Artistic Research in Popular Music: A Critical Evaluation of Potentials and Challenges

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Abstract

The article discusses Artistic Research as a new paradigm. For this purpose, a contextualizing analysis on Practice Research is first conducted. Thereby, the essential points of criticism and potentials of Artistic Research are elaborated from the point of view of epistemic injustice and decolonizing approaches. Following on from this, Artistic Research is discussed as a promising approach to research and teaching in popular music. Topics and perspectives are suggested, and ultimately a call is made for collaborative research to develop a 'mosaic epistemology' and 'epistemological pluralism'.

KEYWORDS: Artistic Research, Practice Research, practice-based research, paradigm shift, decolonization

Introduction

For several decades now, there has been an increasing academic critique of forms of, especially Western, Eurocentric knowledge production, and mechanisms of exclusion and power, but also an increasing opening and reassessment. More recently, in addition to a "methodological abundance" (Hannula et al. 2014: 20–28), approaches that take a closer look at practice have increasingly emerged. Artistic Research and more recently Practice Research offers such a fundamental critique and perspective for research of which popular music studies can benefit immensely.

The article will focus on the general paradigm shift towards Practice Research in recent years and discuss Artistic Research as a specific approach for popular music studies in particular. To understand where the potentials lie, the terms and approaches will first be explained in more detail, to then elucidate the critical and

epistemological impetus of practice and Artistic Research. Following this, perspectives for research and teaching in popular music will be discussed.

I will argue that popular music studies will benefit highly from engaging with the discourse and practice of Artistic Research. Further, I will emphasize the necessity of an inclusive and decolonial perspective for artistic and Practice Research in music. Lastly, I will propose collaborative research as the most promising approach.

Practice-based, Practice-led, Performance-based? On the New Paradigm of Practice and Artistic Research

Over the past decade, shifting attempts to integrate practice into research have been characterized by multiple approaches reflected in terms and often discipline specific concepts such as 'practice-based', 'performance-based', 'practice-led', or 'arts-based' research, among others (for an overview see Bulley and Şahin 2021: 19–26). They have in common that they seek a reassessment and recognition of concrete practices as research.

Important driving forces for the growing academic interest were certain artistic activities (Cramer and Terpsma 2021) and turns in the humanities and social sciences since the 1950s, especially the performative and practice turn (Bachmann-Medick 2016). The practice turn produced a multitude, a "pool of ideas" (Reckwitz 2008: 112) of theoretical approaches that focus on social practices as "doings" and "sayings" (Schatzki 2005). Aesthetic practices also came into focus, for example, in the comprehensive theory of the German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2017a, 2017b), which emphasizes that artistic practices are part of a continuum of socially negotiated and embedded practices. These turns were also taken up in music-related research (Small 1998). But for some time, a conflictual relationship to practice and a dominance of theoretical positions could be observed in music related disciplines (Cook 2015). 'Practice' often only gained relevance and significance if it could be legitimized by 'theory'. This issue has been increasingly addressed in recent years: newer concepts such as 'Artistic Research' and 'Practice Research' offer a redefinition and resolution of the antagonism.

'Practice Research' is one of the latest developments coming from the Practice Research Advisory Group in the UK (PRAG-UK). It is understood as an umbrella term that "describes all manners of research where practice is the significant method of research conveyed in a research output." (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 1) The research field offers potentially new ways of "operating within, across and beyond disciplines", while its sharing "presents an opportunity for the modernising and revitalising of research communication, uncovering novel dissemination routes in the digital era." (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 1) Especially the urge to connect research more strongly to contemporary digital and post-digital forms of knowledge production and dissemination appears to be a convincing argument.

In that the field aims to incorporate and communicate non-linguistic forms of knowledge such as "intuitive, embodied, tacit, imaginative, affective and sensory ways of knowing" (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 1), this development is ultimately also the result of previous efforts to conduct appropriate research that integrates practice, especially in the arts. An important difference from traditional research lies in the understanding of the research process and methods: If practice itself is the method, the research process is less predetermined and more open, non-linear, with

methods emerging and altering over time (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 29). Consistently, this also means that the research output follows a broad understanding, conveying the research inquiry in appropriate formats, such as performance, film, recording, software (Bulley and Şahin 2021b: 31).

More recently, Robin Nelson, who already made an important contribution to the development of the field by promoting "Practice as Research (PaR)" about 10 years ago (Nelson 2013), also acknowledges the recent shifts (Nelson 2022: 16). He analyzes Practice Research and Artistic Research, finding that both are more alike than different and potentially "converge" (2022: 21-33). Important differences though would be a "reluctance to locate art within the broader academy and its over-arching definitions of research, and a disposition to retain aesthetic quality as a criterion" on the part of Artistic Research (Nelson 2022: 23). Both issues are intertwined, however, the critique on aesthetic quality appears to be rather weak, considering that aesthetics (in the sense of aesthesis/perception) in particular characterise the practices in the arts, hence cannot be ignored at all. The more important questions rather would be what aesthetic criteria are applied by whom. However, his argument, that "the primary purpose of research in my formulation is to produce new insights effectively shared" as contrast to high artistic achievements as argued in some publications (Nelson 2022: 25), points to a critical issue that, at the moment, seems to be handled in formulating different specializations or priorities in competing university programs for Artistic Research. Nelson (2022) regularly uses the double label "PaR/Artistic Research" throughout the book. With PaR being not exclusively applicable for artistic practice, it offers a methodological approach for popular music studies in general, such as music management. Another concept that has only been taken up sporadically so far is "research-creation" (Stévance/Lacasse 2018), which is very much in line with the approaches discussed here.

