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The protean music career as a sociopolitical orientation: The mutually integrated, non-hierarchical work values of socially engaged musicians

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Abstract

Socially engaged, participatory music making is slowly establishing itself as a complement to musicians' portfolio careers, although it may still be considered of less value than established concert hall practices. To gain a better understanding of the drivers toward socially engaged practice in music field, we analyzed 20 semi-structured interviews with musicians in Finland, using the lenses of *work values* and *career orientations*. The abductive, theoretical reading analysis shows that the musicians viewed the social- relational nature of their work as a fundamental feature of the practice and sought congruence between their work values and other personal values. The interviewees renounced the hierarchy between intrinsic (autonomy, creativity, variety, achievement, challenge, and intellectual stimulation) and social work values (interacting with people, altruism, and contribution to society), and found participatory practice to be artistically freeing and personally rewarding. Their work appeared less driven by extrinsic values (economic gain and status); hence, their self-directed and values-driven orientation resonates strongly with the notion of the *protean career*. Although their sociopolitical stance involved the risk of weakening their professional status and they had to constantly justify their work amongst their colleagues, they all expressed conscious counternarratives to what they considered the elitism of expert culture in traditional music institutions. The study argues that the practice of socially engaged musicians can help the professional field of music reconsider and transform its stubborn value hierarchies in the complex social, political, ethical, and moral landscapes of contemporary society.

Keywords

musician, career orientation, socially engaged practice, participatory music making, professionalism, work values, protean career, elitism

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Socially engaged, participatory music making is a growing if still somewhat niche pursuit, described by a plethora of concepts ranging from participatory (Daykin et al., 2018; van Zijl & De bisschop, 2023), socially engaged (Grant, 2019), socially responsible (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021), and socially impactful music making (Bartleet & Pairon, 2021; Sloboda et al., 2020) to community music, musical citizenship (Elliott et al., 2016), civic professionalism (Laes et al., 2021), and musicians' engagement with civic missions in society (Gaunt et al., 2021). These mutually overlapping approaches refer especially to professional musicians' increasing, heterogeneous, and sociopolitically motivated work with, rather than simply for, people in contemporary society. These practices also engage with the problems of contemporary society and often operate outside established institutional contexts. In the arts, according to Charnley (2021), socially engaged practices "are proposed as art" while "calling into question art's conventional boundaries," such as blurring the boundary between the artist and the audience and identifying music "not with an object, but with social processes or interactions" (p. 12). Socially engaged practices explicitly provide a response to new, inclusive, and socially aware politics in contemporary pluralist societies (Sloboda et al., 2020), thus highlighting the exclusionary nature of the more traditional music industry and concert hall practice (Foreman-Wernet, 2017; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021; Kolbe, 2021; Westerlund et al., 2021).

This shift in the arts, claimed by Charnley (2021) to be sociopolitical, informed by research on professionalism in music (Grant, 2019), nevertheless meets resistance from professional musicians to whom it may present "an unhelpful distraction from the core practices and values of the discipline" (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021, pp. viv–v). This resistance is understandable given the trajectories of the past, such as the dominance of concert hall practice and ideas around musical autonomy, the atemporal nature of quality, and the so-called star system (e.g., Samson, 2001; Turino, 2008), which all continue to contribute to the construction of profes- sionalism in music and higher music education. Contra the historical construction of perfor- mance practices, participatory music practices should not be seen as "just informal or amateur
. . . [but] a different form of art and activity entirely . . . —and that they should be conceptualized and valued as such" (Turino, 2008, p. 25). Some authors have ascribed the value hierarchies of different kinds of musical practice especially to classical music (Bull & Scharff, 2021; Green, 2003), in which "autonomy from social concerns" is "used to judge other genres of music as less valuable" (Bull & Scharff, 2021, p. 676). In this value hierarchy, intrinsic values refer to things worthy in themselves, whereas the social aspects of music making are seen as extrinsic, non-musical, and merely as a means to the primary end (e.g., Reimer, 2009). This hierarchy has been used normatively when articulating priorities for professional education and work as, for instance, teachers have been advised to concentrate on the intrinsic, purely musical values that great art provides instead of those created by "the horizontal relationships between person and person" (Reimer, 2009, p. 12). In today's discussion, the general distancing of the arts from sociopolitical realities has been reborn in the criticism of the neoliberal policies that urge arts institutions to engage in participatory practices to a greater extent (e.g., Varkøy & Angelo, 2022). While the situation is complex, it has become more evident since the turn of the millennium that the institutionalized art system is "approaching a limit of its ability to contain contradictions upon which it is founded [and that] scripts used to interpret art's politics need to be reevaluated" (Charnley, 2021, p. 17). While the "shift in the relationship between art and politics" suggested by Charnley (2021, p. 8) can also be economically driven, given that public funding has recently been directed to participatory, socially engaged music and arts practices not just in the context of this study but also elsewhere, socially engaged music making can be seen, as a phenomenon, to expand the traditional basis of professionalism in music in

contemporary complex societies (Westerlund & Gaunt, 2021) and highlight musicians' potential "to play a meaningful role in society" (Grant, 2019, p. 388).

