

DIY or die? A typology of DIY careers in the Portuguese independent music scenes

DIY, *Alternative Cultures & Society*
2023, Vol. 1(1) 20–33
© The Author(s) 2023



Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/27538702231153118
journals.sagepub.com/home/diy



Ana Oliveira 

DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

Abstract

This article addresses the DIY career building strategies in the Portuguese independent music scenes. Is it anchored on the reading of DIY careers as a pattern of promoting employability, in a context marked by major transformations in the music industries and the precarization of professional trajectories. Drawing from interviews with 71 individuals involved in the production and mediation of Portuguese independent music, we seek to understand how these actors build their DIY careers considering their different positions within the music scenes, the strategies used to negotiate their careers, and the way DIY is present. For this, we conduct a typological reading of these careers to identify different career profiles. Based on a mixed-methods approach, we identify five distinct career profiles: 'catch-all musicians', 'non-stop musicians', 'mediator musicians', 'author musicians', and 'mediators'. In their differences, these trajectories are marked by DIY ethos and praxis, from their beginnings to the present day.

Keywords

DIY, music careers, trajectories, career profiles, independent music scenes, Portugal

DIY careers as a way of promoting employability

Over the last decades, the music industries have undergone major transformations. The proliferation of (illegal) downloading and streaming services has led to a decline in recorded music sales and contributed to the growing importance of live music (David, 2010, Haynes and Marshall, 2018; Marshall, 2015; Wilkström, 2009). It has become the main source of income for musicians and a plethora of music industries professionals. On the other hand, a series of technological innovations, the arrival of social media and the emergence of a platform economy (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram) (Fox, 2004), have contributed to more widespread access to the means of production, distribution, and promotion of music and have created direct communication channels between musicians and their audiences (Baym, 2012; Carradini, 2016; Choi, 2016; Haynes and Marshall, 2018; Hracs, 2012; McLeod, 2005). Musicians can now easily

Corresponding author:

Ana Oliveira, DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Edifício Iscte, Sala 2w4d, Avenida das Forças Armadas, 1649-026 Lisboa.
Email: ana.sofia.oliveira@iscte-iul.pt

promote their music, attracting new fans on a global scale. At the same time, these platforms offer musicians opportunities for monetization. In short, these innovations have enabled a transfer of power to the creative agents, who now have a wider margin of action at all moments of the production and distribution process and are less dependent on studios, producers, publishers, or promoters.

Although they do not provide a total democratization of cultural-creative production and distribution processes¹, these transformations have implications for musicians' working practices (Hughes *et al.*, 2016). They can now take control and responsibility for a broader range of activities and tasks in the music field. To the creative dimension of writing, composing, and playing, these actors add many other activities – that of producers, editors, promoters, agents, DJs, among others. Having a music career is much more than knowing how to sing or play an instrument. It requires skills related to management (e.g. planning and strategy definition, dealing with copyright, royalties and other legal issues, stock management) and to the production of content for social media (e.g. marketing and self-promotion) (Oliveira, 2020, 2023).

The most recent analyses of these implications for musicians' ways of working are anchored on the DIY or entrepreneurial approach to music careers which has been present in research on different musical genres, in different geographical and sociocultural contexts (Bennett, 2018; Bennett and Guerra, 2019; Coulson, 2012; Gavanas & Reitsamer, 2016; Guerra, 2018; Haenfler, 2018; Kuchar, 2020; Oliveira, 2020, 2023; Reitsamer & Prokop, 2018; Scott, 2012; Tarassi, 2018; Threadgold 2018).

When it was first used in the early of the 20th century, DIY referred to the practices of creating or repairing something without recourse to an experienced craftsman/professional. Over the following decades its meaning gradually evolved to encompass a wide range of cultural and creative practices (Bennett and Guerra, 2019). From the mid-1970s, DIY gained greater prominence with the emergence of punk. By taking control of the means of production and distribution of music, several punk bands created their production platforms and, by organizing themselves into a network (Crossley, 2015), boosted the emergence of alternative distribution circuits to those that dominated the music industries. From a way of music production symbolically and ideologically distinct from the commercial circuits, during the 1980s and 1990s, the DIY ethos remained strongly linked to the punk aesthetic. But it extended to other musical genres, other spheres of alternative cultural production, and to other socio-cultural domains. Today it is synonymous with a broader ethos of lifestyle policies, with repercussions on people's projects and professional choices, on a global scale (Bennett and Guerra, 2019).

The notion of a DIY career implies understanding it as a form of professional trajectory or a pattern of promoting employability (Guerra, 2010, 2016; Oliveira, 2020, 2023) that allows individuals to respond to the current context, guided by neoliberal configurations and by the precarization of the world of work – this obviously includes artistic and cultural work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016; Standing, 2011; Threadgold, 2018). In this scenario of redefining the meaning of DIY, we are now witnessing the growth of the levels of professionalization that characterize much of the contemporary DIY cultural production sphere (Bennett 2018; Haenfler, 2018; Tarassi 2018). It does not mean the DIY career concept has lost its connection to an ethos of independence and resistance. To this ethos is added the recognition of the need to achieve a sustainable lifestyle (Bennett, 2018). To discuss DIY careers is to recognize their pragmatic dimension, which justifies the existence of intersections between spheres that used to be opposed: independent and commercial, art and economy, work and leisure, ideology and pragmatism (Oliveira, 2020). It seems more appropriate to assume that DIY and contemporary independent music practices and careers coexist with mainstream ones in a continuum and a vast dynamic of intersection, generating different degrees and forms of independence.

