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Musicians dealing with the consequences of COVID-19

A study on how musicians have adjusted to work in a socially distanced society

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Abstract:
The COVID-19 pandemic shook the entire world at the start of 2020, causing a global social and economic disruption. This was especially true for those working with large groups of people in places like movie theaters, airplanes and live music venues. This qualitative study seeks to explain what kind of professional lives musicians have had to develop during the coronavirus pandemic through email interviews. The research relates to the theory of habitus and field. It also relates to theory of strategies and tactics. The focus will be on how musicians from Sweden, Finland and the United States have adjusted to work. The musicians were devastated and shocked but quick in using tactics to adapt to the situation. There were big transformations in plans already made. Some musicians returned to former jobs. Part-time teachers started teaching more through Zoom. A few held live-streamed concerts. Some musicians had time for side projects while others sought completely new jobs, which in one case, turned out in his favor. The musicians were almost universally hopeful for a brighter future.

Keywords:
COVID-19, Pandemic, Musicians, Habitus, Field, Tactics, Strategies
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1. Introduction

In the beginning of 2020, musicians around the world were living a life that had largely remained the same for decades. They were working in studios and performing at live shows with big plans for the coming year and the hectic summer season. Then the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic struck the world and changed everything. Performing musicians have been especially hard hit as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic like all of the people who work with large crowd gatherings. They have had to reimagine their habits and reschedule their calendars for the foreseeable future. Imagine a touring musician who had everything planned for the two years ahead. Not only is this musician without a job, he or she now has to replan everything and make the best of the situation in order to progress forward.

I will look into the situation before and during the pandemic. It was shocking for most of the people interviewed. The musicians reacted in different ways and it may have had to do with many factors. I want to find out how musicians reacted to this dramatic turn of events and what kind of procedures he or she has undergone. This study will examine the different ways in which musicians have reacted to the global pandemic and if they have adapted to working in an entirely different way to before.

1.1 Purpose of the Research

This study is aimed at finding out how musicians have had to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and how they create new networks. The purpose is to find out if the mindset has changed and if the musicians figured out new ways of working efficiently during the circumstances. The study is going to focus on musicians from Sweden, Finland, and the United States. The results of this study can be of use for anyone working in the field of music to better anticipate and prepare so that when the next pandemic or natural disaster creates a hindrance for working in the expected way, there are already methods in place.

1.2 Research Questions:

The purpose of the study has been broken into three research questions.
1. How have musicians reacted to the situation?
2. How have musicians adapted to the situation in their professional lives?
3. Has the mindset of the musician changed because of the pandemic?

1.3 Previous Research
There has been a limited amount of research conducted on the subject at the time of writing since the pandemic became widespread in 2020. The following studies have been done to describe precarious work, musicians’ economic situation, support for the arts, the impact that the pandemic has had on musicians’ lives and what types of ingenious new ideas have originated since. The sources have been chosen because they are relevant to the interviews conducted. The purpose of this research review is to show the main conclusions and arguments. The intention is to offer a reference point from which the results of the studies can be interpreted.

1.3.1 The changing nature of work
In a July 2002 article, Angela McRobbie talks about the changing nature of work in contemporary cultural industries. The career pathway with ladder of promotion was already back then changing. She describes how the rave culture beginning in the 1990s operated with a network of informal personal contacts and mobilization. This structure acted as a precursor and model to how the cultural industry functions to this day. (McRobbie, 2002:520). Network sociality has succeeded workplace democracy (McRobbie, 2002:521). The internet has contributed with utilizing multi-skilled people distributing knowledge and contacts to further widen their reach within their social field. Today contacts within the industry are invaluable, as very much of the industry relies on networks based online.

