Journal of Business Ethics (2021) 169:135–151
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04316-3

ORIGINAL PAPER

Care-ful Work: An Ethics of Care Approach to Contingent Labour in the Creative Industries

Ana Alacovska[1] · Joëlle Bissonnette[2]

Received: 30 March 2019 / Accepted: 14 October 2019 / Published online: 28 October 2019
© Springer Nature B.V. 2019

Abstract
Studies of creative industries typically contend that creative work is profoundly precarious, taking place on a freelance basis in highly competitive, individualized and contingent labour markets. Such studies depict creative workers as correspondingly self-enterprising, self-reliant, self-interested and calculative agents who valorise care-free independence. In contrast, we adopt the 'ethics of care' approach to explore, recognize and appreciate the communitarian, relational and moral considerations as well as interpersonal connectedness and interdependencies that underpin creative work. Drawing on in-depth interviews with creative workers in a range of marginal socio-cultural contexts, we argue that creative workers cultivate and sustain a diverse array of practices of care arising from an affective concern with the well-being of others. Far from being merely individualistic and crudely competitive actors, creative workers enact practical ethical responsibilities and affectivities towards a range of human and non-human others, including families, local communities and neighbourhoods, colleagues, artistic scenes and their adjacent genres, and surrounding national and linguistic cultures. In emphasizing the fundamental and structuring role of care in contingent labour markets our approach accords with recent trends in the social sciences that 'affirmatively'—as opposed to 'negatively' and 'suspiciously'—recognize that mutuality, solidarity and affectivity are powerful drivers of action on a par with or even exceeding market-driven self-centredness.

Keywords Creative work · Cultural labour · Caring · Care · Ethics of care · Compassion · Creative industries · Moral work · Informal work · Marginal contexts

Introduction

Creative work, i.e. the work involved in the production of symbolic, artistic and innovative products within the rapidly growing creative industries, has increasingly been in the focus of sociological studies (McRobbie 2016; Smith and Thwaites 2018; Umney and Kretsos 2015), cultural studies (Gregg 2015; Lee 2018) and business and management scholarship (Beech et al. 2015; McKinlay and Smith 2009; Townley and Beech 2010). Notwithstanding the often insurmountable disciplinary gaps between these approaches, most of them define creative work as "*individualized* labour" undertaken by individual freelance workers on a project-by-project basis, operating in cut-throat "winners-take-all markets" and industries that champion the virtues of self-reliance, unique talent, idiosyncratic personality, and subjectifying modes of work (Beech et al. 2015; Naudin 2017; Scharff 2016). Critical approaches, meanwhile, emphasize the flip sides of individualization, above all the precarization of creative work. In this view, individualized creative workers eschew unionization, stable employment or labour protection for the sake and in the name of work autonomy, self-realization and self-expression, thereby turning the passion for self-expressive creative work into an insidious form of control (Beech et al. 2015; Endrissat et al. 2017; Scharff 2016).

In contrast to the studies that stress the individualistic and highly precarious nature of creative work, recent scholarship on the moral economies of work (Bolton et al. 2012;

✉ Ana Alacovska
aa.msc@cbs.dk

Joëlle Bissonnette
joelle.bissonnette@hec.ca

1 Department of Management, Society and Communication, Copenhagen Business School, Dalgas Have 15, Room DAL/2 V.038, 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark

2 Department of Management, HEC Montréal, 3000 Côte-Sainte-Catherine Road, Montréal, QC H3T 2A7, Canada

Bolton and Laaser 2013; Lynch and Kalaitzke 2018), including work in the highly dispersed and individualized freelance labour markets characteristic of the creative industries (Banks 2006; Umney 2017), affirms mutual dependencies with others and concerns for a common good as the ethical foundation of work and as a means to combat work precarization. This article latches on to moral economy approaches to labour in order to challenge the prevalent thesis regarding the individualization/precarization of creative work. By mobilizing central theoretical tenets from feminist philosophy and its conceptualization of the ethics of care (Held 2006; Tronto 1993), we posit care and caring, understood as "labour undertaken out of affection or a sense of responsibility for other people, with no expectation of immediate pecuniary reward" (Folbre 1995, p. 75), as the principal labour mechanism in contingent and precarious creative industries. By probing the logic of care in creative work in this way we attend to the meaning and quality of the interpersonal and relational infrastructures underpinning creative work. Based on the findings of two complementary qualitative studies, involving in-depth interviews with music industry professionals embedded in a multitude of marginal socio-cultural contexts in South-East Europe and Canada, we argue that creative workers, rather than being self-centred, calculative and individualized subjects, are enmeshed in local relational infrastructures whereby sustainability and mutuality are lubricated by considerations of care and care-giving practices. We thus empirically explore the ways in which creative workers cultivate and sustain a diverse array of care practices and enact practical ethical responsibilities towards a range of human and non-human others, including family members, local communities (especially vulnerable and disadvantaged members), colleagues, local artistic scenes, and wider surrounding national, social and linguistic issues.

In emphasizing the structuring role of care in contingent labour markets we conjoin recent trends in management and organization studies that 'affirmatively'—as opposed to 'antagonistically' and 'suspiciously' (Ashcraft 2018; Hjorth 2017)—explore alternative ways of organizing and labouring while recognizing that solidarity, concerns for others and mutuality are powerful drivers of action on a par with or even exceeding market-driven self-centredness (Archer 2000; Parker et al. 2014; Sayer 2000; Vandenberghe 2017).

Literature

The Individualization Thesis and the "Hermeneutics of Suspicion" in the Study of Creative Work

The figure of the individualized, self-reliant, self-expressive, self-enterprising and self-exploiting 'freelance' creative worker has long been posited as a role model of the 'ideal worker' in contemporary capitalism (de Peuter 2014; McRobbie 2016; O'Doherty and Willmott 2009). In turn, creative work has been predominantly studied as an instance of radically individualized work (Butler and Stoyanova 2018; Lee 2018; Umney and Kretsos 2015), prevalently depicted alongside a "pain-pleasure axis" (McRobbie 2002). On the one hand, creative work is celebrated for the possibilities it offers for self-expression, self-realization and self-actualization, while on the other it is decried as an insidious source of self-exploitation, including voluntary acceptance of low pay, insecure and intermittent work that inflicts a range of psychosomatic illnesses such as burnout, anxiety and depression (Beech et al. 2015; Butler and Stoyanova 2018; Rowlands and Handy 2012; Scharff 2016; Smith and Thwaites 2018; Townley and Beech 2010). Creative labour markets are fiercely competitive, with labour supply greatly outstripping labour demand and leading to a skewed distribution of income (Menger 2006). As overcrowded "winners-take-all markets" in which a small number of individual actors accrue ever greater economic payoff (Menger 2006), contingent creative labour markets incentivize workers to perform copious amounts of 'identity work' through self-enterprise, including self-branding, self-promotion, intense socialization and networking in order to enhance their own individual labour market positioning and increase performance (Scharff 2016). As a consequence, creative work is most frequently studied through a critical 'identity work' theoretical lens within 'critical management studies' (Beech et al. 2015; Butler and Stoyanova 2018; Endrissat et al. 2017; Townley and Beech 2010) that exposes the self-expressive and pleasurable work of self-creation predicated on self-enterprising "techniques of the self" as a "devious" source of subjectification and self-commodification (Beech et al. 2015; Scharff 2016).

While this pain-pleasure dichotomy is valuable in debunking the myth of self-expressive and passionate work and unmasking such work as de facto self-exploitative and precarious (Friedman et al. 2017; Gill 2014a, b), this approach does very little to challenge common perceptions of contingent work—serving rather to further entrench the idea of contemporary workers as utilitarian, calculative and individualized agents stripped of their agency and beguiled and duped by neoliberal injunctions of self-expression and autonomy (Beech et al. 2015; Naudin 2017; Scharff 2016). The desire to be critical and to unveil important accounts of hopelessness, injustice, suffering and exploitation under the cover of 'seductive' and 'deceptive' individualization discourses blinds us to the multiplicity of seemingly 'unimportant', mundane, practical, affective and relational considerations—i.e. of community, kinship and neighbourhood—that underpin creative work (Banks 2006).

The "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Felski 2011; Ricoeur 1977), committed to interrogating, subverting and demystifying work trends as illusions and deceptions, results in a

theoretical cul-de-sac, congested by negative critiques and adversarial evaluations (Parker and Parker 2017). In this article we argue that adversarial and suspicious interpretations of workers' subjective experiences of work need to be moderated in order to direct attention to the range of activities and practices through which our informants orient themselves *positively*—i.e. caringly, affectively and relationally—towards others for the sake of living well together, building communal relationships and maintaining a good community. We therefore focus our analysis on how care for the other is performed in everyday practice as a constructive and alternative hands-on empirical response to and resolution of the tensions between individualization and precarity. In doing so we take up Ricoeur's (1977) early calls for "a hermeneutics of trust", as well as recent calls for "critical vulnerability", "critical affectivities" and "affirmative critique" (Ashcraft 2018; Hjorth 2017) in which a researcher's understanding of social phenomena is modulated, revised and reformed not by a desire to lay bare the insidious effects of individualization but by a desire to learn empathically, affectively, practically and trustfully from a study's participants about their relational, moral and affective motives for action.

