

# The Happy Achterhoeker

- *Forming an authentic festival identity in an experience economy*



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## Abstract

How do festivals form an identity, such as 'Glastonbury-state-of-mind'? And what do they mean to society in the bigger picture? This thesis addresses the case of the Zwarte Cross, that was founded by the band Jovink en de Voederbietels as a fan event. The Zwarte Cross helped establish a modern rural identity that is celebrated at the festival and monetized in that cultural niche. Through the scope of a method that combines the theories of liveness, convergence culture, and experience economy, we see how a festival philosophy helps people authenticate and find a personal identity and, in that process, forming a festival identity. Instead of appealing to a number of individuals, the Zwarte Cross, has become the identity marker of a nationwide subculture.

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## Introduction

With the festival industry being halted last year, an explosive growth of popular music festivals has been stopped in its tracks. A relatively new development in recent years has been the growing popularity of Artist Centered Festivals (ACF's)<sup>1</sup>. Artists such as Tyler, the Creator and Sigur Rós have organized and curated their own festivals.<sup>2</sup> ACF's offer artists the possibility to not only curate a line-up of preferred artists, but also create a world in adherence to their 'artistic universe'. For musicologists, it offers the possibility of a case study in how festivals form an *identity* of their own.

There is no strict theory yet that explains how a festival forms that *identity*. In my approach, I have chosen to put three theoretical categories central in the formation of a festival *identity*: *identity*, *authenticity* and *festival philosophy*. In festivals, these categories accumulate, to form a signature festival experience. In my theoretical framework I will explain how that signature, authentic, experience is often ascribed to the festival as a result of a self-identifying process that visitors of the festival go through whilst experiencing music and other media such as imagery and fashion. In ACF's, this process is even more pinpointable, because of the visiting fans of the organizing artist.

In an ACF, this creative output that is associated with the artist is the starting point for the festival experience. This makes an ACF an ideal subject for academic research, because the loyalty of the people that visit the festival is pinpointable to the artist organizing it. In that process, we can witness clearly how a festival's *identity* is formed and, in that way, see how ACF's can be illustrative for identifying experiences at festivals in general. The ACF can be seen as an expansion of the performativity of the artist, while the crowd is often made into an active participant by exercising their fandom through their activities at the festival. Through convergence of media and the accumulation of shared knowledge through the communicative media at a festival, the artistic universe of the artist and its *liveness* are mediated and translated into a signature experience. Through this method, *convergence*

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to Artist Centered Festivals with this abbreviation. I also hereby claim this term.

<sup>2</sup> Grayson Haver Currin, "How Musicians Are Fixing the Summer Music Scene With Their Own Festivals," *Pitchfork*, 19 April 2018, <https://pitchfork.com/features/article/how-musicians-are-fixing-the-summer-music-scene-with-their-own-festivals/>.

*culture, liveness* and *experience economy* are factors that can analyze the formation of a festival's *identity*.

The subject of this research is the Zwarte Cross in Lichtenvoorde, the Netherlands. This festival has grown to one of the biggest festivals in the Netherlands and it is one of the crown jewels of popular culture in the eastern part of the Netherlands. Zwarte Cross started out in 1997 as a motocross event organized by a popular local band called Jovink en de Voederbietels.<sup>3</sup> The *identity* of the festival has always been defined by a 'no-nonsense' mentality, combined with an optimistic 'everything-is-possible spirit'.<sup>4</sup> The development of its own *identity*, starting as an ACF and becoming more independent of the artist brand over the years, can teach us a lot about how festival identities are formed.

The main question that needs to be answered is: how does Zwarte Cross construct its festival *identity*? To answer that question, I will look at (1) how Zwarte Cross was shaped by its founders as an artist centered event, (2) how they turned their crowd into active participants and (3) what the growth of the festival, which used to have a more regional approach, to national proportions, meant for the festival experience.

Starting with the roots of its founding band, Jovink en de Voederbietels, the question is how their *liveness* helped to shape Zwarte Cross. The music they play and the cultural elements that they emphasize can be linked strongly to Southern American rock music but is in fact communicating a very local reality: the message of boerenrock, which is at the core of the Zwarte Cross's festival *identity*.

Following these questions on *liveness*, I employ the theory of *convergence culture*. I will investigate how different kinds of media output make visitors into active participants. The way visitors are made an active part of the festival can lead to the creation of collective intelligence and a sense of community. I am curious to find out how the activation of an audience via converted media leads to collective intelligence, how it contributes to forming a festival *identity* and what implications this has for the Zwarte Cross as a growing festival.

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<sup>3</sup> Given its history as a motocross event, 'Cross' In 'Zwarte Cross' refers to the motocross and not to the shape of the Cross.

<sup>4</sup> "1997: de eerste Zwarte Cross in Hummelo," Geschiedenis, Zwarte Cross, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.zwartecross.nl/geschiedenis/1997-2/>.

This links to the questions surrounding the theory of *experience economy*. If this sum of collective intelligence and the identifying experience that is constructed by the *liveness* of the organizing band creates an activated community, what does this mean for the experience of its ever-growing audience? In the case of the Zwarte Cross, that accumulation of cultural elements translates into a specific sense of humor, which defines the boundaries of its inclusivity.

## Theoretical framework: *identity, authenticity and festival philosophy*

### Interconnected categories

The main goal of my theoretical framework is to understand what theories surround the idea of a festival *identity* and how this relates to the organization of festivals. To clarify that, I have made three, interconnected, categories in this theoretical framework. The first of these, *identity*, explores how personal *identity* and taste in music are connected and influence each other. Very closely related, is how a self-defining definition of musical *authenticity* influences the building of a firstly a personal but also a festival *identity* building. Finally, how a festival functionalizes the concepts of *identity* and *authenticity* is defined by its *festival philosophy*, wherein a festival organization's choices of what to and what not to emphasize in its concept design, color the eventual spirit of the festival.

### *Identity*

In order to understand how a festival *identity* is formed, it is important to look at this process through the scope of theories surrounding human agency. In short: understanding how people actively form their own *identity* through their music taste and going to festivals, is key to understand how festivals form an *identity* of their own. This process of *identity* formation is active at several levels, running from personal to societal.

Simon Frith goes as far to say that music is the cultural form that is best able to both cross borders and define scenes.<sup>5</sup> In his essay on music and *identity*, he states that music has the power to construct an experience that helps to produce identities. To understand that, we have to understand musical experiences as personal, self-in, processes, meaning these experiences function as a way to develop the self. *Identity* forming under the influence of music is, in that way, a mobile process.<sup>6</sup> In that process lies the key to a mutual understanding that we see in groups coming to festivals and finding not only a place they feel they belong, but also exploring and forming their *identity* as individuals on a more personal level and as a group. Music is the metaphor for that mutual understanding.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Simon Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 310.

<sup>6</sup> Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously*, 294.

<sup>7</sup> Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously*, 296.

However in the projection of this identification as unifying process obviously always lies the danger of exclusion, if the mediation of music between groups with different personal experiences is not understood similarly.

A byproduct of this articulation of *identity* through music is that musical forms can be cross-culturally understood and formed into new cultural traditions. An approach that is helpful for interpreting these cross-cultural processes can be found in studies of cultural transfers in history, or relational approaches. One of the latest of these approaches is the *histoire croisée*. Building on earlier interpretations of cross-cultural phenomena that mainly resorted to a perspective of re-establishment or rehabilitation of a 'foreign' cultural phenomenon in a 'new' culture, *histoire croisée* interprets cross-cultural phenomena differently. Instead of the place-bound interpretation of transnational cultural phenomena coming into existence, *histoire croisée* interprets them as interwoven. According to this theory, they override the artificial topographical restrictions of the nation state, that often limit the study of cultural transfers.<sup>8</sup> For the interpretation of how music articulates *identity*, *histoire croisée* is a fitting interpretation when cultural phenomena travel transnationally.

