

*'LOW-BUDGET COSMOPOLITANISM'*

LIVE JAZZ IN RECESSION ATHENS

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This dissertation is submitted to the Department of Music in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

### **Declaration of Authorship**

I Georgia Vavva hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: \_\_8/10/2019\_\_

I confirm that the word length of

- 1) The thesis, including footnotes, is 76,523.
- 2) The bibliography is 4,397.

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## **Abstract**

This doctoral thesis, looking into the live jazz of Athens in the post-2010 period, contributes to the literature of music and globalization by providing an ethnographic example of a musical subculture being put abruptly under economic restraint and forced to operate within a socioeconomic environment distinctly different than the previous one. Based on twelve months of fieldwork, it focuses on three key agents of change within this period: the city, the musicians and the venue owners. In this thesis I explore questions regarding the relation of the local to the global, cosmopolitanism from below and value transformations that occurred during the recession, in the interplay between the Greek popular music industry and jazz, or what could be described in Slobin's terms as superculture and subculture respectively. In particular, I focus on the phenomenon of the rise of small-scale music making that came as a result of the decline of the superculture (Greek popular music), where many high-skilled jazz musicians were employed. As I argue, during the transition from a period of economic development to one of sweeping economic decline musicians and venue owners, being forced to engage into the 'politics of value' and re-establish what it is that makes life worth living, are collectively creating a 'low-budget cosmopolitanism', pointing towards a new ethos in the live jazz scene of the Greek capital.

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## Note on Transliteration

The system I am adopting in the thesis follows the system that Hamilakis (2007: xxi) adopts in his effort to combine the phonetic system proposed by anthropologists and the etymological system proposed by historians and philologists. Where there is differentiation in the transliteration of the same term i.e., Gazi instead of Gkàzi, this is maintained in order to keep the original form as cited by other sources. Accents are used when deemed necessary, to further assist non-Greek speaking readers with the pronunciation.

Αα: a	αι: ai [pron. e, as in ‘eh’]
Ββ: v	αυ, ευ: af/av, ef/ev
Γγ: g	ει: ei [pron. e, as in ‘eBay’]
Δδ: d	οι: oi [same]
Εε: e	ου: ou [pron. u, as in student]
Ζζ: z	γκ, γγ: gk (initial), ng (medial)
Ηη: i	μπ: b (initial), mb (medial)
Θθ: th	ντ: d (initial), nd (medial)
Ιι: i	
Κκ: k	
Λλ: l	
Μμ: m	
Νν: n	
Ξξ: x	
Οο: o	
Ππ: p	
Ρρ: r	
Σς: s	
Ττ: t	
Υυ: y	
Φφ: ph	
Χχ: h	
Ψψ: ps	
Ωω: o	

## Glossary of Greek Terms

**Magazì:** shop/venue. The term is widely used for any kind of shop. In music networks it is used to denote the venues. [also used in the pl.: *magazià*].

**Merokàmato:** lit. a day's work/payment. Usually associated with precarious employment.

**Nýhta:** lit. night, also used to indicate the playing hours and the wider night circuit in which musicians are employed; also *doulèuo nýhta* [work night], mostly used in a negative way.

**Bouzoùkia:** pl. of bouzouki, plucked instrument widely used in *rebetiko* and *laiko* [urban folk] genres. When used in the plural, it refers to the big venues where popular Greek music singers of the *laiko* genre appear.

**Kafeneìo:** [pl. kafeneia] coffee shop, traditional type of social space mainly male dominated in its original form. [also neo-traditional *kafeneìo*]

**Skylàdiko:** dog-den, derogatory term used for the venues of Greek popular music, particularly of the laikò [urban folk] genre. Singers or the audience might also be referred to as *skyloi/skylià* [dogs].

**Laikò:** urban-folk

**Entehno:** art-song, pl. *èntehnoi*: referring to the singers of the genre.

**Vary:** lit. heavy, ref. to style of song, usually for urban-folk

**Elafry:** lit. light, ref. to style of song, usually for èntehno

**Live** [sic]: used as a noun in the Greek context, to denote the live gig

**Tròika:** decision group formed by the European commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

**Mnemònio:** memorandum, pl. *mnemònio*

**Mavra:** lit. black, referring to the black economy or money earned without it being declared to the tax services.

**STUDIO** [sic]: euphemism for brothel. The word is written in capitals throughout the thesis in order to retain the visual effect, as it always appears in capitals on the top of buildings in a pink neon sign.

Greek transliterated words often appear within the text, accompanied by an English word in brackets, i.e Syntagma [Constitution]. The English word provides the literal translation of the Greek one.

## **Key Locations in the Historical Centre of Athens**

**Sýntagma:** [lit. Constitution], refers to the square in front of the Greek Parliament and the surrounding area.

**Monastiráki:** [lit. little Monastery], refers to the square and Metro station, underneath the Acropolis. Also used to refer to the flea market that exists in the area.

**Gkàzi:** [lit. Gas], gentrified area named after the Gas factory that existed there in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also used to refer to the Metro station ‘Kerameikòs’, located in the central square of Gkàzi.

**Kerameikòs:** [lit. Ceramic], the area including the archaeological site of Kerameikòs adjacent to Gkàzi.

**Metaxourgheio:** [lit. Silk Mill], adjacent area to Kerameikòs named after the silk factory that was situated in the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gkàzi, Kerameikòs and Metaxourgheio are part of the wider area called Rouf.

**Tehnòpolis:** [lit. Art-city], the multipurpose art-space established at the location of the old Gas factory in Gkàzi and run by the municipality of Athens.

## Introduction

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This thesis is an ethnographic study of the live jazz scene of Athens during the recession seen through its key agents, namely the musicians and venue owners. As such, it theorizes musical change during the transition from a period of rapid economic growth to one of economic decline, by exploring the interplay between the local and the global, and between the superculture and subculture. Ultimately it poses the question of how perceptions of value change, when globalisation works in a state of scarcity of what made it possible in the first place, namely capital circulation. In actively engaging my interlocutors in the ethnographic text, I argue for a bottom-up approach, which is essential if we are to grasp the multiple and contradicting realities of what I call ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’.

Eight years have passed after the official beginning of the crisis in Greece,<sup>1</sup> which has been for the most part framed as an economic and political phenomenon. The majority of these political and economic analyses focused on the origins and the repercussions of the crisis on a national and international level. The corrupt Greek state and political parties (Mitsopoulos and Pelagidis 2011; Lyrintzis 2011), as well as consecutive failed policies to restrain tax evasion (Pagoulatos 2012), are the main features prevailing in these narratives. The spread of the crisis in the European south has extended the discussion further to international political issues at stake, such as the concept of European Integration (Varoufakis 2011; Argeitis 2012) and the perceived inability of the European Union to address the crisis in an effective way.

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<sup>1</sup> In April 23 2010 Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou (then leader of the socialist party ‘PA.SO.K’) from the remote island of Kastellorizo would publicly announce through the TV that Greece was in urgent need of bailout funds in order to confront the unprecedented economic crisis and the country’s budget deficit. A few days later on May 5, 2010 the Greek state signed the ‘memorandum of agreement’ [mnemònio] with its lenders (the IMF, the EU and the ECB), the so-called ‘tròika’, making Greece the first Eurozone country ever to receive an IMF loan.

However, the events following the financial crisis have triggered a series of phenomena which have also transformed the cultural landscape and have been studied mainly by anthropologists. Dalakoglou was one of the first, coining the term ‘crisis-scape’ (2014) in order to signify the new reality emerging post-2010 and the deteriorating quality of everyday life. These changes have been more intense and obvious in the capital—the city of Athens—creating a hybrid cityscape where appearances of former growth co-exist with images of degradation and poverty, all within the radius of the historical centre as well as in the suburbs.

Walking in the city centre during the day, one will come across many different kinds of people following different activities.<sup>2</sup> Protesters co-exist with well-dressed businessmen and businesswomen, tourists and homeless people. With the uneven distribution of wealth and ‘geographical development regarding the division of labour and the ensuing social inequality’ (Harvey 2014: 130), pictures like the above become more and more familiar to multiple cities across the world, thus in this respect the Greek case poses no particularity.

However, apart from the fact that these discrepancies have been intensified during the years of the crisis, there are also some phenomena which are unique to it, thus products of the crisis, and are manifest all over the city. Initiatives from civilians or NGOs such as soup kitchens for the homeless co-exist with soup kitchens only for Greeks, initiated by the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn which entered the parliament for the first time in 2012 with a percent of 6.92% (translated into 18 seats out of the 300 in total). Golden Dawn in 2018 continues to be an elected party of the Greek parliament, despite the arrest and prosecution of its founding members in 2013 resulting in a trial that is ongoing. One of the accusations they were charged with included the ‘formation of a criminal organization’, after a series of attacks on immigrants and the murder in 2013 of the Athenian hip-hop artist Pavlos Fyssas (a.k.a Killah P)—a known anti-fascist activist—by members of the party.<sup>3</sup> Even though there have been several metal and ‘nationalistic rock’

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<sup>2</sup> For a thorough ethnographic description of the city centre, see Chapter 2, ‘Crisis-scape’.

<sup>3</sup> For a brief account of the party’s history, ideology and its rise during the crisis see Toloudis (2014). For an account of its ‘cultural’ and ‘performative’ aspects, see Bampilis (2018).

bands related to Golden Dawn,<sup>4</sup> its relation to the jazz scene in Athens is non-existent to the best of my knowledge.

In 2011, the social movement of the ‘Indignants’ or ‘movement of the Syntagma square’ was born,<sup>5</sup> in accord with worldwide phenomena that emerged with the help of social media such as the Arab Spring uprising in 2010 (Filiu 2011), the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ in New York in 2011 (Graeber 2011; Juris 2012), and the Indignados (or 15-M Movement) in Spain in 2011 (Dhaliwal 2012). The movement in Athens was initiated through Facebook, and shortly after, tents were raised at Syntagma square in front of the parliament. Furthermore, food markets organized by civilians appeared in every neighbourhood, selling products without intermediaries and therefore at lower prices than the ones in conventional stores or *laiki* [open-air food market].<sup>6</sup> Words such as Grexit, *tròika*<sup>7</sup> and *mnemònio* (memorandum) became part of the everyday vocabulary, with Grexit even making it to the online edition of the Oxford Dictionary.<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 2015 all of the above transformations reached a peak with the announcement of the referendum by Prime Minister Tsipras for 5 July, in order for the Greek people to decide whether they would accept the bailout conditions proposed by the *tròika*.<sup>9</sup> Prior to this, on 30 June, Greece failed to pay one of the instalments of the loan it had received by the International Monetary Fund. In light of these developments, Grexit scenarios started to seem more realistic than ever before. With the imposition of capital

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<sup>4</sup> For ‘white power music’ in Athens and Golden Dawn see Typaldou (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Syntagma Square [Constitution Square] is Athens’s central square, across from the Greek parliament. For a brief account of the birth of the movement see Dalakoglou (2013) and for a critical approach challenging its ideologies see Theodossopoulos (2013, 2014). For accounts related to music and sound, see Papapavlou (2015). In her ethnography *The Experience of Syntagma Square: Music, Emotions and New Social Movements* she provides accounts of the soundscape of the square at that time.

<sup>6</sup> For an account of the ‘anti-middleman food distribution movement’ and solidarity economy see Rakopoulos (2018).

<sup>7</sup> *Tròika* refers to the tripartite committee led by the European Commission (Eurogroup) with the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

<sup>8</sup> The term entered the online dictionary in the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. <<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxforddictionaries-com-quarterly-update-new-words-added-today-include-hangry-grexit-and-wine-oclock/>>. (All hyperlinks in this thesis have been last accessed 8 June 2019.)

<sup>9</sup> Although the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ options were related to the bailout agreement, the question of the referendum was further interpreted as concerning the remain of the country in the EU or not. In this case the rejection of the proposed bailout agreement would instantly initiate a Grexit, as the country would have to default.

controls, the so-called ATM lines started to appear—accompanied by exaggerated accounts of the phenomenon in the media—formed of civilians who were afraid of losing their life savings. International media became an everyday part of the cityscape, as international TV crews were settled on a constant basis at Syntagma square. ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ posters filled the city and the debate taking place on social media assumed huge dimensions, reminiscent of the national divide during the civil war period (1946-49). Separate protests of the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ voters took place almost every day. Supporters of the ‘No’ vote included Nobel Prize-winning economists such as Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman, as well as high-profile rock bands such as Radiohead.

The eight-day period following the announcement of the referendum, from 28 June until 5 July when it was held, was characterized by the imposition of capital controls and queues in front of ATMs, free mass transportation, free call credit provided by private mobile phone network operators, protests and among all these, the announcement of free porn downloading by Sirinakis, a well-known Greek porn-film producer. It was indeed a very irrational world in terms of market economy, with public and private goods given out for free. The strength of the ‘No’ vote was received with enthusiasm and celebrations at Syntagma Square until the early morning hours, but was soon followed by a feeling of disillusionment, when the government a few weeks later agreed to what was considered by many a much harsher *mnemònio* than the one people had just rejected.<sup>10</sup> The following elections in September 2015, just two months after the referendum, were treated with sarcastic quotes on Facebook such as the following:

Had ancient Greeks known that we will be holding elections three times a year they would have never invented democracy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of the result of the vote see <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/07/20/why-greeks-voted-the-way-they-did-in-the-bailout-referendum/>.

<sup>11</sup> The above was posted on a community page on Facebook where witty posts appear every day, commenting on current issues. The page is called ‘The wall had its own hysteria’ and the quote is available on its Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/oToixosEixeThDikhTouYsteria/> and its webpage: <http://hysteria.gr/23423/>.

Quotes such as the above were indicative of people's fatigue, stemming from the consecutive elections, and at the same time expressed the disapproval of the government's tactics and its inability regarding decision-making.<sup>12</sup>

Where does music fit within the crisis-scape that has been formed during the last few years? Several music scenes have been affected in different and often contrasting ways. State-funded music, related for the most part with Western art music and institutions such as Mègaro [Athens Concert Hall], has been facing several problems due to the scarcity of funding.<sup>13</sup> The closure of E.R.T, the state-owned public radio and television broadcaster, and its symphonic orchestra in 2013 and their reopening in 2015 are only some of the facets of the ongoing crisis in the music sector.

Likewise, the mainstream Greek popular music scene and its highly paid pop stars have had to deal with cancellations of shows due to low attendance. Hence, as I argue, the economic collapse affected structures related to what Slobin (1993) calls superculture which in terms of music consists of at least three components: 'a. an industry, b. the state, and c. less flagrant but more insidious strands of hegemony' (ibid: 29). Interestingly enough, the city's live music scenes associated with musical subcultures such as rock, jazz and electronic, have been thriving during these years. Even though Slobin does not provide a definition of the musical subculture, he relates it to 'three overlapping spheres of cultural activity: "choice", "affinity", and "belonging"' (1993: 55), and he places it in the individual as well as micro-units within society (ibid: 36).

Jazz in Athens can attain both the status of a supercultural and subcultural music formation, when for example it is examined within the environment of educational music institutions or in the *kafeneio* respectively. However, this thesis focuses mainly on its subcultural status, by placing it in the individuals

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<sup>12</sup> Post-2010, legislative elections were held in May 2012 and June 2012 (2<sup>nd</sup> round); January 2015; July 2015 (referendum); and September 2015.

<sup>13</sup> The effects of the crisis in Western Art Music in Greece have been thoroughly accounted for by the WestArtMus research project of the Department of Music Studies, in the University of Athens. The project started in April 2014 and ended in July 2015, and through fieldwork research it focused on three axes related to Western Art Music: education, organizations and ensembles, and festivals. The project was funded by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs - Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning' - 'Aristeia II'. The findings of the research have been published in the Greek musicological journal *Polyphony* 26 (2015).



as Slobin mentions and by focusing on venues and musicians who receive no official support and funding either from the state or the music industry, and are thus not related to hegemonic structures, which is one of the characteristics of the superculture. This is in sharp contrast with the status of Greek popular music which is heavily funded and promoted by the Greek music industry, and thus attains the status of a supercultural music formation. The jazz scene I refer to is mainly sustained and promoted through private initiatives of the musicians, the venue owners and dedicated members of the audience.

During the crisis live gigs took place every night in small music venues or bars and cafés and new live music venues opened, owned in some cases by professional musicians themselves, triggering an impressive rise of small-scale musical performances in the Greek capital. However, these gigs do not form a sustainable economic environment for the musicians. This thesis explores this phenomenon further via a ‘micro-level’ ethnographic example of the live jazz scene of Athens in the post-2010 period, and focuses on the practices that professional musicians and venue owners employ as a response to the economic crisis.