Based on this understanding, this article aims to analyze the construction of DIY careers in the independent music scenes in Portugal², considering: (1) the different positions within the independent music scenes that social actors occupy, focusing on gender, education, and social class; (2) the strategies they use to

negotiate a music career and their perspectives on music; and (3) the way DIY is present in their trajectories. For this purpose, and for the first time, we conduct a typological reading of these careers to identify different career profiles.

The article is structured as follows: in the first section, we make a brief historical background of independent music in Portugal and a description of Lisbon and Porto scenes. We explain the centrality of both cities and draw a portrait of their music scenes, considering aspects such as gender, education, and the socioeconomic background of their protagonists. We also describe the main strategies they use to manage their careers. Next, we present an account of our methodological approach. In the third section, we present the typology and discuss the features of the five career profiles. Finally, we provide the main conclusions.

Background

Portuguese independent music: What are we talking about?

Talking about independent music in Portugal means referring to a specific social space within the pop rock universe, established during the 1960s and 1970s thanks to the growing capacity of action of a diversified set of agents and structures: recording studios, labels, newspapers and music magazines, radio shows, venues, artists, and bands (Guerra, 2016). This process was marked by two crucial moments in recent Portuguese history: the democratic revolution of 25 April 1974, which ended 48 years of dictatorship, and Portugal's accession to the then-called European Economic Community in 1986. Both opened Portuguese society to external lifestyles and cultural references. This allowed the consolidation of the pop rock industry. Although on a smaller scale and with some delay in time, we witnessed similar processes to those happening in the US and the UK.

In the 2000s and 2010s, with the transformations that the music industries have experienced, with the widening of its audiences and its relative commercial success, the subfield of independent/alternative music has become a key player, recognised and, in a way, reified (Guerra, 2016), namely by gatekeepers, such as music journalists/critics and promoters. Although this sub-field claims and defines itself by opposition to the objectives and ways of working of the mainstream music industries, there are approximation movements between independent artists and bands and mainstream actors, especially multinational labels, and distributors³. These movements translate into contracts with major labels, which allow musicians greater or lesser freedom, depending on the type of contracts.

So, the Portuguese context meets Hesmondhalgh and Meier's (2015) argument when the authors state that indie, or independent, encompasses a diverse range of approaches to music production and promotion. This spectrum ranges from more traditionally organized independent artists and bands that resemble the majors in their way of working to DIY approaches to self-financing and self-releasing music. The analysis of Lisbon and Porto music scenes relies on this understanding of independent as a space of intersections and constant negotiations between a DIY way of doing and organizational logic common to the more mainstream spheres of the music industries.

Lisbon and Porto independent music scenes

Lisbon and Porto are the country's main cities. They are where we find the key institutions, facilities, players, and opportunities on the political, economic, social, and cultural levels. Therefore, they have always played a crucial role for the careers in the Portuguese independent music scenes. In this sense, most of our interviewees live in Lisbon (44%) or Porto (34%); the rest are based in cities close to these two urban hubs.

The importance of living in Lisbon or Porto meets the desire of ‘being where the action is’ (Markusen, 2006: 1929). This is related to the social and symbolic capital of both cities. As in other cultural and creative activities, the importance of the two cities comes from the fact that they host a set of venues, events, networks, relational dynamics, and key players – especially those with roles in mediation – that positively influence the building of a music career. In his analysis of Montreal, Stahl (2004) already evidenced something similar, highlighting the importance of soft and hard infrastructures⁴ in sustaining the city’s music scene. For these reasons, whether in our sample or more generally in the cultural and creative sector, migration flows between smaller cities with less cultural offer and the cities of Lisbon and Porto are common. This is even more striking in the case of Lisbon. The city occupies a crucial role due to the promotional and reputation-building opportunities. Those who live and work outside Lisbon go there regularly to network.

This importance of the territorial, sociocultural, and economic contexts that structure the music scenes has been highlighted by several authors. Hracs et al. (2011) show how musicians consider the economic and social dynamics of city-regions when making their location choices. Taking the small town of Denton, in Texas, Krims (2014) also shows how urban musicians choose their location based on employment opportunities and considering the types of music consumption cities offer. Namely, the author emphasizes the relevance of the spatial and socio-cultural contexts in which musicians learn to compose and play music. These are preconditions for the development of vibrant and sustainable urban music communities. Therefore, we can say that the case of Portugal is similar to other Western countries.

In line with other music scenes and geographical contexts (Abreu et al., 2017; Berkers and Schaap, 2018; Buscatto, 2018; Gavanas and Reitsamer, 2016; Guerra, 2016; Guerra and Oliveira, 2019; Leonard, 2017; O’Sullivan, 2018; Reddington, 2012; Strong, 2011), male hegemony is a defining feature of Portuguese independent music scenes. In our sample 79% of interviewees identify themselves as men and only 21% of interviewees identify themselves as women. As other research has shown (Richards, 2016; Smith et al., 2019, Vecco et al., 2019), this makes it more difficult for women to build and maintain music careers. The women we interviewed mention aspects such as exclusion from music scenes networks; gender stereotypes of supposed female characteristics, their interests, skills, and roles assigned to them by society⁵; horizontal and vertical segregation, which relegates women to less favourable employment conditions, income, power, and recognition; difficulties in balancing professional and family life; and objectification and sexual harassment. These difficulties tend to accumulate over time, becoming a kind of ‘cumulative disadvantage’ (Acker, 2009 in Buscatto, 2018) that women seek to overcome to negotiate their music careers.