1.3.2 Precarious work
Precarious work refers to any work that is anything but stable in the long run (Lewchuk et al., 2013:17). Many musicians are walking on thin ice as a result of the pandemic which can lead to stressful living. The pandemic has served as a catalyst for changing so many people’s daily lives. There has been a significant rise of precarious employment and people working gig jobs. It has created anxiety and stress for many young people working with precarious work (Lewchuk et al.,
To make matters worse, the number of people working precariously has increased steadily in developed countries like Canada where the percentage of people working precariously jumped from 13.3 to 20.7 percent in just under 20 years (Lewchuk et al., 2013:17). In Toronto, the number of temporary jobs jumped forty per cent from 1997 – 2011 (Lewchuk et al., 2013:16). Then there are people whose work include aspects resembling precarious work. This can include work without benefits and people who doubt their employment to be lasting (Lewchuk et al., 2013:26-37). Uncertainty with work schedules can cause people to spend less time with family and friends and to be less attentive in helping children with homework and with fulfilling household activities (Lewchuk et al., 2013:63). This trend increases by a third in middle- and high-income households compared to others in the same category (Lewchuk et al., 2013:54). The entirety of this can potentially be the cause of a breakdown of social structures. As employment precarity increases, community participation drops (Lewchuk et al., 2013:55). Of the 25 – 34-year old’s working precariously, 54 per cent are single, compared to 31 per cent of the people who consider to be working in a secure position (Lewchuk et al., 2013:55). Many musicians usually working in live venues and on tour face many of these challenges in their daily lives. Precarious living also naturally entails the use of tactics in order to figure out how to find stable jobs.

1.3.3 Musicians’ economic situation

Diana L. Miller found through her interviews and participant-observations described in a 2018 article that grassroots folk and metal musicians oftentimes operate on their own, and outside commercial music industries (Miller, 2018:85). Some work part-time as musicians while working day jobs doing something else. These musicians usually only tour on vacations (Miller, 2018:76). These types of musicians have something to fall back on financially, in case of a pandemic. What folk and metal musicians have in common is that they do not look for financial gain but are motivated by a passion for their music (Miller, 2018:85). Folk musicians on the other hand are better at developing sustainable small-time careers. Technical complexity and heavily rehearsed music are components of metal requiring high commitment. Then there is the lack of jam sessions or open stages. Folk musicians tend to be less inclined to work with the same musicians and can play at changing
levels of commitment. The music scenes of these two genres are organized and supported differently and explain why folk musicians tend to sustain small-time careers into retirement while metal musicians do not (Miller, 2018:81-86).

1.3.4 Support for the arts
Leon Botstein writes in his July 2020 editorial “The Future of Music in America: The Challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic”, that every musician in an orchestra on stage was staggered by the news that all the shows were going to be cancelled. No one really knew about the details of what had happened nor for how long it would last. (Botstein, 2020:352) The future was very uncertain. There wasn’t the same kind of financial support for musical acts and workers in the United States like there was in Europe and Asia which were already opening up schools in July (Botstein, 2020:352). Some musicians depend on live performances for their livelihood, yet there is not much they can do about it. Botstein writes that there is no significant government financial support for the artistic world at all in the United States. Donations from record labels and streaming services such as Youtube, Amazon and Spotify have also been significant in funding efforts for the troubled souls of the music community (Hall, 2020). In a post pandemic world, musicians may have to present live shows in a new way, remotely. The editorial draws on the fact that if live performing in person is a thing of the past, there may be no other choice but to recreate it and keep it popular.

1.3.5 Impact of COVID-19 on musicians’ lives
The pandemic has been devastating to musicians around the world. In a study from Macquarie Business School, a survey has revealed that many musicians have seen a dramatic drop in their income and are reliant on income support from the government. There is negative sentiment about future employment. Financial support in the sector doesn’t seem to boost that sentiment (Crosby, 2020:3). It is unclear why, but results show that males tend to be happier than females (Crosby, 2020:3). Musicians who have had to use their savings seem to be less happy (Crosby, 2020:8). After using own savings, the next most used method was “borrowing from friends and family” (Crosby, 2020:5). Many musicians have started seeking new ways of working like using online media strategies (Crosby, 2020:8).
1.3.6 Cloud Raves and Livestream Concerts