In this qualitative interview study, we explored, in the context of Finland, the drivers and values keeping musicians in socially engaged, participatory practice by connecting their work values (Jin & Rounds, 2012) to their career orientations (Hirschi & Koen, 2021). Previously, musicians' reasons for choosing and maintaining particular areas of activity have been studied using the construct of motivation, for example, by Preti and Welch (2013) (musicians working in healthcare settings) and Schmidt and Gruber (2023) (musicians in classical orchestras and popular music bands). In the present study, we draw upon research on work values (Arieli et al., 2020; Jin & Rounds, 2012; Ros et al., 1999), according to which values are represented in ways that allow reflection and communication, even though people are often unaware of their motives. Values as "trans-situational goals [function as] guiding principles in people's lives" (Ros et al., 1999, p. 51), and serve as criteria when they have to select and evaluate actions (Schwartz, 2012). They are important as "cognitive representations of individual needs and desires, on the one hand, and of societal demands on the other" (Grube et al., 1994, p. 155). Work values have been defined as "expressions of general values in the work setting" (Ros et al., 1999, p. 49), and as "evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is 'right' or assess the importance of preferences" (Dose, 1997, pp. 227–228). More specifically, we will use Jin and Rounds' (2012) taxonomy of work values, which identifies four domains of the phenomenon through a large meta-analysis: (1) intrinsic work values (related to autonomy, creativity, variety, achievement, challenge, and intellectual stimulation); (2) extrinsic work values (related to money, security, and work environment); (3) social/relational work values (related to interacting with people, altruism, and contribution to society); and (4) status work values (related to prestige, management, and influence). Work values have been previously studied among popular musicians (Everts et al., 2022) and music therapy majors (Oppenheim, 1984), but generally the literature on musicians' values remains scarce.

While the focus of this study was primarily defined by the narratives of the 20 socially engaged musicians we interviewed on the topic of their values, we placed a special emphasis on new, self-managed career orientations, especially in relation to portfolio and protean careers (e.g., Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Gubler et al., 2014; Hall, 2004; Handy, 1989; Westerlund & López-Íñiguez, 2022), which reflect shifting attitudes toward work in rapidly changing societies and institutions. We argue that socially engaged musicians' practice can help the professional field reconsider and transform its stubborn value hierarchies in the complex social, political, ethical, and moral landscapes of contemporary society.

Theoretical frame and methodology: Focusing on work values and career orientation

We undertook a process of abductive analysis (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) involving simultaneous engagement with the data and the testing of existing ideas, which resulted in a theoretical reading analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 245–246) referring to Jin and Rounds' (2012) widely used taxonomy of work values. During this process, we followed Abessolo et al. (2017) in connecting theorizations of work values to two related but still distinct approaches to career orientation—portfolio and protean—both representing self-managed, non-organizational orientations to careers, and career development in a changing society. Portfolio careers are defined as being built around a compilation of skills and interests,

with a particular focus on improving employability and diversifying options through maintaining multiple jobs and employers within one or more work areas (Cawsey et al., 1995; Handy, 1989), whereas protean careers are characterized as a specifically values-driven approach emphasizing self-directed meanings, involving a strong calling, and being built upon goals stretching over the whole life space (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). The values-driven dimension refers here to a "person's internal values that provide guidance and a measure of success for the individual's career" and the self-directed dimension to a person's "ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands" (Hall, 2004, p. 8). The protean career orientation thus involves the specific values of personal growth, freedom, and self-determination related to work (cf. Hall, 2004; Segers et al., 2008), whereas the portfolio orientation is more connected to extrinsic motivators, such as money, status, and promotion (Abessolo et al., 2017; Segers et al., 2008).

The protean and portfolio subtypes of career orientation have been widely explored in the field of music (see, e.g., Bartleet et al., 2019; Bennett, 2009; Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Bridgstock, 2005, 2007; Teague & Smith, 2015). Researchers have argued that instead of defining musicians narrowly as performers we should conceptualize them as multi-skilled pro- fessionals who can work within one or more specialist fields (Bennett et al., 2012, p. 8), suggest- ing the portfolio career, with its goal of maximizing employment opportunities, as a suitable approach (e.g., Bartleet et al., 2019). Our research contributes to this growing literature by exploring the explicit values base of socially engaged musicians, especially considering mone- tary incentives and status in relation to other personal drivers in life, such as artistic, moral– ethical, and social–political values. The findings are discussed in relation to portfolio and protean career orientations and interpreted within the framework of expanding professional- ism, which suggests a shift in value hierarchies and embraces "civic responsibilities in a diverse 'horizontal' world, not simply in relation to the relatively narrow 'vertical' musical practice" (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021, p. xxiv).

