

Playing local: Technology, community and collaboration in Edmonton's independent
music scene

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Music has been a constant presence in my life, as a source of inspiration and comfort through life's many highs and lows. My earliest memories are of lying up to my neck in red shag carpet next to our wooden stereo speakers, trying to catch a glimpse of what I suspected were the tiny musicians who lived inside. From whistling, humming, singing and strumming, it is no exaggeration to say that music has accented every moment of my life.

This is thanks to my family, who each in their way showed me to appreciate music as a means of self-expression and human connection. For that reason, this project is dedicated to them, for gifting me with their entirely unique and authentic vision of the world.

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Abstract

Canada's approach to music production has historically been from a national perspective; however, stakeholders are increasingly drawn to local music industries since the global collapse of the music industry at the turn of the 21st century. Research shows that social networks are necessary for successful creative scenes, however the digital age presents new opportunities and obstacles. This study investigates the connectedness of Edmonton's music community from the perspective of the musicians, to understand how large-scale industry changes have influenced the independent scene. Community of Practice (CoP) theory informed the focus group design, analysis of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

The following research questions were posed: **Q1:** How has the music scene in Edmonton been affected by the destabilization of the music industry in Canada? What are some of the opportunities and pitfalls that musicians face when trying to earn a living in Edmonton?; **Q2:** Is there a community of practice present in Edmonton's music community? If so, what are the characteristics that make up this community?; and **Q3:** Given the current challenges and opportunities, in what ways can the music community be supported?

Though not conclusive, findings from two semi-structured focus groups suggested elements of a CoP. Participants reported pride in the scene's collaborative spirit, augmented by Facebook and other tools. Information sharing often occurs informally, making face-to-face interaction invaluable for relationship building in the industry. Venues are therefore crucial for live performance and networking opportunities. The study also suggests a growing number of musicians, which could lead to a future surge in competition and a need for advance planning.

Keywords: Technology, Social Networks, Independent Music Scenes, Disruptive Innovation

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Introduction

Social networks are a vital component of any creative economy, regardless of the art form (e.g. Brown, Craig, Cummins-Russell & Ratinsi, Hracs, Warr & Goode). Cummins-Russell and Ratinsi (2012) write that “the significance of networks for independent music producers has been well established in the urban-economic geography literature and the literature centred on cultural industries” (p. 80). There is consensus among researchers that music production is not merely the work of artists. It also requires infrastructure in the form of financial and economic support, and access to a network of recording artists, producers, event planners, designers, publicists, and other creative professionals, in order for the music to be recorded, promoted, and distributed.

Since the upheaval of the 20th century music industry supply chain in the late 1990's, there is much that remains unclear about what the 21st century holds for music industries in Canada and worldwide. Production and distribution are no longer solely controlled by major record labels, who have struggled to recover from a chain of disruptions enabled by digital technologies at the turn of the century. From the perspective of the musicians, this destabilization has created a need to understand the way that music communities interact, in order to ensure that they continue to have opportunities to produce music and earn a living. As Astra Taylor (2014) writes, “During this crucial moment of cultural and economic restructuring, artists themselves have been curiously absent from the conversation dominated by executives, academics, and entrepreneurs” (p. 30).

The purpose of this study is to address this research gap by investigating the impact of this disruption on independent musicians in Edmonton. By working with musicians to

understand the impact of the disruption on their experience first-hand, the research is designed to identify opportunities and pitfalls for artists in the region, which could help to inform government and industry support for musicians and recording professionals in Edmonton and across Canada. This research will contribute to a growing body of resources that will allow music professionals to navigate the rapidly evolving music industry in Canada. By applying Community of Practice Theory, the study presents a novel approach to understanding music production through a process of social learning.

Rationale

The 20th century distribution model in Canada treated Canadian music as a national product, paying little attention to regional differences. Policies related to music production in Canada were largely concerned with supporting “Can con” which was associated with a loosely defined Canadian national identity (Sutherland 2013). According to Sutherland “Canada has often been viewed as a leader in music industry policy...(but) when it comes to the involvement of local government in developing music industries, Canada lags far behind other countries” (p. 367). He cites many possible reasons for this, comparing industry circumstances in Calgary and Toronto, however his study fails to draw a conclusion about the development of municipal arts policy due to the significant economic and infrastructure differences between the two cities. This indicates a need for a strengthened regional approach that takes the unique circumstances of each municipality into account.

A regional approach to Canadian music would be beneficial to cities and provinces, and would create new opportunities for artists who were once unable to move to another geographic location. According to Stein-sacks (2006):

As a matter of economic need and driven by the new technology opportunities, consideration should be given to provide support to collective initiatives that will allow Canadian communities to band together to access the new platforms and monetize their content, which would have been beyond their reach in the past because of the costs involved (p. 40).

Some researchers believe that Internet distribution will render location irrelevant, thus causing the erosion of Canadian culture. Kruse (2010) argues that:

Given the history of utopian narratives about new communication technologies creating global communication and understanding, and the continuing existence of local and regional cultures and of barriers to technology and information access, the complete erasure of physical geography in subcultural music identities, histories, and institutions is not likely to happen any time soon" (p. 638).

By focusing on Edmonton, a region outside of the traditional culture hubs of Canada, there is an opportunity to uncover regional differences in Canadian music industry practices, and to understand the ways that music production has changed since decentralization in Canada. The results of the study will be beneficial to musicians and municipalities, as well as other industry stakeholders who take interest in strengthening and sustaining a thriving music industry in Edmonton and Canada.

Evolution of the Research Question

At the outset of this project, the goal was to identify innovative approaches to marketing and promotion enabled by new and accessible digital tools. It was soon apparent

that technology has indeed opened the door for innovation; however, these practices have in no way been standardized or documented due to the experimental nature and rapid pace of technological advancement. However, something interesting was taking place in the music community with regard to collaboration and the pooling of skills. The focus of the study shifted accordingly, to explore the collective efforts of Edmonton musicians as a group.

Kadushin (2012) writes, "We cannot really understand social networks by looking at the entire world. Nations, communities, organizations, classrooms, even if connected with one another, have boundaries" (p. 44). In order to define a scene as a unit of analysis, Community of Practice (CoP) Theory was the theoretical framework chosen to understand the following questions:

- **Q1:** How has the music scene in Edmonton been influenced by the destabilization of the music industry in Canada? What are some of the opportunities and pitfalls that musicians face when trying to earn a living in Edmonton?
- **Q2:** Is there a community of practice present in Edmonton's music community? If so, what are the characteristics that make up this community?
- **Q3:** Given the current challenges and opportunities, in what ways can the music community be supported?

Literature Review

The literature search was conducted using online library databases in combination with Google scholar, using the following keywords: Independent music, local, music industry, Canada, music and culture, music and community, creative cities, and creative communities. The search produced literature on music education and online learning resources, music as an art form, music as a learning tool, the cultural significance of local music, creative industries and city planning, economic impacts of local music, and therapeutic applications of music for individuals and communities. In order to maintain a narrow research focus, only those articles relating specifically to music production, marketing, and distribution in Canada were reviewed, however there are many factors pertinent to the study of local independent music production that are beyond the scope of this paper.

The following sections provide an overview of the literature pertinent to this study. I start by defining key terms that will be used throughout, followed by an overview of macro level changes in the industry and how the 20th century supply chain was restructured because of new digital technologies. The second half explores how independent musicians were affected by these changes, followed by a discussion on the importance of social networks and ways to conceptualize a music scene as a unit of analysis. The section concludes with an overview of CoP theory and how it p a conceptual framework for this study.

Macro-structural changes in the Global Music Industry

Indie vs. independent.

The terms “indie” and “independent” are sometimes used interchangeably. Up until the turn of the 21st century, both referred to musicians who produced and distributed music without the support of a corporate record label. These terms often indicated a specific sound

that stemmed from the gritty, low-budget recording style of the early “indies” (Shaw 2013). This is no longer the case now that a broader selection of Canadian musicians are now independents. The term is still frequently used to indicate genre; however, it is important to take note of this ambiguity, as it indicates a shift in meaning and the evolution of indie practices in the digitized context.

This confusion is complicated further by the fact that the term “indie” is not only known to refer to a record label or even a genre of music, but it also refers to a culture or value system upon which the music production and distribution was based (Shaw 2013, 334). Indies in the late 20th century were known for their “DIY” approach to music production, which was a practical choice, but also reflected a subversive, anti-corporate attitude that valued authenticity and collaboration (Brown 2012, Nowierski 2011, Shaw 2013).

While characteristics of the old “indie” culture still linger, this study refers specifically to Canadian independent musicians in the broader economic sense: music that is produced independently of a major record label, often without the support of a label whatsoever. Although genre is a significant factor, the scope of this study is too narrow to address the differences in depth, and would merit future investigation.

Labels and the evolving music economy.

The term “record company” or “label” refers to the organizations that have traditionally been at the center of the music industry supply chain, and have historically served four main functions: artist development, marketing and distribution, live performance, and licensing (Canadian Independent Music Association, 2015, p. 5).



Figure 1 - Breakdown of record label functions, Canadian Independent Music Association, 2015, p. 5

“Major” labels are the established corporations who once dominated the industry, currently known as the “Big 3”: Universal Music Group (UMG), Sony BMG Music Entertainment (Sony), and Warner Music Group (WMG). The role of the majors in music production has evolved since the industry collapsed in the late 1990’s. Once known as the “Big 5,” the majors have undergone significant restructuring in an effort to adapt to the changing industry, which has resulted in buyouts, takeovers, and collaborations, reducing the number of major labels overall. The result was a cutting away of artist supports, leaving many early career musicians to look for new channels to learn their craft.

The Canadian Independent Music Association (CIMA, 2013) defines an independent Canadian music company as “a company owned and controlled by a Canadian, operating in Canada, that is not owned or controlled by a major international music firm (e.g., Universal Music) or Canadian integrated media firm (e.g., Bell Media)” (p. 17). Although the independent

music industry in Canada is increasingly recognized as a valuable contributor to Canada's music industry overall, there is limited information available about independent labels due to lack of research funding and conditions that change too rapidly to be accurately documented or considered representative. Therefore, it is unclear how many independent labels are currently operating in Canada or what their share of the music market is relative to the major labels. However, based on recent market research conducted by CIMA, independent music is a significant source of revenue for the industry and is likely to continue growing (p. 47).

In spite of the lack of conclusive research at the national level, there are three regional studies that can be drawn from that explore the economic impact of a local music economy for Canadian cities, and serve as a jumping off point for an Edmonton based study. Connecting Ottawa (2015), a study focusing on the economic impact and potential growth of Ottawa's music scene, states that:

Music has arguably never been more important for cities than it is today. The experience of Austin, Texas—a government and university town roughly the same size as Ottawa—shows the effect that music can have on a city. Over the past thirty years, Austin's music entrepreneurs, business groups, and municipal government have worked together to make music the centrepiece of a \$4.35 billion creative sector that continues to grow. (p. 4).