The reason I am focusing on the live scene in this thesis is related to my conceptualization of jazz not as a genre but as a cultural practice. As such, my aim is not to define jazz in Greece through music analysis or an extensive historiography examining composers and styles, but to explore the strategies and aspirations of its practitioners during the recession. This is the reason that I chose the live music scene as my field of research. The live music scene is the first ‘point of impact’, where changes in musical practices can be observed as they happen, before they consolidate into fixed new realities. The live jazz music scene of Athens post-2010 was the place where new projects emerged and were ‘tested’ in various jazz venues before being recorded, and the place where musicians would attend each other’s gigs and new collaborations would be set in motion; what Umney and Kretsos (2014: 577) describe as a ‘peripheral activity’ into the building of a professional network.<sup>14</sup> But most

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<sup>14</sup> Umney and Kretsos (2014) in their article on jazz musicians in London distinguish between four types of activities: peripheral, entrepreneurial, associational and professional communitarian, in relation to creative autonomy and collective interaction.

importantly it was the place where the local music network of jazz practitioners, including the musicians and venue owners, would come together on a daily basis, to socialize and renegotiate their ontological status in relation to the Greek soundscape, or to ‘cry all together’ in face of the deepening economic crisis. As such, the live jazz network of Athens post-2010 provided much more than performance spaces; it provided a support system for musicians, venue owners and audience members.

Looking at live jazz music in Athens as a cultural practice, two key themes emerge and are the key themes that organize this thesis. The first one has to do with the interplay between the global and the local, and the second with the interplay between the superculture and the subculture. Regarding the first theme (global-local), professional jazz musicians in Greece are faced with a double negation: being musicians in a country that never considered jazz part of its culture; and being musicians in a country that was never considered part of the worldwide jazz tradition, rendering these musicians invisible both at a local and an international level. It is not a coincidence that until 2010 the *leitmotif* of musicians in the scene was ‘but we are not jazz musicians’, revealing ‘their perceived incapacity to live up to the myths and fantasies surrounding this role’ (Tsioulakis 2011:186).

The second theme, the interplay between the superculture and the subculture in Slobin’s (1993) terms, has to do with their survival as professional musicians. In Chapter 2, I discuss their dependence on local mainstream music cultures in order to make a living, since the jazz gigs are not a source of a steady income on which they can rely. In Chapter 3, I discuss how these two key themes are being renegotiated during the crisis, and the ensuing reversal of power relations between the local and the global, and between the superculture and subculture. These themes have been pivotal in the shaping of the jazz scene, but they are not new. As I will discuss in the next section, they are rooted in the very beginning of jazz in Greece in the 1920s. My aim is not to contribute to the master narrative of jazz as an American genre, but following a bottom-up approach to discuss how the global circulation of jazz affected local music production in the 1920s. Thus the aims of the next section are twofold: to establish the key performance practices and ideologies that have shaped the jazz scene in Athens for the past

ten decades and to bring to the fore a relatively unknown and unexplored aspect of Greek music life.

### **A Brief History**

Studies of jazz in Europe have focused extensively on France, which figures as the ‘jazz country’ *par excellence* after the United States, holding an important position in the development of the genre. In this narrative, France emerges as a safe haven for jazz musicians from the States, particularly during the 1920s. Two of the most referenced examples are Sidney Bechet, ‘one of the first jazz musicians to spend extensive time in Europe, ultimately achieving the status of a cultural hero’ (Ake 2002: 24), and Josephine Baker who for ‘many had been and would remain the preeminent symbol of jazz in France’ (Perchard 2015: 236). Andy Fry (2014), challenging this celebratory history of jazz in France, discusses thoroughly how they both ‘played on and with their imagined connection to France: Baker performed colonial roles that blurred (but did not erase) her difference; Bechet used his Creole roots to write himself into both the prehistory of jazz in New Orleans and its re-created tradition in his adopted home’ (ibid: 269). Tom Perchard (2015) looks closely at local music practices in France from 1945 to 1985 and in one of his chapters describes the debate around the term ‘French jazz’, a debate which is very similar to the one taking place in 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece.

Beyond historiographic accounts of jazz focusing on the United States (Gioia 1997; Giddins and DeVeaux 2009) and France, research looking closely at how jazz has been renegotiated in different national contexts, thus looking at local receptions of jazz worldwide, is relatively limited. However, lately there is a growing body of literature (Atkins 2003; Feld 2012; Bohlman and Plastino 2016; Martinelli 2018) looking at alternative jazz histories and treating jazz as a transnational phenomenon. It is within these studies that I place my work, not to challenge the grand narrative of jazz as an American music, but to expand it beyond the borders of the United States.

The history of jazz in Greece can be traced mainly through scattered publications in the press, written mostly by journalists, music critics and musicians and recently—but to a much smaller extent—by academics (Tsioulakis 2011; Seiragakis 2005; Krisila 2017). This lack of a concerted

effort to record the history of jazz in Greece signifies a further problematic regarding the question not only of what could be labelled under the category ‘Greek jazz’, but whether the term ‘Greek jazz’ is legitimate as such. The 1970s figure often as the official beginning of Jazz in Greece, which coincides chronologically with the fall of the military dictatorship (1967-1974). According to Yorgos Haronitis, who established the journal *Jazz&Τζαζ* in 1993, if we are to look at the discography there are two recordings that signify the beginning of Greek jazz.<sup>15</sup> The first is the recording of the album *Sphinx* in 1979 by the group Sphinx, and the second the recording of the album *Autosxediazontas stou Barakou* [Improvising at Barakos] with Sakis Papadimitriou on the piano and Floros Floridis on the saxophone.

However, an emergent debate argues for the origins of jazz in Greece in the 1920s. Sakis Papadimitriou (2018: 560),<sup>16</sup> in his chapter ‘History of Jazz in Greece’, offers a historical account of the genre throughout the decades and refers to the period from 1920 until 1940 as ‘the prehistory’<sup>17</sup> of jazz in Greece.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to this view, research conducted lately (Seiragakis 2005; Krisila 2017) points to the era of the interwar from the 1920s until the 1940s, not as prehistory but as a significant, if not the most significant, period of jazz in Greece as regards its popularity in a wide audience through jazz dances such as the foxtrot and the charleston.

The reasons that I am discussing the 1920s period of jazz in Greece extensively are twofold. Firstly, because it is exactly during that period that the issue of ‘authenticity’ emerges accompanied by exoticized notions of African-American musicians, and secondly because the live performance practices of the past are strikingly similar to the ones in 21<sup>st</sup> century Athens. In the first case, as is evident in the press, we have a notion of authentic jazz as coming only from abroad, usually the States or France (Krisila 2017: 71, 81) with the local performers considered inferior. This exclusion of local

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<sup>15</sup> For a list of Greek jazz musicians and recordings from 1979 to 1998 see <http://www.jazzntzaz.gr/history.html> (in English).

<sup>16</sup> Sakis Papadimitriou is a pianist and one of the pioneers who established the jazz scene in Thessaloniki in the 1950s.

<sup>17</sup> The term ‘prehistory’ as it is used here denotes a period of time that is not considered part of, or of equal importance to the ‘history’ of jazz. Not to be confused with the term ‘prehistory’ denoting a period of time lacking written historical accounts.

<sup>18</sup> The chapter is included in the volume *The Shared Roots of European Jazz* (2018).

musicians which occurs even today sits uneasily with the term ‘Greek jazz’, considered by some an oxymoron in itself and the cause of a heated debate until now. The second similarity with contemporary jazz has to do with professional musicianship and the practices of live performance, more specifically with the phenomenon of style switching. As I will show, the ever-present relation of jazz to Greek popular musics in the context of live performance has haunted the Greek jazz scene since its occurrence in the 1920s.

Seiragakis (2005: 19) mentions that in 1934 Yiannis Kyparissis established the Symphonic Jazz Orchestra of Athens. During this period, the phenomenon of double orchestras occurs in the light theatre [operetta] and *epitheorisi*,<sup>19</sup> one symphonic and one jazz. As he describes, theatre businessmen would employ musicians who could play multiple instruments and were fluent in diverse styles, i.e classical and jazz. This tactic is common until today in professional musicians’ circles, not in classical music but in Greek popular musics where high-skilled jazz musicians are employed not to play jazz but the pop/folk Greek mainstream songs, due to the fact that their training makes them capable of style switching easily.

Papadimitriou offers another enlightening insight from a later period (1940s-1960s). He describes the performance practices of the era, which again, remain characteristic of Athenian jazz life until today. As he notes (2018: 562):

In night clubs, the programme usually went like this: In the beginning, in part one, the musicians played rhythmic jazz pieces, with brief solos, and people danced; in part two the same musicians, plus a few more on the guitar and the bouzouki, and the indispensable singers (female and male), continued with Greek urban popular and folk songs. [...] Another salient feature was that the same musicians were also involved

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<sup>19</sup> *Epitheorisi* was a sub-genre of light musical theatre (the other being operetta), equivalent to that of the *revue*, drawing on comic-romantic themes. The genre was prevalent during 1907-1922. A common practice in *Epitheorisi* was the adaptation of Greek verses to foreign melodies, mostly European. For a more extended discussion of the genre see Liavas (2009: 78,99).

in popular and folk music, film music, variety shows, theatre performances and various other live performances.

This notion of jazz in the 1920s, which was mostly related to dance and light music theatre, is very far from the notion of jazz that emerged in the 1970s in Athens, as an art in itself with original compositions by new-found bands who wrote exclusively instrumental pieces and recorded them alongside the jazz standards from the *Real Book*. Thus, contradictory narratives about when the history of jazz in Greece starts and what could be considered jazz in the Greek context, on the one hand reveal that this is not a chronological issue but a deeper one, related to the re-contextualization and development of a foreign musical formation and the aesthetic judgements pertaining to each period. On the other hand, the ensuing disagreement suggests that the question is being set on the wrong base from the very start, since authors including journalists and academics seem to be in search of a one-sided story in which jazz in Greece can be described in strict terms, allowing for certain artists, styles and historical periods to be characterized as jazz while excluding others.

Martinelli suggests that ‘the creation of a canon is a discourse of power and exclusion—it reinforces the ideology of the canonizer while devaluing the others’ (2018: 1). When looking at jazz in different national contexts, the question should not have to do with creating a Procrustean jazz canon, in order to decide what qualifies as jazz in the Greek context and what not, but rather to explore the reasons why some composers or eras are considered as belonging to the jazz genre and others not, and what this reveals about the musical affinities and imaginaries that local musicians aspire to.

Instead of trying to map out a chronological development of the genre to define what jazz in Greece is, we should rather be asking which are the ideologies, politics and value judgements that accompany it in each historical period. I am driven by this question in my use of the terms ‘jazz’ and ‘jazz musicians’ and I deliberately move away from conceptions of jazz in strict genre terms; I consider the live music scene as an indicator of how the term jazz is used locally.

As Ramnarine notes: ‘Genre distinctions obscure the fluidity of cultural transmissions, which are not confined by either musical judgement or political outlook’ (2014: 93). In this light, what is happening in the live jazz music scene acts as a much more indicative marker of what jazz in Athens is about, rather than a strict genre definition would. I am not arguing against genre as such, but rather I align myself with Tragaki (2015: 245) who, in her questioning of ‘genre’, proposes Holt’s approach as an alternative: ‘Holt emphasized the construction of genre in association to music practice and experience proposing an ethnographically-grounded theory of genre aimed at *‘understanding rather than defining genres’*’ (Holt 2007: 8, emphasis in the original).

In my use of these terms, I focus on performers with formal training in jazz music or jazz institutions in Greece and abroad, who however partake in the vast and contradictory live music network in the city of Athens in order to make a living. All the performers that I encountered during fieldwork were playing with multiple artists of multiple styles, ranging from Greek traditional musics and Greek popular musics, to classical, metal, avant-garde, fusion, musical theatre etc.<sup>20</sup> In order to distinguish their jazz-related activities, when it comes to ‘jazz music’ and ‘jazz musicians’, I include the performers, the venue owners and the online communities that make use of the term jazz in order to describe their activities.

Hence, my conceptualization and use of the term jazz throughout the thesis draws directly on the way it is being used in the live music context of Athens: as an umbrella term including genres from the wider spectrum of what is known as jazz, such as funk, soul, gypsy jazz, blues, ethnic-jazz, fusion etc. This is not to suggest that the musicians are ignorant of the differences between the various styles or that they use the term loosely. Their main repertoire draws on the American jazz canon, but when it comes to original compositions they are very creative in their blend of styles and genres. Although different in character and style, all the bands I worked with were

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<sup>20</sup> See also Chapters 2 and 3, where the musicians describe their engagement with various musics as being the norm for professional jazz musicians in Athens.

active in what was called ‘the jazz scene’ and musicians would be involved with one another in multiple projects.

In this thesis, I argue that professional jazz musicians, in their choices during the crisis governed by the precarious working conditions, manage to reverse power relations in ‘the interplay between the superculture and the subculture’ (Slobin 1993: 35) and collectively create a new ethos in the Athenian jazz scene, namely what I call a ‘low budget-cosmopolitanism’. In order to develop this concept further, in the next section, I will review the main themes within the literature on globalization and cosmopolitanism in relation to music, as well as anthropological theories of value, framing the theoretical approach of this thesis.

### **Theoretical Approaches**

In contemporary literature, globalization is related for the most part to economic growth, globalized neoliberal capitalism (Taylor 2017), and technological advance which, in the case of music, has led to the vast dissemination of a variety of genres, producing new global soundscapes (Ramnarine 2003; Stokes 2004, 2007). The question is what happens in periods of economic decline, such as the one that Greece has been going through since the official beginning of the recession in 2010. While the interconnectedness of the mass-mediated post-modern era (Appadurai 1996; Eriksen 2007) gave local Greek musicians partaking in the jazz subculture a chance to pursue international careers, they now have to deal with a world of shrunken possibilities locally due to the economic condition. Music was once the medium through which they became cosmopolitans (Werbner 2008) and the medium through which more of the world became theirs (Tsing 2002) as they travelled it to perform, altering their subjectivities from local to translocal during their efforts to localize a music genre such as jazz, which has never been considered part of Greek culture. Is music now their way out of the crisis through translocal musical networks, a non-profitable profession, or both depending on the perspective?

To explain this further, I continue by suggesting that the professional musicians on which I will focus are indeed cosmopolitans, and moreover that they adhere to more than one type of cosmopolitanism at the same time:



‘Elite’ cosmopolitans when they are being paid in order to travel the world and perform their music in venues such as Carnegie Hall, and ‘from below’ cosmopolitans when they have to argue over a 40-euro fee with a local club owner in Athens. In the thesis, I explore this discrepancy between the local and translocal condition further, and provide answers to questions such as ‘what kind of cosmopolitans are we talking about?’, and ‘what does it mean to be a cosmopolitan musician in recession Athens?’ In this, I argue for a ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’, to denote the friction between the local and translocal condition and to theorize cultural change, during a systemic crisis of the neoliberal economic model.

I deliberately avoid notions of globalization related solely to its economic dimension as theorized by economic studies which often prioritize the notion of the self-interested individual. In prioritizing the cultural aspect of economics and globalization, the methods I employ originate from phenomenological anthropology (Jackson 1996, 1998, 2005; Abu-Lughod 1993; Feld 2012) with its focus on particular individuals and the use of narrative in ethnography (Jackson 2002).

By including long excerpts from the interviews in chapters 2, 3 and 4, I suggest that the words of the people from the field can be much more evocative and illuminating regarding abstract notions such as globalization, cosmopolitanism and identity than our academic analysis can ever be (Feld 2012: 7). As Merleau-Ponty would put it: ‘It is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analysing’ ([1962]2002: ix). I have chosen to do so, as reducing their life stories to bare events seemed an inadequate way to depict the complicated situations and crossroads in my interlocutors’ lives. In this, I will agree with Feld, who, although aware of the risks related to storytelling and the memoir genre he employs, insists nonetheless on their usefulness: ‘OK, stories are not analyses in the academic scheme of things. But this does not mean they are unanalytic. [...] Stitching stories together is also a sense-making activity, one that signals a clear analytic awareness of the fluidity and gaps in public and private discourses. To listen carefully to stories is to take local subjectivity seriously [...]’ (2012: 8).

Their quotes do not serve as a mere illustration to the ethnographic text, alongside photographs and other fieldwork ‘artefacts’, which often result in

what Rice describes: ‘Quotes often seem to exist merely to support the author’s point or to bring some local color to the analysis’ (1994: 11). Their narrative is not an illustration to the text; their narrative *is* the text, interwoven together with my analysis. This is the reason why I chose not to indent the long dialogues I have included from the interviews in chapters 2 and 3, but rather consider them an integral part of the text. It is with their stories in the foreground that I build my narrative, weaving a text that narrates the transition from a recently emerging neoliberal capitalist society to one facing austerity.

As I argue, shifting focus not only towards newly emerging phenomena of the crisis, but to the transformations taking place during the transition from one era to another is essential. As Knight and Stewart point out, ‘Austerity differs from endemic underdevelopment and poverty, in that it applies to situations where societies or individuals that formerly enjoyed a higher standard of consumption must now make do with less’ (2016: 2). The literature regarding the crisis has focused mainly on newly emergent phenomena, such as the ones discussed in the opening section of this chapter. Daniel Knight’s (2015) monograph, *History, Time and Economic Crisis in Central Greece* is one of the few works that address the transition from an era of plenty to an era of deprivation, and the ways in which people coped with it. This thesis, further to its contribution to music and globalization theory, is also a contribution to the ‘crisis’ literature. As such, the live jazz music scene of Athens serves as an ethnographic example, through which I explore the reformulation of an already existing cultural practice, to fit in ‘a world of less’.