Finalizing this part about *identity* and showing how a cultural intertwinement can have significant societal influence, an interesting example of how this *histoire croisée* works for music can be found in the article 'Idiocy of Rural Life', by Henry Klumpenhouwer. He explains the musical background of the famous Dutch band Normaal, who have a very strong traditional link to the Zwarte Cross. As a Dutch band singing in local, rural, dialect, they made a strong anti-elitist statement. Most of the Dutch bands at that time were busy making music that fitted their own natural popular traditions, which were mostly influenced by English and American folk tradition.<sup>9</sup> Normaal took this form but crossed it with their own dialect, forming an example of how a cross-national cultural phenomenon can get interwoven with local culture to form a new, authentic, cultural product. By using their local, rural, dialect and combining it with Anglo-American musical elements, Normaal gave birth to

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, (February 2006): 32.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Klumpenhouwer, "The Idiocy of Rural Life: The Rural Debate and the Uses of Identity," in *Critical Studies: Music, Popular Culture, Identities*, ed. Richard A. Young (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2016), 146.

what we call *boerenrock*.<sup>10 11</sup> Although the dialect used is very local, coming from the Achterhoek, the *boerenrock* movement grew into a national phenomenon. Topics like the celebration of sex, drinking beer and *høken*, which means “to have fun” in dialect, were the most important subjects to speak to these rural crowds. Nowadays, they are still at the cultural foundation of the Zwarte Cross.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Klumpenhauer gives a background to which we can see this sudden popularity of *boerenrock*. He states that the most important element in *boerenrock*, *høken*, is an expression that communicates a re-embrace of historic rural values in a rapidly changing and modernizing world. This makes it easy for those rural communities to identify with Normaal’s music, and the bigger, Dionysian, experience that they echo.<sup>13</sup>

#### A rural identification: the boerenrock experience

The three articles explained above all come together in the boerenrock experience: the articulative power of Normaal’s boerenrock, which is the product of an Anglo-American and Dutch cultural intertwinement, creates a mutual understanding amongst communities across Dutch society that identify with the rural. Through this process, Normaal has created the conditions for the foundation of Zwarte Cross. In my analysis we will see how this theory can be used to interpret the boerenrock background of the Zwarte Cross, but also serve as an explanation why the Zwarte Cross became so immensely popular.

#### *Authenticity*

Another factor in how *identity* is formed through music is *authenticity*. Because of the self-in nature of the identifying function of musical experiences like the Zwarte Cross, my approach is centered around the notion that the consideration of musical *authenticity* should be based on the activities of the perceivers of musical culture.<sup>14</sup> This notion is based on the assumption that *authenticity* is in fact a matter of the audience’s interpretation, which is

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<sup>10</sup> *Boerenrock* translates to farmer rock.

<sup>11</sup> Klumpenhauer, “The Idiocy of Rural Life,” 147.

<sup>12</sup> Klumpenhauer, “The Idiocy of Rural Life,” 151.

<sup>13</sup> Klumpenhauer, “The Idiocy of Rural Life,” 153.

<sup>14</sup> Allan Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication,” in *Popular Music Volume 21*, no. 2. (2002): 221. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143002002131>

constructed and defended from within a certain cultural position. In that way, *authenticity* is not inherently inscribed in a cultural phenomenon but ascribed to it.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, by ascribing *authenticity* to music and related experiences, like *høken* for example, we also internalize this *authenticity* and thereby authenticate ourselves. So, to find out what makes cultural phenomena being perceived as authentic, we need to find out who is ascribing *authenticity* to it.<sup>16</sup>

This notion of self-authentication is supported by Frith, who has done research to the perception on authentic rock music. He argues that rock, as a sort of folk culture, expresses a communal experience of the working class, just like *Normaal* expresses the experience of the rural society of the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> How ideologically intended this might seem, he does not believe that music imposes ideology but that it absorbs listeners, as well as that it absorbs concerns and values.<sup>18</sup> This interpretation of the implicit meaning of rock music is certainly disputable, but Frith's assertion that the cultural meaning of music is absorbed and amplified by audiences that identify themselves with it is undeniable. However, Frith states, it is often the case that rock music artists tend to lose their *authenticity* in the eyes of their audiences when they become part of mainstream culture.<sup>19</sup> This notion gives an ideological counterweight to studying the growth of a festival in a time of festivalization of culture, a topic we will touch on shortly.

An argument for the loss of *authenticity* when becoming part of mass culture is given by Frith when he points to the implications of capitalism for cultural production. When rock music becomes a mass cultural phenomenon, it caters to a need that has been created to sell records and earn money. Creators then are just there to create products to sell and thus cater to an artificial need, therefore being less authentic.<sup>20</sup> A similar thing happens when popular music becomes a tool to create a non-authentic, 'fixed', *identity*. John Connell and Chris Gibson see that music is being used as a tool to create communities and forge national and local identities for all sorts of reasons, running from nationalist assumptions to

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<sup>15</sup> Moore, "Authenticity as Authentication," 210-220.

<sup>16</sup> Moore, "Authenticity as Authentication," 210.

<sup>17</sup> Simon Frith, *Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Frith, *Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n Roll*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Frith, *Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n Roll*, 39.

<sup>20</sup> Frith, *Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n Roll*, 50.

commercial goals. In this process, the local is often misrepresented, as it creates caricatures of local identities and fetishizes certain aspects of it.

#### Authenticating to be authenticated

The Zwarte Cross is a festival that is highly associated with this amount of locality, so the question of fetishization of the local to cater a commercial goal is useful to take into account when studying this festival. In the end, the credibility of the festival and the perception of its *identity* all rely on how the people that visit the Zwarte Cross ascribe *authenticity* to it. This is based on a construction that links with rural identification that people find in the boerenrock experience, that is so vividly present in the Zwarte Cross. By ascribing *authenticity* to that rural experience at the festival in which people find a part of their own *identity*, they authenticate themselves. Finally, the communication of that spirit runs through their *festival philosophy*.

#### Festival philosophy

The elements of *identity* and *authenticity* come together in the *festival philosophy*. In this part I will take a look at how *identity* and *authenticity* are used in and communicated through a festival by means of their philosophy.

Contemporary festivals can be viewed as an important part of the modern cultural repertoire. Festivals are places where individuals come together to create, manage and articulate their identities.<sup>21</sup> Contemporary festivals are places where people can experiment with *identity* and formulate an articulation of those identities.<sup>22</sup> With that interpretation, they are a playground for the formation cultural identities. Rebekka Kill sees festivals as a commercialized locus where visitors celebrate the countercultural carnivalesque.<sup>23</sup> She adds that visitors create a joint enterprise, or shared understanding, of their 'domain', to practice a shared repertoire of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> In short, visitors in this case turn into participants of a

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<sup>21</sup> Andy Bennet, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward, *The Festivalization of Culture*, (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate), 22, <https://utrechtuniversity-on-worldcat-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/search?databaseList=&queryString=festivalization%20of%20culture#/oclc/890215016> .

<sup>22</sup> Bennet, Taylor and Woodward *The Festivalization of Culture*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Rebekka Kill, "The artist at the music festival: Art, performance and hybridity," in *The Pop Festival*, ed. George McKay (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 76.

<sup>24</sup> Kill, "The artist at the music festival," 78.

communitive experience. This experience is enhanced by the investment of festivals in an experience that encompasses more than just music, but also more than art and performance.<sup>25</sup> The communitive element in this experience finally makes for a sense of shared repertoire amongst visitors, who can better be described as participants, where knowledge is passed on.<sup>26</sup>

So, what we see here is that when a crowd is activated, they can create a network or a micro-culture of their own in which knowledge can be passed on to others. Participation is in that way a very interesting element in modern festivals. Roxy Robinson's work 'Politics of Participation' explains the role participation plays in event designs and how this relates back to bigger cultural questions around *identity* and *authenticity*. First of all, in a participatory festival, an audience member can be seen as a performer. With so many festivals competing for customers, a participative experience for visitors adds a different kind of value: they are a place when people can interact in order to merge beliefs and discourse with each other, thus creating an identifying experience.<sup>27</sup> This can be seen as an important reason for the success of festivals like the Zwarte Cross. A means by which festivals achieve this kind of experience through their concept design is by playing with their format. A presentational format with a stage and an artist on it facing the crowd is what we tend to think of at a festival. That is a frequently used way of communicating an experience, but the participatory format where this classic spatial proximity and distance between artist and performer are being reformulated can lead to a different experience with visitors.<sup>28</sup> An explanation for the effect of this participatory festival experience lies in the fact that those experiences give the visitor a sense of control over their own cultural experience.<sup>29</sup> Again, just like we saw with self-authentication and the musical experience as a self-in process, we see that personal experience is an unmistakable factor in the experience of the festival's *identity*.

