet and the digitalisation of the music industry allowed non-professionals and audiences to have more control, more freedom of creative expression and the possibility to participate.
- Because of the above-mentioned principle, the power of the big music industry players is, in theory, decreasing, which brings about a more democratic version of the music industry, as well as a more balanced communication system.

Summarised in one sentence: internet users (musicians) obtain more power and music industry majors have to give up some of their territory. However, these consequences of

digital developments are mostly theoretical, in the sense that this was 'supposed' follow from lowered barriers to enter the music industry. Hracs (2012) does in fact acknowledge these changes, arguing that "the introduction and development of digital technologies have finally given musicians the tools to be truly independent." (p. 455). He argues that musicians have always been able to independently produce a record, but simply needed a large sum of capital for that (Hracs, 2012). Consequently, musicians would need another large sum of money to distribute their record, which was without a deal with a major label or distributor difficult to get to a broad audience (Hracs, 2012). Thus, before the Internet and cheap recording options, musicians virtually needed a record label for financial support and their distribution network. Home recording studios and the possibility to distribute and market a record online has drastically reduced the costs to share an album with the world, which has, according to Hracs (2012), Leyshon (2009), and Von Hippel (2005) democratised the music industry. However, this reasoning is typical for digital optimists. Hesmondhalgh (2013) is less optimistic about this, although he listed the two key changes above himself. He calls, for instance, Henry Jenkins, out for not recognizing the potential chances for big corporates in the convergence process to establish their power. Hesmondhalgh argues in *The Cultural Industries* (2013) that Jenkins is convinced of opportunities cast by technological developments to reduce the power of media corporations. Interestingly, Hesmondhalgh's idea of Jenkins seems incorrect, as Jenkins clearly writes "on the one hand, convergence represents an expanded opportunity for media conglomerates, since content that succeeds in one sector can spread across other platforms." (2006, p. 19). However, Jenkins (2006) is more nuanced than the statement cited above, saying that convergence is a two-way street. On the one hand, corporates seek for new ways to let media content 'flow' between different media outlets, in order to increase revenue streams, reinforce their market positions and gain greater commitment from audiences, as they are present everywhere (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18). On the other hand, audiences are adapting to the new media technologies and learn how to control them (Jenkins, 2006). To concretise this for the music industry, majors reinforce their power by expanding their territory on multiple media outlets, but musicians are gaining ground, as they have equal access to, for instance, the Internet to promote and distribute their music. Not only have the majors had the chance to expand their control by combining various media platforms, the emergence of the Internet has also caused extremely powerful conglomerates to arise, like Google, Apple and Facebook (Hesmondhalgh & Meier, 2016). These companies oligopolically rule the digital sphere, as they are strong players in capitalising digital content, distributing digital content and the streaming of information. Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2016) argue that it is easier for

major music industry players to negotiate deals with them (for i.e. digital promotions and distribution) than for smaller independent players or individual musicians. In short, stating that recent technological developments automatically shaped the music industry more democratically is misleading, as more complex dynamics have emerged simultaneously.

Another point of conversation is whether all changes since the digitalisation of the music industry are caused by the technological developments or that these changes were pushed by human desires. The notions of technological determinism are placed along a spectrum of 'soft' and 'hard' end (Smith & Marx, 1994). Simply put, the 'hard' ideas are embedded in the idea that technology pushes change in society. On the other side of the spectrum are the 'soft' assumptions that think that technological developments, and consequences that are brought about, are driven by human agency (Smith & Marx, 1994). In example, the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) theory is founded in the 'soft' sphere (Pinch & Bijker, 1987). Also Collins and Young (2014) reject the notion of pure technological determinism in case of the music industry, saying human desire plays a big part, siding with the 'soft' side. In case of the music industry a combination of both 'hard' and 'soft' determinism seem to make most sense. The endless search for new music carriers (from vinyl, to CDs, to MP3s), and with that the compression of the digital file, eventually stimulated the rise of independent and DIY musicians. As those artists tapped into the new opportunities, also including social networking and cheap producing software, the major labels started to lose power. Although the initial push towards futuristic music files (i.e. Sony helped developing the CD) was supported by majors, the consequences that followed were not desired.

2.1.3 The Dutch music industry

As this thesis focusses on Dutch musicians and their functioning in the Dutch music industry, I will dedicate a short paragraph on outlining the local industry. In a way, the Dutch music industry is similar to other Western music industries; the three well-known majors dominate the market, while independents also have a reasonable hold on the market share. A longitude research by Hitters and Van de Kamp (2010) shows that the indies managed to considerably keep their ground in the last decade of the 20th century, claiming around 40% of the market. However, in the first 5 years of the new millennium, the majors became more powerful in an almost 80/20 ratio in their advantage (Hitters & Van de Kamp, 2010, p. 110). In the past ten years, tables have turned again, as the independents are gaining more ground, also due to their operation on specialised markets and interconnectedness with the majors (Hitters, 2017).

The 'traditional' Western dynamic between majors and independents in the music industry is, thus, also in The Netherlands present. However, what is important to consider is the size of the country and available 'spots' in the top. A decade ago, the national market share of domestic pop wobbled somewhere around 20%, sharply contrasting the nearly 80% international pop covered in some years (i.e. 1990 and 2005, see Hitters & Van de Kamp, 2010, p. 467). A huge part of the music sales is, thus, not of Dutch artists; what does not make it any easier for musicians in The Netherlands to be successful and sustain themselves financially. This also shows in figures calculated by the earlier-mentioned report 'Pop, wat levert het op?': almost 70% of the professional pop musicians in The Netherlands earns between €1.000 and €18.000, on a yearly basis from music (Von der Fuhr, 2015). This is, obviously, not a fortune, as the average yearly income in The Netherlands roughly lies around €37.000. Only approximately 10% of the artists makes more than €45.000 a year. These numbers clearly outline the financial difficulty Dutch professional musicians face.

2.1.4 Spotify and its weak shadows

To conclude this briefly outlined recent history of the music industry, we should look at the 'new big thing' of today's music industry: Spotify (and its shadows). Although there are multiple online streaming services globally, research based on The Netherlands teaches us that Spotify's market share in The Netherlands is over 80% ("86 procent van onze streamingmarkt is in handen van Spotify", 2016). The rest stays in Spotify huge shadow, as Apple Music manages to make up for only 9% of the market, Deezer for 8%, leaving the even smaller Google Play Music (6%), Napster (3%) and PlayStation Music (2%) far, far behind in 2015 ("86 procent van onze streamingmarkt is in handen van Spotify", 2016). Spotify is a peer-to-peer streaming service, that allows users to instantly listen to millions of tracks. Downloading is no longer necessary, like this was required with earlier p2p-music services. Instead, streaming services function on a pay-and-play basis. Users have the choice to get a 'premium' subscription for approximately 10 euros a month, or if they do not want that, listen to an advertisement every few songs. Another research shows that approximately 40% of the Dutch online streaming users pays for a subscription (Wijkman van Aalst, 2016). Moreover, multiple studies have confirmed streaming services, Spotify in particular, displace music piracy (Aguiar & Waldfogel, 2015; Wiegandt, 2013). As Spotify has legal licenses with all major music labels, and deals with online distributors for independent musicians like CD Baby and Tunecore, there seems to be a step back towards 'legal' direction for the music

industry. However, do musicians and the industry actually profit from streaming services? A click on a song is, after all, not the same as the purchase of an album.

A study by Wlömert and Papies (2016) shows that the usage of both paid and free streaming services reduces spending money in other music channels by respectively 11% and 24%. Streaming services like Spotify, thus, cause consumers to adjust the way they spend money on music. Their findings also suggest that streaming services are not necessarily used in an exploratory manner to discover music one may purchase later (Wlömert & Papies, 2016). However, streaming services are, apparently, net positive for the industry as a whole, although this positive effect mostly lies in the revenues made from paid services (Wlömert & Papies, 2016). For artists, Spotify seems to, unfortunately, not bring big fortune. Although it remains a mystery how much Spotify exactly pays out in royalties per play, a couple of years ago Spotify declared to be paying between $0.006 and $0.0084 per play (Dredge, 2015). So, if you are a lucky musician a click on your song could earn you almost one cent. However, if the musician is signed with a label, 70% of this one cent already disappears in their pockets. A collaborated research by the BBC, Rolling Stone, CD Baby, Tunecore and some others (Dredge, 2015) teaches us that, in order to make the US minimum wage of $1.260, a signed solo artist has to get played approximately 1.2 million times (per month). Contrary to this this number is the 'mere' 180,000 plays an unsigned artist needs to live on a bare minimum. Various famous artists have refused to put their music on Spotify, or even pulled if off the platform, like singer Taylor Swift. She explained her reasons by saying "music is art, and art is important and rare. Important, rare things are valuable.", clearly hinting in the direction that streaming services like Spotify do not offer artists enough money. Over the course of writing this thesis, Swift has resolved her issues with Spotify, making her music available again for its users. A rumoured reason for this U-turn is the reached number of 10 millions album sales for her latest album, confirming the money-incentive. On top of that, Spotify had 100 million users globally as of June 2016 (Statista), which sounds like a considerable audience to potentially reach. As I did not stumble upon any research based on musicians' views on Spotify, it is interesting to look into this as well while interviewing for this study.

2.2 Disintermediation of the music industry in the digital age?

After a more general and historic overview of the music industry, I will get further into one of the main topics of this thesis: disintermediation. The debate about disintermediation has been around for a couple of decades now, and could be divided into

two separate focusses. On the one hand there is a group of scholars that mostly discusses disintermediation on an industry level. Some argue that technological developments did indeed cause disintermediation of the music industry (Fox, 2004; McLeod, 2005; Frost 2007), while others reject that idea and strongly advocate reintermediation instead (Jones, 2001; Leyshon, 2001; Kretschmer, Klimis & Wallis, 2001; Arditi, 2014). The second discussion about disintermediation in the music industry evolves around whether musicians still need intermediaries to be successful, or not. Many scholars that wrote about the topic are doubtful that the technological progress of the past decades truly pave the road to complete independent success; perhaps artists do still need a label or publisher to stand out from the digital crowd of musicians (Hracs, 2012; Hracs, 2015; Galuszka, 2015; Tuomola, 2004; Young & Collins, 2010; Pessach, 2013).

The discussion centred around the industry's changes and consequences involves a couple of key developments, including peer-to-peer file sharing, copyright issues, disruptive technologies and reintermediation. Technological developments, like easily available production software or access to online distribution, are identified as disruptive technologies for the music industry (Leyshon, 2001), as they topple traditional business structures. The Internet's early years, peer-to-peer (p2p) file sharing platforms, like LimeWire or Napster, emerged. On these platforms independent musicians could share their music for free with others using the network; but also music owned by (major) labels ended up on these platforms. These platforms, thus, circumvented the traditional distribution system set up and managed by the majors (Arditi, 2014). The majors saw their control and profits deteriorate, as p2p file sharing did not deliver any financial return; no incomes from retailers, nor incomes from copyrights. Fox (2004) emphasises that when music is stored and distributed online as a digital file, disintermediation takes place, which is "particularly harmful to the Big Five [major labels]." (p. 204). The technological changes quickly passed by the industry majors, who were too slow to react at first (Fox, 2004; Leyshon, 2001; Oliver 2010). However, the major labels did not sit still and tried, after a slow start, to find ways to reintegrate their power in the music scene.

Rather than developing their own platforms, they worked *through* other's innovations (i.e. Apple's iTunes), which enabled the re-establishment of the majors' power:

> iTunes created the entry barriers needed for the major labels to maintain their control of the music
> industry. Since people cannot directly upload their music to iTunes for others to download, these

labels can force musicians to pay a fee (through intermediaries such as CD Baby) to compete for album sales. This allows the major record labels to maintain their dominance in the music market. (Arditi, 2014, p. 421).

On the other hand, some argue that the gap left by the industry's slow response allowed other intermediaries to take their place (Lam & Tan, 2001), that function *instead* of the major labels, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

       The second movement of debate around disintermediation in the music industry is intertwined with the above-mentioned, but has a different focus, namely from the musician's point of view. Only a few scholars are optimistic about the effects digitisation has granted for musicians. Both Arditi (2014) and McLeod (2005) express a cautious optimism that online p2p file sharing offers free promotion for independent musicians, which could eventually result in sales. However, not everyone shares this view. Although it is recognised that musicians are able to have full control over their creative processes, copyrights, plans of action and opportunities for exposure via the internet (Hracs, 2012; Tuamola, 2004; Young & Collins, 2010), the same authors are also sceptic about these findings. Musicians will have more trouble making themselves noticed in the huge online pool of musicians; have more difficulties in monetizing their creative activities; and find obstacles in performing as a manager, distributor and producer all at once (Hracs, 2012; Young & Collins 2010; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016; Kruse, 2010). The discussion about visibility online also takes place in scholars examining the impact an actual geographic location still has on success. Verboord and Noord (2016) state that even though social media usage compensates a bit for inequality between musicians from different locations, online resources not entirely undo offline spatial diversity. Although Tuomola (2004) wrote about this topic almost thirteen years ago, I think it is still relevant to mention his observation that managing a musical career via the internet is mostly feasible when a musician already enjoys a certain level of fame (confirmed by Young & Collins, 2010). Scholars are, thus, hesitant in being fully optimistic about the democratising effects digital developments brought about, as they still see many obstacles emerging from this same freedom and opportunities.

2.2.1 Reintermediation

Although the discussion about potential disintermediation on some levels, and the consequences of this for the music industry is not settled, a certain (already briefly discussed) form of reintermediation seems to occur. Following the definition of 'intermediate' according

to Oxford Dictionaries ("Coming between two things in time, place, character, etc."), we can assume that an intermediary does not necessarily have to be a human being. Indeed, Morris (2015) also mentions that in literature on cultural intermediaries mainly human intermediation is described. Moor (2012) rightly argues: "non-human and/or material forms of agency can be just as significant contributors to "intermediary" or mediating activities as human ones, and [...] they should be acknowledged as such" (p. 565). Therefore, it is plausible to state that platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Facebook, iTunes, TuneCore and CD Baby are to be considered intermediaries in the digital age. Fox's (2004), earlier mentioned, statement that when music is stored as a digital file and distributed online, disintermediation occurs, thus, seems to have turned out to be incorrect. A record might not need a physical manufacturing or a physical distribution anymore, which, indeed, cuts away certain third parties (i.e. a distributor or publisher), but the digital version of that same record will not be able to reach millions on its own without any help.

TuneCore and CD Baby are platforms via which musicians, providing they pay for a subscription or one-time fee, can upload their music on the most mainstream platforms, like iTunes, Spotify and Amazon. To pick TuneCore as an example, as all these online distributors offer more or less the same services, for $29.99 per album (in the first year, $49.99 the following years) or $9.99 per single, musicians can distribute their music to digital music channels. TuneCore also takes care of royalty registration, musicians can keep 100% of their copyrights, and the distributor even offers a publishing service that has a team actively working on the musician's behalf to land syncs (music featured in movies, TV series et cetera). In other words, digital distributors act out some of the key activities labels used to take care of. Although musicians can easily sign up to these platforms and have them distribute their music for them, they still *need* those digital distributors to have their music published. 'Spotify for Artists' even states:

> To make sure everything on Spotify is properly licensed, we require all music to be delivered by labels and distributors. We have deals with most labels and distributors, so if you're signed to one just ask them to put your music on Spotify.
>
> If you're not signed to a label or distributor, we have deals in place with companies who can deliver your music to us and collect royalties for you. These are called aggregators.
> (FAQ, Spotify for Artists)

Also Apple states that in order to get your music on Apple Music musicians 'can go through one of our approved aggregators' (Apple Music Connect: Frequently Asked Questions). Thus, if musicians are not signed with a label or distributor, they are still forced to work through, and pay for, these aggregators if they want their music featured on mainstream music channels.