Many musicians have lost their source of livelihood in live performing. This has caused some to abandon music, while others have sought new types of gathering income. One way to do this is to perform online. Amidst all the ideas on how to keep partying people around the world happy, a new phenomenon called cloud raves, or virtual raves, have become popular (Palamar and Acosta, 2020:1). Particularly in the United States, where the Electric Daisy Circus hosted many famous dance music acts in the spring (Palamar and Acosta, 2020:1). In the beginning of 2020, venues could still livestream concerts (Hall, 2020). They eventually closed as well, which led to livestreaming from otherwise unconventional sites such as rooftops (Hall, 2020). This type of online performing is very similar to when Steve Aoki performed his set live on his Twitch channel on the 16th of October or when Keith Urban (2020: video online) performed live on YouTube on the 16th of March. Some musicians have even raised awareness about supporting struggling musicians (Lee, 2020:1). All of these online performances were popular when people were isolating in their homes. By the 14th of January, 298 208 people had seen the video of Keith Urban performing (2020: video online) on his YouTube Channel. Because of all the livestreaming, companies like Verizon and Vivendi started working on long-term strategies and platforms where musicians can connect with their fans (Hall, 2020).

1.3.7 Conclusion of Existing Research

To summarize everything, 2020 has been a very tough year both financially and personally for many people. According to the previous research, the industry was characterized by online networking, precarious work and certain type of economic realities. Some have had to adapt in more radical ways. The record number of unemployed has led to many seeking new jobs since there has often been very little or no support from the government. Still, the pandemic has caused an unprecedented wave of online performing. Without predicting anything, this could have a significant long-term effect on cultural-aesthetic expressions.
1.4 Theory
The following theories describe perspectives on how our society is constructed and how musicians might act as a consequence of their social fields and limitations imposed on them. The theories are Habitus, Field, Strategies and Tactics. These specific theories have been chosen because they reflect the world and its structures well to explain what kinds of boundaries and limitations musicians face on a daily basis.

1.4.1 Habitus and Field
The theories of habitus and field by Pierre Bourdieu (Spence et al., 2016) explain how people use unconscious strategies of living and how they construct and are affected by social fields. When there is a stop in performing amidst a pandemic, the plans and strategies are completely transformed, and the performer is therefore captivated by the social field that the performer inhabits. Habitus describes our personality and our character. Cultural, Economic and Symbolic capital all create our habitus which is wired into us (Spence et al., 2016:6). Habitus can either change or remain the same. There can also be a combination of continuing to practice a certain action while at the same time working in a completely different way. One example could be that if you were a guitar player, you would continue playing guitar in a different setting. Instead of performing with a band in front of a thousand people, you would perform on a live show on Zoom. In the journal article “Tracking habitus across a transnational professional field” (2016:6), the word “field” is explained as “a social space that is structured according to different species and amount of capital”. This very space is what each musician has to work with based on relationships and resources. Differential Association indicates a process where people are more likely to associate with other like-minded people (Bottero and Crossley, 2011:102). These firm relationships form as part of similar habitus to create social networks (Bottero and Crossley, 2011:101-103). In the middle of the pandemic, the habitus of musicians is therefore drastically transformed according to their social fields.
1.4.2 Strategies and Tactics
In the book “The Practice of Everyday Life”, Michel de Certeau (1984) describes the theories of strategy and tactics as a way in which a person operates according to the living environment. Musicians generally wouldn’t use strategies since they have a tactical approach to the strategies of the world around them. Strategy is the instrument of power. In the book these organizational structures of power are referred to as “producers” while the individuals are referred to as “consumers”. Consumers are assumed to be passive and conformed by certain rules created by the strategies of the powerful. Strategies are big, less responsive plans that progress slowly. Michel de Certeau writes the following: “I call a strategy the calculation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power can be isolated.” (de Certeau, 1984:35-36)