Research questions

We analyzed the interview data to find the answers to the following questions, which emerged from the abductive process: How are the domains of work values (Jin & Rounds, 2012) manifested, and what is their mutual relationship in the socially engaged musicians' accounts in the Finnish context?

Data generation methods and selection of interviewees

The data consist of semi-structured interviews with 20 Finland-based socially engaged musicians, selected through a questionnaire that was conducted in 2020 as part of the *Music for Social Impact* research project coordinated by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Out of the 63 respondents in Finland, 20 were asked for an individual interview following the principle of maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990, p. 172) to gain the widest range of perspectives possible on the phenomenon and to choose individuals who showed particular interest in developing their practice and were thus likely to articulate and reflect on it. The interviews were designed to deepen respondents' reflections, built on the survey responses, and were to some extent tailored to each individual interviewee. Their thematic areas included: (1) training and career path, (2) motivation for undertaking socially engaged practice, (3) beliefs about achieving social impact, (4) content and process of work, (5) internal monitoring and evaluation, and (6) context and constraints. Instead of using a question-answer format, the interview provided

Table 1. Demographic and educational profiles of the interviewees.

Pseudonym[a]	Duration of practice (years)	Musical qualifications (highest level)[b]	Qualifications in other disciplines (highest level)
Aaro	1–5	BA*	MA
Anne	>5	MA	None
Eerik	>5	Non-formal education	MA
Hanna	1–5	Non-formal education*	BA
Harri	>5	Self-taught	MA
Henri	1–5	Vocational upper secondary degree	MA
Iiris	>5	MA*	None
Kai	>5	MA	Vocational school
Katriina	1–5	BA	MA
Leo	1–5	MA*	None
Liisa	>5	MA	None
Maria	>5	MA	None
Markus	>5	BA	MA
Mikael	>5	Non-formal education	PhD
Paula	>5	MA	None
Pia	>5	MA (unfinished)	MA
Riitta	>5	MA	BA
Roosa	1–5	Vocational upper secondary degree*	BA
Susanna	>5	MA	MA
Tiina	>5	Self-taught	BA

[a]Research participants were not asked to identify their gender in either the survey or the interviews. Pseudonyms follow the original female/male name division.
[b]Including musicology and ethnomusicology.
*Indicate the in-service specialist training in community musicianship offered at universities of applied sciences.

an opportunity for the interviewee to narrate their own biographical information, personal experience, and the meanings they ascribed to their socially engaged work in the form of a story, shifting the interviewee–interviewer roles toward those of narrator–listener (Kartch, 2017). The interviews, lasting approximately 90 min, were conducted via the Zoom video-conferencing platform in the summer and autumn of 2021 and were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed.

The interviews contained descriptions of practices typically undertaken on a project basis, often supported by scholarships. Most of the interviewees had started working with socially engaged practices more than five years previously (see Table 1). They had worked in contexts such as care homes, hospitals, prisons, schools, youth centers, and churches, and were address- ing the needs of specific groups such as unemployed people, refugees and immigrants, and peo- ple with disabilities. Some had university degrees in the performance of various musical genres, including folk music and contemporary composition, while others had other higher education backgrounds, for instance theology and social work. Several interviewees had undertaken a major career shift, changing to the music profession from disciplines such as engineering and journalism. The interviewees had developed their own unique approaches to participatory practice having gathered knowledge and skills from a variety of sources; five interviewees, in particular, had undertaken the recently

established in-service specialist training in community musicianship offered at several Finnish universities of applied sciences.

Analysis

The abductive process "involved a recursive process of double-fitting data and theories" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 179). It consisted of a preliminary reading of the interviews to identify a new theoretical scope, thus avoiding the need to force the interview data "into the straitjacket of preexisting concepts" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 169). In the course of this preliminary reading we found the data somewhat anomalous. The initial aim of our project had been to focus on musicians' beliefs about social impact, but the interviewees did not like the idea of impact, or denied it altogether, preferring to talk about their values. As a whole, the data resonated with theories of work values and the concept of the protean career; these, however, appeared to exist in a creative tension with the more traditional discourse around values in music and music education research, and the concept of the portfolio career in the field of music. This creative tension provided our new, heuristic theoretical scope, enabling us to ask different questions about musicians' professionalism and work. We found the theoretical relevance of the new scope ["by reference to "theory-close . . .] and [theory]-far writings . . . that inspired novel insights" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 180). We then embarked on the theoretical reading analysis, which consisted of carefully reading and re-reading the data from the perspective of the domains of Jin and Rounds' (2012) work values, and by employing the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) whereby colleagues representing different disciplines (in this case, music and cultural studies) carry out the analysis together. In this type of approach the researcher is considered to be a "craftsman" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 234) whose "extensive and theoretical knowledge of the subject matter" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 236) is of crucial importance "in putting forth new interpretations and rigorousness in testing the inter- pretations" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 239).