Artistic Research

The report of the PRAG-UK group also discusses various forms of research in artistic practices, including Artistic Research. Artistic Research has emerged as a cross-disciplinary approach since the 1990s especially in Central Europe and Scandinavia and increasingly with the Bologna Declaration (Caduff and Wälchli 2010). Apart from an acknowledgements of researching artists dating back to the renaissance and especially the early 20th century (Osborne 2022) and prior considerations for institutionalized arts-based research (Eisner 1981), the 1993 lecture "Research in Art and Design" by historian Christopher Frayling (1993) at the Royal College of Art in London is seen as an important starting point for the emergence of Artistic Research as a new "research paradigm" (Jacobshagen 2020: 14; Bolt 2016). The systematic distinction of art- and design-related research into the three categories "into", "through", and "for art and design" illustrates an autonomy of the latter category, in that Frayling refers here to the special nature of the communication level as not *per se* linguistically bound (Frayling 1993: 5). This differentiation was taken up and modified in the 2000s, especially by Henk Borgdorff (2007, 2012). Borgdorff proposes the categories "research on the arts", "research for the arts", and "research in the arts" (Borgdorff 2007: 6), which are generally accepted in

contemporary discourse. The main difference of this trichotomy is the focus and point of interest: While 'research on the arts' approaches art practice as object of study, institutionalized in disciplines such as musicology, the other two categories shift the role of it: In 'research for the arts', "art is not so much the object of investigation, but its objective," and can be understood as a form of "applied research" (Borgdorff 2012: 38). 'Research in the arts' then aims at overcoming the separation of researcher and research object, and to minimize the distance between object and subject. Instead, "the artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results," and is characterized by a special "performative perspective." (Borgdorff 2012: 38).

The mainly continental European and Scandinavian debate on Artistic Research in music since the early 2000s has been advanced by institutions such as the Orpheus Institute in Gent/Belgium and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC). In 2015, the AEC issued a white paper advocating for a stronger establishment of the research field and the development of quality standards (AEC 2015) and is one of the initiators of the so-called *Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research* in 2020, advocating for further institutionalization and standardization, among others (AEC 2020). Other important mediators are the *Journal for Artistic Research* (https://jar-online.net/en) and the *Research Catalogue* run by the Society for Artistic Research, an online database of Artistic Research projects (https://www.researchcatalogue.net).

Although the discussions about Artistic Research are still controversial, as will be shown below, there are tendencies towards consolidation. Artistic Research can be understood as an "umbrella concept" of the diverse existing forms such as practice-based, and performance-based (Barton 2018: 4–5). Originality, documentation, methodology, referencing, intersubjectivity, and terminology play to a certain degree just as much a role as the artistic process and its results itself (AEC 2015; Coessens et al. 2009: 178). It is relevant that the essential part of the research output is an artistic work—a recording, performance, installation—"which can exist without writing and justification, but can also co-exist with other forms of documentation making it an articulated piece of research" (Blain and Minors 2020: 13-14). As Borgdorff argues, writing can only with difficulty take the place of artistic argumentation ("artistic 'reasoning'") (Borgdorff 2012: 69). However, some argue that skills of articulation and writing are essential for Artistic Research (Hannula et al. 2014: 25).

In sum, artistic music research is interested in the concrete individual processes of experience, decision-making and interpretation of meaning in performing, creating and designing, composing and arranging, communicating and making of music and sound. It is an artistic process embedded in research contexts and their requirements in which the artist deals with objects, situations, constellations creatively and conveys this process in a sensually perceptible form such as recordings, performance, spoken and written text. In this understanding, Artistic Research is part of the wider paradigm shift, indicating the focus on forms of aesthetically sophisticated and deliberate practices, such as music making (Zaddach 2021). Understanding the field of Practice Research as a continuum in reference to Nelson's argument (2022) enables then a smooth transition of the focus between artistic and general practice in the field of music.

Epistemic Injustice, Decolonization, Mosaic Epistemology: The Critique and Epistemic Potentials of Practice and Artistic Research

The 'epistemic intertia' addressed by Philipp Tagg aims at a fundamental critique of the academic understanding of research, knowledge, and knowledge production that is dominant in the West. Practice and Artistic Research acknowledge their limitations and issues and therefore offer a transformative potential to reconfigure the field of research.

A major point of friction in the discourse on Artistic Research is the critique of the dominant understanding of 'knowledge' and 'knowledge production' in academia (Siegmund and Calabrese 2016). The institutionalized and differentiated research is questioned in its interpretative sovereignty, which is also related to questions of power (Huber et al. 2021: 9). Donald Schön already pointed out in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) that historically there has been an institutional distinction between research and practice. Research, hierarchically higher than practice, was characterized by a "technical rationality", practice as the field of application (Schön 1983: 31). The hierarchies of theory and practice led to an "artificial bifurcation which downgrades Artistic Research and practice and closes off potentially fruitful avenues of knowledge and research" (Duby and Barker 2017: 2).