### ***Music and Globalization***

Globalization theory has shifted focus to phenomena such as time-space compression, disembedding, acceleration, interconnectedness, hybridity, diasporas, flows, migration and glocalization (Eriksen 2007). Whether these are new phenomena pointing to a distinct new era, or phenomena that can be traced back to eras such as the Enlightenment or the Age of Discovery and are just magnified today under the lens of modernity, has been highly debated among globalization theorists (Appadurai 1996, 2002; Friedman 2005). The term ‘globalization’, referring both to the postmodern condition and to its

theorization as such, has been pervasive in academic literature since the late 1980s (Inda & Rosaldo 2002: 4; Lewellen 2002: 7) in academic fields ranging from economics and politics to sociology and anthropology, but has also proved to be very popular in the media and advertising during the 1990s (Tsing 2002: 457). From academia to popular culture ‘it is a term which has undergone a conceptual inflation in recent years and has now been devalued. It can mean anything, everything or nothing’ (Munck cited in Edelman and Haugerud 2005: 157).

Countless definitions have been applied to the term, but almost none of them seem to be able to eschew a reference to its economic dimensions (Lewellen 2002: 8). It is a general consensus that the transnational flow of global capital and the rise of global markets is the event that sped up globalization processes, followed by repercussions in the economic, political and cultural dimensions. As Tsing aptly points out ‘at the turn of the century, then, globalism is multi-referential: part corporate hype and capitalist regulatory agenda, part cultural excitement, part social commentary and protest’ (Tsing 2002: 458). Anthropology has prioritized research related to the cultural effects of globalization treating economics as part of the culture and not an ‘exogenous factor’ (Sahlins 2013), and has dealt in particular with the ways in which the local and the global are articulated (Inda & Rosaldo 2002: 4). It is within this framework that I place my research, since the Greek crisis ‘transcends local and national borders’, and ‘highlights the complex relationship between global and local experience’ (Knight 2013: 147).

In this perspective, anthropology, by privileging the cultural (Appadurai 1996: 11), has managed to prove concerns about cultural homogenization and grey-out as being far from true, since locally specific research has shown that people are not passive recipients of a ‘global’ culture imposed from above, but rather engage dialectically with the disjunctive processes involved in globalization (Appadurai 1996; Inda & Rosaldo 2002; Tsing 2002). Despite anthropology having rejected the idea of mono-directional flows from the West to the rest, as dominant in globalization discussions, there are some issues that still require further analysis. The first one is related to the notion of the ‘West’ as such, and the second one to the concepts of the ‘global’ and the ‘local’, and how their interplay is involved in place-making.

From the very beginning in globalization theory, even in its mistaken recognition of westernization as one of its key features, lies an assumption that the West is a homogenous space, or at least a space characterized by homogeneity regarding its superculture. Broken down to the cultural level this could appear to be rather problematic. Which is the 'Western' model that appears to be dominating others less 'powerful'? Even in defining Western as North American and European the question remains. The term 'Western' seems to be more applicable when we are dealing with a globalization from above, prioritizing the systemic and economic aspects of it. Seen from the perspective of globalization from below (Appadurai 2002), this homogeneous picture starts to look a bit more fragmented.

If we are to conceive today's world as a series of disjunctive global cultural flows as Appadurai (ibid) proposes, where and how can we draw the distinction between the global and the local if there could be any at all? Is global a hybrid created by interacting localities? The question of course is not new in anthropology, as Inda and Rosaldo (2002: 9) point out: 'While everyone might continue to live local lives, their phenomenal worlds have to some extent become global as distant events come to have an impact on local spaces, and local developments come to have global repercussions.' Even so, the spaces of the local and the global seem to be some sort of clearly defined areas of operation regarding the cultural, economic and political level that become entangled in many diverse ways. Could we distinguish then how much 'local' there is in the 'global' and how much 'global' in the 'local'? Probably not. Where we could turn our attention though is to the ways that the de-territorialisation of culture takes place (Inda & Rosaldo 2002: 12) leading us to a view of globalization as a procedure, as means of making something global (Turino 2000: 6), as a means of place-making (Tsing 2002: 464) rather than a fixed status in which the postmodern world finds itself.

The anthropological study of music has dealt comprehensively with the above mentioned issues, as sound and its ephemeral nature pertain to a great extent to the concept of 'flows', a popular concept of the 1990s giving way

to the concept of ‘circulation’.<sup>21</sup> In line with anthropological theories on globalization, Stokes proposes an alternative notion of globalization, conceived ‘less as a single system, increasingly beyond our conceptual reach and out of our control, and more as a set of projects with cultural and institutional specificity, projects that construct, refer to, dream and fantasize of, in very diverse ways, a ‘world’ as their zone of operation’ (2007: 5).

The importance of this approach is that it helps restore human agency within complex political, economic and technological processes, which often appear as self-contained systems with the ability to autoregulate, without any human intervention involved. One prime example is ‘the market’ as it is conceptualized in economic science. Within economics, cultural events are always considered ‘exogenous factors’ as Marshall Sahlins notes: ‘The cultural and historical phenomena that account for the constitution and transformation of the material life of society are thereby rendered outside the purview of economic science’ (2013: 163).

Slobin (1993) drawing on Appadurai’s model of –scapes, in order to approach a world that is characterized by fluid, overlapping and disjunctive relations, suggests an analytical tool based on the notion of a world culture that leads to the following three categories: *superculture*, *subculture*, and *interculture* (Slobin 1993: 11). Slobin’s theoretical framework derives from his understanding that ‘there are no ‘simple’ societies any longer, yet ‘complex’ is too flat a word to describe the nestings and foldings, the cracks and crannies of the lands of Euro-America’ (ibid: xi). However complex or disjunct these societies may be, the notion of flows creates a common field of reference. ‘While group histories and social forces separate us, our personal expressive lives are inextricably tied to similar networks and patterns of possibilities, however unevenly and even inequitably they may be applied’ (ibid: 13,14). Slobin shifts focus to the study of individuals as well, noting that we are individual music cultures (ibid: ix).

Erlmann (1999) argues that globalization is not a new condition, but a process that started long ago, during the 1890s. What is particular to his

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<sup>21</sup> I draw on the series of the three key-notes, given by Timothy Taylor on the topic of value and music circulation, during the Masterclass on ‘Valuing Music’, in Mainz University in June 2018.

notion of the global era is that, as an ‘imagined totality’, what unites it is not the structure of the modern society but ‘a regime of sign and texts’ (ibid: 4). His study focuses on these narratives, one of which is music. The name that he proposes for his methodological and theoretical approach is ‘an ethnography of the global imagination’, having as a purpose to ‘examine the kinds of truth that are produced in colonial and post-colonial contexts’ (ibid).

Moving away from a scientific model of research, ethnomusicologists have become ‘less interested in the structural proposition that performance simply reflects “underlying” cultural patterns and social structures’ (Stokes 1994: 3). Music is not merely considered a societal reflection, or just a system of symbols which when correctly decoded can reveal us interesting aspects of the society in which they are entailed. Further to this, globalization and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole has shifted focus from a simplistic study of repertoires towards more specific issues.

One of the disciplinary shifts has been the return of interest in ‘the course of human music in its entirety’, as we now ‘see the world as a set of issues, valid everywhere, to be debated, and less as a group of repertoires’ according to Nettl (1983: 433). Ethnomusicology changed scale moving from the local to the global, either by studying ‘trans-state cultural processes’ (Turino 2003: 51) or by moving even further to the realm of the imaginary drawing the picture of a world where ‘musics once perceived as foreign and outlandish have become familiar. Isolated musical practices now interact with others, producing energetic new hybrids, global soundscapes’ (Stokes 2007: 1).

Drawing on this literature, outlined above, and by focusing on particular individuals as agents of change, this thesis explores how the relation of the global to the local is being transformed during the abrupt and violent transition from a former state of economic growth to one of economic decline. As I argue, the late 1980s and early 1990s in Greece signalled the beginning of an ‘extrovert’ period, with the key event being the country’s entrance to the EU in 1981 and its subsequent joining of the Euro currency in 2001. There were two significant consequences from this development, namely the flow of goods and the ease of travel, both in and out of the country. It was in this circulation that musics considered foreign to Greek culture acquired their value, as I will discuss further.

The flow of capital from European Union funds promoted social upward mobility and resulted in the subsequent emergence of upper-middle classes, which were gradually involved in a rampant consumerism until the mid 2000s. Prevalent during this period was a fascination with anything coming from out of the country, which was considered much better than its local equivalent. Thus, capital circulation and economic development created a state in which ‘the appropriation and domestication of difference’ acquired ‘a certain prestige value’ (Sahlins 2013: 171). Jazz, within this state of economic euphoria, acquired the status of a ‘prestige good’ almost always accompanied by expensive cocktails and fusion cuisine in the fancy bar-restaurants of the 1990s.

As far as the ease of travel was concerned, this resulted in many Greeks studying abroad, benefiting from the low or non-existent fee policy available to EU nationals. In a strange turn of events, nowadays postgraduate students coming from abroad as part of the Erasmus exchange in the jazz programme of the Ionian University, undertake teaching of undergraduates, as a strategy to make up for the lack of lecturers due to the budget cuts in education post-2010.<sup>22</sup> Again in this case, the translocal accommodated the shortage of human capital at the local level, but through the reverse path, namely that of internationals coming in instead of Greeks going out.

The thesis explores further how the crisis affected local jazz production arguing that the scarcity of funds oddly enough sped up the localization of the genre via two avenues: the first one was related to the fact that local musicians during the crisis provided a cheaper alternative to the ones coming from abroad and were thus preferred by venue owners, and the second one is related to the introduction of the genre in performance spaces that were reserved until now exclusively for local Greek musics, namely the *kafeneio*. This odd mixture of a predominantly local space of socializing mostly by working classes and a translocal ‘prestige good’ of the 1990s, namely jazz, is one of the most characteristic examples of what I refer to as ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’.

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<sup>22</sup> I would like to thank Dimos Dimitriadis, the establisher and head of the Jazz Performance Department in the Ionian University, for this information.

### ***On Musical Cosmopolitanism***

The current debate on cosmopolitanism, as it has been formed within the last two decades in anthropology and ethnomusicology, appears to be very distant from initial conceptions of the term as somewhat connected to elitism. Cosmopolitanism, according to Nigel Rapport, originates with Immanuel Kant, for whom it ‘expressed a necessary ontological tension [...]: to be human was at once to inhabit an individual embodiment, a particular spatiality and temporality (or “*polis*”), and to be an essential instantiation of species-wide capabilities and liabilities, part of a human whole (or “*cosmos*”)’ (2014[1999]: 110-11).

In recent anthropological theory, the term has been widely re-determined due to the disjunctures characterizing the contemporary globalized world. Terms such as ‘rooted’ (Appiah 1998), ‘discrepant’ (Clifford 1992), ‘vernacular’ (Bhabha 1996), ‘bottom-up’ (Hannerz 2004), ‘diasporic’ (Stokes 2007) and ‘from below’ (Stokes 2010; Feld 2012) cosmopolitanisms have emerged in contemporary literature in anthropology and ethnomusicology contributing to a notion of ‘situated cosmopolitanism’ (Werbner 2008: 1). The above issues have been elaborated quite eloquently in the opening chapter of the edited volume *Cosmopolitanism* (Breckenridge et al. 2002: 1):

For one thing, cosmopolitanism is not some known entity existing in the world, with a clear genealogy from the Stoics to Immanuel Kant, that simply awaits more detailed description at the hands of scholarship. We are not exactly certain what it is, and figuring out why this is so and what cosmopolitanism may be raises difficult conceptual issues.

Turino has discussed the term extensively and suggests that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not conflicting concepts, but rather that the former presupposes the latter. In his *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (2000), he draws a fundamental distinction between globalization and cosmopolitanism. He argues that while globalization as a term has been widely used, it applies only to certain phenomena that could be considered valid for the whole of the world such as the state-system. On the contrary, phenomena such as ‘the use of computers, may be widespread but



have not been incorporated by substantial portions of the populations' (ibid: 6), and thus cannot be considered global. Cosmopolitan and cosmopolitanism would be more appropriate terms, according to Turino, in order to refer to 'a specific *type* of cultural formation and constitution of habitus that is translocal in purview' (ibid: 7). Jazz, being a predominantly translocal music genre, adheres to the kind of cosmopolitan cultural formations Turino argues for.

Stokes (2007) continues in the same vein as Turino, favouring the term 'cosmopolitanism' as opposed to 'globalization' but for a different reason. Stokes employs the term as a way to restore human agency, a characteristic which globalization as a concept seems to be lacking. In his words: 'The shift of emphasis is significant, and, in my view, highly productive. Most importantly, it restores human agencies and creativities to the scene of analysis, and allows us to think of music as a process in the making of "worlds", rather than a passive reaction to global "systems"' (ibid: 6). Further to this, in his ethnography *The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music* (2010) he argues for a cosmopolitanism 'from below'. He locates the phenomenon in the effort to localize popular genres in Turkey such as jazz, tango, hip-hop and electronica and 'thus rendering them Turkish' (ibid: 20).

Steven Feld, in his ethnography *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana* (2012), focuses on specific individuals in order to explore issues of 'race', politics and spirituality in relation to jazz and African music as well as the uneven power relations occurring amongst them. Feld writes about an 'embodied, lived, uneven, complicated' (ibid:7) cosmopolitanism from below. In doing so, he employs narrative and dialogue as the main styles of writing, signalling in this way a desire to distance himself from abstract, academic definitions of cosmopolitanism (2012: 7):

The kind of intervention I offer you means to clear space to talk about cosmopolitanism from below, to reimagine cosmopolitanism from the standpoint of the seriously uneven intersections, and the seriously off-the-radar lives of people who, whatever is to be said about their global connections, nonetheless live quite remotely to the theorists and

settings that usually dominate cosmopolitanism conversations in academia.

Thus, the main issues lying at the heart of cosmopolitan theory nowadays are related to the reconceptualization of the term, exploring its relation to nationalism not as an opposing but as a complementary term, as well as its relation to globalization and power inequalities leading to the emergence of ‘minoritarian cosmopolitans’ (Breckenridge et al. 2002: 6).

Drawing on this literature, I particularly focus on the notion of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’, defined by Werbner as ‘an oxymoron that joins contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment’ (2006: 496). In the Greek case, musical cosmopolitanism as a concept is of particular interest, as the discussion regarding Greek national music oscillates constantly between the ‘European’, ‘oriental/Ottoman’, ‘Balkan’ and ‘national/Hellenic’ identities (Tragaki 2018: 4). Tragaki challenges the notion of ‘cosmopolitanism as an orthodoxy’ when it comes to Greek popular music and calls for the ‘undoing [of] cosmopolitanism’, beyond the East-West divide (ibid: 8). She goes on to suggest that we should look beyond a notion of a celebratory cosmopolitanism that bridges asymmetries and brings harmonic coexistence, and towards one ‘which may also be painful and futile and as an agonistic terrain for multiple subjectifications and negotiations claiming a ceaselessly becoming world (Braidotti 2013)’ (ibid).

In light of the recent economic adventures of the country, I coin the term ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’ to refer to the reformulation and renegotiation of an already established musical tradition, namely jazz, in order to fit the new environment that lacked the conditions that made its dissemination on a local level possible in the first place, namely capital circulation. This process, as I will show, is full of paradoxes, frictions and was realized under a condition of structural violence as people in the field often mentioned, forcing them to re-evaluate what it is that makes life worth living. As such, ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’ is a phenomenon and a process, one that entails a forced renegotiation of values as I will discuss thoroughly in the next section.

### ***On Value Theory***

While anthropological theories of value have re-emerged in academic discussion, the only consensus amongst anthropologists seems to be that there is no single, uniform theory of value (Graeber 2001, 2013; Otto and Willerslev 2013a). Nonetheless, there are two major theoretical strands that originate in the works of Marcel Mauss and Karl Marx. The first strand draws on Mauss's work on exchange in market-less societies, and the second strand deals with the notion of value (use value-exchange value) in market-based societies. The ensuing debate is often evident in the dichotomy of 'gift vs commodity'.

Value theory in anthropology was developed in order to provide an alternative model for the study of economics in market-less societies which formed the main focus of anthropological studies, with Graeber citing Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* as the first book-length work of economic anthropology (2001: 6). Furthermore, the aim was to develop and provide alternatives to the market-based society by questioning the notion of self-interest that was, and still is, popular in economic theory. This was one of the main tasks of Marcel Mauss, as Graeber (2001: 155) notes: 'In doing so, he [Mauss] was not simply challenging modern common sense about economic relations. He was saying that the assumptions of economics and social science do not adequately represent the common sense even of people in our own society'.