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Interviewees were given written information about the study, including their right to discontinue their participation. They were not compensated for their time. They all gave their informed consent to take part in the study.

Findings: Socially engaged musicians' work values

The findings of the theoretical reading analysis showed that the interviewees provided considerably more accounts of what Jin and Rounds (2012) call intrinsic and social-relational work values than extrinsic and status work values. The theoretical concept of work values was not used in the interview guide nor mentioned by the interviewer during the interviews; rather, the narrative format of the interviews allowed interviewees to tell their own stories from their own standpoint. We therefore combined accounts including references to extrinsic and status work values into a single category. The interviewees articulated the non-pecuniary benefits they gain from participatory practice and confirmed the low status of socially engaged work in their professional environments; they also referred to the need to justify their work in the field of music,

explaining that it does not fall easily within the professional boundaries of more established performance traditions.

Intrinsic work values

Intrinsic work values refer "to the fulfilling of inherent psychological needs such as autonomy and competence" (Jin & Rounds, 2012, p. 327). They therefore include the potential creative values and variety that the work provides as well as the achievements, challenges, and intellectual stimulation required for good work. The interviewees characterized their socially engaged work as a radical alternative to the competitive and perfectionist working environment typical of concert hall practice and much of the professional music business. For instance, for Leo who had been working in conventional classical music settings for 40 years, and in socially engaged practice for some five years, the orchestra appears as a big machine where an individual musician's performance is heard only if they make a mistake:

> When I go to a concert to play, I'm wearing a white tie, a penguin suit. I go there, I don't talk to anybody, I don't make any extra gestures . . . You just play your part and that's it . . . Thousands and thousands of concerts, so how many of them are like, have I ever felt anything myself? I've just performed, done the perfect performance . . . It has to be just so, and not almost . . . You have to commit yourself to the performance, and you are not allowed to do anything of your own.

In contrast, Leo reported finding that the open, improvisatory situations of his socially engaged work allow him the liberty to make artistic decisions and express his creativity as well as his emotions. The interactive, participatory practice heals his distress from orchestra work:

> Instead, now there's this interaction . . . I can remove a mistake in a way, maybe by improvising or by making it a bit more my own. And then, really, it's not just the music that's the most important thing, but it includes . . . what I'm talking about and also the fact that I change instruments. So you have all kinds of interests . . . When you're in a symphony orchestra, you're part of a big machine . . . Here I am the engine myself and I can then change things as I like. It's really liberating, it's therapeutic for me, too. (Leo)

Although the work contexts and practices of the interviewees differed, they all cherished the social and relational aspects of their work, such as music being a "social glue" (Riitta); however, as shown by Leo's account, above, the values of the social aspect were described not simply in relation to the participants but also to themselves. Maria said that she believes the practice restores her own relationship with music and improves her performance in her orchestra job: "It brings something sort of good to the stage, to the traditional concert, that also starts making it better there as well." For Iiris, socially engaged practice challenges the musician–audience relationship and made her question established socio-spatial concert arrangements:

> It [socially engaged practice] has travelled to my traditional role as a performer as well, so I've been thinking about that interaction with the audience as a relationship as well . . . I've wondered a lot why
> . . . the halls are built so that there is a clear boundary between the performers on stage and the listeners in the audience in their assigned places.

Maria, among several others, described her work as an embodied and concretely sensed return to the "roots" in which music is part of everybody's everyday life:

> So here you can at least gain access to a . . . "world of rest" in which true communication and the meaning of what it is that we are actually doing becomes better defined . . . [It] brings to the playing some meanings that are not so easy to reach when you are on stage and there is this paid audience . . . The people with their own personalities and presence bring meaning to the music making.

The restoration of the function of music as an arena for communication does not necessarily require lowering the standards of the music making, and some of the interviewees distanced themselves fiercely from categorizations that undermine the artistic quality or status of participatory practice. Pia believed that true changes in people's lives and society can be achieved only through uncompromised artmaking:

> We have a surprisingly high level of quality. It's so important to me. I hate every single reference to "caring art" or "healing art" or whatever. There is no such thing. You always have to make really ambitious art. That's also what I think helps people, so that they notice that we made something like this.

However, all the interviewees discussed the quality of music making, and as Eerik phrased it, "respecting the starting point of [the people taking part in the project] and as if bouncing off that." Maria saw that those taking part in participatory projects bring qualitatively important elements to the process: "It's a means of being able to be together . . . when I've seen the process, I hear important things there."

Being involved in participatory music making may change musicians tremendously. For Liisa, the practice shook her inculcated conception of musical values, which had started to blend with social values:

> I've started to think a lot about the question of value, what we really value and why . . . when in a way something different can also sound pretty good . . . what is the motive behind the making? And when . . . people get interested in something, it doesn't always have to be so ultimately perfected or grandiose.