The people without power relate to these strategies in different ways through tactics. Tactics are actions based directly on the observations of the environment. When societies crumble, it becomes very hard for the consumers to maneuver and use tactics. Tactics can be taken to use and transform quickly in any given moment. The rate of change is the ace of tactics while strategies have slow power as their strong suit. In the book, de Certeau describes all of the daily common activities in everyday life such as reading, driving and cooking to be tactical in character. Tactics are therefore an adaptation to the environment by consumers and describe how to non-powerful react to the limitations imposed on them. (de Certeau, 1984) The organizational power structures can be seen as the producers who have placed restrictions on much of the cultural landscape and live performing. Various musicians are therefore using different tactics as they are limited by these new restrictions that societies have imposed on them because of the pandemic.

1.5 Methodology
This study has a qualitative approach. This chapter will begin with an explanation on how the respondents were chosen to be interviewed. This will be followed by a paragraph about the chosen method and a list with the interview questions.
1.5.1 Selection
The people interviewed have been chosen using two non-probability sampling methods called convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling refers to the selection of participants based on convenience. Snowball sampling describes one respondent which then gives tips on additional people to interview. Snowball selection is especially suitable for studying the circumstances surrounding different phenomena and is therefore appropriate in the evaluation regarding the effects COVID-19 has on the lives of musicians. The risk with snowball selection is that the additional people might know each other so well that the answers start to lack versatility. (Ahrne and Svensson, 2015:41) Knowing some of the musicians personally made conducting the interviews easier. It started with contacting the musicians that I knew personally, after which, I started contacting musicians that were living close by. I also contacted producers that worked with Electronic Dance Music, which is a genre that I listen to a lot. The musicians I knew from before were from Sweden, Finland and the United States. Only two of the musicians were from Finland and the United States, respectively. From there it spiraled out until I had thirteen answers to all the questions.

1.5.2 Email interviews
The chosen method consists of structured questions sent by email to the thirteen artists and band. Because of the pandemic and social distancing, the interviews could not be done in person. Email interviews seemed to be the most practical way of contacting specific musicians so that they can answer whenever they have the time, without having to schedule anything. The questions are directed towards various musicians working with many genres in order to gain variety. The plan was to first contact specific musicians from different genres, asking them if they wanted to participate. They were in this email given an option to either talk through Zoom or answer the questions by email. Because the first ones wanted to answer the questions on their own, the focus shifted to using email interviews only. If they agreed, they would then be sent the thirteen interview questions. After receiving the answers and reading them, I would then send follow up questions or call them in order to assure a long enough answer and to gain a deeper understanding of something particular. I would continue contacting musicians until receiving enough answers. The interview
questions were prepared in advance as to easily know and remember what to ask (Ahrne and Svensson, 2015:44). Email interviews have not existed for a long time and there is therefore a need for more research as to the ups and downs of this particular way of conducting interviews (Hawkins, 2018:493). Interviews provide good insight if prepared correctly. The advantage of conducting email interviews instead of meeting in person is that your travel expenses and travel time reduce to nothing (Gibson, 2010:2). This argument is hardly relevant anymore due to applications such as Skype and Zoom. You also get answers without having to ask questions orally, saving even more time (Gibson, 2010:2). Choosing the time when you respond or answer also gives you a certain freedom to write or to analyze the questions at your own pace. This could be why the answers of email interviews remind you more of diaries than regular face to face interview answers, according to what Gibson (2010:3) writes about the data in her experience of conducting email interviews. Comparing traditional interviews with email interviews, Gibson (2010:3) found that answers written by email were less impulsive and outright. Email interviews are different from traditional face to face interviews in many other ways as well. Common disadvantages range from misunderstandings to your questions ending up in the spam folder (Ahrne and Svensson, 2015:39). E. Hawkins writes in her 2018 article that a challenge for conducting interviews in this way was to specify when the interview was over when sending an uncertain amount of follow up emails. It can take a long time to receive answers. It is also hard to verify the identities of the participants since you only have an address to rely upon (Gibson, 2010: 4). Nonetheless, even if you don’t know for sure who is participating, the address can usually be verified to be real by comparing it to the official address given on social media or the artist website.