Besides the major music channels (i.e.: iTunes, Spotify, Apple Music) that are only accessible via other intermediaries, others are free to sign up to without barriers. Facebook, YouTube and SoundCloud are popular online platforms musicians are using to share their creative work or get in touch with their fan base. Although musicians won't need an aggregator or powerful contact to distribute their content, they have to deal with another forceful intermediary: algorithms. To use a definition José van Dijck coined in 2013, an algorithm is "a finite list of well-defined instructions for calculating a function, a step-by-step directive for processing or automatic reasoning that orders the machine to produce a certain output from given input" (p. 30). Or in other words, an algorithm creates an automated response B to action A. A recent study by Skeggs and Yuill (2016) states that Facebook, in order maximize their profits, influences how "your network is shaped over time" and how you interact – "with whom, when, where" (p. 391). As Facebook shapes and adjusts their algorithms, that in their turn control wat Facebook users see in their News Feed, they are in full control of how widespread a musician's Facebook post's reach will be. On the one hand, the algorithms collect user-data, analyse it, and create a feedback-loop on user's their newsfeeds (Schou & Farkas, 2016). A result of this is the, in 2016 widely discussed, filter bubble, which describes how, due to Facebook's algorithms, users continuously see related content to previously consumed content. On top of that has Facebook been changing algorithms in the past years that caused the decline of the organic reach of Facebook Pages (the commercial side of Facebook, where bands and musicians can also sign up their band's profile). When the organic, free reach declines, the only way to reach an audience is through paid promotion (Boland, 2014). Manoeuvring through Facebook's algorithms in such a way to reach a fan base can, thus, be a costly and even arduous activity, as musicians have no power on the platform. Also some of Spotify's features that could offer exposure, are coordinated by algorithms, like *Discover Weekly* (a personal playlist based on previously played songs) or *Your Daily Mix* (idem). Another feature, *Related Artists*, through which many Spotify users discover new artists that are in line with what they are already listening to (Spotify), is navigated by algorithms. Spotify, amongst others, bases its algorithms on big data bought from The Echo Nest, a data

collector on music. Checked as of the 18th of June 2017, The Echo Nest's database has more than a trillion data points about over 38 million songs (Homepage, The Echo Nest). Morris (2015) proposes to call companies that use music data to help shape how audiences encounter music, like The Echo Nest, *infomediaries*, as they are "organizational entities that monitor, collect, process and repackage cultural and technical usage data into an informational infrastructure that shapes the presentation and representation of cultural goods." (p. 452). Ultimately, the mediation of algorithms could work as an advantage as well as a disadvantage to musicians, as algorithms keep users of both Facebook and Spotify in some kind of loop; if an artist is in the loop, they could gain greater exposure, but if an artist is not, they are virtually invisible.

A last phenomenon to consider that drives certain business dynamics originating on the Internet, is the capitalisation of big data or, in other words, datafication. As the online traces from millions of users online are saved, stored, categorised and analysed, the owners of this data have valuable information in their hands. For the music industry, this has a couple of implications too. As Prey (2016) rightfully points out, ever since the invention of the phonograph people have not really been able to keep track of what happens to a record after it was checked out of the store. Now, what people listen to, how often people listen to it, where people listen to it; online platforms, like Spotify and YouTube, collect all kinds of information like this about their users. This data is sold to advertisers, is translated into a recommendation service algorithm or is simply viewable for musicians or labels. Especially for music streaming services like Spotify or digital radio services like Pandora, selling this data points to advertisers so they can customise and tailor their ads to specific target audience, or individual even, is a lucrative business. In this case, Prey (2016) argues, it is not necessary that 'reality' is actually represented in the data they sell; as long as advertisers believe in the "data wizardry" they reached their goal (p. 13). A reason for this might be that data is not created *by* reality, but part *of* reality (Prey, 2016); big data are nowadays part of the world we live in, and contributes to reality, instead of only describing it. Besides the possibilities to make revenue of listeners' data, the number of plays, views, clicks and likes on a certain song, post or video are often public. This publicness of numbers makes the internet a rather transparent place, as now every individual with an internet connection, industry worker and artist can see how often a song is played on Spotify, or how much engagement an artist has on Facebook. Also artists themselves also have great insight on their popularity, the locations of their fans and other statistics offered by online platforms.

2.3 Careers in Music and Do-It-Yourself culture

Having a career in the cultural industries has many characteristics that are different from a 'normal' job at the office. In this part I will merely focus on having – or chasing – a career as a musician, as this is the main focus of this study. Working as a musician carries a number of features including having multiple employers or clients that they work with on a short-term, freelance basis. Making music also often demands someone to work irregular hours, for example during the night (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Hughes et al. (2016) outline three possible career-models for musicians, respectively from dependent to independent. The first model is called the *360-degree model*, which entails being signed with a record label that takes care of everything imaginable, hence the name 360-degree. Marshall (2013) argues that in the past few years, the 360 deal has become increasingly common. This would be due to the declining revenues coming from album sales, as the 360 deal also covers, for instance, merchandising, live performances and other income sources beyond recorded music (Marshall, 2013). This way, labels are able to make revenues of side activities. This switch towards a 360 deal clearly shows the changing financial concentration in the music industry. Although most artists do recognise this agreement as a decline of their own rights, they also view it the best career opportunities to sell a lot of records to a broad audience (Hughes et al., 2016). After the 360 model, the *entrepreneur model* takes its place, representing a lot more independency. The musician operating in this model does work with intermediaries of several sorts, but by own choice and hire (Hughes et al., 2016). This is a fundamental difference, as the musician is in charge of choosing the people they want to work with. The last career-model is the *DIY model* (do-it-yourself), in which a musician is completely free from contracts and third parties, managing and creating every component in their musical career individually. With the emergence of modern technologies this model has flourished, and the Internet is flooded with new music from fully independent artists (Goodman, 2010). The increase of self-released albums over the past few years is also rooted in the opportunity for artists to self-record, self-distribute and self-promote their records. As the DIY musician is one of the main focusses in this study, a further literate look into that topic will be unfolded below.

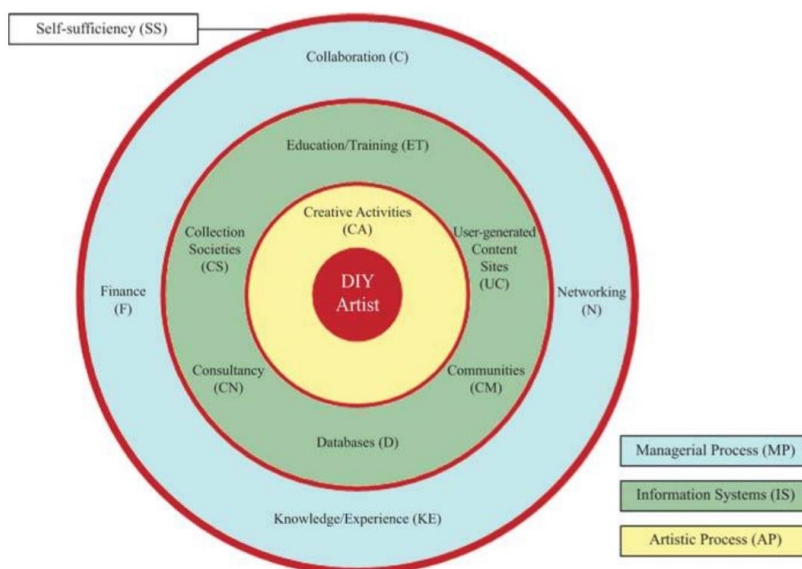### 2.3.1 Do-It-Yourself culture in the music industry

Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture amongst musicians is not something that arose when the internet emerged in the 90s. DIY has roots in the 70s anti-genre, punk (Oliver, 2010; Hracs &

Leslie, 2014; Winter, 2012). Essentially, the DIY culture originates from the desire to simply have fun, be anti-commercial, and self-sustainable at the same time (Oliver, 2010). Strachan has drawn two conclusions related to the DIY scene: organisational structures of the music industry would be bad for creativity, and musicians signed to a major label would suffer (2007). He takes it even further, stating that genres such as folk, rock, world music and, of course, punk, consciously turn against the consumer culture (Strachan, 2007). Nowadays, these ethics still seem to apply to the DIY scene, as some musicians do not want to get involved with the major players in the field. However, the question remains whether this is actually a deliberated choice or rather an imposed career-style, as the traditional path to musical success was not theirs to walk (yet). A survey conducted by Reverbnation (a US based online platform that helps musicians find opportunities) back in 2011 showed that 75% of the independent artists are still looking for a label deal (Reverbnation, 2011). However, this survey was based on musicians in the United States, where the music scene has a different dynamic than the Dutch scene. Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2015), think that DIY-ers do not necessarily have an anti-corporate stance anymore, but rather anti-major label ethos. Three other scholars, jointly, also seem to agree with the authors outlined above, saying that the DIY musician "is rebellious but not necessarily in an overtly political manner." (McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010, p. 1367). They explain that that the creative product created is simply placed outside the "commercial territory of the majors" (McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010, p. 1367). Also Hitters and Drijver (2017, p. 31), who studied mirco-independent record labels in The Netherlands, argued that the Dutch DIY-ers basically did not have any political or anti-capitalist motives to start a micro-independent. The main reason mentioned why DIY is attractive to many musicians, is that musicians do not have to apply to anyone's rules and are able to collaborate with others in the DIY community to save money (see next paragraph about The Cultural Entrepreneur) (McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010). Finally, DIY artists are thought to not have a thirst for money, because they live for the sole purpose of the artistry (McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010). Looking back on the last paragraph is becomes quite clear that the notion of a DIY artist knows quite some variations, especially when it comes down to the motivations against participating in this scene. Money is a recurring theme, but whether the musician is explicitly positioning himself against capitalism or that he is just not in it for the money is something scholars do not entirely agree on.

As a result of the easy access to the digital world and recording tools, musicians gained more independence, which also exposed to several non-musical tasks they suddenly

had to take on in their daily schedules. Hracs and Leslie (2014) point out that DIY musicians in Toronto are conflicted on which tasks to prioritise and that being a creative genius is not enough to make it in the music scene; a feeling for business is equally important. However, the pressure of this on creatives poses risks, as they might not be trained or suited for these tasks (Hracs, 2011). In The Netherlands, 57% of the workers in the creative industries are predominantly or completely self-employed, which is a three times larger number than the rest of the country's working population (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016). Responsibilities that come with this include managing your own identity, professional development and a portfolio which often turns out to be unpaid, resulting in dealing with an unstable income (Hennekam & Bennett, 2016).

Oliver (2010) designed the 'DIY musicology model' (p. 1426). This model gives a clear overview of what daily tasks of the DIY musician should be able to employ. These tasks vary from creative activity to financial skills. Being fully independent is, thus, not for everybody, as not every person essentially excels in all these tasks. Oliver (2010) mentions, however, that "in order to be sustainable, it is essential for an artist to make use of all the relevant tools in the database, social networking sites, collection societies, education and training information, communities as well as the use of communication…." (p. 1426), hence the importance of the middle level of the model, that consists of all these things. This is an interesting observation, as it indicates that even the DIY artist needs others, although perhaps not music industry workers, to be successful individually. Also Lingel and Naaman (2012) confirm that the help of others is important in the DIY scene; an active online fan base that produces new content for the artist and shares this with their network are vital nowadays.

2.3.2 The Cultural Entrepreneur

An important concept that follows from the individual independence in the music industry is the idea of the *cultural entrepreneur*. Scott (2012) defines the cultural entrepreneurs as "a

social group comprising mostly young people whose primary life goal is to build an artistic career." (p. 238). Swedberg (2006) states that making money is, although often crucial for cultural entrepreneurs, not a priority to them. Cultural entrepreneurs regularly work "without capital", meaning that work in the creative field is often carried out without a monetary reward (Ellmeier, 2003). There appears to be a certain understanding about what money means for the cultural entrepreneur, which is a divergent perception of what money means to 'regular' entrepreneurs. Bourdieu (1996) already recognised this idea years ago, as he thinks that creatives in (small) autonomous art scenes are satisfied with receiving alternative capital, instead of financial capital. Bourdieu opposes the small-scale production subfield of cultural production against the field of mass cultural production; the small-scale production subfield involves "*very* low levels of economic capital, and *very* high levels of field-specific symbolic capital." (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 215; Bourdieu, 1996). As the entrepreneurial musician often functions outside the "commercial territory of the majors" (McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010, p. 1367), we could state that this independent kind of music production and release is to place within the small-scaled production territory. However, it is to be considered that due to digital reproduction in the present-day era, small-scale (online) distribution for the music industry is a disappearing phenomenon. Even if a record is produced completely autonomous, in self-release, and without major industry involvement, there is still a case of mass reproduction in the sense that a record could be easily (and cheaply) spread globally via the Internet. However, even though the indie music industry might be a different case than, for instance, the analogue visual arts scene, it is still important to note that the main incentive for cultural entrepreneurs is not a monetary reward, but a symbolic one (Hesmondhalgh, 2006).

Bourdieu's (1986) ideas of alternative capital are, thus, functioning in the sphere of the cultural entrepreneur. Examples of alternative capital are cultural capital (i.e. knowledge, skills), social capital (i.e. a network one could benefit from) or symbolic capital (i.e. reputation and fame). Provided musicians own certain musical skills, managing social and symbolic capital are crucial in a musical career. The volume of social capital owned by an individual depends on the size of their network (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, the larger one's network, the more social capital they can 'spend'. Having an extensive network as a musician can be advantageous; cultural entrepreneurs often collaborate with other (un)established cultural entrepreneurs that practice a complementary skill to their own. Hitters and Drijver (2017) describe some sort of collectivism amongst independents, in which they support each other instead of viewing others as competitors. Because of "similar

standing in the industry", creatives can help each other producing cultural products (i.e. music and videos) and work together for "exposure, experience, friendship and interest" (Scott, 2012, p. 238); when allocated in the right way, social capital could be conversable into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1996). Symbolic capital is, in the long run, probably the best alternative for economic capital, as it could result in the mythical 'buzz'. The 'buzz' is defined as "the infectious power of rumours and recommendations circulating through dense cultural intermediary networks." (Scott, 2012, p. 244). Simply put, the 'buzz' resembles a contemporary phenomenon of 'going viral'; a beneficial kind of fame in the right circles. From this concept of cultural entrepreneurship, it becomes clear that musicians have to deal with a complicated allocation of capital to make things work. Especially beginning musicians often lack financial capital, which forces them to be creative and pursuit their goals through social connections, a good reputation, and collaborations based on mutual growth, rather than money. Moreover, Hesmondhalgh (2006) even states that, drawing from Bourdieu, a financial reward is not even the main incentive to produce cultural products (in this case music), for artists functioning in the autonomous small-scale production segment. The symbolic of recognition and honour are considered of much great weight than money. Some artists take it even further, claiming that even symbolic capital is not an objective in their artistic career; a *l'art pour l'art* kind of feeling arises here, as artists just want to make music for the sake of making music (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010).