In this process of forging identities through musical experiences, authentication and participatory festival culture, identifying experiences in festivals are communicated through the *festival philosophy* into a group-based practice. And when there is a such thing as a group, there are always people who do not find their place in it. If festivals want to operate

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<sup>25</sup> Kill, "The artist at the music festival," 78.

<sup>26</sup> Kill, "The artist at the music festival," 78.

<sup>27</sup> Roxy Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, 8.

as places where people can experience and explore multiple identities, they need to be carefully managed to operate as such.<sup>30</sup> Participation is at the core of inclusion in festivals, just like it is in normal life. This relates to very tangible issues, like financial accessibility, but also to topics like *identity* and diversity issues.<sup>31</sup> So counter-intuitively to what you might think after reading the picture I painted above, festivals do not necessarily operate as this utopic safe space where people come peacefully to seek belonging in music and formulate their *identity*. It is an important sidenote to make, that festivals, although often unintentionally, can also operate as spaces of exclusion, with visitors privileged over locals and where diversity is not celebrated.<sup>32</sup>

### The communicative vessel

The solution, answer or cause to all of these issues can be traced back to the so-called *festival philosophy*, which is the most important too to communicate the festival experience as a whole. The philosophy plays a crucial part in the identifying and authenticating potential of a festival as it is the communicative vessel of the deeper sociocultural experience that a festival can be. And that communicative vessel, as we saw, is not restricted to a transfer of information from organizer to visitor, but very versatile and reciprocal in its workings.

### Conclusion

The three big theoretical pillars of this paper about the Zwarte Cross and how it formulates its festival *identity* are *identity*, *authenticity* and *festival philosophy*. Within this framework, we have seen that these pillars are often interconnected. For example, talking about *authenticity* is very difficult without including the topic of *identity* and participatory culture at festivals also functions as an identifying process on a festival wide scale. The common denominator in this framework is the role of the self and the agency we have in the creation of identities of our own, the people we meet but also the festivals we visit. We ascribe *authenticity* to the music we love listening to, but also to the festivals we have the most

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<sup>30</sup> Michelle Duffy and Judith Mair, "Festival Encounters," in *Routledge Advances in Event Research*, ed. Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing (Melbourne: Routledge, 2018), 83.

<sup>31</sup> Duffy and Mair, "Festival Encounters," 87.

<sup>32</sup> Duffy and Mair, "Festival Encounters," 91.

memorable experiences in. The musician playing songs about a reality you identify with, leads to authentication of the artist as much as it leads to authentication of the self. With the festival as the stage for that experience, how the organization contextualizes that experience influences its effects. In the end, we choose to go to the festivals that we believe have a philosophy that lies close to our personal experience. It is no surprise that so many people in times of Corona choose to support their favorite festival by holding on to their ticket instead of asking their money back. Almost as if going to a festival has become as of an important identifying statement to make as people do supporting sports clubs. And the believe that drives that fanatic support, is in its turn driven by this framework of *identity, authenticity and festival philosophy*.

## Method

In order to interpret and understand how festivals create an *identity* and to see how the Zwarte Cross became what it is today, a method is required that makes the theoretical framework about *identity*, *authenticity* and *festival philosophy* applicable to a broader context. Festivals are situated in a much broader entertainment market and their popularity is only to be explained if we zoom out and use theories that universally apply to the society that chooses to consume those events.

### The Triangular Scope

Where the theoretical framework explains the sociocultural scientific discourse that we can situate this study about festival *identity* in, this method creates a scope that functionalizes that theoretical framework for a modern festival like the Zwarte Cross. The method consists of three theories and if imagined as a triangular, reciprocal scope, it can be used to analyze the multifaceted and interdisciplinary cultural phenomenon that is a festival. The three concepts that I will use are convergence culture, as theorized by Henry Jenkins, *liveness* as found in the work of Philip Auslander and *experience economy* as formulated by Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore. *Convergence culture* will explain how, in our mediatized society, activating media converge and how the audience engages with this, forming collective intelligence and actively helping to create the festival *identity*. As a result of our mediatized society, I see the perception of live and mediated converging in a festival like the Zwarte Cross, creating a very interdisciplinary experience out of the classic music festival format. Finally, *experience Economy* provides an economic explanation for the success of festivals: the wages of the world are more and more spent on experiences instead of goods, which is good news for festivals like the Zwarte Cross.

### *Convergence Culture*

The top corner of the theoretical triangle that can be imagined as the construction for this framework is reserved for *convergence culture*. We are living in a time of an unprecedented media presence. Media have never been more omnipresent than they are now and serve innumerable different purposes in our lives. Jenkins argues that the world has seen a cultural

shift in the last few decades when it comes to the way we use media. He describes a change from the classic, passive, audience who absorb content as a spectator, into an activated audience, who take the mediated content further and connect it with other media to create a new information. This collective intelligence and ability to converge content via a range of different media is a very powerful communicative tool, if used in the right way.<sup>33</sup> For music and (artist centered) festivals more specifically, convergence theory offers a useful perspective to interpret the workings of the artistic universe and how that translates into a festival *identity*. A festival is no longer necessarily a medium where artists perform color the festival experience with their *liveness*; instead, it is a place where tons of media form that experience. In the case of the Zwarte Cross, where the festival was set up around one artist, the artist organizing a festival of their own and in that way enhanced its *liveness*, is no longer limited to just one medium but employs multiple media that interact with each other to communicate their message to the public. Through that conversion of media, the role of the audience as the perceiver in this situation is in fact very active. By coming to these events and actively sharing their festival participation on social media, but also by taking part in various activities at a festival, they become an active part of the festival's media strategy. And for artist centered festivals, you could even go as far as saying that this active participation is a way of affirming the crowd's 'loyalty to the artist'. Thereby, it also helps to build the brand of the artist and the festival. So, the way *convergence culture* relates back to festivals actually works through two major steps. First of all, there is the convergence of activating media and there is the audience that engages with this, creates a collective intelligence from their (mutual) experiences and mediates this to their following to help build the *identity* of the festival. Both of these steps serve as the starting points of the other two theories I will include: *liveness* and the *experience economy*.

### *Liveness*

Another perspective on festivals, and ACF's like the Zwarte Cross more specifically, that has to be included is what these festivals add to the real-life experience of music. It is clear that festivals are highly influenced by the mediatized society we live in today. The convergence

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<sup>33</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide* (New York: New York University Press: 2006), 3-4.

of different styles and art forms creates a new environment for the 'traditional' live performance of artists and therefore modern festivals and ACF's can be seen as an extension or recontextualization of the live performance.

The urgency of redefining the meaning of *liveness* in the era of media dominance is addressed by Philip Auslander. Auslander uses some interesting terms and notions that I think are very fitting for researching festivals. He seeks to find the meaning of live in the world of today and explores many different art disciplines and viewpoints on the matter. A very important point he makes is that *liveness* should be considered not as a term that has the same general meaning in different contexts, as its meaning is related to the specific sociocultural context in which it occurs.<sup>34</sup> This is important for ACF's because, being strongly related to an artist and its artistic universe, their very existence is defined by a very specific sociocultural context. The creation of this context, as we already concluded, is the result of a convergence of different art forms and styles that are communicated through a sum of media, which creates the live context. The performance that happens within this new context is shaped by the mediated reality in which it exists. Auslander offers a solution by viewing the live performance as parallel to the mediated performance within the same cultural economy.<sup>35</sup>

As a product of our *convergence culture*, my vision on this is that the cultural phenomenon of the live performance is changing into something that is not just parallel to the mediated performance. In fact, I think the two are converging themselves and as I will show through my focus on the Zwarte Cross as an ACF. ACF's are an extension of the live performance of artists and are realized through the convergence of different media and art forms, making it a place where live and mediated converge.

