

Building a “Heavy Metal World” Cultural Entrepreneurship in the Polish People’s Republic

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores how cultural entrepreneurs built a “heavy metal world” in the Polish People’s Republic (PRL), focusing on the years 1980–89. By combining historical analysis with primary research to examine how both fans and artists alike acted together to overcome shortages, scarcity, and repression, this paper supports inclusive definitions of cultural entrepreneurship that go beyond an economic orientation, and acts as case study in an under-researched area to highlight the often uneasy coexistence between states and cultural production. **KEYWORDS:** cultural entrepreneurship, heavy metal, music industry, counterculture, social capital.
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*Twoje życie jest heavy, twoje problemy są heavy
Miasto, w którym mieszkasz jest Heavy Metal!
Nigdzie nie znajdziesz ciszy . . .
Heavy Metal Świat!*

*Your life is heavy, your problems are heavy
The city in which you live is Heavy Metal!
You will never find peace . . .
Heavy Metal World!*

“Heavy Metal World” by TSA (Machel, S., Rzehak, J. & Piekarczyk, M, 1984)

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has become an endemic theme in studies of creative labor and there is today an idea of “music entrepreneurship” (Dumbreck and McPherson, 2016). Many have conceptualized music-makers who behave entrepreneurially as “cultural entrepreneurs” (Scott, 2012, Tschmuck, 2016). While the idea of musicians behaving as entrepreneurs is not necessarily new (Blanning, 2008), it is uncommon for studies of cultural entrepreneurship to take place outside of market-based, capital-available, politically democratic contexts—also defined in psychological literature as Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich et.al, 2010). Cultural entrepreneurship in transition economies, such as those moving from state socialism or communism to capitalism, has indeed been explored, notably as a vehicle for change (Runst, 2013; Nicoara, 2018; Draganova and Draganova, 2019), but significantly less focus has been afforded to cultural entrepreneurialism in a state socialist or communist context. How do we understand cultural entrepreneurship under systems of state socialism or communism, and what does the nature of this entrepreneurial practice tell us about both the complex inter-relationship between the state and musical creativity, and about how we understand and define cultural entrepreneurship?

This paper will explore how cultural entrepreneurs built a “heavy metal world” in the Polish People’s Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, or PRL), in particular between the years 1980 and 1989. Drawing on both primary interviews and historical textual analysis, this paper uses heavy metal under the PRL as a case study on how processes of entrepreneurial fandom alongside artistic entrepreneurship allowed heavy metal fans and musicians to build a culture—to build a *world*—outside of the traditional parameters of a market economy and in the face of enormous resource constraints and political repression. In doing so, the findings of this paper problematize narrow economic conceptualizations of cultural entrepreneurship. We thus develop an alternative, inclusive, working definition of cultural entrepreneurship by highlighting entrepreneurial practices within a heavy metal subculture taking place both from the production side and also crucially from the consumption side too. We draw on Becker’s (1982) concept of collaborative *Art Worlds* and suggest that these practices represent what we term “world-building” rooted in the development of a culture understood—drawing on the work of Hall (1997) and Morley and Chen (1996)—as “practices through which people create meaningful worlds in which to live” (Negus, 1999, p. 20). Finally, this paper presents an insight into a specific example of cultural production’s paradoxical relationship with the state whereby the Polish state-sanctioned Houses of Culture—which sought to promote an ideological, hegemonic project of “cultural enlightenment”—inadvertently provided the vessel within which countercultural entrepreneurial practices were cultivated.

Conceptualizing Cultural Entrepreneurship

While the definition of entrepreneurship is notoriously hard to pin down, many adopt an explicit market orientation, for example: “individuals who open businesses, that is, they become self-employed” (Runst, 2013, p. 603). As explored by Betzler and Camina (2020, p. 2), this is

true for definitions of *cultural entrepreneurship* too, whereby understandings of these practices are often rooted in their contributions toward and within formal cultural or creative industries. As such, cultural entrepreneurship is often understood in the context of developing new markets (Scott, 2012; Acheson, Maule, and Filleul, 1996; Dempster, 2009), or identifying and exploiting new sources of capital (Wilson and Stokes, 2005). Definitions of this kind imply a “strict orientation towards the economic context, towards market logic, the relationship between supply and demand, price mechanisms, and monetary goals” (Betzler and Camina, 2020, p. 2).

However, understanding cultural entrepreneurship within a narrow economic conceptualization problematizes how we might make sense of it taking place under authoritarian or even totalitarian contexts of state socialism or communism whereby a market logic is forbidden, and indeed—as per the work of Marquis and Qiao (2018)—wherein the socialization of citizens may lead to the internalization of this logic. That being said, case studies exploring the political economy of cultural production have done much to inform how we understand the relationship between authoritarian political regimes and cultural *production* in particular (see work by Bezein (1994) on production practices of state-subsidized theater in fascist Italy, or Monasterio-Barso (2018) on cultural entrepreneurship in Havana). Recent work by Zhang and Corse (2019) on the Chinese Model Opera during the Cultural Revolution importantly highlights the role these forms of political organization play not only in cultural production, but also in shaping processes of consumption.