Developing the local industry that can boost municipal revenues while diversifying the local economy, and enriching the cultural output of a city, appeals to a variety of stakeholders. The study continues:

There are quantifiable effects. Working with a massive Canada-wide dataset of business and census data, a recent study found a strong correlation between the presence of artist populations and rising local wages across all occupations. The relationship is particularly strong when artists are surrounded by a supportive scene, a phenomenon the researchers dub “scenius”. This is the notion that a mix of talented artists, sophisticated audiences, and a culture of risk and experimentation boost the quality of output of all participants. (p. 25)

In 2012 Manitoba Music commissioned “Sound Check: An Economic Impact Analysis of Manitoba’s Music Industry” to develop a provincial music strategy. Like Alberta, Manitoba has a long-standing DIY tradition (p. 14), lending merit to researching and cultivating diverse regional industries.

Similarly, the National Music Centre (2014) investigated a province-wide strategy for Alberta. The study produced the following four recommendations (p.5):

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the economic profile of Alberta’s music cluster with regional breakouts for Calgary and Edmonton as well as other smaller cities as appropriate.
- Position music as a key economic sector and vehicle for diversification of the economy of Alberta and method by which municipalities can stimulate economic growth, increased investment, youth retention and attraction, and tourism.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan to build the business capacity of the music industry in Alberta.

- Develop and implement a live music strategy for Alberta in order to improve the live music product offering in Alberta and generate increased music tourism.

These studies clearly articulate a case for the economic value of regional music industries; however, there is little mention of developing support mechanisms for musicians themselves.

Changes in the twentieth century distribution system.

Recorded music sales plummeted in the early 2000's, resulting from a culmination of disruptive factors, including the mass production of low cost CD's, the increased availability of mp3 downloads, and the increasing popularity of online shopping (Cummins-Russell & Rantisi, 2012; Nowierski, 2011; Stein-sacks, 2006; Straw & Sutherland, 2007).

Straw and Sutherland (2007) write that "in Canada, as elsewhere, perhaps the biggest change in the music industry has been the adjustment to digital technologies, a process which has been far from easy" (p. 149). The reason for the downturn is not as cut and dry as some believe. Many believed that digital piracy and peer-to-peer distribution were at the root of the declining record sales (Baym 2010, p. 77), but others, like Cummins-Russell and Rantisi (2012), suggest that "new revenue sources—often related to information and communication technologies (such as the sale of telephone ringtones)—have appeared and are increasingly significant" (p.83).

The digitization of the music industry meets the characteristics of disruptive innovation, and corporate loss of power resulted partly from a failure to recognize and make use of the Internet in time to regain control (Moreau, 2011, p. 28). Building on this idea, Hracs (2012) writes:

Until 1997, the music industry ... enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with technology whereby the music industry evolved in lockstep with a range of technological advances. These technological advancements, including the development of vinyl, magnetic audiotape, and compact discs, were beneficial to the industry, with consumer electronics companies such as Sony creating new markets for reproductive equipment and the majors being able to mine their back catalogs selling old recordings in a range of new formats (p. 445).

The disruption of the modern industry indicates more complex factors in play than technological changes alone. Stein-Sacks (2006) describes a chain reaction caused by the mass production of CD's that she describes as the "Walmart effect":

Traditional retailers who were used to working on margins in the 35% range were now faced with a huge predicament. Their volume sales, representing +80% of their gross sales and driven by Top 100 titles, were being sold for cost or less by the Big Box players as loss leaders. Unlike many other goods, CDs are the same regardless of where you buy them – the only comparison to be made being price. Given the choice of buying the new Top 10 CD at a music retailer for \$16.99 or \$11.99 from Wal-Mart – well, the obvious happened (p. 8.)

In addition to the reduced CD prices being offered by large distributors, a limited selection of titles was available in the major chains. Stein-Sacks (2006) notes that "while specialty retailers carried inventories of 2,000 – 10,000 titles in their larger stores, Big Box stores carried fewer selections, focussing on the 200 titles that represented the bulk of music

sold” (p. 9). Consumers who sought a greater selection were driven to online sources to obtain music beyond store shelves.

New business models.

The sale of recorded music began its decline in 1998, when Internet went mainstream (CIMA, 2013). Corporate stakeholders have scrambled to adapt to the new music economy and recover the revenue that recordings once earned. One method has been the introduction of 360 deals (Marshall 2012, Galuszka & Wyrzykowska 2016), in which contracts with artists include other revenue sources such as performance and merchandising.

In the early 2000's, the widespread adoption of smartphones as music players has further popularized mobile music collections and introduced another platform through which music can be distributed, in the form of streaming apps (Papies & Wlomert, 2016). Today, smartphones are ubiquitous and the mobile entertainment options available to consumers are seemingly limitless, which has resulted in new revenue sources in the form of paid streaming subscriptions. The overall effect of paid streaming on industry revenues remains unclear.

Decentralization and the long tail.

Nowierski (2011) suggests, “The Internet has segmented and democratized the music media, which has increased coverage for independent artists” (p iv). Similarly, Nancy Baym (2010) suggests that music has gone from being controlled by a few labels, to a more diverse market. She makes the point that music itself is not being threatened, but that the industry is being decentralized, which creates new dynamics for the production and consumption of music, and new opportunities for musicians. “While the majors may be in crisis, the internet and the recession have opened the music industry to reconfiguration in ways that allow the entry of many new kinds of players, both amateur and professional” (p. 179).

Chris Anderson's (2004) theory of the long tail, which indicates a shift in focus for entertainment industries due to new digital marketing tools and recommender software, indicates opportunities for niche marketing. Until the 21st century, entertainment industries have primarily focused on the production and sale of blockbuster hits, due to the overhead cost of production, distribution, and limited shelf space in brick and mortar shops. The Internet has created new economic conditions caused by reduced overhead cost of sales and distribution, and essentially unlimited digital shelf space for an infinite variety of products (Anderson, 2008, p. 6).

According to Anderson (2008) "the new niche market is not replacing the traditional market of hits, just sharing the stage with it for the first time. For a century we have winnowed out all but the best-sellers to make the most efficient use of costly shelf space, screens, channels, and attention. Now, in a new era of networked consumers and digital everything, the economics of such distribution are changing radically as the Internet absorbs each industry it touches, becoming store, theater, and broadcaster at a fraction of the traditional cost" (p. 6.) Hits make up a fraction of potential sales for entertainment distributors, therefore the Internet now provides sales opportunities that fall outside of the realm of best-sellers, without taking up valuable shelf space in brick and mortar shops (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Anderson's Long Tail theory

Whether or not these conditions are beneficial to artists is still up for debate. Dubber (2008) writes that “the Long Tail raises this very simple observation about reduced-friction release and near-zero costs when you no longer have to manufacture 1000 CDs to begin selling. It *doesn't* say that therefore you will sell 1000 copies without having any expenses.”

In other words, the long tail makes it possible for music to be produced with a reduced overhead cost, which can be seen as an advantage for early career musicians. However, production is only one link in the music supply chain, and marketing and distribution of independent music are challenges that remain. According to Dubber (2008):

To the independent artist...it's helpful that the Long Tail phenomenon exists because it means that if there's a chance to sell a few copies of your work, there are no longer any

barriers in your way to stop you selling those few copies. That won't make you a millionaire, but it's better than nothing.

The long tail can therefore have positive and negative effects for musicians, in that it creates new challenges and opportunities for independents, but only some of the time. Gaffney and Rafferty (2009) suggest that for independents, the challenges posed by the long tail have always been present:

Discovering and locating independent music has always been a relatively difficult practice. Independent music is characteristically located outside the mainstream music industry and the large, financially backed major labels. (p. 376).

They also suggest, however, that new technologies such as social networking sites offer new opportunities. "These challenges for discovery have been ... alleviated through the Internet and digital distribution. The internet has allowed for the global reach of fanzines, independent record stores and non-commercial radio stations (p. 376)."

Dubber (2008) agrees that "the great thing about the internet is that something that would not have even seen the light of day under different circumstances can become a runaway success simply because people like it, talk about it and send it to their friends."

The digital landscape also creates new problems that did not exist in the pre-digitized world. Gaffney and Rafferty (2009) continue:

While access to these once obscure music resources has been made available via the internet, the problem of discovery still remains. New websites, blogs, and fanzines are being launched almost daily and the fans are now dealing with an abundance of access points (p. 376.)

Given the lack of record label support in areas of publicity and distribution that many independent artists now face, the new long tail market is as a double-edged sword. On one hand, there are new opportunities for indie musicians to market a greater variety of music with the hope of finding audiences who are interested in their product; on the other, the Internet is now flooded with music from artists hoping to gain popularity online, making it challenging to attract audiences and engage with them in a sustained way.

Micro-Structural Changes: Musicians as Entrepreneurs

Once having struggled to be “discovered” by the major labels, musicians now face a fragmented market that is flooded with competitors. New methods of marketing and publicizing their work require development in order to be recognized (Pettipas & Jagoda, 2012).

In the late 20th century “Musicians signed to recording contracts advanced their careers on the basis of their creative abilities and were not required to possess technical, managerial, legal, or entrepreneurial skills” (Hracs, 2012, p. 444). Many aspects of production that were once in the hands of the major labels are now the responsibility of the artist. Aside from writing and performing music, musicians are now entrepreneurs, marketing experts, recording artists, graphic designers, and so on. Digital tools should theoretically make this process easier (Stein-Sacks, 2006, p.31), but it also presents new challenges.

Digital platforms like Soundcloud promote the idea that it makes it simple to connect with audiences, when in fact it is a much more involved process of marketing and self-promotion. It is increasingly difficult for musicians, especially new and emerging ones, to get any meaningful level of exposure and discovery in the hyper-competitive environment (Stein-Sacks, 2006, p. 31)

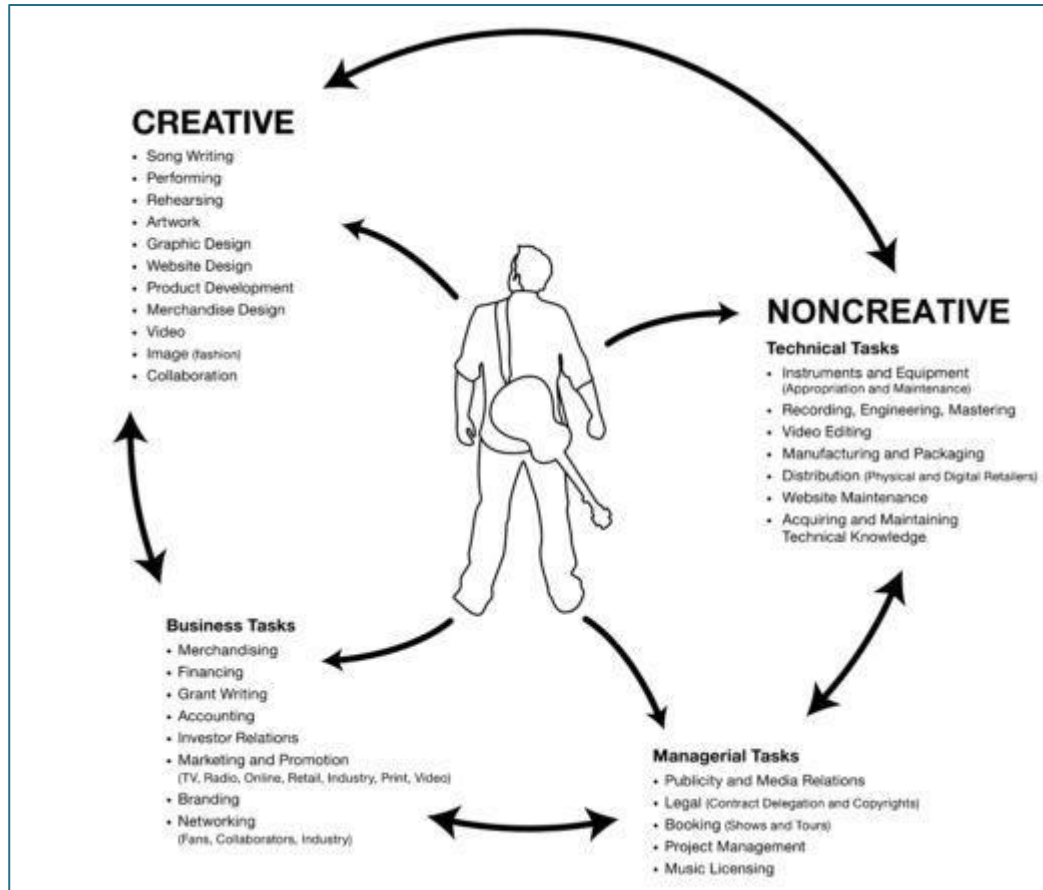


Figure 3 – The Creative and Non creative tasks of Independent Music Production – Hracs, 2012, p. 457

Figure 3 illustrates the many roles that independent musicians need to fulfill. While accessible technology fosters creativity in developing a DIY marketing strategy, musicians are not always experts at marketing themselves, and the tools are only beneficial to those who have the ability to apply them effectively. The result is a growing need for musicians to learn new skills, or hire experts to perform tasks that fall outside of the realm of music production, in order to earn a living as a professional independent musician. This necessitates an available network of industry professionals with different skillsets, and funds to pay them with.