### *Experience Economy*

Closing this triangle that has explained to us much about the mediatic and artistic side of festivals, there is one factor that has to be included still. To answer the question why people actually pay this much attention to festivals and gladly go there to spend their earnings. It fits in a modern trend: wages are spent differently than they used to be. A

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<sup>34</sup> Phillip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*, 5.

behavioral pattern that sees people not invest in ‘things’ anymore. An explanation for that behavior can be found in the theory of Joseph Pine and James Gilmore about modern economy.

Pine and Gilmore state that in modern economy is no longer built on the provision of goods and services but that the key to economic success lies in the staging of experiences.<sup>36</sup> In their work about the *experience economy*, they provide a step-by-step guide to becoming successful in this new economic climate. Most of these steps are not necessary to go through for this research on festivals, but the general thought they provide is something that is key to my method because it explains to us why festivals are so popular.

The general idea Pine and Gilmore provide is that if businesses and societies want to be successful and prosperous, they need to focus on providing experiences for their customers.<sup>37</sup> This notion touches also on the popularity of festivals and the fact that there are so many different festivals out there that are very well visited. The public is keen on spending money on experiences and when present at a festival that provides an experience, that makes them feel as if they are contributing members of its community, so that they have a feeling of control over the identifying experience of the festival.<sup>38</sup> This shared experience is often mediatized by visitors, or participants if you want, via outputs like social media, to make a statement of identification with the event. In the case of ACF’s, this goes even further into not only identifying with the festival, but also identifying a lot with the artist influenced atmosphere. Especially with a festival like Zwarte Cross we will see that this idea of experiencing the culture that is designed by and shared with the artist is important for its success.

### Closing the triangle

With the *experience economy* completing the triangle, we have a method that provides a window to view the identifying processes that take place at festivals and ACF’s specifically. In short, the triangle is made up out of three categories: society, artist and economy.

*Convergence culture* explains how converging media are used to create a new framework

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<sup>36</sup> B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy, updated edition*, (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011), 24.

<sup>37</sup> Pine and Gilmore *The Experience Economy, updated edition*, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, 8.

through which cultural expressions are mediated. This new context makes for a new definition of what is live and what is mediated. Nowadays, the borders between live and mediated are becoming increasingly blurred. The parallel that Auslander described has changed into a live experience that is defined by the mediatized culture we live in today. Modern *liveness* in this view is a converged phenomenon itself. The success of this translates into the success of festivals like the Zwarte Cross, that have an *identity* that helps form an active community of its own, with shared values. In an economy that is propelled by experiences, these festivals are thriving and growing bigger by the year.

## The construction of 'boeren' *identity*: boerenrock

To understand how the festival *identity* of the Zwarte Cross is formed, it is necessary to dive into the local cultural context from which it originated. I will focus on the musical background of the Zwarte Cross first and use the band Normaal, who, in terms of musical style, are widely regarded as the predecessors of Jovink en de Voederbietels. This band is exemplary for the Dutch 'boeren' subculture and hold a relationship to cultural questions regarding the slow disappearance of local dialects along with the speakers of those dialects being viewed as uncivilized by the urban part of Dutch society.<sup>39</sup> This narrative of being outsiders of society is what defines both the bands their artistic universe and *liveness*, as we will see when we dive into their history. Interestingly enough, the music of both bands, as well as the culture surrounding them, draws inspiration from Southern American rock culture. Because this narrative leans heavily on a notion of *authenticity*, it is remarkable to see that a lot of cultural elements seem to have origins in a culture on the other side of the Atlantic, showing us the identifying workings of *histoire croisée*.<sup>40</sup>

### Dutch dialects: 'Oerend Hard'

'Oerend Hard' was one of the first occasions on which Dutch boerenrock was given a national stage. The contents of its lyrics describe exactly what the culture surrounding the Zwarte Cross is about, so these will be analyzed in the next part. However, those lyrics also fit in a larger cultural trend that has been going on in Dutch pop culture: the rise of artists who write and perform songs in Dutch regional dialect. In decades before the Zwarte Cross was founded, an increasing number of these artists rose and became popular in Dutch culture. Normaal was the most well-known band that laid the foundation for this trend, and a renewed appreciation for music in dialect. They glorified the *høken* mentality, which included 'normaal doen' (acting normal), drinking, the motocross.<sup>41</sup> With their usage of dialect, they gave rural culture a renewed voice.

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<sup>39</sup> Boeren translates to 'farmers'.

<sup>40</sup> Klumpenhower, "The Idiocy of Rural Life," 149.

<sup>41</sup> Louis Peter Grijp, "Singing in Dutch Dialects: Language Choice in Music and the Dialect Renaissance," in *Reframing Dutch Culture, Between Otherness and Authenticity*, ed. Peter Jan Margry and Herman Roodenburg, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 225-227.

Their song *Oerend Hard* grasps a big part of the lifestyle that is connected to this culture. The lyrics of the song and the connected video are about two guys who are speeding to a motocross event in their region, ending up getting drunk and eventually crashing.<sup>42</sup> Although popular with their fans, the rest of the Netherlands criticized how they supposedly glorified reckless behavior.<sup>43</sup>

The story that is connected to this song and the song itself popularized rural culture in the Netherlands. The love for motocross, drinking beer and *høken* are big themes that we see returning in the *Zwarte Cross*. In the bigger picture, however, the popularity of *Normaal* tells the story of the struggle of the rural minority, that fights back to the cultural Anglo-American dominance of the time.<sup>44</sup> Against the background of the *histoire croissée*, the irony in this is that *Normaal* itself is redefining the definition of *authenticity* that is linked to ‘their’ culture. The fading of the dialects is a metaphor for urban Dutch culture taking over and reducing rural cultures to inferior. In the perception of their fans, *Normaal* stood up against this and put their culture back on the map. With that new sense of *authenticity* as a weapon, they tend to save their own *identity*. The interesting thing of course is that the music of *Normaal* is very much influenced by Anglo-American music culture, so this case serves as a perfect example of how a traveling culture can intertwine with the local, to form a new, authenticated, cultural phenomenon: boerenrock.

### *Ascribing authenticity*

We tend to think that *authenticity* is inscribed in music, and that an artist either is, or is not authentic by nature. However, we ascribe *authenticity* to an artist ourselves, which makes it the audience’s product, instead of the artist’s product<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, in this process of ascribing *authenticity* to an artist there is a case to be made that that authenticating an artist also authenticates the audience it speaks to.<sup>46</sup> In the case of the *liveness* of *Normaal* and later *Jovink*, this is exactly what happens. *Normaal* is the product of an Anglo-American and Dutch rural culture intertwining, which is adopted and ascribed

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<sup>42</sup> “Normaal-Oerend hard”, YouTube, accessed May 1, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Y\\_wUu99E7M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Y_wUu99E7M).

<sup>43</sup> Grijp, “Reframing Dutch Culture, Between Otherness and Authenticity,” 225-227.

<sup>44</sup> Grijp, “Reframing Dutch Culture, Between Otherness and Authenticity,” 225-227.

<sup>45</sup> Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication,” 220.

<sup>46</sup> Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication,” 220.

*authenticity* to by the Dutch rural audience that wants to view themselves as a culturally significant group. In that process of intertwining histories and ascribing *authenticity* to ‘their’ musical standard-bearers, they authenticate not only their favorite artist, but also themselves. In that way, the appreciation of boerenrock equals appreciation for their own habits, making *høken*, the no-nonsense mentality and of course their dialect cultural. This means that the *liveness* of bands like Normaal and Jovink, who rely so heavily on this local rural *identity* in everything they do, cannot be seen as separate from that cultural process. The authentication of their cultural background through the music of these bands makes their *liveness* a phenomenon in itself, which in turn can tell us a lot about the cultural significance of the Zwarte Cross.