Despite these difficulties, in the wake of feminist-queer movements, #MeToo or the building of support networks in the music field⁶, our research denotes a greater problematization of gender inequalities and the prevailing heteronormative constructions of gender and sexuality. This happens especially among the younger generations and is shown in the reduction of differences between men and women when composing lineups. Formed in Lisbon, in 2014, the collective and promoter *Maternidade*⁷ is an example, to which we can add *DAMAS*, a music venue, in Lisbon. They have in common the intention of fighting the marginalization of women in concert lineups, as well as the paternalism that they consider to be institutionalized. This phenomenon also manifests itself in some musical projects, such as *Vaiapraia* and *Filipe Sambado*⁸. It translates into the themes addressed in the lyrics and how the artists present themselves, questioning gender stereotypes.

In line with the results of other research on musicians’ ways of working and their entrepreneurial attitude (Coulson, 2012; Scott, 2012), the protagonists of Portuguese independent music scenes have a high level of education. 69% of our interviewees have completed higher education and 20% have attended university. However, few have formal higher education in music, and this is mainly in music production and sound engineering. This does not mean a total rejection of music education: among the interviewees, 38% had taken singing and instrumental lessons; 24% had attended a music conservatory, while others had rock

and jazz lessons. Nevertheless, in most cases, these lessons were a means of acquiring basic knowledge for a further DIY self-taught evolution.

As many authors (Bennett, 2018; Friedman et al., 2016; Threadgold, 2018) have shown about the importance of socioeconomic background in the creation of conditions for building DIY careers in music and others creative and cultural industries, the Portuguese independent music scenes are not an exception. Most interviewees belonged to the middle classes associated with liberal professions (66%) in artistic, intellectual, and scientific areas. We can say that this is a group of actors who are strongly qualified in educational, professional, and social terms, which contrasts with most of the Portuguese population, but is close to the reality of other artistic and creative groups in Portugal and other countries.

Although this privileged socioeconomic position, precariousness and insecurity mark the careers in Lisbon and Porto independent music scenes. This is a common feature of other creative workers (Bennett, 2018; Guerra, 2016, 2020; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016). They must combine various strategies and sources of income. Meeting other research on music careers (Coulson, 2012; Gavanas and Reitsamer, 2016; Guerra, 2016; Reitsamer and Prokop, 2018; Scott, 2012; Tarassi, 2018), one of the main sets of strategies that our interviewees adopt takes on a logic of multiplication and can take different forms. One possibility is the development of different roles and activities in the music scenes, a multi-tasking exercise that Tarassi (2018) also identified when studying Milan's independent music scene. This is a characteristic feature of independent music production and an aspect Becker (1982) already pointed to in his analysis of the art worlds. The ability to perform different roles and activities makes artists attractive to a variety of employers and contributes to the acquisition of symbolic and cultural capital, reinforcing the positioning these actors have in the music field. A second possibility is to combine music with another profession, which may or may not be related to the artistic and cultural field. Several works in artistic and creative sectors, and more specifically in the music field (Coulson, 2012; Gavanas and Reitsamer, 2016; Guerra, 2016; Reitsamer and Prokop, 2018; Scott, 2012; Tarassi, 2018), have shown that this is an essential strategy to ensure the viability of careers in these areas. For most of our interviewees (62%), this situation arises as a necessity because the income they get from music is not enough. To teach, to be involved in several musical projects simultaneously, as well as to play, compose and write for others are other ways in which this logic of multi-tasking is translated.

A second set of strategies is strongly associated with a professional perspective of music. Musical activity is understood as any other profession. Networking, planning and defining goals, and a work methodology is a crucial strategy for a music career. This also includes the use of copyrights, as well as applications for funding. Especially networking refers to music's relational and collective dimension (Becker, 1982; Crossley, 2015). Relational networks are the main way of access job opportunities and build a reputation. Thus, they are used strategically. But they are also a way of being integrated into a community. As Coulson argues, 'networks in the music world also involve friendship, co-operation, support, musical collaboration and learning opportunities' (Coulson, 2012: 258). In the case of Lisbon and Porto scenes, our interviewees state that teamwork – do-it-together (DIT) – is a requirement for building music careers.

A third set of strategies follows a logic of continuity. Our interviewees strive to play live many times and to remain continuously active. This means always being at some point in the process of creating and distributing music, whether composing, recording, producing, editing, or playing. Regularly editing albums, singles, or video clips is also a common practice.

A fourth set of strategies is based on a logic of reduction. This can mean reducing the size of musical projects, that is, instead of having a band with several members, having a band with two or three elements, or having a solo project. But it also means saving, seeking to reduce the costs of musical activity, and adapting it to the resources available. DIY practices assume a crucial place here and in playing different roles in the spectrum of music creation and promotion.