Thus, within value theory there is the recurring theme of 'gift vs commodity', with the two standing for different types of social relations, or as Tsing notes 'as icons of different system for making value' (2013: 22). Theorists seem to agree though that Mauss and Marx shared a common goal, as they both 'employed concepts of value for a critique of the capitalist system of commodity production and exchange-both based on the expected return of something parted with: whether this was in the form of a gift given or labor time expended' (Otto and Willerslev 2013b: 1,2).

Hence, recent literature tends to bring the two together rather than draw a distinction between them. As David Graeber suggests 'no pure gift, or pure commodity economy actually exists' (2013: 36), a notion further supported by Anna Tsing's work on the matsutake mushroom, in which she analyses

how ‘objects enter in and out of capitalist commodity status’ (2013:37). The notion of sociality, as an intrinsic part of ‘value’ is further supported by Marxist anthropologist David Harvey who considers ‘value’ a social relation (2014: 3) and goes on to suggest that: ‘Commodities do not take themselves to the market. Individual agents – buyers and sellers – come together in the market to trade commodities for money and vice versa’ (ibid: 38).

Several authors contributed to the discussion recently, with the publication of two special issues on value by *HAU* journal in 2013. The main argument, namely whether a unified theory of value exists or even if one is desirable, is presented in the Introduction in the form of a ‘Socratic debate’ between the two editors Otto and Willerslev. Otto argues that anthropology and ethnography should seek to contribute to social science theory, while Willerslev argues that anthropology’s role is to deliver attacks on the grand narratives of social theory through ethnographic particularity, what in the title of their article is referred to as ‘guerrilla ethnographic theory’. But both agree to explore the potential of ‘value’ as theory (2013a: 1). Furthermore, Otto (2013a: 3) suggests that there are three lines of thinking that inform theory and method within the volume’s contributions, namely the following:

1. How value is created through exchange.
2. Values as shorthand for worldviews.
3. A synthesis between exchange-based theories and values-as-worldviews by looking at how action is informed by values and simultaneously creates value.

Hence, there is another distinction evident in recent literature, that of ‘value vs values’, with an effort to combine the two via action (Graber 2001; Lambek 2013). As Graeber (2001: 16,18) argues, the ‘value vs values’ debate originates in Dumont’s work (1982, 1986), who associated the first [value] with modern, individualistic societies, ‘arguing that it was precisely this principle of individualism that made possible the emergence of “the economy”’ (Graeber 2001: 18), and the second [values] to traditional or ‘holistic’ societies. Graeber elaborates further on this, asserting that the division of ‘value vs values’ is not to be found only as an opposition of

‘modern vs traditional’ societies, but is an inherent characteristic of the market-based society, a division allowed by the ‘role of money as a universal equivalent’ (2013: 224). In the end, as he states recalling Mauss, these are the two sides of the same false coin. As he points out (ibid): ‘It is not a coincidence that we use the same word to describe the benefits and virtues of a commodity for sale on the market [value] and our ideas about what is ultimately important in life [values].’

An important contribution is made by Lambek (2013), who talks about ‘economic/utilitarian’ vs ‘ethical’ values, as another way to speak about ‘value vs values’, and makes a significant distinction regarding the acts related to each one of them, namely ‘choice’ and ‘judgement’. Choice, according to Lambek, is related with commensurable and comparable values, while judgement with incommensurable and incomparable ones: ‘In sum, where choice entails selecting among commensurable alternatives or according to commensurable criteria, judgement entails the balancing of incommensurable values’ (ibid: 143,144).

In Figure 1 (see below), I have summarized the various approaches used to distinguish between ‘value’ and ‘values’, as discussed above in the works of Graeber, Dumont and Lambek. These appear as different notions distinguishing between modern and traditional societies and domains of commoditized and non-commoditized labour. Furthermore, I draw on the theoretical model proposed by Lambek as discussed above, in his distinction between utilitarian value as an alternative to ‘value’ and ethical value as an alternative to ‘values’, and their associations.

	<b>value</b>	<b>values</b>
<b>Dumont</b>	modern/individualistic societies	traditional societies
<b>Graeber</b>	domains of commoditized labour	domains of non-commoditized labour
<b>Lambek</b>	utilitarian	ethical
	comparability	incomparability
	commensurability	incommensurability
	choice	judgement

Fig. 1 'value vs values'

In this thesis, I employ the distinction of 'value vs values' as an analytical tool in order to explore what happens when capitalism, the largest, single evaluation system ever imposed (Harvey 2014: 24), fails, particularly in the chapters regarding musicians' choices (Ch.3) during the crisis, and the career choices of venue owners (Ch.4). What happens to the 'rational man', a concept so much promoted by economists and so much challenged by anthropologists such as Mauss (2002[1950]), Sahlins (2013: 163-64) and Graeber (2001)? What happens to music in a market economy which, in the Greek case, and particularly after the imposition of capital controls in 2015, had to operate in a state of scarcity of its main medium of circulation, money? What informs musicians' choices when capital circulation is disrupted?

This thesis explores these questions by examining the value transformations during the recession in the interplay between Greek popular music and jazz, or what could be described in Slobin's terms as superculture and subculture respectively. I argue that it was ethical values that informed choice, or according to Lambek 'judgement', rather than economic ones, a condition significantly different than the one to be found pre-crisis.

In chapter 3, I suggest that Greek popular musics represented exclusively an economic value for the musicians, while jazz represented a number of values in the plural, such as pleasure and self-fulfilment. As I explain, this is the reason why the superculture (Greek popular music industry) declined, as it was not only money's circulation that was disrupted during the crisis but

also the circulation of anything associated and heavily relying on it. The renegotiation of values seen as a political act (Graeber 2001: 88), as well as the dynamic processes of globalization and cosmopolitanism rely upon a key aspect: people. Thus, in the next section I discuss the ambivalent role of the individual in anthropology and ethnomusicology and argue for an ‘ethnography of individuals’.

### ***On Human Agency***

The nature and tradition of anthropology as the study of culture, as well as practical issues related to fieldwork methods, have prioritized the study of groups of people, small or large over the study of particular individuals. These groups are considered to be culture’s carriers and to an extent homogenized groups, in the behaviours of which social rules are inscribed. Here is a brief definition by Erickson and Murphy: ‘Cultural, or sociocultural anthropology is the study of human lifeways and thoughts, often summed up simply as “culture”’ (2008: 17).

However, scholars within the disciplines of anthropology and ethnomusicology lately have dealt with the problem of the absence of the individual in ethnographic research, being critical at the same time of the reification of culture (Abu-Lughod 1993; Appadurai 1996). Four anthropologists who have written extensively on the issue of the individual within anthropological research are Lila-Abu Lughod (1993), Nigel Rapport (1997, 2003), Michael Jackson (1998, 2005) and Vincent Crapanzano (1980). Each one of them adopts different solutions helping to form an anthropological approach that is more interested in the dialogic encounter of different logics-worlds. People are no longer considered to belong to homogenized groups that act under an over-structure, like culture or society, which lies beyond them. In their effort to overcome abstract notions and generalizations, Lila Abu-Lughod (1993) focuses on the narrative and the ‘ethnography of the particular’, Nigel Rapport (2003) on the ‘individual-with-a-life-project’, Michael Jackson (2005) on the ‘ethnography of events’, and Crapanzano (1980, 2004) on the imaginary as a formative power for the shaping of the individuals’ worlds.

In ethnomusicology, there have been several publications considering the

role of the individual in ethnographic perspective. The special issue of *The World of Music* (2001) dedicated to ethnomusicology and the individual features several articles in regards to the genre of musical biography. In the introductory note, Jonathan Stock (2001) argued for an ‘ethnomusicology of the individual’, tracing the focus on the musical experience of individual persons back to Veit Erlmann’s (1991) work on black South African performers. While Stock argued that the focus on the individual is merely a literary one (2001: 6), Ruskin and Rice (2012) a decade later suggested that ethnomusicologists such as Slobin (1993), in following Appadurai’s (1996) work, have shifted focus to ‘the theoretical and methodological significance of individual musicians’ (Ruskin and Rice 2012: 300). Ruskin and Rice trace the challenging of the notion of the music culture as a coherent whole and the focus on individual musicians even further back to the works of Gourlay (1978), and Frisbie and McAllester (Mitchell 1978).

More recent monographs combine fieldwork and literary sources, with one example being Virginia Danielson’s (1997) biography of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum. Danielson, drawing on the literature of practice theory and cultural studies, addresses ‘the issue of agency in society, particularly the role of the exceptional individual in expressive culture’ (ibid: ix). Timothy Rice’s (1994) ethnography on Bulgarian music is based on the life trajectories of two individuals, who serve as the entrance to the social matrix. Rice focuses on the individual, exploring how music is ‘individually created and experienced, historically constructed and socially maintained’ (ibid: 8). With this ‘subject-centered musical ethnography’, he is suggesting ‘that a move away from culture to the subject as the locus of musical practice and experience may provide a fruitful approach to some of the questions about music that our encounter with the modern world leads us to ask’ (2003: 152).

This new world in which we encounter our subjects has been succinctly described in the works of Arjun Appadurai (1996), Martin Stokes (2007) and Thomas Turino (2000, 2003). Modernity, globalization and cosmopolitanism are some of the issues introduced by the above anthropologists and ethnomusicologists depicting an interconnected world, in which common ideas might be shared by groups in dispersed locales (Turino, 2000). This idea of a ‘world-in-flux’ (Law, 2004) which no longer can be considered ‘as a



specific set of determinate processes’, but rather as ‘an unformed but generative producer of realities’ (ibid: 7), calls for a different approach where the notion of being is replaced by the notion of ‘being-in-the-world’ (Jackson 1998: 3).

This ethnographic study of the shifting soundscape of live jazz music in recession Athens is a study largely based on five individual musicians and four venue owners. Considering Ruskin and Rice’s categorization of ethnographies having particular individuals as their focus, I will try to place my study in relation to these categories. Ruskin and Rice categorize ethnographies according to five themes: 1) the importance of individuals in musical ethnographies, 2) the types of individuals discussed and analyzed, 3) the theoretical purposes served by these treatments of individuals, 4) the nature of ethnomusicologists’ encounters with individuals, and 5) the narrative strategies employed when individuals are included in musical ethnographies.

Regarding the first theme (importance), individuals are central to the narrative throughout this thesis and act as ‘the primary lenses through which to look at broader topics’ (Rice 2012: 302,3) with extensive use of interview excerpts, in chapters 2,3 and 4. Ruskin and Rice include in this category the works of Keyes (2002), Vander (1988) and Bakan (1999).

Regarding the second theme (types of individuals), I would place the individuals in this thesis in the category the authors labels as ‘key figures’ (2012: 305), as they were all extremely active in the live jazz scene during the time I was conducting fieldwork. Each one of them has followed a different trajectory on the road towards professionalism and has made different choices during the crisis. The four venue owners I focus on are what Ruskin and Rice call nonmusicians, a category that ethnomusicologists rarely focus on, as they suggest, and that also includes audience members. In my case under the term nonmusicians I include the venue owners, who at the same time I consider ‘key figures’, as with their venues they helped establish a new local network that supported Greek jazz musicians post-2010.

Regarding the third theme (theoretical purpose the study of individuals serve), I place my study among the ones that Ruskin and Rice describe as ‘studies concerned with difference in culture’ and, more specifically, among

those ‘viewing individuals as agents who operationalize, put into motion, give meaning to, and change social, cultural, and musical systems’ (2012: 308). As examples of this approach, they cite the works of Danielson (1997) and Sugarman (1997). Furthermore, this thesis forms part of ethnographic works ‘foregrounding the experience of ethnomusicologists and their encounters with individuals during fieldwork’ (Ruskin and Rice 2012: 308), through the extensive use of reflexivity in the text. Reflexivity is used throughout the thesis as a way of ‘recognizing the dialogic achievement of knowledge in fieldwork; [and] problematizing the researcher’s social, political, or economic position’ (ibid: 310). Ruskin and Rice discuss Anthony Seeger’s *Why Suyá Sing* (1987) in relation to the reflexive turn in ethnomusicology.

Regarding the fourth theme (author’s encounter with the individual), my study qualifies for the first category of ‘direct’ encounter, as it is based on fieldwork, interviews and participant observation. Further to the live gigs that I attended consistently throughout 2015-2016, I was also a student in LAB|Music Education where four of the featured individuals (all except George Kontrafouris) taught. The fundamental relation that connects me to them is that of student-teacher as Yiorgos Georgiadis was my teacher in electric bass, Michalis Evdaimon was the instructor in the funk band workshop of which I was part and Kostas Yaxoglou was my teacher in Jazz Harmony. Babis Tyropoulos was not my teacher but a friend, who taught electric guitar at the time at LAB|Music Education and when I conducted my fieldwork he became actively engaged with the Athenian jazz scene.

Regarding the fifth and last theme (narrative strategies), my thesis combines multiple of the narrative techniques that Ruskin and Rice mention. Firstly, I employ biographical narrative as a means to trace the choices of individual musicians and explore how these were affected by the crisis. In the case of the musicians, thorough biographies from their first contact with music (Chapter 2), to their strategies to deal with the crisis (Chapter 3) are included. In the case of the venue owners, the chapter dedicated to them (Chapter 4) is a chronologically focused biographical approach to the post-2010 period, focusing on their professional choices in the aftermath of the precarious employment conditions caused by the recession.

Furthermore, I employ the narrative technique of dialogue, with ‘the use of extended interview transcripts’ which in some cases are ‘juxtaposed with an interpretive monologue by the author’ (Rice 2012: 314). As Rice (*ibid*) notes, this technique is labelled by Tara Browner (2002) as an ‘ethnographic pair’. Finally, as I already mentioned there is extensive use of reflexivity, particularly in chapters 1, 2 and 3, as a means to introduce polyvocality in the text.

In the first chapter I employ an *italic* typeface to denote the reflexive voice of the ethnographer during writing or during fieldwork, drawing on Barz’s (2008) discussion on the use of fieldnotes. Barz (*ibid*: 207) distinguishes between three voices in the presentation of fieldnotes. As he explains:

I present selected fieldnotes in tandem with other voices: First, my voice while still in the field; second, a voice of reflection after the note was written; and third, a voice more distanced from experience. I use an *italic typeface* to represent the initial fieldnote, the first voice (presented in the present tense). The second, reflective voice is often an inscribed form of what Simon Ottenberg refers to as a ‘headnote,’ a memory associated with a specific field experience (1990: 144). This second voice is represented in capital and small capital letters (presented in the past tense). The third voice, more analytical and removed from the first two field voices, represented by a roman typeface, illustrates my interaction with my fieldnotes ‘out of the field’.

Following his example, I employ two styles. The first is a roman typeface used for the ethnographic description and the second is an *italic typeface* for what Barz (2008: 207) calls ‘headnotes’, after Ottenberg (1990: 144), ‘a memory associated with a specific field experience.’ This represents the reflexive voice of the ethnographer as she describes the images, sounds and odours of everyday life in recession Athens, a kind of mental fieldnote commenting on the dystopian reality. Furthermore, as the ethnographic description addresses two chronological realities of the city, namely the ancient and the modern, drawing on different imaginaries that nonetheless

come to co-exist in 21<sup>st</sup> century Athens, the past tense is employed for the historical references while the present tense for the ethnographic walk.

## **Methodological Approaches**

‘No one is an insider, not even to oneself.’

### ***Ethnomusicology at Home: On ‘Insiders’ and ‘Outsiders’***

I can still picture my expression of puzzlement after one of my professors<sup>23</sup> in Greece made the above comment on a methodology essay I wrote, in 2012. The essay was a report of a fieldwork exercise, during which we had to attend a musical event and interview two people related to it. I had just started learning the electric bass at that moment with Yiorgos Georgiadis, so I attended one of his live gigs with Crazy People Music, which I had already attended a number of times in the past. I had then claimed in the essay that I was an insider, given my pre-existing relation to the field, only to receive the above comment when I went to my professor’s office to discuss the essay. The fieldwork conducted for this thesis raised again the issue of ‘insider vs outsider’, suggesting that this is one of the fundamental distinctions in methodological approaches in ethnomusicology, further translated into a distinction between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

Back in 2012 I did not engage with it critically though. ‘He is a social psychologist, I’m a social anthropologist, we don’t speak the same language’, was the first thought that came to my mind in what I later on considered to be an instinctive effort to defend what I had learned thus far. As time went by though I could not get it out of my mind. What if he was right? And to go back to anthropological terms, does the ‘native ethnographer’ really exist or is it just another facet of our longing to feel accepted by the people we are studying and to be a part of their world?