Conceptualizing a Music Community

Several factors can indicate the success of a music community: supportive networks, venues in which to perform and connect with one another, a pool of skilled talent, a receptive audience, economic support in the form of “day jobs,” and government and industry funding initiatives (Kruse 2010). Researchers frequently cite the importance of social “scenes” or “clusters” in Toronto and Montreal, where the majority of Canadian music was produced in the late 20th century. Hracs et al (2011) emphasize the importance of collaboration among members of a local music community:

Faced with dwindling employment opportunities, low incomes, the need to secure functional live/work space, and the demands of independent music production, some musicians choose to cooperate while others compete for opportunities. The risks associated with independent music production can either strengthen the solidarity and collective resolve of music communities or pit individual musicians against one another (p. 377).

This suggests a potential for competition and economic risk associated with producing music professionally, which makes geographic location an important consideration for the success of an independent musician. A supportive and collaborative network of artists is necessary for a local community to thrive, and the level of collaboration is influenced by economic and social factors in the region.

Scenes and Clusters

In order to understand how musicians in a local community collaborate, a unit of analysis needs to be defined. One commonly used term is a music “scene.” Straw (2001) highlights the struggle that scholars continue to have with this elusive term. He writes:

‘Scenes’, like ‘vector’ suggests both the direction of a movement and its scale. Is a scene

a) the recurring congregation of people at a particular place,

b) the movement of these people between this place and other spaces of congregation,

c) the streets/strips along which this movement takes place (as cited in Allor 2000),

d) all the places and activities which surround and nourish a particular cultural preference,

e) the broader and more geographically dispersed phenomena of which this movement or these preferences are local example, or

f) the webs of microeconomic activity which foster sociability and link this to the city’s ongoing self-reproduction? All of these phenomena have been designated as scenes. Is a scene the group of people, as they move from place to place? Is it the places through which they move? Is it the movement itself? (p. 249.)

Straw’s (2001) questions illustrate the complexity of defining a scene and the looseness with which the term is used. It lacks the precision needed to develop reliable measurements as a unit of analysis.

Finch (2014) notes that the meaning depends on the perspective of the user. It can have economic implications for politicians and city planners, while it has more cultural and social connotations for the musicians themselves (p. 3). “Scene” therefore encompasses the location, the players, and the actions they take within the domain of musical production in the region.

Another commonly used phrase is that of a “cluster.” Derived from sociology, the term used in this way is closely linked to Florida’s (2005) concept of the “creative class.” A creative cluster refers to the geographic location where musicians congregate due to favourable conditions for music production, while simultaneously representing the community of professionals who contribute to music production within a geographic location.

Theoretical Framework: Communities of Practice

While scenes and clusters both describe the relationship between social activity and geography, neither of these concepts adequately addresses the interactions taking place within a creative network that contribute to the success of a community. This study considers community situated in the specific cultural and economic context of the Edmonton region thus Community of Practice (CoP) theory was chosen as the theoretical framework. CoPs are “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al 2002, p. 4). Simply put, they are “communities where the learning component is central” (Wenger et. al 2009).

CoPs can take on many forms and a variety of characteristics including size, life span, colocation vs distribution, homogenous or heterogeneous groups, spontaneous or intentional formation, and unrecognized vs institutionalized communities (Wenger 2002, p. 26). In spite of these variables, all CoPs have three common characteristics: “a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain” (Wenger 2002, p. 27).

Rooted in constructivist theory (Johnson 2001, p. 47), CoPs consider learning as a social process of developing knowledge, as opposed to traditional teacher-student learning. Members of a CoP have access to each other regardless of their expertise, and are able to share and build upon their collective knowledge. In other words, "it is not just a matter of knowhow but also a matter of who knows what that is at the heart of a CoP" (Bettiol and Sedita, 2011, p. 469.) Because learning and interaction are central components, researchers in health, social work, education, and organizational contexts typically apply CoP theory.

Although CoP is applied less often in the context of creative fields, the social aspect of creativity has frequently been acknowledged by knowledge management researchers (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003), suggesting a logical link between CoPs and creative industries.

Bettiol and Sedita (2011) consider the role of communities of practice in creative industries, concluding that:

The social ecology that emerges within the CoP is very helpful in supporting interactions, which go beyond knowledge sharing. It is the existence of the community that leads creative professionals...to share a common identity and language... These elements increase the probability to develop projects together and to cluster when there are specific needs coming from a client that a single professional is not able to manage alone" (p. 477).

Waldron (2009) explores the informal online learning practices of a group of folk musicians, and concludes that the group experiences "rich, meaningful music learning experiences" (p. 108) through participation in a CoP, suggesting value in collaboration over competition.

The study of CoPs has evolved in two ways since it was first developed (Hoadley, 2012, p. 290). The first shift has been to consider the ways that CoPs can deliberately be fostered as opposed to evolving organically, and the second shift has been away from the social behaviors within a CoP, to the impact of technological platforms on the formation and sustainability of CoPs (p. 292.) Many studies have been conducted on the relationship between CoPs and technology. Johnson (2001) highlights the distinction between CoPs and virtual communities:

Virtual communities are groups that use networked technologies to communicate and collaborate. Communities of practice are cultural entities that emerge from the establishment of a virtual or nonvirtual organization—as opposed to the virtual community itself, which is designed. Therefore, designing a virtual community does not guarantee that a community of practice will arise because an underlying task-based learning need must exist (p. 56).

Hoadley (2012) builds on this:

Communities of practice typically have a degree of informality (...making them a community and not an organization) high connectivity (rather tight social relationships between members of the community), and a relatively high degree of identification with the group),” concluding that these characteristics can be fostered through the deliberate application of technology in support of “connections, conversations, content, and information context” (p. 299).

Wenger et al's (2009) *Digital Habitats* explores the idea of “stewarding technology” in online CoPs. “Technology stewarding adopts a community’s perspective to help a community choose, configure, and use technologies to best suit its needs. Tech stewards attend both to

what happens spontaneously and what can happen purposefully, by plan and by cultivation of insights into what actually works” (p. 24). Therefore, CoPs are groups that emerge out of a shared need, however their goals can be reached more effectively through identifying the unique goals of the group, and developing technology to support these goals.

Summary and Research Questions

Given the destabilization of the music industry in Canada and worldwide, independent musicians are faced with new challenges and new opportunities to connect with audiences in order to record and sell their work, and earn a living. The major record labels of the 20th century have been displaced as industry superpowers, and must now compete with multiple stakeholders for their share of the music market. Partially due to the digitization of recorded music, the music industry has transformed from a storefront system to a niche-based “long tail” market, in which independent musicians are required to learn new skills to connect with audiences and industry stakeholders in a competitive market.

The digital marketplace presents an opportunity for the development of music scenes outside of traditional centres such as Toronto and Montreal, indicating an opportunity to strengthen the music community in Edmonton in a way that had not previously been possible. This has cultural and economic benefits for Edmonton and Canada.

Digital technology can also be used to create virtual environments that can bring people closer together without being physically present, indicating potential to develop digital platforms that can help to bring Edmonton’s music community together in a long lasting and collaborative way. Therefore the following questions were posed:

Q1: How has the music scene in Edmonton been impacted by the destabilization of the music industry in Canada?

Q2: Is there a CoP present in Edmonton's music community, and what are the characteristics that make up this community?

Q3: Given the current challenges and opportunities, how can a CoP be supported?

Methodology

The goal of the study was to understand the impact of the destabilized global music industry on the local independent music community in Edmonton. In order to provide an in depth profile of Edmonton's independent music scene, the project focused specifically on the interactivity and supportiveness of the community through the lens of Community of Practice theory, with the intent of identifying the community, domain, and practice components of the CoP. With this in mind, the focus group questionnaire (see Appendix A) was broken down into subcategories, based on Wenger et. al's (2009) framework for technological stewardship (p. 10).

The first section of the questionnaire focused on how Edmonton's music community has been affected by the destabilization of the music industry over the last 20 years. In order to understand the present day goals of the community, it was necessary to establish an understanding of what conditions existed prior to digitization, and what variables may have emerged due to widespread changes in the industry. This section also helped to orient the participants to the subject matter, and to establish rapport between the interviewer and fellow participants.

The second section explored the characteristics of Edmonton's independent music community as a Community of Practice. The Community section was designed to understand "what social and sharing practices are in place so that improved practices can occur for all members?" The domain category focused on understanding "what is the shared goal of the community?" while the practice section focused on understanding "what techniques are employed by members in order to learn about producing music and reaching audiences?" The ways that musicians connect and their reasons for doing so were explored with the hope of identifying obstacles and opportunities that may contribute to their success as individuals, and as a sustainable local industry.

Design

The study can best be described as an ethnographic case study. A combination of case study and key informant methods were used, using a focus group as the primary method of data collection. There is significant overlap in the rationale for key informant and case study research, as both seek to understand the nature of a phenomenon in the context of environmental or social factors. According to Yin (2009), case studies are suitable when seeking to understand "a real-life phenomenon in-depth, but such understanding encompass(es) important contextual conditions—because they were highly pertinent to your study" (p. 18). An in-depth understanding of Edmonton's independent music community as a CoP cannot take place without also considering the context. The historical, cultural, economic and geographic context of Edmonton's independent musicians all have an impact on the interactions and successes of the community.