However, when one would do a search inquiry online on 'cultural entrepreneur', a wide range of different theories and definitions will pop up. For instance, Swedish sociologist Richard Swedberg compares the cultural entrepreneur (the artist) with the economic entrepreneur. Loosely based on the early 20th century economist Joseph Schumpeter, Swedberg explains that economic entrepreneurs and artists share many characteristics like, for instance, being innovative, putting together new combinations, 'breaking out of an equilibrium' and having followers (Swedberg, 2006, 249-250). Bacache, Bourreau and Moreau (2014) consider new music an invention, and the decision on how to release it determines whether a musician becomes an entrepreneur; self-releasing a record evolves the musician to an entrepreneur, while singing with a record label, and thus handing over intellectual property rights, leaves a musician in the 'inventor' state (Bacache, Bourreau & Moreau, 2014). These authors compare self-releasing an album as a commercialisation strategy. As Teece argued, back in 1986, successful commercialisation often requires partnerships with powerful players that are in control of 'key complementary assets'. These key complementary assets are considered

distribution and promotion in the music industry, which have become more accessible to independent musicians after the digitalisation (Bacache, Bourreau & Moreau, 2014). Therefore, more artists might choose to self-release an album, instead of signing with a label. Another reason to become an 'artist-entrepreneur' (Peltz, 2011), is because of conflicts between a musician and a record label. The principal-agent theory, the idea that an agent (a label, or other intermediary) works on behalf of a principal (the musician) (Eisenhardt, 1989), resulted in a problem, as the agent and the principal can have conflicting visions on the production of an album. A solution to that, as written about by Peltz (2011), is vertical integration of the principal; the musician "takes over roles in the value creation chain previously occupied by other actors, interfering in the traditional arrangements for production, distribution and promotion." (p. 98). Peltz also adds to this that this does not mean that the musician has to master all these tasks alone, but rather controls who carries them out for them (2011). This also means that the musician keeps ownership of their music's copyrights (Peltz, 2011). Artists that have a record signed with a label, often only receive income from royalties and sales when they break even with the investment made in the record. Therefore, owning copyrights could be beneficial, as the musician directly receives all revenues a record makes.

In conclusion, the cultural artist-entrepreneur enjoys multiple definitions and characteristics. They often operate with alternative capital as they lack monetary resources. This already indicates the independence of the musician identifying as a cultural entrepreneur, as singing with a label usually brings about financial resources to produce an album. Indeed, the cultural entrepreneur is known for self-releasing records, which requires the musician to vertically integrate in the production chain of producing an album, and put together and control a team themselves. As discussed in light of Bourdieu's alternative capital, this team could also exist of people that are also trying to make a career in the creative industries instead industry professionals, to help each other to a higher level.

2.4 Musicians in the Digital Age

Drawing from the dozens of articles written about previously done research on the music industry, it is safe to say that the music industry is a complex, dynamic and ever-changing business in which both musicians and intermediaries have to search and fight for their place continuously. In the heavily digitised landscape, musicians are able to self-produce, self-distribute and self-promote their music independently. However, these opportunities do not

necessarily mean intermediaries dissolve into thin air, as both major and independent labels are still around, and new intermediaries took their place in the contemporary music industry. Major labels still have a financial and reputational advantage over smaller, independent labels and individual artists, especially when it comes down to negotiating deals with big digital players like Google, Apple and Spotify. New intermediaries – like digital distributors (i.e. TuneCore), digital playlist curators, *infomediaries* (Morris, 2015) like The Echo Nest and, ultimately, recommendation algorithms on various online platforms – also shape the new dynamics of the current music industry. Although, also due to technological evolutions, musicians have wide range of career-models to 'choose' from, ranging from fully intermediated to completely unmediated (resp. the 360-degree model, the entrepreneurial model and the DIY-model), there is no consensus on which one guarantees most success in the current music industry. This thesis aims to provide further insights on musicians' take on this problem, as the role of intermediaries in the Digital Age is studied and placed next to existing research.

3 Methods

In order to answer the main question of this study, I employed two complementary research methods; fifteen semi-structured in-depth interviews were interpreted with a thematic analysis. To grant this research a solid foundation, I first conducted a thorough literature review of the research previously done on the topic of disintermediation of the music industry. Both the data-gathering method and data-analysing method are part of the qualitative research school; the data originated from semi-structured in-depth interviews and the eventual transcripts were analysed with a thematic analysis, with theoretical foundation in Braun and Clarke's (2006) work and a Straussian coding style. Because this thesis aims to go explanatorily about the topic of intermediation in the Dutch music industry, the decision to conduct these qualitative methods was essential. With this study I intended to find new ideas, concepts and phenomena on the main topic, rather than merely explaining previously found results. The aim of this study is to get in-depth information from musicians' points of view on intermediation in the music industry. Qualitative research methods are much more competent to gain knowledge about feelings, thought processes, and emotions than quantitative research methods, that aim to express results in numbers and statistics (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Maxwell, 2008). Although it is a possibility to eventually explicate qualitative research results in numbers as well, the way of interpreting is different. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain the qualitative analysis as "an interplay between researchers and data" (p. 13). Below, the two methods, population, sample, and operationalisation are outlined.

3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The data-gathering method of this thesis is the conduction of semi-structured in-depth interviews. By means of doing interviews, the thoughts, opinions and experiences of musicians with the digital world were exposed. In previously done research, academics could not find consensus on whether intermediaries had become irrelevant for a successful career in music, or had developed into a new-found, indispensable agent for musicians and artists. To create more clarity on this disagreement, the only way to go seems to be directly to the source: musicians. The followed format of interviewing followed was a semi-structured setup. Lofland (1971) captures the purpose of semi-structured interviews as: "elicit[ing] rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. Its object is to find out what kinds of things are happening rather than to determine the frequency of predetermined kinds of

things that the researcher already believes can happen." (p. 76). By means of interviewing musicians in a semi-structured manner, reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs were revealed (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, p. 141; Kvale, 2007), while not being tied to a fixed list of questions. The semi-structured interview format left me free to ask questions in an order adjustable to the individual being interviewed, as well as probing for further information on a topic (Fielding & Thomas, 2008). Another significant potentiality of (semi-structured) interviewing is the possibility to examine non-motivations (Fielding & Thomas, 2008), something that would be hard to disclose with, for instance, a survey. In this study this was particularly useful, as probing for the motivation to *not* work with certain intermediaries contributed to the essence of the eventual conclusion. Legard, Keegan & Ward (2003) distinguish two complementing ways of acquiring the data needed: *content mapping* and *content mining*. Content mapping involves the first steps in the interviews, or when a new topic is introduced; the interviewer asks questions to draw an imaginary map of a respondent's general views, opinions and knowledge of a topic. Content mining involves probing in various manners like explanatory probing, clarifying probing and amplificatory probing. Combining both content-gathering styles left me free to navigate each interview in distinct direction, as foundations of all my respondents were different.

However, in extensive literature about doing (semi-structured) interviews, a number of weaknesses of this method are named, mostly concerning validity and reliability (i.e. Kvale, 2007; Denscombe, 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Reliability revolves around the trustworthiness of a statement and whether this is reproducible if another scholar would conduct the same research; validity refers to the correctness and strength of an argument (Kvale, 2007). These concerns about the validity or reliability of the method are grounded in the epistemological features of qualitative research in general and, thus, interviews. Researches in the positivist tradition believe that reality exists external to a researcher and is, thus, 'out there' to investigate and map through precise research. In contrast, constructivists consider that reality is not external to the subject, but constructed through a subject's interaction with the world (Gray, 2013). Translated to interviews this simply means that an interview is not conducted to reveal reality, but to construct reality. It is not difficult to see the problem for positivist traditionalists, as

Giving up the belief in one true objective social reality, the quest for absolute, certain knowledge, corresponding to an objective outer or essential inner reality, is replaced by a concern for the

quality of the knowledge produced with an emphasis on defensible knowledge claims. (Kvale, 2007, p. 123).

The idea that knowledge about reality is constructed in the moment the interviewer and respondent share, becomes even more complicated when the 'interviewer effect' makes its entrance. When conducting interviews, the researcher becomes the research tool (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). The thought behind the 'interviewer effect' is that the persona of the interviewer might have an impact on the respondent's answer. For instance, race, gender and age could have an impact on how the interviewee responds to the interviewer. However, this problem was marginal in case of this research, because my respondents are musicians; there was no cultural gap, and I did not experience an influential role of an age-, race- or gender-difference. On the other hand, the chances of a certain interviewer bias to occur are imagiable. As I am an active musician myself, mostly functioning the DIY-scene, there is a possibility I might be looking for certain answers or patterns that suit my own views on the current state of the Dutch music industry. My own experiences and tastes could influence how I interpret statements and my probing into a direction of my personal interests, rather than academic interests. Chenail (2011) also predicts a plausible pitfall for researchers that are a member of the population they are researching: "Given this affinity these "insider" investigators may limit their curiosities so they only discover what they think they don't know, rather than opening up their inquiries to encompass also what they don't know they don't know." (p. 257). However, my closeness to my study-object also grants me advantages, as I understand feelings, reasoning and the unique manner of having a career in the creative industries better than someone who does not have that experience. On top of that, my personal affinity with the topic could improve my interview skills, because I know from experience, instead of literature, what it entails to be a musician in the Dutch music industry. More concerns associated with qualitative research lie in the analysis phase of the data, which I will later cover in more detail

3.1.2 Population and sampling

Initially, this study was based on two different populations: unsigned musicians and signed musicians. This thesis was originally based on the assumption that the difference between being signed or not, was the determining characteristic of the extent to which musicians work with intermediaries. Therefore, I started off the sampling in this study purposefully, and equally, selecting musicians that were either signed or not unsigned. The

initial goal was to interview ten musicians from both groups each, to draw a large enough sample to be able to identify patterns within the groups and distinctions between the groups. However, after being approximately seven interviews deep into research, I discovered that the line between being signed or unsigned was not the decisive factor, so I dropped the initial research question concerning these distinctive populations. Now, this thesis focusses on pop musicians in general in The Netherlands. Pop music is meant here in the extensive sense of the word (popular music), representing folk, (alternative) rock, hip-hop and (a poppy kind of) jazz. All musicians in the sample have a professional career in music; they are either making a living off their musical activities (including side-activities, like teaching and other creative tasks), or aspire to do so in the future (as they are, in example, still studying music). Furthermore, I searched for musicians that built a career in the last ten years, because they experienced the Digital Age on the most present-day basis. A last condition was that the

Table 1

Name	Age	Genre	Act name	Label	Bookings agent	Manager
Märel Bijveld	20	Folk	KOALA	No	No	No
Thijs Vroegop	29	Utrecht	Tim Dawn	No	No	No
Matthijs Steur	26	Folk	Matt Winson	Yes, V2	Yes	
Britt Pols	30	Electro pop	PollyAnna	No	No (but used to)	Yes
Annika Boxhoorn	30	Pop	ANNIKA	No	Yes	No
Frans Verburg	33	Alternative something	Crying Boys Café	Yes, Excelsior Recordings	No	No
			Rina Mushonga		Yes	Yes
Giorgi Kuiper en John van Beek	22 en 25	Hip-hop	De Likt	No	Yes	Yes
Liselot van Oosterom	26	Pop jazz	Lilith Merlot	No	No	No
Nicolas Schuit	34	Alternative rock	The Cosmic Carnival	Yes, Innercore Music	Yes	Yes
Fridolijn Vanpoll		Pop jazz	Fridolijn	Yes, V2	No	No
Cas Ronckers	19	Pop	CAS	No	No	No
Tijs van de Poll	28	Folk	Friends of the Family	No	Yes	No
Vincent Patty	37	Hip-hop	Jiggy Djé	Yes, Noah's Ark (owned by him)	Yes (when still performing)	No
David Westmijer	22	Indie	The Brahms	Yes, self-owned label	Yes	Yes

Thomas*		-	Pop rock	-	Yes, V2	Yes	Yes

respondents are originated from The Netherlands and mainly have a career there as well. Some respondents are taking their careers abroad, but the majority of their career is still on Dutch soil.

When recruiting respondents, I mainly surfed around the Internet searching in line-ups of festivals, scanned the artist-pages of various record labels, and asked some musicians from my personal network to interview. Most musicians from my own network are in more or less the same career-phase as me (beginning, DIY), although some have a more advanced career already; both career-stages were valuable for this study. I approached some potential respondents via Facebook, but the majority of my requests were cast via email. As mentioned, my sampling was first directed towards the distinction between two different groups, which eventually resulted in a still rather equal distribution between signed and unsigned musicians (see table 1); the change of the main question came after I already emailed most musicians that were selected based on the rejected research question. This resulted in a diverse sample, varying from completely independent musicians to fully signed musicians. Eventually, I conducted fifteen interviews with sixteen respondents. The interview with hip-hop group De Likt was conducted with two of the group's members. The youngest musician I spoke to was 19 years old at the time of the interview, and the oldest 37 years old. All respondents live in de Randstad (area where the big cities of The Netherlands are located), which might have spatial implications on the results of this study.

3.1.3 Operationalisation and topic-list

In preparation for the interviews, I listed the topics that need to be discussed in a topic-list (see table 2). Although the topics were mostly determined prior to the interviews based on the literature review, some topics were added or adjusted after executing a couple of interviews based on new-found information.

Table 2

Careers
Career history
Phase of career (Hughes et al.'s career models)
Career goals

Intermediation	
	Labels
	Bookings agents
	Manager
	Value of intermediaries in Digital Age
	(Dis)advantages of working with intermediaries
DIY culture	
	Self-release
	Self-distribution/promotion
	Difficulties of DIY
	Advantages of DIY
	Entrepreneurial characteristics
Network	
	Dutch music industry (obstacles/benefits)
	Alternative capital
Online vs. Offline	
	Social media practices
	Effectiveness of online efforts
	Datafication of music industry
	Live performances

The interviews were executed between March 10th 2017 and May 16th 2017. I met some respondents at home, others in a cafe, and I even met one of the respondents between his sound check and the start of his show at music venue V11 in Rotterdam. The interviews were recorded with Android's recording app, on my Huawei P8 Lite smartphone, after which I directly uploaded the audio to my Google Drive to prevent data loss. The interviews lasted 45 minutes on average (see Appendix 3). After transferring the audio file to my MacBook Pro I proceeded to transcribe the interviews in a smooth verbatim transcription style: a word-by-word transcription, including ehms and ahs. All interviews were conducted in Dutch. Used quotations were strictly translated to English; in the appendix the Dutch quotes can be consulted (see Appendix 2).