Early anthropological and ethnomusicological studies, such as those of the ‘Berlin comparativists’ (Cooley and Barz 2008: 9) and Malinowski (1922),

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<sup>23</sup> The professor I am referring to is Nikolas Christakis, author of *Musical Identities: Life Narratives by Musicians and Bands of the Greek Independent Rock Scene* (1999).

initially focused on the study of societies in remote locales to which they considered themselves outsiders. With the questioning of ‘Western economic, political, and intellectual hegemony [...] after World War II’ (Barz and Cooley 2008: 11), and the return of anthropology and consequently ethnomusicology ‘at home’ and in urban settings (Reyes 1982), the notion of the native ethnographer was born together with the assumption that he/she was more likely to be an insider than a non-native. The above has not remained unquestioned though (Narayan 1993; Pian, 1992).

Globalization has made so many different cultures and subsequently musical cultures available within a national terrain that the notion of the insider proves to be a rather dysfunctional one. As Narayan aptly points out: ‘To extend conceptual tools forged for the study of heuristically bounded, simple societies to a world in which many societies and subgroups interact amid shifting fields of power, these very tools must be reexamined’ (1993: 676). To an extent, we are all outsiders before we engage in fieldwork regardless of a shared or not nationality with the people in the field. Tragaki, a Greek ethnomusicologist studying rebetiko in Thessaloniki, has put it quite succinctly: ‘Eventually, we may recognize, to certain extents, various social codes; this may not vouch for interpreting them, though’ (2007: 157).

Following this approach, I abandon the insider/outsider dualism related to the notion of the ‘native’ ethnographer. In Narayan’s words: ‘Rather than try to sort out who is authentically a “native” anthropologist and who is not, surely it is more rewarding to examine the ways in which each one of us is situated in relation to the people we study’ (1993: 678). Instead of trying to define how much ‘self’ there has to be in the ‘other’ to come up with a percentage that qualifies someone for the ‘native ethnographer’ title, I will rather position myself in the field and focus on the advantages and disadvantages of doing ethnography in a familiar locale.

Since I am Greek and a native speaker, I was able to participate in and understand fully the discussions taking place among the musicians. However, there were some challenges. Misunderstandings caused by cultural difference can often lead to extended discussions in order to clarify certain concepts and issues. Yet feeling acquainted with the culture provides us with the certainty that we are in a position to understand everything, even though sometimes it

is our own preconceived notions that we apply to the field, preventing us from asking further questions. On that front, the fact that I had to translate the interviews from Greek to English proved very helpful, as reviewing the translated excerpts at a later stage provided the basis for re-discussing and clarifying things that I had misunderstood.

Despite my lengthy engagement in various music scenes of Athens there is a significant differentiation between me and the professional musicians I worked with. I was not active as a professional musician myself in the jazz scene, as I did not have the music skills required to make a living by playing jazz, contrary to the people on whom I focused. My lengthy engagement with the field has proved challenging regarding another matter. On the one hand, it gave me the advantage to know personally some of the high-profile musicians of the jazz scene, allowing me to locate the key persons that could be useful for my research. I had to re-assign roles to myself, though, as some of these people already knew me but not as a researcher. They knew me as a friend, as their student, or a friend of a friend of theirs who suddenly wants to gain access to some of their intimate life events and thoughts related to their professional music-making. On the other hand, doing research in an environment I have been involved with since 2011 and formed a great part of my life long before engaging in PhD research created a feeling of intimacy that proved very challenging the moment that I had to start writing the PhD.

Considering all of the above, fieldwork is not about being native, insider or outsider and thus able to provide 'authentic' or less 'authentic' insights to the field. Rather, 'our experience in the field was and is enmeshed in a web of human relationships, more or less intimate, more or less personal' (Tinoco, 2003: 19). This focus on human relationships and experience has been the main theme of discussion regarding fieldwork in ethnomusicology during the two last decades (Cooley and Barz 1997).

## *Dialogical Approaches in Fieldwork*

Today it is not transcription but fieldwork that constitutes ethnomusicology.

(Titon 2008: 25)

The challenging of Western hegemony together with influences from post-structuralism, gender studies, phenomenology and hermeneutics, have contributed significantly in the shaping of a new epistemology for ethnomusicology leading to two major changes. Firstly, ethnomusicology, following currents in anthropology, has no longer to be about distant others; it could as well be about the researcher's own society. Secondly, fieldwork itself became the new locus of interest shifting the focus to experiential learning.

'*What the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with how she finds it out*' (Emerson 1995: 11, emphasis in the original). The latter was signified in ethnomusicology with the publication of the edited volume *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* in 1997 and its second revised edition in 2008. 'Experience' is the key word if we are to understand the major shift that occurred in the discipline with this publication, or to put it better, the realization of the major shift that had been occurring during the last decades 'shifting the emphasis away from *representation* (text) toward *experience*' (Cooley and Barz 2008: 4, emphasis in the original). Not only music is no longer considered to be out there waiting for someone to collect it, like a flower in the field, and analyze it, but the process through which we come to know about music has become of primary importance.

What the authors call the new fieldwork places an 'emphasis on human relationships rather than on collecting information' (Titon 2008: 30). Especially Titon, drawing on phenomenology and hermeneutics, poses the central question that should concern us: 'The new fieldwork leads us to ask what it is like for a person (ourselves included) to make and to know music as lived experience' (ibid: 25). Musical meaning is constructed intersubjectively between the ethnographer and the people in the field.

This approach has been constitutive to my research and my choice to focus on these particular individuals, as I discussed in the section about the individual in ethnographic research. Ruskin and Rice (2012: 310), in discussing Seeger's (1987) use of reflexivity, note that 'Seeger suggests that the ethics of reflexive anthropology are rooted in an intersubjective and dialogical approach to field research, one that sees people not as abstract objects, but as thinking subjects with whom ethnomusicologists share knowledge.' My knowledge in the field was built not only through our interviews, but through my relationship with these people as their student in the shared time we spent during our classes, discussing personal and music-related issues, in which we shared our frustrations, our questions and how we will make it through this new reality. The time spent in the field is reflexively analysed in the thesis, pointing towards the acquisition of knowledge as a constant and evolving process that includes questioning preconceived assumptions, exploring new research questions and possible theoretical orientations, as I discuss extensively in the opening section of Chapter 3.

Interviewing was my main methodological tool when it came to discussing issues related to their professional careers, both for the musicians and for the venue owners. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each one of them, and the narratives from the interviews proved to be fundamental in the organization of the ethnography. In an effort not to predispose them regarding my theoretical orientation but rather to allow them to indicate issues that they themselves consider important, I presented my initial question in general terms starting with the theme of 'Music and crisis'. As Tragaki mentions: 'During the first visits, I wished to avoid "coloring" beforehand the ways personal narratives were performed with my own hypotheses and interpretations' (2007: 170).

As I have already mentioned I attended electric bass lessons in LAB|Music Education as a way to get further involved in the jazz music scene and get familiar with the musicians. Making music with the people we are researching is an established methodology in ethnomusicology. John Baily (2001) refers to the advantage and particularity of this method for ethnomusicologists—one that anthropologists and sociologists lack—and highlights several of them. Learning to perform can provide insights into musical structure, help assign



an understandable role to the researcher, help the researcher to gain access to the social world of professional musicians and give direct entry into the performance event. He continues: ‘It was not so much that I understood the music as a performer but that being able to play it gave me an immediate and large area of common experience with people to whom I was a complete stranger. [...] Again, it was a matter of musical relationships forming the basis for social relationships’ (ibid: 96). This last remark is the one I consider the most important. After all, ‘knowing’ in the field is achieved mainly through participating and being actively involved in music practices with the people we are researching.

### **On Documentation**

Nor does the new fieldwork abandon documentation; if anything, documentation increases. But documentation, too, is repositioned, and is now considered reflexively, as an inter-subjective product, rather than as the report and analysis of a witness.

(Titon 2008: 30)

Another important methodological tool during my fieldwork research has been documentation. Taking photos, videos, recording interviews and fieldnotes are the basic methodological tools that I used, employing different devices, both analog and digital, such as a voice recorder, an iPad and an ‘oldschool’ tiny notebook. In it I would write down only the very important things that happened during the events, to avoid looking preoccupied with transcribing everything, trying rather to blend in with the audience. Further to this, I kept a diary in the form of fieldnotes written right after the events, writing down my thoughts as well as emotions regarding the events and the progress of fieldwork. This helped me to remember things but also to engage reflexively with my experience in the field. Fieldnotes are very important as they ‘are a step taken directly *after* a given experience and *before* representation in the form of ethnography’ (Barz 2008: 214, emphasis in the original).

Fieldnotes are another ‘text’ of the fieldwork included in the ethnography. Fieldnotes function as the ‘x-rays’ of our research, capable of revealing the pitfalls, but also our way into knowing, often neglected and not included in the polished narrative we are trying to construct when writing an ethnography. As Barz aptly points out: ‘fieldnotes seldom appear in our ethnographies; only rarely when we write about musical performance do we allow our readers to experience our individual process of knowing [...]’ (2008: 206). The inclusion of fieldnotes as part of the main text allows fieldwork to unfold before the reader’s eyes, revealing how it is an ongoing process subject to continuous re-evaluation. As we enter the field the people we meet can shift our focus to different directions than the ones that we had in mind originally. As a result, ‘fieldworkers [...] frequently need to alter their research plans at the last minute’ (Beaudry 2008: 224).

The above documents from the field, including fieldnotes and interview transcripts, formed the basis for the narrative in the majority of the chapters, particularly in chapters 2,3 and 4. In my case the fluidity of the music scene as well as the fluidity caused by the crisis were the two basic challenges that I had to deal with in my effort to capture a ‘snapshot’ of these musicians’ lives.

All the above methodologies helped me to develop some extensive insight into the musical worlds of these particular music agents in Athens. Through re-examining the documents, I was able to reflect on and monitor the changes that occurred during the course of fieldwork, which led me to reshape my research questions as well as my overall perspective, and furthermore to acknowledge that by the time that they are documented they have already become history. As Tina K. Ramnarine points out in the concluding remarks of her study on Finnish folk musicians regarding changes that occurred in the field after she left: ‘Both testimonies attest to the shifting interspaces between local practice and the musical global network, to the inevitability of musical change as part of the creative process, and to folk performers as innovative and creative agents who forge their own musical pathways’ (2003: 219).

## Thesis Structure

The goal of the thesis is to provide an ethnographic example, within the literature of music and globalization, of what happens to a musical culture when it is put abruptly under economic restraint and forced to operate within a socioeconomic environment distinctly different than the previous one. The live jazz scene of Athens serves as a case study, since it was one of the scenes that flourished (musically but not economically) during the recession, when it comes to the number of live gigs that took place every night in the Greek capital.

With the thesis being an example of urban ethnomusicology of the city (Reyes 1982), I considered essential the ethnographic description of the material culture and surroundings in which the live gigs take place, and where the musicians and venue owners I talk about lead their lives. Furthermore, since I am committed to the study of individuals, they are the ones leading the narrative and are being brought to the foreground. Hence, the four core ethnographic chapters are divided into two categories, one that looks in broader terms at the city and the jazz scene (Chapter 1), and a second one that deals with the life-narratives of individuals within it, that of five musicians and four venue owners (Chapters 2,3 and 4).

The first chapter, ‘Crisis-scape’, provides a detailed description of the area called ‘the historical centre of Athens’, with a particular focus on the areas of Sýntagma and Kerameikòs, where all of the venues I focused on during fieldwork, are located. This chapter’s aim is to acquaint the reader with the area, the venues and some of the bands, and at the same time to provide a counter-narrative to the one promoted by international media for the past eight years capitalizing on the notion of ‘drama’. Furthermore, drawing on theory of gentrification, the chapter discusses how the decelerated rhythms of the process due to the crisis allowed for the emergence of an alternative live music culture, part of which was jazz. The chapter also addresses the status of jazz both as superculture and subculture and maps out the transition from the posh clubs of the 1990s to the simple *kafeneío* in the post-2010 era.

The second chapter, ‘Between Scylla and Charybdis’, borrows its title from the Homeric epic. The title is an allegorical reference to the choice professional jazz musicians have to make between the superculture and the

subculture, in their way towards music professionalism. Following the introduction to the chapter, an ethnographic vignette takes us to the key fieldwork sites: LAB|Music Education, the music school where I took electric bass classes, and Afrikana, one of the main jazz venues in the area of Kerameikòs. The description of these key fieldwork sites serves as a reflexive encounter with the scene since my first attendance of the live gigs of Crazy People Music in 2011 until my fieldwork in 2015, and constitutes a micro-ethnography that entails all the key people and locations that are discussed thoroughly throughout the thesis.

The third chapter, ‘The crisis has been great for music but not for the musicians’, takes its title from a phrase Kostas Yaxoglou used during one of our harmony classes, to describe the current condition of the jazz scene. The chapter follows these same individuals during the crisis and describes the musicians’ choices within this tumultuous period. Drawing on value theory, I argue that there has been a turn regarding their criteria for choosing which gig to take or reject. This, combined with the abrupt decline of the music industry, triggered an impressive rise of small-scale music making in the Greek capital, part of which were the jazz gigs.

The fourth chapter’s title, ‘It’s all or nothing’, is also inspired by someone in the field, Panos, who is one of the venue owners of Spiti [Home]. He used this phrase during our interview to describe the state of mind, he and Yiorgos (his business partner) were in, when they decided to open the venue. This chapter is dedicated to the venue owners of the area of Kerameikòs and explores the turn to micro-entrepreneurship in relation to these particular venue owners who have all been related to the jazz scene as audience members during the past decades. Turning again to value theory, this chapter discusses two different ontologies of jazz live music, as gift and as commodity.

In conclusion, I discuss the emergence of a new ethos in the Greek capital and its jazz scene moving away from conceptualizations of ‘work vs play’. As I argue this has come as a result of the current socioeconomic developments, speeding up the localization of the genre as well as making the musical practices of the past, related to the superculture and subculture, obsolete.

Finally, Epimetro closes the thesis, with a text written and translated by Babis Tyropoulos, who is one of the key figures in the ethnography. The text is a reflexive encounter of his tour in the States with the band Roxy Roca, during one of his attempts to escape the local condition. This text appears deliberately as a postscript to the main body of the PhD and not as an Appendix. In this way, I choose to give the last word to one of the musicians and remain consistent with my approach, in foregrounding the people in the field and treating them as theoretical thinkers themselves, suggesting that reflexivity is not a 'privilege' of the ethnographer but an activity people in the field also engage with, while contemplating their life trajectories.

## Chapter 1

### Crisis-scape

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*But what is life like in a city that finds itself in the eye of the crisis-storm, how does the everyday reality here compare to Athens' global media portrait?*

(Dalakoglou 2014: 7)

Dalakoglou's question informs the volume *Crisis-scapes: Athens and Beyond*, which was published as an accompaniment to the same-titled conference that took place in Athens, May 2014. I use it as the guiding question to build the ethnographic narrative in this chapter. Dalakoglou's volume provides insights to the Athenian daily life and particularly to the 'new social formations and paradigms of staying, building, resisting and Being in the city during the crisis' (ibid: 11). The present ethnographic chapter continues in this vein by applying the initial question to the Athenian jazz life, paraphrasing it as 'What is life like around the jazz music venues of Athens?' The ethnographic description aims towards an understanding of the spatialities that accommodate musicians and music performances in today's Greek capital; spatialities which are far from the fancy clubs and bar restaurants of the 1990s and early 2000s. At the same time, it introduces the post-2010 venues not as detached from the urban space but as an integral part of it. The detailed description of the urban setting where the ethnography takes place stems from my intent to situate this study within the tradition of ethnomusicology of urban areas, where the urban is 'essential, i.e, intrinsic to the study object and hence to its explanation' (Reyes Schramm 1982: 9). Finally, the chapter sets the backdrop against which the jazz musicians and venue owners make their decisions transforming the live music scene of

Athens in the post-2010 period, and contributes towards the familiarization of the reader with the material space where the Athenian jazz music life takes place.

Jazz—a genre that even to this day is not considered part of the local culture even by the musicians who perform it—challenges stereotypical perceptions of Greekness throughout the Western world, which has developed its own romanticized idea of Greece. As Hamilakis points out very eloquently, the West ‘had constructed its own version of the classical heritage, had appropriated it as its own origin myth, and always felt unsure and ambivalent in dealing with the present-day inhabitants of the “glorious land that was Greece”’ (2007: 8).

This chapter will take us to the fieldwork site through an ethnographic description of the area broadly referred to as ‘the historical centre’ of Athens (see Fig. 2). I focus mainly on two areas, *Sýntagma* and *Kerameikòs*, and in between, I have included a description of the area of *Monastiráki* that lies in the path that connects them. By employing the ethnographic description, the chapter aims to depict the multi-layered and contradictory imaginaries of Greekness that form everyday life in post-2010 Athens, building upon ideas of nationhood, religion, tourism, ancient Greece and, most recently, that of crisis.