In line with the privileged positioning of most of these actors in the Portuguese social structure, the use of family support is also a common strategy in the Portuguese independent music scenes. It is through this diversified set of strategies that the interviewees manage their careers.

Methodology

The data were collected between 2016 and 2018. To provide different points of view on the object of study and achieve a more comprehensive and robust perspective, we used a mixed-methods approach (Crossley and Edwards, 2016). We conducted 71 semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in the production and mediation of Portuguese independent music scenes: musicians, promoters, record label heads, producers, music venue programmers, managers, and journalists. We used snowball sampling, seeking to ensure that our sample was representative of the Portuguese field, namely in terms of gender. The concern to include social actors at different stages of their careers also guided sample design. We started with a set of key informants and key players in the Portuguese independent music scenes, who facilitated the entry into the field and allowed the identification of other members of the music scenes. Then, we also asked each new interviewee to suggest other people to interview.

The interviews were carried out in settings chosen by the interviewees, such as rehearsal rooms, recording studios, bars, music venues and public places. All interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. We conducted our data analysis by building key categories based on the interview scripts. The interviews were subjected to a thematic content analysis using *NVivo*, which also served as a starting point for the construction of the typology. For this construction, we used multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), a technique that allows knowing the topological configuration of the social space under analysis, facilitating the definition of profiles of individuals characterized by a set of variables that represent the most frequent type-relationships. We complemented the MCA with cluster analysis, a clustering method that allows the operationalization of the groups/profiles identified through the MCA. Throughout the article we will use excerpts from the interviews as a way of illustrating the ideas discussed. To ensure their privacy, interviewees have been anonymized.

A typology of Portuguese DIY independent music careers

To better understand the construction of DIY music careers, we conducted a typological reading of them to identify different career profiles. To define the career profiles, we considered two analytical dimensions that the MCA revealed to be the most relevant. The first involves the strategies adopted by social actors to ensure the sustainability and economic viability of their careers, including strategies such as networking, the capacity for reinvention, regularly publishing albums and other artistic materials, or using copyrights. The second one focuses on the combination of music-related activities with others in non-musical/artistic fields to earn a living. Based on these dimensions, we were able to identify five ideal-typical career profiles in the independent music scenes: 'catch-all musicians', 'non-stop musicians', 'mediator musicians', 'author musicians', and 'mediators'. They are fluid ideal types. Overlaps or transitions between different career profiles are common during these actors' trajectories. These movements are a consequence of the precariousness and uncertainty that characterise the careers of these actors. They are also the result of external factors, such as the fragile economic situation of the country and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Catch-all musicians

'Catch-all musicians' comprises 27% of our interviewees. This career profile includes musicians who mostly combine their music careers with other music-related activities, such as writing and playing for others and working as producers and composers for cinema, television and advertising. It is also common to find musicians who combine music with another profession outside the musical/artistic field. Although the interviewees perceive music in a professional way, their own music-making is not their primary source of income. It is also in this career profile that applications for funding are more frequent, which is a crucial task in the context of the non-artistic activities developed by musicians. Therefore, the careers of these musicians require a great capacity for adaptation and enormous versatility. This is the reason why we have designated this career profile as the 'catch-all musicians'. This capacity for adaptation and multiplication of projects and roles is their main strategy to deal with the instability and uncertainty of a music career. This occurs in a markedly DIY way. The skills and expertise needed to perform the various roles are acquired in a self-taught way, in a logic of sharing and collaboration with others. It is also a career profile deeply marked by DIT, because it is anchored in relational networks. The following excerpt illustrates the need to combine several activities, play with different bands, and work hard. In these words, are also evident the difficulties that this multi-tasking entails:

I live from the music field, not only making music and not only making the music I want. I make music for advertising, for films. I also have work in producing events, and in the studio. I must keep splitting up, which brings very good things. For example, being able to do anything. Then there's a downside: you can never dedicate yourself 100% to anything. And it's very hard to stop doing one of them because it's the combination of them all that allows you to continue living.

Male, 40 years old, BA, musician, producer, promoter and record label head, Barreiro.

This career profile has the most significant gender difference: 94.7% of the individuals in this sample are male. This group is also where we find the oldest interviewees, that is, over 50 years old. Therefore, it is also in this profile that we find the interviewees with the longest career: 89.5% of the interviewees have 16 or more years of activity. This finding reinforces an idea that other studies (Abreu et al., 2017; Bennett, 2013; Haenfler, 2018) have already demonstrated: the participation and involvement in music scenes and subcultural movements is not a reality that remains confined to youth. It continues over time, even though the forms of involvement may change. At the same time, it leads us to consider that this versatility and capacity for adaptation is essential for maintaining and consolidating a music career over time.

Non-stop musicians

This career profile includes 10% of interviewees. Finding a balance between music-making and other professional activities is also a reality, but the connection between the day job and the artistic sphere is more evident in this career profile. The defining feature is the maintenance of continuous musical activity. This means ensuring that the cycle of creation–performance–dissemination is never interrupted, requiring regular releases of albums, EPs, singles and videos. To ensure this, the musicians must plan the whole creative process and define objectives and a work methodology. These musicians are also able to reinvent themselves as musicians and artists. One way to achieve this is to develop various musical projects in parallel. This not only enables musicians to express their creativity in different musical styles but also increases the possibilities of playing live and their sources of income. In this way, and as the excerpt below illustrates, one

of the main strategies used by these musicians is to ensure as extensive a concert circuit as possible for their different musical projects.