Studies such as these point towards the importance of broadening our understanding of cultural entrepreneurship to move beyond an economic, marketized articulation, and one which broadens the range of actors within it. Many of the more all-encompassing definitions of cultural entrepreneurship are still relatively narrow insofar as they center ideas of the personal, such as increasing levels of personal artistic recognition if not economic reward (Behnke, 2010; Klamer, 2011; Scott, 2012; Musgrave, 2014) often rooted in ideas around the accumulation and maximization of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Other definitions are somewhat broader, privileging the idea of creating social and cultural value (Anheier and Isar, 2008), while others are broader still, seeing cultural entrepreneurship as being driven by a cultural mission (Rentschler, 2003). A broad definition of this kind has been developed in the work of Essig (2015, p. 228), who highlights that entrepreneurial practice in the cultural sector may occur in what she calls “extra-economic circumstances” where the aims and objectives cannot be understood within a narrow financial orientation. This work helpfully articulates the need to understand the means and ends of this particular kind of entrepreneurship by examining the arts and culture sector in the United States. However, as per the work of Chang and Wyszomirski (2015), the context within which entrepreneurial practice takes place is key. This therefore leads us to ask what cultural entrepreneurship understood in this way might look like in a radically different societal and political composition.

Methodology

It is relevant at this juncture to outline why heavy metal in Poland is such an apposite site of

academic inquiry. While Polish heavy metal is globally recognized and is known to have its own unique metal scene with a variety of bands and record labels, especially in the subgenres of death and black metal (Patterson, 2013, 2015, 2016; Page, 2015), the history and foundations of it have not been exhaustively analyzed. While scholars such as Christe (2003), and to a certain extent Mudrian (2004), acknowledge the role of heavy metal in Poland during the PRL and appreciate the potential for alternative subcultures to exist under authoritarian or totalitarian governments, they do not attempt to understand *how* that subculture *worked*, and in this sense their analysis does not sufficiently interrogate the uniqueness of the heavy metal identity that formed in Poland at this time. As an argumentative paradigm, this is insufficient to understand Polish heavy metal, and in this sense, we agree with Weinstein (2000, p. 96) that: “One cannot assume that the audience for heavy metal in England matches such audiences in the United States, Japan or Poland. The metal audience in the late 1980s may not be the same as it was in the mid-1970s. . . . Intelligent analysis demands an awareness of these and other distinctions within the audience, as well as a realization that these differences may be more or less significant.” It is this that we seek to do below.

Archival material on heavy metal music from the time of the PRL, including zines, magazines, recordings, published interviews, written recollections in books—notably in *Jaskinia Hałas* (Lis and Godlewski, 2012, 2015)—and other secondary sources were key. Artist biographies were central to the analysis too, including *Vader: Wojna Totalna* by Jarosław Szubrycht (2014) about the band Vader, and *Ten Gitarowy Huk: Historia Zespołu TSA* by Maciej Nowak (2011) about the band TSA. Many important books, magazines, and DVDs in the Polish language are from Athanassiou’s personal collection and translated into English, given Polish fluency. Dominic Athanassiou (coauthor) developed the heavy metal website Metal Rescusants between the years 2011 and 2018, and has developed a wealth of archival data and an understanding of the cultural scene both as a fan of the genre and as a publicist for a Polish record label. In addition, interviews were conducted with Piotr Wiwczarek (founding member of the band Vader) in 2014, as well as Grzegorz Fijałkowski and Wojciech Lis both in 2016 who were active in the Polish heavy metal scene throughout the 1980s.

Findings

Wszyscy żyliśmy w tym samym przeciętnie gównie i trzeba było we własnym zakresie kolorować co się da w naszym życiu, choć nie było za dużo kredek w zasięgu ręki.

We all lived in the same shithole, so we had to color whatever we could on our own in our life, even if we did not have many crayons within the reach of our hands.

—Misterkiewicz in Lis & Godlewski, 2012, p. 174

The findings below follow in four components. The first contextualizes heavy metal music production and consumption in Poland by outlining some key features of the political infrastructure of the PRL, focusing in particular on how the state understood its role in the production and consumption of culture. Part two examines processes of entrepreneurial fandom, while part three looks at entrepreneurial practices among musicians, and part four looks at the key place where these two sides of the cultural entrepreneurial nexus combined for heavy metal under the PRL: concerts.