Jazz, within this description, appears as constituent and part of the discrepancies that form modern day Greece. At times jazz evokes an elite cosmopolitanism accompanied by exotic cocktails, as is the case at the touristic area of *Sýntagma*, and at times a ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’ as in the area of *Kerameikòs*, where the decelerated rhythm of gentrification in the aftermath of the crisis has allowed for the emergence of a world betwixt and between. This controversy also indicates the complex social worlds in which jazz is enmeshed, at times being part of the superculture and at times being apart from and opposed to it. Despite being marginal and still considered a foreign body to the local culture, it has dominated the Athenian night soundscape in post-2010 Athens. Jazz emerges then as a dissonance at another level, as live music performances create a condition of ‘flow’ against the crisis-provoked condition of ‘stasis’. A flow that takes place in between the cracks, as part of a sonic ‘hidden transcript’ (Scott 1990) of the city, ‘a

discourse that takes place ‘offstage,’ beyond direct observation by powerholders’ (ibid: 4).

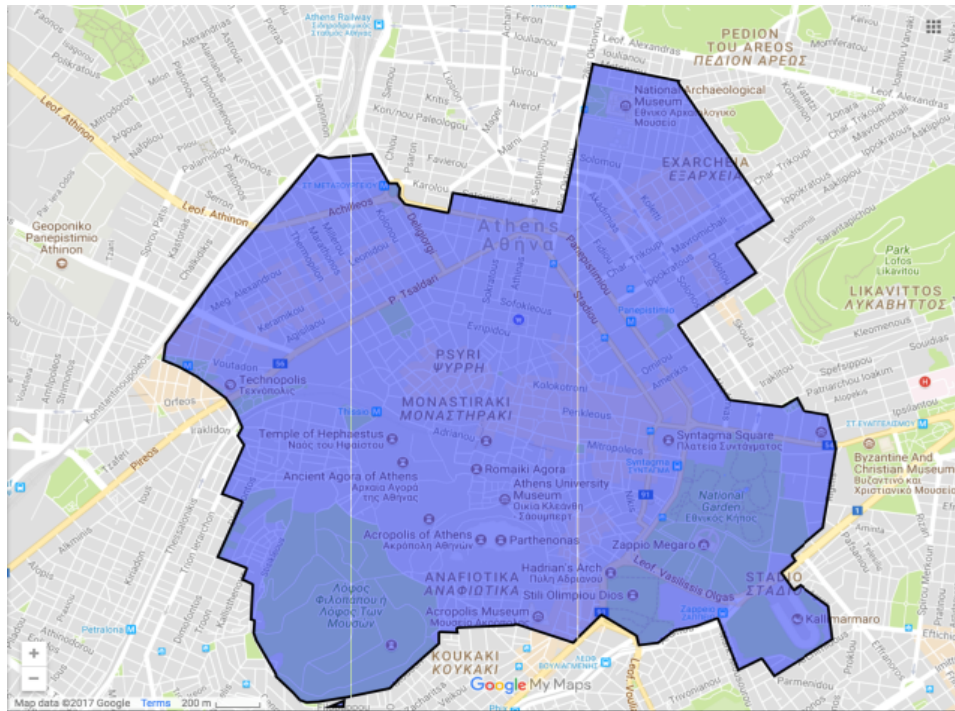


Fig. 2 Athens Historical Centre<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Map data ©2018 Google  
<[https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1HJ5oHvCKa5RQVo5\\_tjO5esguZvE&hl=en&ll=37.978927382549294,23.728152173967487&z=15](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1HJ5oHvCKa5RQVo5_tjO5esguZvE&hl=en&ll=37.978927382549294,23.728152173967487&z=15)>



## The Athenian Live Jazz Scene

*The sound of live music in Athens is like a wave in constant flow, sweeping every hour of the night around the historical centre, permeating dark alleys through the windows and doors of small bars. My vivid imagination, probably translated into nonsensical English phrases, is interrupted by another sound though. This time it is coming from my computer, as the notifications on Facebook about the jazz gigs won't stop. The Facebook page JAZZ live EVENTS in Athens<sup>2</sup> was my way of monitoring the scene during fieldwork and my connection to it while I am away. Venue owners, jazz aficionados and musicians post photos and comments related to previous nights' gigs and share event pages about the ones coming up.*

I get at least five notifications per day. This translates into a minimum of twenty live gigs per week taking place from jazz bars to neo-traditional *kafeneia* around the historical centre and its gentrified areas. Kerameikòs and Gkàzi are the main ones located to the northwest of the Acropolis. In these areas the big clubs intended for the Greek mainstream are located in well-lit central streets and avenues, while in the dark little alleys surrounding them, one will find many small bars and *kafeneia* hosting live gigs of various genres. Jazz, funk, rock, EDM, traditional, rebetiko; every genre has its place.

As the mainstream Greek popular culture receded during the crisis leaving the main avenues of these areas empty, the small dark alleys started to liven up. When I conducted my fieldwork during 2015-2016, jazz live gigs would usually start around 10.30-11.00 p.m. and could go on until 2-3 a.m., even on weekdays, particularly in the venues of Kerameikòs. This distinguished them from the gigs (many times with the same musicians) that took place in bigger and posher venues such as Gazarte, which started earlier, around 9 and on time. In both cases a creative blend of the global tradition of jazz with local musics takes place in these late hours.

When it comes to the repertoire, Athenian musicians draw mainly on the American canon and the jazz standards. Pieces that were often played in jazz jam sessions included It could happen to you by Jimmy van Heusen, There is

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<sup>2</sup> The page was created in 2013 by Irene Konstantinidi, a Greek female jazz vocalist, and is run by her and Manthos Yiourtzoglou. [<https://www.facebook.com/groups/JAZZ.live.EVENTS/>](https://www.facebook.com/groups/JAZZ.live.EVENTS/)

no greater love by Isham Jones, Summertime by Gershwin and Cry me a river by Arthur Hamilton. Other regular standards, often drawing on Brazilian music, were Fly me to the moon by Bart Howard, Masquenada by Jorge Ben Jor, Garota de Ipanema (The girl from Ipanema) by Antonio Carlos Jobim, Berimbau by Baden Powell, My funny valentine by Richard Rodgers, How deep is the ocean by Irving Berlin and Take the A train by Billy Strayhorn.

The jazz standards provided also most of the material for our harmony classes with Kostas Yaxoglou. Some of the pieces we analysed were I got rhythm by George Gershwin, A child is born by Thad Jones, Cold Duck Time by Eddie Harris, Sophisticated Lady by Duke Ellington, Solar by Miles Davis, All the things you are by Jerome Kern, Just Friends by John Klenner, Bewitched by Richard Rodgers, Prelude to a kiss by Duke Ellington, Blue in Green by Miles Davis, and How insensitive by Antonio Carlos Jobim. Further to the jazz standards, we would analyse music of various styles drawing on American popular musics, modern jazz and classical music. Some examples were the following: Almost is never enough by Arianna Grande, Lingus by Snarky Pappy, Bach's prelude from the 1<sup>st</sup> cello suite and Chopin's prelude Op.28, No.4. In my electric bass classes, we focused mostly on learning how to improvise, with the blues form as the basis and using techniques from Jim Stinnett's book *Creating Jazz Bass Lines*. Some of the pieces we studied were Bags Groove by Milt Jackson and Blues in a closet by Oscar Pettiford.

The bands I worked with had a vast repertoire ranging from blues to rock, hardbop and funk. Crazy People Music's repertoire included Coronation Hop, performed originally by the Gene Krupa Sextet, Boogie Stop Shuffle by Charles Mingus, Chameleon by Herbie Hancock, Billie's Bounce by Charlie Parker, Rich Man's Welfare by Roy Hargrove, Mo stuff by Miles Davis and Play by Electro Deluxe. Funky Lab Band's repertoire included Rocksteady by Aretha Franklin, Fire by Ohio Players, Thank you by Sly and the Family Stone, Knockin em down by Phat Phunktion, and I love you more than you'll ever know by Donny Hathaway. The Deep Throat Sessions had a wide stylistic variety in their repertoire including original compositions and arrangements, such as Bill Frisell's Boubacar, the gospel In my time of Dying, Drum song by Jackie Mittoo, Money by Pink Floyd arranged in a 7/4 rhythm signature, Old friend by The Allman brothers, Slipping into Darkness

by the band War, Blue Jean Blues by ZZ Top and Miss you by the Rolling Stones.

Further to arrangements and original compositions that were mixed during the live gigs, there were also three projects—tributes to particular composers—when I was conducting fieldwork. The first was the project A Love Supreme, a tribute to John Coltrane by saxophonist Takis Paterelis, the second was the project Silver Lining, a tribute to Horace Silver by drummer Panos Tziniolis, and the third was a tribute to Charlie Haden by pianist Kostas Yaxoglou.

Although Athenian jazz musicians draw mainly on the American repertoire, when it comes to composing their own music, things become complicated. Parmenidean philosophy, oud, ney and lyra, Balkan rhythms, John Coltrane, Horace Silver, Tower of Power, modern jazz, modal jazz, nu jazz, bebop, New Orleans and polyphonic singing of Northern Greece are all combined, having as a vehicle the improvisational nature of jazz musics. This hybrid jazz soundscape is audible every night around the areas of Sýntagma and Kerameikòs.

### **Sýntagma [Constitution]**

However, it has always been Syntagma, which concentrated mass rallies and shaped Greek politics, the focal public space with the Parliament buildings (the former palace). It hosted two Decembers, the one which ignited the civil war and the other which marked the beginning of massive movements for direct democracy, politicizing grassroots protest against accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003), as the debt crisis has been deepening.

(Leontidou 2012: 303)



Fig. 3 Refugees on hunger strike set tents at Síntagma square, requesting family reunification in Germany (November 2017).

I get off the bus at Síntagma ready to start my ethnographic walk and take notes and photos, observe and write down anything that could elicit sounds and images to a faraway reader, whose only connection to Athens lately has been through the media. The reflexive voice of the ethnographer buzzes in my head: *This ethnographic description aims to disassociate the Athenian everyday life from a media-oriented image of disaster and ghetto.*<sup>3</sup> *It aims at pointing out that the crisis is a far more complex phenomenon including controversial and contradicting realities that one-sided approaches prioritizing drama have failed to depict.*

I keep walking, thinking the above while a rather familiar scene takes place on the other side of the road. *Tsoliàdes* or *Evzones*, as the members of the presidential guard are officially called, are walking down Vasilissis Sofias [Queen Sofia] avenue past the parliament. *Could Dizzy Gillespie be one of them? Why not? After all, in 1956 he had a photo shoot at the Acropolis wearing the Evzones's traditional attire for the cover of his album 'Dizzy in*

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion regarding the applicability of the term 'ghetto' in the Athenian case see Leontidou (2012: 310) and Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou (2011: 33,53). Leontidou suggests that the phenomenon is restricted to enclaves and cannot be compared to American ghettos, while Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou (2011: 53) talk about ghettos being formed in the city centre either by new city dwellers' or 'old-money residents'.

*Greece'. Exoticization can be a two way-path. Jazz is exotic to Greece, as Greece is to jazz.*

*Evzones* continue their march accompanied by the characteristic sound of their *tsarouhia* [rustic shoes with pompoms], which weigh 1.5 kilograms each, hitting the ground. In contrast, the sound of my flip-flops barely makes it through the sounds of car honks and tourists. I soon arrive outside *Grande Bretagne* and *Saint George*, the two fancy hotels across from *Sýntagma* square. Outside two men are waiting for their taxi, holding garment bags with the logo *BALDESSARINI*. Surely some expensive suits are carefully folded in there. Tourists come and go, it is a sunny Saturday afternoon in August, most Athenians haven't returned yet from their vacation, the traffic is normal, the city is at its quietest and all looks well. It is almost as if it were 2004, when *Sýntagma* was at its glory, as Dalakoglou (2013) describes:

Between 1990 and 2004, it [*Sýntagma* Square] was completely redeveloped three times, being transformed into a construction site every few years. *Syntagma* was advertised as the 'square-display of the capital city' and was glorified by authorities of the 'Strong Greece' period, hosting supposedly the biggest Christmas tree in Europe and the city's New Year fiesta.

The image of glory has cracked repeatedly since 2008 though. Walking past the hotels I notice the marble stairs at their entrances. Since 2008 they have been often broken and smashed in order to be used as impromptu 'weapons' against MAT<sup>4</sup> [riot police] during protests. It takes only a few minutes for a symbol of luxury to be transformed into an urban guerrilla warfare tool, an act described by Herzfeld (2016[1997]: 23) as a striking case of disemia:

Perhaps the most striking case of a disemia grounded in the ambiguities of 'Europe' is the predicament of Greece, at once the spiritual ancestor

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<sup>4</sup> M.A.T: *Monades Apokatástasis Tàksis* [Public Order Reinstatement Units] is a special police unit dealing with protests.

and, in the early years following accession and once again since crisis struck in 2009, the political pariah of the European Union. It also appears to be the case that the breakdown of cordial relations with the rest of the European Union has propelled the Greeks into a space where for the first time, they are able to deploy the symbols of the neoclassical past against the powers that once monopolized them, as when infuriated demonstrators hurled chunks broken off neoclassical buildings at the police confronting them.

Today, the building of *Grande Bretagne*, renovated according to the neoclassical original, has no smashed corners, and all the stairs are in a perfect condition. Until the next protest. I keep walking past the bottom part of the square, a square that three years ago in 2015 hosted one of the biggest gatherings in the recent history of Greece, of people supporting the ‘NO’ vote at the referendum, when suddenly I lift my head and see ‘ONE, Bureau de Change’ for currency exchange. This is after all a heavily touristic area. *How ready would Bureau de Change be, though, had Grexit happened that Sunday, to exchange all euro currency into an imaginary drachma?* The smell of freshly grounded coffee from a coffee shop interrupts my absurd thoughts.

A few meters away the ‘secret’ location of a speakeasy bar is betrayed by a sign reminding the clients that it is still August and even bar owners need some vacation time. The sign reads ‘WE’LL SERVE YOU Great drinks...BUT NOT TODAY’. This is one of the regular cocktail bars in the centre, holding live jazz gigs once per week in its basement with free entrance. It is actually called Speakeasy, inspired by the prohibition era that preceded the Great Depression. What a fit choice of name and era to be transferred to post-2010 Athens, the era of the ‘Great recession’. *I am sensing some emerging marketing inspiration here!* The great recession spirit emerges once again, this time in the flashing yellow sign of MR GOLD (see Figure 4 below). This is another phenomenon of the last years: people pawning their jewellery for a few coins. Shops of this kind, which started to mushroom after 2010, are usually covered by big posters on their glass windows preventing anyone

from seeing the transactions taking place inside, contrary to the graffiti on the walls and the shop shutters right next to it, which are laid out in the open for the public eye to see.



Fig. 4 Pawn shop, Lekka Street (August 2017).

I have arrived at Kolokotròni Street, named after the famous hero of the 1821 Greek revolution. *I recall returning from Booze Cooperativa, a place of applied aesthetics as the owners call it*<sup>5</sup> *and the 'Electric Nights' festival that takes place there every year. When I left, I had to climb down the stairs from the third floor where the festival took place, towards the ground floor where the main bar is situated and where the music was much more mainstream. I exited the building under the sounds of a groovy Arctic Monkeys song that I cannot recall at the moment. What I do recall though is imagining Kolokotrònīs on his horse starting the Greek revolution under the sound of Arctic Monkeys. This is what you get when you combine urban street naming that draws on Greek history and the globally circulating soundscapes of the British music industry at 4 in the morning.*

Back to the streets! I am heading towards Monastiràki and I alter my route a bit in order to pass by one of the best cocktail bars in Athens and top 50 in

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.boozecooperativa.com/>

the world. Baba au Rum, as it is called, is located in a tiny pedestrian way in between *yfasmataðika* [dry goods store]. This area is full of them. Linen, fabrics, zippers, buttons, anything one might need is exhibited outside, overwhelming the pavement with colourful reels. ‘*Foüntes, dantèles, klostikà*’ [tassels, laces, fibers] and tiki cocktails<sup>6</sup> with jazz gigs on Mondays, as Baba au Rum used to host live gigs for free from 2012 until 2015, all hidden on this tiny pedestrian street.

On my left, at Athinaïdos Street, I encounter once again curtains and linen next to ‘fish cone’ and falafel shops right across from Faust. This is no place to make a pact with the devil, but a ‘bar-theatre-arts’ space where one can exchange some euros for a drink and live music. I have arrived at Agias Eirinis [St. Irene’s] square now, one of the most vibrant areas of night-life but day-life as well. I keep walking and my glance falls on a poster about a lost dog on the window of a coffee-library shop. The photo of *ZAI*, the lost dog, features next to Baudelaire’s, Rimbaud’s and Proust’s books. *Were it a book and not a poster it would be certainly titled ‘In search of lost Zai!’*

The area of Syntagma is full of cocktail bars like the ones mentioned above, which during the recession started hosting live jazz gigs either as a way to strengthen their cosmopolitan character or as a strategy in order to increase the number of clientele on weekdays. Most of these bars are strictly oriented towards translocal musics (Anglo-American, Caribbean etc.), most of the times being played by a DJ. The genres can vary from world music, jazz, funk and soul to rock, electronic and RnB. When it comes to live music, there are different bands performing every week and they usually cover a wide range of styles ranging from jazz and swing to funk and blues. The audience most of the time is a combination of the bar regulars and people who are there exclusively for the live gig.