The study followed the case study steps adapted from Merrigan et al (2004, p. 152, 2012):

1. Review the literature on the topic
2. Articulation of research question
3. Selection of participants based on defined criteria
4. Data Collection in a focus group setting
5. Transcription of recorded data
6. Thematic coding and analysis of data
7. Interpretation of findings and drawing of conclusions

Data Collection

Although case study research often involves interviews as a data collection method, the emphasis of this study on social networks made it appropriate to observe the participants interacting in a focus group. A focus group is a small group of participants who are brought together to discuss a particular research topic (Krueger 2009, p. 6). According to Krueger (2009), focus groups are a useful approach when the research aims to look for a range of perspectives on the research topic, or you hope that ideas will emerge from a group. "A group possesses the capacity to become more than the sum of its parts, to exhibit synergy that individuals alone don't possess" (p. 19). The nature of a focus group lends to rich discussion, potentially revealing multiple perspectives, while allowing the participants to delve more deeply into a given topic.

There are a number of advantages to using focus groups (Merrigan et al (2004): the loose structure allows for breadth and depth of discussion, the discussion can function as a brainstorming session in which new ideas are generated, and it helps to explore topics from the perspective of community insiders as opposed to the researcher (p. 112).

One of the drawbacks of this method is the limited number of questions that can be asked in a session. Compared to interviews fewer questions can be asked in a focus group setting due to the time needed for respondents to discuss and share their reactions (Krueger, 2009, p. 35). Because of this limitation, a semi-structured approach was developed based on four overarching themes that were supported by prompting questions. The questions intended to draw out a discussion around CoP based themes as opposed to more limiting scripted approach. See Appendix A for the complete focus group guide.

Krueger's (2009) guidelines aided in the development of the questions:

1. Brainstorm
2. Phrase the questions
3. Sequence the questions
4. Estimate time for each question
5. Get feedback from others
6. Revise the questions
7. Test the questions

In the brainstorming stage, three subcategories were identified relating to the research question:

1. Impact of industry changes on local industry
2. Community Characteristics
3. Ways to support the community

The categories were redefined as the *community*, *domain*, and *practice* components of the CoP. The questions were then sequenced and phrased in order to direct the discussion

toward topics identified in the literature review while being open ended enough to allow respondents to determine the direction of the response (Krueger, 2009, p. 53).

Each of the three subcategories was chosen with the intent of collecting as much data about the topic as possible, in order to gain a holistic view of the independent music community in Edmonton. The background section aimed to situate the topic within the context of the local history, culture, and economy, with the goal of identifying any similarities or differences between Edmonton and the more traditional centres. This section also intended to orient the participants by first discussing some of the macro-level changes to the music industry, and how they have influenced the local music scene. By engaging in discussion about the current state of the local industry and the needs of the Edmonton music community, this section provided cues that were explored in detail in the *domain* section.

The next section focussed on characteristics of the community to see if it functions as a CoP, or possesses enough of the characteristics of a CoP that it may grow into one. This section was adapted from the "action framework" provided in Digital Habitats (Wenger et. al, 2009, p. 147), and was intended to explore the *community* component of the participants as a CoP.

The next section explored the *domain* aspect. The goal of this section was to identify the goals and common interests of Edmonton's music community. The final section of the guide focused on the practice component of the CoP. This section attempted to identify the methods used by members of the community to achieve the goals outlined in the previous section. The section also explored the ways that technology connects the community and increase the exchange of information.

Data Sources and Sample Selection

Key informant sampling was used to select participants who are considered to have expertise in their field. Key informant research is a technique traditionally used in ethnographic studies which involves identifying and selecting knowledgeable members of a larger community, with the goal of obtaining representative data from relatively few participants (Tremblay 1957, p. 689). According to Gilchrist (1992):

Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge, status, or communication skills, who are willing to share their knowledge and skills with the researcher and who have access to perspectives or observations denied the researcher (p. 75).

In order to access insider knowledge and identify key informants for the study, I drew on pre-existing friendships within Edmonton's music scene to inform the participant selection process. I attended live music performances and social events in order to meet new people and establish trust, as well as to observe the social aspects. A list of potential candidates was then compiled based on word of mouth recommendations and social media research that represented three key areas: knowledge of how the music community has evolved over time, knowledge of current industry trends in Edmonton, and their role as a music industry professional in Edmonton. The criteria and rationale are explained in Figure 4 below.

Criterion	Definition	Rationale
Edmonton Based	Participants live and work in Edmonton and the surrounding area	A regional limit was necessary in order to ensure that the data collected pertains specifically to the local community
Working musician or Industry professional	Working is defined as those actively earning a living or pursuing a career in the local music industry	Due to the volume of musical talent in the city it was necessary to differentiate between professionals and hobbyists. Given the nature of the industry this was loosely defined, as "day jobs" and other sources of income are often unavoidable
Multiple roles	In addition to musicians, sound engineers, publicists and promoters were also sought	There are a variety of professions that contribute to musical production and distribution. A variety of professionals were sought in order to ensure that the local community was well represented and CoP characteristics could be identified
Independent	No signed contracts or financial support from major labels	The basis of the study is to understand what has changed in independent music communities outside of the major centres, without the support of major labels
Experience Level	A variety of experience levels was sought	An intergenerational approach was taken in an attempt to identify how conditions in the local community may have changed over time. It was also hoped to identify how accessible the industry experts are to newer musicians, as this is a key characteristic of a CoP
Public Recognition	Awards, newspaper articles, participation in prestigious events	These are indicators of commercial success, indicating that participants have knowledge of local industry dynamics and potential CoP characteristics
Active online presence or other technology expertise	Evidence of social media use (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and active personal webpages	Active tech users have knowledge of resources that are used within the community, and can help identify technology needs of the community. These are the potential technological stewards.

Figure 4 – Key Informant Selection Criteria

A “multiple category design” (Krueger p. 26) was used, in which input was sought from a variety of perspectives as opposed to seeking participants with similar backgrounds. Musicians,

recording artists, event planners, and publicists were selected in an attempt to achieve an accurate representation of the community. A range of ages was sought in hopes of identifying perspectives that may have changed over time. Once I had compiled an initial list of informants, they were contacted using email listed on personal websites and social networking sites and invited to participate in the study.

Coding and Interpretation

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006):

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (p. 6). The benefit of using this method is that it can be adjusted and applied to a variety of research methods. It also acknowledges the researcher as playing an active role in the research process (p. 7).

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify several decisions that must be made about your research which will guide the process of analysing data (p. 9). These include the theoretical framework (p. 9); the criteria used for defining a “theme” (p. 10); the type of analysis you want to do (rich description of the data set or detailed account of a single theme) (p. 11); inductive vs theoretical analysis; semantic vs latent themes (p. 13); essentialist/realist vs constructionist analysis (p. 14); and the types of questions being asked about the data (p. 14). Based on these questions the following decisions were made:

- The research is inductive, indicating that the research question evolves through the coding process (p. 12)

- Latent thematic analysis was used, meaning that underlying concepts were interpreted and not merely literal meaning of the data
- The research is constructionist in its assumption that “meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering with individuals” (p. 14). In other words, this study seeks to understand “the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided” (p. 14).
- The questions are drawn from Wenger et al’s (2009) framework on technological stewardship. The questionnaire was designed to explore characteristics of the community that could lead to identifying barriers and developing solutions to supporting Edmonton’s music community.

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a 6 phase framework for thematic analysis, pictured in figure 5. Each phase was followed in order to develop codes from the data that was collected.

Table 1: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 5 - Phases of thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006)

Design Challenges

Two focus groups were conducted, on July 9, 2015 and October 4, 2015. I had difficulty scheduling the two groups, which I did not anticipate in the design stage of the project. In the first instance, I contacted 27 potential participants who had been identified through word of mouth recommendation and social media. I sought people who had an active presence online and who appeared to be well established in the Edmonton music community, based on the

criteria outlined in the methods section. I initially targeted specific people, but discovered that in order to achieve enough interest for the project I would need to broaden my search.

Therefore the participants became a targeted snowball sample as opposed to a key informant sample.

A diverse selection of participants was sought to explore differences within the community. However, out of the candidates who agreed to participate, even fewer actually attended the focus groups. In spite of having confirmed six attendees for both sessions, only three respondents participated in the first focus group, while only two participated in the second. All of them were of similar age, and only one was female, so the results cannot be considered representative, however they did produce rich discussion which will be discussed in the next section.

Scheduling Challenges

Scheduling was a downside of focus group methodology for this population. The majority of people contacted expressed interest and offered to do interviews, but were not able to attend a focus group. I attempted to use multiple digital scheduling tools but was not successful in getting a larger group together because of their busy schedules. I was advised that people tend to be less active with touring and other performances in the winter season, which should be taken into consideration for future researchers. That being said, the lifestyle of working musicians requires a level of hard work and commitment that may deter them from committing extra time to a research project at any time of year. This could indicate a need for a different data collection method, such as individual in-person interviews, or using telephones and video conferencing technology.

The decision to use focus groups was based on the potential for generating new ideas. In the first focus group, in which three people participated, the discussion was lively and in depth. The second group echoed some similar themes in the discussion, but it required more prompting because of the reduced number. Overall the method sparked conversation for both groups and the results were informative; however, more than two participants are recommended for a focus group to ensure a rich discussion.

Results

The data was sorted into themes based on the three components of a CoP: community, domain, and practice. Each section was then summarized and further broken down into subcategories using Braun & Clark's (2006) method of thematic analysis. According to Wenger et. al (2009):

No matter what your relationship is to your community—a core member, a leader, a peripheral member, not a member at all—the first and foremost step is to understand your community and its circumstances (p. 149).

Distilling Edmonton's music community into these components lays the groundwork for supporting the local scene in a systematic way, by identifying the characteristics of the group and the needs of its members.

Because focus groups were conducted, the transcribed data is conversational and therefore concepts are difficult to attribute to individual participants. Example quotations were selected and used to exemplify the themes identified, and conflicting or unclear opinions are noted when applicable.

PLAYING LOCAL: COMMUNITY AND TECHNOLOGY IN EDMONTON'S MUSIC SCENE

Participant number	Role	Industry Memberships	How long have you worked in Edmonton's music community?	Awards, public recognition, unique credentials	What technology platforms do you use to connect with other members of the community?
1	Musician, Educator, Producer, Engineer	Alberta Music, Edmonton Musician's Union	20 years	EAC/AFA Grants, University Staff Award Recognition, Involved in local arts advocacy initiatives	Facebook, Instagram, Websites
2	Songwriter, performer, promoter, booking agent, manager	Alberta Music, SOCAN	20 years	None, other than the "reward of public appreciation :)"	Facebook, Twitter, Email, Reverb Nation
3	Songwriter, performer, band leader	Alberta Music, SOCAN, Folk Alliance	Casually for 24 years, as primary vocation for 5 years	Edmonton Music Award winner	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Website
4	Recording engineer, producer, freelance musician	Alberta Music, SOCAN	17 years	Edmonton Music Award, Mayor's evening for the arts, Edmonton artist trust fund	Twitter, personal website
5	Songwriter, performer	Alberta Music, SOCAN	15 years	National radio play, bookings at various festivals including Edmonton Folk Music festival, Mayor's celebration for the arts, Edmonton Music Awards	Facebook, Twitter

Figure 6 – Focus group participant data

Participants

Each participant completed a short questionnaire at the beginning of the focus groups to outline their role in the music community. The data is collated and outlined in Figure 6.

Background

This section sparked a comparative discussion about ways the Edmonton music scene has changed since the 1990's. Many of the macro level differences indicated in the literature were confirmed, including challenges related to learning new skills, market saturation and financial challenges.