Moral Economies of Creative Work

Calls for the moralization and responsibilization of 'individualized' contingent labour markets in general (Bolton et al. 2012), and creative labour markets in particular (Banks 2017; Hesmondhalgh 2017; Umney 2017), are now steadily gaining traction. The moral economy concept occupies a central place in emerging discussions of creative work that recognize the possibility of workers carving out non-market spaces of interaction wherein more communitarian, non-instrumental and solidarity motives underpin work (Banks 2017; Umney 2017).

The moral economy concept refers to the embeddedness of market economies in relational infrastructures held together by shared values and beliefs about justice and about what constitutes good, fair, moral and appropriate life and conduct, while also specifying the rights and responsibilities of individuals within communities and in market exchange (Sayer 2000). In rectifying over-idealized versions of pre-market moral societies in earlier accounts of moral economies, as well as the over-estimated capacity of markets to cancel out human interdependencies, Sayer (2000) argues for the importance of "thick" interpersonal relations as the basis for economic exchange in which the creation of bonds and mutuality creates "an ethical surplus" that escapes market rationalization but nonetheless lubricates economic relationships. A moral economy approach thus treats all economic activities as suffused in relational infrastructures, moral considerations, solidarity and mutuality (Vandenberghe 2017; Zelizer 2012). Through this lens, relational concerns and ethical evaluations inform and guide all economic relations, including employment relations. By the same token, all economic arrangements "rely on the formation of bonds, care and mutual obligations" (Bolton et al. 2012, p. 128).

Accordingly, creative labour studies that adopt a moral economy framework concentrate on examining collaborative and compassionate modes of work within alternative workspaces such as artist cooperatives (Sandoval 2016; Vail and Hollands 2012) and non-profits (Serafini 2018). Some researchers also acknowledge that, in spite of the neoliberal propulsion towards individualization and self-enterprise, creative workers increasingly adopt the "ethical codes" of "social enterprise" while showing "commitment to wider community, ecological and social issues" (McRobbie 2016, p. 118) and adopting a 'sustainable prosperity' credo in which career success is decoupled from individualistic enrichment (Oakley and Ward 2018). What scholars of creative work have found useful in the moral economy approach is not its view on the particularistic, grounded and situated character of interpersonal relations of care and mutuality, however, so much as its strong normative and universalistic principles premised on an abstract ethics of justice concept of what constitutes moral conduct and 'good life' (Hesmondhalgh 2017). In the most elaborate instantiation of this approach to date, Banks (2017) outlines an ideal "creative justice" scheme of normative governance aimed at responsibilizing creative economies, including measures to "increase human flourishing" and to "reduce harm" (e.g. precarity, exploitation and underpayment).

Adopting a moral economy approach to the study of work in the creative industries is extremely productive in that it provides ethics-based analytical tools with which to tackle long-neglected macro-social issues in this field, including issues of social responsibility, the redistribution of public resources, and equitable access to the labour market. The normative moral economy framework has rarely been tested on situated empirical micro-social grounds, however, and thus remains an abstract model of "creative justice". A notable exception is Umney's (2017) recent empirical study of normative conceptions of fairness (fair pay, good working conditions) and egalitarianism (inclusivity, fair distribution of profits) in London's market for music gigs.

In this article we redress the dearth of empirical studies of moral economies presenting a lived and situated empirical understanding of abstract considerations of "creative justice", fairness, egalitarianism and mutuality in creative work (Banks 2017; Umney 2017). In order to concretize the abstract dimensions of moral economy approaches we argue for the usefulness of adopting and adapting an ethics of care approach that recognizes deep relationality, human interdependencies, the needs of others, and hands-on caregiving as the basis for action and work (Held 2006; Noddings 2010; Tronto 1993). In so doing we subscribe to a

form of "methodological situationalism" that advocates approaching social life as being accomplished locally in ordinary everyday "micro-social" acts (Knorr-Cetina 1988). In a micro-social order, moral economies cease to be merely a matter of compliance with abstract moral injunctions about how to live well and justly together. At micro-social level, moral economies are accomplished locally and enacted in situ as actual on-the-ground and unobligated practices of care (Hennion and Vidal-Naquet 2017; Stewart 2007). The micro-social order is suffused with recurrent interactions, emotional commitments, a sense of cohesion, and affective sentiments that are practically accomplished in everyday acts of kindness, affection, care and compassion (Archer 2000; Hall and Smith 2015).

An Ethics of Care Approach

By starting from the premise that caring, compassion and relational concerns are an ontological basis of life and that the Other forms the basis for action, including economic action, the ethics of care approach conceives of caring as the existential element of all work in which actors necessarily "reach out to something other than the self" (Tronto 1993, p. 104). As such, the notion of care first emerged as an analytical concept in studies of interpersonal connectedness and gendered relational responsibilities in private, intimate and domestic spheres (Folbre 2012; Held 2006). Owing to its feminized legacy and private character, the analytical potential of the notion of care has long been undervalued (Tronto 1993). However, a growing number of scholars have begun exploring the importance of interpersonal attachments and deep relationality beyond the domestic sphere and in occupational domains of professional 'care work' such as nursing (Hennion and Vidal-Naquet 2017; Molterer et al. 2019) and education (Noddings 2010).

The ethics of care approach presupposes a relational interpersonal configuration of everyday life and work and thus necessitates a systematic understanding of the nature, quality and dynamics of relationships of care. In contrast with traditional ethical theories—including the moral economy approach—that privilege abstract principles, formal rules, impersonal duties and deliberative justice to sanction relational conduct, however, the ethics of care approach concentrates on the specificities of practices, virtues and feelings (kindness, empathy, compassion) as these arise from concrete life situations that are themselves infused in relational infrastructures and local webs of interdependencies (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 2010; Tronto 1993). Through this lens, care itself structures the practical, emotional and affective everydayness of human life (Archer 2000). Acting 'other-wise' instead of 'self-wise' thus becomes central to care-ful, reflexive living and working (Lynch 2007). According to Tronto (1993), the crucial ethical elements of care are other-centred and necessitate *attentiveness*, i.e. suspending one's self-interest while recognizing the unmet needs of the other, as well as *responsibility*, which implies assuming responsibility for hands-on care outside of formally prescribed rules of obligation and duties, driven by a desire for a 'better world'.

If care is central to all work, then creative work represents a form of fundamentally "other-centred work" (Lynch 2007, p. 555) that must be studied in all its complexities as work that is *attentive to* the needs of others and *responsible for* maintaining, sustaining and repairing a "better social world" (Tronto 1993, p. 130). According to Sayer (2000, p. 7) the people's main relationship to the world is one of concern, and so issues of "how people behave in relation to others, with respect to their well-being" should be the mainstay of any social study (see also Vandenberghe 2017).

Lynch (2007) offers a threefold taxonomy for studying other-centred work as infused in relationships of care, with three major circles of relationality, attentiveness and responsibility for the well-being of others that reflect varying degrees of interdependency and care-full-ness. First, there are primary *relations of intimacy*, with the prototypical care relationship being that between parents and children. Then there are secondary *relations of mutuality* that involve personal attachments to proximal others such as relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Third, there are tertiary *relations of solidarity* that involve a duty of care for and 'politically emotional' attachments to largely unknown others, such as public goods, national cultures, linguistic entities or the environment. Differing degrees of attentiveness, responsibility and mutuality underpin the three relational circles of care. Relationships of care are not based merely on a pre-set list of tasks but on actual, situated and local activities of looking after and looking out for others (Lynch 2007, p. 559; Tronto 1993). Using Lynch's model, we outline how our informants accomplished care in specific "micro-social" acts (Knorr-Cetina 1988) of relationality and compassion within the three circles of affiliation.

An emphasis on care, compassion and caring does not imply that care is an exclusively selfless and altruistic practice. Self-interest is not incompatible with the practice of caring, since "caring for others" means "helping ourselves" (Wuthnow 1991). According to Wuthnow (1991) and Foucault (1987), "care for the self" strengthens a sense of affiliation and affection as it is based on moral reasoning about the appropriate role of the self within a community and an intimate concern for the well-being of others. Following Wuthnow (1991, 1995) and Foucault (1987), we below elucidate empirically how altruistic and social objectives can be compatible with an individual worker's own self-interest and career sustainability.

Methods

A Multi-sited Atypical Case Study: Creative Industries in Marginal Socio-cultural Contexts

This article builds on empirical findings generated from two independent multi-sited qualitative studies of the music industry in marginal socio-cultural contexts. The first author conducted research on the margins of Europe in the post-socialist Balkan countries of North Macedonia and Albania. The second author conducted empirical data gathering among French-speaking minority communities in Canada (in Ontario and in the Atlantic and Western provinces, though not in Québec, which is recognized as a French majority context in Canada) as well as in Catalonia (a part of Spain where Catalan, a minority language, is the second most widely spoken language).

