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"Ten times measure, one time cut".
Methodological and political issues of collecting data
on the music industries

Background

The issues I would like to share about collecting data on music do not concern the musicological, educational, technological, or the aesthetic aspects of the wide range of activities related with music. They concern several economic, political and social aspects of music as a constitutive element of our society and culture that includes a set of various forms of everyday social practice in a wide range of occupations involved in the creation, production, circulation and consumption of music. I will try to explain why it is necessary to collect reliable data on these activities, and how this endeavor is not just another technocratic issue, but mainly a matter of methodology and policy, based on theoretical and practical considerations.

Some time ago, I tried to find some information about the contribution of the music as a complex sector in the Gross Domestic Product of Greece. The difficulties encountered when calculating the contribution of the cultural industries to GDP have been discussed elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Throsby, 1994). Because social research on music and policy making for it are not very well developed in Greece, I thought that there must be at least some hard evidence to justify this void in a country with a rich multicultural musical tradition and contemporary creation. Given the high cultural significance of music, the hypothesis was that there must be something wrong with its economic significance. Otherwise, how to explain the fact that a great deal of the music education and the activities related with the production, circulation and consumption of music are governed by policies outdated several decades ago and by a market mechanism that operates without any corrective regulations or control to the benefit of the consumers of music products and services? Or how to explain the fact that little or no visibility at all is allocated to the music policy?

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Well, it proved that nobody could answer the question about the economic significance of music and there is no reliable source that might provide similar data in a sensible way. Apart from a few institutions that collect mainly non-economic data on some aspects of music or on some music-related activities – like IEMA – actually there is no solid infrastructure to study the complex economic, social and political aspects of this sector of cultural production. As a result, several simple, but crucial and difficult questions remain unanswered.

How many people are involved in each sector of music? What are their working and living conditions? What is the income of this part of the population and what is its distribution? How many producers are there in all sectors of the music-related economic activities? What are the volume and the value of their production? Are these data comparable with those of other EU countries?

Policy matters

During the last decades of the twentieth century there was a turn towards the creative industries on a global level. The creative industries are nowadays considered to be an essential part of the economy and a main contributor to the development and economic growth. Greece is supposed to be a developed country and as such it is supposed to incorporate the creative sector in its policies. The music industries are a part of this sector. Therefore, it is expected that policies on the music industries – based on hard evidence – are implemented in this sector too. Or, this is what a rational approach might look like. Well, at least all this is valid on a theoretical level.

However, if you try to find some data on the statistics portal of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (http://www.statistics.gr/, Fig. 1), you'll be surprised to discover that for almost 40 years the more or less systematically collected data on culture remains the same. For the music sector until 1997 it included music education schools, as well as the state and municipal orchestras. Today the music education schools are not included in the same section any more.

While, data on state and municipal orchestras may be found under the section "entertainment" (distinguished from the section "culture") together with the libraries, the daily press and magazines, and the art galleries, the statistical data under the section "culture" includes data on music education schools, on book publishing and – of course – on museums and archaeological sites (Fig. 2). There is definitely some evolution of the state concept in Greece about the music sector and about culture in general, at least in terms of differentiating the section "culture" from the section "entertainment". Interestingly enough, there is no such a dis-

tinction nowhere in the internationally known scientific literature on the production of culture.

Figure 1. The front page of the Hellenic Statistical Authority website.

Figure 2. Classification of data on "entertainment" and "culture".

An interesting point that might be made here is that although the internationally accepted

classifications of goods and services (like PRODCOM), of the harmonized system for external trade statistics (HS) or the economic activities (like NACE Rev. 2.0) are well known, most of the data in the tables of the Hellenic Statistical Authority concerning the codes on music are just empty cells. I believe that the classification of the collected data mentioned above and the scarcity of data on the music industries – as well as on other sectors of the cultural production in Greece – reveal some interesting aspects of the hegemonic political views on this aspect of our economic and social life.

Let us compare the world of music seen through the eyes of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and the Greek state with the analysis on the same issue found in the international research practice and literature.

Theoretical background

Since the mid '90s it became gradually accepted that there is no such thing like a music industry – in singular, not to mention that nowadays for several researchers identifying the music industry with the recording sector is completely misleading. During the last World Media Economics & Management Conference, held last month in Thessaloniki, this idea was very clearly expressed by researchers from Italy and the Netherlands as well.