"Sometimes I find that by the time I've booked stuff and done this and done that, I have less time and energy to sit down and write a song. Which is REALLY what I SHOULD be doing, but, then when you're on the road, you're doing all of these other things. You're getting to the next show, and you're tour managing and promoting and making sure that everything is set up or lined up, and I think that with that whole DIY thing where you're handling all aspects of it, and you have ACCESS to all that stuff, it does spread you kind of thin from time to time."

It was unanimously agreed that technology has changed everything-- for better and for worse. Making connections with industry people is infinitely easier, and access to recording equipment and learning resources is as simple as a visit to the Edmonton Public Library. However, the ease of access has also led to a flooded market, making it more difficult to attract interest and establish meaningful connections.

"You'd have to pay money to go into a studio that somebody had invested money into. I think that's one of the big differences between not-so-far in the past and now is that if

...it always starts with a good song and all that, but 15-20 years ago if you wanted to make a recording you had to get a lot of money and pay somebody to do it. Now you don't."

"In terms of connecting, like, using the internet to connect with people, the one thing that I might think could be seen as a con as opposed to a pro, is that it's much easier for people who, say, book bands to become inundated. It's much easier for someone now to just blanket email, like, 100 venues even if maybe they haven't researched if the venue even suits them, or they have a chance to even get a show there. It's the same thing as sending your disc out to a radio station. You wouldn't send your disc to a religious talk radio station if they don't play music, right? So I think it's definitely made it easier, but in some ways too easy and ... the new types of technology have also led to a lot oversaturation."

There is a larger pool of local talent:

"When I was at age 20-25, it seemed like a lot of the bands that were the same age or younger who were getting started at that time still needed to spend some time evolving, and it feels like there are so many young 20 year old bands who are just coming out of the gate just AWESOME."

This is attributed to increased access to information. Youth who may not have had financial means to access music lessons are now able to learn from teachers on YouTube for free, while sophisticated recording equipment is now as simple as a software download.

"I think you had to be lucky enough to have a connection with somebody that either had a studio, or had access to some equipment and kind of take you under their wing a little bit, or you waited until you were 18 or 20 and went Grant MacEwan and took the recording program. Otherwise, what would you do? You wouldn't have access."

The role of major centres has changed. Although the industry power still lies in those cities, connecting with them is less reliant on geography, so there are more options available for musicians to decide how they want to engage with industry and with members of the public.

"You're talking about major labels and stuff, and that was all part of the process. The label would find a band, actually front the cost of the recording and production, and that would sort of...you know, they wouldn't really send a lot of people to Edmonton to do that. You would do that elsewhere, so there probably was a lot less music being actually produced and recorded IN Edmonton, by local people... And now I can't count on all of our hands how many people I know who have a half decent recording studio that can turn out a decent quality sounding recording."

Community

All participants spoke with pride about Edmonton's music community. They described a participatory culture based on their collective commitment to the success of the scene, and not just their individual careers. This data was sorted into the following themes: supportiveness, connectedness, mentorship, offline interaction, collaboration, and interprovincial connectedness.

Supportiveness.

The supportiveness of the music community in Edmonton was unanimously emphasized. People promote each other's shows as well their own. There is a sense of ownership and personal responsibility to participate in supporting the community.

"I love Edmonton, and that's the reason I don't move, even though I think I could make a living elsewhere. Because here, people jump. It's not as cliquy as other cities... For me, Edmonton's super supportive."

There is a sense of group identity. The community supports those who participate – they are united by a common goal.

"I think it's one of those things that everyone sort of appreciates and understands- that if they don't contribute to that then we won't have it. Everybody sort of takes an active role in recognizing it."

"If Edmonton just said...stop bitching about being deadmonton or like, we don't have talent or draw here. You know what? We do stuff here that nobody else does, and we do it the way we do it. And I think people just need to be confident and cognizant of that fact. And again, it's that attractive force. When you're not desperately trying to be like Nashville or desperately trying to get to Toronto, people are attracted to that. Because you're basically implicitly saying 'we're good enough as we are.' You know, we're Edmonton as fuck."

Connectedness.

Connectedness has also increased over time. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have made it easier to stay connected and share community information. Social

networking tools have also enabled third party connections – people connect with each other when they tour because they have mutual friends. The visibility of the social network in the form of mutual friends on Facebook strengthens the community through endorsement.

“Stuff was more insular before. Now you see people from different scenes at different events and shows.”

“If you show up in any of these communities and you go to the shows and you support them, everybody embraces you. We’re all in it together and we’re all fighting the same fight and we’re fighting it alongside each other we’re all stronger, and it means so much to everybody that it, like, knits us together.”

In spite of connectivity, things can be improved. Some amazing talent seems to be isolated to small social groups that are not widely known in different communities. Over time, increasing connectedness could change this dynamic.

“I’ve... sort of connected with a number of different pockets within the industry that are surprisingly disconnected from each other to me. To me, it’s very surprising how disconnected it is.”

Tradition of mentorship.

There is a tradition of mentorship in the Edmonton community wherein more experienced musicians will support and encourage the more junior ones, sharing contacts, feedback, and advice. Several anecdotes were shared in which mentorship was received at early stages of their career, and how this has inspired them to pass along what they have learned to others. This often happens serendipitously and in person.

"I've always noticed musicians...when we get around younger kids, even if you might see their band and it's clear they still have some work to do, I've never seen anyone in my peer group not want to offer advice or some kind of assistance, or when I book I try to give bands a first crack, and I know I've seen that."

Several community leaders were named, but all of the participants attributed some of their learnings to Kirby, a sound engineer often described as the backbone of the Edmonton music community since the 1970's, who lost her battle with cancer in 2014. Kirby has been recognized at the 2015 Edmonton Music Awards and inducted into the City of Edmonton's "Salute to Excellence" 2017 Hall of Fame. Honest, hardworking, and selfless, she has established a legacy in the community that members feel a responsibility to honour.

"I don't know a single person in the music industry that doesn't know Kirby or know of her. She's touched EVERYBODY."

Offline interaction.

One benefit of new technologies is that it is easier to connect with industry people, meet other musicians, build relationships, and access information. One of the downsides is market saturation and competing for attention, so booking and making connections can also be more difficult. Given the difficulty of competing for attention, face to face relationships are still the primary point of access to the community.

"I think for the most part the real relationship building happens face to face. Facebook and stuff is useful for either trying to make an initial contact or break down or initiate a hello, OR once you've built that relationship to kind of stay in touch, but, you know the coolest projects that I hear of usually got started because someone got invited to a

recording session, or people were sitting around having a pint somewhere and got talking and came up with an idea and then they pursued it."

Collaboration.

There has been a noticeable increase in collaboration over time. In the past people may have been more possessive or secretive about trade secrets.

"It used to be hard to get people to cough up information."

"People would guard (information)... and part of it is that that information is kind of accessible now anyway."

There is less of a sense of competition than there once was.

"I think when we started I had the sense that it was a bit more competitive... now there's a sense that if this band does well, it's good for everybody."

Interprovincial connections.

There is also increased connection across Canadian provinces. When people tour they keep in touch via social media, making it easier to maintain connections from a distance and call on them when information about that place is needed.

"We all like being more connected to people in these pockets in other cities from similar scenes in every city that we go to. And it's easier to stay in touch, I guess. Back in the day you'd be calling them but now you can send a group message to all your friends in Winnipeg, or whatever."

"And also if you play a certain kind of circuit or festivals, you'll see the usual suspects every summer so over time you build those relationships and they grow stronger and

stronger. And people will call you and say "I need to sleep on your couch" or whatever, because they're playing tomorrow. Those dots get connected on a bigger level."

Both groups brought up the interconnectedness of the prairie cities of Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. Anecdotally it is believed that these cities share a spirit of cooperation due to shared culture and regional isolation. Harsh weather conditions and disconnection from larger cultural hubs has led to a collective DIY approach and a collaborative social network. The cold weather is also commonly thought to contribute to incubation of talent because of long months spent indoors during the winter months.

"I lived a year in Saskatoon and I noticed that they also had a very strong community. It was very similar to Edmonton. Everyone supported each other's gigs and people came out and you sold lots of merch, and Winnipeg is similar... there's a bit of a similarity between those three."

Both groups agreed that social media allows greater access to experts, leading to increased sharing of knowledge and collaboration on projects that would otherwise not have been possible.

"That's was amazing to me about Twitter, is that you see people who would have been inaccessible before replying to everyday people. As long as people are respectful, there's a chance that they'll read your message and get back to you. And I don't think that was ever as possible. I guess you could have written them a letter or something, but you know, would it even get seen?"

Domain

The domain section results were sorted into five main categories: marketing, touring and performing, relationships and networking, business logistics, and finances. The logistics of writing, learning, and recording music are primary goals of the industry, and are present in each of these categories in some way.

Marketing.

The participants identified the difficulties of self-promotion without formal marketing training, and the need for musicians to understand and cultivate ways of promoting their music. Therefore it's important to have access to people who have expertise either through informal channels or as a paid service – both of which are required components of a scene.

“For what it’s worth, now that we’re wearing all these hats, one of them is marketing.

And I don’t think anyone’s particularly good at it.”

In spite of these challenges, it was also suggested that the new model also allows people to opt out of practices that don't work for them or that they disagree with, and can instead find creative new alternatives.

“The other thing I would say is that if the game is so open right now, and you don’t like the way it’s being played, it’s a great time to just say fuck it and make your own system.”

One of the biggest marketing challenges is that of competing for the attention of audiences. Given the flood of information available to consumers now, getting your music heard by your potential fan base is a challenge, and musicians need to find ways to make their music stand out as a product worth paying for. Getting the attention of bookers, promoters,

and other stakeholders is just as much of a challenge, so differentiation is a significant area of interest.

"I literally spend all my time obsessively on the internet... I just want my music to be heard. If you're gonna turn your life upside down and put everything into your music then you want it to be heard."

"In terms of... using the internet to connect with people, the one thing that I might think could be seen as a con as opposed to a pro, is that it's much easier for people who, say, book bands to become inundated. It's much easier for someone now to just blanket email, like, 100 venues even if maybe they haven't researched if the venue even suits them, or they have a chance to even get a show there."

Social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, are vital for self promotion, so learning to use social networking tools is an important skillset to learn:

"Facebook has changed its algorithms, like, fifteen times since it started... so you're constantly trying to figure out what the hell all the companies are doing with their algorithms, and new social media things, and which one attracts which audience... so there's a lot that musicians have to worry about that they didn't used to have to, I don't think. It used to be like, get a show at the Sidetrack, make sure posters are up."

Curation is a challenge for listeners as well as musicians. New methods of distribution such as streaming sites offer a large variety of music to choose from, which can be overwhelming. The challenge of marketing is therefore linked to understanding different distribution platforms and how to be visible:

"You've gotta sift through a lot of stuff sometimes to find the stuff that you like. So in SOME ways it makes it more challenging for the artist to kind of bust through and be heard amongst all the noise, but for the listener, too, it's great that there's so much stuff that you can access, but you kind of have to go through 20 things before I find something that I like. And I don't even know if I like it anymore because I've just heard so much stuff. But that said, I think people know what they like and the talent is still the underlying thing."

Touring and performing.

Touring and live performance are vital for marketing and promoting, connecting with audiences, and making important industry connections.

