

## **Working Harder and Working Smarter: The survival strategies of contemporary independent musicians**

**Brian J. Hracs - Uppsala University**

The working lives of contemporary independent musicians are fraught with risk and uncertainty. These individuals are responsible for a complex range of tasks, earn low incomes, experience forms of spatial and temporal fragmentation and face fierce competition from local and global firms. Yet, the psychic rewards associated with creative employment compel musicians to remain in the labor market, practice self-exploitation and develop innovative strategies to compete and survive. To date, however, little is known about how musicians overcome the inefficiencies of the 'Do It Yourself' (D.I.Y.) model and negotiate the hyper-competitive marketplace. Drawing on 65 interviews with independent musicians and key informants, this presentation will highlight the interrelated spatial, organizational and commercial strategies being used by musicians in Toronto, Canada. It will demonstrate that independent musicians are exchanging their bohemian identities and spatial preferences for professional personas and banal live/work spaces in Toronto's suburbs. It will also consider how musicians are altering their networking practices and 'get help' from collaborators and intermediaries in order to move beyond the constraints of the D.I.Y. model and traditional social networks. Some of the innovative commercial strategies that independent musicians use to market and monetize their products in the increasingly competitive and global marketplace will also be discussed. This presentation will contribute to and nuance understandings of creative entrepreneurship and risk mediation strategies in the digital age.