3.2 Thematic analysis

The method used to analyse the data gathered with the semi-structured interviews, was a thematic analysis in the style of Braun and Clarke (2006). Explained in the most basic of ways a thematic analysis "is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). However, this description refers to a shallow observation of the studied text; an interpretation of these patterns and themes is as

significant as making the observations in the first place; if not, even more important. The thematic analysis has two approaches, namely the 'bottom-up' inductive approach and the theoretical 'top-down' deductive approach. When using the inductive method, the researcher derives themes and codes from the text itself; the 'bottom-up' approach does not try to fit a text into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This way, the eventual framework of codes and themes is a close match to the studied interviews. The deductive counterpart of this inductive style manages things in the complete opposite way, as it tries to fit the data in predetermined coding frame. Braun and Clarke (2006) prescribe this top-down approach to a study with a specific research question, while the inductive style pinpoints the specific focus of the study while being employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although this thesis does have a specific research question to answer, I broke with Braun and Clarke's vision, as I analysed the interview data in a 'bottom-up' manner. Naturally, due to studied literature, a followed topic list and my own involvement in the topic, I was slightly biased and influenced before-hand, as I expected certain patterns and themes to show up in the data. However, instead of trying to fit the gathered information in a predetermined coding frame, I kicked off the analysis with an open coding style (outlined below).

A similar weakness, as discussed above about interviews, occurs when conducting a thematic analysis; the researcher's own influence or interpretations play a large role in the analysis process. As all researchers carry their own framework of knowledge and experience reality in an individual way, the latent analysis will therefore be dependent on a researcher's judgement, something exact scientists cannot bear. However, when interpreting the various themes, I will ground the observations with an extensive explanation, so each reader of this thesis will be able to follow and understand my ways of thinking.

3.2.1 Coding

What exactly counts as a theme, is based on a rather vague description. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) argue: "Ideally, there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial.". The choice to include a certain pattern as a theme, seems to be dependent on a researcher's own judgement and prevalence. Therefore, I will operationalise the coding process in the Straussian style, by respectively conduct open coding, axial coding and, finally, selective coding. This style has close links to Attride-Sterling's (2001) theme breakdown describing respectively the *basic theme*, the *organizing theme* and the *global theme*. The basic themes "are simple premises characteristic of the data", the organizational theme is a "middle-order

theme that organizes the Basic Themes into clusters of similar issues" and, finally, the global theme grabs "the principal metaphors in the data as a whole" and discloses what the complete dataset actually is about (Attride-Sterling, 2001, p. 389). As Corbin and Strauss (1990) also explain, the activity to get to a *basic theme*, is called *open coding*: "the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically" (p. 12). This is also the phase where statements are compared to identify the differences and similarities within one interview. As meaning cannot exist in isolation, but merely in comparison to other phenomena, the action of comparing is crucial in this first phase. As already indicated, in this part of the coding process many codes (or themes) will derive from the dataset. *Axial coding* is the next step; in this stage codes, also cross-interview, are compared and grouped (*organizational themes)* (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The last phase of coding in the Straussian style, is *selective coding*. In this phase 'all categories are unified around a "core" category, and categories that need further explication are filled-in with descriptive detail.' (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The comparison can be made to Attride-Sterling's *global theme* as "the core category represents the central phenomenon of the study." (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). After the main themes are identified, an answer to the research question can be found.

After noticing there were approximately 150 pages to code, I decided to make use of what technology has to offer and downloaded coding programme Atlas. The software allows me colour coding and linking codes amongst each other, which was a useful manner to code the interviews. Ultimately, the open coding process yielded 243 codes. These codes were all classified by colour in general categories like 'internet', 'career', 'intermediaries', 'Dutch industry', 'Spotify', 'alternative capital'. This categorisation has no link to the eventual analysis discussed in the next chapter, as it was merely to keep the coding process clear and organised. After analysing the derived codes, eleven organizing themes were identified, that were eventually grouped together in three main themes (see figures 1, 2, 3 on next page). The singled out main themes are respectively *The Digital Age Paradox*, *The need for intermediaries* and *The New DIY*. The first theme (*The Digital Age Paradox)* does not directly concern intermediaries, but contains an outline of the contemporary Dutch music landscape. This theme informs about online opportunities and pitfalls, and how the Dutch music industry is firmly guarded by gatekeepers. The following two main themes are more specifically outlining views and beliefs on intermediaries in the Digital Age, both broken down in various subthemes.
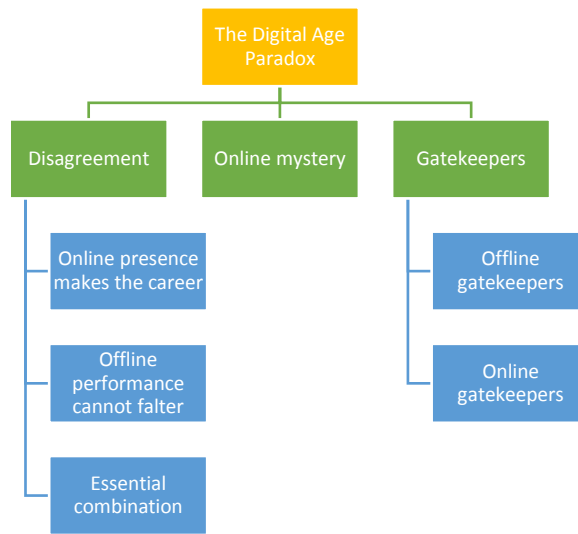
Figure 1

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                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │ The Digital Age  │
                    │     Paradox      │
                    └────────┬─────────┘
          ┌──────────────────┼──────────────────┐
   ┌──────┴──────┐    ┌───────┴──────┐    ┌───────┴─────┐
   │ Disagreement│    │Online mystery│    │ Gatekeepers │
   └──────┬──────┘    └──────────────┘    └──────┬──────┘
          │                                      │
   ┌──────┴───────────┐                  ┌───────┴─────┐
   │  Online presence │                  │   Offline   │
   │ makes the career │                  │ gatekeepers │
   └──────────────────┘                  └─────────────┘
          │                                      │
   ┌──────┴───────────┐                  ┌───────┴─────┐
   │     Offline      │                  │   Online    │
   │   performance    │                  │ gatekeepers │
   │  cannot falter   │                  └─────────────┘
   └──────────────────┘
          │
   ┌──────┴───────────┐
   │    Essential     │
   │   combination    │
   └──────────────────┘
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Figure 2

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              ┌──────────────────┐
              │  The need for    │
              │  intermediaries  │
              └────────┬─────────┘
          ┌────────────┴────────────┐
   ┌──────┴───────┐          ┌───────┴──────┐
   │Difficulties of│         │  Necessity of │
   │  DIY-career   │         │ intermediaries│
   └───────────────┘         └───────────────┘
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Figure 3

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ The New DIY  │
                    └──────┬───────┘
          ┌────────────────┼────────────────┐
   ┌──────┴───────┐ ┌──────┴───────┐ ┌───────┴──────┐
   │  "Control    │ │  Build It    │ │ Self-release │
   │ freak-ish-ism"│ │  Yourself    │ │              │
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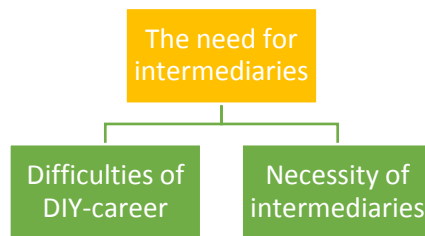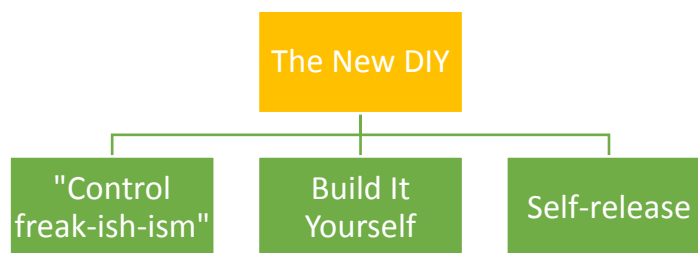
4 Analysis

In this chapter the above-mentioned main themes, *The Digital Age Paradox*, *The Need of Intermediaries* and *The New DIY*, will be discussed and set out on the basis of quotations selected from the interview data. The specific order of the themes is no coincidence, as every preceding theme contributes to better understand the following theme. *The Digital Age Paradox* will first draw a comprehensive map of how the Dutch music industry is understood and experienced by the respondents. This theme grants a better understanding as to why musicians feel like they still need intermediaries. Lastly, *The New DIY*-theme could only be fully understood when having in mind how the contemporary music industry works and musicians' attitudes towards intermediaries.

4.1 The Digital Age Paradox

The first main theme in this research is relates to the landscape of the Dutch music industry as of 2017, rather than intermediaries. However, the roots of thoughts on (dis)intermediation are based in views that have shaped this theme, therefore it is important to outline this first. When interviewing the respondents, it became clear that there is a widespread, general state of mind in which most, if not all, respondents feel like these are times of big changes for the music industry. Due to technological changes and innovations, like Spotify and social media platforms, the industry is in such evolution no one really knows what to do, or how things will look after they have settled down. Furthermore, no one – from successful signed band to emerging DIY'er – knows what works on social media, and Spotify is an even bigger mystery. Despite to all this uncertainty but hopeful anticipation for change, old channels still seem to decide, which indicates the evolution might not be that spectacular after all. This paradoxical tendency will be outlined below; broken down in three subthemes respectively two that express uncertainty and third subtheme that illustrates the presence of both online and offline gatekeepers in the Dutch music industry.

4.1.1 Disagreement

The first subtheme I will discuss is already a contested issue, as this concerns the various ideas on what is now most important to be successful in the contemporary music industry; online presence or offline presence. The most-heard view on this is that a combination of the two things is needed to be able to make a career in music, although the centre of gravity

varies between the respondents. The disagreement on what exactly is most important in the Dutch music industry nowadays illustrates an unsettled situation.

4.1.1.1 Online presence makes the career

In all interviews I conducted, there was discussion about the opportunities and backlashes the internet could possibly bring about. Out of the fifteen respondents, there was no one who is not on both Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Other outlets vary a bit more, as not everyone is using Twitter (anymore) or Snapchat. Many respondents have expressed how they think online activities and presence are important in making a career, sometimes even more important than offline activities. What is more, there seems to be a tendency that talent comes second to the numbers that show on a musician's online profiles, both to be taken seriously by an audience and people in the industry. It does not seem to matter whether the online representation is faked or bluffed; how it comes across is what counts. One of the respondents said about this "I fear that online is more important, yes I think online is more important because there is a lot of bluff. If you have a lot of followers and it looks like you are doing really well, then people will believe that" (Liselot). Also Britt confirmed "I think if you have 300.000 shadow-views because of Spinning, that will be something that persuades people". The term shadow-views is a consequence of shadow-followers. This is a frequently used term in the social media scene, which means having fake followers that are either bought or simply bots; these followers are not organically 'earned' followers. However, whether the likes or followers are real or not, is not of importance: "The funny thing is that you can buy plays on Spotify, you can buy views on YouTube and you can buy followers on Instagram. It is a strange world. I would say that if you would invest 10.000 euros in a range of clicks, plays and promotions, that would work better than signing with a label." (Britt).

Not only to fans and audiences *online numbers* are important, intermediaries in the industry are also thought to base several decisions on it. Many respondents have expressed that the efforts of signing with a label, finding a bookings agent or trying to book a gig themselves would most certainly result in the third party analysing their social media profiles.

I am a 100% certain that if I would email a festival with the message 'hey we are a band, emerging bla bla bla, sounds a bit like this, here's a link to a video', the first thing I think they will do is checking our Facebook. How many likes do you have, what did you do so far, how are things looking out for you. And yes, if you have 300 likes or 1200 likes, that will make a big difference. (Thijs)

Also Fridolijn stated that a high number of plays on Spotify interested an agency, and Britt was certain that labels only look at the engagement that you have online in their decision to sign you or not

Although the general feeling about this number-based culture is not very positive, some respondents do admit they are participating in it as well. One of the respondents said about this "A little while ago, I was writing with an English artist that has 20 million Instagram followers, well then I am super impressed." (Britt). And also Thijs admits that if people want to work together he first checks online 'who they are, what they did, how far they are'. Another respondent expresses her own dissatisfaction with her number of likes saying "I just *need* to cross that 1000 like-bar, but I am not there yet. Then people will take me more seriously." (Liselot). Online numbers do not only influence audiences and intermediaries, musicians are also influenced and moved by it in a certain way. Some simple numbers seem to have a grasp on the industry.

This particular focus on numeric listings is an interesting phenomenon that emerged from this study. As far as I know, research about this is very limited, especially from this perspective. Prey (2016) did study how insight in the amount of plays of a song on online streaming services 'dataficated' listening and tailored advertising services. Indirectly, this still relates to what seems to be popular online has an effect in the real world. Similarly, Prey notes "[…] for an ad revenue–dependent streaming service such as Pandora, the point is not so much whether 'reality' is being accurately reflected, but whether advertisers (and investors) are sufficiently convinced of the service's data wizardry." (2016, p. 13). This quote reflects a comparable view as the statement that bluffing success online will have a positive effect on a career, some respondents made.

4.1.1.2 Offline performance cannot falter
Although many different expressions of the importance of online presence and representation have been made, offline activities were not unmentioned. Another general tendency of the musicians interviewed is also still that the quality of live performances and connecting with people is something that has be strong. In that sense, this is an interesting contradiction from the observations mentioned in the previous chapter. Following the statement that an online presence is very important, Märel said:

But still, real life stays the most important thing, because if you look at it: having a profile that is on point, but if you play very badly live and you are not a nice person in real life, and you do not know how to talk to people and you have this kind of arrogance over you, but your pages look good: you are still a shitty band.

Also Tijs mentioned that even though you could come really far with bluffing online, the inability to live up to it in your live performances will expose you. Later he added to that: "In the end you are as good as the last show you play". Annika even thinks that in order to be able to have engagement online, you first need to have a good live reputation and an 'impressing' CV.

Besides marking a good live performance and being skilful in 'the real world' as the most important thing, respondents also think that connecting with fans works better when seeing them offline instead of online. In example, Britt states that building a fan base through playing a hundred shows a year, talking to your fans and giving them the attention they want, works best to build a long term career. Fridolijn adds that online and offline could go 'hand in hand': "You can have a widespread reach via these channels [social media], but in the end you need to connect people to you with your music and not a picture or an interview.". Contrary to the belief that a polished social media profile is what matters most, respondents still think that delivering a good live performance is crucial for building a career in music.

On top of that, the importance of live performances for the musician's bank balance also came up in a couple of interviews. Two musicians from signed bands that are doing well in Dutch music scene both stated that playing live is a very important source income for musicians nowadays, and therefore the performance needs to be of good quality (David, Thomas). Indeed, over the past years, a musician's income has been increasingly dependent on revenues made from live performances (Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Young & Collins, 2010). This might be an explanation for the importance the respondents attach to playing a good live show, as almost half of their income comes from this source (Von der Fuhr, 2015). Especially since the arrival of online streaming services, people spent even less money in purchasing music (Wlömert & Papies, 2016), the income-share of live performances might keep on increasing in the upcoming years. Therefore, being able to attract an audience to your show, both by playing well and abilities to connect with fans, that purchases tickets is still considered crucial.