1.5.3 The questions for the Email Interview

The following questions were sent out to the respondents.

- What music genre do you work with?
- How long have you been a musician?
- How much time do you put on music?
- How did you react to the shutdowns associated with the outbreak of the pandemic?
- What changed, regarding your work?
- What are you doing now that you didn’t do before?
- Have you had to adapt to new living conditions?
- Have you changed what you do on a daily basis compared to before?
- In what ways have you managed to adapt to changes?
- How has your mindset of you as a musician changed?
- Did you fulfill the expectations you had in the beginning of the pandemic?
- Will your pre-pandemic ambitions be fulfilled?
- Has your view of your future as a musician changed?

1.6 Ethical Considerations
Throughout the writing of this thesis, basic research ethics principles have been followed. The guidelines from the document titled “Research ethical guidelines for exams and essay work at Dalarna University” have also been followed. The participation in a research study is voluntary. Therefore, principle of informed consent has been followed when the people who were interviewed were first informed of the purpose of the study. They could then choose whether they wanted to participate or not. Furthermore, principles regarding confidentiality have been thoroughly followed. The respondents are anonymous and thus cannot be identified by anyone on the outside. The collected material and the information about my respondents can only be used for research purposes. (Vetenskapsrådet, 2013)

2. Results and Analysis
This section describes the results of the email interviews. I will be using thematic analysis and three common themes to identify patterns within all of the gathered answers. These themes follow and mirror the research questions to figure out how musicians have reacted to the situation in their professional lives, how they have adapted to the situation and if the mindset of these musicians has changed throughout the year of 2020. The interviewed are all experienced musicians with most having worked in the business for decades. They are singers, producers and
instrumentalists and they work in jazz, pop, trap, R&B, blues, fusion, electronic dance music, ambient, lounge, funk, metal, folk music, classical music, advertising music, film music, theater music and musicals. The reason for there being so many genres is because almost all of the musicians worked with multiple genres. For most of them, music as a whole has been a full-time job, while it’s been a part time job for others. Most of the interviewed who work part-time are also music teachers or music students. The two Swedish jazz musicians have been labeled with letters for easier identification.

2.1 Reactions
The musicians coped with the shutdown in different ways. Most agreed however, that the shutdowns were shocking and disrupting. A folk musician said that he reacted with shock and grief but that he reconciled soon after. He said that he was in need of a break at that very time, but that he didn’t expect it would take longer than a few weeks, let alone months. Jazz musician A on the other hand, said that it wasn’t supposed to affect Sweden according to FHM. Two of the musicians said they had film jobs at the time of the shutdowns. A DJ said that he was concerned about the health care system and the people around him who could potentially be negatively affected health-wise. The uncertainty surrounding future employment was of concern for the one American musician in the beginning of the pandemic, until his employer did shut down. A few of the musicians said that they didn’t react to the shutdowns in any special way. Some of the musicians weren’t that affected by the shutdowns since they were used to producing their music independently from home.

All of the rehearsing and live performing stopped which was a pity, according to jazz musician B. A few of the interviewed acts said that their tours had been cancelled because of the pandemic. A metal band said that they had just completed their European tour and that they were ready to go on another tour in April. They were very upset since they were planning on traveling the world in the summer and since this was the first year that they had been booked to play at big music festival in Europe.
A producer and DJ working with electronic dance music said that he panicked and tried to figure out if he had to re-educate himself in order to earn a living. He said that his whole world turned upside down and that all of his income was cancelled. He said that he has to be very meticulous with his economy. On the topic of adapting to new living conditions and translated from Swedish, he said the following.

“I have to be very meticulous with my economy. And so, I’m trying to find a new way to get a “normal” job. I have always been self-employed, lived off my live shows, and music, and never had to seek for financial support for anything. Now I’m suddenly unemployed. I have applied for both a scholarship and the Cultural Council’s support. We’ll see if I’m lucky. But I’m not counting on anything.”