Poland during the Polish People's Republic (PRL)

Poland was under the rule of the Soviet Union from 1945 until 1989. Unlike most Soviet satellite states, Poland was, according to Davies (2001, p. 9), seen as different due to its “autonomous, national brand of Communism,” conceptualizing Poland as a “client state” rather than a “puppet state” mimicking the governance of the Soviet Union. This independent character might be understood as being driven by the tripartite interaction of fierce nationalism, Polish Catholicism, and cultural pride, which together provided hope and resolve to the population during the struggles of foreign occupation that had largely typified the national experience since 1939. For many people living in Poland during the era of the PRL, everyday life was gray, bleak, and filled with boredom, where lived experience was “shaped by an internalization of the communist ideology, expressed through a denial of subjective agency in favor of an unconditional embrace of collectivist ideals” (Giustino et.al 2012, p. 1). Norman Davies (2005, p. 451) argues, in his multivolume history of Poland, that the living standards were “austere” and that:

alcoholism, bad drains, long queues, peeling plaster, overcrowded homes and buses, polluted air, heavy falls of soot and chemical dust, unmade pavements, sub-standard service, endless delays and arguments with petty officials, all had to be accepted as part of everyday life.

Heavy industry was prioritized over consumer goods and services in the PRL's economic goals. The majority (60 percent) of government investment went into engineering, fuel, and energy, engendering what Kamiński (1991, pp. 4-5) described as “economic self-strangulation,” which manifested in increasing prices for basic consumer goods and widespread civic disillusionment and protestation. On September 17, 1980 these factors contributed to the birth of the popular movement Solidarity, founded as a trade union and led by future Polish president Lech Wałęsa. The movement promoted nonviolent action against the government to create an independent Poland free from the Soviet Union. As a result of increasing protests and political activism, in 1981 the government introduced martial law, which lasted for two years, allowing the authorities to impose even stricter control on its population through curfews, restrictions on travel, monitoring of phone calls, and strict punishment for “dissent” (Davies 2001, p. 21).

Houses of Culture and Cultural Enlightenment

Despite consumer goods shortages, bleak living conditions, and martial law, the PRL experienced an influx of creativity during the 1980s, whereby “Polish literary culture was thriving”

and “monumental sculpture, drama, graphics and instrumental music reached standards of international excellence” (Davies, 2005, pp. 457-8). However, 1980s Poland was an authoritarian state with an official ideology and instructions on what form culture and music should take. This cultural ideology, known as *cultural enlightenment*, is described by White (1990, p. 1) thus:

the socialization of adults and children in their spare time through participation in non-professional arts and other cultural activities . . . inculcating values and mobilizing the population. . . . Its three basic principles are belief in the need to equalize access to culture, belief that such access can change human behavior, and belief that the party can and must control the nature of the culture which is created or provided.

This cultural policy had the aim, at least in part, of preventing the formation of subcultures and countercultures. To strengthen the implementation of this policy, the government introduced Houses of Culture in every region of the country to tighten its control outside of larger cities such as Warsaw or Krakow. These Houses of Culture were places where anyone could create, participate in, or just watch state-sanctioned art for free; whether it was music, dance, or theater, and were furnished with the necessary equipment for everyone to use (White 1990; Patton, 2012). What went wrong for the government, particularly in the decade of the 1980s, is that these official places of leisure and culture—along with state radio and state youth magazines—became a hotbed for up-and-coming and nonconformist talent of the 1980s punk, rock, and heavy metal music boom, which would challenge the government, both directly (punk) and indirectly (heavy metal) (Patton, 2012; Lis and Godlewski, 2012, 2015; White, 1990).

The Paradox of Heavy Metal

At least partly in response to civic activism, strikes, and widespread protests, General Wojciech Jaruzelski—the PRL’s Prime Minister and Head of State from 1981 to 1989, described by Pelinka (1999, p. 11) as a “General-Dictator”—subsidized rock to win over the youth and keep them from joining political movements like Solidarity, by “granting Polish rock bands a virtual *carte blanche* on radio and in concert halls” (Ryback, 1990, p. 182). This could perhaps explain why one of Poland’s most successful heavy metal acts, TSA, was allowed (or perhaps more appropriately, ordered) to perform a concert upon the introduction of martial law on December 13, 1981, and throughout the 1980s performed concerts all over the country, one year during this period performing over three hundred times (Nowak, 2011). Or, as one Polish official, quoted in the *New York Times* (1988) put it: “I prefer them to project their frustrations into bitter protest songs, than to go out into the streets with stones.”

However, this early endorsement (whether tacit or explicit) was reversed by 1984, with the state now seeing rock, punk, and heavy metal as responsible for increasing levels of violence and discontentment among Polish youth, and as emblematic of Western capitalist indulgence, and “not a Polish invention” (Ryback 1990, pp. 185-86). However, whether some politicians disliked such music or not, the government aided in funding and organizing some of the biggest events dedicated to alternative music in Eastern Europe, namely Jarocin Festival (founded in 1980)—

the biggest alternative music festival in Eastern Europe, which also received attention abroad from the BBC—and (in 1986) Metalmania—the only heavy metal festival in Eastern Europe at that time to receive attention from publications abroad such as *Metal Hammer* and *Kerrang!* (Lis & Godlewski, 2012; 2015).