"Half of what you're doing when you're touring is, you wanna make friends with people, not out of a selfish thing, but, there is a reward for it because if people feel they're actually the band's pals, they're gonna come back to the show. I think with social media there's a good chance to do that kind of stuff. They're not just your fan, they're, like, your friend or whatever. Whether or not they're your best friend...maybe not, but you know what I mean? People can feel like they have some kind of personal connection with someone in the band."

This is sometimes at significant cost to the musicians who must take financial risks to make this happen. Given the irregular hours of touring and the time it takes to write music and practice, making a living wage is difficult. Many "day jobs" are low paying jobs with flexible hours, and often don't raise enough funds to cover the cost of performing.

“What I need to do at this point in my career is I need to play shows outside of Edmonton...so I've been focusing on that for the last year, and it's a crapshoot. Like, I played a show in Lloydminster, and that was a good show, it was like half full, I've never played there before, I got to play for a half full room, we had a great time, loved it, we had a BLAST. The show probably cost me about \$300. How often can I go out of town and play a show that cost me \$300, you know?”

Networking.

Networking is the primary means of accessing valuable knowledge and resources.

Relationships have always been the foundation of the music industry, but as reported by both groups, the channels for achieving this have changed. Engaging people and getting them to attend live performances has changed, and given the decline of recording sales, word of mouth is an important way of getting the word out.

“Certain fundamentals haven't changed. You still have to have a good relationship and prove yourself over time. I don't think that part of it has really changed, it's just the way that you connect with people.”

“Being in music for the last 20 years, it's like, “oh god, now Myspace is defunct, now we have Facebook, and now we have Reverb Nation, and now we have Garage Band and Bandcamp and Soundcloud and this and that, and it's like... it seems like it will never end. But, at the end of the day, you know, some of the same rules apply I guess.”

Endorsements are a valuable way to gain credibility in the industry due to the challenges of competing for attention.

"If it's something I haven't heard of before, often times I might not even bother. UNLESS a friend of mine said 'hey, these guys are awesome', then I would pay attention."

Online presence can now be searched and quantified, so it is important to have a visible presence in the music community in order to prove credibility. Additionally, this is the primary way that information is exchanged, social meetings are arranged, and business information is discussed.

"I see it as a fact of the industry now... if you wanna throw yourself in the ring at all, you have to show up with a social media presence."

Music "is a team sport," so developing a quality product involves getting to know people, working together, and building relationships.

"It would be great to have a team of people helping out so I could focus more on just music, but that's why I don't have a job, so that I can focus on music full time."

Business practices.

There is a lack of formal structure to the local industry, and independent musicians must "learn by doing". The act of learning, playing, writing and recording music is still the core skillset, however it has become necessary to develop a personal business strategy in order to become successful. Thus there is a keen interest in developing and understanding business practices—from grant writing, promotion, recording, booking venues, etc, and how to earn a living while doing it. Alberta Music has made an effort to increase educational events and resources available, however there is still a need to formally define and educate on the "dos and don'ts" of the industry.

“The Kirbys of the world are the gatekeepers of new musicians getting into it...because there is no established industry, there is no code of conduct... which is something that I value. I think a code of conduct has a great deal of value. That does not exist in this industry...at all.”

Getting paid.

Live venue owners often fail to understand the financial investment musicians make to learn and promote their music, so it can sometimes be challenging to negotiate reasonable pay. Income for musicians can be unpredictable, and the overhead costs of maintaining a career can be expensive.

“So if I say, you know what, my time is worth this much... I can't get paid for less than a certain amount. Most of the time people are beyond cool with that, and they're just like, oh I never thought of it like that before. But there's a lot of people in town that don't value what they do or the cultural output of what they do.”

Practice

The Practice section was sorted into three categories with several subcategories: social media, connecting with audiences, professional development, and marketing.

Social media.

Social media, and Facebook in particular, is the primary platform used for local musicians to communicate online. These are supplemented by Instagram, Youtube, and Twitter. Facebook is the most commonly used platform as it provides an access point to most offline social interactions, while Youtube is vital as a means of getting exposure. Instagram is used largely to maintain a sense of personal connection with fans.

“Social media is one thing that I am a TOTAL whore about, and I know that sometimes I shouldn’t look at my phone as much as I do. But, I’ve never been this busy in my life before, and it is kinda nice knowing “hey, that guy’s gigging over here,” or oh, they’re on tour. Oh, they had a great show, or I didn’t know those people were working together, or I didn’t know they were doing that, oh a new record that I like... You know, I see these people very infrequently, so it’s nice to kind of catch up through social media.”

Facebook acts as an online rolodex. Communication and relationships have always been central to the music industry, but online social tools have augmented existing practices. It is a means of reaching out to the community to get questions answered, and of maintaining relationships with people you meet at live events locally and on tour. The connections you make online can lead to invitations to important offline activities that you would otherwise not be aware of.

“I guess there’s the quantity of connections, and there’s also the quality of connections... you know, I’ve seen stuff about (points to K) you on Facebook, but I’ve never met you. And now we’re in a room together, there’s something more than you would get on social media.”

Using social media is considered “industry standard.” There is no standard practice or rulebook for what works or how it should be done, but a lack of online presence could be detrimental to a musician’s ability to make the right social connections and connect with potential fans.

In terms of community resources, the participants were not aware of forums specifically for the use of musicians in Edmonton, although the lack of standardization in this regard produced mixed opinions about the need for such a resource.

One on hand, a designated platform or forum was thought to be appropriate for niche interests, like sound and recording, or for a specific instrument etc.

"I don't know what changed, maybe it was Facebook, but...or just that GOOGLE is...everything, everywhere. But, maybe pre-Myspace there was definitely websites that were like... here's a list of venues in Winnipeg."

On the other hand, one participant felt that if designed correctly this could be a valuable tool for the community.

"Almost everything that I've done publicity or marketing wise I have learned how to do through online blogs that give you ideas and stuff, and that's entirely where I've gotten that kind of info. So, it depends on what you're looking for."

Connecting with audiences.

Social media is also used for connecting with audiences. It is considered essential for promotion, and even once success and reputation are established an online presence must be maintained in order to keep fans engaged.

"Even really successful artists maintain the social...like what you're saying is once you have the ball rolling you might think you don't really need to, but they DO."

The practice of hosting house concerts has increased in popularity as a way for musicians to set the price for their work with a built in venue to perform, without the

challenges associated with booking venues. This creates a sense of intimacy which also helps establish personal connections with fans. Space is quite often limited, which also gives a sense of exclusiveness to the event, which makes it a desirable experience.

“If you were a duo or a trio or singer-songwriter and somebody is willing to host you at their house and get 30 of their friends to show up, but actually pay 25\$ or 50\$ or whatever to have that more intimate experience, and then they get to interact with the artists right after, and the artist gets the door and the merch money....I mean the model makes sense. I've done a couple of house shows and you can usually make decent money.”

Professional Development.

Learning the tricks of the trade happens primarily at face-to-face gatherings, which are often informal social interactions where innovation and sharing happen serendipitously.

“I still go to those (Alberta Music) seminars once in a while. Those are good ways where you get people of all ages SHARING information... the last one I went to was cool because it was about grant writing, and they had three different people from different age groups.”

“I'm also aware of other informal stuff... like Ryan Anderson used to have informal gatherings about once a month where people would get together for a beer and just share ideas on what they've been doing to try to promote stuff, or try to co-promote things like regional tours. I haven't really run into any issues where people were not forthcoming with stuff. If people wanna know, “hey you guys played at that festival last

year, who books that?" I'll give them their contact information, why does that bother ME?"

Making music is still the main goal, so continually practicing and improving is still a collective effort.

"It still comes down to a good song or a good performance. You can be a social media master, but they come to your show, and it SUCKS (laughing), they're not gonna come back, so you might get people out for one show but they're not gonna come back."

Marketing.

Digital savvy is important to get noticed by bookers, agents, funding bodies and audience members.

"Yeah, like if you don't have an EPK (electron press kit), or you didn't have one five years ago, who was gonna hire you? Who was gonna wait, who was gonna pop that CD in the mail. You know what I wanna do? I wanna click on the link and I wanna click play on your songs. My web guy said, you wanna get people to information in 7 clicks or less. And like, yeah, it's great, it's tight, it's easy, and that's the beauty of technology."

"I remember the AFA grant I applied for...they sent it back and asked "how many Facebook likes does your band have?" And I was like, oh! They look at stuff like that...I have to tell members of my band ...just take a photo of your foot and say "gigging here tonight". It takes literally like 15 seconds, and someone's gonna see it or like it or something."

Touring is an important means of establishing a presence in the music industry, and while on tour, selling merchandise is important to earn extra cash.

"I think for bands and musicians a big part of it is, if you can be successful and you can generate revenue touring...merch sales off the stage is still pretty important. I think for a lot of bands that's the gas money."

Another promotion technique which has the added potential of earning additional funds is licensing music for use in television, film, and advertising.

"There's a lot of bands who did well for themselves by licensing a song for a movie or a commercial or whatever. It gives you a bunch of exposure and you usually get paid half decent and you get some royalties."

Selling entire albums is no longer a focus, and instead individual songs are more likely to earn revenue. Though not always possible, a single song can have huge earning potential.

"People will say 'I'll buy that for a buck'. If you get half a million people to do that, then you're kind of in the money."

Discussion

This study provides an account of the conditions faced by independent musicians in Edmonton (see Figure 7). By considering the musician's perspective on what resources are needed, further studies can be conducted and drawn from in order to provide education, capital, and venues for the current and future musicians in Edmonton. Although Edmonton has long-standing musical tradition with established best practices, it has largely been an oral

tradition known only to those who participate. By beginning to document key information, the information can be used to identify shortcomings, or readily be shared with newcomers at early stages of their career or who have moved from elsewhere.

The CoP framework provides a method with which to analyze interactions that are difficult to define and quantify, while focusing on learning as a component of the community that should be supported. This account is a starting point for shedding new perspectives on local music production, including learning as a collective process, and the social dynamics of the scene. Implications of the research related to each of the research questions follows below.

