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When means and ends coincide: on the value of DiY

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ABSTRACT
This article focuses on the relationship between 'Do-it-Yourself' (DiY) music practices and value. Based on anthropological fieldwork conducted in Glasgow between 2010 and 2011, it provides an ethnographic examination of a music collective that started off as an online blog and subsequently evolved into a record label and a live music promoter. The article considers the DiY values that pervaded the collective's views and practices, as well as how their music activities produced value. I suggest that DiY is a notion that can help us develop a nuanced understanding of 'value,' because it embodies the co-existence of different and interpenetrating types of value, spanning the realms of ethics, politics and the economy. That DiY consolidates diverse forms of value further indicates its importance for cultural policy: instead of taking for granted how value is produced and by whom, and how different types of value are related, or accepting a priori the usefulness of 'value' as an analytical category, DiY shows that these should rather be objects of ethnographic inquiry.

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This article focuses on the relationship between 'Do-it-Yourself' (DiY) music practices and value. Based on anthropological fieldwork conducted in Glasgow between 2010 and 2011, it provides an ethnographic examination of the music collective Winning Sperm Party (hereafter WSP),[1] which started off as an online blog in 2007 and subsequently evolved into a record label and a live music promoter. The article considers the DiY values that pervaded the collective's music-making, as well as how WSP music activities produced value. Rather than focusing upon a music genre or a specific 'sound,' in what follows I discuss the practices of WSP relevant to the enactment of Do-it-Yourself music-making, but also their views about its enactment. In doing so, I suggest that DiY is a notion that can help us develop a more nuanced understanding of 'value,' because it embodies the co-existence of different and interpenetrating forms of value, spanning the realms of ethics, politics and the economy.

From its roots in home improvement projects to its contemporary manifestations, DiY generally involves making things yourself instead of consuming ready-made ones (Duncombe 1997, p. 7, Holtzman *et al.* 2007, p. 44). Nowadays, in addition to music and art practices, DiY initiatives seem to encompass anything and everything, ranging from citizenship (Ratto and Boller 2014), community WiFi networking (Jungnickel 2014) and archives (Baker 2015) to radio and repair events (Day 2017). DiY is so ubiquitous that *The Guardian* recently ran a feature on Do-it-Yourself and how to do things your 'own way' by 'sidestepping the establishment' (Frazer *et al.* 2014, n.p.). Its elusiveness is further reflected in the definitions of DiY in the academic literature. For example, Lowndes (2016) contends that DiY represents what Foucault termed 'subjugated knowledge,' which can empower creative practitioners, subvert social hierarchies and animate grassroots politics. Luvaas

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opts for Raymond Williams' notion of 'structure of feeling', and argues that DiY demonstrates great economic potential as 'one of the very ideological pillars upon which contemporary capitalism rests' (2012, p. 6). For Wehr (2012), DiY provides the means to separate everyday life from the world of politics and material production ('the system'). Following Habermas, he writes that 'DIY is an attempt to decolonize the lifeworld,' which, as opposed to 'the system,' 'is characterized by shared values, norms based in morals or traditions, and personal relationships' (2012, p. 8).

These accounts are important and innovative contributions to the study of DiY practices. Yet they appear to privilege one form of value over others, thus drawing a distinction between the political, economic and ethical value of DiY. Scholars writing on cultural industries tend to focus on the intersection between two discreet forms of value, namely economic and 'cultural' value, with the latter encompassing the non-economic aspects of creative work.[2] While such accounts recognise 'cultural' value as intrinsic to creative practices, 'the precise meaning or definition of "cultural value" continues to provoke intense debate' (Banks 2015, p. 40). I would suggest that this is because the discourse on 'cultural' value lacks input from the practitioners it claims to represent (see Newsinger and Green 2016).

My discussion of value is rooted in the ideas and practices of DiY cultural producers. In exploring the collective's views and activities, I make intelligible the values that informed their music-making and, in turn, the forms of value it created.

Sharing resources has been a widespread practice among DiY practitioners and largely sustains music activities in grassroots creative economies. For the collective, however, sharing had an intrinsic value that transcended the sphere of exchange and infused their music-making with ethical meaning. The capacity of sharing to bring people together through the mutual enjoyment of resources made the collective's efforts worthwhile and gave WSP its identity. The collective further highlighted the importance of caring for musicians with whom they collaborated as a promoter and record label. Their own experience of 'professional' promoters in Glasgow had made them realise the importance of showing interest in bands, their music and well-being, beyond the logistics of promotion and record production. In fact, strict planning, punctuality and effectiveness were less important than a friendly, personable attitude. 'Disorganisation,' therefore, can be said to constitute an explicit value, one that also left the meaning of DiY open to interpretation. As I have argued elsewhere (Chrysagis 2016, pp. 292–293, 2017, pp. 149–151), DiY had an ambiguous, even negative meaning among Glasgow-based DiY practitioners. Yet WSP were very clear about the practices they did *not* value, such as the exploitation of musicians. Their practice was inherently political in that it sought to resist what they perceived as unethical practices, while setting a different example.

I argue that the conjunction of ethical, economic and political value in the collective's ideas and practices conjures up a 'regime of living':

> A given regime provides one possible means, and always only one among various possible means, for organizing, reasoning about, and living ethically … Regimes of living have a certain systematicity or regularity … that give them a provisional consistency or coherence. But they do not necessarily have the stability or concrete institutionalization of a political regime. Rather, they may be conceived as abstract congeries of ethical reasoning and practice that emerge in a range of situations, taking diverse actual forms. (Lakoff and Collier 2004, p. 427)

The notion of 'regimes of living' draws attention to the diverse configurations of DiY across different domains by focusing on their common features. Its usefulness as a concept further lies in its capacity to expose the ambivalent nature of DiY activity and how it brings together loosely connected values.