The work of Patton (2012) has been particularly helpful in untangling the complex and often paradoxical relationship between heavy metal music and the state in Poland during the PRL. Focusing primarily on the post-martial law period (1981–89) when Solidarity was driven underground, he finds three contradictions within the state’s official music industry policies at this time:

1. The structure of the Polish music industry under the Division of Culture within the Polish Communist Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, or PZPR) Central Committee was so enormous and complex that formal oversight of its directives was difficult to coordinate and monitor.
2. The industry’s main goal was to deliver cultural goods and “cultural enlightenment,” but widespread scarcity of consumer goods problematized how citizens might, in fact, consume such culture.
3. While the Polish music industry was profit-making, its financial motivations represented a conflict of interest with political ideology, leading to a tense interdependency whereby live performances were the central (often only) source of revenue.

Patton’s examination of the PRL’s music business of the 1980s offers an insightful economic conceptualization of the growth of live heavy metal in this period. However, he also acknowledges that the multiple bureaucratic branches of the state allowed gaps for “burgeoning entrepreneurs [to] pursue their own projects within the bounds of the system” (Patton 2012, p. 6). This is exactly what happened to heavy metal; from the most commercial act to the most underground, you could read about them in state-funded youth magazines, hear them on state radio, watch their concerts in state-funded Houses of Culture, or even see their performances at state-funded festivals such as Jarocin or Metalmania. The paradox, however, is that while these artists were often not conforming to cultural enlightenment they were nonetheless occasionally promoted, even if inadvertently, through state media, and the promotion of these acts was cultivated by entrepreneurs seeking to overcome the intense resource constraints of the country. The following sections therefore will seek to offer detail to Patton’s (2012) economic architecture to enrich and supplement our understanding of heavy metal during this period. In doing so, we examine the ways in which heavy metal musicians and fans—who would later become renowned artists, journalists or editors, record label owners, or promoters—pursued entrepreneurial activities in a country where those might not normally be expected, and analyze the main factors that led to the development of this entrepreneurial subculture.

Entrepreneurial Fandom

Tape Trading and Zines

Despite the aforementioned extreme consumer good scarcities, empty shops, and near total absence of music shops, the Polish heavy metal music was booming in the 1980s. Reflecting the tension outlined by Patton (2012), Szubrycht (2014, p. 97) notes that: “the hunger for new heavy metal and rock music in Poland was huge but the access to music was minimal.” The central mechanisms through which consumers could access heavy metal were state-owned radio programs and state-owned youth magazines that operated in much the same way that we understand the traditional functions of cultural intermediaries today (Bourdieu, 1984; Negus, 2002). Throughout the 1980s, radio presenters aired albums of all types of music (including heavy metal) in their entirety and by the mid-1980s, radio programs started dedicating shows entirely to heavy metal due to its popularity. Shows such as *Muzyka Młodych* (translated as Youth Music), *Metal Top 20* or *Metalowe Tortury* (translated as Metal Tortures), were some of the most important shows through which young fans could discover new heavy metal music. Heavy metal fans were so dedicated that they would record each show on cassettes so they could listen to them repeatedly (Szubrycht, 2014; Lis & Godlewski, 2012, 2015; Lis 2016). At a time when purchasing tapes or CDs was nearly impossible—and if they were available then they were equal to a monthly living wage—radio was the only place the heavy metal youth could listen to albums in their entirety (Darski in Weltrowski & Azarewicz, 2012). The only other alternatives, recalled Wiwczarek in an interview, were via records sent or smuggled by families living abroad, or through private markets where one could purchase or exchange records (Wiwczarek, personal communication, 2014).

The other important medium through which heavy metal fans could learn about new music was through state-owned youth magazines such as *Na Przełaj* or *Magazyn Muzyczny*. These were not specialist heavy metal music magazines but rather covered all kinds of music and youth interests (Szubrycht, 2014; Lis & Godlewski, 2012, 2015). For heavy metal fans, the importance of magazines such as *Na Przełaj* was its contact section. Anyone could advertise themselves, their band, or share ideas with a full contact address. It is via these addresses that the heavy metal scene in the PRL was allowed to network through the post, exchange cassettes recorded from state radio (called tape trading, a phenomenon that existed in the West as well), and get in touch with like-minded people throughout the country. Acquiring these contacts would be the first steps for the heavy metal community in creating networks and cultivating crucial social capital, through which they would pursue entrepreneurial activities such as creating their own zines and organizing concerts. For Fijałkowski (personal communication, 2016), the early tape trading initiatives were the beginning of community building, rooted in passion, where he saw his role as one of “organizer and promoter.”