Marginal contexts represent "extreme" or "atypical" cases that are heuristically well positioned to reveal concealed and unorthodox mechanisms of social life, including hitherto under-reported practices of care in creative work (Flyvbjerg 2006). Atypical marginal socio-cultural contexts exist on the peripheries of dominant "typical" centres of geo-political power and are characterized by deep precarity, such as poverty, geographic isolation, economic transition and endangered languages and cultures. In a marginal context people actively strive to mitigate the effects of precarity by constantly "inventing" sustainable ways to live well together and by implementing alternative modes of organization and labouring rooted in communitarian initiatives and social economy (Boucher and Thériault 2005).

'Marginal' creative industries themselves also exhibit a heightened degree of precarity as a result of a lack of robust infrastructure, incomplete or transitional governmental structures, weak educational institutions and meagre capital investment (Hracs et al. 2011; Luckman 2012; Primorac 2014). At the same time, communitarian, relational and solidaristic forms of creative work organization seem to compensate for unemployment and underpayment in marginal spaces (Alacovska 2018). Marginal localities are thus becoming desirable spaces for the development of creative careers since they possess high levels of "civic capital", visible in "interpersonal networks and solidarity within a community-based on a shared identity, expectations, or goals" (Hracs et al. 2011, p. 368). By offering neighbourly, reciprocal and supportive creative industry dynamics, in contrast to the cut-throat competition prevalent in metropolitan creative hubs, marginal localities appeal to a steadily increasing number of precarious creative workers languishing in the "metropolis" (Alacovska 2019; Luckman 2012).

In Francophone minority communities in Canada, with just over a million people (amounting to four percent of the Canadian population outside of the province of Québec) dispersed over a wide territory and surrounded by an English-speaking population (Corbeil 2012), the French local market for the music industry is marginal. Despite the almost complete absence of possibilities to commercially support and export talent, however, the Francophone music industry is nonetheless burgeoning, with more than 200 music creators and 30 small music businesses thriving on mutual aid and solidaristic occupational relationships (Bissonnette and Robineau 2017). In Catalonia, another "minor" local market of barely 2 million Catalan-speaking people (Tresserras 2013, p. 776), there is likewise a vibrant music industry comprised of independent micro-enterprises (Morén 2016) that support each other in a non-competitive way (Bissonnette and Arcand 2018, pp. 15–16) while integrating a growing local solidarity economy network (XES 2019). Albania and North Macedonia, meanwhile, notwithstanding language barriers and their small populations, are among the ten top exporters of creative goods among the transition economies, with audio-visual services, including music publishing, playing a significant role (UNCTAD 2018). And in spite of recent commercial successes resulting from increased outsourcing initiatives located in the region, "solidarity-based economies" and "collaborative co-financing" are still widespread "as alternative ways to promote creative entrepreneurship" in post-crisis and post-transition marginal spaces (UNCTAD 2010, p. 8).

Marginal contexts in which relationality, solidarity and affectivity are endemic to cultural production constitute propitious empirical sites in which to study relational, affective and communitarian values that structure contingent labour market behaviour. In contrast to the prevalent creative work studies that typically theorize creative work on the basis of empirical evidence collected in metropolitan urban centres of the Global North, such as London (Alacovska and Gill 2019; McRobbie 1998; Umney and Kretsos 2015) or New York (Neff 2012), we endeavour to identify vital relational and affective mechanisms of creative work in an atypical marginal case—mechanisms that remain obscured in the data gathered in mainstream creative hubs.

Data Collection

The first author gathered data in Macedonia and Albania in the period from January 2014 to May 2015. As part of a larger study of creative work in a post-socialist context, 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of professionals working in local music industries, including music creators, producers and managers. The interviews were conducted in local languages and were 1–2 h in length. The second author conducted 50 semi-structured in-depth interviews (of 45 min to 3 h in length)

in the period from October 2015 to April 2017 with music professionals in francophone minority communities of Canada (Ontario and the Atlantic and Western provinces) and in Catalonia. Cumulatively we interviewed 32 female, and 58 male music professionals.

Although the two studies were undertaken independently of each other, both studies set out to investigate individual experiences and practices of creative labour amidst conditions of heightened precarity characteristic of 'marginal' regions. The scope of the interview schedule was to probe for the music professionals' subjective responses to the working conditions of the 'marginal' creative industries. The interviewees were invited to narrate their working lives with a focus on the insecurity and uncertainty of creative work, working hours, labour benefits, pay, job satisfaction, professional standards, anxiety and burnout, autonomy and passion in creative work. We did not initially probe for relationships of care; the salience of care and acting other-wise arose spontaneously from the interviews.

All informants made or strove to make the bulk of their revenue from music while juggling a mix of income streams from function gigs, music-teaching jobs, sales of records, royalties, streaming fees, festival appearances, brand endorsements, etc. At the time that the interviews were held the informants were living and working as music professionals in the marginal contexts studied. Most of our informants expressed a strong sense of emotional attachment to the local contexts, either because they originated from those regions or had developed affiliation through repeated visits or/and family ties. With varying intervals and degrees of intensity, some of our informants had previously initiated their creative careers outside of their local communities, in most cases through studying in larger and metropolitan creative hubs. At different stages in their lives and careers, however, they had chosen to return to marginal localities, motivated amongst other things by the attraction of more affordable housing and rehearsal space, the opportunity of attaining a better work–life balance, cooperative working environments as well as the presence of already established social support networks such as family-based care networks.

The majority of the informants we interviewed were at mid-career stage. Their age ranged from 31 to 50 (26 informants were in the 31–40 age-range; and 28 in the 41–50 age-range). Sixteen informants were in the younger segment, between 21 and 30 years old, while twenty informants were in the older age bracket of 51–60. Such age distribution indicates that the majority of our informants had been implementing caring practices for over 20 years. This testifies to the long-term sustainability of the care-ful orientation to work and the obdurate persistence of caring practices over the arch of one's working life.

Data Analysis

Although undertaken under the auspices of two independent studies, the empirical work yielded notably similar insights, both into creative work practices in general and in particular into relationships of care and caring. Given the substantial thematic overlap between the two datasets, we did not pursue a comparative analysis but rather analysed the empirical material around emerging thematic clusters using reiterative focused coding (Glaser 1978).

The theme of care and caring emerged quite consistently from the data and not prior to data collection, especially when we focused on "micro-acts" of creative work practices (Knorr-Cetina 1988). While there are limits to the extent to which we can generalize the importance of care from our qualitative study, it should be noted that our objective was not to generate objective truths about the social world. Rather ours was an interpretive study (Guba and Lincoln 1994) aimed at gaining insights in how the creative workers we interviewed practised creative work on a daily basis, how they themselves self-interpretively made sense of their professional standing and how they coped with precarity in local and situated marginal contexts.

Our data analysis abided by the logic of abduction (Van Maanen et al. 2007). For while we first approached the field by mobilizing established theory-driven conceptions of 'individualized' creative work, such as passion, anxiety, burnout, autonomy and precarity, we gradually modified these conceptions as the self-reported practices of care observable in most of our informants' accounts directly contradicted the prevailing depiction of creative work as individualized.

As the theme of care and caring emerged and ultimately established itself, in defiance of existing theoretical frameworks, so we gradually revalorized and reframed the basic conceptual apparatus of creative work studies, proceeding to develop a theory (Eisenhardt 1989) able to comprehensively accommodate the emic conceptualization of care in creative work. In this process we treated care as a first-order construct, i.e. as a concept actively engaged with by our informants (Aspers 2006). We then turned to the ethics of care approach, which provided the second-order (theoretically driven) model of care and compassion with which we analysed our informants' work practices and experiences.

Affective Criticality

The ethics of care model has been posited as a meta-analytical device for the study of management and organizations under the label of "critical performativity" (Parker and Parker 2017; Spicer et al. 2009) and "critical complicity" with informants (Ashcraft 2018). A meta-analytical ethics of care entails researchers respecting and *caring for*

the life-worlds, affectivities and grounded perspectives of those studied, even if these contradict entrenched theoretical frameworks (Ashcraft 2018). In this way the researchers practise "affective criticality" in which the informants' accounts are not treated as suspicious but as imbued by deeply felt relationalities, sensibilities and affectivities which are nonetheless critically interrogated against the knowledge that all human relation to the world is one of care and concern (Sayer 2000; Archer 2000; Benhabib 1992). By staying attentive to and receptive of creative workers' emic understandings of care, we approach *care* in its affirmative affective valence as reflexively discussed, experienced and theorized by our informants (Archer 2000). In this way we reconnect the study of creative labour to local conditions, social relevance and lived experiences. We thus consider this critical interrogation of our data an affective criticality.