Regimes of living firmly embed ethical discourse and action in the mundane dimensions of ordinary life. Following Foucault's insights (1997), which have been instrumental in the recent resurgence of interest in ethics and morality within anthropology (see Mattingly and Throop 2018), Lakoff and Collier perceive the norms and techniques associated with regimes of living 'not only ethical in the sense of morally correct,' but also as modes of self-fashioning and thus constitutive of particular kinds of subjects (2004, p. 427). The authors further note that 'the word regime suggests a "manner,

method, or system of rule or government," characteristic of political regimes,' and they write that 'problems of ordinary life … are central to regimes of living' (2004, p. 220, 229). In so doing, they provide an appropriate analytical tool to examine whether and how DiY as a form of ethical practice produces economic value and constitutes a form of politics. But contrary to their definition of regimes of living as a 'means' to an end, my conviction is that DiY, in its capacity to generate economic value and facilitate political action, combines means and ends. Lakoff and Collier warn us though that 'regimes of living do not provide definitive resolutions to problematic situations by recourse to a politics' (2004, pp. 229–230). The economic importance of regimes of living should not be overestimated either, as dealing with everyday problems might mean generating income to sustain the practice in question but it may not contribute to economic 'growth.'

This leads me to perceive DiY and value as ethnographic categories, instead of assuming that the value of DiY pre-exists or seeking to understand its essence (see also Eiss and Pedersen 2002, p. 284). The way in which value is established, negotiated and disseminated in DiY music practices is conducive to an '*ethnographic theory of value*' (Graeber 2013, p. 223). The presentation of ethnographic findings precedes an analysis of 'value' and 'values' that embeds my discussion of DiY within a broader theoretical framework underpinned by Graeber's notion of 'infravalues' (2013). The ethnography culminates in the final section on infravalues and their relation to DiY as a 'regime of living' (Lakoff and Collier 2004).

Value and values, means and ends

As is obvious from the two potential ways of framing value that I have suggested – the values informing DiY music activity, as well as how value emerges in situated DiY action – 'value' is by default a unifying concept, demanding an approach that transcends analytical boundaries which, in anthropology at least, 'have been more assumed than examined' (Pedersen 2008, p. 5). In exploring ethnographically the relation between DiY and value, I perceive value as a quality or product of acts rather than objects (Lambek 2008). Until recently, the comparative study of value was characterised by the failure 'to relate it properly to action' (Graeber 2001, p. 4 cited Widlok 2013, p. 13). The recent interest in 'value' within anthropology can be traced to contributions coming from the anthropology of ethics and morality, but also to Graeber's work (2001) and his reinterpretation of Marx through Marcel Mauss (Scheele 2015, p. 32). According to Otto (Otto and Willerslev 2013a, p. 3), there are three main lines of reasoning that one comes across in anthropological writings on value: first, value is perceived as the outcome of exchange and relations of reciprocity. For example, work on the gift and commodity exchange has been at the core of anthropological contributions to the subject of value in social theory, thus having an impact outside of anthropology. In this line of reasoning, value is intimately related to the realm of economics. Another important strand has employed 'values' in the plural to convey different cultural systems and how social values are enacted and guide people's everyday conduct. The third line of reasoning, in which I will situate my discussion of DiY music practices, consists of a combination between the first two, by seeking to express how social and cultural values permeate everyday practices, and in turn how the resulting actions produce value. Thus, an important dimension of the synthetic anthropological approach to value is the reconceptualisation of value beyond its narrow meaning as the production of commodities: the 'synthesis between exchange-based theories' of value 'and values-as-worldviews' in the third strand 'aims to expand the Marxist understanding of labor as the source of exchange-value toward a more general theory of value that considers any form of human action from the perspective of value creation' (Otto and Willerslev 2013a, p. 3).

An example of this synthetic line of thinking is Lambek's (2008, 2013) discussion of the relationship between economic and ethical value. Following Aristotle and Arendt, Lambek distinguishes between action and labour (production) to designate that '[a]cts are activities whose primary outcomes are not products (objects) but consequences' (2013, p. 144), and that ethical value relates to action in the same way that material value is associated with production (2013, p. 141). Yet, as

Graeber notes, the term 'production' encompasses both commodities and social relations, and, therefore, value-production is simultaneously a process of relational self-constitution (2013, p. 223). Although the focus on political economy and material goods has obscured this insight, Graeber argues that such an emphasis was necessary for Marx to understand how capitalism works, a system that for him was perverse because 'it saw human beings primarily as a means to produce wealth rather than the other way around' (2013, p. 223). Even though Lambek's distinction between action and production cannot be sustained, as Lambek himself admits (2013, p. 145), his contribution is innovative, as Otto and Willerslev observe (2013b, p. 5), because he seeks to demonstrate how value emanates from human action – Lambek focuses on ordinary, performative acts – and, by extension, how it can quickly dissolve when action is absent.

While different material values can be compared based on a single standard – money – '[t]he value of "values" … lies precisely in their lack of equivalence' (Graeber 2013, p. 224). Values are perceived as unique, and they cannot or should not be compared with one another or converted into monetary value: such forms of valuation are normally framed as 'judgements' (Lambek 2008, pp. 136–138, 2013, pp. 143–144). Judgement emerges as important even when we consider the financial markets (Ortiz 2013), where discourse on value becomes overly technical and thus appears to lie outside the realm of ethics and politics. As Ortiz shows, the distinction between material calculation, ethical value and political responsibility is not always explicit, because financial processes are fraught with ambivalence and have political repercussions, inviting reflection and the exercise of discernment. What the example of the financial markets shows is that monetary valuation is never just a technical operation. Therefore, even in contexts purporting to be devoid of ethical and political considerations, an analytical division between different forms of value needs to be approached with caution.