4.1.1.3 Essential combination

Lastly, many respondents stated that combining online and offline activities is essential for maintaining a long-lasting career in music. As discussed above, it is a no-go to have a thriving online presence, but no good live performance. The other way around also does not work. When musicians play a great live show, but audiences are not able to find you online afterwards, it is also not good for your career, although Märel and De Likt think this might be better than the first-mentioned order. However, many respondents state that nowadays, one thing cannot go without the other: "[…] it just belongs together. It is all equally important. We just do everything." (Vincent).

4.1.2 Online mystery

Despite the unsettledness of the online versus offline debate, the general feeling about online possibilities might be best expressible in one big question mark. None of the respondents exactly knows what precisely guarantees success online, and Spotify seems to be an even bigger, but welcome, mystery.

Although most musicians I interviewed are millennials, and could therefore be considered 'digital natives', everyone seems to be at a loss for what is the key to success online:

> I just really don't know, I should get a good lecture about it sometime, because I actually don't really know. (Liselot)

> We keep our eyes open and pay attention to what other people do, to see what works and what does not work. This is the kind of time no one really knows what works. (David)

> It is all a bit unpredictable. Sometimes nothing really happens [with a post]. (Thijs)

> It is all one big puzzle, that you have to move around all the time. (Britt)

These short quotes all show that musicians still seem to be in an exploratory phase of what gains the most traction on their social media profiles. However, two of the female respondents do know that selfies do deliver the most 'likes' for them (Britt, Liselot), and that merely sharing live show events on Facebook does not exactly bring the house down (Thijs, Annika, De Likt).

Respondents do, however, *think* to know what will work to 'break the internet': doing something weird or unique. Annika states "I just need to be featured on a Vice or something. Or make a weird video. That's how it works.", and also Nicolas mentions that musicians have to plot a plan on how to "stand out with an activity, a record, add a bunch of stuff to it" and that that is "how it should be". Likewise, David thinks that you need to stay 'creative' with your promotion, and that you have to keep on doing fun things online. Cas talks about always finding new ways to show yourself with, in example, producing vlogs or a 360-degrees video. This shows a resemblance with the symbolic 'buzz' Scott (2012) described. Instead of directly earning money with activities online, respondents are looking for exposure and creating a sphere where audiences, other creatives and industry workers notice their existence and talk about them in a positive way.

On top of the insecurity on how to handle their online activities, some respondents also were unsure how online popularity translates to the real world. Some spoke about their doubt that having a large number of plays on Spotify, or many likes on Facebook, actually means you are having a successful musical career. Fridolijn mentions "It is all so fake. Having 1000 likes on Facebook definitely does not mean that 1000 people are coming to your show.". Also Britt describes artists that have five million plays on YouTube or Spotify, but are never booked for shows. Thomas talks about the band's songs on Spotify, saying that one of their songs has 500.000 plays, but they have no clue who is listening to it. Matthijs even asks himself the question 'what is one like even worth?', considering that also people that are just vaguely interested in his band Matt Winson like the Facebook page, without actually being engaged. These doubts sharply contrast the belief outlined above that faking popularity and professionality online can make a career, as respondents are apparently not sure at all if that pretence actually makes such a large impact on a career.

4.1.3 Gatekeepers
The last subtheme in the *The Digital Age Paradox* theme, is about how, despite the changes the Internet has brought about, things in the Dutch music industry do not seem to be changed that much. Over the course of most interviews there were a couple of traditional channels mentioned repeatedly. Firstly, many respondents had competed in either a local or a national pop contest, varying from De Grote Prijs van Nederland to The voice of Holland (Märel, Annika, Matthijs, De Likt, Nicolas, David, Liselot, Cas,

Vincent). A couple of them also (aspire) to do the Popronde, a travelling showcase festival that visits 40 cities in The Netherlands (Annika, Thomas, Cas, David, Märel). Competing in a musical contest has been traditional way to have success, as well as participating in the Popronde, which has been around for 22 years already. Another showcase festival that was brought up a number of times was Eurosonic/Noorderslag, which is also still part of the career-plan for some respondents (Märel, Thijs, Annika, De Likt). Other channels that were mentioned many times are still offline media productions like 3FM, a Dutch public radio station that is considered the place for bands or musicians to kick-start their career, and *De Wereld Draait Door*, a popular daily talk show that features one-minute music items (Annika, Matthijs, Britt, Nicolas, David, Thomas, Cas, De Likt, Frans). Also radio is still considered an important channel for fame, sometimes even the channel that launched a career (Nicolas, David, Thomas, Cas, Vincent). Despite all online possibilities, these offline channels still seem to be considered crucial when you want to have a career in music in The Netherlands. Apparently, a traditional gatekeeping-system prevails the Dutch music industry, where gatekeepers or 'cultural intermediaries' select and reject music for 'production, broadcast and publication' (Shuker, 2016, p. 127). Getting past the gatekeepers that stand between musicians and audiences is a trick every artist still has to pull off.

4.1.3.1 Offline gatekeepers

In the first place, as I call them, 'offline gatekeepers' guard the gates to the masses. Some respondents expressed how the Dutch music industry is very secluded and just a few key players decide who will have a place in the top (Matthijs, Britt, Märel, David, Nicolas, Cas). Some respondents speak of the Dutch industry as a scene of favouritism, where you need to be part of a little club in order to be booked or get airplay:

> A lot of people know each other, and if you are part of it, then you are part of it. If you are not, then you are not. And if they said 'no' once, or if they said 'no' three times, and you just cannot manage to break into it, it is probably never going to happen. Then how are you going to do it [making a career] without the help of bigger labels? That is almost impossible, because the Dutch industry is so small. (Nicolas)

Also Matthijs thinks there is small group of people that call the shots in Dutch industry, and David adds that there are just a few pluggers in The Netherlands that are actually

taken seriously. Annika contributes to this that if the previous chief of Serious Talent, the talent scout item on 3FM, likes a band, you will see also see that band on *De Wereld Draait Door*, in playlists and played on 3FM; "if you manage to have precisely the right song they completely dig, then you are in, if you do something else then you are out.". Lastly, both Märel and Matthijs mentioned that if you are not contracted with one of the major bookings agencies (Friendly Fire, Agents After All, Mojo), you will have a hard time finding a way of playing on bigger festivals, as those agencies are in charge of the complete line-up selection.

Despite the possibilities the Internet and other technological developments have brought about in the past decades, this paragraph clearly shows that many respondents still consider some well-known channels, led by a handful of key players, as the best chance to have a career music in The Netherlands, even if that means maintaining a standard hierarchy of key players calling the shots. Hesmondhalghs's (2013) and Hracs' (2013) predictions that, due to easier access to audiences, the music industry would be more democratised because of a reduced power of the industry elite, seems to be fall through. Hesmondhalgh was right in his point that musicians have more opportunities to share and promote their music online, but the way respondents still greatly value the offline channels that are controlled by a small group, shows that the industry has not exactly democratised over the past years. Moreover, some respondents even expressed the worry that because of the easy access online, it only has become more difficult to be picked up by the right people, as the Internet is overcrowded with people that (think to have) talent (Frans, Liselot, Cas). Hracs (2012) has found a similar view, expressed by musicians from Toronto, stating that 'barriers to entering the market have been significantly lowered, but that market is fraught with uncertainty and above all competition.' (p. 459).

4.1.3.2 Online gatekeepers
Next to the powerful offline gatekeepers in the Dutch music industry, a new group of gatekeepers has emerged alongside of them, who either operate *on* the internet or are *part of* the internet. In the first place, online gatekeepers operating on Spotify were repeatedly discussed. The general feeling about Spotify is positive, as many respondents pointed out that Spotify has a widespread reach, talking about their songs being placed in (international) playlists (Matthijs, Fridolijn, David, Tijs). A song being placed in Spotify playlists is, as became clear from the interviews, something desirable, but for most respondents unclear how to achieve. Britt for instance stated it is really hard to get in a

Spotify playlist, and that there is no telling on what will happen to a song, because Spotify is highly equivocal. When I asked David whether he knew how the band's song Golden ended up in a popular German playlist he answered me "I have no clue. I guess the playlist composer thought 'this fits the list'". Thomas even compared being featured in Spotify playlist as 'some kind of magic' adding that "then you are suddenly featured on a playlist in Ireland or Vietnam, what happened to us lately. Then you think 'how the hell did this happen!?'". Although all respondents know that the bigger playlists are curated by 'professional' editors and other playlists by 'simple' Spotify users, no one really knows how their music is picked up in the first place. This is possibly the work of Spotify's algorithms, that group, categorise and classify songs based on listeners' listening-behaviour. Another, emerging, option is similar to radio pluggers: the digital plugger, that pitched music to online playlist curators. For the important Dutch playlists, there seems to be one person in charge. Britt, for instance, said that she thinks that everyone hoped Spotify would make the Dutch industry more democratic, but instead "it only got worse, in some perspectives we took a step back, because again the labels and people with money are in charge". Also Annika talks about only one person being in charge of Spotify, whom she is happy to accidentally know. Also David sees the importance of being featured in a Spotify playlist and says that the chief editor is probably flooded with emails and phone calls right now. However, Matthijs stated that via their label, a digital plugger made some successful steps for their band, while Britt said good digital pluggers are yet to be discovered. However, one way or another, either a digital formula or a playlist curator guard the gates to a broader online audience.

Similarly, many respondents spoke about the necessity to promote (sponsor, pay) for their posts on Facebook, as Facebook's algorithms obstruct their content from reaching a wide organic reach (Thijs, Nicolas, Liselot, Cas, Annika, Thomas, David, Fridolijn).

In sum, Jenkins's statement that powerful companies are able to vertically expand their control through convergence does exactly not seem to fit. For instance, on Spotify a new group of independent A&R-agents (the playlist curators) have emerged. The editors that curate the coveted Spotify playlists are generally not attached to the influential majors, radio stations or television programs, but the power is still with a small elite, and not the musicians or audiences. On top of that, algorithms that decide on Facebook who sees what (Skeggs & Yuill, 2016), and on Spotify how personal playlists and Related Artist-lists are composed, are likewise not controllable by (major) labels or other industry giants. The phenomenon vertical convergent integration by the elite is, thus, in that sense

not justified. However, the internet might have caused democratisation, but in the most 'pure' definition of the word: the people decide. As Vincent said "the people are now in control of what is popular". Transparency on online engagement (i.e. views, clicks and plays) and algorithm-based lists, clearly show what audiences like and listen to. Yet, we have to take into account that, if we lengthen this idea, internet giants like Facebook and Spotify master their users from above with their algorithms. Still, neither major industry players nor musicians have necessarily become more powerful because of the Internet, as Hesmondhalgh (2013) and Jenkins (2006) expected.

4.1.4 In sum…

To briefly summarise the past paragraph, a paradoxical, maybe even contradicting conclusion emerges. On the one hand, respondents seem to think that faking and bluffing a successful career online, on social media and other digital music channels, will take a career far enough to be a successful musician in real life as well. Contrary, an artist's live performance has to of high quality as well, because otherwise the online bluff will fall through. This directly disintegrates the first statement made, as, apparently, respondents think you *canno*t have a career solely based on a prosperous online reputation. On top of that, does none of the respondents exactly know how to achieve a successful online reputation, as none of them has actually build a career this way; the fast online route is mostly discussed in a 'this is possibility' kind of manner, without a sign of actually wishing or understanding how to pursue their career like this. Lastly, the Dutch music industry is still perceived to be mostly breakable via the traditional, offline channels, like radio, television, pop contests and showcase festivals. Simultaneously, new online music channels that were supposed to democratise the music industry, are controlled by several new forces, like a small elite of independent playlist curators, and algorithms created by the platforms' developers. The promised equality between the music industry and independent musicians (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Hracs, 2012) is, thus, unjustified, because musicians still need to get past a range of gatekeepers, both online and offline. Moreover, the expectation that artists can build a career online is an opportunity nowadays, immediately proves to be inaccurate as well.

4.2 The need for intermediaries

This general outline of the online versus offline-debate and the current situation of the Dutch music industry, will function as a foundation to better understand the upcoming two themes

that are specifically about intermediaries. I would like to point out already that these two themes are not necessarily opposing each other, and do overlap in some instances. In this theme the positive, although sometimes forced, notions about intermediaries will be outlined, which will be broken down in two subthemes: *Difficulties of DIY-career* and *The need for intermediaries.*

4.2.1 Difficulties of DIY-career

The first subtheme that, indirectly, speaks in favour of intermediaries is the one in which respondents describe difficulties they experience in doing things themselves. A comment frequently made was that too much time was spend on, for instance, managerial tasks, at the expense of time invested in creative processes:

> … I indeed think I should spend more time on making music. Writing songs, creating new things. (Thijs)

> I just want to occupy myself for 100% with making music, so I do not have to worry about all the things that happen around it. (Märel)

> No, because it stresses me out, and the only thing I want to do is making music. (Annika)

> It was way too much, I almost got a burn out from doing that [all business tasks]. … You are busy with so many different things, negotiating contracts, interviews, rehearsing with the band, live performances, land gigs, and also keeping an eye on your long-term vision. It drove me crazy at some point. (Fridolijn)

This selection of quotes is only a small one out of the many complaints about how doing everything yourself is not something enjoyable. These statements are mostly focussing on practical tasks like managerial tasks, booking live performances and paperwork. This observation is no news, as Hracs (2012), Young and Collins (2010), Hennekam and Bennett (2016) and Kruse (2011) had already noticed the trouble being a DIY-er could bring about. When Hracs (2011) interviewed independent musicians in Toronto who, comparably, feared that business tasks would consume too much time. His research also showed a tendency that mere creative talent was not enough anymore to succeed in music, as a musician now also needs to be skilled at the business tasks. Unfortunately, for some respondents this does not seem to be the case. About responding to emails and being

reachable Märel says: "those are simply tasks for a manager, and I am just not really good at it. None of us are.". Also Liselot says she is looking for a manager and a bookings agent, because she has experienced she is not good at it, and she does not even want to be good at. Both Britt and Thijs explain that it is difficult to negotiate for yourself or sell yourself as a product. When talking about why they are doing certain tasks themselves, two respondents even used the word 'forced', which clearly reveals the negative feeling towards this (Thijs, Annika).

In sum, most respondents are not happy with the dichotomy of being a musician and being a businessman at the same time. They want to devote their time to music, and not managerial tasks, which some of the respondents do not even consider themselves good at. This feeling tackles the somewhat heroic idea that the DIY-culture is still rooted in the anti-commercial 70s punk movement that was demonstrating against the system of big corporations in the industry, that some scholars claimed (Oliver, 2010; Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Winter, 2015). Instead of taking on certain tasks themselves out of rebellion, musicians do it out of necessity; "if you take a day off, things are stagnating" (Fridolijn).

However, not every aspect of doing things yourself is viewed negatively, as many musicians experience it as a useful educational task. Thijs states that, in order to hire a good manager, it is important to first understand what is required to get the job done. Also Annika is satisfied with self-releasing her first album, saying that because of that she knows more ways now, and that she can do things right at once the next time. Vincent even thanks his current career as the owner of hip-hop record label Noah's Ark to the DIY-model he adopted in his music career: "… I can read contracts, I know what it reads, and what it is about, what is important, and what I could possibly negotiate about. I know how to make a deal in the right way.". Also the members of De Likt state that because of self-releasing their first album, they would have a better negotiating position against industry professionals and intermediaries, because they know the ins and outs. Further positive views on the DIY-career model will be discussed in the next subchapter.