For Bruno Latour a distinction between research and science therefore seems consistent. In his view (Latour 1998), science is "cold, straight and detached", while research is warm, emotional, and risky, ultimately also standing for uncertainty. By overemphasizing science, certain aspects have been neglected. As Reckwitz (2017b) points out in his critique of traditional sociological theory, affect, for example, has been neglected for far too long. In contrast, he emphasizes that every social practice is "affectively tuned in a particular way and has, as such, a built-in affective dimension" (Reckwitz 2017b: 118). In the context of Artistic Research, German philosopher Anke Haarmann (2019: 75–82) emphasizes that the emergence of Artistic Research can only be understood against the backdrop of this critique of science and research forming at the end of the 20th century.

This awareness of the relationship between knowledge, power, and injustice is addressed in the context of the discourse around 'epistemic injustice' according to Miranda Fricker, among others (Fricker 2007; Kidd et al. 2017). This concept broadly encompasses forms of discrimination, racism, oppression, or disrespect that lead to exclusion from knowledge contexts, distortions and misrepresentations of experience, and ultimately inequitable knowledge production. Epistemic injustices and imbalances are also prevalent, or at least present, in institutionalized music research and education (Ewell 2020; Morrison 2019; Grasswick 2017). Ethnomusicology and popular music studies also faced defamatory discourses and exclusions from academic institutions in the 20th century, and in parts continue to do so today.

Epistemic injustices and epistemic inertia are part of the core critique of Artistic Research. In fact, one of its strengths is the rediscovery of non-linguistic forms of knowledge long excluded, such as "intuitive, embodied, tacit, imaginative, affective and sensory ways of knowing" (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 1). Swiss

philosopher Jens Badura therefore refers to the distinction, deeply anchored in our Western thinking, between "on the one hand intuitive, immediate cognition, and on the other hand discursive, reason-based cognition" (Badura 2015: 43). The view, manifested since the Enlightenment, that "reasons for knowledge claims" had to be provided in the sense of evidence, not only meant the restriction of cognition to rational-conceptual argumentation and logic, but also degraded intuitive cognition as a mere precursor of discursive cognition (Badura 2015: 44). Badura argues for a complementary, post-antagonistic understanding of intuitive and discursive cognition (Badura 2015: 47). This expansion could create a "negotiating space of different ways of knowing", dealing with aspects of expertise, conceptualizations, subjectivity, and affects in tense ways (Badura 2015: 48). It ultimately also means that Artistic Researchers can by no means hide behind an affirmative understanding of "a 'completely different' cognition" (Badura 2015: 48) – and thereby abet the mystification and obfuscation of artistic creation.

By problematizing precisely this, Artistic Research literally demands an expanded understanding of knowledge. Hence, Robin Nelson (2013: 37–47) distinguishes several "modes of knowing" and speaks of a "know-how" ('insider knowledge', experiential, haptic, tacit and embodied), a "know-what" that is explicated through critical reflection and a "know-that" which is ascertained by third parties through observation and analysis. In any case, it is characteristic that artistic knowledge represents a particular form of subjective and situated knowledge (Barrett 2014; Huber et al. 2021, eds.; Coessens 2014, 2021). Artistic practices are then made intelligible as "negotiating, positioned webs of meaning and fruitful for the field of research as a negotiation space about insight" (Haarmann 2019: 61). In doing so, Artistic Research unfolds its full potential as "epistemic aesthetics" (Haarmann 2019), revealing different knowledge between art and theory (Mersch 2015: 131ff.). However, it is less about the cognitive content of art per se than about the modes of cognition in artistic processes.

Another perspective that relates and adds to a critical reflection on Artistic Research is offered by a decolonial perspective and the sovereignty of knowledge traditions. It resonates with the discussed critique on dominant western concept of knowledge production and power, as "decolonization is intertwined with and politically related to, feminism, queer studies, anti-ableism, anti-racism, the dismantling of white supremacy, and anti-capitalism" (Zemke and Tecun 2021: 1). A decolonial perspective critically questions and transforms the impact of Eurocentric cultural models, which privilege, among others, "writing over orality; and linguistic culture over inscriptive cultures of other kinds (dance, graphic arts […])" (Ashcroft et al. 2013: 75). As Sweeney Windchief and Jason Cummins (2022: 158–161) point out, there is an ongoing process of acknowledging Indigenous knowledge in Western academic contexts, that seeks to establish an "epistemological pluralism" and a "specific purpose of bicultural accountability and the protection of community held IKTs [Indigenous knowledge traditions]". While decolonization is increasingly taking shape in certain academic disciplines such as sociology (Connell 2018), it can be considered that cultural practices offer essential access and routes of this process that can be made accessible in new ways through Artistic Research (Mani 2021; Lin and Kretz 2020; see also Hannula et al. 2014: 65–68). In taking up this perspective, I am in no way trying to make a derogatory equation of a freely chosen affiliation with minority groups (e.g. artists)

with a birth-given affiliation in a socially determined minority. My point is rather: Artistic Research needs to embrace and learn from these perspectives and relatively new voices in research. They enable us to identify und fully understand "epistemological violence" (Robinson 2020: 6). At the same time, this illustrates that Artistic Research can by no means be limited to the university as a place that has certain barriers to entry.