Another distinction, between internal and external values in practices (MacIntyre 1981), is highly relevant to music. For example, receiving money, and gaining status or prestige through making music are values external to the practice. Bourdieu's field of cultural production (1993) would be able to capture the ways in which people compete for such external goods and resources. It is necessary to stress that these values exist in various other practices. When a value cannot be achieved through other practices it can be called internal to the practice in question. McIntyre's schema requires a shift away from 'utility,' and towards what specific practices can afford in and of themselves: there is no *a priori* economic or other form of external value in an activity seeking to achieve the internal value of a practice. Music is a good example of this because most people engage in it for the inherent pleasures involved and not for financial rewards. 'Internal goods,' write Crossley and Bottero (2015, p. 43), 'are not conditional upon acquiring great skill or high levels of achievement,' and so music's pleasures are rewarding for most participants. Widlok further notes in his work on sharing that the process of realising the internal value of a practice does not translate material value into other intangible forms of value, such as 'sociality' or 'community'; far from that, it 'alters the ways in which value is created and not just the value of particular items that are involved' (2013, p. 25).

I believe that Do-it-Yourself is best understood as a modus operandi that allows people to achieve the internal value of a practice while simultaneously transforming the way in which value is generated across different realms. Most people who engage in DiY music activities do so in ways that combine internal and at least *some* form of external values: aesthetic pleasure, social enjoyment and personal fulfilment converge with the provision of necessary resources for the practice to continue, publicity and even 'prestige.' DiY creativity and commerce are not necessarily antithetical (Cohen 1991), but mutually constitutive (Weinstein 1999). In other words, in DiY music practices means and ends tend to coincide.

This shows that the distinction between internal and external values is not absolute or always easy to make, not least because any given practice may be in turn linked to other practices and their respective values, internal or external (Lambek 2010, pp. 21–22). As Banks puts it:

> The health and continuation of any practice relies on achieving an appropriate balance between the pursuit of external and internal goods. Cultural industries offer many examples of this kind of practice, where external rewards are managed in relation to deeply valued internal purposes. (2014, p. 27)

The artificial dichotomy between internal and external values, and the porous boundaries between economic, ethical and political value demonstrate that instead of privileging one value over others, we should be 'taking the tacit, *interior* values that inform how one goes about pursuing value within certain fields … and reassembling them as an explicit value in themselves. We can refer to such tacit interior values as *infravalues*' (Graeber 2013, p. 233). Infravalues, Graeber continues, can often become metavalues or 'criteria by which to prefer some structures of value over others' (2013, p. 233). The importance of Graeber's notion of 'infravalues' is not only analytical but methodological, too: *how* people pursue value is amenable to empirical observation and description, and this is a distinctive advantage over MacIntyre's approach.

For Graeber, while certain infravalues are rewarding per se, they are not normally seen as ends in themselves. By contrast, my ethnographic findings attest to the fact that DiY infravalues constituted an explicit purpose of WSP practices. In tracing ethnographically how DiY infravalues informed the collective's actions, I emphasise, in turn, the ways in which their music practices created economic, ethical and political value. While the activities of WSP initially constituted pragmatic responses to shifting material and practical circumstances, they reflected, first and foremost, the collective's desire to resist the 'business-like' approaches of certain Glasgow-based promoters and make music in an ethical manner, thus embedding their practice firmly within the history of DiY music-making.

Winning Sperm Party

WSP members were in their early twenties. None of them was originally from Glasgow, but, except for Peter, they were all from the Trossachs area in Stirling: Colin and Iain grew up in Callander, while Peter and Corey were from Alloa and Aberfoyle respectively.[3] They had initially moved to Glasgow to study, with Peter and Iain taking up sound engineering, Colin doing science and business, and Corey enrolling in a graphic design course. Colin was employed as a manager in a local poster distribution company and Iain had joined Colin's team after quitting his previous job at a supermarket. As a graduate, Corey was working in a graphic design company, but he subsequently left to get a job in the kitchen of a bar-restaurant in the West End. His new job allowed him greater flexibility and ample time to make music. Likewise, Peter had become relatively disillusioned with his job as a sound engineer and he occasionally helped his father in the field of market research.

Colin and Iain knew each other from school, and the rest of the collective's members first joined them not in Glasgow but in Stirling, where Iain and Colin organised music events at the School Hall and other venues during weekends. Colin recounts that 'we were doing it ourselves because it was a natural thing to do. We hadn't thought about it and we weren't "anti-corporate." We probably wanted to be rock stars just playing our own gigs.' While still in Stirling, they had decided to seek performance opportunities in Glasgow through local promoters, but Colin boldly stated that their experience was a negative one: 'When we were in our first band from the country and wanted to play gigs in Glasgow, we'd come through and being ripped off. … So, then we realised that we're not doing that again.'[4]

Therefore, the formation and evolution of WSP was not defined by explicit anti-corporate sentiments but was driven by pragmatic considerations and represented a coping mechanism: as a DiY promoter, WSP could assert their right to perform music in the city on their own terms. Partly, though, the collective sprung out of a reaction to what they considered exploitative practices, reflecting sentiments of discontent with what they referred to as 'corrupt' promotion companies, which prioritised financial gains and took advantage of young and unknown bands. The collective set themselves apart from those commercially minded promoters by embracing and nurturing different values.