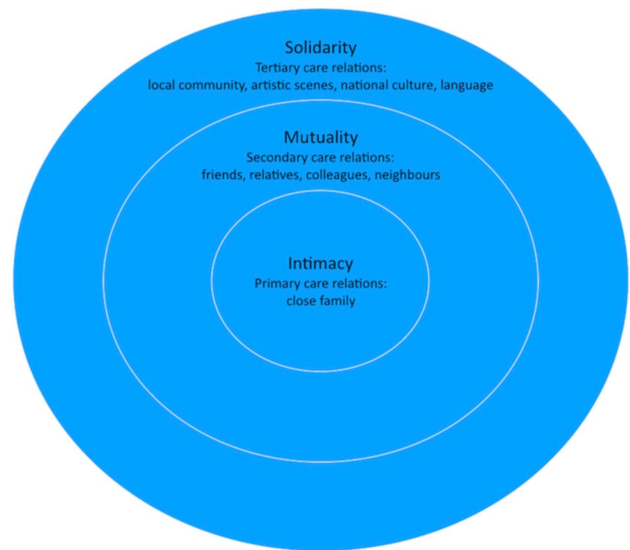

Fig. 1 Circles of relationships of care (based on and adapted from Lynch 2007)

Findings: Creative Work as Immersed in Relationships of Care

Our informants' accounts were suffused with concern for and attentiveness to the needs of the other, revealing creative work as taking place within elaborate local relational infrastructures in which care about and caring for others flourishes. For our informants, creative work was most emphatically not self-centred and individualized but pre-eminently other-centred and relational.

To capture this orientation to the other we map out the caring practices and considerations of our informants using Lynch's (2007) concentric circles model of relational care (see Fig. 1). For Lynch, care informs and enhances not only the primary circle of close, intimate and love relations but also the secondary and tertiary circle of relationships with others who are distant (although still spatially proximal) or unknown.

The first circle consists of relationships of intimacy involving considerations of family, especially childcare and care for elderly family members. The second circle consists of relationships of mutuality in which individual creative workers go about their work relationally rather than merely strategically or economically. Considerations of maintaining and repairing collegial relationships of mutual support underline the relationships within this secondary circle of care. The third circle consists of relationships of solidarity wherein concern for an aggregate of unknown others and care for public goods, such as national cultures and linguistic inheritance, predispose people to caring actions. In our analysis we focus on the secondary and tertiary relationships of care, as these were directly implicated with the actual realization of creative work, while staying attentive to primary relationships of care and their interrelations with this realization.

These three circles of care are not mutually exclusive but interpenetrating and reinforcing. The relational intimacies, mutualities and solidarities of the different circles of care cumulatively call for a revaluation of creative work as other-centred work. In what follows we disentangle the relational dynamics of the three circles of care.

Intimacy: Relationships of Primary Care and Love

Professional creative work was found to be immersed in relationships of primary care, i.e. in care for dependent others such as children, elderly parents and relatives, or partners suffering long-term illness. The interrelationship of primary care and creative work was found to be especially intricate given the 'unsocial working hours', including time-consuming networking and extended touring, that presuppose the kind of care-free mentalities requisite for making a living from music (Smith and Thwaites 2018). For many informants the boon of working in marginal contexts in spite of looming precarity was both the affordability and easy manoeuvrability of the place as well as the deep relationality and affective proximity of existing place-based care networks. These care networks encompassed the intergenerational solidarity of close relatives, the mutuality of intimate friends, but also the goodwill of colleagues which enabled the informants to reconcile the demands of their creative work and primary care.

> I could go to Toronto, do big business in English, but I have my limitations. **I have five children at home and this is my life priority.** I do not need to go to English Canada. (Véronique, music manager, Atlantic Canada)

> I love living here. **My mum takes care of X [her son] while I work**. It would have been very difficult to sustain a music career elsewhere as a single mother. I work mainly at nights, at bars, often go on tours, and rehearse at odd times. (Lena, singer, Macedonia)
> We moved back to the Balkans as my partner got sick. He is handicapped now and it is easier for me to juggle work with the care for him as everything is **less competitive** and I can get around quickly, do groceries in-between gigs, **swap gigs with colleagues** when he falls sick (Tara, musician, Albania)

In contexts in which it was already difficult for our informants to make a living from music (even if they all accepted minimalistic lifestyles), the informal and relational child care support available from within close-knit, intimate, social groups, enabled them, whether male or female, to accept brand-enhancing and reputation-boosting but low-paying artistic propositions such as shows, tours and collaborations that would have required longer periods away from home.

Furthermore, many informants, as was the case with Tara above, spawned reciprocal kindness and generosity from their colleagues by stepping in for gigs, swapping gigs or extending work so as to cover for each other and thus strengthen the likelihood of uninterrupted and flexible capacity of care amidst emergencies or unforeseen events (for a similar primary care dynamics see Raw and McKie 2019). Patterns of primary care mutuality thus began to emerge as a practical manifestation not of strategic relationship management but of empathy and community resilience that bound the workers together in collegiality which nonetheless strengthened each individual's capacity to balance primary care with work:

> My wife and I are both musicians. At the beginning it was difficult. We had to turn down a lot of gigs as they took place on a Saturday or late at night and we couldn't afford to pay a nanny when the kids were sick. **But after a while we realized we were all in the same boat and helped each other. I'll stand in at a gig for someone with a sick child one night, and then I can call on them for help when I need it** (Sergei, drummer, Macedonia)

Primary care is more often than not intimately related to secondary and tertiary relationships of care, as in the following representative account given by Stef, a French music creator in Ontario (Canada), who equates 'care for a music-making community' with 'raising a child':

> My wife is from the First Nations, **where they say that it takes a village, a community, to raise a child. This is exactly the mentality that I see and that I adopt in the music industry**. It's all about the community. The reason I'm still here today creating music in French in Ontario is a matter of community – it's because so many people helped me with grant applications, with contract templates, with everything. … I knew that I could find people from the community who'd be able to help me out in any situation. What's funny is that now I've become a resource myself. I get emails and Facebook messages from young music creators who ask me questions, who ask me for help – and I love it! I'm one of the old-timers now! I find it very important to give back because I don't believe in competition.

Mutuality: Secondary Relationships of Care for Collegiality

Closely related to the primary relationships of care is care for collegiality and for professional community. Care for collegiality implies cherishing cooperative, mutual and reciprocal relations with peers and co-workers as a compensatory mechanism for the lack of a well-developed local infrastructure for creative industries (such as functioning booking agencies, professional venues, intellectual property protection systems, royalty collection societies, loan agencies, training and educational systems, etc.) and occupational support services (such as professional associations, unions and music societies). Acutely aware of the absence of official support for local creative industries, our informants took upon themselves the responsibility for creating mutual support systems by instituting collegiality and mutuality, not only as a mechanism for offsetting economic risk but also building occupational cohesion and solidarity in the face of precarious and undercapitalized local labour markets. Our informants' caring activities for enhanced collegiality ranged from the informal mentoring and training of younger musicians (in order to ensure equitable access to the labour market to young entrants) to the everyday pragmatism of favour-swapping and mutual aid (in order to minimize the cost of production and increase efficiency). For example, some informants provided discounts on professional and technological production services as an initial step towards co-building a nascent industrial infrastructure and safeguarding existing client base:

> We are a very small industry to be competitors. We **help each other.** If a colleague calls and asks me to play with their band because that evening their drummer is sick – even if it's a rival band - I say yes. **They return the favour**. You can't lose a gig because of a sick drummer! (Damian, musician, Macedonia)

> Nothing functions properly around here. There's no real industry, no intellectual protection system, no professional clubs, no minimum pay… **But we have to build this infrastructure ourselves - together**. For example, we haven't got any cheap access to

> good musical equipment. So I lend out my guitars to younger folks - free of charge of course. (Arta, musician, Albania)

> I do **a lot of mentoring** for free with young artists … There's **no formal training, formal guides or manuals available here**. So the artists come here and we sit and we talk about what's happening to them. […] I think it's necessary in the cultural industries that we share experiences. I think that many of us are very generous about that. (Carol, music manager, Atlantic Canada)

> I offer as many music services as I can, so artists from our community are able to stay and to make a career from here. For example, I am actually offering an airplay tracking service. We are the only agency offering it. **But it does not pay**. Usually it is worth 1,500 to 3,000 dollars, but the artists could not afford it, so I offer it for 1000$. **It is not enough and it is not good for the business, but it is an investment that I have to make for the artists.** It doesn't make sense, but it was very much needed and we had to start somewhere, so I did it. (Véronique, music manager, Atlantic Canada)

Most of our informants championed care for collegiality as an investment in sustainable local music industries and vigorous artistic scenes, while also openly acknowledging the benefits of collegiality and solidarity for individual economic sustainability and flourishing. Indeed, the sustainability of individual music careers was premised on the solidaristically endorsed existence of viable local artistic scenes:

> We've developed a very efficient community-based radio network that showcases local artists. We've built a real industry – an industry that wasn't there 20 years ago. And **now we can all benefit from it**. (Carole, founder of a record label, Atlantic Canada)

> There's been an explosion of artists. Twenty years ago there were about five Franco-Ontarian artists but now we can count at least a hundred and fifty artists, as well as around fifty new products launched every year. […] Things are happening, quality products are being launched and real businesses are developing, **which is good for all of us**. (Daniel, musician, Ontario, Canada)