A consequence of such a decolonial approach is a critical perspective on 'art', which is certainly one of the challenges of Artistic Research. However, an issue seems to arise only from a traditional anti-practice antagonism. Ethnomusicologist John Blacking emphasized already around 1980, that art does not "consist of products, but of the processes by which people make sense of certain kinds of activity and experience" (Blacking 1981: 9). Art is "a multifunctional social phenomenon because it is situated in a complex system of collective (economic, social, political, cultural) and individual needs" (Zembylas 2007: 263), and hence cannot follow a closed, essentialist concept in the 21st century. Further, Ethiopian scholars Fasil Merawi Tessagaye and Alex Minichele Sewenet (2017: 353) argue that art understood as community-based, situated practice can play an essential role as a tool and agent of "mental decolonization" in order to "bring radical social transformation in our society." Ashcroft (2015) argues for the strength of "affective responses" and a "material resonance" as non-cognitive qualities of aesthetics across cultural boundaries. It seems that the discussion around this rather clarifies the following: a consequence of the Practice Research turn is then to transcend the traditional Eurocentric hegemonic boundaries of 'art' and rather understand 'art' as non-exclusive but highly sophisticated and situated practices that span over very different forms.

Considering Fricker's 'epistemic injustice', Badura's 'negotiating space' and various decolonial perspectives I argue that popular music research would benefit substantially from a connection to the broader discourse around Artistic Research. It has then the potential to contribute to an 'epistemic mosaic' resp. a 'mosaic epistemology' (Connell 2018) by drawing on decolonizing and intersectional approaches of research, creating an "epistemological pluralism" and pool of distinctive forms of knowledge in academia and higher education.

Current Debates on Artistic Research

Although becoming increasingly accepted, Artistic Research is still heavily under discussion. Current debates revolve especially around the status of institutionalization and academization. On the one hand, there are increasing calls for the establishment of new programs, journals, fundings. In Germany, for example, the current situation is strongly criticised. The German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat 2021), an independent body with an advisory function, diagnosed a general lack of Artistic Research and certain backwardness of existing programs in Germany, especially at the postgraduate level at art and music colleges. It further expresses the need for an appropriate development of internationally compatible programs. However, at German music universities Artistic Research is a "belated discipline" (Jacobshagen 2020: 13), still very limited and highly debated, accompanied by years of skepticism and even prevention on

the part of established disciplines such as musicology. Interestingly, only recently a new panel of experts from the network of music colleges developed guidelines for the inclusion of artistic music research, and also advocated anchoring Artistic Research in the curriculum as "propaedeutic practice" already at the bachelor level (RKM 2020).

On the contrary, a tendency of subordination to the administrative university is being discussed on the part of the artist-researchers. While these issues were partly addressed as potential threats more than ten years ago (Coessens et al. 2009: 17ff.), more confident criticism has recently been voiced of an increased academization and institutionalization and the alignment processes that accompany it (Cotter 2019; Henke et al. 2020; Slager 2022; Nelson 2022: 24–25). Thus, the *Manifesto of Artistic Research. A Defense Against Its Proponents* represents a fundamental critique, especially of the methodological-theoretical and institutional subordination to an "university-academic regime" (Henke et al.. 2020: 6). Artistic Research would lose its autonomy, so they argue, since the arts are characterized precisely by the fact that they "do not proceed according to a strict method (a met'hodos) in prefigured trajectories, but in the form of leaps, side-walks, or detours (...)." (Henke et al. 2020: 13). Cultural studies researcher Cornelia Caduff also diagnoses that Artistic Research is increasingly dominated by scholars and theorists who are not themselves involved in artistic practice at all (Caduff 2017: 321–322)—which threatens to reinforce a renewed imbalance and distancing from the potentials of Artistic Research. Artist-researchers are also criticizing the *Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research* from 2020, signed by the leading institutions and professional groups of Artistic Research. Here, the still outstanding integration, especially into the OECD's *Frascati Manual*, and funding programs are being criticized (AEC 2020). Artist-researcher in turn question its approved subordination to university and neoliberal contexts (Cramer and Terpsma 2021). In fact, being an artist-researcher demands a "dual consciousness" (Osborne 2022: 11), with the threat of subordination not just to a methodological regime, but also to the "current research condition in its institutional over-determination by its capital functions" (Osborne 2022: 12). For Osborne, the subsumption to the administrative logic of university "destroys" the ontological form and potential of art, so that "critically significant contemporary art practices are not likely to be generated within, and certainly not out of, the current higher-educational art-institutional situation" (Osborne 2022: 11, 13). However, there is also the argument that for artists, the context of the university can offer a relatively unconstrained experimental space in contrast to creative industries trimmed to efficiency (Nelson 2022: 10–11). In this respect, the concrete conditions must be discussed and fairly negotiated.

At the core of these debates in the 2010s, the European Artistic Research Network recognizes the focus on the ontological question 'what is' Artistic Research. Instead, the focus should be on application, exploration, and shaping a transformative discourse of what they call a "postresearch condition" (Slager 2022: 2). These current debates once again highlight the conflictual potential of Artistic Research (and Practice Research in general), as this 'conflict of faculties' (Borgdorff) is also about interpretive sovereignty, power and resources. At the same time it reveals the conflict of art and research in general as being embedded in neoliberal higher education and creative industries nowadays.