The driving force behind the consolidation of the collective's practice was their multiple band membership, which had resulted in an array of affiliations with other musicians in Glasgow. Indeed, the consensus was that social interaction and involvement in diverse music genres were the main reasons behind WSP's prolific activity. As Peter put it:

> It's about the interaction with different people; you have one interaction with a sound group and then a different one with a group of people who play different stuff. You have a lot of different types of music you are interested in, but you know that other people are not necessarily interested in all of them.

Although much of WSP's musical output was the outcome of part-time engagement, I encountered a surprisingly complex web of affiliated bands. I was intrigued not only by the sheer amount of creative activity and the numerous bands associated with the collective, but also by the ongoing discussion about starting new bands and projects on top of the existing ones, not to mention the various one-off and sometimes impromptu performances that took place in WSP events. Moving to the urban context of Glasgow provided WSP with opportunities for music cross-fertilisation and exchange that resulted in a range of musical projects.[5] Multiple-band membership also underpinned the collective's promotional activities and eventually gave rise to a record label.[6]

What can the practices of WSP tell us about the value of DiY? The collective themselves would regularly point outside the realm of music when talking about DiY. For instance, they held the opinion that artists had a nuanced understanding and superior hands-on experience of DiY practice owing to the nature of their craft that involved the use of diverse materials. As I was told during my fieldwork, DiY was 'more important' than music itself because it constituted an 'ethical apprenticeship' that went beyond the acquisition of musical skills, and because DiY had and should have much broader resonance outside music. A kindred mentality beyond common musical taste was indeed crucial for building relationships with other musicians and cultural producers, evident in the WSP label's diverse roster as well as the collective's numerous contacts with Glasgow School of Art students and graduates. For artists, embracing a DiY ethos was also geared towards accumulating necessary knowledge through hands-on training and experience, which could prove an asset in their future careers (Chrysagis 2016, p. 292).

The collective seemingly privileged DiY over music and drew various links with other kinds of DiY practice, but music was the catalyst for their participation in DiY.

Corey, for example, highlighted the experience of live performance and musical creativity as highly rewarding processes:

> Half the fun of playing music is playing with people, and that's half of where the passion lies; but also spending the time on your own to create something and then take it to people and see if that works. It's a good feeling when you get something that could 'work' and then you take it to practice and other people enjoy it; when all the ideas come together and create an end product, especially when you get to the point where you're playing it for the first time live and you pull it off … It gives me goosebumps.

WSP would regularly cite Michael Azerrad's book *Our Band Could Be Your Life* (2001) as a major source of inspiration. Azzerad chronicles the emergence of several American bands in the 1980s, such as Black Flag, The Minutemen and Fugazi that were associated with independent record labels.[7] The common denominator among these bands was not so much 'a circumscribed musical style' but the 'punk ethos of DIY,' which enabled people to start bands, launch record labels and take control (Azerrad 2001, p. 6). This found a parallel in the WSP record label: a great deal of the music belonged to the punk rock continuum, but the label was musically diverse owing to the influence of DiY in a variety of music genres (Bennett and Guerra 2018, p. 9). Azzerad further states that DiY initially embodied a pragmatism that 'was a necessity more than a statement' (2001, p. 6). The collective also demonstrated such a pragmatic approach to music-making when they first started organising their own events in Glasgow.

While the punk ethos of DiY originated in the U.S. in the mid-1970s, Bennett and Guerra note (2018, p. 8) that the meaning of punk as a form of resistance proliferated at first in the U.K. Earlier music genres such as skiffle, which became popular in 1950s Britain (see Dewe 1998), were a

decidedly DiY affair, but it was not until the advent of punk and its subsequent subgenres (e.g. anarcho-punk, hardcore punk) that DiY took on anti-commercial, politicised and ethical meaning. While the contours of DiY were drawn in the Western world, its far-reaching effects are nowadays evident in various cultural practices cross-culturally, with DiY values encompassing ethical, political and, importantly, economic aspirations (Bennett 2018). The collective drew on the history of DiY music to define their practice and create their own trajectory, which reflected their social, cultural and practical circumstances.

Disorganisation

WSP would often declare their lack of 'proper' organisation. Some gigs were announced just a few days in advance, even on the day. Others were cancelled, bands would drop out from the line-up last minute, while most gigs would kick off with considerable delay. In the past, WSP would regularly publish the financial breakdowns of gigs they promoted. Listing all proceeds and expenses – a widespread practice within the DiY network – ensured transparency, guaranteed that artists were getting paid, and underscored the collective's non-profit approach. However, later on WSP ceased the publication of financial breakdowns, while in one instance due to a miscalculation they ended up taking money from a gig's proceeds, which was considered a taboo.[8] Moreover, for a considerable period the online shop was not properly managed, which meant that customers would not receive their records until weeks after placing an order. Despite all this, from an insider's point of view, being 'disorganised' was not necessarily a negative quality, because organisation did not matter in and of itself, according to Iain:

> I think we try to keep it relaxed. If you go to a gig that a big promoter is putting on, you've got all the organisation – stuff that is going on that stretch you from the fact that you're there to have a good time and play your music – and if you're thinking about running by a strict timeline it can be detrimental to your performance.