Another key resource was the emergence of zines (or fanzines) created by the heavy metal fans themselves. These creations were the first publications entirely dedicated to heavy metal in all its forms—from classic heavy metal to the most extreme music—and would become a central source of new heavy metal music discovery (Szubrycht, 2014; Lis & Godlewski, 2012, 2015).



Figure 1. Kmiółek's *Thrash 'em All* zine, found at www.deathmetal.org/zines

These zines also contained addresses of people, bands, and other zine editors from all over the country who were willing to take part in tape trading. They were homemade magazines by dedicated heavy metal fans who would later become important figures of the heavy metal scene and the Polish music industry.

The process of creating a zine during the 1980s was complex and rife with challenges and obstacles. Firstly, editors had to seek out materials such as photographs, reviews, interviews and news. Some of the reviews and interviews were original and typed on a typewriter while some were translated from Western magazines such as *Metal Hammer*. Photographs were usually photocopied from either original sources or other magazines. The logos in the magazines and overall visual design had to be drawn by hand. The reviews, interviews and photographs were then glued onto the designed zine page (Lis & Godlewski, 2012, 2015; Szubrycht, 2014). While this sounds relatively easy, the tools which were necessary for this process, such as glue or staples, were not always there. Mariusz Kmiółek, who is now the manager of the band Vader and the owner of a heavy metal booking agency Massive Music, used an alternative to glue: he mixed flour and water and other ingredients to create a sticky spreadable substance for his magazine *Thrash 'em All* (Lis & Godlewski, 2012, p. 201).



Figure 2. Front cover of *Metallian* zine found at www.deathmetal.org/zines

Tomasz Krajewski—who ran a zine during the PRL entitled *Holocaust* which launched towards the end of the PRL, and is the current owner of Pagan Records—claims that people had to have connections in order to own a typewriter because their ownership was monitored by the government. Krajewski remembers that approval from the Ministry of Culture was needed in order to purchase one, and the cost was approximately equal to two computers today. Therefore, they were reliant on networks of friends, family or colleagues who either already owned such machines or had them at work. Social capital, thus, was of significant importance in an environment lacking in economic capital (Krajewski in Lis & Godlewski, 2012, pp. 204-6). Similarly, photocopying machines were not something everyone owned or had easy access to. There was usually only one photocopying machine or shop in every town or area, and even then the machines often did not work. Wiwczarek recalled in an interview that many of those who created zines in this period travelled long distances to where using photocopying machines was cheaper or of better quality, or simply because their hometown may not have had one (Wiwczarek, personal communication, 2014). As per the ownership of writing machines, the government had to issue photocopying permits which had to be obtained from the municipal office in the area one lived, and then from the censorship office. The owner of the photocopying center would then print out the number of copies which the permit allowed (Kmiełek in Lis & Godlewski, 2012; Davies 2001, 2005). Permits were also necessary for distribution of printed text and

materials, a process which emerged partly in response to the distribution of literature by political groups such as Solidarity. For this reason, printed zines may have had the title “for internal use” on the cover page, as seen in Figure 2.

Passion, Fashion, and ZOMO

A key motivator of heavy metal fans at that time, according to Wiwczarek (personal communication, 2014), was a passion and dedication that allowed them to creatively find ways around scarcities as seen in the production of zines. Another element of the heavy metal subculture members approached passionately was the apparel, or heavy metal uniform, which usually included black T-shirts with band logos and artwork, studded belts, bracelets and accessories, leather jackets, boots, and long hair (Walser, 1993; Weinstein, 2000). In order to make band T-shirts, which were nowhere to be found in shops, dedicated fans had to paint their favorite band logos on T-shirts themselves. Likewise, accessories such as patches or studded bracelets all had to be created from scratch in the fan’s spare time (Szubrycht, 2014; Lis & Godlewski, 2012, 2015). Piotr Wiwczarek of the band Vader explained that in order to create a cap similar to the one Rob Halford of Judas Priest used to wear, he modified a hat railway workers in Poland used to wear. He decorated this black hat with chains he purchased at a metalwork shop and studs from a local sewing shop (Szubrycht, 2014). Similarly, guitar straps also had to be handmade. Wiwczarek (personal communication, 2014) recalls that he had to spend a whole day in order to transform an army belt into a guitar strap, which he did by painting the belt black and hammering studs purchased from a sewing shop into it.

On many occasions, the hard work and sacrifice put into creating clothes and accessories was ruined by the paramilitary police, ZOMO (Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej, which translates to: Motorized Reserves of the Citizens’ Militia). The ZOMO force was renowned for their brutal treatment of the youth in the 1980s. Wiwczarek (personal communication, 2014) told us in an interview that heavy metal fans often fell victim to such treatment and lost their homemade T-shirts, belts, or studs. On some occasions, he told us, the ZOMO would confiscate concert tickets or would take heavy metal fans for special interrogations and cut their long hair. Similar stories can be found in the work of Szubrycht (2014) and Lis & Godlewski (2012;2015). Still, heavy metal fans were mentally prepared for the risk of being caught by the ZOMO and losing a precious piece of clothing or artwork, and they did not give up. If they lost something, they created new versions, and sometimes even created backup versions for such occasions. This phenomenon offers evidence that the heavy metal subculture’s passion for their chosen lifestyle was strong enough that they were willing not only to sacrifice their time to create clothes and accessories from scratch, but also to face paramilitary forces as a consequence of their participation in the culture.