### Travelling cultures: a *histoire croisée*

Where does this leave us with regard to the analysis of the construction of the *liveness* of Jovink en the Voederbietels? And how should we relate this to the cultural basis for the Zwarte Cross? It leaves us at a point where we need to question how this cultural dimension has come about and how the *histoire croisée* actually functions. Originating from a theoretical school in cultural history that studies intercultural transfers, the *histoire croisée* comes from a long tradition of interpreting transnational cultural phenomena. The problem with the study of these phenomena has been that scholars have often resorted to a linear, geographic approach that was based on a division of the world in nation states. *Histoire croisée* tries to make the role of the nation state more relative by reflecting on the frames of thought of historical actors and historians, not only inside their national frameworks, but also transgressing it. It does so by reformulating cultural transfers as intertwining histories, which start happening at the exact moment historical actors of different cultures start noticing each other.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Peter van Dam, “Vervlochten geschiedenis. Hoe *Histoire croisée* de natiestaat bedwingt,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 125 (2012), 103.

### An authenticated *liveness*

It is a complicated process and I think there can be other interpretations of a cultural interaction like this, but it does tell us a lot about why the *liveness* of Normaal and later Jovink is being perceived as authentic instead of inauthentic. That is because we tend to think that *authenticity* is inscribed in music, and that an artist is or is not authentic by nature. However, this is definitely not the case because we ascribe it to an artist ourselves.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, in this process of ascribing *authenticity* to an artist there is a case to be made that authenticating an artist also authenticates the audience it speaks to.<sup>49</sup> In the case of the *liveness* of Normaal and later Jovink. This is exactly what happens. Normaal is the product of a culturally intertwining historical process, a *histoire croisée*, which is adopted and ascribed *authenticity* to by an audience that wants to view itself as an authentic and therefore culturally significant group. They want to be heard. In that process of intertwining histories and ascribing *authenticity* to ‘their’ musical standard-bearers, they authenticate not only their favorite artist, but also their own culture. This means that the *liveness* of bands like Normaal and Jovink, who rely so heavily on this local rural *identity* in everything they do, cannot be seen as separate from that cultural process. The authentication of their cultural background through the music of these bands makes their *liveness* a phenomenon in itself. The authenticated *liveness* of Normaal is the foundation for the *festival philosophy* of the Zwarte Cross and ultimately for the festival’s *identity*.

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<sup>48</sup> Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication,” 220.

<sup>49</sup> Moore, “Authenticity as Authentication,” 220.

## Activation through *convergence culture*: activating an audience

Now that we have analyzed how the *liveness* and *authenticity* of rural rock bands Normaal and Jovink are constructed and how that helps to forge a cultural *identity*, it is now time to dive more into the specific way the audience is involved and activated at the Zwarte Cross through *convergence culture*.

This builds for a very big part on how Normaal have defined boerenrock's *identity*, but in the case of the Zwarte Cross that process of bonding with the audience really starts with the band Jovink en de Voederbietels. In this chapter I will discuss a lot of their history, but mostly in context of their marketing campaigns. The focus in this analysis will be put on how they benefit from and use the implications that fit in *convergence culture*. The question that drives this analysis is therefore: how the audience is made into active participants in the formation of the festival's *identity* through the accumulation of the collective intelligence of *convergence culture*. This means that I will focus on how Jovink has used media to activate their audience in the past, before the Zwarte Cross came into existence, and how that led to a collective intelligence which translated into a very active fanbase. To be able to answer this question satisfactory, within the context of their history, I will show how they organized the festival and show how the marketing of Jovink became an integral part of their *festival philosophy*.

### Jovink philosophy: *høken*

Jovink en de Voederbietels was founded as Jovink in 1992 by Gijs Jolink and Jan Lovink. In their first shows they were followed by a large group of friends from Hummelo, in the rural east of the Netherlands, who called themselves the 'Voederbietels'. Jovink and their fans were very conjoined in the experience of those early days. Eventually, this led to a fusion of the band name and that of the fan group. It became symbolic for Jovink's philosophy: a shared experience of friendship, partying and having fun. The incarnate *høken* mentality.

The years leading up to their debut album were years which were years in which their popularity grew. Their songs about drinking, partying and, above all, their 'manager'<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> 'Maneger' is spelled wrong deliberately. This was to emphasize their non-seriousness.

mother, the iconic Tante Rikie, constructed a wild reputation which saw a young audience connecting to their image.<sup>51</sup>

In 1997, Jovink began working on a new part of their image. In collaboration with their fans, they came up with several stunts that were in line with their wild, *høken* image.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>53</sup> This participatory approach was the seed for the Zwarte Cross.

### Bigger and louder: a fan-centered experience.

As a part of that strategy, Jovink organized the first Zwarte Cross in 1997.<sup>54</sup> They designed the event on a very low-key basis, constructing a racing track in a piece of land of befriended farmers in Hummelo. Jovink's signature brand of guerilla marketing, which was based on mouth-to-mouth advertising, led to a thousand-person strong turnout and 150 participants in the race, often appearing in crazy outfits. Although this all seems like the first edition of the Zwarte Cross was an event that was unofficial and mainly organized just for the fun of it, the men of Jovink did actually apply for an event permit at the local municipality and got it.<sup>55</sup>

Due to the great success of the first edition, the event moved to another location for its second year. The crowd, which was four times the size of the year before, enjoyed the stunts on the specially designed circuit and the 'traditional' Jovink concert at the end of the day.<sup>56</sup> The calamities following the stunts, that left dozens of participants hospitalized, only enriched the festival's 'anything goes' reputation. Adding to that, the edition of 1998 showed the first signs of the Zwarte Cross outgrowing its design as a fan event. In the years that followed, it would turn into a multiday festival.

In the growing process of those first four years, the festival kept its *philosophy* of being a fan-centered festival because of the active role the fans played in one of the festival's most crucial elements: the motocross. What was originally used as an extension of

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<sup>51</sup> Rick Aabers, "Zo werd Tante Rikie de koningin van de Zwarte Cross," *De Gelderlander*, September 4, 2019, <https://www.gelderlander.nl/bronckhorst/zo-werd-tante-rikie-de-koningin-van-de-zwarte-cross~a7fb48e8/>.

<sup>52</sup> Translates to: Jovink live, not good but definitely loud

<sup>53</sup> "Jovink en de Voederbietels", *Artiesten*, NPO 3FM, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.npo3fm.nl/muziek/artiesten/2013-jovink-en-de-voederbietels>.

<sup>54</sup> "Jovink en de Voederbietels", *Bands*, Standby Productions, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://standbyproductions.nl/bands/jovink.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Zwarte Cross, "1997: de eerste Zwarte Cross in Hummelo."

<sup>56</sup> "1998: Springbulten zo hoog als kerktorens," *Geschiedenis*, Zwarte Cross, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.zwartecross.nl/geschiedenis/1998-2/>.

the band's *liveness* had now become the pivotal element of the festival. However, that did not mean the band Jovink was not actively influencing the atmosphere around the motocross through their *festival philosophy*. Over the years, the fans of Jovink had become accustomed to their ludicrous actions and in that spirit, the fans found ways to translate that craziness into the festival by actively participating in the cross. With the motocross as a medium, their appearance in ludicrous outfits was a way to communicate the collective intelligence that the growing group of visitors had acquired through their fandom in Jovink and participation at the festival. It is clear that at this point where the festival had really started to grow in popularity, that the Zwarte Cross had activated their audience in some way and created the collective intelligence and participation that led to a signature fan-focused and fan-controlled experience. The result of *convergence culture* is found in that collective intelligence leading to shared humor and mentality of the fans. The means by which we can measure that can be found in the festival's media output.

#### *A humorous convergence*

How did the practice of activating their audience through their *liveness* work for Jovink? A part of how Jovink connected with their audience is sketched above, but it is worthwhile to take a more specific look at how this worked out at the Zwarte Cross. The relationship they build through their *liveness* were the foundation for the festival *identity* of the Zwarte Cross. I now will take a look at several examples that show how their *liveness* was translated into the Zwarte Cross through these forms of media and how that constructed the collective intelligence that led to activate audience participation.