At the end of October 2010, Transmission, an artist-led gallery in the East End, was hosting a series of presentations by self-organised communities in Glasgow and beyond, spanning practices that ranged from music and art to political activism. WSP were scheduled to give a talk, so I was anticipating it with great interest. To my disappointment, the collective did not attend the event and failed to give prior notice to the organisers. The reason for the cancellation was that they could not decide upon the content of their presentation. When I brought this up in a discussion I had with Colin later, he explained that part of the reason why they refrained from presenting was their lack of a specific agenda in relation to DiY. The collective's reluctance to present their views is consonant with the idea that DiY brings together means and ends: its values are not readily translatable because they cannot be easily abstracted from everyday action. The Transmission incident thus demonstrates why DiY practitioners may not always be keen or indeed able to take on the role of explaining the values of DiY to non-DiY audiences in formal contexts.[9]

Sharing

The collective's response to the relative lack of material resources was a form of extensive sharing. The decision to set up a free-download record label is a case in point; also, mutual help and the sharing of resources, such as musical equipment or the electricity generator they used to set up outdoor gigs, were very common. Although it would be tempting to perceive sharing as a form of utilitarianism, it was not a means to an end, but an integral dimension of the collective's existence – their raison d'être, as Colin explained:

> It's just the idea of sharing stuff. For example, when you like some music and you want to share it with people and be able to do it as cheaply as possible, or even free if possible. I mean, it's good to be able to get people free downloads and that anyone, even if they don't have any money, as long as they've got an Internet connection, they can download it. And now that there's no barrier really, it has to be as inclusive as possible.

In his article on the ethical dimensions of sharing, Widlok makes precisely this point when he says that:

> Sharing in these instances need not involve a generous person who gives, nor a transfer at all, but it entails allowing others access, and to do this for its own sake, i.e. for the sake of jointly enjoying these resources. (2004, p. 63)

He notes that sharing does not divide individuals or groups into givers and receivers and does not constitute a sharing 'out,' but a sharing 'in,' by opening up the circle of people who have access to these resources.

The association of various bands and individuals with the collective influenced the way in which WSP members reflected upon the collective's identity. For Colin, Iain, Peter and Corey, the musicians that had released music on the label and the individuals that regularly contributed to the organisation of WSP music events *were* members of the collective. As Colin said to me:

> DiY always ends up being a community. Most of the time it's like: 'Can you do this, can you do that?.' It's not like: 'I am going to do everything.' It's not a perfect democracy, but the more people on board, the more likely it's going to be worthwhile doing.

Sharing involved the joint use of resources and mutual enjoyment of music, while granting participants membership into the collective. This resonates with Widlok's remark that '[s]haring creates a shared base, triggering the emergence of social groups and shared identities' (2004, p. 61). As a form of giving (and taking), sharing becomes problematic due to its consequentialist connotations that unavoidably reduce its complexity. WSP practice helps to recast the very definition of sharing: what animated the collective's actions was DiY's capacity to facilitate the mutual use of resources for the sake of it, rather than the ability to share specific 'things.' Sharing was enacted by that very process – it was 'not done *by default* but … constituted *by turnout*' (Widlok 2004, p. 63). Releasing music and organising events expanded the collective's inner circle and extended the boundaries of the group. It was the composition of the collective that was altered through sharing, rather than the ownership of goods through 'exchange.'

Caring

WSP further perceived DiY as a way to claim and retain control of their music through releasing their own records and putting on their own gigs. For the collective, keeping control and operating as a non-profit unit were interdependent but the latter's association with DiY was far from clear-cut. Whereas non-profit was ostensibly easier to grasp, the term DiY had been the object of constant discussion. Colin believed that it was a source of confusion for everyone involved and that its values, which conveyed a communal venture, literally contradicted 'Do-it-Yourself.' DiY was essentially seen as a guarantee of ethical conduct and a practical guide that sustained their music practices and enabled WSP to navigate the complex map of the music industry. Thus, the term functioned mostly as a potent signifier – hence the correlation between DiY and non-profit as an index of the collective's approach, according to Iain:

> With DiY you know that we'll not make money off it. That's what I would get if I saw it somewhere. We're just non-profit. I think it would probably be better to say non-profit all the time, because I don't know whether people that say they are DiY are actually non-profit.

It follows that 'DiY' was not an accurate or truthful description of non-profit activities, because the relation between DiY practice and money was highly contingent and evolving. WSP had not written off the possibility of making a living out of music. In fact, as Haenfler points out, sensibilities acquired through participation in DiY music-making, such as risk-taking and adaptability, can be translated into marketable skills: 'In a global economy fraught with risk, people may increasingly be encouraged or even *forced* to create DIY careers' (2018, p. 188). Certainly, the collective did

not explicitly frame or articulate their practice in terms of 'career' or professionalism, but Peter's reflections are telling:

> Having worked into a pub where they do stuff on a business level – where they're employing somebody to put on a gig and put up the posters and so on – I honestly don't really see the differences with what we do. Most of the time, the actual interest from people who are booking the gigs – because they are booking it as a job – is zero. They'll hang about until the doors open and then they're away, you know? As long as everything goes smoothly and the agreements with the bands have been met, then that's it. And that, I would say, is far more amateur.

Thus, it was not income that defined one as amateur or professional but, rather, the ethical significance of these terms. Peter's words demonstrate that what distinguished WSP from 'professionals' was a caring attitude towards the bands they hosted in their events and label. Peter had substantial experience in working as a sound engineer for non-DiY promoters and he would recount how they regularly complained about the bands they were putting on – and whose music they were supposedly into – and how they talked about musicians in a negative way. WSP, by contrast, would not choose to host bands whose music they did not appreciate, because this would result in the collective being uninterested in the event. WSP would cook for musicians performing at their events, while they saw the cost of hiring a music venue as an important factor because it could affect the bands. Peter explained to me that:

> None of us wants to put much money into paying out for a big venue and we don't really want to see touring bands not being able to pay for petrol to get to the next gig or to eat that day. If we put on gigs in places that were more expensive then we wouldn't be able to pay bands as much. It seems that most of the gigs we're putting on is about making sure that everybody gets a bit of money for the trouble than us taking a cut.