Entrepreneurial Musicians

During the 1980s in the PRL, even the most popular heavy metal bands hardly made a living out of their music. The members of TSA, whose songs were frequently aired on the radio and

who performed hundreds of concerts each year, claimed that “every penny had to be saved in order to be a musician” (Nowak 2011, p. 11), and if that meant that one had to work at a coal mine to get that money, then it had to be done. Money was not a driver of cultural entrepreneurship during the era; heavy metal fans became entrepreneurs by using their networks and any materials around them in order to help them build an escapist “heavy metal world,” and the same was true of musicians. If money was not available to purchase instruments or equipment, then musicians built what they needed with alternative materials found at home or in the small number of shops that existed.

Rehearsal Spaces

The role of social capital in building a “heavy metal world” during the PRL years was as central to the entrepreneurial fans as it was to the musicians. Finding recording studios, rehearsal spaces, or even musical instruments and equipment was difficult. The band TSA commented in interviews that they had “eternal struggles” with rehearsal spaces. Often, the directors of the Houses of Culture would prohibit heavy metal bands from practicing for various reasons: playing too loudly, the band members’ hair was too long, or simply because they were drinking beer (Nowak, 2011). The band Vader experienced similar problems with Houses of Culture in the 1980s. Piotr Wiwczarek (personal communication, 2014), reflecting on the central role that personal connections played in the era, claimed that who the director was at a House of Culture made a huge difference; one might be open-minded, wanting the youth to be engaged in arts, and therefore would allow bands to rehearse at the venue, while another might only be interested in “furthering his political career” (as Wiwczarek put it) and therefore offer only paid-for dance and foreign language courses. When one rehearsal space was not available, a band had to go to the next one, whether it was in the same town or further afield. Bands would often travel by train from one region to another so that they could find a place to rehearse (Nowak, 2011). Here again, we find evidence of the central role played by social capital. The band Vader gained access to a club that had a music room with equipment to rehearse only because one of their members at the time, Zbyszek Wróblewski, worked as an archivist, and thanks to that role had access to this club. In exchange for using the room, the band had to “perform at a holiday resort during the summer” (Wiwczarek, personal communication, 2014). The band’s connections also allowed them to use a Polish Radio Olsztyn studio—the only studio in their hometown of Olsztyn—to record their second demo, *Necrolust*, in 1986 (Szubrycht, 2014).

Musical Instruments

Musical instrument shops did not really exist and even if professional instruments were for sale, very few people could afford a guitar or amplifier. Therefore, musicians had to find alternatives. The first instruments Vader and several other bands used were handmade or remade; the amplifiers were built in their basements, the guitars (usually from the Soviet Union) were often rebuilt to try to improve them, while the drum sets were built from anything they could find (Wiwczarek quoted in Bałajan, 2008). Even popular bands such as TSA had difficulties with equipment. Bogusław Dubiel—an electrician who helped bands by building equipment and

worked as a technician at a House of Culture—experimented with amplifiers after he received a broken Marshall amplifier to fix. Given that such amplifiers were prohibitively expensive and beyond the reach of the majority of consumers, Dubiel built new amplifiers based on the Marshall structure. Spare parts for such equipment were not available on the market in the PRL, and therefore these homemade amplifiers lacked longevity and burnt out after only a few uses. However, they were all young musicians needed and could afford during this time (Nowak, 2011).

Concerts

As per the work of Patton (2012), live music was central to the Polish music industry (and by extension for heavy metal) under the PRL for economic reasons. However, the sociality of live music during this era also offers a sociological window into the multifaceted operation of cultural entrepreneurship by both producers and consumers. It was at live events where these two sides of cultural production came together. Young cultural entrepreneurs—whether fans trading tapes and zines, or musicians with homemade instruments—networked and strengthened their relationships with their contacts from all over the country, and occasionally from abroad. Moreover, these events were treated almost like religious pilgrimages; they offered a place for networking as well as an escape from everyday life (Wiwczarek, personal correspondence, 2014; Szubrycht 2014; Fijałkowski, personal correspondence, 2016). However, those who took part in organizing these events had to face the challenges presented by scarcity and censorship.