Solidarity: Tertiary Relationships of Care for the Local Community

Creative workers care for the local communities in which their work is embedded. Solidaristic care for local community and care for mutuality in professional community are hard to disentangle, as in the case of our informants who often intertwine kinship and neighbourhood ties with their professional work. In general, however, care for collegiality is oriented more narrowly towards fellow workers, colleagues and a circle of working partners while care for local community is entails caring for the well-being and flourishing of fellow-citizens by staying constantly attuned to vulnerabilities and deprivation in the surrounding social milieu. In marginal social contexts, the creative workers we interviewed are keenly perceptive of widespread precarity and social injustices in the surrounding community and thus have an 'inner urge'—or 'call'—to contribute to a shared communal good with their activities. Creative workers thus feel a sense of responsibility to engage in hands-on care work to support the well-being of others:

> A real musician should care about their people. Around here, our government doesn't care and so we the artists do. We **care about sick children, the disadvantaged, the elderly**. We care about **people in need**. … by giving humanitarian concerts to collect money so the family living down the road can pay for their son's expensive kidney surgery, to refurbish the windows at the local school that the municipality doesn't care to do and what not. (Bobi, musician, Macedonia)

> We play **humanitarian concerts** almost once a month. All us musicians do this. Just yesterday I was playing at a bar to gather money for refurbishing a shelter for abandoned Roma children. It's sad to be sleeping outside in this weather. **Someone has to act**! (Vasil, jazz musician, Macedonia)

> People work hard here - 40 or 50 h a week. So if I can give them a song that talks about themselves instead of a mainstream pop American song - if they can cling to something local – then maybe **they'll feel more rooted in their community and this will give them the desire - the will - to participate more in the community**. (Pascal, musician, Atlantic Canada)

> When I organize concerts I always contract a small local printing shop or a local graphic designer, a local photographer and local venue managers even though it's more expensive. This is the way I work. **I sacrifice a lot but I think I also give a lot to my community and that's what drives me**. (Véronique, music manager, Atlantic Canada)

Typically working under the umbrella of local non-for-profit organizations, many creative workers engage in voluntary work to advance various social agendas connected to a range of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, including the homeless, the unemployed, and children with disabilities. Our informants took care of redistributing both economic

and cultural resources by engaging in more expensive but solidaristic local production. Many informants, as in the case of Véronique quoted above, hire local producers to manufacture artistic products as a way of reinvigorating community economies, despite incurring higher costs by doing so. Many strive not only to enhance the social and economic resilience and prosperity of their communities (Nussbaum 2011) but also their own and others' capabilities for engaging with meaningful locally produced cultural objects whose content resonates intimately with local experiences.

Despite the centrality of selfless motivations for moral engagement in care labour, our informants also emphatically acknowledged the value of care labour as self-care—and the additional importance of such labour for increasing name recognition, brand value and employability.

> At some point, people acknowledge what you do - and at that moment **you realize that you don't do all this for nothing, because now they can see**. It's like being told "We see what you do, Véronique" and that feels very good. (Véronique, manager, Atlantic Canada)

> *People identify with this album. I think it strikes a chord. Everyone can relate to it in this community and everywhere else in Atlantic Canada. I play in places* ***that are completely sold out and everybody there knows the lyrics***. (Pascal, music creator, Atlantic Canada)

Solidaristic Music-Making: Caring for Local Artistic Scenes and Their Genres

Care for genre diversity is readily observable in our sample. With limited local audiences and few possibilities for exporting their products, local music producers report difficulties attaining economic viability in a diversity of music genres. They identify a range of challenges to developing and maintaining expertise in specific music genres, including lack of educational support, limited buying power and the absence of specialized venues and audiences. Interestingly, throughout the diverse marginal contexts studied the only music genre in a local language that was sufficiently popular for its creators to make a living was traditional or commercialized folk music—a genre that many of our informants sought to self-define themselves against, both artistically and economically. In general, our informants felt responsible for maintaining the vitality of local artistic scenes through sustained engagement with genres in which the chances of achieving economic sustainability are minimal.

Some of our informants experienced their care for "non-economically" sustainable genres as a form of 'calling', while others made it a career credo to always resist and oppose engaging in 'folk music' as a way of making a living (due to their belief in the inner artistic and social qualities of specific genres such as hip-hop or jazz). Our informants assumed direct responsibility for caring for specific music genres by organizing (predominantly through 'free labour') genre-specific workshops, festivals and annual events to cherish skills and promote respect for these genres. In this way creative workers create alliances that afford them the strength and legitimacy to incur the risks of working in non-viable genres (especially so in view of the fact that institutional economic support for these genres is virtually non-existent in marginal contexts):

> It's very difficult to make a living playing jazz in this godforsaken city. But somebody has to **save our culture** from the corroding effects of turbo-folk music. **This is a calling!** (Alex, musician, Macedonia)

> When we began it was really important for me and for the band to create a contemporary music scene. One of my missions **was to contribute to going beyond the violin and traditional songs and jigs – to get beyond traditional culture**. It was not so bad, but at one point that's all there was. So **I've always been driven by that mission** and I've always wanted to sing in French. (Joseph, musician, Atlantic Canada)

> What we need to do is hip-hop in Catalan, or any music from the street – music that tells things directly, music that talks about things that young people experience for real. **And this is what I'm trying to do when I write reggae in Catalan**. (Marc, musician, Catalonia)

> If you want to specialize in jazz, say, or hip-hop or some other less popular genre, it's impossible here […] We're now **organising a local jazz workshop** so young musicians can develop their skills. (Vasil, musician, Macedonia)

> **We have to do something**. So we **got together** a big number of marginal genre musicians across Atlantic Canada and **launched a music festival** dedicated to new music styles in French. But the venue managers and broadcasters refused to give us visibility or to showcase our music. (Pascal, musician, Atlantic Canada)

Although many informants felt their intention to specialize in specific genres was severely limited by the marginal contexts in which they worked, they strove to carve out shared viable market niches for themselves that nonetheless enabled and promoted individual market visibility and professional standing.

> For me, when any of us succeeds, in Ontario or outside of Ontario, **it's good for all of us** because it shows that it's possible to succeed when you're a French artist from Ontario. When a Franco-Ontarian artist plays on

an international stage **it reflects on the entire community.** (Michel, musician, Ontario Canada)

There's a wider diversity of music in the Balkans lately. The bigger this diversity, the better the chances that **each one of us will still be able to survive from making music**. (Driton, musician, Albania)

Solidaristic affectivities and caring for national and linguistic cultures

Many creative workers referred to their care for national culture and language when defending their economically irrational decisions to create music in local contexts and local languages. For many informants, making music in their own local language was a self-conscious choice based on affective and intimate attachments to national cultural expression, local modes of being and lifestyle practices:

To make hip hop in Macedonian may seem ridiculous. There's almost no market. But it's vital that there is some backlash against all that disgusting turbo-folk around. **Being a rapper in Macedonia means you care about the things around you**. (Sami, musician, Macedonia)

It was natural to write songs in Catalan because I just felt the need to tell stories in Catalan. […] I wanted **to use the cultural expressions my mother and grandfather used in Catalan in my songs to make sure that they didn't get lost**. I want all this to be reflected in my songs and these aren't things that could be translated into Castilian Spanish or in English. (Pau, musician, Catalonia)

When we decided to sing punk rock in Catalan six years ago, no other bands sang punk rock in Catalan. It was always in Spanish or in English. […] People are starting to speak Catalan without any complexes. That's what's happening in Catalonia now and that's why **I think I'm doing something important for my country, for my culture, by writing punk rock in Catalan**. […] You sing the song and it becomes natural again to use these expressions. (Vic, musician, Catalonia)

It's very important to create cultural references from our community. I wanted to be part of this artistic movement that creates quality rap, folk, rock and pop music from our community – music that talks about us, that talks like us, that sounds like us. (Cedric, musician, Atlantic Canada)

Many informants reported caring for the preservation of the language of their communities, whether through musical experimentation (e.g. Vic), political rebellion (e.g. Joseph) or artistic hubris (e.g. Sami, Marc). In spite of the increasing globalization of culture and the conglomeratization of creative industries, our informants showed clear localization tendencies and care for linguistic and cultural diversity.

Although they sometimes felt as if they were swimming against the tide, care for national culture and language was recognized by community members but also capitalized upon as a powerful selling proposition, i.e. as a marker of quality and innovation, albeit perhaps containing a dose of self-exoticization, in vigorously competitive regional and global cultural markets:

Last July we played at a festival here in Barcelona. At the concert **we sold albums, shirts and stickers in the thousands of euros** to a man who didn't understand a word of Catalan. […] For real, I was touched. I think the people respond to singing in Catalan. (Vic, musician, Catalonia)

Sometimes selling music in a weird language actually pays off. **Foreign rights buyers think it's exotic**. We ride this tide. (Coni, musician, Macedonia)

Discussion: Towards an Ethics of Care in the Study of Creative Work

Existing definitions of creative work reductively define creative work as self-centred, individualized, self-expressive and autonomous labour (Banks 2006; McRobbie 2016). The individualization of creative work is seen from the critical perspective of a hermeneutics of suspicion (Felski 2011; Ricoeur 1977) as the cause of widespread precarization, exploitation, gender and class discrimination (Conor et al. 2015; Friedman et al. 2017; Gill 2014a, b). Creative workers tend to self-exploit. 'Duped' by the seductive yet false promise of self-expressive and self-realizing jobs, creative workers tend to accept low pay, dismal labour conditions and lack of benefits (Beech et al. 2015; Endrissat et al. 2017; Scharff 2016). While such scholarship is important in denouncing inequalities and uncovering the exploitative dimensions of creative work (Vandenberghe 2017), it precludes the possibility of creative workers acting 'virtuously' or 'morally', i.e. acting in opposition to, rather than in blind compliance with, the individualized, instrumental and competitive logic of creative labour markets (Benhabib 1992). Our data show both that creative workers daily engage in a diverse array of other-centred, morally led, relational and affective practices of care for close family, for local communities, for collegiality and for genre-specific artistic scenes, national na linguistic cultures, and that these care practices are nonetheless aligned with self-interest and care for individual career sustainability.