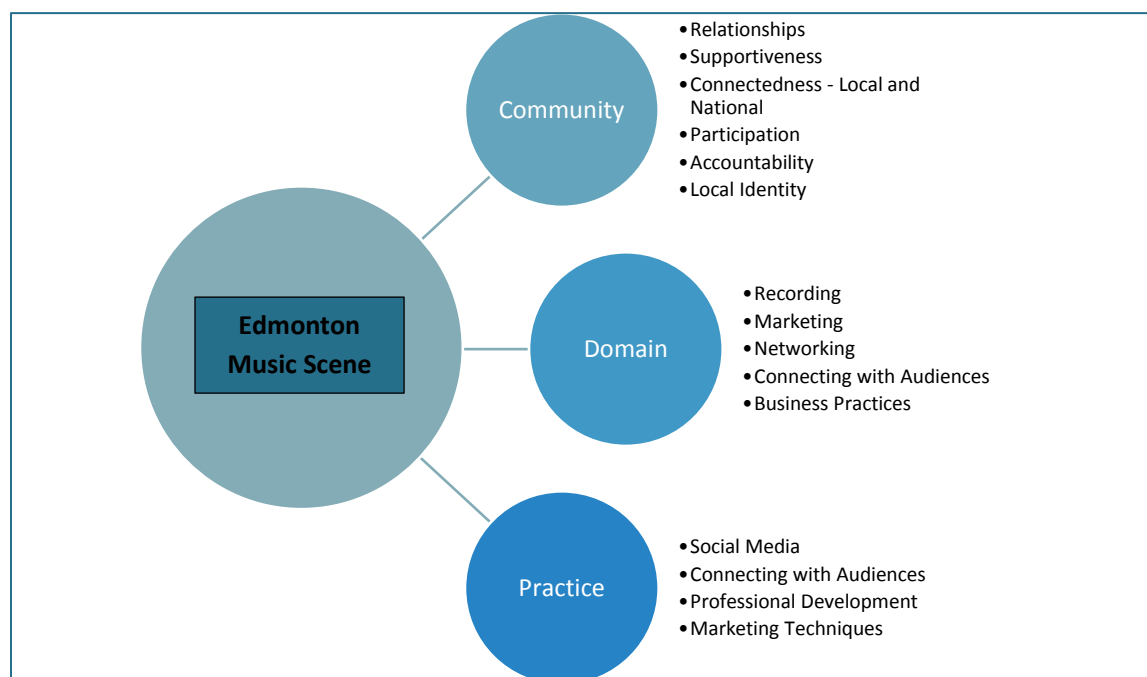


Figure 7: Components of the Edmonton Music CoP

Q1: How has the music scene in Edmonton been impacted by the destabilization of the music industry in Canada?

Opportunities.

Edmonton has always been proud of its innovative and collaborative spirit, and this sense of collective identity has solidified for many of Edmonton's musicians in recent years. There has been an increase in collaboration between genres, reduction in barriers to entry, and a perceived reduction in competition.

There is increased opportunity for creativity in how business is conducted, greater selection of choice with regard to geographic location, recording and distribution methods, and who you have access to or choose to work with. Collaborations between artists in different parts of the country are now possible due to file sharing technologies.

There are more professional recording studios in the city, and recording is cheaper and higher quality. The Edmonton Public Library also has a recording facility that is accessible to the public free of charge, further reducing barriers to access for those who could not access recording equipment.

The steady supply of formally educated talent from Victoria School and Grant MacEwan music programs is now augmented by talented young musicians who have greater access to educational resources, increasing Edmonton's talent pool in the long term.

Pitfalls.

In spite of the collaboration reported by the participants, the anticipated increase in musical talent resulting from online learning resources may negatively impact the collaborative tradition of the Edmonton music scene. Although there are more people available to provide in-demand creative services, the larger circle may encourage competition for scarce resources

such as funding grants and limited venues. This could also make it more challenging to engage an audience in Edmonton as the entertainment options continue to increase.

The lack of best practices, code of conduct, or frameworks that were once provided by top record labels leads to frustration for musicians who must learn to navigate the system through trial and error. Although the community is collaborative, people need access to the right connections who can mentor them. In many cases, these connections develop in face-to-face settings prior to gaining access to the Facebook community. This can be a challenge due to the limited number of regular meeting points in the form of performance venues.

Cost of living and lack of financial support continue to be a challenge. This is not a new problem, however the increasing importance of new income streams such as touring and merchandise require additional start-up capital and take time away from playing and song writing. Many artists fund tours and pay for band members out of pocket, and lack additional supports such as health benefits.

Learning business skills is the responsibility of the artist and can deter success for otherwise talented individuals. This makes the pooling of skills more important than ever, in order to make best use of individual strengths and to conserve energy for making music.

Q2: Is there a community of practice present in Edmonton's music community, and what are the characteristics that make up this community?

The findings of this study suggest a clearly defined community, domain, and practice, however the sample is not diverse enough to represent the entire community. The mark of a true CoP is that of knowledge transfer between experts and newcomers, resulting in "the reproduction (and evolution) of knowledge through the process of joining and identifying with

communities as the central and defining phenomenon within a community of practice” (Hoadley, 2012, p.292). Given that the participants were all fairly experienced, further information on the experience of peripheral participants is needed to confirm if a CoP is present.

That said, the long-standing tradition of mentorship in Edmonton’s music community continues to grow, and efforts to develop community connections on the part of Alberta Music and other industry associations have increased the diversity of the community, and could lead to the eventual connection of isolated participants.

Participation in the community is not reliant on genre like once would have been the case, but is now established through social connections, making it important to have access to spaces where serendipitous social encounters can occur.

There is a sense of the commitment put forth by members of Edmonton’s independent music community to ensuring that the scene continues to grow and thrive. In spite of the clear sense of pride and ownership felt by the community, there are drawbacks that could be detrimental to the long-term economic success of the local scene. Lack of touring and marketing funding, business expertise and performance venues could be a hindrance if not fostered.

Further research is needed to identify demographics who likely face challenges connecting to the scene due to geography, socioeconomic limitations, scheduling challenges due to parenting or family obligations, or hidden social barriers relating to gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Because the informal connections are made face to face and maintained on Facebook, participation in social and impromptu professional development activities requires

an invitation, making success dependent to a certain extent on their acceptance into a core social group.

Q3: Given the current challenges and opportunities, how can a Community of Practice be supported?

The rationale for using CoP as the theoretical framework for this study was that it provides a distinct means of breaking down the components of a loosely defined music “scene.” Given the informal structure and voluntary nature of CoPs, traditional organizational design approaches to fostering interaction do not apply. Wenger et. al (2002) differentiate organizations from CoP’s, citing a community’s quality of “aliveness” (p. 49). For this reason, the means of fostering CoP’s must be flexible, focusing on drawing out and enhancing the community’s unique characteristics in an organic way.

Designing for aliveness requires a different set of design principles. The goal of community design is to bring out the community's own internal direction, character, and energy. The principles we developed to do this focus on the dilemmas at the heart of designing communities of practice (p. 50).

Wenger et. al (2002) outline seven guidelines for cultivating CoPs (p. 51) Applying these design principles to this study provides structure through which support mechanisms can be identified, applied, and evaluated. As Wenger points out, these are guidelines and not recipes, and can be applied flexibly to suit the needs of the community.

1. Design for Evolution

“Because communities are built on existing networks and evolve beyond any particular design, the purpose of a design is not to impose a structure but to help the community develop” (p. 51).

Recommendation: The disconnection of different pockets of talent indicates a need for the community to break down barriers to connection and broaden the reach of the existing network. Further investigation into multiple scenes in the city and consideration of what may be contributing to the isolation may help to connect isolated groups. By documenting informal interactions, challenges may be identified for peripheral participants.

2. Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives

“Good community design brings information from outside the community into the dialogue about what the community could achieve. Sometimes this involves educating community members about the role of communities in other organizations. It might mean bringing an "outsider" into a dialogue with the community leader and core members as they design the community. As a result of this dialogue, the people who understand the issues inside the community and have legitimacy within it are also able to see new possibilities and can effectively act as agents of change” (p. 54).

Recommendations: Initiatives to engage the public would be of benefit – not just the usual suspects who frequent Edmonton's numerous festivals, but the countless other demographics in the city who go unrepresented in these social circles. By increasing the connectedness of the music community and further engaging the public, this will benefit the

strength of the local music community and further establish a sense of community, engagement, and diverse representation.

Input from other creative industries who have faced similar challenges could also be of benefit. Collaborative interactions involving journalists, designers, theatre professionals to name a few could present new perspectives not previously considered. In addition to this, perspectives from other industries could lend insight into areas that haven't been considered.

3. Invite different levels of participation

“People participate in communities for different reasons—some because the community directly provides value, some for the personal connection, and others for the opportunity to improve their skills. We used to think that we should encourage all community members to participate equally. But because people have different levels of interest in the community, this expectation is unrealistic” (p. 55).

Recommendation: The participants in this study were selected based on their commitment to music as a full time activity, however it is worth noting that those who participated were a self-selecting group. Many other musicians in Edmonton are not able to pursue the same level of commitment, but are talented and interested nonetheless. Understanding the reasons why people participate in the community would provide insight into the types of activities that would attract peripheral participation.

4. Develop both public and private community spaces

“The key to designing community spaces is to orchestrate activities in both public and private spaces that use the strength of individual relationships to enrich events and use events to strengthen individual relationships” (p. 58).

Recommendation: Make the value of informal interaction explicit, while recognizing that public and private interaction are both required. Many formal and informal networking events occur, however the initiatives of a few people can be strengthened by a larger collective action from the community.

Establishing lasting music venues wherein musicians can perform, collaborate, and socialize is important for both public and private relationships. In order to address this and other challenges, local jazz musician Thom Bennett established the Edmonton Live Music Initiative in partnership with local government agencies. According to his website “the aim of the program is to improve circumstances for all stakeholders involved in Edmonton’s music scene in order to ensure long-term sustainable growth. To that end, the ELM Initiative has been working with musicians, venues, promoters, municipal and provincial politicians, educators, advocacy groups, economic development agencies, and many other industry people to craft improvements that benefit the entire live-music ecosystem.” Thom provided the following comments in an email in August 2017:

Things have been going well for the ELM Initiative. We're about to unveil a website with some branding courtesy of the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, who see merit in our vision. We were just part of a press conference unveiling the ability for

underage performers to play in licensed establishments. We're also designating two areas as live music districts in town and well, a whole bunch of other things too!

5. Focus on value

“Communities thrive because they deliver value to the organization, to the teams on which community members serve, and to the community members themselves. Value is key to community life, because participation in most communities is voluntary. But the full value of a community is often not apparent when it is first formed. Moreover, the source of value often changes over the life of the community. Frequently, early value mostly comes from focusing on the current problems and needs of community members. As the community grows, developing a systematic body of knowledge that can be easily accessed becomes more important” (p. 59).

Recommendation: Educating local governments and members of the public on the true cost of music production would help earn support from the community. Teaching musicians to understand the economic and social value of their work would help them improve negotiations for pay. In the long term, understanding the value of participating in a CoP and how it can support the local industry in the long term would strengthen the existing tradition, and help the CoP evolve as the industry continues to change.

6. Combine familiarity and excitement

“Successful communities offer the familiar comforts of a hometown, but they also have enough interesting and varied events to keep new ideas and new people cycling into the community. As communities mature, they often settle into a pattern of regular

meetings, teleconferences, projects, website use, and other ongoing activities. The familiarity of these events creates a comfort level that invites candid discussions. Like a neighborhood bar or café, a community becomes a "place" where people have the freedom to ask for candid advice, share their opinions, and try their half-baked ideas without repercussion" (p. 61).

Recommendation: The culture of the industry is very much based on an intersection of casual socialising and business encounters, so this is likely already in place but has not been formally analyzed. Further research to identify the business practices including calendar year, code of conduct, best practices etc. would give structure to the informal practices so that they can be measured, fostered, and replicated as required.

7. Create a rhythm for the community

"At the heart of a community is a web of enduring relationships among members, but the tempo of their interactions is greatly influenced by the rhythm of community events. Regular meetings, teleconferences, Web site activity, and informal lunches ebb and flow along with the heartbeat of the community. When that beat is strong and rhythmic, the community has a sense of movement and liveliness. If the beat is too fast, the community feels breathless; people stop participating because they are overwhelmed" (p. 63).

Recommendation: More simply put, this indicates a need for an annual calendar of events that can be shared and used a resource in order to correctly time community activities. This study is one example of scheduling challenges that can occur within the community due to

lack of awareness of seasonal engagements for musicians. Summer months are filled with festivals and paid shows including weddings and outdoor events that make coordinating a group of musicians nearly impossible, as they are often traveling for the entire summer.