Practice Research in Popular Music Studies

Forms of music practice research initially developed very differently in different regions of the world, especially in the USA, the UK and AUS/NZ, in the past decades. This can be seen in the multitude of different doctoral degrees and titles, which in the case of the USA, for example, with the establishment of the Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA), goes back to the 1950s and in some cases even further (Cook 2015: 12-13). In a global perspective, James Elkins identified six different "Cultures of PhD" in the field of Artistic Research in general: a British, a Scandinavian, a continental European, a Japanese, a Chinese, and a North American model (Elkins 2014: 10-11), with the British model also being found in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, Uganda, and some more. Corresponding music-related programs in the United Kingdom and Australia/New Zealand in particular have been able to develop increasingly since the 1980s due to reforms of the higher education sector and research funding (Jacobshagen 2020: 23–32; see also Nelson 2022: 127–180).

Practice Research already played a role in the early phase of Popular Music Studies. Philipp Tagg (2011) emphasizes that already during the founding phase of the IASPM special emphasis was placed on internationality, interdisciplinarity and interprofessionality. Interdisciplinarity meant not only the consideration of diverse research disciplines, mostly anchored in university contexts, such as musicology, sociology, or political science, but also "music making" (Tagg 2011: 3). Interprofessionality was addressed to "because it is impossible to understand much about music without considering it in relation to the multitude of functions it can fulfill, or without consulting a wide range of those who, in one way or another, mediate musical experience" (Tagg 2011: 4). However, according to Tagg, it is precisely this objective of IASPM that has been compromised due to "epistemologically restrictive hierarchies of ideas, discourses and approaches" (Tagg 2011: 4). He identifies as reasons for this not only social and economic causes, but also a deeply rooted dichotomy of art and science, which he calls "epistemic inertia". Rupert Till summarizes two years later that the central issues of popular music studies, also as a reaction to narrow and inappropriate methods of historical musicology, certainly revolved less around music practices of composing or performing and led to a lack of appropriate methods (Till 2013: 3). He also reiterates the call for more interprofessional approaches to be included in popular music studies. Following on from this, Bruce Johnson (2013) criticizes the problematic neglect of aspects of corporeality, affects, and materialities that are relevant to concrete musical practices. He too identifies a deeper epistemological problem as the cause of this, in that we often invoke theories, technical mediation, and disciplinary boundaries. These tend to shape and maintain a distance between theoretical discourse and concrete musical practice, which, after all, they ultimately seek to interpret within their disciplinary boundaries (Johnson 2013: 103–104).

Referring to Tagg's critique and the debate that followed, the 2/2017 issue of *IASPM@Journal* focused on "Practice-Led and Practice-Based Popular Music Studies." Pointing to the tradition of practice-based research in the UK and Australia, Till (2017) notes that such research in popular music studies has been quite narrow to date, with a focus on technological aspects such as music

production (Till 2017: 5–6). He emphasizes that music research that aims at an artistic product as an essential part is now taken for granted in fields such as European art music and that it should therefore not be surprising in popular music studies to use concrete music practice as a method as well (Till 2017: 4). Rather, he argues, audio contributions, for example, are a natural format for popular music in general.

The '21st Century Music Practice Research Network', founded by Simon Zagorski-Thomas in 2016, is also linked to this debate and offers a platform of testing and sharing concrete approaches. Zagorski-Thomas launched this network to offer a solution to the call for interdisciplinary and interprofessional music research. In workshops and conferences, researchers and practitioners gather, whereby there is no restriction to popular music, but rather a wide variety of musical cultures are to be considered (21st CMPRN). The network deals in a productive way with new possibilities of research dissemination. Already in 2015, Zagorski-Thomas (2015) pointed out his understanding of what he called back then "artistic practice-as-research". Important arguments are that "a text-based analysis is not necessarily the best way of presenting this sort of [research]", but would be better represented by a variety of forms of "multi-media templates" (Zagorski-Thomas 2015: 32). The network and the publications are highly credited for following an inclusive, holistic understanding of music and sound as well as intercultural approaches. Zagorski-Thomas' work recently culminated in a "practical musicology" proposing a transformed musicological expertise for the purpose of practice and Artistic Research (Zagorski-Thomas 2022)—which is also evidence of how the transformation of research and higher education is also affecting the established disciplines.

Artistic Research Perspectives for Popular Music Studies

Practice and Artistic Research can be understood as methodology (Nelson 2013, 2022; Haarmann 2019; Hannula 2014; Coessens et al. 2009). Practice is the key method of research (Nelson 2013: 9), functioning as focal point and nexus to other methods. There are often more or less established qualitative research methods applied, such as field work and autoethnography, videography, music analysis, interviews, artefact analysis, among others. However, these methods can be limiting and predetermining. In artistic music research, specific facets of the practice, such as a performance, lyrics writing, or sound design and production, can function as method. Important to acknowledge is that the practice, the process of doing, is fluid, non-linear and driven by self-reflexivity. The purpose of research methods is then to acknowledge and reflect the process and researcher's unique perspective. Hence the artist-researcher evaluates the potential and appropriateness of methods in the process repeatedly which can lead to a very bespoke mix of methods, a "methodological pluralism" (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 45). This can also include less conventional research methods. For instance, one could count the steps walked during the songwriting process with a pedometer – quantitative data that reveals its meaningfulness and appropriateness only against the background of the self-reflective individual practice.