A properly theorized notion of care, we argue would allow for non-instrumental moral, relational values, communitarian considerations and ethical propensities to become salient in the analysis of creative work. Some creative work scholars have made important inroads in this direction (Banks 2017; Gregg 2015; Hracs et al. 2011; Kennedy 2012; McRobbie 2016; Mears 2015; Umney 2017). Against the backdrop of mounting evidence of social disparities and inequalities in creative work, Banks (2017) advocates a normative conception of 'creative justice' that champions equitable access to education and a redistribution of financial gain to "make work more progressive and equalitarian, as well as fairer and more just" (Banks 2017, p. 9). We join forces with these scholars in the hope of contributing to further consolidating a revitalized research programme centred on the moralization and responsibilization of creative work. However, we extend this research programme by moving beyond an ideal normative model of a moral economy in creative industries centred on abstract ideal-type notions such as human dignity, creative justice, egalitarianism or political liberalism, operative at a macro and ideological level. We do so by bringing the ethics of care approach, with its emphasis on situated, hands-on, practical and emotional dimensions of care, to bear on the moral economy approach while situating the study of care practices at micro, local and concrete level. In doing so, we answer Vandenberghe's (2017) recent call to develop "a moral sociology" that brings the moral philosophy "into the real word" and therefore focuses on how the actors themselves "reason, think, evaluate, and act morally in ordinary situations of action" (p. 413). According to Vandenberghe (ibid.), such an endeavour is only possible at the intersection of ethics and the empirical sociological study of moral action in "real situations". It is for this reason that we adopt and adapt the ethics of care approach to the study of sociological creative work in marginal contexts.

Creative Work as a Labour of Care

Drawing on the ethics of care approach, we propose that creative work represents a distinct form of other-centred work, or labour of care, in which interpersonal connectedness, relationality and attentiveness to the vulnerability of others are fundamental characteristics of work.

As a labour of care, creative work is deeply enmeshed in three overlapping and intersecting circles of primary, secondary and tertiary care relationships. First, creative work is enmeshed in relationships of primary care. Maintaining a balance between creative work and primary caring for dependent others, including care for children, is an extremely intricate matter in creative work given that the ideal of care-free individualism has long dominated the symbolic, affective and practical dimensions of working within the creative industries (Conor et al. 2015; Gill 2014a). An ethics of care approach dismantles the typical binary treatment of care work and paid employment as being separate and disconnected life/work spheres while driving attention to the alternative and intertwined life-work practices of "commoning", e.g. the pooling of "common"—mutual and reciprocal—childcare resources within a local community, as paramount for sustaining meaningful work (Federici 2011). Work and care are intimately coupled, with primary care and intimate relationships profoundly consequential for both commercial and affective career success (Alacovska 2019; Ivancheva et al. 2019). This focus on the intimate coupling of intimate relationships of care and working relations is especially propitious for the study of work in sectors, such as the creative industries, in which women have been disproportionally disadvantaged due to their traditional role as primary carers within families (Berridge 2019; Conor et al. 2015).

Second, creative work is enmeshed in *relations of mutuality* whereby creative workers *care about* the well-being and flourishing of their fellow-citizens and colleagues. The labour of care presupposes individuals who are "devoted, caring, and concerned about the common good" (Wuthnow 1995, p. 8) and who *care actively and practically for* proximate and situated others. Practices of secondary care are most manifestly observable in our data when informants discuss their specific engagements in voluntary work, i.e. unpaid work aimed at sustaining the 'common good', such as improving the living conditions of fellow-citizens, neighbours, wider collegial circles and genre-specific allegiances (see also Taylor 2004). Such situated labour of care is of a non-contractual and non-market nature that has frequently been observed to occur in small towns, local communities and neighbourhoods (Nelson and Smith 1999; Williams 2009).

Third, creative work is infused in *relations of solidarity* through "politically emotional" attachments and practices of care for genre-specific local artistic scenes, languages and national cultures (Lynch 2007). In our interviews, creative workers reported being actively engaged in unremunerated service work because of an inner urge to "do good", to show compassion, to help others and act upon a sense of purpose in their local communities, or what Lynch and Kalaitzke (2018) call an engagement in affective as opposed to calculative solidarity. Affective solidarity has been observed in recent studies of creative work which show that young web designers are primarily driven in their work by "patriotic calling" and a sense of "social responsibility" for "civic voluntarism" such as participating in "hack-for-good" design events (Gregg 2015) or safeguarding "net ethics for common good programming" (Kennedy 2012).

In emphasizing practices of care we do not wish to present them as yet another form of free labour practices shepherding youthful and underpaid human resources to creative

corporations. Rather we propose reconnecting the relational logic of care with self-interest, i.e. with personal brand-enhancement and name-recognition pursuant on care for the other. According to Held (2006), a caring agent possesses the skills required to assess the needs of others only after their own needs have been recognized. Moreover, Wuthnow (1995) argues that voluntarism provides yet another cultural script that cultural workers can mobilize in the construction of their self-identities, claiming, for example, that community service enhances career positioning and a sense of accomplishment.

Similarly, the ethics of care does not seek to deny the "ethics of care for the self" (Foucault 1987). The later writings of Foucault open up the possibility of an optimistic reading of care for the self (Barratt 2008). Such an optimistic reading challenges the understanding of neoliberal "technologies of the self" as self-disciplining, corrosive, soul-corrupting mechanisms that result in the radical individualization of work, precarity and psychosomatic illness (Beech et al. 2015). This perspective, which has come to be known as "a Foucauldian governmentality perspective", has been all too readily applied in studies of creative work. Most famously, McRobbie (2016) argued that the "creative dispositif", as promulgated by glamorous media discourses, manuals and guides, functions as a self-exploitative and self-commodifying instrument of power in the creative industries (see also Scharff 2016). Through a "fresh reading" of late Foucault (Barratt 2008), however, care for the self "appears as a pedagogical, moral and also ontological condition" for the construction of "a good leader"—or, by the same token, we may add, for the construction of 'a good creative worker' (Foucault 1987, p. 124). In this sense, care for self is not self-deluding or individualizing; rather, taking care of the self is an essential part of caring for the other (Wuthnow 1991, 1995). Such care implies a practical process of deliberation about and action towards living well together with others: "the assumption of all this morality was that one who cared for himself correctly found himself, by that very fact, in a measure to behave correctly in relationship to others and for others" (Foucault 1987, p. 118). The ethics of care thus provides an affirmative heuristic for an interpretation of creative workers' community-based, interpersonal and relational caring without denigrating self-interest and instrumental concerns. Such affirmative care for the self is evident in our data when our informants relay the responses of those they care for. They take laudatory and congratulatory remarks as further motivation to persist in a creative profession, not least because care for others strengthens creative workers' brand value, increases their market visibility and boosts their employability. All of this enables them to engage in continual cycles of ethics of care. Caring for the other and caring for the self are thus intertwined. Caring for the other is a way to care for oneself. Our results thus support Mooney's (2014) conceptualizations of altruism, morality, and solidarity as based on a notion of personhood in which individual well-being and common good are interdependent.

Critical Affectivity: Relationality and Human Interdependencies as Fundamental to Creative Work

Our study challenges the 'individualization thesis' that prevails in much social scientific research, especially in the study of creative work, which attributes only self-interested, utilitarian and calculative values to all human behaviour (Archer 2000; Mooney 2014; Vandenberghe 2017). Drawing on our empirical data we have shown that creative workers' motivations are not entirely self-interested, not least because creative workers exercise agency as moral persons who are infused in complex relational infrastructures of family, kinship, friendship, community, collegiality and national cultures. We have shown that much of their behaviour is governed by relational concerns and inner caring responsibilities as a means of countering the incipient precarity and economic uncertainty of marginal creative industries.

In order to appreciate the local and situated care-led relationality of creative work, we have adopted and applied an affective criticality approach to the data analysis, allowing us to recognize affirmatively, as opposed to negatively or adversely, the affective valence of care as reflexively discussed, experienced and theorized by our informants (Archer 2000; Benhabib 1992). A theoretical emphasis on care as a principally salient element in the empirical life-worlds of the informants thus affirmatively foregrounds relationality and human interdependencies as primary drivers of action in contrast to the narrowly defined competitive, individualistic and self-centred behaviour of labour markets actors. Through this lens, our informants' creative labour practices manifested themselves empirically as situated caring practices.