By the mid '90s the "music industry" was seen, for example by Malm and Wallis (1993: 4) as "a complex animal". To clarify the complexity of the system, they distinguished the primary music mass media, like production and distribution of sound and image carriers with recorded music and their packaging, from the secondary music mass media, like radio and television. In addition, Malm and Wallis consider any medium associated with music, like books, magazines, and broadcasts where music is the basic content. In a word, all media with musical and music-related content are included in that sector of the system which they call production and distribution of software. Finally, the related hardware is taken into account, that is, the production and distribution of the machines and equipment needed to manipulate, reproduce and transmit sound (Malm & Wallis, 1993: 5). The media they refer to are not conceived from a technological point of view, but as communication media, which means they are regarded as complex systems for the production and distribution of symbolic forms. In this context, the radio for example, is not just electronic equipment, cables, and switches, transistors and circuits, but a whole system that enables the production and circulation of specific cultural content in our societies. In short, radio – like any mass medium – is a social system. Because the production and circulation of symbolic forms are organized within a market

economy, in principle the economics of such systems comply with the industrial organization model. In other words, the different sectors of the production and distribution of music "software" and "hardware" are actually different industries. Evidently, then, the "music industry" is not a single industry, but rather a set of industries, or – according to the approach suggested by Malm and Wallis (1993: 22-26) – a set of systems. Similar ideas about the music as a complex sector and about the music industries (in plural) were expressed later by other analysts and researchers, like Connolly and Krueger (2006). A more or less systematic description of this sector has already been presented and discussed in the literature (Baltzis, 2012).

If the music industries constitute such a complex system, then the data needed to make policies perhaps should extend to several sectors: production, distribution & consumption, exports & imports (i.e. trade relations), employment and labor force statistics, music education, revenues distribution (i.e. market concentration & income). From this point of view, collecting data just for state or municipal orchestras and music education schools looks like a rather bad joke. Let us compare this situation with an example on the European level. A few months ago, the European Music Office (EMO) report was published. This is a report on monitoring the cross-border circulation of European music repertoire (Legrand, 2012). Nine organizations from different countries participated in an extensive study that included the collection of statistical data on specific music distribution channels. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers formulated five main recommendations for policy-makers. The point made here, is that policy-making, as well as business making, without hard evidence – i.e. without reliable data – is like driving with your eyes closed or like casting the dice. This is actually another paradox because while we are constantly told that efficiency is required, no political decision has been taken to make the music policy more efficient. However, this is not the only paradox of the Greek cultural policy. For example, we are constantly told that culture is the "heavy industry" of the country. Yet, the Ministry of Culture – recently merged with the Ministry of Education – has always been among those ministries that are allocated the lowest budgets. So heavy is the cultural industry in Greece, that the country is not represented is several European and international institutions concerning music (like EMO or the European Culture Forum).

Methodological issues

Returning to the complex system of the music industries, it can be seen that even the statistical data collected by EUROSTAT on music is not sufficient. The cultural statistics pock-

etbook, published in 2011 explains in the chapter on methodology that the NACE Rev. 2.0 classification includes music publishing and recording, and retail sale of audio equipment and recordings (3 four-digit codes) and the ISCO-88(COM) classification includes one code for composers, musicians and singers. No data is collected on several sectors of the music industries system. Here is where a series of methodological questions are raised. For example, given the fact that a large part of the content of the radio broadcasting industry is music shouldn't this be taken into account? Radio, actually adds some value to music when through broadcasting it channels part of the consumption. A most difficult methodological question is raised by the fact that the music sector nowadays includes several activities previously unrelated with the music, like the manufacturing, distribution and retail of computers who may be used in several links of the value chain of music. To what extend and how should the NACE classification codes 26.20 (Manufacture of computers and peripheral equipment) should be taken into account when calculating the data on the music industries? Or – another example – how could the reproduction services of video recording be excluded when a considerable sector of the music industries is the music video industry?

As can be seen, the practical issue of collecting data on the music industries to make decisions based on hard evidence is related with several methodological and theoretical issues. These remain unresolved and need to be analyzed and discussed before taking any action. Hence, the problems concerning the collection and distribution of statistical data on the music industries are at the same time theoretical and practical. As I have tried to show, they also have political and methodological aspects. However, the economic aspects of collecting, processing and distributing data on such a complex system should not be underestimated.

Conclusion

I will conclude with some remarks on the economic aspects of these issues. In times of crisis there is a vicious circle concerning specific policies for development in certain sectors, like music. To develop an appropriate policy that will encourage the growth of this sector, statistical data are needed. However, to harvest these data, infrastructure, technical support and specialists are needed. In short, investment is needed. On the other hand, however, the currently dominant political idea of cutting expenses to minimize the deficits in both the public and the private sector, can hardly meet this need. In other words, without spending on a reliable system for collecting and processing the necessary data, it is hard to make decisions that support a sustainable growth of this sector. Besides, without reliable data there is always the

possibility to make the wrong decisions that suppress growth instead of encouraging it. It may be concluded, then, that the current policy to cope with the crisis creates a vicious circle for music policy as well. The IEMA is a recognized national institution promoting culture and there is no doubt that during its twenty years of operation it has done a great job in several fields concerning music. My suggestion is that through its numerous local and international partnerships, it might perhaps include easier in its activities the development of a solid methodology for collecting reliable data on music as a set of economic, socially, and culturally valuable activities. This might also be supported by developing specific collaboration with MIC centers and with existing research units in the universities.

To put it briefly, if making political decisions on music is like cutting, collecting, processing and distributing data is about measuring before cut. In this sense, I believe that a rational approach should comply with the saying "ten times measure, one time cut".

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