A relevant part of the research practice is what Bulley and Şahin (2021: 1–2) call the "research narrative". The narrative "articulates the research inquiry that emerges

in practice" (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 1). It determines the form of dissemination, depending on the research practice and focus, and includes different types such as performance, recording, and spoken or written text, providing further context and explanation.

Under the term Artistic Research, popular music has so far played only a subordinate role, which is problematic from the discussed point of view. Nevertheless, it is now generally accepted that popular music has developed its own distinctive forms as artistic, aesthetic, and creative practices. As Blacking pointed out already in 1981, "musical skills are not required any less for 'folk' and 'popular' music than for 'art' music […] Pop musicians are no less meticulous about rehearsal than symphony orchestras" (Blacking 1981: 12). Hence, artistic research helps to shed light on these particular practices in popular music. The following brief outline is intended to provide an overview of previous and suggestions for future research in artistic music research in general (Zaddach 2021: 16–17). It will be clear that these issues are also addressed by general music research, which only further reinforces the potential for collaboration.

Performance practices and performativity. This field is obviously one of the main fields and includes various aspects such as

- interaction and entrainment in performance on stage, in the studio, rehearsal room
- improvisation and musical interpretation (phrasing, expression, among others)
- historical performance practice and styles/genres
- intertextuality and referentiality,
- composing/songwriting, arrangement and lyrics writing
- beat making, sampling and remixing,
- music production in the widest sense, focusing on technologies such as DAWs, interfaces and other tools and their agency in artistic practices.

Within artistic music research in general, many of these themes have already been addressed, often within an experimental approach (Assis 2018; D'Errico 2018, 2021; Schwab 2018; Crispin and Gilmore 2014). Especially questions of improvisation and interaction with other musicians (Peters 2020; Lüneburg 2018) are also already picked up in the context of popular music and jazz (Burke 2021; Kahr 2018, 2021; Meelberg 2021; Haaland 2020; Onsman and Burke 2017). Further, performance and social aspects of specific popular music genres are of interest (Exarchos 2021; Miller et al. 2021; Almås 2019).

Performativity also includes themes such as body and affect, space and atmosphere, staging, lighting, and sound design. Especially aspects of embodied knowledge and the body as a carrier of knowledge and affective processes in performance have been addressed so far (Buyken 2020; Smith 2017; Snowber 2016; Meelberg 2011).

Part of it would also be aspects of music production, such as sound design and composition processes in the recording studio (Haarmann 2020; Howlett 2009) as well as in multimedia contexts such as music videos, games, or X-reality. For

instance, aspects of coding and designing digital musical instruments and tools have been acknowledged in the context of artistic music research (Teboul 2021; Schindler 2018: 41–136; Rutz 2018).

Processes of learning and knowledge acquisition. Processes of learning are essential for musical practices and can include institutionalized and informal learning environments, such as scene-specific musical codes. In current debates on Artistic Research there has been an increased turn towards the fundamental question of knowledge and knowledge production in and through musical practices (Jacobshagen 2020; Huber et al. 2021, eds.). As argued, Artistic Research can offer a powerful tool for learning processes in higher music education (Jam Music Lab 2021; McMullen 2021; Hughes 2017; Wilson and van Ruiten 2014). Inquiries could deal with questions of specific playing methods and techniques, learning to play new instruments, self-reflexivity and self-knowledge (Burke 2021; Zaddach 2019).

Negotiation of working and living conditions and their effects on artistic practice. Even though working and living conditions are not part of artistic practice at first sight, they are an essential part of it. For example, aspects of working conditions closely connected to performance, such as teamwork and conflicts, touring, physical and mental health, drug use, affect artistic practices. As McKinna (2014: 68) argues, "playing night after night is both an obstacle to overcome and a position of necessity to affirm." The requirements of entrepreneurship in the field of music are manifold, their impact on the artistic practice yet rather unrevealed from the artist point of view.

Although not a purely Artistic Research project, *Black Metal, Trauma, Subjectivity and Sound* by British musicologist and musician Jasmine Hazel Shadrack is a remarkable contribution to linking Artistic Research approaches and genre-specific popular music research. The five chapters span over topics such as history of black metal, gender in extreme metal, and composing and performing black metal. In doing so, Shadrack demonstrates her reflection on direct experience from musical practice on the one hand, and comprehensive discursivity of cultural studies on the other hand. Performing the music opened another 'dialogical space' for processing her trauma of male domestic violence and abuse (Shadrack 2020: 15). Part of Shadrack's Artistic Research is the analysis of the songwriting and performing processes, describing it as "emptying out", leading into a temporarily transformational self-experience together with the genre-specific performance characteristics (such as screaming/growling, fast tremolo picking on the highly distorted guitar, blast-beats on the drums, among others) (Shadrack 2020: 17).