Participatory practice also requires the courage to reach beyond one's acquired technical skills—for instance, toward improvisation and playing new instruments—and can provide, as Henri expressed it, "the opportunity to indulge and try my wings." Roosa took her motivation to continue her socially engaged practice from working with diverse musical forms: "I get to work in my own field and I get to work with and spin music in its different forms, or expression in its different forms. So it also gives a lot for me."

Hence, for the interviewed musicians themselves socially engaged practice is both intellectually and artistically educational and stimulating, partly because it presents a zone of uncertainty and discomfort that challenges their customary professional work and its predictability, as reflected on by Maria and Paula: "It educates the musician . . . to understand and gain those experiences of what this is all about in the deepest sense" (Maria); "I think it's very wholesome to hope . . . that artists in particular would dare to be the ones who open up at least their own boundaries" (Paula). Tiina reported enjoying the freedom to develop her practice based on skills she had accumulated from different jobs, using her own creativity and imagination: "Well, this is really great work, because . . . you can think for yourself what you want to do and in what direction you want to develop your work." Despite the relational nature of working with instead of for people, the interviewees felt that the practice gives them independence and autonomy.

Social-relational work values

Social-relational work values (Jin & Rounds, 2012) are related to interactional aspects of professional work, and in a wider sense to altruistic values and contributions to society. Indeed, in addition to conceptualizing their music as a social practice and giving rich descriptions of what the practice means for themselves, the interviewees recognized that their work could contribute to wider societal transformations and affect people's wellbeing and happiness as a collective form of enjoyment, or even as therapy. Many of the interviewees saw a need for correcting the damage the music and music education system might have caused to some individuals in the past. As Susanna explained, "There are many people in this country who may have a somewhat traumatised relationship with their own music making, having been told that you're the one who can't sing."

Some of the interviewees perceived socially engaged practice as a service for people, although not one simply born out of altruism, as it also provides wellbeing for the musicians themselves. This was illustrated in the following statement:

> I've always thought that when I do this kind of work, I'm a servant. And here we approach artistry from a servant's position. For some people [musicians] that becomes an obstacle . . . but I notice that I feel terribly well when I'm able to act as a servant through my art. (Anne)

Inclusive, collective practice was described as providing enjoyment when aiming to dismantle or lessen the impact of the hierarchy of those taking part in projects and those facilitating them: "It's not so much either or, either performer or listener, but that you can be both, including me myself while I'm there" (Iiris). Like many other interviewees, Eerik stated that he himself takes immersive enjoyment from the collective flow in the processes of participatory music making: "The musical output may be anything between heaven and earth, but the greatest reward is to experience . . . that kind of group happiness when we play together and listen to each other." The integration of intrinsic and social-relational values of the practice is an impor- tant driver of action for musicians, as explained by Katriina: "I gain so much mentally myself and I believe that those who participate . . . gain a lot as well. This motivates and inspires."

The blurring of established roles in music making was characteristic of all of the interviews, in which the interviewees did not separate the social values that they saw the practice as providing, both in general and for those who took part in the projects, from those that it provided for themselves. As one observed,

> I enjoy myself or get something out of it; that it's fun for me to chat with people, to play and sing with people. It's kind of like a little bit of hedonism . . . But at the same time also some kind of helping thing. (Kai)

Extrinsic and status work values

In the analysis we combined the extrinsic work values relating to "material aspects of work, such as pay, benefits, and job security" with status work values that relate to prestige, management, and influence (Jin & Rounds, 2012, p. 327). The interviewees did not talk about money as a value in itself, and status or financial success was mentioned only to belittle their personal importance. Roosa, for instance, placed personally meaningful and emotionally rewarding work above monetary gain:

> [W]hen I notice the experiences of success or good feedback or times that have gone well, it is also emotionally rewarding . . . You can't get rich doing this job [laughs], but it's a bit like a matter of choice, in the sense that I'd rather do work that has meaning for me and I get something out of it than do something else with my teeth gritted.

Anne described how colleagues used her social-relational practice as a way of dumbing down her skills and competences as a musician rather than seeing it as a special area of expertise:

> There is this [attitude], "That's what she does, as she cannot do anything else." And then every now and then some of them [musicians] are surprised when I do a bigger gig, that "Wow, you still have that skill to play!" . . . so there is this belittling . . . that "Poor her, she cannot do anything else."

The interviewees explained how lack of status and (other) professional musicians' critique of socially engaged practice relates to its very nature. In socially engaged practice the musician needs to be flexible and give some leeway to the participants. The musician cannot be in total control of the outcome as is traditionally expected in contemporary composers' practice, for instance. Sometimes participatory practice remains very local and out of wider public view, and hence does not add to a composer's acknowledged oeuvre. As Liisa explained, involvement in socially engaged practice may lower one's status among colleagues and be detrimental to career building:

> Professionals can do all kinds of things, but then the fact that you do something where you can't control the end result, so to speak, with whom and what . . . and kind of social status . . . This isn't some kind of career building.