Ethical professionalism was highly valued, but the level of care shown by the collective came at a personal, if not economic, cost. As Tarassi demonstrates in her account of the Milan independent music scene, multi-tasking and self-exploitation were common traits in participants' creative work, 'evident in the choice to carry out professional activities without obtaining suitable economic returns' (2018, p. 216). For WSP, it was more important to avoid exploiting bands than themselves.

Resistance

The collective believed that the ongoing exploitation of bands was their own fault too, in the sense that most musicians who had the ambition to 'make it' could fall prey to promoters who were enforcing 'pay-to-play' policies. WSP held the view that DiY was especially important for younger bands, who needed to become self-sufficient and avoid exploitation by circumventing intermediaries – WSP included. DiY thus constituted an omnipresent form of 'resistance' that was consistent with the history of DiY music-making. At the same time, however, DiY provided WSP with the means to *inhabit* the models and practices of the music industry on their own terms. Can my research participants be criticised for a failure to pay tribute to the radical politics of DiY movements and initiatives that preceded theirs, thus diluting DiY's political essence? This could be a valid point, but it is only part of the story.

As Brent Luvaas notes in *DIY Style*, 'this is not the proletarian revolution Marx and his followers were waiting for. Kids these days just don't believe in anything so grandiose. For most of them, there is no after or beyond capitalism … There is just more of the same' (2012, p. 158). By contrast, Stephen Duncombe underscores the political potential of DiY, while also stressing the problematic connotations of the term: 'do-it-yourself is a far-from-radical proposition. The idea of not allowing your creativity to be stymied by any "authoritarian system" is the essence of American individualism' (1997, p. 188). George McKay makes a similar point when he writes that 'the turn to a politics of Do it Your*self*, of self-empowerment, can be seen as a corollary of the Thatcherite notion of the privileging of the individual' (1998, p. 19). The term, then, does not seem to correspond with the actual practices on the ground. As both Duncombe (1997, p. 189) and McKay (1998, p. 27) have noted, 'yourself' in DiY ascribes a sense of atomistic or possessive individualism where it does not exist.

My ethnographic findings indeed demonstrate that the values of DiY are firmly embedded in and derive from social interaction and co-operation. This is also where DiY's political value is grounded. As Duncombe aptly puts it, DiY is not politics by definition but 'politics by example' (1997, p. 205). I would add that DiY, in bringing together means and ends, constitutes a politics that fully emerges in the process of doing it, and during that process it transforms the relations of its own becoming. As opposed to political formations that have the means to effect change in the public realm, DiY gains its authority through its focus on lived experience. The kind of 'political' realm that DiY supports, then, seems to be much closer to a politics that 'rises directly out of acting together' (Arendt 1998 [1958], p. 198). Such a grassroots politics empowers music practitioners to shape or change the conditions of their everyday lives. At the same time, DiY lacks a clear articulation of its own aspirations to transform the world and, in this sense, it is a 'pre-political' movement (Duncombe 1997, p. 185).

My interlocutors in Glasgow emulated previous examples from the history of DiY to make music, put on gigs and release records, but their approach did not allude to a teleological form of political practice predicated on explicit 'resistance.' Instead, their practice conveyed a form of 'oblique resistance:' 'an ambivalent type of resistant politics that is more than just mere emancipation' (Jian 2018, p. 229). Caught up in a language of protest and dissent, 'DiY culture' (e.g. McKay 1998) risks losing sight of the fact that DiY is neither dependent upon a pre-existing consensus – as the word 'culture' perhaps could lead one to believe – nor is 'politics,' in the conventional sense of the term, necessarily the hallmark of DiY. The radical power of DiY may instead be located in its transformative potential through the development of ethical sensibilities: with their music-making the collective sought to realise a different ethical rather than political ideal. This does not neutralise DiY's emancipatory force and its capacity to oppose exploitation and resist excessive commercialisation in the cultural industries. It just shows how the relationship between ethics and politics is enacted in DiY practice. As Saba Mahmood (2005, pp. 34–35) has argued, declaring the apolitical character of ethical practices would be an error (see also Mattingly and Throop 2018, pp. 483–485). It might be productive, therefore, to shift our ethnographic attention to the political value of DiY music practices through the ethical transformations they engender.

From infravalues to regimes of living

The collective's self-professed 'disorganisation' and the seemingly piecemeal attempts to articulate a clear and concise definition of DiY testified to what seemed to my uninitiated eyes a youthful, haphazard and ultimately precarious enterprise. WSP practices constantly evolved through experience, and this was reflected in the way they framed their ideas about DiY. The collective's hesitation to come up with a DiY blueprint to present at the Transmission event should be seen in relation to this constant process of adaptation and, by extension, the inability of a singular definition to capture the manifold dimensions of DiY activity. Disorganisation, therefore, can be perceived as part and parcel of DiY – one of its infravalues, along with sharing, caring and resistance. As I have shown, the collective's practices and views on DiY were further linked to a set of notions about inclusiveness and accessibility, being non-profit and self-sufficient, as well as DiY's potential to foster community.

Graeber argues that infravalues are not normally ends in themselves, but '[s]ometimes they might become so' (2013, p. 233). The collective enacted DiY infravalues as intrinsically worthwhile dimensions of music practice – not as the means to generate economic, ethical and political value or achieve particular goals, such as forging a career in the music industry. Yet sharing simultaneously produced economic and ethical value for participants in DiY music-making: the collective expanded through sheer participation, and the sharing of resources ensured that WSP would be able to continue their musical pursuits. Likewise, the implicit form of resistance that WSP exercised against what they perceived as 'corrupt' practices merged ethical and political value, while their disorganised but caring approach emphasised that the economic value of 'professional' music-making can have an ethical undercurrent.