Artistic negotiation of meta-issues. Closely connected to working and living conditions are socially relevant meta-issues or themes, for example intersectional issues of discrimination and oppression, social inequality, climate crisis and environmental sustainability. Artistic practice can and does offer specific contributions to such issues. For instance, music becomes more and more relevant for debates on climate change and environmental pollution (Ribac and Harkins 2020; Wodak 2018; Kagan and Kirchberg 2016), Artistic Research can offer a promising view connecting climate research with aesthetic forms (Kagan 2015; Zaddach 2023).

As discussed under the aspect of decolonization, Artistic Research has the potential to broaden knowledge through aspects of cultural identity, otherness,

transculturality, among others. In the context of artistic music research, promising research has been undertaken (Mani 2021; Lin and Kretz 2020; Medbøe 2013), demonstrating the transformative potential of intercultural dialogue and decolonizing Western academia.

Further, following Marcel Cobussen's (2021: 291) understanding of Artistic Research as an "unexpected but nevertheless expectant exploration of a network of nodes, agents, and their relations through making art", an interesting, posthumanist and post-anthropocentric perspective opens up. The inclusion of non-human actors and objects and their agency in the artistic process and its reflection can be seen as particularly revealing. This perspective makes it possible, for example, to discuss the wind as a player on a mountaintop in field recordings in Vietnam (Östersjö and Nguyễn Thanh Thủy 2021) or to investigate the specific sound of a recording studio (Thompson 2021). Without question, AI, which is being used more and more in the form of „human-computer co-exploration" and „distributed human-computer co-creativity" (Giotti 2021: 56, 62-64), is an important area of exploration, offering unique and important perspectives on creativity and technology through Artistic Research (Tillmann and Zaddach 2022; Borgdorff et al. 2020).

Artistic Research in Higher Popular Music Education

For quite some time, Artistic Research has been considered to play an important role in higher education (Wilson and van Ruiten 2014) yet faces certain challenges and issues. Higher education is ultimately determined by economic, political, and educational factors (Blain and Minors 2020: 15). The emergence of knowledge markets led to a dominance of the neoliberal logic of commodifying knowledge and education. Additionally, in many countries, higher education became a contested market on an international level, with public sector universities competing with private ones. The transformation of higher education can be observed in the absorption or amelioration of "business-style language to reflect our market-driven obsession" (Duby and Barker 2017: 4).

Smith (2016) critiques the often-repressed entanglements of higher music education with neoliberal logics, describing it as a form of "symbolic violence". One aspect that is widespread is to see students as (future) cultural entrepreneurs in the creative industry. Smith finds this logic barely compatible with the values of a democracy-based (popular music) education (Smith 2016). As I understand it, there is a danger of a self-reinforcing effect with Artistic Research becoming more integrated into the university: the artist-researcher, not necessarily a fresh graduate, may see research from the viewpoint of an entrepreneur, as an additional asset to further optimize his own branding and unique selling points for the creative industries as well the contested higher education market. This illustrates the significance of the dissemination of research findings, collaboration, and ultimately research spaces freed from neoliberal logic.

Interestingly, popular music and especially more practically oriented programs are growing, at least in the UK (Warner 2017: 136–137). This practice shift in higher education requires academically validated programs. David Henson and Simon Zagorski-Thomas even plea for a new agenda of higher popular music education. They approve of an approach which enables students to "develop the habit of

critically engaging with their respective and collective HPME [higher popular music education) journeys as reflexive cultural process" (Henson and Zagorski-Thomas 2019: 21). Practice and Artistic Research seem to offer ideal approaches and methods to learn and practice such learning objectives. As Bulley and Şahin (2021b: 1) point out, it is being emphasized by many scholars that "Practice Research enriches not just higher education but learning and knowledge acquisition in other contexts including creative industries, scientific settings, non-profit organisations and independent bodies". They further argue that the close relationship of professional practice and Practice Research enables "situated learning in education" in a certain way (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 13), and that both are "vital for a healthy and prospering higher education environment" (ibid.: 56). Therefore, the implementation of such approaches in the curricula is already convincing at the bachelor level (RKM 2020): In shared learning spaces, future professional musicians and music managers could learn more about their specific thinking and doing, artists could link theoretical knowledge, for instance about affect, with their concrete artistic practice, musicologists could support the artists and at the same time learn more about the practice of secondary research and knowledge transfer. Challenges are to adjust the tasks and assessments in ways that match the different levels and background, especially in an international market with locally varying quality standards. Even though such approaches for the BA- or MA-level may not yet fully qualify as Artistic Research: They place concrete individual practice at the center and, accompanied by research, help to train one's own critical reflexivity.

From my own teaching experience and a survey in the form of group interviews during an MA seminar on 'Research & Practice' at BIMM Berlin, the following can be concluded: the students appreciate the close connection of their individual musical practice with research assignments (which are seen as an unavoidable, but "annoying" part of the MA program by some). The introduction or deepening of understandings of research in general (such as qualitative and quantitative research, hermeneutics, among others) and Artistic Research in particular turned out to be a promising approach. Problematic, however, is that only one semester of three hours class time each week and practice-based assignments appear to be insufficient for at least some students: They may struggle to gain sufficient experience in the world of research, to become familiar with forms of inquiry, actual reading and critical evaluation of literature, development of research questions, and vocabulary. Learning to properly articulate oneself and write requires practice and time. Additionally, managing both, delivering a convincing artistic project and fulfilling academic requirements, creates another level of challenge. While some students learn and progress fast, others have a hard time coping with the general idea of research. This problem is due in part to the widely varying levels of prior experience in scholarly work within the BA on an international level.