Answering a question about what changed regarding his work, the one musician from Finland said the following.

“I was on the home stretch of a theatre production where I functioned as a bandleader when the restrictions came into effect. We were forced to inhibit the last performances. Furthermore, an entire additional theatre production was also inhibited, in which I was supposed to work as a bandleader during the summer. A lot of smaller shows with different settings were also inhibited. A festival that I was supposed to perform at in the United Kingdom became an online-festival instead. Just a few days ago, another show in December was inhibited. In short, the number of ordinary jobs changed to almost nothing.”

All of the musicians were understanding and had no problems with the restrictions, following the health authorities’ recommendations and instructions, knowing that the restrictions were necessary and that they would stop the spreading and save lives. Social distancing when rehearsing and hanging out changed the way in which people where conversing or moving around gatherings.

2.2 Adaptation
The popular phenomenon called online performing was inevitably ought to appear in the answers. The metal band started communicating through Discord. Instead of
live performing, they held a livestreamed gig and Q&A through Twitch. The pandemic brought other forms of music and cultural work. When asked what he does now instead, the musician from Finland said that his hometown organized a weekly live-stream where cultural workers premiered. He says he worked as a sound engineer for that. He said that he still also works as a producer from home and has released an EP during the difficult times. He also wrote that he actually held a small concert with his band where everyone wore masks and were social distancing.

The musician from the United States said that once his employer within the music business shut down everything, he tried to find other ways to make a living. The unfortunate event subsequently turned out in his favor when he came up with selling guitar sample packs online and giving zoom lessons as a music teacher, all remotely. He also said that while the pandemic has made remote working the new normal, it has also opened up possibilities like taking care of his 6-month-old at home during the day which wasn’t possible before in many households. He said that the pandemic has given him more time to work on his own business which has actually benefited him financially.

A pop musician said that his already unstructured everyday life had become even messier because of the changed lifestyle. He did, however, say that he was working on fixing it. As part of this fixing, he said that he has become better at dividing up and structuring his work on music. He said that he’s now working more than before on how he presents himself as an artist. He also said that he’s working harder to market his artist brand.

The DJ said it’s hard to adapt to less travelling but that he knows it will soon return to normal. He said that he’s prepared for health checks, as long as he gets to travel again. He said that the pandemic has also given him more time to plan what to do with his artist project and that it’s given him more time to reflect on what he can do to improve his live shows and how to improve musically.
Jazz musician B said, that because of the difficulty of practicing together with his band members, he has resorted to practicing and studying the possibilities to become a “one-man band”. He said it’s challenging and fun.

Because of his lifestyle filled with travel, one techno producer said that he hadn’t been home for 2 weekends in a row for at least 25 years. He said that he did, however, have a routine of working in the studio during the day. To adapt better, and to work more remotely, he built a studio at home so that he doesn’t need to travel into the city to his other studio. The DJ said that he actually got more work done now than before because he was saving time by working from home.

Teaching in different forms is one of the often-mentioned things that the musicians didn’t do before, but what they started doing because of the pandemic. These were things like going back to teach piano lessons or teaching more image production.

Many of the respondents said that because of the remote working environment, they now had time to plan ahead and work on side-projects which had been left on the shelves. The DJ said that his side-projects included activities like painting, sculpturing and entrepreneurship. The techno producer had started studying different subjects, mostly within music and film. One producer of film music said that he used this time to help other musicians in need of transferring to a remote recording environment. The pandemic had also allowed the folk musician to start writing his book and renovating a house.