Our data make it evident that creative workers take their social responsibilities seriously by engaging in community-building and grassroots social care initiatives (often under the auspices of local not-for-profit organizations). In this way many informants act as "social enterprises", playing an active community and neighbourhood caring role for their disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable fellow-citizens (McRobbie 2016). In addition, many informants report having incurred personal debts in supporting the development of local industrial infrastructures and upholding collegiality (Banks 2017). Our informants are thus veritable embodiments of the features denoted by the term "artrepreneur" (Harvie 2013). Artrepreneurs pursue creative careers by "forming horizontal networks of support that defy individualism" (Harvie 2013, p. 23) while practising creative work as community-based and socially engaged art.

Caring creative work presupposes involvement in alternative local 'community economies' (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013), and our data confirm this pattern. Our informants reported being engaged in exchanges of collegial favours and mutual aid within their local occupational community to compensate for inexistent industrial infrastructure, underdeveloped labour markets and capital investment. Mutual aid between colleagues helped them attenuate the precarity and instability of creative work in the face of non-negotiable primary care responsibilities. Within local communities, economic and labour activities "reflect care and responsibility for one another" (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013, p. xviii; Parker et al. 2014). Collegiality and mutuality are mechanisms for the attainment of economic sustainability (Oakley and Ward 2018). Mentoring younger musicians, providing informal training and favour-swapping all serve as alternative ways of organizing that make it possible to "survive well" (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013) in the local music industry and combat the precarity, inequality and exclusion of contingent labour markets. Moreover, our informants convey strategic cultural localization initiatives by caring diligently for linguistic and cultural diversity in spite of the intense globalization of creative industries. Such care for local cultural expression, genres and languages is pursued with a view to enhancing local people's flourishing and well-being in meaningful and enriching ways (Nussbaum 2011), as well as contributing to the maintenance of spatially situated music scenes. To this end, many informants actively contribute to the formation of local genre-specific infrastructures such as festivals, workshops, record labels, clubs and similar, all of which support the alternative development of nascent local music industries.

By highlighting the importance of these alternative organizational and industrial forms in the sustainability and flourishing of local music industries, and by emphasizing the non-economic, affective motivations behind such work our findings align with those of authors who view alternative modes of organizing in creative industries (cooperatives, social enterprises, collective labour, gift labour, etc.) not only as a means of challenging precarious, insecure, fragile and exploited labour but also as political projects that may contribute to creating more ethical economic, social and political systems (Sandoval 2016; Vail and Hollands 2012). Together, these findings showcase what Lynch and Kalaitzke (2018) call affective morally led universalistic forms of solidarity as opposed to the narrow calculative forms of solidarity produced by the political and economic forces of neoliberalism and the cultural forces of responsibilized individualism.

Conclusion

The main contribution of this article consists in re-conceptualizing individualized and autonomous creative work as a labour of care and other-centred work, in contrast with and contesting the prevailing definition of creative work as individualized and self-centred. Drawing on empirical evidence from multiple marginal socio-cultural contexts, we have outlined the diverse array of caring practices—including care for families, local communities and collegiality, as well as for genre-specific artistic scenes, national culture and languages—in which our informants engaged and which they balanced with self-interest and self-care.

In this article we have proposed the adoption of an ethics of care approach in the study of creative work. The ethics of care perspective, with its focus on hands-on caring practices and situated acts of compassion, offers a novel and reinvigorating tool for understanding the pluralistic reasons for engagement in creative work, providing multi-faceted criteria for evaluating the relational, interpersonal and affective values operative in professional work. In emphasizing relationships of care we have demonstrated the need to contextualize creative work in practice within its local and situated setting. Only in this way can we hope to understand how creative work is both constrained by and enabled by community affectivities, mutuality and solidarity. By practising an ethics of care ourselves as researchers (Spicer et al. 2009), we recognize affirmatively our informants' local perspectives, responsibilities, affectivities and practices of care. Against this backdrop it is possible to reconceptualise the policy, educational and organizational aspects of creative work 'from the inside', i.e. from the emic perspective of care—or of what actually matters to creative workers.

If care for the other is central to creative workers' experience of their work, then creative organizations should offer ample space for caring—for practising responsibility and compassion. At the same time, "learning to care" (Wuthnow 1995), including the virtues of compassion, responsibility and empathy, should become a central pillar of curricula in both art education and business schools (see McRobbie 2016; Wuthnow 1991). Cultural and labour policies need to account for the social care valence of creative work and strengthen the not-for-profit civic voluntarism dimension of creative work. At the same time it is crucial that the centrality of caring in creative work should not be used to justify public dis-investment in social care institutions and welfare programmes. This is because the championing of art as a means of combatting social exclusion and poverty in marginal or deprived communities could potentially have detrimental effects. Underpaid artistic work cannot serve as a cost-effective antidote to

major social problems. *Care* in creative work should thus be *care*-fully studied in order to ascertain the full social impact of art in local communities as the basis for policy-making. Although creative industries may be well positioned to empower human flourishing in local communities (Nussbaum 2011), political readiness to redress the social inequalities immanent in creative work itself, such as gender inequalities, should not be compromised. Even though gender inequalities did not feature prominently in our results, we are aware that gendered distinctions regarding primary care relationships are receiving attention in the literature on creative work in the UK (Berridge 2019; Gill 2014a). While creative sectors in the UK are dominated by neoliberalism (Berridge 2019), which is recognized as antithetical to care in deep and profound ways (Ivancheva et al. 2019, p. 449), future research should explore these gendered differences further to ascertain whether they are also important (or why they are not important) in contexts where alternative and solidaristic modes of organizing and labouring in creative industries are being practised.

Funding These researches were supported by Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit (Grant no: MK_211), Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflicts of interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals The research involved human participants and hence entailed dealing with personal data that have been managed, stored and protected in accordance with the Research Data Management requirements and Ethical Approval procedures in operation at the relevant national research institutions.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all the participants in the study. All the participants were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity and privacy.

References

Alacovska, A. (2018). Informal creative labour practices: A relational work perspective. *Human Relations, 71*(12), 1563–1589.

Alacovska, A. (2019). 'Keep hoping, keep going': Towards a hopeful sociology of creative work. *The Sociological Review, 67*(5), 1118–1136.

Alacovska, A., & Gill, R. (2019). De-westernizing creative labour studies: The informality of creative work from an ex-centric perspective. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(2), 195–212.

Archer, M. S. (2000). *Being human: The problem of agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ashcraft, K. L. (2018). Critical complicity: The feel of difference at work in home and field. *Management Learning, 49*(5), 613–623.

Aspers, P. (2006). *Markets in fashion: A phenomenological approach*. London: Routledge.

Banks, M. (2006). Moral economy and cultural work. *Sociology, 40*(3), 455–472.

Banks, M. (2017). *Creative justice: Cultural industries, work and inequality*. London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers.

Barratt, E. (2008). The later Foucault in organisation and management studies. *Human Relations, 61*(4), 515–537.

Beech, N., Gilmore, C., Hibbert, P., & Ybema, S. (2015). Identity-in-the-work and musicians' struggles: The production of self-questioning identity work. *Work, Employment and Society, 30*(3), 506–522.

Benhabib, S. (1992). *Situating the self. Gender, community and post-modernism in contemporary ethics*. New York: Routledge,

Berridge, S. (2019). Mum's the word: Public testimonials and gendered experiences of negotiating caring responsibilities with work in the film and television industries. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549419839876.

Bissonnette, J., & Arcand, S. (2018). Music entrepreneurs in a linguistic minority context: effectuation as adaptation to the paradoxes of digital technologies. *Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts, 7*(1), 3–22.

Bissonnette, J., & Robineau, A. (2017). *Étude sur le développement des artistes et des entreprises de la musique œuvrant au sein des communautés francophones en situation minoritaire*. Moncton: Institut Canadien de Recherche sur les Minorités Linguistiques.

Bolton, S., Houlihan, M., & Laaser, K. (2012). Contingent work and its contradictions: towards a moral economy framework. *Journal of Business Ethics, 111*(1), 121–132.

Bolton, S., & Laaser, K. (2013). Work, employment and society through the lens of moral economy. *Work, Employment & Society, 27*(3), 508–525.

Boucher, J. L., & Thériault, J. Y. (Eds.). (2005). *Petites sociétés et minorités nationales, enjeux et perspectives comparées*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Butler, N., & Stoyanova, R. S. (2018). No funny business: Precarious work and emotional labour in stand-up comedy. *Human Relations*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718758880.

Conor, B., Gill, R., & Taylor, S. (2015). Gender and creative labour. *Sociological Review, 63,* 1–22.

Corbeil, J. P. (2012). *Le français et la francophonie. Langue, Recensement de la population de 2011*. Ottawa: Statistique Canada.

De Peuter, G. (2014). Beyond the model worker: Surveying a creative precariat. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research, 6*(1), 263–284.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review, 14*(4), 532–550.