Most of these bars adhere to an international, cosmopolitan imaginary evident in their decoration, their names as well as their menus. The prohibition era, American presidents, or far-flung continents and countries, act as inspiration for their names. Even though these cocktail bars host

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<sup>6</sup> The notion of tiki exotica adopted by cocktail bars around the world draws mainly on Polynesian culture. On the social history of the tiki bar see Carroll and Wheaton (2018).



performances regularly, most of them do not have a stage but rather create one impromptu by taking away some chairs and tables. As a result, the musicians usually end up squeezed into a corner or among the audience. Further to this, the musicians also have to carry the majority of the equipment on their own, as these bars don't have any kind of infrastructure to support a live gig.

Continuing my walk, I am just about to arrive at Athinàs Street and Monastiràki, one of the busiest and most touristic places in Athens, but for the moment I am surrounded by the smell of urine and the sight of shops out of business, which have their windows covered with old torn posters. Their narrow stairs and entrances now serve as a temporary, or maybe permanent, refuge for the homeless. In every corner there are homeless people trying to claim some space, sometimes in humble stairs like the above and sometimes in more *grandiose* ones. That same night when I imagined Kolokotrònis starting the Greek revolution under an Arctic Monkeys song, I walked by a church close to Agias Eirinis square to take some pictures of late-night or early-morning Athens. Three homeless people were sleeping at its front entrance and above them a big sign on the church's marble read «ΕΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΙΣ ΕΥΛΟΓΕΙΤΕ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ» [in congregations bless ye God].



Fig. 5 Three homeless people in sleeping bags at the entrance of St. Irene church, Aiòlou Street (April 2016).

### **Monastiràki [Little Monastery]**

The Acropolis, the sun, the Pantànassa<sup>7</sup> church, the railway and Metro station,<sup>8</sup> the mosque made out of marble from the last remaining column of the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the tourists, the entrance to the flea market, the yellow cabs, the heat and the 360° hotel and bar-restaurant overlooking all of it form part of a late-summer frame that fits my iPad screen. The square, with its colourful mosaic made of marble and stone symbolizing the multiculturalism of the area, is full of people. Some are waiting outside the station while others are seated along the perimeter of the church or on the wooden benches, on the structures disguising the Metro air vents, as well as on the mantel around the glass floor above the excavation site that brought to light accidentally a small fraction of Iridanòs, the ancient river that was flowing through the city.

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<sup>7</sup> Pantànassa is an epithet used for Virgin Mary in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, meaning 'Queen of all'.

<sup>8</sup> The term *ilektrikòs* is used for the electric railway (line 1), inaugurated in 1869, which runs over the ground and the term *metrò* for the underground (lines 2 and 3). It connected the port of Piraeus with Athens and initially operated as a steam line. The Athens Metro (lines 2 and 3) was inaugurated in 2000 as part of the city's preparations for the Olympic Games.

Walking away from the square, shops located indoors and outdoors are lined-up in a chaotic mix along Ermoù Street selling all sorts of stuff. *After all, Hermes, after whom Ermoù Street was named, was considered a patron of trade.* My view is suddenly interrupted by one of the huge blue tourist buses. ‘Sights of Athens 16 euro, two-day valid ticket’. Right behind it is a conventional bus, No.227, running the ‘Agios Artèmios – Ano Petràlona’ route with a ticket that costs only 1.40 euros. For the moment they are both stuck in traffic and amid loud car horns. *The only difference being that on the roof-top of the tourist bus, tourists get also the chance to sunbathe and return back home a more exotic colour than when they arrived.*

Merchants have laid out all sorts of antique or antique-looking objects mixed with modern ones. Drachmas, old instruments, cameras, *kompològia* [worry beads], vinyl and furniture, some of them placed on the roof tops and the windshields of parked cars, which act as impromptu stalls, and some others on carpets laid out on the street or the sidewalk. The noise fades out, as I walk away from this pile of strange objects that sometimes look like garbage, and head towards Kerameikòs.

Same heat, fewer people, fewer cars. Silence is a suitable soundscape for the ancient graveyard of Kerameikòs, the first public cemetery of ancient Athens located in the west.<sup>9</sup> Soldiers who died during the Peloponnesian war, as well as famous Athenians including Pericles, were buried here, a few metres away from the contemporary jazz venues established post-2010. *On a very strange note I am thinking that Half Note, the oldest jazz venue in the city, is also located right across from a cemetery for celebrities, the First cemetery of Athens in the area of Mèts where war heroes, Nobel-prize poets and modern presidents are buried. Is jazz elitist even in the after-life?!*

Half Note, established in 1977, relocated permanently in 1995 in the area of Mèts where it can be found today. Prior to the crisis Half Note used to host live gigs primarily with international artists, particularly from the States. This, on one hand, made it a reference point for the Athenian jazz scene, both for the musicians and the audience, as it provided them with the opportunity to

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<sup>9</sup> More information can be found on the site of the Ministry of Culture: [http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj\\_id=2392](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2392).

listen to some renowned international jazz performers. On the other hand, it was often criticised as expensive and elitist, due to the fact that it would not provide space for the local musicians.

During the crisis, however, and with the alcohol consumption decreasing, booking artists from the States or Europe and hosting them for one week was not sustainable. The price of the entrance fees dropped after 2010, by 10 euros. But the ticket policy was not the only thing that changed. Two strategies were set in motion, in order to cope with the fact that the trade upon which they had relied for so many years had become unsustainable due to the local condition.

Firstly, they reduced the days of performances by international artists to four days (instead of seven), and secondly, they started hosting gigs by local artists, not only from the jazz scene, but from a variety of genres ranging from traditional to Greek popular musics, apparently in an effort to attract a diverse audience. Thus, it was at this moment when the translocal became too expensive that the local scene was embraced by the venue. By 2017 Half Note would host the smallest number of jazz gigs in Athens during the week, among the clubs that were dedicated to jazz. Although it maintains the characterization 'jazz club', the jazz performances formed only a small part of its events during my fieldwork.

Due to all the above, the venue has lost its privileged position in the Athenian live jazz scene, since there are other venues nowadays which support the local scene and are hosting exclusively jazz performances charging a much smaller entrance fee. Nonetheless, Half Note is an emblematic venue holding a special position in the history of jazz in Athens. Years ago, inside its walls, the upcoming musicians as well as today's venue owners were nurtured.

Away from the neoclassical houses of Mets and Half Note, and on my way towards Kerameikòs, abandoned businesses and empty buildings form part of the scenery, offering a backdrop for the expression of current issues through graffiti or stencils on their walls. An old entertainment club called 9/8 looks out of business, but posters still figure on its outside. Next to it, Piaggio, Vespa, Honda, Suzuki and Yamaha motorbikes are locked behind the big glass windows of one of the many motorbike shops that exist in the area. *Will*

*the motorbikes and the graffiti be included one day in the ‘monuments’ worth conserving by the Directorate of Conservation of Ancient and Modern Monuments, housed in a neoclassical building a few meters ahead?*

As ancient Greece serves the imaginaries of greatness pertaining to the past—being represented via the material culture of the city and its ancient monuments—modern Greece is represented by the fetishization of drama related to the crisis. Where one always had tours of the Acropolis, one now also has an ‘educational and informative tour of modern Greece, exploring the lessons learned from Greece’s financial crisis’ organized by the Guardian for 2,500 GBP.<sup>10</sup> Anything that falls in between the glorious past and the shameful present is silenced by the dominant narrative and the structures of the superculture. Graffiti will never be conserved and jazz will never be considered part of the Greek music culture, as it will never be supported by the structures of the superculture, in this case the state. As Herzfeld (2015: 6) notes:

For the state, culture is often an effective device of control because, while its outward forms are highly visible, its ordinariness disguises its coercive, norm-enforcing power. By the same token, however, ordinary people seek security in shared local norms of mutual engagement, calls for self-governance, and the ironic inversions of official discourse that are perhaps best illustrated by the graffiti of political protest—which, in consequence, are ignored or destroyed by the official authorities as being a violation of ‘culture’. For these cultural expressions, there is no place in the pantheon of ‘intangible heritage’.

In a similar way, the superculture denies jazz a place in the Greek soundscape through official state and educational policies, according to which Jazz Diplomas offered by conservatories are not officially recognized

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<sup>10</sup> The tour, advertised by the Guardian and organized under the lead of the newspaper’s Greece correspondent Helena Smith was withdrawn after public outcry. For more information, see the following articles in online news media:  
<https://www.rt.com/news/422572-guardian-refugee-tourism-greece/>  
<http://greece.greekreporter.com/2018/03/29/guardians-greek-crisis-holiday-package-causes-outcry-gets-retracted/>

by the Ministry of Culture, and thus cannot secure work in the public sector for any of these musicians, unlike in the case of Diplomas in Classical music.

### **Kerameikòs [Ceramic]**

The two big avenues traversing the area, namely Peiraiòs and Ierà Odòs, have been synonymous with mainstream Greek music as many of the clubs hosting shows of the Greek popular music singers are located there, together with big clubs pertaining to Anglo-American genres such as electronic dance music. In contrast, the jazz venues are located in the small and dark alleys surrounding the avenues. Thus, the hierarchy between the superculture and the subculture acquires a strong spatial dimension in the area, which is quite telling in symbolic terms of their visibility and invisibility respectively. Furthermore, the big venues use the name Gkàzi to refer to their location (in posters, online events etc.), as ‘Gkàzi’ is associated with mainstream entertainment, while the small alternative venues use the name ‘Kerameikòs’ [Ceramic] which is the ancient name of the area once inhabited by potters. The area is also known for the numerous ‘STUDIOS’ and illegal brothels dispersed across the three neighbourhoods, a phenomenon that goes back to 1910, when a number of brothels opened in the area, contributing to its bad reputation.<sup>11</sup>

The area has been at the epicentre of academic discussion in Greece, particularly relating to gentrification processes. The very existence of the phenomenon in the Greek case is questioned (Maloutas 2007), due to the lack of state intervention. Thus, some scholars distinguish the Greek paradigm as privately led (Leontidou et al. 2007), as opposed to gentrification in the Anglophone world, which is framed mainly as a state-led process (Watt 2013). Gibson and Homan (2007: 71) make a similar argument about gentrification in Sydney, which is unlike gentrification in cities in North America and Europe, due to the state’s fragmented role when it comes to urban development in Australia. Alexandri (2018) provides an elaborate

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<sup>11</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century Gkàzi was a working-class area, with a mixed population comprised of Roma, Muslim families from the North of Greece and workers of the Gas factory. For early accounts of brothels in the area of Gkàzi see Machairas (1986) and for the more recent phenomenon of ‘studios’ see Andriopoulos (2017).

discussion on the various approaches to gentrification, while arguing for the occurrence of gentrification ‘even in the case of “absent” state intervention’ (ibid: 36).

Within this discussion, the two main narratives that have emerged focus, on the one hand, on the role of the cultural industries (Avdikos 2014; Souliotis 2013), and on the other hand, on the displacement of vulnerable groups such as immigrants and the Roma population by the middle-class gentrifiers (Alexandri 2015a; Tzirtzilaki and Alexandri 2010). Avdikos (2014: 141) traces the early signs of the process back to the 1990s, and to the publication of a cost-benefit analysis related to the regeneration of the area of Gkazohòri by the municipality of Athens. Soon after, the first wave of gentrification was initiated with the strong presence of gay and lesbian communities, a phenomenon also observed in certain areas of US cities (Weightman 1981). In Gkàzi, the establishment of the gay community and artists in the area was followed by a boom in the entertainment sector with the opening of multiple bars and cafés. The inauguration of the Metro station ‘Kerameikòs’ in 2007 signalled the further transformation of the area into what Alexandri has aptly described as ‘a 24hour playground of entertainment’ (2015b: 20).

However, the rapid rhythm of gentrification was halted post-2010 and ‘provided the opportunity for alternative gentrifiers to better establish themselves in the area’ (ibid: 1636). Thus, while the process was initiated by top-down policies of the municipality of Athens as well as by real estate companies in what could be labelled as a ‘back-to-the-city move by capital’ (Knox and Pinch 2010: 141), it was followed in post-2010 by bottom-up initiatives which are strongly culture-oriented, signalling the flowering of an alternative culture in the area strongly focused on the arts. It was during this period that four of the core Athenian jazz venues were established in Kerameikòs, the alleys of which I enter continuing my walk.

My first turn is at Plataiòn Street, named after the battle that took place in Plataea during the second Persian invasion of Greece, in 479 B.C. General Mardonius was killed and the defeat of the Persians contributed to the end of the war and signified the beginning of the classical era of the Athenian democracy. The only battles taking place here now are between fearful residents, colourful graffiti, abandoned businesses taken over by Chinese

retail, modern Greek/Mediterranean cuisine and neo-traditional *kafeneia*, stencils about the refugees and traditional barbershops.

An A4 sheet in landscape position titled ‘ΑΝΑΚΟΙΝΩΣΗ’ [announcement] is attached with sellotape to the glass front door of an old block of flats. ‘Residents are kindly requested to LOCK the central entrance door every night after 11 pm.’ Next to it is a ripped ‘ΕΝΟΙΚΙΑΖΕΤΑΙ’ [to let] that once advertised an apartment. The notion of fear comes to mind as described by Alexandri (2015a). Alexandri discusses the tensions that are created in the area between old and new residents, indicating a double notion of fear, that of the ‘other’ represented by the immigrants, and the fear of a lost gentrification opportunity. In her words (ibid: 1642-3):

Gentrifiers, whilst losing hope for the future outcome of their investments, engage in socio-spatial conquests that boost their socio-economic networks, immunise homeownership and turn against the ‘other/s’ who are projected as a spatial felony, a threat that has to be displaced, so that the area becomes a *more beautiful* thus *safer* place. [...] Urban fear becomes the Trojan horse of gentrification; the middle classes demand that inner city spaces adjust to the specific aesthetic thus surveillance criteria which secure homeownership and further gentrification dynamics.

A few meters away from the fearful residents is the alley where Nixon was located, a bar-restaurant where for the past three years:

The Analog President & dr. George Palamiotis<sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ present the deep interstellar groove experience known as \_\_\_\_\_ \*\*\*The Deep Throat Sessions\*\*\*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Yiorgos Palamiotis is one of the most renowned electric bassists of the Athenian scene.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/TheDeepThroatSessions/>



The Deep Throat Sessions, as the name suggests, is not a band name even though most of the audience referred to the group as such, but rather a conceptual series of music sessions. The Deep Throat Sessions started in 2013 at the screening room of Nixon, with performances three times per week which were gradually downsized to two and then one by 2016, until the venue's final closure on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2016. The members of the group as mentioned in Facebook were:

George Palamiotis - Space Bass, Spoken Word

Mike Kapilidis - Drums/Vocals

C.B Tyropoulos - Guitar/Pain

Lord of the Nord - Nord Keys

They describe the music they are playing as 'Psychedelic/Afro/Funk/Jazz/Rock'. The 'Analog President' refers to the owner of the venue who supported the sessions since the very start. In the last session in 2016 he was called on stage to say a few words:

I didn't know that I was going to say something... I wanted to say that it's been three years—I mean since they started three years ago and now they are about to end—three years which were pretty impressive for me. All of this, the screening room and the guys approached in the best way they could an idea that I had, and that I hoped there would be a big response from the people in order to create something here... that the two or three times that I got up and tried to talk about it while I was drunk I managed to express it only with one word, making everyone feel very uncomfortable by saying that the meaning of all of this is *kàvla*.

Lambros then closed his talk introducing the last piece ever to be played at Nixon and the Deep Throat Sessions, namely *Misirlou*.<sup>14</sup> The Deep Throat

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<sup>14</sup> Lambros here refers to the song *Misirlou*. The original 1927 version is available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW6qGy3RtwY>, as well as the surf rock arrangement by Dick Dale featured in Pulp Fiction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hLIXrlpRe8>.

sessions remain a landmark in the Athenian live scene due to the extraordinary musicianship of all the performers as well as the acts of the frontman and instigator of the whole effort, George Palamiotis, which included the narration of stories related to his original compositions, about hotels in Thessaloniki, about Lady Edith and the Russian Spy, as well as poetry reading. One of the usual poems Palamiotis would recite was ‘Not Brazilia but Oktana’ from the poetic collection *Oktana* (1980) by Andreas Empirikos.<sup>15</sup> All these elements ascribed the status of a ritual to these particular performances, with the audience being acquainted with them after some time and participating.