We must be always doing something, trying to give many concerts. We mustn't stand still. Nowadays, music gives us money through concerts, royalties, and almost nothing else. The goal is to keep playing, to do new things so we can play more often.

Female, 31 years old, attended higher education, musician, dance teacher and actress, Porto.

This implies the development of solid relational networks with other actors of the music field. Networking not only leads to job opportunities but is also essential in the processes of reputation building and the achievement of a more favourable positioning in the field. In this career profile, music takes on a professional character, requiring planning, dedication to work, perseverance, and the capacity to multiply roles in the music scene. It is in this and the previous category that a highly professional perception of music-making prevails, and DIY practices take on a more professional dimension. This brings us back to the works of Thornton (1995), when she introduces the notion of 'subcultural capital', and Haenfler (2018) who shows how DIY practices and subcultural experiences are transformed into viable career paths by encouraging the development of skills useful in the labour market, such as management, organisational and marketing skills, but also DIY skills, of resistance, achievement, freedom, and collective action.

Mediator musicians

This is the career profile that brings together the highest percentage of interviewees (31%). Unlike the previous career profiles, for 'mediator musicians', the combination of music-making with other professions outside the music field is not very common. However, the need to play several roles is also a reality. As well as being musicians, these actors work as promoters, record label heads, managers, or music venue curators – that is, professions that allow for creativity, but focused on 'mediation' activities. DIY ethos and practices are very present. First, because the performance of these roles arises, in most cases, as a necessity, due to the lack of channels for promoting their musical work. At the same time, the learning of the necessary skills for the performance of these activities takes place in a self-taught way. In contrast to the other career profiles, the development of several musical projects is not an option. The focus is on the multiplication of roles. The musicians in this career profile tend to be younger and, therefore, recourse to family support is more common for these actors than for the other categories. Another differentiating element is the fact that most members understand music as being only one of the channels and possible languages to share their vision of the world. As the following excerpt clearly demonstrates, we find in these actors a willingness to experiment artistic languages besides music:

I can't imagine doing this my whole life. I want to realize if I want to continue making music or if it's just a means. I think for me, it's just a means. It could be writing or making films, or theatre. I like the boost it gives me. Many things I'm learning by making music and programming will serve me in the future. But I don't see myself making music for the rest of my life. But maybe I'll do something else related to music, programming, and agency work.

Female, 18 years old, attending higher education, musician, promoter, and record label head, Lisbon.

We also find a skeptical perspective regarding living solely as musicians. They consider that being a full-time musician, especially in the independent music scenes, is virtually impossible. So, in the future they imagine themselves combining music with other artistic activities, such as illustration or writing, as well

as playing other roles in the independent music scenes, more linked to mediation and not so much to creation. Involvement in the music field tends to be seen as a form of experimentation and learning. And rather than something continuous and linear, it seems to be made of back-and-forth movements. It is also important to mention that it is in this career profile that we find a higher presence of women (32%), as well as greater awareness and problematization of gender differences in the music field and other artistic areas (Buscatto, 2018; Reddington, 2012).

Author musicians

The fourth career profile, which we have designated as ‘author musicians’, is the smallest (7%). The small size of this group is a significant and quite expressive result of the difficulties involved in building and maintaining careers in independent music scenes. This is the only career profile whose members live exclusively from the music they create for themselves. They do not need to create music for other people or be involved in mediating activities. This implies a diversified set of strategies. First, recognizing that networking and the acquisition of social capital are crucial (Becker, 1982; Guerra, 2016; Reitsamer and Prokop, 2018), these interviewees focus intensively on networking and establish relationships in the music field. However, like the ‘mediator musicians’, the reduction of the size of musical projects (solo projects or projects with two or three people) was also a career-management option. It makes easier and cheaper to book bands and allowing salaries to be divided among fewer people. In line with data revealed by other investigations (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009; McRobbie, 2016), this aspect reveals the influence and impact of neoliberal ideals and their logic of individualization on musicians’ trajectories, potentially generating feelings of isolation. Another strategy often used by these actors is the planning and definition of a work methodology, as well as the maintenance of continuous musical activity and the realization of a concert circuit. A differentiating element of this career profile, which clearly reveals an authorial vision of the artistic work, is the use of copyrights⁹, which enable them to generate income from their music, often an essential supplement in periods when income from other sources is scarce. The words of one of the interviewees show that a music career requires knowledge about these mechanisms:

You must understand a minimum of collective management of copyrights: know what that is and how you can get the money that is yours. You must know how you can make your music profitable without selling records or concerts (publishing, placement,...). These are important sources of income. You must know how copyright works and what happens if your music is used without your permission.

Male, 27 years old, BA, musician, Porto.