Heavy metal cultural entrepreneurs organized both large and smaller-sized concerts and festivals by managing and cultivating relationships at Houses of Culture and student clubs. A central driver of these efforts was the fact that no individuals had their own equipment (other than the basic instruments) necessary for such an event, but Houses of Culture or clubs were already furnished with musical equipment for concerts (Jaworowski in Lis & Godlewski, 2015). In addition, all public events during that time period had to be agreed to by the governing authorities, which included either the local authorities or the House of Culture directors, in addition to censorship approvals. The team behind the Metalmania festival, for example, had to convince the state authorities—especially the official state music booking agency Pogart—that heavy metal was popular enough to warrant hosting a two-day event. In order to do that, the organizers asked during a music show on the radio whether people would like to attend an event or festival with heavy metal bands. This resulted in the radio show presenter receiving five thousand letters in the mail claiming that fans would want such an event. The letters were taken to the Pogart offices, leading to the development of the Metalmania festival (as well as other events), and to booking foreign heavy metal bands such as Running Wild (Germany), Kreator (Germany), and Overkill (USA) (Lis & Godlewski 2012, 2015). This example highlights that it was not simple to obtain formal approval from the authorities in order to organize a concert. In cases like those above, it was necessary to have reasons supporting the logic for having an event at a given location, which required both entrepreneurial wit and the cooperation of cultural producers and consumers.

A further obstacle in organizing concerts was censorship. Depending on the political

situation and the person on duty in the censorship office, the attitude on heavy metal music varied. The censorship office had to approve performances, and this included the approval of the lyrics to all the songs that were going to be performed at the concert. A censorship officer would be present at the concert, making sure that the lyrics submitted beforehand matched those sung at the concert. In order to overcome this, song lyrics often had to be changed or adjusted so that the bands received the necessary permit to perform. However, the censorship officer was regularly not present at the concerts (as per the findings of Patton (2012) regarding the unmanageable architecture of the state). Additionally, officers often did not understand what was being sung because it was either in English or the lyrics were shouted and not clearly sung (Krajewski in Lis & Godlewski, 2012; Kim in Lis & Godlewski, 2015). A band that did encounter problems with the censorship office was TSA, because their lyrics were explicitly political, resulting in some of their songs being taken off radio rotation (Nowak, 2011). However, the band members in TSA understood that if they managed to get their lyrics approved by the main censorship headquarters in Warsaw, then no other censorship office in any other town would cause them trouble, meaning lyrics could be changed or masked later. As Wiwczarek (personal correspondence, 2014) recalled: “When the more extreme versions arrived—growling—people were totally unable to understand any kind of phrase or sentence, so this was a certain security from Polish censorship.”



Figure 3. Vader "Necrolust" Flyer (1986) found at www.demoarchives.org

Discussion

What is perhaps most interesting about the entrepreneurship of heavy metal fans and musicians during the PRL, is that the behavior of these entrepreneurs was, in many respects, classic and perhaps even typical when seen through the prism of nonmonetary definitions of cultural entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship always takes place within parameters and constraints—of resource, of opportunity, etc.—and in Poland under the PRL these heavy metal fans and musicians could be seen reflecting various dimensions of entrepreneurial practice: the displays of passion, the innovative circumnavigating of resource constraints, the cunning methods of promotion, the multifaceted exploitation and maximization of social capital when money is low, the desire to build a scene and express themselves in the face of great social challenges. In some

senses, these heavy metal entrepreneurs might be thought of as sharing some similarities with the kind of entrepreneurs seen coming from rap, hip-hop, and grime music in London today (White, 2016). However, it is the environment during the PRL of “economic self-strangulation” (Kamiński, 1991, pp. 4–5) and consumer good shortages, the culturally hegemonic project of cultural enlightenment, political repression from the ZOMO and censorship from the Central Committees of state, and a philosophical disavowal (in the main) of private property and private profit, which makes this case study such an interesting and special example of cultural entrepreneurship—one that seeks to contribute to that which Verver et al. (2019, p. 956) have described as “going beyond the persistent empirical focus on the west.”

In the first instance, this case study highlights the complexity of cultural production under formalized regimes of political repression, but also more broadly speaks to the uneasy coexistence between governments and musical production. As per the work of Cloonan (1999), this relationship can vary between being explicitly promotional, laissez-faire and market driven, or authoritarian as per the PRL. States often try and shape culture—and music is no exception—but outcomes are hard to predict or even accidental, often acting as a form of indirect patronage. In the United Kingdom, for example, the idea that social security payments, known colloquially as *the dole*, might in fact have been a source of income for creative workers during the 1970s and 1980s was not a conscious government decision (O’Rorke, 1998), and indeed today council housing and youth clubs were both key incubators for the development of the grime scene in London (Hancox, 2018). Likewise, under the PRL, while the state tried to tighten the apparatus of a dictatorial regime to formally direct and dictate cultural production, in the end they indirectly provided the vessel in the form of Houses of Culture, which allowed a countercultural movement to flourish. As per the work of Dyer et al. (2008), innovative entrepreneurs are often motivated by a desire to challenge the status quo, and this is as true under the repressive forces of the PRL as it is in other contexts within which entrepreneurship flourishes.