According to Liisa, "the biggest problems are faced in the attitudes of the contemporary music community" that guards, as Charnley (2011) writes, "the boundaries of art in the name of an avant-gardism that is elitist" (p. 39). Liisa described how, in the contemporary music community, music is still expected to be autonomous and reflect the composer's unique and individual voice. The extremely hierarchical nature of the field makes it "difficult to produce anything that differs from the conventional . . . So the model of [the] contemporary composer . . . comes into collision with these kinds of communal and facilitating activities" (Liisa).

The interviewees' downgrading of extrinsic and status work values was a strong feature of the data. It has been suggested that the downgrading of values takes place when some values cannot be attained. For instance, "[l]ow compensation may lead to decreased importance attached to material and security related values" (Jin & Rounds, 2012, p. 328). For some interviewees, this kind of upgrading of social work values while downgrading external and status values was manifested as exaggeration: "My salary is kind of near the poverty line, but then again I think that what I do is enormously rich mentally" (Katriina); another went even further when claiming: "This is my passion, because I never really experience this as a job at all . . . so I would do this for free, just like that" (Aaro).

Discussion

Values integration and the politics of professional music making

The interviews with the socially engaged musicians in Finland who participated in the research were heavily laden with descriptions that fall into the category of intrinsic and social values,

according to Jin and Rounds (2012). However, the findings also showed that these work values were not in a hierarchical relationship with each other but were integrated and mutually con- stitutive. Extrinsic values relating to money and career were not central, and when interview- ees talked about their socially engaged practice they downplayed their professional status rather than the reverse; indeed, some interviews described the struggle "to produce anything that differs from the conventional" (Liisa) and the need to step "beyond shame" (Anne). In his analy- sis of previous scholarly discussions on the *social turn*, Charnley (2011) reminds us that resist- ance arises since participatory practices pose "a threat to the authorial autonomy and complexity that are the *sine qua non* of art as aesthetic practice" (p. 39). The consequences of blurring the hierarchy between autonomous art and more participatory artistic forms reso- nates with research in the cultural fields that acknowledges how "broad competencies and diverse portfolios can present challenges for reputational legitimacy" (Stokes, 2021, p. 351). Besides being potentially seen as "driven by marketplace demands, making workers appear to be aligned with economic logics," the portfolio career may signal that the practitioner deserves "the derogatory label *jack of all trades*, *master of none*, used to frame someone as an unskilled, opportunistic dabbler" (Stokes, 2021, p. 351, emphasis original).

Relationality was recognized as the fundamental character of socially engaged music making, described as a turn toward the roots of understanding what music could mean in human collectives, or as a retroactive, healing opportunity for those who in the past were discouraged from acquiring musical agency. The interviewees unanimously expressed the view that it was not only those who took part in participatory projects who benefited from the relational practice, but also they themselves; it provided them with joy and emotional satisfaction, a sense of professional freedom and autonomy, the impetus for expanding their learning and professionalism (Westerlund & Gaunt, 2021), and a source of understanding the wider meaning of music for life as a whole. In this way, the interviewees conceptualized the meaning and value of participatory practice not as an amateur practice contrasted with expert culture (cf. Turino, 2008) but as something with intrinsic value for all who take part in it, including themselves. It was described as liberating and rewarding even when it meant, for example, losing the copyrights that are normally assigned to the final musical products of a composer. Indeed, Charnley (2011) reminds us that the original meaning of the term aesthetic experience refers to "an experience of freedom, rather than of particular types of artistic 'perfection' associated with clearly articulated social roles" (p. 41).

The interviewees' sociopolitical and moral positioning was revealed, in particular, when some of them presented their practice and its values consciously as counternarratives (Peters & Lankshear, 1996) to their long-term experience within rather than at the margins of more legitimized institutional settings. This emerged in multiple self-reflexive descriptions of how the traditional elitist and hierarchical institutions, with their star culture, fail in their societal tasks in contemporary society. In this sense, the interviewees' counternarratives described their own socially engaged practice as musicking in its critical mode, whereby relationships represent "a sure pointer to the nature and the preoccupations of the society," according to Small (1977) when describing the distance between elite and non-elite in the context of Western concert practice (p. 4). Some of the interviewees highlighted the transformative potential of socially engaged music making in the wider political context, thus explicitly moving beyond the traditional view of music as politically neutral. They also demonstrated a high level of "systems reflexivity" (Westerlund et al., 2021) when positioning themselves as change agents "fighting against the machinery" (Liisa) and wishing to redefine the profession's attitudes and mental models. Participatory practices were thus largely seen to establish "anew the aesthetic distance from life and people" (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p. 16).