4.2.2 Necessity of intermediaries
The negative feelings towards carrying out business tasks as a musician are two-sided, as on top of the complaints many respondents also feel like you *need* intermediaries to succeed in the Dutch music industry. The main reason given for this that intermediaries (mostly labels, bookings agents and managers) are needed for their networks. Many respondents feel like

they 'do not have huge reach themselves' (Britt), and therefore, they feel like they would need a label or manager for make up for that. For example, Thijs mentions "I would like to use the network of a label, or the network of manager…". Matthijs explains that his label has short lines with, for instance, Spotify or the radio; because of the efforts of their label they were invited to Radio 2 and *De Wereld Draait Door*. Both Fridolijn and Britt state that labels or bookings agents make deals to promote their artists; "Of course, a label like that has valuable contacts and deals that they can place an artist on the homepage [of iTunes] once a month." (Fridolijn). Britt says about this, as she has heard, that Universal cuts deals with radio stations to play new records of one of their emerging artists in exchange for a visit of one of their top artists. In other words, bigger labels or bookings agents have a strong position to negotiate deals with important broadcasting channels in the industry, which Hitters and Drijver (2017) also confirm by stating that industry majors still have a stronger negotiating position with big online players than independents.

Another way to get music featured on those powerful channels is through a plugger or promotor. A plugger is a person musicians can hire on a freelance basis to promote their music to, mostly, radio stations. The goal is to get the music featured on a radio's playlist. Regularly, artists pay between 500 and 1500 euros for a plugger to pitch their song to the radio. Every respondent in this study has either hired a plugger or is planning on doing so for the simple fact there is, at least so they think, no other way to get airtime. David says his band owes their success to their feature on radio 3FM, which they achieved via a plugger: "…that is the way to go. It is still how things go.". Liselot calls is naive of herself to think she would stand a chance pitching her own music to the radio; "I am just going to pay a thousand euros to someone who is very good at it. And that is a lot of money, but so be it.". Also Märel explains that it would be smart move to talk to plugger before you want to release a single, as 'they are the people that can get your music on the radio'.

However, not every respondent believes in the necessity of a plugger. For instance, Britt had her break-through single featured on radio 3FM, without promotion via a plugger; it was just picked up by one of the station's DJs. Also both Thomas' band and Cas were played on radio 3FM's segment *Serious Talent* (a talent-scout item) without the mediation of a promotor. They were both by means of social media scouted for the radio's programme. Also Britt thinks she was seen on YouTube. Thus, there are chances to make it to the traditional national channels, and past the offline gatekeepers, without a plugger or other intermediary, although it entails some luck.

Lastly, respondents mentioned how intermediaries are 'good at what they do' (Thijs), and how that is also an incentive to hire them. This subtheme has a close link to the earlier-mentioned theme on how respondents feel like they are not good at certain business tasks. Listelot says that in order to make an actual good promotion plan for the release of her EP, she needs the help of a professional; someone who has studied for it. Also both Frans and Annika say they needed a producer to 'take a record to the next level', even though they both produce themselves as well.

Multiple scholars already pointed out that musicians will still need certain intermediaries to take their careers to the next level (Tuomola, 2004; Galuszka, 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Meier, 2016). Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2016) argue against the Internet displacing middlemen and traditional gatekeepers, because such theories do not take into account the 'decisive ways that music industry power remains tied to access to capital, financing, and marketing support […].' (p. 7).

4.3 The New DIY

The New DIY is a theme that focusses on how many respondents operate in an entrepreneurial kind of way, in which they keep their own power, but also outsource various tasks to intermediaries they choose themselves. That musicians are not unfavourable towards intermediaries plays an important role here, as respondents still work with them, but on a more independent basis. The cooperation with friends or acquaintances also plays a role in this theme, as working together with musicians and professionals that are functioning the same independent level creates value without being tied to fixed contracts. This theme is called *The New DIY*, because it is a proposal to an alternative career-model to the traditional DIY and 360-model, which will be further outlined in the concluding section of this thesis.

4.3.1 "Control freak-ish-ism"

The most mentioned reason to stay independent and not 'sign away' themselves with a label or other intermediaries, is that musicians want stay in control over their own creative processes. Tijs says he functions as the manager of Friends of the Family, because they do not want to be 'tied to people from above'. He further mentions that signing with a label often comes with a certain contract that forces bands to produce an x-number of CDs which 'gives a lot of pressure' and now they can produce a record 'whenever they feel like it' (Tijs). Also the members of De Likt explain their decision to stay independent from a label with the

statement that like this it is 'very pleasant to be able to decide yourself 'now our music is finished and now we will release it''. Also Annika, who even takes De Likt as an example of a group that stayed independent, states that if you are a little unfortunate, labels are going to decide when you can release your record even if you feel like you are not ready for it. On staying independent she says: "It takes a little, well an enormous amount of, more time to do it like this, but at least you are still in control" (Annika). These statements made about being able to release the music whenever a musician feels like it, are in line with the assumption Strachan (2007) made that the recording industry is bad for creativity, and that musicians signed to (major) labels suffer from this. The expressions outlined above show the constraint respondents indeed feel about being signed with a label, and being pressured into a workstyle they do not choose.

Nonetheless, not everyone signed with a label feels restrained. Matthijs says about V2 that they do not get in your creative process too much, and that his band can decide for themselves whom to work with. Also Fridolijn states that having contact and negotiating with her label is easy and possible: "if you really want something to be done differently, they are amenable to it.". On top of that, respondents mention the positive reputation having a label or manager brings about. Having a manager looks professional (Märel, De Likt), and being signed with a label earns you a certain reputation and goodwill in the music scene (Annika, De Likt).

Also money plays a role in the decision to stay independent from labels. When musicians release an album with a label, the label often paid or disbursed the record, which hands over the copyrights of the music to them. When selling, streaming or any other way that generates income from a record (e.g. royalty-based plays, syncs), the label receives the majority of the revenues made. Therefore, it is beneficial for musicians to release a record independently, so they can keep the rights on their own music and, thus, receive the full 100% of revenues. For Tijs this played a big role in the band's decision to sign with a label or not, as the band's record was already finished and paid for, they did not see the use of signing off their rights to enjoy a label's distribution and promotion services. Also David states that his band decided to not sign with a label, as they are in the position to finance their own album and, thus, do not have to pay back any money to anyone. An investor would be 'great', according to Britt, as this person 'would not necessarily want to be your manager or label' and she could make all creative decisions herself.

Although I stated earlier that the negative view on a DIY-career tackled the idea that DIY has roots in 70s punk, as doing things themselves is experienced as a constrained rather than an ideological motivated choice, this theme *does* have strong links to 70s punk. As Oliver (2012) pointed out, the DIY movement emerged in the punk genre because punkers wanted to be independent, self-sustainable and not controlled by authorities. The just-discussed theme shows close comparisons to this, as the respondents do not want to be overpowered by industry majors (or even independent labels), want to keep ownership to their own copyrights and, thus, be in control over the monetary streams their music generates. Indeed, the explanation McLean, Oliver and Wainwright (2010) attached to DIY-artists, saying that the incentive for 'doing things yourself' was to not apply to anyone's rules, and decide whom to collaborate with, coheres here.

4.3.2 Build It Yourself

This collaboration by choice, mentioned in the previous sentence, is central in this subtheme. The entrepreneurial character of being a musician in 2017 is further explored here. As already outlined in the literature review of this study, the 'cultural entrepreneur' or 'artist-entrepreneur' is a broad concept, varying from maintaining collaborations 'sans capital' to a self-initiated vertical integration in the value chain of the production of an album. Peltz' (2011) statement that musicians occupy or self-determined outsource multiple different positions in their careers (vertical integration), showed up many times over the course of the fifteen interviews.

Piecing together, managing and controlling their own team for the production and release of a record, bookings of live performances and other career-related issues, is an approach frequently mentioned. A reason Britt gives for this is that 'many parties want a lot from you, without being willing to invest much time in you'. Therefore, she thinks it is better to put together your own team, with people that 'are super engaged and think you are amazing'. Britt is not the only respondent who thinks it is crucial to hire or work with people that believe in what you do. Thijs also stated that it is important to hire a bookings agent that thinks you are great, because only then they can sell your act. Fridolijn, who is signed with a label, still picks some third parties herself. Separately from her record label, she works with someone who is specialised in digital distribution for international releases, and also an individual who is in charge of her vinyl production has no connections with V2; "This is something I strongly believe in, to work with individuals who are specialised on specific parts of the production process". David said about deciding 'to be their own label': "we know

a lot of people in the industry, and we wanted to do some – I think it is called – cherry picking. So, basically this person and that person: we want to work with them. That way it is our organisation". The use of the word 'organisation' is telling here, as David already draws the line to a regular enterprise. As Swedberg (2006) considered, interpreted from Schumpeter's theory on economic entrepreneurs, putting together novel combinations is 'at the very heart not only of entrepreneurship in general but also of cultural entrepreneurship' (p. 260). The combination is, in this case, building a team and putting the right people together.

Respondents also regularly choose to take on the task themselves, instead of hiring an intermediary. This time the musicians do not despise the task at hand, or are forced in the position to perform them, as discussed in the previous main theme. Rather than outsourcing distribution, promotion, booking gigs and other managerial tasks, respondents say it is 'super useful' (Thijs) and more efficient to do certain things themselves. Britt, initially signed with a bookings agent from one of the major bookings agencies, tells that after breaking with them, she started to book shows herself: "it is really lousy, but if I do it myself I book five gigs over the course of a week. Well you really would not have to expect that from a bookings agent.". Also Fridolijn says that she quit outsourcing managerial tasks, although 'it is nice when people answer emails for you, I can do that myself as well.'. Nicolas, who now does have a fitting manager for his band, managed The Cosmic Carnival himself for many years, told me that it is important to hire someone that 'does better and faster business than the band members do'. In his case, Nicolas himself was the hardest worker possible: "a manager only worked against us, because where he paused, I proceeded working". The briefly outlined principal-agent problem comes into play here, as respondents express opposing views between them and an intermediary. Indeed, the solution they find is either doing it themselves or hire someone by choice to carry out the task at hand, like Peltz (2011) explained would be a solution to this problem.

4.3.3 Self-release

The very last theme discussed in the analysis of this study is about self-release and alternative capital used in a musician's career. All fifteen respondents self-released at least one record or are planning on doing so, either an EP or an entire album. Five of the interviewed musicians signed with a label after that release, the other nine stayed independent, or started their own label. The fact that every musician or band in my sample has self-released an album is the most unanimous pattern in this study, although motivations vary. Two decades ago, the

general way to initially reach the masses was via a label, that financed and arranged basically everything including the record, distribution and promotion (BRON). Apparently, tables have turned significantly, as none of my respondents tried to find a label before releasing their first record. On the one hand this might have something to do with how labels are more cautious nowadays because of the ever declining album sales, which makes it harder to make money off artists (Marshall, 2013). Therefore, labels do not sign artists as quickly as they used to do. However, this reason was not mentioned once, so this might be an indirect cause or even a development that took place before most respondents started their careers in music. What is more plausible, is that musicians can now do many things themselves, due to digitisation. For instance, to produce an album it is not necessary anymore to rent an expensive studio, and the promotion of the record could be done through social media (David, Tijs). Like Bacache, Bourreau and Moreau (2014) stated, the increasing number of self-released albums are a result of the distributing and promoting, and thus also recording, of a record being more accessible to everyone.

Another reason I am attaching to this unanimous self-release trend in the sample, is the use of alternative capital. Although self-releasing an album could be costly venture, independent musicians often work together with other creatives that have a 'similar standing in the industry' (Scott, 2012, p. 238). In practice, this means that musicians work with other creatives that could either be friends, acquaintances or even strangers that are also trying to have a career in the creative industries, to help each other reaching a higher level. However, instead of paying each other with money, the act of some kind of shared development suffices. For instance, Britt produced her first record with a friend who wanted to start his career as a producer. She wanted to record an album, and he wanted jobs to work on, so they helped each other out. The record turned out to be fairly successful, which made the collaboration worthy for both. Britt later adds that she does basically everything with friends, from shooting videos to photoshoots: "Yes, I do actually everything with friends. Also my photography is always done by friends. Yes, like this you can help each other as artists. […] You need to help each other out, that is very nice. Together you can get a lot done.". Also Matthijs says that their bookings agent is a friend of the band. He owns a small bookings agency, as the two parties help each other to a next level by providing each other work. Another example comes from Thomas*, who was good friends with members of a famous Dutch band that took his band with them on tour as the support act. The famous band had a good support act, and the emerging band was introduced to a broad audience. The members of the De Likt also profited from the shared development that was enabled when they were

played on the radio for the first time:

> Giorgi: …And then it [their single] got picked up by 3FM, Eva Koreman, she was the radio DJ who thought we were really good, and she was a newcomer to at that point-
> John: -yes, and she thought 'I will take this on, and then if it becomes a hit, I also get something out of it'.
> Giorgi: Yes, so we would both grow, both profit from it.

In all the given examples, Bourdieu's alternative capital strongly functions, because money was in none of the cases directly involved. Working together with people from a personal network, concretely illustrates how social capital could work. Building social capital does not come free, as it requires a great investment of energy and mutual favours (Bourdieu, 1986). However, when allocated properly it could be converted into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Translated to a less abstract level, this means that when a musician manages to undertake their social contact successfully, it could translate to exposure and, eventually, success. This indeed shows in the examples outlined above, as the collaborations between cultural entrepreneurs caused a symbolic benefit for both parties involved. Naturally, there will always be one party that gains more, and one party that gives more than the other, but generally the pair shares an advantage compared to before the partnership. The artists 'paid' each other in networks, talent, experience, reputation, and all other effects that appeared after the collaboration. Because money becomes a secondary resource here, it is easier for musicians to self-release a record, for the simple fact that less money is needed.

The way Scott (2012), Swedberg (2006) and Hesmondhalgh (2006) all describe how the alternative forms of capital carry a greater weight than monetary rewards seems indeed true. Even a touch of *l'art pour l'art* was felt in some interviews. For instance, Annika states that she thinks the most important thing is to create a 'product' you can support yourself as an artist and building a worthy reputation in the music scene: "I don't need big success, I just was to make beautiful things […] I don't want to be sell-out". Nicolas adds to this: "… and you don't have to be rich, having your music is enough, and the adventures you experience together, that will take you very far.". Also both Cas and Liselot mention that their primary goal in their music career is to have their music heard by a lot of people, but that they do not necessarily want to be famous for that; they just want to make music and have others enjoy it.

5 Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Summary of Results

By means of doing interviews with sixteen professional Dutch pop musicians, I strived to find an answer to the question how Dutch pop musicians are making use of intermediaries to have a successful career in the Digital Age. After analysing a broad range of literature on dis/reintermediation, that would or would not have occurred over the past decade, this thesis can add new information to this debate. Most articles read and used as an academic foundation in this study, were published years ago, varying from a couple of years to more than a decade. As technology is ever changing, state-of-the-art information on intermediaries in the Digital Age is ever required.