DiY is not free from ultimate goals or competition, but even if we reduced the heterogeneity of DiY and traced its position within Bourdieu's schema as a field of 'restricted production' (1993, p. 39), a focus on macro-processes would confine and, in fact, impoverish our understanding of the experiential dimensions of DiY, the value pluralism it affords, and the way it transforms the production of value. It would treat, for example, practices of sharing as part of the interests and investments integral to 'the field,' that is, as an 'illusio' and a reassertion of the 'game' (see Threadgold 2018). By contrast, '[w]hen value is understood as inhering to means rather than simply to ends, that is, to acts and practices rather than simply to goals or objects, the problem of scarcity, and hence of competition, becomes less acute' (Lambek 2008, p. 136). This is not to deny that DiY *is* part of a 'game' and a form of cultural production that, in its many facets, variably invites or supports a consumerist lifestyle (Luvaas 2012); or that its purported accessibility does not take into account that musical accessibility is not limited to the physical contact between music and listener but also involves participation and personal reception (Eisentraut 2013); or, finally, that the self-professed inclusivity of DiY networks is contradicted by claims of insularity by outsiders and the fact that DiY often sidesteps issues of class, race and gender, among others (McKay 1998, p. 45). However, for a practice that constantly undergoes reassessment and has been transformed from complete negation in punk rock into a pragmatic response to practical circumstances and a ubiquitous phenomenon in the cultural industries and beyond, neatly placing DiY within an overdetermined schema would seem to oversimplify. It would be a reduction of DiY's 'ethical complexity' (Faubion 2011), which involves the constant negotiation between different and often conflicting subject positions in which music practitioners find themselves.

Owing to the open-ended and volatile nature of DiY, attempting to identify specific criteria or DiY metavalues that would convey a fixed structure of values, seems to contradict DiY's very essence. The coalescence of different forms of value in DiY practice would further hinder any such attempt. Yet if there was an element that clearly distinguished DiY practitioners from other cultural producers – DiY's *sine qua non* – then that would be ethics: not so much as an umbrella value incorporating other infravalues but as an ever-present dimension pervading DiY practice. Enacting DiY infravalues constituted the collective as an ethical subject. Because infravalues convey a mode of practice, Graeber's schema allows us to establish what is particularly ethical about DiY music-making. Drawing on MacIntyre (1981), Lambek considers any practice to be 'ethical insofar as the goal is not instrumental but reaching for excellence within the particular practice' (2010, p. 21). But the pursuit of internal value alone would seem to render the notion of an ethical practice meaningless because it encompasses so much and hence explains so little; rather, the very constitution of ethical value in DiY music-making is gradually accomplished through action.

DiY aims to foster an ethical form of urban life. As such, it can refer to the ways in which urban resources are used, appropriated and transformed – what Lefebvre has called 'the right to the city' (1996, 2003) – but I think that DiY embodies something more profound: it provides a regime of living in a period when '"living" has been rendered problematic' (Lakoff and Collier 2004, p. 419). Despite the diverse conceptions of DiY among my interlocutors, there was consensus that it was 'a good path to follow,' as one of my interviewees phrased it. The collective's 'musical pathways' (Finnegan 1989) were of high importance compared to other urban routes and everyday commitments: Corey had quit his well-paid job as a graphic designer and Iain was trying to get by on as little money as possible. Both, in common with Colin and Peter, valued flexibility as a prerequisite for making music and perceived work as an enabling rather than restricting factor in relation to their musical pursuits. It was evident, then, that music activities defined and ordered a great deal of their everyday lives, with their personal and social identities being structured largely around musical routines.

Were members of the collective deliberately choosing a precarious existence? As Threadgold notes in his study of the Australian DiY scene:

> By opting out of the high pressures, long working hours, and often unreasonable demands of professional fields, the concept of 'strategic poverty' may be more apt in that there is a sense that one can opt to scale back full-time work now for it to pay off with current satisfaction. The future can wait. (2018, p. 169)

Indeed, we should not disregard the fact that my ethnography points to a particular stage in the life course of DiY practitioners, which allowed them the choice of 'strategic poverty' in order to pursue their creative endeavours. But, despite my initial impression, it was repeatedly pointed out to me that as a mode of cultural production DiY was *not* precarious, and that arguing the opposite would obscure the persistence of such practices over time. For example, at the time of writing WSP are still active in the city's musical landscape. This resonates with the idea that many music practitioners continue their involvement in what were hitherto seen as 'youth' music cultures beyond their youth (Bennett and Hodkinson 2012, Hodkinson 2013).

While we cannot predict what will happen to the collective in the years to come, a number of young musicians I met during my fieldwork have managed to penetrate the music industry: Stuart, who used to run Cry Parrot (Chrysagis 2017), a DiY music promoter, was later employed as the Senior Producer at London's Cafe OTO, a well-known venue in international avant-garde music circles; and members of the experimental hardcore punk band Ultimate Thrush (Chrysagis 2016) have recently achieved popularity in the UK as well as abroad as part of the dance music outfit Golden Teacher. In addition to these younger actors, I also had the opportunity to interact with middle-aged DiY practitioners who collaborated with the collective, and whose trajectories provide a glimpse into the future. A longstanding member of Glasgow's DiY network – who went on to win the Scottish Album of the Year (SAY) award – highlighted DiY's transformative potential when he told me that: 'There comes a point where DiY stops being your own alternative and becomes the right way to do it … It's basically how I see the world.' The success and recognition he has achieved, along with his ongoing involvement in and support towards DiY activities, demonstrate that DiY has the potential to generate economic value without necessarily losing its distinctiveness or diluting its infravalues. They further demonstrate that participation in DiY music-making inculcates sensibilities that continue to inform one's practice.