Endrissat, N., Kärreman, D., & Noppeney, C. (2017). Incorporating the creative subject: Branding outside–in through identity incentives. *Human Relations, 70*(4), 488–515.

Federici, S. (2011). *Feminism and the politics of the commons*. https://tobh.pw/7ir9hhq1hfz.pdf.

Felski, R. (2011). Critique and the hermeneutics of suspicion. *M/C Journal, 15*(1).

Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(2), 219–245.

Folbre, N. (1995). " Holding hands at midnight": The paradox of caring labor. *Feminist Economics, 1*(1), 73–92.

Folbre, N. (Ed.). (2012). *For love or money: Care provision in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Foucault, M. (1987). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom. An interview with M. Foucault, 1984 by R. Fornet-Betancour et al. *Philosophy and Social Criticism, 12*(2–3), 112–131.

Friedman, S., O'Brien, D., & Laurison, D. (2017). 'Like skydiving without a parachute': How class origin shapes occupational trajectories in British acting. *Sociology, 51*(5), 992–1010.

Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J., & Healy, S. (2013). *Take back the economy. An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
Gill, R. (2014a). Academics, cultural workers and critical labour studies. *Journal of Cultural Economy, 7*(1), 12–30.
Gill, R. (2014b). Unspeakable inequalities: Post feminism, entrepreneurial subjectivity and the repudiation of sexism among cultural workers. *Social Politics, 21*(4), 509–528.
Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley: Sociology Press.
Gregg, M. (2015). Hack for good: Speculative labour, app development and the burden of austerity. *The Fiberculture Journal, 25*(186), 183–201.
Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Hanbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105–117). London: Sage Publications.
Hall, T., & Smith, R. J. (2015). Care and repair and the politics of urban kindness. *Sociology, 49*(1), 3–18.
Harvie, J. (2013). *Fair play—art, performance and neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Hennion, A., & Vidal-Naquet, P. A. (2017). Might constraint be compatible with care? Home care as a situational ethics. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 39*(5), 741–758.
Hesmondhalgh, D. (2017). Capitalism and the media: Moral economy, well-being and capabilities. *Media, Culture and Society, 39*(2), 202–218.
Hjorth, D. (2017). Critique nouvelle—an essay on affirmative-performative entrepreneurship research. *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat, 16*(1), 47–54.
Hracs, B. J., Grant, J. L., Haggett, J., & Morton, J. (2011). A tale of two scenes: civic capital and retaining musical talent in Toronto and Halifax. *The Canadian Geographer, 55*(3), 365–382.
Ivancheva, M., Lynch, K., & Keating, K. (2019). Precarity, gender and care in the neoliberal academy. *Gender, Work and Organization, 26*(4), 448–462.
Kennedy, H. (2012). *Net work: Ethics and values in Web design*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Knorr-Cetina, K. (1988). The micro-social order: towards a reconception. In N. Fielding (Ed.), *Action and structure* (pp. 21–53). London: Sage Publications.
Lee, D. (2018). *Independent television production in the UK: From cottage industry to big business*. Berlin: Springer.
Luckman, S. (2012). *Locating cultural work: The politics and poetics of rural, regional and remote creativity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Lynch, K. (2007). Love labour as a distinct and non-commodifiable form of care labour. *The Sociological Review, 55*(3), 550–570.
Lynch, K., & Kalaitzke, M. (2018). Affective and calculative solidarity: The impact of individualism and neoliberal capitalism. *European Journal of Social Theory*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431018786379.
McKinlay, A., & Smith, C. (2009). *Creative labour: Working in the creative industries*. London: Palgrave.
McRobbie, A. (1998). *British fashion design: Rag trade or image industry*. London: Routledge.
McRobbie, A. (2002). Clubs to companies: Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative worlds. *Cultural Studies, 16*(4), 516–531.
McRobbie, A. (2016). *Be creative: Making a living in the new culture industry*. London: Polity.
Mears, A. (2015). Working for free in the VIP: Relational work and the production of consent. *American Sociological Review, 80*(6), 1099–1122.
Menger, P. M. (2006). Artistic labor markets: Contingent work, excess supply and occupational risk management. In V. A. Ginsburgh & D. Throsby (Eds.), *Handbook of the economics of art and culture* (Vol. 1, pp. 765–811). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
Molterer, K., Hoyer, P., & Steyaert, C. (2019). A practical ethics of care: Tinkering with different 'goods' in residential nursing homes. *Journal of Business Ethics*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-04099-z.
Mooney, M. A. (2014). Virtues and human personhood in the social sciences. In V. Jeffries (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of altruism, morality, and social solidarity* (pp. 21–41). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Morén Alegret, H. (2016). La facturació discogràfica cau a un mínim històric. *Anuari de la musica 2016 Enderrock*, pp. 70–75.
Naudin, A. (2017). *Cultural entrepreneurship*. London: Routledge.
Neff, G. (2012). *Venture labour*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Nelson, M. K., & Smith, J. (1999). *Working hard and making do: Surviving in small town America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Noddings, N. (2010). Moral education in an age of globalization. *Educational Philosophy and Theory Banner, 42*(4), 390–396.
Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Oakley, K., & Ward, J. (2018). The art of the good life: Culture and sustainable prosperity. *Cultural Trends, 27*(1), 4–17.
O'Doherty, D., & Willmott, H. (2009). The decline of labour process analysis and the future sociology of work. *Sociology, 43*(5), 931–951.
Parker, M., Cheney, G., Fournier, V., & Land, C. (Eds.). (2014). *The Routledge companion to alternative organization*. London: Routledge.
Parker, S., & Parker, M. (2017). Antagonism, accommodation and agonism in critical management studies: Alternative organizations as allies. *Human Relations, 70*(11), 1366–1387.
Primorac, J. (2014). The position and perspectives of cultural and creative industries in Southeastern Europe. *Medijska istraživanja, 20*(1), 45–65.
Raw, A., & McKie, L. (2019). Exploring women's mutuality in confronting care-precarity: 'Care Accounts'—a conceptual tool. *Sociology*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519856236.
Ricoeur, P. (1977). The question of proof in Freud's psychoanalytic writings. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 25*(4), 835–872.
Rowlands, L., & Handy, J. (2012). An addictive environment: New Zealand film production workers' subjective experiences of project-based labour. *Human Relations, 65*(5), 657–680.
Sandoval, M. (2016). Fighting precarity with co-operation? Worker co-operatives in the cultural sector. *New Formations, 88,* 51–68.
Sayer, A. (2000). Moral economy and political economy. *Studies in Political Economy, 61*(1), 79–103.
Scharff, C. (2016). The psychic life of neoliberalism. *Theory, Culture and Society, 33*(6), 107–122.
Serafini, P. (2018). *Performance action: The politics of art activism*. London: Routledge.
Smith, N. T., & Thwaites, R. (2018). The composition of precarity: 'Emerging' composers' experiences of opportunity culture in contemporary classical music. *British Journal of Sociology*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12359.
Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations, 62*(4), 537–560.
Stewart, K. (2007). *Ordinary affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Taylor, R. F. (2004). Extending conceptual boundaries: Work, voluntary work and employment. *Work, Employment & Society, 18*(1), 29–49.
Townley, B., & Beech, N. (Eds.). (2010). *Managing Creativity: Exploring the Paradox*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Tresserras Gaju, J. M. (2013). Catalunya i la mundialització: Nous reptes per a la llengua i la cultura. In J. Albareda (Ed.), *Catalunya, nació d'Europa 1714–2014* (pp. 766–789). Barcelona: Enciclopèdia Catalana.
Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. London: Routledge.
Umney, C. (2017). Moral economy, intermediaries and intensified competition in the labour market for function musicians. *Work, Employment & Society, 31*(5), 834–850.
Umney, C., & Kretsos, L. (2015). 'That's the experience': Passion, work precarity, and life transitions among London jazz musicians. *Work and Occupations, 42*(3), 313–334.
UNCTAD. (2010). *Creative economy report*. New York: UN.
UNCTAD. (2018). *Creative economy outlook*. New York: UN.
Vail, J., & Hollands, R. (2012). Cultural work and transformative arts: The dilemmas of the amber collective. *Journal of Cultural Economy, 5*(3), 337–353.
Van Maanen, J., Sorensen, J. B., & Mitchell, T. (2007). The interplay between theory and method. *The Academy of Management Review, 32*(4), 1145–1154.
Vandenberghe, F. (2017). Sociology as Moral Philosophy (and Vice Versa). *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie, 54*(4), 405–422.
Williams, C. C. (2009). Repaying favours: Unravelling the nature of community exchange in an English locality. *Community Development Journal, 44*(4), 488–499.
Wuthnow, R. (1991). *Acts of compassion: Caring for others and helping ourselves*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
Wuthnow, R. (1995). *Learning to care: Elementary kindness in an age of indifference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
XES. (2019). Xarxa d'economia solidària (XES) de Catalunya. http://xes.cat.
Zelizer, V. A. (2012). How I became a relational economic sociologist and what does that mean? *Politics & Society, 40*(2), 145–174.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.