On an observatory level it is safe to conclude that despite all technological opportunities and online freedom, musician cannot or do not want to work without intermediaries. The Dutch music industry is experienced as a secluded area with limited space in the top, which makes it tough to have a big break through. Traditional channels, like radio, television and a couple of showcase festivals, are still considered crucial for success, that follows the exposure these media constitute. However, these channels are managed and controlled by a few key players, or gatekeepers, who decide what fits the bill and what does not. Self-establishing a career via online media outlets is cautiously viewed as a possibility, although the focus on numbers and bluffing online are not loved by many. Nonetheless, most respondents think that playing a good live show, connecting with fans in real life and being featured on the traditional channels are essential to making a musical career in The Netherlands. However, in order to play that good live show where the fans are purchasing tickets for, musicians nowadays need an album that attract people to the show (Frith, 2014); and that album needs to be produced, distributed and promoted.

Although all fifteen respondents in my sample had self-released at least one record are planning to do so in the near future, this does definitely not mean they did every part in the process themselves. The term 'self-release' stands for keeping your own copyrights in this case, which translates to not being signed with a label. However, none of the artists in this sample managed the whole process without any help from intermediaries or third parties. On the one hand, performing non-creative tasks was experienced as something that consumes too much time, which intervenes with focussing on music. On top of that, some respondents feel they are not good at some work, so they want to collaborate with intermediaries to close that

competency gap. On the other hand, there is a tendency you still *need* certain intermediaries, especially for their network and skills, to have a successful career. This has a close link to the idea that the Dutch music industry is tough to penetrate, because musicians need to get to precisely the right people. As 'the right people' are not present in big numbers, it is necessary to know the right middlemen that could establish a link between the musician and powerful gatekeeper.

However, in 2017 there is no fixed model on which intermediaries to work with, and on what basis. Not one respondent in my sample handles the same kind of combination when it comes to working with a label, bookings agent, manager and distributor. Besides these four 'common' intermediary-options, musicians also greatly vary in making use of a plugger, hiring a professional producer or a digital promotor. Furthermore, when artists hire a third person to carry out certain tasks for them, this person does not necessarily have to be an industry professional or that someone with that promising network; intermediaries could also be friends, acquaintances or other creatives trying to maintain a career in the cultural industries, helping each other to get to a higher level. Artists like to put together their own team of people to self-manage the release of their record, mostly for the reason that they want to be in control of whom to work with, when to release the record and to not be controlled 'from above'. The idea of being in control, whilst working with others is the general tendency in the interviews conducted for this study.

As has become clear, musicians still notably work with all kinds of intermediaries from all different levels in the creative industries. Whether this is for handing over unwanted tasks, a network expansion, closing a competency gap, or the plain necessity to break the Dutch industry, the phenomenon of disintermediation far from occurs. A quote from the very last interview perfectly illustrates this conclusion:

> […] you could also wash your own car. But could you wash your car in ten minutes, while you're listening to music? That is what it's all about. The fact that the industry innovated and evaluated to where it is today, does not make it more or less attractive to do things yourself. You could do it yourself before as well, if you had a solid plan. You can do everything yourself, promotion, distribution. Well go do it. People get paid for this for a reason. (Vincent Patty)

5.2 Discussion

In the last section of this thesis, I will discuss the in-depth implications of the conclusions summarized above, which already modestly showed through the analysis section.

In the first place, leaning on observations about the Dutch music industry and opportunities brought about by modern technology, some sort of paradox seems to occur, hence the name of the first main theme *The Digital Age Paradox*. It is remarkable how it seemed like every respondent was in some kind of debate with him/herself during the interview. As the potential idea to build a career on potentially fake online engagement and polished-looking social media profiles, was taken down within 30 minutes by themselves with up to three arguments. No one really knows what guarantees the high engagement numbers online, nor do artists know how, in example, one million streams on Spotify translate to their offline career. On top of that, is it found impossible to have a career without a good live performance, even though going without a good-looking social media is repertoire also found preposterous. The third argument against online possibilities is the tendency that artists still need to pass traditional and new gatekeepers to bring their music to the masses. These contradicting statements are telling, as artists apparently now have to manage and master three different 'channels' in order to have a successful career in music: online media, live performances, and traditional channels guarded by gatekeepers. Only doing well online is not enough, and only doing well offline neither. However, the words 'managing' and 'mastering' do not necessarily apply to the traditional channels, like 3FM, *De Wereld Draait Door*, Popronde and other analogue routes. To get music featured on one of these channels is not something musicians have full control over, as they often need to hire a plugger (which does not guarantee success either), have someone in their network that can put in a good word, or the luck to be scouted either online or offline. The remaining emphasis on the traditional channels shows that, firstly, audiences apparently still take the words of an elite group of influencers and, secondly, that there is hardly a way to make it to the Dutch top without the help of these influencers. Predictions that the technological developments of the past decades would democratise the music industry (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Hracs, 2012), thus fall through. Especially, because many online platforms, like Facebook, Instagram and Spotify show content to users based on previously consumed content; algorithms created by the platforms' software developers. Online audience, thus, only find an artist if they are either purposefully looking for it, or an artist's music or content is already up their ally, or close to their network (Skeggs & Yuill, 2016). As a result, it is difficult to break into online user's

algorithmed feedback loops without paying or working with a good digital promotor. Therefore, to be heard by the big masses, on a national level, being featured on the traditional channels is still crucial. Of course, in comparison to the years before the Internet boom, musicians do have more opportunities to be heard nowadays. So the internet more transparently functioning as an A&R agent, because an amount of plays and likes indicate what the audiences like, might offer a way to be seen by the traditional gatekeepers. As Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2016) have argued "We have not seen the removal of music's intermediaries but instead a game of musical chairs, in which new gatekeepers have emerged." (p. 11); instead of the elimination of traditional gatekeepers, new online alternatives to win their attention have emerged, as well as additional gatekeepers in the online sphere.

Secondly, based on observation regarding intermediaries, I would like to propose and introduce a new career-model in the Dutch music industry, and possibly beyond those borders (See figure 4, on page 61). Reinforcing the work of Hracs (2011; 2012), Hracs and Leslie (2014), Young and Collins (2010), and Hennekam and Bennett (2016), observations from this study show that musicians indeed feel like doing everything themselves is an overwhelming effort, that they might be underskilled for it, and that they *need* intermediaries for their network to be successful in the Dutch music scene. The DIY-models as presented by Oliver (2010), Hracs (2012), Hughes et al. (2016, p. 25), in which the artist carries out virtually every task himself, is, thus, either outdated or an illusion in the first place. Today, it is perceived impossible or just plain undesirable to execute all career-related tasks individually. The attached anti-commercial 70s DIY-ideology seems to be true in some ways, as musicians like to be independent from corporates' power and control their own money streams (Oliver, 2010; Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Winter, 2015). However, I would like to side with Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2016) here, and rather interpret this an anti-major ethos than an anti-commercial stance, although some respondents even expressed a *l'art pour l'art* kind of mentality. Contradictory, some respondents did feel 'forced' into doing things themselves, which was not desired.

However, the other side of the spectrum, a (360-degree) deal with a record label (Marshall, 2013; Hughes et al., 2016, p. 22), is neither unanimously aspired, as some musicians do not even want to sign with a label anymore nor work with all traditional intermediaries. Even having deals or contracts with labels or other intermediaries could vary greatly from artist to artist. This leaves us in a dynamic landscape, where musicians 'cherry

pick' with who, when, why, and for how long they want to work with this individual, in order to establish their career in music. This comes closest to a simple entrepreneurial career-model Hughes et al. (2016, p. 23) presented, indeed noticing that being the spider in their own web enables artists to 'stay independent while working with, and through, major label marketing and distribution services'. Oliver's 'DIY musicology model' mentioned this correctly, as he included the importance of communities and collaborations in his model (2010, p. 1426). However, musicians do not merely work through services from majors to achieve success, because they ever so often work with other musicians, creatives, and cultural entrepreneurs. An activity that they can enable via their social capital, and ultimately transpose to symbolic capital: the fame, good reputation or honour in the The Netherlands (Bourdieu, 1986; Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Moreover, the thought that independent musicians make music for the sake of making music, and not for money, nor for fame (McLean, Oliver & Wainwright, 2010) even finds its traces in a couple of interviews.

Altogether, as observations made in this study indicate, the work-method musicians apply to their career do not fit any of the above-mentioned models anymore, I am proposing a new one (see figure 4), that will be discussed below

Firstly, the new model illustrates a new career-sequence. Secondly, it shows a slightly simplified version of the different, and versatile, paths an artist could walk on their way to the release of a record and playing live shows. The model shows an updated order of how an artist's career generally evolves nowadays. As I spoke with only fifteen musicians in the Dutch industry, it is, of course, safe to state that not every single artist handles that career like this, but a certain pattern occurred from this dataset.

A couple of things have changed massively with respect to a roughly twenty years ago. In the first place, all musicians self-release a first record. Before, talent was picked up by A&R agents, and artists signed with a label, that financed a record for them. Apparently, careers now start with self-releasing a professional first record, instead of trying to find a label beforehand. Some artists sign with a label for a new record, others stay independent. The second big shift, that also has been discussed by Frith (2014), is the way how records now constitute as the promotion for a tour, instead of the tour motivating people to purchase the record. The reason behind this is the decline of record sales, and increasing percentage of revenues earned from live shows in a musician's overall income (Gaca, 2016; Hracs & Leslie, 2014; Young & Collins, 2010; Von der Fuhr, 2015).

At the top, the sequence starts with the artist, the person that wants to have a career in music, which they nowadays achieve when they can play live shows, and has to be established via a record. The first step in this process is finding capital to fund the record, which could be by either signing with a label, alternatively finding financial capital through crowdfunding or other investors, or spend alternative capital by means of mobilising a personal network. The next steps involve creative choices, like where and how to produce the record. Labels sometimes leave the choice to the artist open to make this decision themselves. Subsequently, the finished record has to be distributed, which leaves the artist with the choice to either self-distribute online and offline, have their label distribute the record, or sign a distribution- or licensing-deal with a label or another record distributor. The following move is crucial, as the promotion of the record has to get the artist past the gatekeepers. The options for promotion are quite rich; an artist's record label could take care of it, an artist could hire a freelance (digital) promotor and/or plugger, an artist could take care of their own promotion online (e.g. via social media), or compete in a pop contest (which does not usually used as an album-promotion strategy, but it a common way to gain momentum). Lastly, when an artist managed to get their record noticed and featured on one (or more) of the Dutch traditional channels, like 3FM and *De Wereld Draait Door*, it is time to play live shows at the regional pop venues and festivals. Here musicians could choose to either try to book the shows themselves, or collaborate with a bookings agent.

I designed this model as a loop, because with every new record, musicians can decide on a distinct route to take. Where Hracs, (2011; 2012), and Hennekam and Bennett (2016), were worried about the huge list of tasks an independent had to master, musicians now principally need to master a couple of entrepreneurial character traits. They need to be innovative, and able to put together new combinations (Swedberg, 2006); the new combinations representing a solid and well-functioning team consisting of creatives, some industry professionals and personal acquaintances that are able to take a musician's career to the next level. Although having a successful career in the Dutch music industry did not seem to become easier to achieve due to technological developments, as the expected democratisation did not really take place, musicians unanimously chose the path in which they interpedently decide whom to work with, instead of leaving these decisions in the hands of industry majors. Being in control of their own career is the ideological stance that drives the DIY Entrepreneur.

This model falls short on some points, as it does not represent the smaller live performances artists play to grow their fan base in the preparatory phase towards a release. Continual social media usage, that provides followers updates and background stories, is also left out of this model.

Figure 4 The DIY Entrepreneur

Figure 4 The DIY Entrepreneur
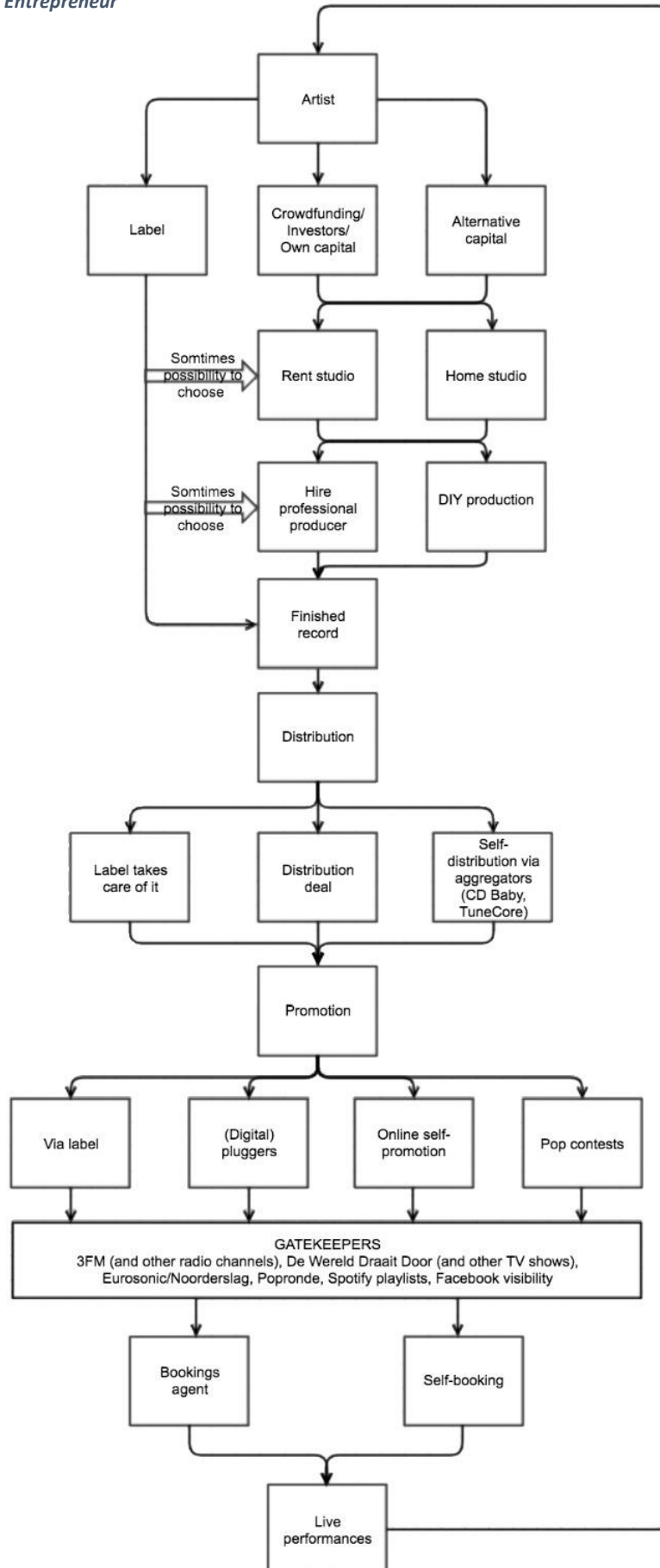
5.3 Reflection and Future research

While intensively working on this study for the past four months, I feel like I have gained a lot of valuable experience as a researcher and I, above all, very much enjoyed researching this topic. One of the pitfalls I expected beforehand, was my bias a researcher, because I was studying a group of people I am more or less part of myself. Eventually, I think this bias was dominantly controlled, as I was aware of this from the beginning and found myself discovering new phenomenon, at least for myself. Exploring new information shows I did not study in the tunnel vision of own framework of knowledge. However, interviewer and coder biases can never be completely ruled out, but I am confident I diminished it as far as I could.