Awareness of busy seasons can help foster an appropriate pace so that the excitement level doesn't fizzle or become too overwhelming, while also avoiding being so low that people lose interest. Deeper analysis of factors that influence rhythm, such as calendar events, seasons, and timing of grants would be of benefit.

Future Research

Other factors beyond the scope of this study play a role in the future of the music industry in Canada. For years the CRTC (Sutherland 2013) has regulated “Can con” on broadcast media channels that once influenced the way the music was distributed by record labels and chosen by audiences. Now that the internet has surpassed broadcast media as the primary means of distribution, the production and distribution of Canadian music is sure to be affected. Canadian produced content is difficult to regulate on streaming platforms as they are international entities, so the way that consumers seek out and consume Canadian music, and in fact all music, has changed. This can have both positive and negative repercussions, as it increases the potential for engaging audiences internationally, while presenting more choice to Canadian audiences, making it more challenging to connect with them.

Platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and Google Play use software to recommend new music based on individual tastes, however the differences in algorithms and potential licensing

issues that may arise could limit or control the content on a given platform, limiting music that the user ends up hearing.

The Postmedia buyout of local media in Edmonton has nearly eliminated local coverage of the arts in mainstream news outlets. The long term effect on local arts communities, including the music scene, needs to be carefully considered and measures should be taken to fill in the gap by other institutions, be they government or industry stakeholders.

Another area that merits further exploration is the increase in the talent pool due to greater access to learning resources. As long as someone has access to the internet, there are myriad ways they can learn to play music and to utilise online technologies to get their music heard. This could have positive and negative outcomes for the music community, however an influx of talent can be anticipated and should be planned for in order to ensure that the necessary resources are available to support them.

Conclusion

This study initially considered the ways that Edmonton's independent music scene has adapted to the collapse and subsequent restructuring of the 20th century music industry through the lens of innovative marketing strategies. The literature search soon revealed that although there are many digital tools available, the industry and associated technologies are still changing too rapidly to draw conclusions about specific techniques, many of which were obsolete shortly after publication.

This led to questioning how the community adapts under conditions that are constantly changing, which required a unit of analysis to be studied. Given the fluctuating conditions, CoP

theory was applied to understand the collective learning process by which participants have adapted.

CoP theory provided a theoretical framework to design focus groups, in order to identify and analyze the social interactions of the music community. By doing this, the results produced a snapshot of the current conditions and recommendations could be made to foster an active and sustainable CoP, capable of weathering uncertain conditions in the long term. Though it is unclear if a true CoP exists, the findings indicate a strong networked community that is committed to strengthening the scene.

The pooling of resources lends to furthering the common goals of making a living from producing music. An increase in formalized efforts, in the form of workshops, awareness campaigns, or fundraising, to augment the existing strengths and help musicians navigate the challenges of the music business could solidify and strengthen the existing music tradition in Edmonton. The benefits to the city are cultural and economic, making Edmonton music a valuable resource to tap into for investors (e.g. Amazon) when considering new opportunities.

Astra Taylor (2014) writes:

Technology may enable new expressive forms and distribution may be cheaper than in the past, but the process of making things remains, in many fundamental respects, unchanged. The arts...depend on a type of labor input that cannot be replaced by new technologies and capital (p. 43).

When considering the value of music as a part of Edmonton's culture, the most valuable elements are the musicians themselves. The implications for local government suggest that,

while music was once considered a commercial product managed by corporations, this is no longer the case. While musicians do benefit from certain aspects of the digitized world, there are skills and financial resources that they often lack. There is need for support in these areas, as well as increased venues, which are vital for industry networking as well as connecting with the public. Efforts from local stakeholders like Alberta Music and the Edmonton Arts Council have been made, but with the anticipated influx of young talent, increased funding and professional development opportunities could prevent “talent incubation” for more successful scenes like Toronto, who would reap the economic and cultural benefits.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Focus Group Questionnaire

The questions below are intended to encourage discussion as opposed to being strictly followed as a script. Each section is designed to focus on the *community*, *domain*, and *practice* elements of a CoP. The community section aims to understand “what social and sharing practices are in place so that improved practices can occur for all members?” The domain segment focuses on understanding “what is the shared goal of the community?” while the practice section focuses on understanding “what techniques are employed by members in order to learn about producing music and reaching audiences?”

Background – (15 minutes)

- Welcome and introductions
- What are your thoughts on changes in the music industry since the early 2000's? Have these changes impacted local independent music in Edmonton?
- Has the internet brought about challenges or opportunities for independent artists? What are the challenges and opportunities currently facing Edmonton's music scene?
- How do the conditions in Edmonton compare to other cities in Canada?

Community – (25 minutes)

- Describe how the music community in Edmonton interacts.
- Is the community supportive or competitive?
- Is the community easy to access? How do people stay connected?
- How has the community changed over time?
- How does the community connect with fans?
- What types of roles do people fulfill in the community (i.e. marketing, design etc.) How have these roles evolved over the years?

Domain – (20 minutes)

- What are some common interests for Edmonton's music community?
- What are some of the activities that people work together on?
- Does the community share information on navigating the industry? If so, how is this shared?
- Are there opportunities to connect and learn from industry experts?
- Is there sufficient support from government and industry organizations for independent musicians?

Practice - (25 minutes)

- How does the community overcome obstacles mentioned in section 1?
- Does the Edmonton music community use technology to stay connected with each other? With audiences? If so, how?
- What online resources does the music community uses to connect and share industry information?

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- Are the available resources effective? Easy to access?
- How tech savvy are members of the music community?
- Is there anyone who stands out as a technology leader/innovator in the Edmonton area?
- What do you think the community needs to create a sustainable local music industry?

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Are there any trends you see happening for local musicians in Edmonton or across Canada that haven't already been discussed?
- Does anyone have anything further to add?

Appendix B

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: *Playing local: An exploration of community and technology in Edmonton's independent music scene*

Research Investigator:

Kirsten Bauer
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Supervisor:

Dr. Gordon Gow
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Background

You are invited to participate in this study to provide information on your experiences as a member of Edmonton's independent music community. Your name was obtained either through word of mouth recommendation by a member of the community, or through participation in local music initiatives found online.

The information you provide will be used as part of a capping project required for my Master of Arts in Communications and Technology. The findings of this research could potentially be used in published articles, future studies or academic presentations.

Purpose

Playing Local is a project that focuses on the independent music community in Edmonton. Over the past 20 years, there have been major changes to the music industry in Canada and internationally brought about by the internet and home computers. Music production and distribution are no longer controlled exclusively by the major record labels, creating new opportunities and challenges for independent musicians. Given the fact that artists are now able to produce and distribute their own work, they also must find ways to market their product independently. This has created a need for independent musicians to find new ways of connecting with audiences, in order to ensure that they continue to have opportunities to produce music and earn a living.

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of this disruption on independent musicians in Edmonton. The study also tries to identify if there are any factors unique to Edmonton that have impacted the local music industry, or that will have an impact on the future success of the local music scene. A supportive community and audience are vital to the success of creative scenes, so this study will focus specifically on the social interactions of the music community in Edmonton.

Study Procedures

- A focus group will be conducted with members of Edmonton's music community.

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- A selection of Edmonton's independent musicians and industry professionals were identified through internet research and word of mouth recommendation. Participants were selected from a variety of backgrounds in order to create a clear picture of the music scene in Edmonton.
- A series of questions will be asked by the researcher in order to generate a discussion. Different points of view create a richer discussion, so all participants are encouraged to contribute their ideas. The session will take approximately 90 minutes, and will be recorded and transcribed.

Benefits

- You will have the opportunity to voice your opinion and engage in discussion with other members of the music community about the current state of the music industry. The results of this study may generate new ideas that can be used in future research and arts based initiatives.

Risk

- There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation

- Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to contribute. You may withdraw your participation at any time during the focus group activity. You may request modifications to your responses for up to one week after the focus group takes place.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- This research will become part of my final project for my Master of Arts on Communications and Technology. The results may be used in future studies, published articles or academic presentations.
- The data provided in the focus group will be recorded and transcribed without identifying the speaker. I will then analyze the discussion and provide the results anonymously in a research paper. The information that you provide will be kept anonymous, however you will be given the option to be identified by name in an appendix of the study.
- The data collected will be kept confidential. Only I and my supervisor will have access to the information that you provide. Once recorded it will be stored on a password protected USB stick and locked in a filing cabinet at the University of Alberta Enterprise Square campus. The data will be stored for five years after the completion of this project, and then destroyed.

Further Information

- If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact:
Researcher: Kirsten Bauer, 780-232-5763, kbauer@ualberta.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Gordon Gow, 780-492-6111, Gordon.gow@ualberta.ca
- The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Participant informed consent

Please note you will be asked to confirm your consent at the beginning of your interview.

I acknowledge that the research procedures for this study have been explained to me, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that the audio will be recorded during the focus group. I know that I may contact the researcher designated on this form if I have questions, either now or in the future. I have been assured that the personal records relating to this study will remain anonymous.

DATE

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

PRINTED NAME OF INVESTIGATOR

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

Please indicate if you would like your participation to be acknowledged by name in an appendix to the final report.

____ YES ____ NO

Appendix C

Email Recruitment Script

Study Title: *Playing local: An exploration of community and technology in Edmonton's independent music scene*

E-mail Subject line: Research on Edmonton's music community

Hi _____:

My name is Kirsten, and I am working on a research project about changes in the Canadian music industry and their impact on the Edmonton scene over the last 20 years. *[Explain how we may have previously met if applicable]*. This study is being done as part of my Master's degree in Communications and Technology at the University of Alberta, but it is also a topic that I feel personally very connected to as music has always been a significant part of my life in Edmonton.

I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group with other members of Edmonton's music community to share your knowledge of the industry, and what it's like to be a musician in Edmonton. Your name was chosen based on your activities in Edmonton music, as well as word of mouth recommendations from other musicians. Your input will be a huge asset to my project, and may lead to the development of new resources to help local musicians build their careers.

There is no risk to participating in the study, however you may find this to be an interesting learning opportunity to discuss the state of the industry with other musicians from a variety of backgrounds. You might already know one or two of the other participants, so this could also be a fun social gathering. The session will take place on _____ at 3:00 PM and will take about 90 minutes. I will also provide some snacks and drinks.

An information sheet about the project is attached that explains the project in more detail. If you are able to participate or if you have any questions about participating please reply to this message or contact me at 780-232-5763. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Kirsten Bauer

Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet

Question	Answer
Are you based out of the Edmonton area?	
What is your role/ roles in Edmonton's music community?	List all that apply (e.g. songwriter, performer, sound engineer, promoter etc.)
Are you a member of any industry organizations?	List all that apply

<p>How long have you worked in Edmonton's music community?</p>	
<p>Have you received any awards or other forms of public recognition for your work? Do you have any unique credentials or successes?</p>	
<p>(If applicable) What technology platforms do you use most frequently to connect with other members of the community?</p>	<p>(e.g Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, websites)</p>

Special thanks to the participants for graciously sharing your knowledge and passion (in order of appearance):

Jeff Stuart, Mark Feduk, Doug Organ, Thom Bennett, and Kimberly MacGregor.