For most of these interviewees, music has a professional dimension. Consequently, and like the ‘non-stop musicians’, these actors manage the uncertainties associated with a professional trajectory in music through planning and dedication to work and the adoption of a perseverant posture. The trajectories of these actors are also marked by DIY, which translates into their desire to control the different phases of the processes of music creation, production, and dissemination. It is in this career profile where we find the actors with a more privileged family background in socioeconomic terms. If we consider that this is the only career profile in which musicians manage to live from the music they create for themselves, this seems to suggest that the safety net provided by a middle or upper-class origin acts as a crucial element in enhancing the maintenance of the musical careers of these actors, as is also evidenced by other authors (Bennett, 2018; Threadgold, 2018).

Mediators

We come to the last career profile, the mediators, which includes an extensive set of interviewees – 25%. This is a heterogeneous group that is distinct from the others because it does not include musicians. These are social actors who play crucial roles in the Portuguese independent music scenes, acting as journalists/music critics, radio broadcasters, promoters, managers, label heads and music venue owners and/or programmers. Because almost all live exclusively from their activity in the music field, they have a professional perception of music. The only exception is one person in charge of a record label, who has another job, his main source of income. In this case, even if the publishing activity requires him to work a lot of time, it is a hobby, reflecting a strong passion for music. In all the other cases, the economic sustainability of their careers is entirely anchored in the musical sphere, often combining editorial activity with promotion or management. The professional trajectories in this career profile are also developed on a DIY basis. Except for the journalists, who mostly had higher professional education, in the other cases, learning was based on trial-and-error as their involvement in music grew. After the ‘mediator musicians’, this is the career profile where we find more women (24%), which suggests that a music career for women continues to pass essentially through the sphere of mediation. The following excerpt illustrates the trajectory of a woman, highlighting DIY as a way of learning the role played in the music scene. It also shows that over the years, the music stopped being a hobby and became her main occupation:

I went to London to do my degree (engineering). I worked in this area, but from the beginning, I had a very close relationship with music. I saw a lot of concerts, I socialized a lot with people. The music industries fascinated me. One day I decided to start a record label with a friend. Later, a job offer came up in Portugal, which had nothing to do with music, and I accepted it. I worked as a management consultant, but soon I started working with bands again. After some time, I created an agency, left my other job, and began to dedicate myself 100% to music.

Female, 40 years old, BA, entrepreneur in charge of a music agency, Lisbon.

In another dimension of this research, which is not the focus of this article, we applied Social Network Analysis to understand the structure of the relational networks that sustain the two music scenes, and we perceived the centrality of the people who belong to this career profile. They are catalyst figures who support and assure the maintenance of the scenes, acting as an important link in the cooperative network that Becker (1982) showed to be a feature of the art worlds.

Conclusion

Through a pioneering analysis in Portugal, this article augments the literature on the ways of working and the configurations DIY careers assume in independent music scenes. Based on a mixed-methods approach, it identifies the strategies and modes of action as well as the difficulties and tensions involved in these trajectories. It brings major contributions to the ongoing international discussion on DIY music practices and careers. The first is that it is the accumulation of roles that allows a wider range of interviewees to earn a living from music, albeit not always exclusively from their activity as musicians. Far from being a homogeneous and linear experience, having a career in the Portuguese independent music scenes is a multifaceted and complex process, where different possibilities and modalities of trajectories fit, as reflected in the diversity of the five career profiles of the typology we have identified.

This multiplicity and the non-linear character of these trajectories are intensified with situations such as the one experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic. In Portugal, it deepened and made more visible fragilities that had already been felt by cultural workers for a long time. This was felt particularly in the

performing arts. The lockdowns have meant sharp income losses for musicians and other actors in the live music ecosystem. Support measures from the Portuguese government were scarce and did not always reach all actors involved in the independent music scenes, which tend to benefit from less support when compared to other music genres. As a result, the combination of music with other professions became even more necessary for many of the protagonists of Lisbon and Porto's independent scenes. These actors had to reinvent themselves in the search for new strategies to deal with the challenges imposed by the pandemic. And in this process, digital tools and platforms have assumed a crucial place in music production and promotion (Green et al., 2023).

A second contribution is that, although a music career is associated with a wide diversity of possible strategies and trajectories, there is one common denominator: the DIY ethos and practices. It is a requirement for a career in the independent music scene. DIY practices were important to most actors from the beginning of their cultural activities to the present day. They manifested in different learnings such as singing and playing instruments; recording, producing, booking, and organizing concerts and tours; or producing contents for social media. In all these learning axes, we speak of informal learning processes and contexts characterized by trial-and-error and the sharing of information and skills based on belonging to creative-artistic communities and local music scenes (DIT), facilitated by digital technologies. Discursively, DIY does not fail to appear connoted with the will to affirm an alternative positioning to the dominant paradigms and ways of making, assuming an ideological character and one of resistance. But what prevails above all is its imminently pragmatic character. DIY appears as a necessity and as a strategy for survival in music.

Third, although there is greater awareness and more efforts to make music scenes truly equal spaces for men, women and gender minorities, women continue to develop careers mainly as 'mediators' and 'mediator musicians'. Music genres such as punk and independent/alternative music are associated with more inclusive attitudes and contexts and a disruptive posture towards the current system and its configurations. However, our research adds to the theoretical and empirical body that demonstrates that the 'cumulative disadvantage' (Acker, 2009 in Buscatto, 2018) that women face when trying to build their trajectories continues to be a reality in Portuguese independent music scenes.