The scarcity of jobs was clearly apparent with many of the musicians, whether it concerned the booking of new jobs or the increasing number of music producers. An apparent theme is also that most had a lower income in 2020 than what they had before. A couple of the musicians said they had to adapt by trying to cut down costs in their everyday life. Referring to his colleagues, the folk musician also said that it’s easy to fall into apathy when being so much at home without a plan for the day. One big change has been to be more isolated and alone than before. The techno producer said that because he doesn’t have any other education than the music, it becomes difficult to enter the regular labor market.
2.3 The Mindset

None of the musicians said that the pandemic affected the way they see themselves as musicians. A few had lost an interest in music after being home and not being able to jam or perform collectively anymore. Some were pessimistic about the future of musicians, referring to live organizers who had to shut down their business. Jazz musician A expressed the difficulty of living economically as a musician for a long time into the future. They were almost all, however, hopeful and being positive when talking about their own vision for their career. The pop musician discovered that he has a lot of good ideas and that he is more solution-oriented than he had realized. The film score producer said that he thinks the musician of the future will be international even if there will be less live performing. Jazz musician B said that he didn’t expect for the pandemic to last this long, and that he was expecting he could play live throughout the latter half of the year. The folk musician said that he couldn’t wait for the pandemic to be over and that the pandemic had actually increased his enthusiasm for what the future holds. The DJ said that his view of his future as a musician had changed for the better by getting a better overall picture of what he should do to broaden his brand and community. The musician from Finland said that he has learned that musicians have to be able to adapt to different types of situations.

The techno producer said that he doesn’t feel like people are in need of his music at this moment and that it’s been difficult to find inspiration or just to produce techno. In the following quote, translated from Swedish, he explains the situation regarding techno.

“It’s a bit of a fresh product and since I’m not playing anything at the moment, there’s no use for that music. I barely ever listen to techno at home except when I’m doing a DJ mix or producing. For me, club music is experienced on a loud sound system with people dancing together. That’s where the inspiration comes from. It has become calm electronic ambient music. It has been up and down. I live one day at a time but I’m optimistic that in maybe one year, everything may return to normal.”
When asking about his view of his future as a musician, he said that he has become more gloomy and doubtful. He thinks it will become difficult. He says that “I do not know. Very uncertain only.” He says that he may try to find new ways without a platform that is clubs and festivals. He continues by saying “It’s not possible. So, it’s sad right now.”.

2.4 Conclusion

The common features among the interviewed appear to consist of cancelled live shows coupled with the popular use of remote communication software programs like Zoom and being more at home. For many, the pandemic has cooled down many of the ambitions from the beginning of 2020.

As habitus refers to habits, skills and dispositions, the results can be analyzed accordingly. The musicians reacted almost unanimously in the same way. The musicians did not necessarily have the habitus to combat this pandemic. There were musicians who were planning to perform live in 2020, but who then eventually had to change the nature of their performance for a live setting. The American musician was working fulltime until his employer shut down which allowed other skills he had to be used more extensively in the forms of teaching and selling samples. His habitus was therefore altered to suit his new professional situation. For the one musician who claimed to already have an unstructured lifestyle from before, you could claim that his habitus was ready for a disrupting event such as this pandemic. The musicians can also be placed into two groups. Those who have found new means of income and those who haven’t diverted from their path of being an artist only. The artist habitus might be less emerging among musicians who have had to resort to new activities in order to support themselves. The DJ felt so deeply rooted in the industry, that he used this time to work on himself as an artist and to improve his live shows for the future. The field essentially describes what the musician has to work with in terms of professional position. In a pandemic, it is this field which defines the relationship structure. For many musicians that I interviewed, they resorted to existing parts of their jobs, while other found completely new jobs. For the American musician, he resorted to a side of the music community that he already had one of his feet in.
The strategies are oftentimes reflected by the overseeing rule makers. In this pandemic, the governments of these three different countries were in charge of drafting and imposing guidelines with radical restrictions on travel with a wide array of safety precautions and instructions. These governments provided support for some as evidenced by the answers. There were those who sought financial support. The support itself and the act of applying for support can both be strategies. That being said, there can be many tactics when applying for the support. Because of the scarcity of jobs and the lowered income of most musicians, they resorted to different types of tactics to support themselves financially. In order to continue performing, the metal band and the Finnish musician both held and worked with live streamed concerts, respectively. For the techno producer, his tactics comprised of building a home studio to work remotely. Three out of the thirteen musicians and bands interviewed resorted to online teaching to secure a steady income. These maneuvers taken by musicians to adjust can be thought of as tactics within the field of each musician.