Despite the non-hierarchical integration of intrinsic and social-relational values, the overall quality of music—including a changed understanding of what is meant by quality—was still an important driver for the work. The interviewees saw themselves as working within the disciplinary category of professional musicians and artists, and not, for instance, as social workers or therapists (cf. Charnley, 2021). Some of them distanced themselves more explicitly from any discourse that might dilute the main purpose of their relational practice—artistic production—while for others, the disciplinary boundaries were less clearly separated and they positioned themselves as spanning boundaries between different disciplines and service providers (e.g., hospitals). The overall blurring of hard boundaries and resulting hybridity resonates with literature that calls for more flexible normative models for professional musicianship, in which "quality, value, and excellence of professional practices are understood from multiple heterogeneous perspectives in varying and changing institutional and inter-institutional contexts" (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021, p. xxv).

The findings of our study support earlier arguments that recognize the importance of avoiding top-down approaches, and, as in Bennett's (2008) holistic cultural practice model, place the emphasis on the opportunity for musicians "to create and sustain intrinsically satisfying careers with the flexibility to meet changing personal and professional needs" (Bennett, 2008, p. 1). For the interviewees who took part in the study, socially engaged practice is not simply a response to societal needs, nor is it only about politics focused on other people and their potentially oppressed and vulnerable position in contemporary, institutionalized music practices, but can also be directed at musicians' own well-being and need to reposition themselves in society. The search for alternatives and self-reflexive reorganization of the value hierarchy at the same time corrects excessive technical rationality (Barrett & Westerlund, 2024; Schön, 1983) in understanding musical expertise, as our findings suggest that not all professional musicians want to externalize emotions, compassion, empathy, or sociopolitical values created by "the horizontal relationships between person and person" (Reimer, 2009, p. 12) from their work. The interviewees' accounts indicate how they had moved beyond technical rationality with its goal of complete mastery, and rather accepted incompleteness and continuous professional learning as a part of their work. This movement away from the narrow expert culture that, since the post-Second World War era, has gradually drawn professional practices further away from explicit attention to social and societal values, has also been noted in the wider literature on professionalism (e.g., Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2011). Aligning with this literature, the findings of our study suggest that socially engaged musicians can fundamentally reposition themselves as professionals in contemporary society and recognize the value of the service aspect of professional music making, in a political sense. However, our interviewees' emphasis on the intrinsic values associated with the practice indicates that this repositioning is not only about the relationship between professional musicians and society, with its music institutions, but also about their own autonomy and wellbeing.

Socially engaged music making as a protean career orientation and a calling

As shown by our analysis, the musicians who participated in our research sought congruence between their work values and other personal values, which in the career-orientation literature (e.g., Arieli et al., 2020) points toward their having personalized protean careers (Westerlund & López-Íñiguez, 2022) rather than portfolio careers, which focus on better employment, income, and security. Their careers were described in terms of protean characteristics as being self-directed and driven by values and passion (Gubler et al., 2014). This should be understood in relation to the context of the Finnish society, however, in which participatory practices

require a constant search for funding from musicians even when running their own companies. For our interviewees, socially engaged music making was a matter of principle. Many claimed to be willing to continue working with people even when the monetary reward was small or non-existent, while only a few considered ceasing their practice because it prevented them from earning their living.

In the career literature, the protean career orientation has been related to a calling toward one's work (Hall, 2004). This refers both to an opportunity for self-fulfillment and a means to make the world a better place (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), and to a "path with a heart" [in which individuals use their] "gifts ('charisms') . . . for the common good" (Hall, 2004, p. 9). To reiterate, the interviewees' counternarratives included multiple versions of how their practice contributes to social and societal transformation, such as dismantling institutional hierarchies and role divisions in music industry and education, and, as one of them described, bringing "music back into people's everyday life" (Aaro). The calling was related to these social poten- tials and political transformations, achieved both horizontally in situ when working with peo- ple in various contexts and vertically through "fighting against the machinery" (Liisa) as an ongoing critique of music-institutional systems and the hierarchies of professional communi- ties. In the light of prevailing value and funding structures, our interviewees understood that this kind of passion for their work can easily lead to exploitation and precarization (Belfiore, 2018; Bennett, 2018), yet they consciously pursued a practice that combines their social and musical aspirations.

Desire for alternative models of musical practices in society

As revealed in our study, the work values of the socially engaged musicians we interviewed are about agency and existential questions of who they are as professionals in relation to people of all kinds, beyond traditional concert hall practice and hierarchical, talent-seeking music educa- tion. Indeed, anthropologists have pointed out that values are in fact "ideas about a good social and relational world" (Haynes & Hickel, 2016, p. 10; see also Small, 1977). This view suggests that when separating intrinsic and social values and placing them within a hierarchical frame, as has been done in much scholarship in music and music education (cf. Reimer, 2009), we create an understanding in which professional musicians can claim to be asocial and apolitical and therefore privileged to exclude themselves from responsibilities in our changing society. However, as Haynes and Hickel argue, when value hierarchies are considered relational and moral, countering the prevalent hierarchy can function as a strong motivator for further action, as we have shown. Moreover, when musicians' work values are framed within a societal hierarchy, it provides a powerful moral orientation toward alternative models of society seeking conditions fostering "justice, well-being, and full human flourishing" (Haynes & Hickel, 2016, p. 7). Socially engaged musicians can thus be seen to create alternative social models for music making by questioning how social relationships are created and established within current expert practice and resisting conventional professional expectations whereby intrinsic musical values are traditionally distinguished from social values that are categorized as non-musical and extrinsic to musical values.