#### *The crazy cross: completing the artistic universe*

We already saw that at the first edition of the Zwarte Cross, the event was never really meant to be a serious sports event. It was organized as an elaboration of Jovink's *liveness*, and in that spirit contestants in the races often appeared in the ludicrous outfits. Footage taken in 1997 shows these crazy outfits, but it is the process from that point onwards that is most interesting.<sup>57</sup> The 1998 edition saw a great number of calamities, so at this point the

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<sup>57</sup> "20 Jaar Zwarte Cross – 1997 Hummelo," YouTube, accessed June 19, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=g5E5Th8aa-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=g5E5Th8aa-g).

Zwarte Cross had somewhat of a reputation that was connected to crazy stunts and reckless driving on motorbikes.<sup>58</sup> The organization, Jovink, took this to heart and made it a major element in their visual campaigns to promote the festival. Seen from the perspective of the theory of *liveness*, this is also a deed of Jovink to ensure a key part of their *liveness* is made into a cornerstone of the festival's *identity*.

The love for motocross is an element that Jovink has quite literally inherited from Normaal. Bennie Jolink from Normaal and Gijs Jolink from Jovink, father and son, share a passion for motocross and have given it a central role in their musical endeavors. Music and the motocross are closely related in the celebratory culture of both the bands and their audience.<sup>59</sup> This makes the motocross an important element of the artistic universe of both Normaal and Jovink, shaping their *liveness*.

The artistic universe is not necessarily about neighboring music or artforms but more about experiences that support the *liveness* of a band. The motocross and the combination of both the bands their performances with the cross makes for an experience that is not very often seen at music festivals. In turn, it also makes it the ultimate Jovink experience, because all the elements that make up the bands' *liveness* are amplified to a maximum here. Ultimately, this means that the fans of the band who seek authentication not only find that in the bands' music, but also in other elements the band communicates through their *liveness* in their *festival philosophy*. This makes for a more complete self-identifying experience and it could serve as an explanation for its popularity amongst rural Dutch communities: authenticating the *festival philosophy* of the Zwarte Cross helps them find their *identity* and see themselves as *authentic*.

### An activated audience

It is at this point that we see the formula of *convergence culture* that leads to an activated audience being put to use for the first time. The initiatives by the participants in the races to wear crazy outfits and perform crazy stunts is represented in the poster campaigns of their

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<sup>58</sup> Zwarte Cross, "1998: Springbulten zo hoog als kerktorens."

<sup>59</sup> Onno Havermans, "Niet Normaal. Achterhoek door Zwarte Cross drie dagen in de ban van Jovink," Trouw, accessed June 12, 2020, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/niet-normaal-achterhoek-door-zwarte-cross-drie-dagen-in-de-ban-van-jovink~b5367c39/>.

festival. This recognition would lead to a sort of arms race in making the craziest outfits and stunts that goes on until this day and is a major selling point of the festival.<sup>60</sup>

A fine example of how this reputation was made into a selling point through their media output is the poster of the 2000 edition of the festival. This edition fell in the middle of a period in the festival's development that was characterized by the introduction of a musical program alongside the show of Jovink. This was also the time where the festival became more popular and started growing immensely.

**Zwarte Cross**  
weekend 2000

Spectaculaire stunts!  
Speciale camping!  
Meer dan 15 live-bands

8 en 9 juli  
Halle Gld.  
Crosscircuit de Knappenbulten (volg de pijlen)  
2 dagen spektakel

Bungee-jumpen zonder elastiek: vijf vel vanaf 50 meter in vengnet. Stalle wand rijden. Looping met motor – nog nooit eerder vertoond!. Sturteam Alex van de Broeke (motoren). Sturteam Bert Bezelmans (BMX). Brandende hoepel, Rodeomotor. (Gedeeltekijk) met feesttent overdekte crossbaan. Veel Specials!. Sprong over ... Prominentenklasse, Gayklasser (muzik). Vuurwerk, Complete kermis, Gezellige festival markt met o.a.: hennepainting, T-shirts bespuiten etc., Kinderhoek met o.a.: luchtkussen, reuzeglijbaan, clowns, draaimoln, echminkhoek, gratis ranje, etc.

**en nog veel meer...**

ZATERDAGMIDDAG 8 JULI	ZATERDAGAVOND 8 JULI	ZONDAG 9 JULI
<p>'Grote Prijs' van Halle met o.a.: HIK, Shift Happens, De Zoute Drieples, DOGZ, Nog onbekend e.v.a. Crosstraining vanaf 14.00 uur Tent open 13.00 uur Hele dag kermis Entree: gratis</p> <p>2 dagen muziek</p>	<p>Brommerkierball met o.a.: Rock'n'Roll Connection, Love Bum Brothers, Theo the King, Ame Jansen, Jacques Heep, Status Quoivink Tent open: 20.00 uur Entree: fl. 15,-</p>	<p>Zwarte Cross met o.a.: Travolta's, Samuel Eddy (Ierland), de Zingende Fresia's, Kabaal, Yellow Cookie, Drumbands, Dweilorkesten, Jacques Harp, Theo the King, Fiere Magelantiek, Versaansgebied, Jovink &amp; the Voederbijstale e.v.a. Aanvang: 11.00 uur, einde: circa 22.00 uur Entree: fl. 10,- (Kinderen tot 1.30 mtr. gratis)</p>

Passe partout hele weekend: f 40,-. Incl. 2x campingovernachting + uniek T-shirt

Voor aktueel nieuws en voorverkoopadressen: [www.jovink.nl](http://www.jovink.nl)

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<sup>60</sup> "2019: Niks is Onmogelijk," Zwarte Cross, Geschiedenis, accessed June 12, 2020, <https://www.zwartecross.nl/geschiedenis/2019-2/>.

<sup>61</sup> "2000 Poster," Zwarte Cross, Geschiedenis, accessed June 12, 2020, [https://www.zwartecross.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/02/2000\\_poster.jpg](https://www.zwartecross.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/02/2000_poster.jpg).

This poster shows how the organization valued the contribution of their audience at the festival. We see the bandmembers sitting on a bike with the four of them, performing a spectacular act. This is a clear reference to the stunting done by the visitors who participated in the cross and makes them part of the festivals' output. It reads on the left 'spectacular stunts!' and on the right 'a 2-day spectacle'. Below the image of the band, the exact stunts and categories that are present at the cross are also mentioned. Adding to that, there is also a reference made to an activation of their audience in the musical spectrum. On the lower left corner, a part of the Saturday program is the "Big Prize' of Halle', a local talent contest. An example of how the Zwarte Cross sets activates their audience through collective intelligence and their use of *convergence culture*.

### Sign Language

This now leaves us with the question how this leads to the collective intelligence of *convergence culture*. I will illustrate this using the latter example and a new one. This final example gives an insight in how the process of gathering collective intelligence creates and emphasizes the Zwarte Cross community and thus helps construct their festival *identity* through a *festival philosophy* that is centered around crowd participation. A returning element since the first days of the Zwarte Cross has been the presence of small, ludicrous signs at the festival sight.<sup>62</sup> The signs all have messages that are related to either the festival, rural culture or actuality or a combination of all of these topics. One of the first examples that can be found is a sign from 1997, the first year of the Zwarte Cross.

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<sup>62</sup> Elianne Wijers, "'Wij durven alles tegen het licht te houden of het nog bestaansrecht heeft. Zelfs de main stage'," interview by Bertus Elings, 3voor12, February 23, 2019, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://3voor12.vpro.nl/lokaal/gelderland/artikelen/overzicht/2019/Februari/Interview-Elianne-Weijers--De-Feestfabriek----Wij-durven-alles-tegen-het-licht-te-houden-of-het-nog-bestaansrecht-heeft.-Zelfs-de-main-stage--.html>.



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This sign, from the first edition, was placed in front of the tent where Jovink performed in the first year of the festival. The sign reads: “Wet I-J Nog? Zwarte Cross ‘96” which is Dutch Achterhoek dialect for “Do you remember the Zwarte Cross of 1996?”. This sign is a comical reference to the fact that this year is the first edition of the festival, hinting on the often false or exaggerated stories that were told by the people who supposedly were there.