Because infravalues are about *how* value is achieved, the values presented in this article may not be applicable to virtually all DiY practices. Infravalues evolve and change as DiY adapts to shifting circumstances across different fields. After all, as Lakoff and Collier argue, that regimes of living 'can be identified in diverse situations is not to say that actors in them face the same issues, or have recourse to the same range of responses' (2004, p. 430). In DiY, the issues and responses at hand may be determined by specific circumstances and the stage of DiY practitioners' life course. Yet, instead of perceiving DiY activities as youthful acts of momentary transgression by focusing on questions of 'sustainability' (e.g. Oliver 2010) and the scarcity of financial or technical resources, or defining DiY simply as a stepping stone to a future career in the cultural industries, I believe that we should also pay attention to the ongoing and permanent transformations that DiY makes possible.

Conclusion

That DiY consolidates different forms of value – ethical, political, economic – is an indication of its importance for cultural policy. A 2003 report on the status and future of the Scottish music industry by Scottish Enterprise, Scotland's leading economic development agency, ends with the following words on the value of music:

> [W]e have been concerned here primarily with the problems of developing the Music industry in Scotland – hence the emphasis on business practice. But if, as we suggest, a healthy music economy is dependent on a healthy music culture, then policy should be concerned not just with business growth, and changing the way things are done, but also with people's ability to make a living from music *without* being ambitious to change their lives. As a cultural industry music is unique – and uniquely important – because so much of its commercial success depends on people making and listening to music for its own sake, without economic concerns at all (Williamson *et al.* 2003, pp. 127–128).

The Scottish Enterprise report unavoidably points towards a highly instrumental conception of the value of music because it is primarily concerned with music's economic potential, a situation that reflects a common problem in cultural policy debates (see Belfiore 2018). As the authors of the report state, however, it may be misleading to accept the opposition between music's internal value ('for its own sake') and material calculation ('commercial success'). Likewise, it would be misleading to impose a sharp distinction between the infravalues of DiY music-making and its commercial significance. We should not forget that 'value' brings together several dimensions, and thus the 'value' of value lies precisely in its multiplicity and ability to transcend analytical oppositions (Eiss and Pedersen 2002, p. 287). By following the disconnection between different forms of value or between 'value' and 'values,' evident in the first two anthropological reasonings on value, we risk uncritically reproducing the relations of forces that impose such a distinction in the first place. As Ortiz notes (2013, p. 76), for instance, if we accept as a starting point the historically conditioned distinction between ethical and economic value, we may end up also accepting the underlying assumptions that sustain this dichotomy. Then, 'the search for economic value would be a politically and morally neutral, technical endeavor' (Ortiz 2013, p. 66). Although I would not go as far as arguing, like Luvaas (2012) does, that DiY is one of the bastions of contemporary capitalism, DiY does present an increasingly prevalent way of producing economic value in the cultural industries. Reality on the ground is infinitely more complex than what the artificial distinctions between different forms of value suggest. And as Crossley and Bottero (2015, p. 46) note in relation to the music worlds that participants come to inhabit and enjoy, reality is more complicated than the ideal categories set up by MacIntyre (1981). The infravalues of DiY music-making are not always internal values in MacIntyre's sense.

After all, the value of DiY should not be taken for granted, nor should we assume that DiY practitioners share the same values. DiY conveys a distributed notion of value that emerges in practice, and provides an example of the '*relational* nature of processes of value allocation and cultural validation' (Belfiore 2018, p. 2). In DiY, cultural practitioners appear to be in control of the production and representation of value, as opposed to top-down evaluations and official discourses (Newsinger and Green 2016). But this distinction should not be overstated. As Graeber reminds us, value is social and therefore always invites comparison; it can only be realised in other people's eyes (2013, p. 225). It is here that the strength of empirical research on how value is negotiated in different fields becomes prominent.

It has been argued that anthropology can decisively contribute to the theoretical elaboration of value in the social sciences, but also that, as an ethnographically driven discipline, anthropology's particular strength lies in its capacity to deliver an 'anti-theory of value,' by introducing novel concepts from the field that do not fit neatly into predefined theoretical categories (Otto and Willerslev 2013a). DiY shows that instead of taking for granted how value is produced and by whom, and how different types of value are related, or accepting a priori the usefulness of 'value' as an analytical category, these should rather be objects of ethnographic inquiry.

Notes

1. www.winningspermparty.com [Accessed 18 Apr 2019].
2. A notable exception is Mark Banks (2017), who discusses the ethical dimensions of cultural work.
3. All personal names have been changed.
4. Colin was referring to the 'pay-to-play' policy, through which certain promoters would exploit musicians by making them sell tickets on their behalf or pay a fee to perform.
5. Despite their versatility as instrumentalists, WSP members were largely self-taught musicians.
6. For a detailed discussion of WSP's activities as a record label see Chrysagis (2016).
7. For a discussion of independent record labels in the UK see Hesmondhalgh (1998, 1999) and Strachan (2007).
8. Even covering costs by taking money off the proceeds could be considered 'unethical' for part of the DiY network.
9. This also raises an important issue about representation in the realm of DiY practice, a topic that deserves extensive treatment in its own right.

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