Future research could be aiming towards testing the just-discussed model on a larger sample, and other countries. Other things that have not been taken into account in this study are the spatial differences between musicians from the countryside and musicians from the city. In this study, accidentally, only musicians that are based in the Randstad, the urban area of The Netherlands, were interviewed, which might differ from musicians from more quiet regions of The Netherlands. Other future research could focus on the new digital intermediaries, like Spotify-playlist curators on algorithms influencing users. Having more insights in how these forces function would be beneficial to both research on the intermediation-topic regarding the music business, and for musicians. Lastly, I would recommend to look more into the datafication of the music industry, with a focus on how a certain numbers of plays, views, likes et cetera have an impact on a career in music and how various people working in the industry view this.

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7.1 Appendix 1: List of respondents

Name	Act name	Label	Bookings agent	Manager	Distribution deal (if not signed with label)	Self-released (first) record	Features on traditional channel
Märel Bijveld	KOALA	No	Yes, on handshake basis	No	No	In planning	No
Thijs Vroegop	Tim Dawn	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Matthijs Steur	Matt Winson	Yes, V2	Yes		-	Yes	Yes
Britt Pols	PollyAnna	No	No (but used to)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Annika Boxhoorn	ANNIKA	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Frans Verburg	Crying Boys Café	Yes, Excelsior Recordings	No	No	-	No (not with CCC, but with other acts)	Yes
	Rina Mushonga		Yes	Yes	Yes	-	
Giorgi Kuiper en John van Beek	De Likt	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Liselot van Oosterom	Lilith Merlot	No	No	No	No	In planning	No
Nicolas Schuit	The Cosmic Carnival	Yes, Innercore Music	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Fridolijn Vanpoll	Fridolijn	Yes, V2	No	No	-	Yes	Yes
Cas Ronckers	CAS	No	No	No	No	In planning	Yes
Tijs van de Poll	Friends of the Family	No	Yes	No	Yes, PIAS	Yes	Yes
Vincent Patty	Jiggy Djé	Yes, Noah's Ark (owned by him)	Yes (when still performed)	No	Yes, PIAS	Yes	Yes
David Westmijer	The Brahms	Yes, self-owned label	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Thomas*	The Elementary Pinguins	Yes, V2	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes

7.2 Appendix 2: Original Dutch citations

Original Dutch citations by respondent in order of appearance.

Respondent	Original Dutch citation
Märel Bijveld	Maar toch, dan blijft het echte leven toch belangijker wel, want als je het zo bekijkt dat je een pagina hebt die on point is maar je speelt live super kut en je bent niet leuk in het echt, en je weet niet zo goed hoe je moet praten met mensen en je hebt een soort arrogantie over je heen, maar je pagina ziet er wel professioneel uit; dan ben je alsnog gewoon een kutband.
	Zeg maar ik wil me gewoon 100% bezig houden met het muziek maken, zodat ik me niet druk hoef te maken met wat er allemaal omheen gebeurt.
	En dat is gewoon het beroep van een manager, en ik ben daar gewoon niet zo goed in… Wij allemaal niet zo.
	k denk wel op een gegeven moment, stel we brengen dalijk een singel uit, dat het dan wel verstandig is van te voren met een plugger te gaan praten. Want zij zijn wel degene die de muziek bij de radiostations binnenkrijgen […]
Thijs Vroegop	Want oké ja ik weet 100% zeker dat als ik een mailtje stuur naar een festival van 'hee wij zijn een bandje, opkomend bladiebla klinkt ongeveer zo, hier is een linkje naar filmpjes lalal', het eerste wat ze doen is denk ik Facebook checken, hoeveel likes heb je al, wat heb je gedaan, zo staat het er ongeveer voor. En als dat dan 300 likes zijn, of 1200, dat maakt best uit.
	En is ook een beetje onvoorspelbaar. Soms gebeurt er niet zoveel mee.
	Maar het is inderdaad, ik vind ook dat ik meer bezig zou moeten zijn met muziek maken. Met liedjes schrijven, nieuwe dingen maken
	Ik doe veel zelf. Ook wel noodgedwongen natuurlijk.
	Maar ik zou best gebruik willen van het nerwerk van een label, of van een manager et cetera.
	Niet omdat ik denk dat ik als ik een keer contract heb, dan heb ik het gemaakt, maar omdat ik gewoon merk dat ja… mensen die veel mensen kennen en goed zijn in wat ze doen, die krijgen gewoon meer dingen gedaan.
Matthijs Steur	En dat kan heel handig zijn, tegelijkertijd kun je je ook weer afvragen 'hoeveel is zo'n like waard?'
Britt Pols	Ehm, dus ja stel dat je 300.000 schijnviews hebt van Spinning of zo, is dat iets wat mensen wel over de streep trekt.
	En het gekke is je kunt gewoon Spotify plays kopen, en je kan YouTube plays kopen en je kan Instagram followers kopen, dus het

	is een beetje een gek wereldje. Ik zou zeggen als je 10.000 euro zou investeren in allerlei clicks en plays en promotors, dan kom je verder dan als je bij een label zit.
	Het is ook één grote puzzel, heel de tijd moeten schuiven ook.
	Terwijl, ik heb laatst ook met ehm een schrijven met Engelse artiesten dan hebben ze 20 miljoen Instagram volgers en dan ben ik helemaal impressed.
	Je kunt het ook organisch doen, en dan kun je echt een lange carrière hebben. Een fanbase opbouwen, en honderd shows per jaar speelt, en met mensen praat, en fans de aandacht geven die ze willen.
	Het is niet nog erger geworden, maar in bepaalde opzichten, hebben we een stap teruggedaan dat weer de labels en de mensen met geld in charge zijn
	Dan heb je nog steeds niet zo'n hele grote… ik heb niet zo'n heel groot bereik zelf.
	Ik heb van de week wat mensen ontmoet, ik ben op zoek zelf naar een investeerder. Dat zou natuurlijk echt te gek zijn, als er iemand is die geld investeert, en die niet daarmee per se je manager wilt worden of je label. Dat je alle creatieve beslissingen zelf kunt maken.
	Heel veel partijen willen heel veel van je zonder dat ze echt veel tijd in je investeren. En dat is wel een reden waarom ik soms denk dat je beter je eigen team kunt opzetten, eh… van mensen die super geëngageerd zijn en echt in je geloven […]
	En dan merk ik gelijk, dat is heel erg, dat als ik het zelf doe, dan staan er gewoon binnen een week vijf optredens, nou dat hoef je van een boeker echt niet te verwachten.
	Ja, ja, ik doe eigenlijk alles met vrienden. En ook fotografie wordt altijd door vrienden gedaan. Ja dan help je elkaar ook als kunstenaars. Of zo. Ik fotografeer ook heel veel artiesten gewoon gratis omdat ik het leuk vind om ze te helpen. Je moet elkaar ook helpen daarin. Dus dat is wel mooi. Wat je allemaal me z'n voor elkaar kunt krijgen.
Annika Boxhoorn	Maar je moet dan ondertussen toch wel een live reputatie hebben opgebouwd en een indrukwekkende CV of agenda hebben, en die heb ik dan wel al.
	Maar ik moet gewoon eigenlijk op een Vice of zo, ja dan moet je wel een of ander raar video'tje maken, dat is wel hoe 't werkt.
	Als jij precies het goede liedje vindt dat zij helemaal te geil vinden, dan zit je erin, en als je wat anders doet dan zit je daar niet in.
	Nee, want dan ben ik gestrest, en het enige wat ik wil is muziek maken.

	Dus dat is geen bewuste keuze, maar dat is een keuze, dé keuze die ik nu noodgedwongen moet maken.
	Ja ik ben met die jongen gaan werken, omdat ik dacht 'hij kan mij op een hoger niveau tillen'.
	Dus het kost iets meer, nou, gigantisch veel meer tijd, maar dan heb je nog altijd wel in eigen macht.
	Ik verdien m'n geld al met muziek, dan wel op twintigduizend verschillende manieren, maar ik ben wel happy, ik wil geen sell-out zijn.
Frans Verburg	No citations
Giorgi Kuiper	Want we hadden toch wel bij de De Grote Prijs gemerkt dat het toch wel erg prettig is als je zelf kan besluiten van 'nu vinden we de muziek af en nu gaan we het naar buiten brengen'
	Want toen werd het opgepakt door 3FM, Eva Koremans, zij was de radioDJ die ons echt wel goed vond, en zij was nieuw toen ook-
	Ja dus voor ons allebei, konden we ervan profiteren
John van Beek	Ja en zij dacht dat pak ik een beetje aan, dan hoop ik dat dat wat wordt en dan heb ik ook wat.
Liselot van Oosterom	Ik vrees dat online belangrijker is, ja ik denk dat online belangrijker is want er is heel veel bluf. Als je online vet veel volgers hebt en het lijkt of je vet goed bent dan gaan mensen daarin geloven.
	Ik moet gewoon over die 1000 komen maar daar zit ik nog lang niet.
	En ik weet ook gewoon nog niet zo goed, ik moet er eigenlijk een keer een goede lecture over krijgen of zoiets want ik weet het eigenlijk niet zo goed.
	Ik ben daarin gewoon echt heel naïef. Ik ga gewoon duizend euro betalen voor iemand die dat heel goed kan. En dan kost me dan heel veel geld, maar ja.
Nicolas Schuit	Ja je moet er helemaal overna denken, en een soort plot schrijven hoe je gaat opvallen met een actie, met iets, met een plaat, dat je er allemaal dingen aanhangt, dat zou ook moeten eigenlijk.
	En heel veel mensen kennen elkaar, en als je erbij zit, zit je erbij. Als je er niet bij zit. En ze hebben één keer nee gezegd, of ze hebben drie keer nee gezegd, en je komt er heel de tijd niet bij, dan gaat het waarschijnlijk nooit meer gebeuren, is mijn ervaring dan. […] Ja hoe ga je dat doen dan? Internet? Hoe ga je dan zonder de hulp van grote maatschappijen ertussen komen. Dat is bij niet te doen, omdat de markt zo klein is.
	En je moet harder gaan in zaken doen dan de bandleden zelf doen. […] Een manager werkte ons alleen maar tegen eigenlijk, waar hij stopte dan ging ik nog verder.

	En je hoeft niet rijk te zijn, je hebt genoeg aan de muziek en de avonturen die je samen beleeft, ja, dan kan je, dan kom je al een heel eind.
Fridolijn Vanpoll	Die twee gaan hand in hand. Je kunt groot bereik hebben via al die kanalen, maar uiteindelijk moet je mensen aan je verbinden met je muziek en niet met een fotootje of een interviewtje.
	Het is zo fake. Het zegt ook vaak helemaal niets. Als ik 1000 likes heb voor een optreden wil dat helemaal niet zeggen dat er 1000 mensen komen.
	Dat was echt te veel, ik heb er bijna een burn out van gekregen. […] Je bent met zoveel verschillende dingen bezig, contractonderhandelingen, interviews, oefenen met de band, optreden, boekingen binnenhalen en ook je lange termijn visie in het oog houden. Daar werk ik op een gegeven moment echt gek van.
	Als je een dag vrij neemt gebeurt er ook niets.
	Zo'n label heeft natuurlijk wel heel goede contacten en dealtjes dat ze één keer per maand iemand op die homepage mogen zetten weet je wel?
	Dat is wel een onderdeel waar ik sterk in geloof, dat je per onderdeel van je release te werken met mensen die gespecialiseerd zijn in dat onderdeel.
	Als je iets echt anders wilt staan ze daar wel voor open.
Cas Ronckers	No citations
Tijs van de Poll	Uiteindelijk ben je zo goed als je laatste show.
	We doen het zelf zodat we niet vast zitten bij mensen van bovenaf.
	Het geeft veel druk. Nu kunnen we het doen als we er zin in hebben.
Vincent Patty	Voor ons het gewoon allebei, het hoort gewoon bij elkaar. Het is ook allemaal net zo belangrijk. We doen gewoon alles.
	Ja precies, ik kan nu contractlezen, ik weet wat daar staat en ik weet ook waar het over gaat, wat er belangrijk aan is, wat er eventueel te onderhandelen valt. Ik weet nu hoe je op de juiste manier een afspraak moet maken
	Maar kun jij je eigen auto wassen in tien minuten terwijl je muziek aan het luisteren bent? Dat is waar het allemaal over gaat. Het feit dat de industrie geïnnoveerd is en geëvolueerd naar wat het nu is, dat maakt het niet meer of minder aantrekkelijk om het zelf te doen. Je kon het eerst ook zelf doen, als je maar en goed plan had. Je kan alles zelf doen, pluggen, distribueren. Nou ga het maar doen. Mensen worden niet niks betaald om zoiets te doen.
David Westmijer	at wij heel erg proberen is onze ogen open te houden en op te letten wat andere mensen doen. En wat werkt en wat niet werkt. Het is nu een soort tijd dat niemand echt weet wat er werkt.

	Nee, echt geen idee. Gewoon eh… de samensteller heeft het vast gezien en dacht 'dit past hierbij'
	En ehm, ja dat is ook wel de way to go. Dat is nog steeds hoe het gaat.
	En uiteindelijk hebben we de knoop doorgehakt, we willen het gewoon zelf doen, in ieder geval in Nederland. We kunnen het betalen, dus waarom zouden we het niet zelf betalen, dan hoeven we niemand terug te betalen.
	Maar dat was een beetje onze overweging, we kennen veel mensen in de industrie, en we willen meer een soort, cherry picking heet het volgens mij, dus gewoon die en die, daar willen we mee werken, dan is het gewoon onze organisatie zeg maar.
Thomas*	Dat je, een soort magie of zo, dat je ineens in een lijst staat in Ierland of in Vietnam of zo, waar we laatst in stonden. Dat je denkt 'hoe de hell kan dit nou weer?'

7.3 Appendix 3: Interviews

Name	Location	Date	Duration interview
Matthijs Steur	V11, Rotterdam	March 10th, 2017	31:26
Thijs Vroegop	Restaurant De Markt, Utrecht	March 15th, 2017	34:51
Märel Bijveld	Het Gegeven Paard, Utrecht	March 15th, 2017	26:53
Britt Pols	Restaurant Post, Dordrecht	April 11th, 2017	1:01:31
Annika Boxhoorn	Rotown, Rotterdam	March 21st, 2017	32:06
Frans Verburg	At his home, Rotterdam	April 10th, 2017	56:01
Giorgi Kuiper John van Beek	De Likt's studio, Rotterdam	April 12th, 2017	48:21
Liselot van Oosterom	De Machinist, Rotterdam	April 20th, 2017	27:57
Nicolas Schuit	Keilewerf, Rotterdam	April 12th, 2017	52:57
Fridolijn Vanpoll	Walter Woodbury Bar, Amsterdam	April 28th, 2017	43:41
Cas Ronckers	WDMC, Rotterdam	May 9th, 2017	49:25
Tijs van de Poll	At his home, Rijswijk	May 4th, 2017	28:35
Vincent Patty	Noah's Ark office, Amsterdam	May 19th, 2017	45:41
David Westmeijer	Het Gegeven Paard, Utrecht	May 2nd, 2017	44:33
Thomas*	CREA Café, Amsterdam	May 3rd, 2017	51:00