The last implication of this study is to show that the family socioeconomic background and the social class of these actors continue to play a crucial role as an element that enhances the pursuit of musical careers. This is an argument that our typology proves, and it is especially evident in the 'author musicians' career profile. It is the only one in which musicians live exclusively from the music they create for themselves. It is also the one in which its members have a more privileged socioeconomic family background. If, when applied to music and music careers, DIY ethos and praxis might suggest that these careers, and their viability and sustainability, could become accessible to a broader set of social actors, our research shows that they are not a sufficient condition for this.


Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was developed as part of the author's doctoral thesis – *Do It Together Again: redes, fluxos e espaços na construção de carreiras na cena independente portuguesa* [Do It Together Again: networks, flows and spaces in the construction of careers in the Portuguese independent scene], supported by FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, within the scope of the doctoral scholarship under reference SFRH/BD/101849/2014.

ORCID iD

Ana Oliveira  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4013-8584>

Notes

1. Several studies (Haynes and Marshall, 2018; Kjus, 2016; Morris and Powers, 2015) show that, rather than promoting profound changes in power relations in the music industries, these transformations have been adapted to already existing practices and paradigms.
2. This DIY concept is present not only in the theoretical framework that underpins this research but also in the interviewees' discourses.
3. Today, the main labels in the Portuguese music field are the multinationals Universal and Sony and the Portuguese label Valentim de Carvalho, founded in 1824.
4. Hard infrastructures include the built environment, cultural centres, meeting and socializing venues, live performance halls, studios, labels, promoters, and the music press. Soft infrastructures involve associative structures, social relations, and networks, interactions between the various members of the music scenes, which provide the flow of ideas and information.
5. In Portuguese society, there is a strong influence of the Roman Catholic matrix that assigns women the roles of mother, girlfriend, and wife. While men are invited to assert themselves and lead in the public space, women's domain of leadership is the private space, the home, the children, the domestic sphere.
6. An example is shesaid.so, a global independent community of women and gender minorities in the music industries, which already has several Portuguese members. More details at <https://www.shesaid.so/>.
7. More details at <https://www.facebook.com/maternidade2014>.
8. Further details at <https://www.facebook.com/Vaiapraia> and <https://www.facebook.com/ofilipesambado>.
9. Musicians in other career profiles also use copyrights, but this is less significant for them.

References

- Abreu P, Silva AS, Guerra P, et al. (2017) The social place of the Portuguese punk scene: An itinerary of the social profiles of its protagonists. *Volume!* 14(1): 103–126.
- Banks M and Hesmondhalgh D (2009) Looking for work in creative industries policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 15(4): 415–430.
- Baym NK (2012) Fans or friends? Seeing social media audiences as musicians do. *Participations* 9(2): 286–316.
- Becker HS (1982) *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bennett A (2013) *Music, Style, and Aging: Growing Old Disgracefully?* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press.
- Bennett A (2018) Conceptualising the relationship between youth, music and DIY careers: A critical overview. *Cultural Sociology* 12(2): 140–155.
- Bennett A and Guerra P (eds) (2019) *DIY Cultures and Underground Music Scenes*. London: Routledge.
- Berkers P and Schaap J (2018) *Gender Inequality in Metal Music Production*. Bingley: Emerald.
- Buscatto M (2018) Feminisations of artistic work: Legal measures and female artists' resources do matter. *Todas as Artes. Revista Luso-Brasileira de Artes e Cultura* 1(1): 22–38.
- Carradini S (2016) An organizational structure of indie rock musicians as displayed by Facebook usage. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*: 1–24.
- Choi GY (2016) "Who run the musicGirls !" examining the construction of female digital musicians online presence. *Popular Music and Society* 40(4): 474–487.
- Coulson S (2012) Collaborating in a competitive world: Musicians' working lives and understandings of entrepreneurship. *Work, Employment and Society* 26(2): 246–261.
- Crossley N (2015) *Networks of Sound, Style and Subversion: the punk and post-punk worlds of Manchester, London, Liverpool and Sheffield, 1975–80*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Crossley N and Edwards G (2016) Cases, mechanisms and the real: The theory and methodology of mixed-method social network analysis. *Sociological Research Online* 21(2): 217–285.
- David M (2010) *Peer to Peer and the Music Industry. The Criminalization of Sharing*. London: Sage.
- Fox M (2004) E-commerce business models for the music industry. *Popular Music and Society* 27(2): 201–220.
- Friedman S, O'Brien D and Laurison D (2016) "Like skydiving without a parachute": How class origin shapes occupational trajectories in British acting. *Sociology* 51(5): 992–1010.