These signs symbolize the role *convergence culture* plays in the Zwarte Cross. They have been present at the festival since the beginning and have had a function in creating the collective intelligence that helps to form the festival *identity*. Some of them were related to music, like the “He, Ho, Baal Stro” sign below, which is a reference to ‘Blitzkrieg Bop’ by the Ramones and a hint on the way bands like Jovink and Normaal wove their rural *identity* with Anglo-American pop culture.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Zwarte Cross, “1997: de eerste Zwarte Cross in Hummelo.”

<sup>64</sup> ‘He, Ho, Baal Stro’ translates to ‘Hey, Ho, bale of straw’.



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The tradition of these signs at the festival reflects how the process of gathering collective intelligence with the audience of the Zwarte Cross leads to a very specific kind of humor. When you are part of that group and identifies with the sort of humor the festival adheres, you fit in. And again, this is reached through the *convergence* of media because those signs are a medium to make something vague as humor very much tangible. Humor is the product of the gathering of that collective intelligence which goes through different forms of media, as we saw with the poster and the history of Jovink en de Voederbietels.

### Method to the madness

It is a constant process of drawing people into the same experience. In that process, *convergence culture* is the most important tool to communicate and visualize the humor that defines the experience of the Zwarte Cross, that can be traced back to the *liveness* of Jovink and Normaal. It is that experience in which people find an *authentic identity*, which they want to mirror themselves to. Finally, the popularity of the Zwarte Cross can be understood according to the *experience economy*: its *authentic* and identifying experience is in demand in an economic climate where experiences are highly valued. So, people are more

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<sup>65</sup> Zwarte Cross, "Hihahonderden 'ludieke' borden sierden ons festival in de afgelopen jaren, maar we zijn wel benieuwd naar jullie favorieten. En vermoedelijk hebben jullie er ook meer foto's van. Hier op an! Bordjesbom in de reacties in 3, 2, 1... NU!," Facebook post, February 27, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2576150749063802&set=hahahonderden-ludieke-borden-sierden-ons-festival-in-de-afgelopen-jaren-maar-we-> .

than willing to be part of that. At the peak of the Zwarte Cross's popularity, we see the workings of the methodological scope of *convergence culture*, *liveness* and *experience economy* in full effect.

## Limits to inclusivity: the *experience economy* implosion

If the success of the Zwarte Cross is the result of large Dutch rural groups authenticating their *identity* through the *liveness* of Jovink paired with the specific kind of humor that grew in their fanbase and was communicated with the collective intelligence of *convergence culture*, the result is that it delivers a unique experience that in an *experience economy* a lot of people want to be part of. Through the window of the theory of *experience economy*, it is easily understood that our society and economy are very much fit for these kinds of events. The unique experience that the Zwarte Cross delivers could explain the growth of the festival over the years. However, as it is often situated in very specific cultural norms, the collectively formulated humor is often difficult to be commonly understood in other parts of society than the rural. With the growth of the Zwarte Cross over the years, its audience has also become a lot more diverse, and this has created difficulties for the festival. In this chapter, those difficulties will be the central topic. What are the implications of an ever-growing audience, due to the *experience economy*, for the festival *identity*, and how does the festival try to find a balance between communicating their fan specific *festival philosophy* whilst being inclusive? I will make this analysis by means of telling the remaining part of the history of Jovink and the Zwarte Cross and light the controversial communication of the *identity* of the festival in combination with humor.

### Growth and the end of Jovink

In 2006 the festival moved to an even bigger ground in Lichtenvoorde where they welcomed 78.000 visitors over the weekend. The festival got into a partnership with 3FM, one of the biggest national radio stations, and definitively grew to a sizeable enterprise.<sup>66</sup> At this point, the organization of the festival was no longer just a task of the band Jovink, but of a bigger group of professionals. Although Jovink were still in charge of operations, they decided to establish a company to make sure things could be organized smoothly. ‘Feestfabriek, Alles Komt Goed B.V.’ became the corporate personification of the spirit Jovink en de

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<sup>66</sup> “2006: De verhuizing naar Lichtenvoorde,” Zwarte Cross, Geschiedenis, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.zwartecross.nl/geschiedenis/2006-2/>.

Voederbietels and the Zwarte Cross and laid the blueprint for the *festival philosophy* of the Zwarte Cross as the biggest festival in the Netherlands.<sup>67</sup>

In 2007, the band decided to stop their activities to focus on the organization of the Zwarte Cross.<sup>68</sup> Eventually you could say the Zwarte Cross outgrew Jovink, but this would be dramatizing the cause of the band. Jovink said the band simply needed to execute wild ideas like the Zwarte Cross because the sale of Jovink records simply was not big enough to live from.<sup>69</sup> The growth of the Zwarte Cross in that way can be seen as an example of how an artist can monetize their own artistic universe through extending their *liveness*, whilst utilizing the ideal conditions that *convergence culture* and the *experience economy* offers. With the right approach to a *festival philosophy*, this extension of *liveness* can grow into an event that in itself is perceived as *authentic*. Contrary to how impersonal that way of seeing the Zwarte Cross might sound, its origins in the *boerenrock* tradition and the way visitors self-authenticate and thus self-identify through the festival, and thus the legacy of Jovink, makes the Zwarte Cross a proud statement of Dutch rural *identity*.

#### Out of the shadow

The years after the official end of Jovink saw the festival becoming a more influential stage in the Dutch music industry. This also meant that the Zwarte Cross was no longer operating in the shadow of the bigger festivals of the Netherlands. The Zwarte Cross and the way they designed their experience became a platform itself, as they profited from the *experience economy*. The organization chose to communicate with their growing fanbase with their signature humor. How unpretentious that might sound, in a *convergence culture*, this collective intelligence is only to be fully understood by the people participating in that collective. Since societal issues are a returning topic in the humor of the Zwarte Cross and the rhetoric of the organization surrounding that has changed a lot in recent years. Being a communitive festival, the humor that connected visitors grew more all-encompassing whilst the festival was no longer just part of a small niche in society. In the light of that growth, we

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<sup>67</sup> Translation: the party factory, everything will be fine inc.

<sup>68</sup> "Jovink en de Voederbietels – (29-12-2007)," YouTube, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B96EjjsLQDY>.

<sup>69</sup> Havermans, "Niet Normaal. Achterhoek door Zwarte Cross drie dagen in de ban van Jovink."

see the topics of the satiric signs change from making fun of the band Jovink and the crazy stunting cross drivers, to ridiculing society itself.

In an interview with Pieter Holkenberg, the communications manager of the festival since 2008, he states that this critique on society and the political side of the festival was never really part of the agenda of the Zwarte Cross but just came about. Especially the ludicrous signs are being picked again as an important element in the communication of this satire. By hinting on societal issues in a subtle way, they encourage the visitors to think about these topics. In the interview, Holkenberg proudly tells how the team meets a couple of teams per year to enjoy a couple of beers and come up with these signs. Several examples of these signs are the ones below.<sup>70</sup>



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The first sign is criticizing the anti-queer politics of Russian president Vladimir Poetin. Not only did they criticize the Russian president, there also was the so-called *Naked Run For Freedom* to collect money in the battle to oppose Russian policies against the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Steven Stoffers, "Waarom Zwarte Cross wél met politiek durft te Mengeren," 3voor12, March 21, 2017, <https://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/overzicht/2017/Pop-en-politiek/Zwarte-Cross-Engagement-betrokken.html>.

<sup>71</sup> Stoffers, "Waarom Zwarte Cross."

<sup>72</sup> Stoffers, "Waarom Zwarte Cross."



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Ironically, another sign, the one above, communicates something different and ridicules the queer community. The sign reads: “Gay doen is belangrijker dan winnen” which is a take on a Dutch proverb that means “it is more important to participate than to win”. These signs show that Zwarte Cross has the habit of ridiculing any movement in society, even if it openly supports the cause of it. However, especially whilst being the biggest festival in the Netherlands, this habit of ridiculing sensitive issues, which is engraved in the *festival philosophy*, can backfire.