Further challenges for an adequate higher education embedded in Practice Research lie in having appropriately trained and active teaching staff with sophisticated skills both in in music practice and research, appropriate resources and spaces, funding opportunities for projects, and in cultivating a transdisciplinary working environment through collaboration with other art and research-focused departments. For instance, the problem of the academic space in a university is particularly evident in the power relations between students and teacher, even more

so when the spaces do not (yet) represent constellations that are appropriate to the research paradigm, as the philosopher Tere Vadén acknowledges (Hannula et al. 2014: 53–54). This illustrates the necessary change in institutional settings to establish convincing, internationally competitive programs and realizing the potentials of Artistic Research.

Collaborative Research

Finally, I plea for a collaborative approach to practice and Artistic Research. Nicolas Till (2020: xi) argues with reference to sociologist of knowledge Barry Barnes that "any form of practice is, in effect, a form of 'collective action' to the extent that it always enters into an existing field". As Bulley and Şahin argue, collaboration in Practice Research can break down "boundaries between disciplines, between the institutional and non-institutional research communities, and opening the domain of research to the wealth of under-represented ways of knowing" (Bulley and Şahin 2021: 25–26). Collaborative research can function then as a negotiation space and a model. Through epistemic irritations, collaborative research could unfold its potential as a "catalytic practice" (Bieler et al. 2020: 89). As Martin Tröndle (2012: 192) points out, the unpredictability of artistic practices makes collaboration between scientists and artists difficult and requires a "high level of moderation in the research process". Stévance und Lacasse (2018: 16–18, 136–137) plea for a collaborative interdisciplinary approach in the form of joint projects. However, the challenge is not to fall back into old hierarchical patterns of collaboration between researchers and artists as simple data providers, as a standard mode in previous research collaborations (Born 2021). Musicologist, Artistic Researcher and classical pianist Mine Doğantan-Dack (2020, 2022) is critical about collaborative Practice Research in interdisciplinary teams of, e.g., musicologists, music theorists, psychologists and practicing musicians. According to her experience, such work is still too often dominated by established knowledge hierarchies and fails to recognize "the much wider meaning- and theory-producing affordances of the act of performing". This illustrates that the transformational potential of transdisciplinary collaborative Artistic Research has yet to be fully realized.

As new as the field of Artistic Research is, it demands prudent reflections on the settings and conditions of collaboration. Blain and Minors (2020) propose a strategic approach based on an understanding of collaboration as a continuum. Their frame consists of three main fields: project development, regulatory requirements, and content development, and includes aspects such as a vision statement, core values and processes of the collaboration, risk assessment, and modes of dissemination, among others. Especially the references to different modes of action and interaction as well as ethics in collaboration are important to consider (Haaland 2020: Chap. 1), especially if we take decolonial approaches and epistemic justice serious.

Collaboration seems to fit well with the conditions of popular music, since it is an important characteristic of many forms of it (Henson and Zagorski-Thomas 2019: 14; Bennett 2012). In addition, collaborative learning is an approach well-suited

for higher education, even though adequate education methods and theories are still lagging (Henson and Zagorski-Thomas 2019: 15).

Further, collaborative research seems to be the most promising approach to overcome 'epistemic injustices', acknowledge the various decolonial perspectives and create an open 'negotiating space'. In collaborative research not only theories and concepts can be evaluated and reviewed, also new forms of knowledge transfer can be developed as well as an experience-based and culturally sensitizing artistic, scientific, didactic, and managerial education. In doing so, collaborative artistic music research could convincingly contribute to a 'mosaic epistemology' and reach interprofessionalism. This could provide new perspectives for research, which would realize itself both within –between different departments – and outside the university, for example in the form of community-based research. Here, transdisciplinarity beyond the disciplinary frameworks would be achieved (Bulley and Şahin 2021b: 17).

Conclusion

I argued that practice and Artistic Research developed into a serious research paradigm since the 2000s. I described the critique of Artistic Research of a narrowed understanding of research and knowledge production and discussed current debates that also have as their concern a critical appropriation by the administrative and neoliberal university.

Subsequently, I argued that popular music studies would benefit greatly from becoming more integrated into the discourse around Artistic Research in general and from going beyond genres, styles, and historically and geographically developed musical cultures in artistic music research in particular. My closing argument was that the liberating strength of Artistic Research for the university would unfold even more if Artistic Research were conducted collaboratively, both between the departments of the university and outside of the university or transdisciplinary. It has the potential to create a 'mosaic epistemology' (Connell 2018) by drawing on decolonizing and intersectional approaches to research, creating an "epistemological pluralism" (Windchief and Cummins 2022: 158) and pool of distinctive forms of knowledge in academia and higher education. For that purpose, I offered a frame of potential research fields and questions for popular music studies in particular.

What is certain is that this critique on the current status of Artistic Research, in particular the subordination to conditions of the neoliberal university and higher education, requires a continuous debate and negotiation. Only through acknowledging the full and still-emerging potential of artistic music research, collaborating at eye level beyond dogmatic claims of interpretative sovereignty and, in particular, applying and exploring projects, can a serious transformative discourse take place.

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