- Gavanas A and Reitsamer R (2016) *Neoliberal Working Conditions, Self-promotion and DJ Trajectories: A Gendered Minefield*. Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- Green B, Bennett A, Guerra G, et al. (2023) How live is live? COVID-19, live music and online performances. In: Woodward I, Haynes J, Berkers P, Dillane A and Golemo K (eds) *Remaking Culture and Music Spaces. Affects, Infrastructures, Futures*. London: Routledge, pp.34–46.
- Guerra P (2010) *A instável leveza do rock: gênese, dinâmica e consolidação do rock alternativo em Portugal 1980–2010 [The unstable lightness of rock: Genesis, dynamics and consolidation of alternative rock in Portugal 1980–2010]*. Porto: University of Porto.
- Guerra P (2016) Keep it rocking: The social space of Portuguese alternative rock (1980–2010). *Journal of Sociology* 52(4): 615–630.
- Guerra P (2018) Raw power: Punk, DIY and underground cultures as spaces of resistance in contemporary Portugal. *Cultural Sociology* 12(2): 241–259.
- Guerra P (2020) Other scenes, other cities and other sounds in the global south: DIY music scenes beyond the creative city. *Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy* 1: 55–75.
- Guerra P and Oliveira A (2019) Heart of glass: Gender and domination in the early days of punk in Portugal. In: Vilotijevic D and Medic MI (eds) *Contemporary Popular Music Studies: Proceedings of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music 2017*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp.127–136.
- Haenfler R (2018) The entrepreneurial (straight) edge: How participation in DIY music cultures translates to work and careers. *Cultural Sociology* 12(2): 174–192.
- Haynes J and Marshall L (2018) Beats and tweets: Social media in the careers of independent musicians. *New Media and Society* 20(5): 1973–1993.
- Hesmondhalgh D and Baker S (2011) *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge.
- Hesmondhalgh D and Meier L (2015) Popular music, independence and the concept of the alternative in contemporary capitalism. In: Bennett J and Strange N (eds) *Media independence: Working with freedom or working for free?* Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 94–115.
- Hracs BJ (2012) A creative industry in transition: The rise of digitally driven independent music production. *Growth and Change* 43(3): 442–461.
- Hracs BJ, Grant JL, Haggett J, et al. (2011) A tale of two scenes: Civic capital and retaining musical talent in Toronto and Halifax. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien* 55(3): 365–382.
- Hughes D, Evans M, Morrow G, et al. (2016) *The New Music Industries: Disruption and Discovery*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kjus Y (2016) Musical exploration via streaming services: The Norwegian experience. *Popular Communication* 14(3): 127–136.
- Krims A (2014) What is a musically creative city? In: Barber-Kersovan A, Kirchberg V and Kuchar R (eds) *Music City – Musikalische Annäherungen an die Kreative Stadt*. Bielefeld: transcript, pp.33–44.
- Kuchar R (2020) Music venues in transition. States of autonomy, dependence and subcultural institutionalization. *Todas as Artes. Revista Luso-Brasileira de Artes e Cultura* 3(2): 25–41.
- Leonard M (2017) *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock Discourse and Girl Power*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Markusen A (2006) Urban development and the politics of a creative class: Evidence from a study of artists. *Environment and Planning A* 38(10): 1921–1940.
- Marshall L (2015) ‘Let’s keep music special. F – spotify’: On-demand streaming and the controversy over artist royalties. *Creative Industries Journal* 8(2): 177–189.
- McLeod K (2005) MP3s Are killing home taping: The rise of internet distribution and its challenge to the major label music monopoly. *Popular Music and Society* 28(4): 521–531.
- McRobbie A (2016) *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morris JW and Powers D (2015) Control, curation and musical experience in streaming music services. *Creative Industries Journal* 8(2): 106–122.
- Oliveira A, 2020. *Do It Together Again: Redes, fluxos e espaços na construção de carreiras na cena independente portuguesa [Do It Together Again: networks, flows and spaces in the construction of careers in the Portuguese independent scene]*. PhD thesis. Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.
- Oliveira A (2023) Another typical day at the office: Working life in the Portuguese independent music scene. *Emomusicology Review* 23: 13–31.
- O’Sullivan CA (2018) Just not that into it?': Gendered barriers in the indie and dance music scene in Dublin. *Journal of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music* 8(1): 103–116.
- Reddington H (2012) *The lost women of rock music: female musicians of the punk era (2nd ed.)*. Sheffield: Equinox.
- Reitsamer R and Prokop R (2018) ‘Keepin’ it real in central Europe: The DIY rap music careers of male hip hop artists in Austria’. *Cultural Sociology* 12(2): 193–207.
- Richards J (2016) Shifting gender in electronic music: DIY and maker communities. *Contemporary Music Review* 35(1): 40–52.

- Scott M (2012) Cultural entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship: Music producers mobilising and converting bourdieu's alternative capitals. *Poetics* 40(2012): 237–255.
- Smith S, Choueiti M, Pieper K, et al. (2019) *Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender & Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters, & Producers Across 700 Popular Songs from 2012–2018*. Los Angeles: USC Annenberg.
- Stahl G (2004) “It’s like Canada reduced”: setting the scene in Montreal. In: Bennett A and Kahn-Harris K (eds) *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 51–64.
- Standing G (2011) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Strong C (2011) Grunge, Riot Grrrl and the Forgetting of women in popular culture. *The Journal of Popular Culture* 44(2): 398–416.
- Tarassi S (2018) Multi-Tasking and making a living from music: Investigating music careers in the independent music scene of milan. *Cultural Sociology* 12(2): 208–223.
- Thornton S (1995) *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Threadgold S (2018) Creativity, precarity and illusio: DIY cultures and “choosing poverty”. *Cultural Sociology* 12(2): 156–173.
- Vecco M, Vroonhof P, Clarke M, et al. (2019) *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (with the exception of the audio-visual sector)*. EENCA, European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual.
- Wilkström P (2009) *The Music Industry: Music in the Cloud*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.