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<sup>73</sup> Stoffers, “Waarom Zwarte Cross.”

## Sevn Alias and 'Allah's Afbakbar'

When Holkenberg proudly stated in that interview from 2017 that they had never had to remove a single sign due to 'censorship'.<sup>74</sup> However, in 2019, the tone of the organization was a whole lot different when one of these signs was called out by an artist, playing the festival for being racist and Islamophobic. This sign, with the text 'Allahs Afbakbar', which translates to 'Allah's Bakery' was a play on words of the Islamic statement 'Allahu Akhbar', which means 'God is great', and was posted next to a catering facility.<sup>75</sup> When Dutch rapper Sevn Alias posted this on his Instagram, stating he was shocked by the racist humor and that he never wished to play at the festival again, the festival came under heavy pressure from social media to apologize and get rid of the sign. Eventually they did that and, in their statement, they expressed regret and stated that there was absolutely no place for racism at the festival.



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<sup>74</sup> Stoffers, "Waarom Zwarte Cross."

<sup>75</sup> Editorial office of de Gelderlander, "Zwarte Cross maakt excuses voor racistisch bord en zijl," de Gelderlander, July 22, 2019, <https://www.gelderlander.nl/oost-gelre/zwarte-cross-maakt-excuses-voor-racistisch-bord-en-zeil~a8c4e0b0/>.

In the past however, there are some other occasions to be found where the Zwarte Cross has come close to what they later define themselves as crossing the line. Examples of this are the slogan in the beginning years 'Ook veur Blanken', which translates to 'Also for white people', and a poster of the edition of 2002, where a black-faced driver takes center stage in their most important promotion tool.



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In contrast to the one previously discussed; these did not bring about national controversy. Of course, this could be because in 2002, social media were not yet a thing, and maybe in that time, signs like 'Allah's Afbakbar' would have been easier accepted in the Netherlands, but that is a subject for another discussion. Nevertheless, the fact is that the

<sup>76</sup> "2000 Poster," Zwarte Cross, Geschiedenis, accessed May 1, 2020, [https://www.zwartecross.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/02/2002\\_poster.jpg](https://www.zwartecross.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/02/2002_poster.jpg).

festival did not have the outreach it has today, because back then it was still operating in the shadow of bigger, more mainstream, festivals. This does, however, not mean that these expressions are and were not problematic.

### Accelerating past the niche

For my analysis of the Zwarte Cross and its festival *identity* the conclusion has all to do with the connection between the success of a festival in the *experience economy* and the festival *identity* of the Zwarte Cross, which is very much defined by their audience activation by means of the product of their collective intelligence: their humor. This used to be product of the *convergence culture* that was used to amplify the *liveness* of niche band Jovink, but since the band stopped, the festival grew and their *liveness* was no longer at center stage, the humor that is at the heart of the *festival philosophy* of the Zwarte Cross came in a different light. The implications of the *experience economy* have proven to be fertile ground for the Zwarte Cross in the sense that their crowd and festival grew, but there is more to the success of a festival than economic success. This is because their *festival philosophy* allows visitors to feel authenticated and find a sense of *identity* and belonging in the festival *identity*. However, adding the fertilizer of the *experience economy* to that *authentic festival philosophy* and the festival basically explodes, adding topics to their agenda that grow above their heads and eventually leading to a sort of breaking point where the Zwarte Cross encompasses so much, that the original collective intelligence that was the result of the *liveness* of Jovink, inevitably evolves into a form that cannot be understood by everyone who wants to be included in the festival experience. This reaches the question of inclusivity. If the Zwarte Cross wants to be inclusive, they need to adjust an important part of their *festival philosophy*. In turn, the sum that has to be solved contains the element of the controversial sense of humor, and the element of its commercial success. To be truly inclusive, that important building block of the *festival philosophy*, its *authenticity* and a big reason why people mirror their *identity* to the festival, the humor, should at least be reformulated.

## Conclusion

The conclusive question that needs answering is how the Zwarte Cross constructs its festival *identity*. The short answer to that question is that it is constructed through a range of reciprocal mechanisms than have been analyzed through the triangular method of *liveness*, *convergence culture* and *experience economy*. These are theories that we see functionalized in the organization of festivals. *Liveness* through the staging, in the broadest sense of the word, of artists. *Convergence culture* for mediating cultural expressions. And, finally, *experience economy* to explain a festivals monetizability. Through that analysis, and taking into account the theories about *identity*, *authenticity* and *festival philosophy*, we can understand what constructs a festival *identity* and more specifically how that works for an ACF that grew from niche to mainstream: the Zwarte Cross.

The first question I posed was how Anglo-American musical influence is translated into an authentic musical culture that generated a lot of following. Normaal and Jovink take cultural elements of Anglo-American music and wave them with their local reality through their use of dialect and, while doing so, they glorify their own rural background. This intertwinement, or *histoire croissée*, is perceived as authentic because *authenticity* is not inscribed in music but ascribed to it and, in this case, used to authenticate the rural. In short: the *liveness* of Normaal and later Jovink is used to authenticate and thus identify a cultural group.

Following that comes the question about *convergence culture*. In the case of the Jovink en de Voederbietels, their fanbase was created on an image of spectacular live shows and stunts which enriched their live reputation. With the Zwarte Cross originally being an extension of the band, it also the *høken* mentality at its core. The audience of the early days played an active part in communicating that mentality, by participating in the stunts and dressing up. Following that, the organization took that imagery and made it a part of the *Zwarte Cross's festival philosophy*. This activated their audience even more which drew in larger crowds who were even more fanatic in expanding that tradition of lunacy and motocross. In that process, you can recognize the principle of collective intelligence in the form of the specific brand of humor that was growing with the festival. Humorous elements like the ludicrous signs were meant to emphasize the *festival philosophy*. The collective intelligence in this way is a very important factor in the construction of the festival's *identity*.

That story has its downsides too. If humor is to be seen as the product of collective intelligence, then you must acknowledge that there are always boundaries to the collective. The fertile ground of the *experience economy* has made the Zwarte Cross a huge cultural influence, but the factors that have formed its *identity* have proven to be problematic for its inclusivity. All in all, the Zwarte Cross has become a huge platform because of its success and its experience has to cater to a pluriform audience, making it an increasingly difficult challenge to remain inclusive, whilst holding on to humor that especially non-rural groups can find offensive.

So how does this all add up to form the festival *identity* of the Zwarte Cross? As said, it is the result of an interactive and reciprocal mechanism, so it is difficult to pinpoint the exact process. The triangle of the theories of *liveness*, *convergence culture* and the *experience economy* have proven to be very useful to translate this process, functionalizing the theories around *identity*, *authenticity* and *festival philosophy* into an explanatory format for the success of modern music festivals. Through the *liveness* of the organizing band Jovink, a sense of rural *authenticity* through self-authentication became part of the individual *identity* of a lot of their fans. This created a sense of community amongst them, which they emphasized through forms of media through *convergence culture*, which led in turn to the creation of the specific humor that colors the Zwarte Cross's experience. To close the triangle, we take it back to the monetizability of society's urge to experience: the *experience economy*.

The evolution of the Zwarte Cross meant it would become so much more than the artist centered festival it was at the beginning, but its original values are still very much part of the festival *identity* and color the success of the festival. On the other hand, the controversy surrounding the festival in recent years brings about the question if the festival is not self-imploding and succumbing to its own influence.

That being a speculative question for the future, it is important to assess what this analysis of the Zwarte Cross means and what we can take from it for future research. The method that balances out the factors of *liveness*, *convergence culture* and *experience economy* is an excellent way to analyze the meaning of festivals, when taking into account a broad theoretical understanding of *identity*, *authenticity* and *festival philosophy*. I think this analysis on how a festival *identity* is formed shows us that festivals are more than events that balance on selling 'Dionysian' experiences, but musical experiences that help us

formulate who we want to be. A testament of our individual agency in the process of cultural identification.

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