3. Discussion

In this chapter I am going to discuss my research project. This will include discussing the previous research followed by a discussion about my method, the results and my main findings.

Even though it’s been tough, this industry is more prepared for what the pandemic put forward because of networks, working online and precarious work. Without the internet, this would have been a lot harder for the musicians who are used to communicating online. Precarious work also appeared in the results, as some musicians were unsure about the state of their employment. The pandemic served as a catalyst for discovering old and new side jobs. The industry also seems to have characteristics you can take advantage of in a vulnerable situation.
As previously stated, there were certainly risks with doing email interviews. The risk of not getting enough answers wasn’t applicable in this study. The literature around email interviews shows the risk of misunderstandings and that the respondents answer in the wrong way. I tried to counteract this by sending follow-up questions. When sending email interviews, it can take a long time before you get an answer. I sent out questions until I had enough answers. Some wrote long answers, and I think I can relate to the literature on the diary texts which were written by musicians with more time on their hands. The flexibility to do things at your own pace for the researcher and respondent seems to be positive. I could have possibly got longer answers by conducting face-to-face interviews on zoom. On the other hand, I did receive a lot of answers and a lot of material for analysis.

Regarding the research questions posed in the beginning of the study, the results indicate a somewhat expected reaction among the participants. The musicians were all clearly shocked to a degree where one of the musicians stated that he panicked. There was a lot of concern and uncertainty for the future coupled with a unanimous understanding for the safety precautions implemented. For some, the pandemic didn’t really change anything. Others had to find new sources of income. For the American musician, this was a possibility, where an unfortunate event led to an opportunity previously not possible. As I said in my previous research, online performing became increasingly popular during 2020 among many musicians, including with some that I interviewed. Online teaching was also a new job for more than one of the musicians. There was now also more time than before for things such as side projects. The scarcity of jobs in the industry was clear with many musicians. Many also said that their income was lower, just like with the musicians in my previous research. The adapting part of the results garnered more variety than I expected in terms of the different tactics. The majority was hopeful and looking forward to the future. Most of the musicians had a positive mindset. Even though a few of them were in a panic, there was hopefulness. An alternative could have been for the musicians to not find any alternative activities and to have a dark outlook on the future.
The result can be summarized in three points. First, in my material you can see two groups. You have the four people who choose to do something else for a living than what they used to do before the pandemic. Then you also have the nine musicians who could never imagine doing anything else. Second, the respondents show a strong readiness to adapt. If you reflect it on my previous research, it seems they are used to adapting and finding ways because it characterizes their industry. Third, the musicians seem to be filled with hopefulness and looking forward to the future.

I have been careful to reproduce the information correctly, write my material and explain how I went about it. I have received a relatively good amount of material that I consider to be a good saga. The results met my expectations in terms of what happened to many people in the music industry during the outbreak. The most unexpected finding was that some musicians had never been home for this long and that the pandemic seemed to offer a well-deserved break. The challenges with my study have been having musicians from multiple countries. I could have interviewed more people from Finland and the United States for a wider spread. However, I have still been able to make the structural results visible with the chosen theory. I also consider the theme and the theory as strengths. It is a current theme and a completely new situation that musicians find themselves in. This study has shed light on what the reality looks like.

The results of this study can be of use for anyone working in the field of music to better anticipate and prepare so that when the next pandemic or natural disaster creates a hindrance for working in the expected way, you’re ready to adapt. In particular, gender studies around such events could be studied further, and why men seem to have a brighter outlook on the situation. Another interesting option would be to conduct an in-depth study with the musicians to get a deeper perspective.
4. References


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