Theories of work values can therefore be helpful for articulating the view that evaluations of professional work in music and music education cannot be considered only from the perspective of musical quality, in relation to individual performances, or by pointing to the technical understanding of musical quality. As we have shown, this does not necessarily lead either to the instrumentalization of music, or complete relativism, but may lead to what Turino calls the folk revival in participatory activities, "where people [including the musicians] experience each

other in heightened physical-sonic ways . . . a celebration and experiencing of the social group itself and for this, perhaps more than any other, are highly fulfilling and meaningful" (Turino, 2008, p. 188). Based on the findings of our study, it can thus be argued that socially engaged practice can be a way both to democratize culture, involving fulfilling and meaningful practices, and a meaningful option for musicians to increase their professional freedom and experienced autonomy to an even greater extent than the tasks they are used to undertaking in their more established occupations. In other words, socially engaged practices do not necessarily instrumentalize the musician insofar as they simply adhere to neoliberal policies, as claimed, for example, by Varkøy and Angelo (2022), but rather can open a channel and arena for a sociopolitical professional repositioning in contemporary societies. The multiple counternarratives of our interviewees show, however, that although musicians may combine performing and teaching in their careers without any conflict of interests or hierarchy, as also demonstrated by Boyle (2021), it may make considerable demands on them to reconcile their traditional performance-related work with socially engaged practice, since the latter fundamentally blurs boundaries between established and novel performance practices.

Implications for higher music education

This study informs higher music education at a time when "many of the traditional hierarchies are diluted and dismantled in favour of open participation and opportunity" (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021, p. xvi), suggesting that professional diversity and a plurality of values should be embraced while "at the same time continuing to champion specialist expertise at the heart of practice" (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2021, p. xv). Whereas career planning has been pro- moted as part of musicians' education (e.g., Bennett, 2018), it may be necessary for higher music education to create reflexive curricula for discussing values, not simply for students "to value their professional practice" (Rowley et al., 2021, p. 69) but also to understand these val- ues and their professional responsibilities in relation to both the past historical trajectories that constitute the practices currently taken for granted practices and future alternatives in a rap- idly changing society. While professionalism in higher music education curricula has already been expanded through the provision of alternative performance contexts (Carey & Coutts, 2021) toward diverse performance contexts and more socially engaging practices, the findings of this study show that there is a wider call for sociopolitical, self-reflexive, and moral rethink- ing of value hierarchies in today's higher music education, beyond questions of the future employability of students (cf. Charnley, 2021; Foreman-Wernet, 2017; Grant, 2019). Higher music education could be seen as the main mediating space for critically examining modernist dichotomies, unnecessary hierarchies, and the mythical ideal of music practices being sociopo- litically neutral.

Limitations

It should be noted that although the interviewees who took part in this study formed a highly heterogeneous group of individuals from vastly different educational backgrounds, by dint of working as professional musicians they simultaneously represent an emerging professional career orientation. They revealed an up-to-date understanding of how their socially engaged work relates to the challenges of not just society but also the structural problems of traditional music institutions and music education. The interviewees were also aware of relevant research and ongoing discussions of the topic in Finland, which affected all the interviews.

Conclusion

In this interview study, we explored the work values of socially engaged musicians in the context of Finland showing how interviewees' intrinsic and social-relational values were mutually integrated and intertwined, forming a holistic foundation for their practice, whereas their extrinsic work values, relating in the literature to livelihood and career status, were not described as high priorities. Interviewees reflected on the hierarchical and exclusive values of musical elites and traditional institutions, and their values-driven reflections took the form of a calling for the common good, thus pointing more toward a protean career orientation instead of a portfolio career. While socially engaged practice can be interpreted as one element of a portfolio career, it may not be lucrative in the Finnish context and, more importantly, can threaten the musicians' credibility in established communities of professional musicians. In this context, musicians engaged in socially engaged practice take a high risk, as their work can weaken their professional image and therefore employability in traditional institutional con- texts. As a whole, socially engaged music making can be seen as challenging the exclusive pri- ority of technical rationality in expert music culture—since it indicates that satisfying work in music may not always be about musical skill and perfection—and suggesting that institutional- ized music and music education systems need to become more aware of how the boundaries of professional music making are not politically neutral, and how musicians themselves can, and already are, extending the traditional and taken for granted boundaries.

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