Secondly, the heavy metal entrepreneurship under the PRL acts as an extreme example of the role that social and cultural capital play in cultural entrepreneurial practice in an environment where economic capital is almost entirely absent. This is, in many ways, similar to the work of McRobbie (1998, 1999) on the fashion industry. The centrality of social capital in particular as a mechanism for the development of a “heavy metal world” reflects



Figure 4. Vader Live in Decay 1986 Demo found at www.demoarchives.org

suggestions of Bourdieu (1986) that alternative forms of capital act as tools to mitigate economic disadvantage. In this sense, the findings here lend support to those who have sought to expand the way we understand and define cultural entrepreneurship as being driven by more than economic goals (Rentschler, 2003; Anheier and Isar, 2008; Behnke, 2010; Klamer, 2011; Musgrave, 2014), and is an example in extremis of what Scott (2012, p. 241) refers to as “entrepreneurship sans economic capital.” Economic gain was almost entirely absent from the aims and ambitions of these entrepreneurs; but entrepreneurial they were nonetheless.

Conclusion: Entrepreneurship as World-Building

The practices of the heavy metal entrepreneurs in Poland under the PRL enrich our understanding of what cultural entrepreneurialism is and how we define it. Firstly, it demonstrates that both producers *and* consumers of music can be considered entrepreneurs. The heavy metal fans dedicated themselves to building their “heavy metal world” and put their hearts into it, and in many respects, there was no clear boundary between fan, artist, or music industry worker; they all united together to create their own world with whatever tools they had around them. This multidimensional nature of cultural entrepreneurship calls to mind Becker’s (1982, pp. 34-35) concept of *Art Worlds*, defined, at least in part, as “an established network of cooperative links among participants” wherein “the world exists in the cooperative activity of those people.” This idea is reflected in the practices of the heavy metal subculture of the PRL in key roles that musicians, audiences, and intermediaries within it played in a collaborative capacity in order to build *their* art world.

Secondly, the practices examined in this paper support the development of more inclusive definitions of cultural entrepreneurship. What definition might we propose? Building on Becker (1982), we suggest that the practices of cultural entrepreneurship uncovered herein highlight the need to emphasize the *cultural* in cultural entrepreneurship, and in this sense, we have turned to definitions of *culture*. Writers such as Williams (1961, 1965) defined culture as a way of life, while Hall (1997) and Morley and Chen (1996) understood cultural practices as being processes by which “people create *meaningful worlds* in which to live” (Negus, 1999, p. 20, emphasis added). It strikes us that this meaningfully chimes with the development of the art world—the “heavy metal world”—during the PRL. In this sense, we might understand cultural entrepreneurship as being novel enterprises or behaviors that seek to maximize economic, cultural, or social capital in the desire to build (or contribute to) a cultural world or landscape by creating something new. That is, cultural entrepreneurship is world-building. Certainly, this is a working definition, and the bridge we have sought to build here between entrepreneurship theory and cultural studies is not without limitations, not least that *world-making* in cultural studies is a cultural construction of individual and social identity, while entrepreneurship focuses on the creation of value within specific contexts. Nonetheless, the findings in this paper suggest value in reemphasizing the cultural dimension of cultural entrepreneurship and we hope this idea might be engaged with further.

Finally, a crucial component in making sense of cultural entrepreneurship is not only

observing and analyzing adopted behaviors and practices and/or orientations, but also understanding the emotional dimension of this work too. The entrepreneurial practices uncovered in this paper were driven by a passion for cultural expression and rooted in a struggle against extreme adversity. As recalled by Wiwczarek (personal correspondence, 2014): “You had to earn this music. Maybe that is why that passion was so strong. Nothing was available. You had to fight for everything.” It is for this reason—drawing on both Rentschler’s (2003) view of cultural entrepreneurship as being driven by a cultural mission and the lyrics of the band TSA quoted at the beginning of this paper—that we have conceptualized this heavy metal cultural entrepreneurship as being rooted in what we call world-building. Central to this project was the fact that both musicians and fans got involved with heavy metal because it made them feel better and more confident, and it created an escapist world for them (Wiwczarek, personal correspondence, 2014; Fijałkowski, personal correspondence, 2016). With the help of music, the youth in the PRL could escape their everyday reality—such as the one so evocatively described by Davies (2005) and Nowak (2011, p. 55)—and dream both about a different life; one in which they could become stronger people (Krajewski in Szubrycht, 2014, p. 108; Wiwczarek, personal correspondence, 2014). By creating their own world and escaping everyday realities, they went counter to the government’s norms and ideologies and, thus, formed a strong counterculture. Members of the Polish heavy metal subculture in 1980s Poland were creating an escapist world for themselves by listening to records and the radio, creating their own magazines and concerts, and in doing so creating a tightly knit subculture in the beginnings of Poland’s metal music industry.

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