Despite the fact that no one would refer to the music they played as belonging to the jazz/funk genre, all of the performers were active in the jazz scene and had appropriate training. The keyboard player and the drummer were also members of DatFunk mentioned previously and had year-long careers in the Athenian scene. Babis (guitar), Palamiotis (bass) and Asteris (keys) had all spent time studying at Berklee. Their repertoire at the sessions included arrangements of songs such as Money by Pink Floyd, Riders on the Storm by Doors, Boubacar by Bill Frisell as well as original compositions by Palamiotis such as Maitre Tambur Makabo, 1968 Summer of Love and Atlas Hotel.<sup>16</sup> After 10 years, Nixon (see Figure 6 below) closed its doors forever and is now replaced by a shop of Chinese retail fashion ‘made in Italy’ as their sign says.

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<sup>15</sup> Andreas Empirikos was a poet. He introduced surrealism in Greece in 1935 and was the first psychoanalyst in the country.

<sup>16</sup>Videos recorded at Nixon are available on the project’s page on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfo89PRxCb1VSwGuXdwNndg>.



Fig.6 The wall outside Nixon bar, a few weeks after its final shut down (May 2016).

Back to Plataea Street, painted skeletons gaze at me. The stencils at the other side of the road read:

**BOMBES ΣΤΗΝ ΑΣΙΑ**  
**ΣΤΡΑΤΟΠΕΔΑ ΣΤΗ ΔΥΣΗ**  
**ΣΕ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΛΕΜΟ**  
**ΜΙΑ ΕΙΝΑΙ Η ΔΥΣΗ**  
**ΑΛΛΗΛΕΓΓΥΗ**  
**ΣΤΟΥΣ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΣ**  
**ΑΠΕΡΓΟΥΣ ΠΕΙΝΑΣ<sup>17</sup>**

On the next corner, Kerameio bar and Elvis await. Kerameio [pottery], named after the area of Kerameikòs which was once full of potteries, is a regular bar and acts as one of the standard jazz venues with free entrance every Wednesday and Sunday (see Figure 7 below). Right next to it, Elvis sells souvlaki for the hungry and often drunk night citizens. A big poster of *The King* is attached to the glass door of one of the fridges and next to it a bunch of garlies in a row are hanging from the ceiling. Both businesses are owned by the same people. The idea of combining a bar with the ‘humble’

<sup>17</sup> ‘Bombs in Asia, camps in the West/ In this war there is only one solution/ SOLIDARITY/ to the refugees on hunger strike’.

souvlaki, instead of a sophisticated menu aspiring to fusion of the modern with the traditional, proved to be a very successful endeavour.



Fig. 7 The entrance to *Kerameio* (May 2016).

Elvis stands on the corner of Plataion and Leonidou Street. The victory of the Greeks against the Persians in Plataies was preceded by the defeat of Leonidas in Thermopylae, during which he uttered the historic phrase ‘*Μολών Λαβέ*’ [Molon Labe]. On the opposite corner now there is a burgundy pick-up truck with a sticker above its plates claiming almost as emphatically as Leonidas did «MH ME KOITATE» [DON’T LOOK AT ME]. It is parked next to a low-storey house with graffiti on one of its walls depicting a man extending his arm. He seems to be begging, but not for money. The question is explicitly stated by the artist: ‘Spare some time?’ At the bottom, the word ‘OXI’ [NO] in red font has remained, reminiscent of the two simplest quotidian words upon which Greece’s fate was thought to depend during the 2015 referendum.

Continuing along Leonidou Street I arrive at Louis, the jazz *kafeneio* of Kerameikòs. *Kafeneio* could be roughly translated as coffee-shop or a place where coffee is being served. It is a traditional type of *magazi* found all over

Greece. The notion of *kafeneio* is very similar to that of the *kafana* as described by Ana Hofman (2010, 2015), who correctly chooses not to translate the term. She notes that the terms ‘pub, tavern or café’ cannot describe ‘a specific experience in space that includes drinking, eating, listening to music and socialising’ (2015: 2). As such, the space of *kafeneio* posits a very distinctive identity, closely knitted to particular cultural practices related to socialising, to be found across the Balkans, and probably originating in Turkey (Hofman 2010: 143).

Playing cards or backgammon, chatting and gazing at the horizon are some of the regular activities while drinking the morning coffee at the *kafeneio*. As the day progresses, coffee becomes *tsìpouro*, *rakì* or *ouzo*<sup>18</sup> together with something to eat, the so-called *mezès*. In many cases and up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *kafeneio* has been a male-dominated space. ‘*Pali sto kafeneio tha pas?*’ [Are you going again to the *kafeneio*?], must have been a phrase regularly uttered by the stay-at-home wife of that period. The neo-traditional *kafeneia* of Kerameikòs are of very different style regarding their decoration and clientele, attracting mostly youngsters. Furthermore, the absence of a TV is what distinguishes them from the traditional *kafeneia*. Louis hosts exclusively jazz and blues gigs once or twice per week, combining in this way a local way of entertainment and socializing with the unconventional soundscape of jazz.

Finally, I arrive at one of the main avenues, namely Ierà Odòs. The holy way, the sacred road, synonymous with *bouzoùkia*<sup>19</sup> in modern Greece. Once it led to Eleusis and its mysteries, now it leads to mainstream clubbing, a modern-time ritual. The first thing I see in front of me is the big building of ‘The National Bank of Greece’ and right next to it a huge ‘EXIT NOW’, painted against a black wall. *Oh, the irony!* This picture could very well have served as a sarcastic magazine cover when Grexit was a heated debate in the media. However, there is no underlying political statement here, just an

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<sup>18</sup> *Tsipouro*, *rakì* and *ouzo* are strong alcoholic beverages common across the Balkans and Turkey, often accompanied by small dishes called *mezès* (similar to tapas).

<sup>19</sup> Further to denoting the instrument, the term *bouzoùkia* is also used to refer to genres such as *laiko*[folk], as well as the venues where the genre is performed. It is often used with negative connotations alongside the term *skyladiko* [dog-den].

unfortunate coincidence. The painting next to the Bank of Greece advertises a live escape room game, where ‘Exit now’ is obviously the primary goal!

Ierà Odòs is full of nightclubs awaiting the winter and the start of the new season. On my left there is what looks like an abandoned industrial building, but when I turn my head upwards I see the sign Lohan Nightclub, named after Lindsay Lohan, the American actress-singer. I remember reading an article in which she claimed that she opened the club to help the refugees.<sup>20</sup> *Big question mark on my face as I glance up to observe the club.* The only thing attesting to the club’s luxury is the starlet’s name on the top and the chandelier at the entrance. The rest resembles an abandoned factory. The hordes of dressed-up youngsters must be at some beach at the moment getting their tan, which they will surely exhibit here or some other club in the coming months.

On the opposite corner, a ‘priestess by the sacred road’, as she calls herself, is offering astrological services of cartomancy drawing on various techniques and traditions such as Deste, Hal and Lenormand. In the background, the pink neon sign ‘STUDIO’ is visible but not lit yet. This is the quarter of the big clubs, the posh restaurants, the parking lots, the small bars, one of the first LGBT-friendly areas, the ‘STUDIOS’, the garages, experimental theatres, the Metro station, and of Afrikana and Spiti, two of the core jazz venues of Athens. At this part of Kerameikòs the streets are named after the Eleusineian Mysteries.

Time to turn at Ierofantòn Street. A parking sign and underneath it another sign with an arrow pointing the way to ‘Penelope and the Suitors’, a music restaurant, show me the way. Iero-fantis: the one who reveals the sacred. Ierofantis or Hierophant was the chief priest and always a descendant of the kin of Evmolpidae. The kin of Evmolpidae provided one of the first Hierophants and also happens to be the name of another street a bit ahead. Another STUDIO pops out and next to it Afrikana. The mysteries of love and music are being revealed here every night. Now a ‘ENOIKIAZETAI’ [to let] sign figures promptly on the balcony of the STUDIO.

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<sup>20</sup><https://www.politico.eu/article/greece-celebrity-pro-refugee-migrant-nightclub-lindsay-lohan-athens-migration-crisis-europe-dennis-papageorgiou/>

Afrikana is hidden towards the end of the road with its flashing blue façade barely visible behind some beautiful green-leaved trees (see Fig.8), with the two chimneys from the gas factory in the back overlooking the area. The wall of the building across from Afrikana has one very common piece of graffiti (see Fig.9), found throughout the streets of Athens.



Fig. 8 Afrikana jazz club, Kerameikòs (August 2017).



Fig.9 The building opposite Afrikana (August 2017).

‘Λάθος’, the Greek word for ‘mistake’, is spelled incorrectly here on purpose; an omega [ω] is used instead of an omicron [ο]. The correct spelling would be ‘Λάθοσ’. *Is this ‘λάθος’, found all across the city, a visual remembrance of the past eight years? Who knows what the artist had in mind.*

Afrikana started as a cocktail bar in 2013, soon after began hosting live gigs, and was renamed as a jazz club in 2016. Afrikana hosts live gigs exclusively with local jazz performers every day except Monday, charging an extra four euros for the first drink. There are some bands performing on a regular basis, on specific days of the week for the whole season, while the rest of the nights, new artists and groups have the opportunity to present their work. In October 2016 a jam night was added on Tuesdays with free entrance. During my fieldwork one of the house bands of Afrikana was Crazy People Music.

Crazy People Music is probably the longest surviving band of the live jazz scene of Athens and has been performing on a regular, weekly basis, since 2007. They describe the genre they play as being influenced by jazz, funk, latin and hip hop. In December 2014 they started playing in Afrikana and became one the venue’s housebands until 2016. As one of the descriptions on their event page on Facebook mentioned:

Crazy People Music is a group of five exquisite musicians, very well known to the Greek audience, with Athens as their basis. Their music combines jazz with funk and the tradition of New Orleans second line.<sup>21</sup>

By 2017 all members of the band had their own personal projects recording and releasing original material, parallel to performing with Crazy People Music. Yiorgos (bass), Alexandros (drums) and Antonis (trombone) are also members of the Athens Big Band, of the municipality of Athens.

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<sup>21</sup> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/crazypeplemusic/>  
YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrX6jI2oi2o&start\\_radio=1&list=RDMrX6jI2oi2o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrX6jI2oi2o&start_radio=1&list=RDMrX6jI2oi2o)  
A short video regarding the band (with English subtitles) shot at Santa Botella is also available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSdz-utIxA>



Afrikana has no distinguished seating according to which the ticket price changes, as is the case with Half-Note. The space is not filled with tables, though there are some high stands made of wood and some stools, but people are mostly standing. This contributes to the club-like feeling the owner wants to induce. As she commented during our interview regarding participatory and presentational styles of jazz performance in the Athenian venues:

Since we are talking about this now..., what I am trying to achieve here is exactly this. To make jazz the way it normally is. The way it was performed in the 1920s and 1930s in bars where they would smoke inside and drink, and there were whores. All this situation. Because this is jazz. Jazz was created in brothels. [...] There is no elitist jazz. This a European myth, a convention made up by conservatories and by all this academic environment and the idea that jazz is chamber music. Anyway, as far as this is concerned I want the *magazi* to be characteristic on this end. I mean if someone wants to go to listen to jazz ‘respectfully’ they can go to Kelari [The cellar, Athenaeum] which is a very nice venue with great sound. There is also the conservatory above where they host some live performances. But here, this is a jazz club. End of discussion. Jazz here..., there will be jams, if they want they will keep playing until 3 in the morning, as was the case yesterday with Crazy People. Who kept on playing for two and a half hours.

Half Note and Afrikana, although very different in scope and character, comprise the two ends of the same spectrum. And again they have an interesting story to tell regarding the pre- and post-crisis period through their spatial dimension. Half Note is located in a posh neighbourhood next to the first cemetery of Athens and Afrikana is situated next to a brothel and a car mechanic’s at the ‘wrong’ side of a regenerated area.

I turn right at Evmolpidon Street and a huge block of flats, probably lofts, stands out. It stands as evidence of the initial era of gentrification that took place here before the economic crisis, as these buildings aimed to provide urban, costly lofts to young middle and upper class ‘alternative’ Athenians. In his study of the areas of Kerameikòs and Metaxourgheio (KM), Avdikos

mentions that ‘the above resulted in the increase of the average selling price of a house in the region of €600 per square meter at the level of about €2000 in the period 1997-2008’ (2015: 4). Today there are not many signs of it being inhabited though. An A4 sheet, accompanied by a cell phone number, informs potential buyers that there is ‘property for lease’.

With the chimneys of Tehnòpolis always on my left overseeing the area, I am on my way to Spiti [House] art bar. Posters continue to ‘decorate’ the walls of abandoned buildings. Tom Odell, Maraveyas, Malamas, Alkinoos, Xatzifragketa, Locomondo, Tonino Carotone, Haroulis, Stixoima, Kasabian, The Jesus and Mary Chain; local and international artists all claim their share in the Athenian summer night of the city’s open theatres. Dionysus paves my way as I find myself at Iakchou Street. Iakchos is the name that Dionysus assumes as leader of the procession towards Eleusis. In 2017 Athens, Iakchou Street leads me to ‘The Mexican’, an ethnic cuisine bar-restaurant advertising the ‘el Jimador’ tequila on its glass balcony. *Tequila and Bacchus, sounds like a good match!*

I take a left turn at the corner, pass by a nice one-storey stone house, abandoned of course, and here I am at Evpatridon Street. This street is not a busy one, although it is situated only a few meters away from the main square of Gkàzi and the Metro station. Here there is only one theatre, called Avaton. *On second thoughts, it does not seem like a good choice of name. The word avaton denotes a sacred space where entrance to everyone is forbidden or where only a few are allowed to enter.*<sup>22</sup> *Hopefully more are entering to watch the theatre’s shows!*

Spiti art bar is situated opposite the theatre. Spiti was established in 2014 by two musicians, Panos Kartibelis and Yiorgos Lykoudis. The venue operates exclusively as a live venue hosting mainly jazz gigs, as well as flamenco nights and seminars since Panos is a flamenco guitarist himself. Its burgundy red wall is almost covered by a huge bougainvillea with magenta flowers, extending from the entrance to the second floor (see Figure 10

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<sup>22</sup> *Avaton* literally means a place, usually related to religion, where one is not allowed to walk through. Mount Athos, the Eastern Orthodox Monasticism centre in North-eastern Greece, is an example of an *avaton* restricted to females, as women are not allowed to set foot in the whole area.

below). Glass frames with posters of the Gypsy Swing Jam, the Jerez Festival and an exhibition that took place on the second floor are placed next to and between the two windows which are protected by black metal bars. The area is known for car and bicycle burglaries. Two wooden stands are chained to the windows, waiting for the opening.



Fig. 10 Spiti art bar (August 2016).

With these images in mind I leave the little alleys of Kerameikòs and make my way back home. And the way back home passes through the ‘mainstream’, as I have to go to the Metro station located in the central square. Voutàdon Street, named after a sacerdotal genus of ancient Athens, is full of bars lined up next to one another; they mushroomed after the Metro station was inaugurated in 2007 bringing hundreds of Athenians here during the night. As Souliotis (2013: 66) observes:

During the 1990s and early 2000s this interaction between urban policies and night economy micro-businesses became more intense, as the elaboration of rehabilitation projects, realization of localized

interventions remodelling of squares and increase in accessibility (new Metro stations) canalized hundreds of bars, restaurants and cafes in the historical neighborhoods (Gazi, Metaxourghio, Keramikos).

Gazarte, one of the big posh venues is situated here. Huge posters of past concerts by John Scofield, Rufus Wainwright, Bill Frisell, Jose Feliciano, Manu Di Bango as well as Greek artists such as Savvopoulos, Arvanitaki and Galani decorate its façade. A student of the music school I attended once commented on the venue's high-price ticket policy, joking about Frisell's concert: 'Yeah, sure, Frisell at Gazarte, the ticket will cost something like 600 euros!' Many of the Greek jazz bands who perform in Gazarte with an entrance fee of 10 to 15 euros may be heard in the surrounding bars of Kerameikòs for 3 to 5 euros, or for free.

It is still early in the day, late in August, and the place seems deserted. A totally different picture compared to the one someone will encounter during the night. The Metro square, otherwise known as Persephone's Square, now looks huge, a square full of concrete and empty of people. I take the empty stairs, walk towards the platform and embark on Line 3. I follow the orders of the lady whose voice announces the stations: 'Syntagma, change for Line 2'. Next stop Academias, in front of the trilogy.<sup>23</sup> I follow the exit signs as my walk is coming to an end. I am standing on the escalator slowly emerging to the ground. There, waiting for me, are Athena and Apollo, Hansen's Academy of Athens, the Greek flag, and recession Athens. The ancient, the modern, the post-modern and the post-mortem, all together, each one standing for its own cause. 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece in a nutshell: religion, mythology, philosophy, neoclassicism, nationalism, and failed capitalism. One wor(l)d: crisis-scape, in one frame:

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<sup>23</sup> The Athenian trilogy is a term referring to the neoclassical-style buildings of the Library, the University and Academy of Athens, designed by Theophilus and Christian Hansen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig.11 The Academy of Athens, Panepistimiou Street (August 2017).<sup>24</sup>

Even though the Greek crisis was represented as a mono-dimensional phenomenon, scholars including Daniel Knight have been critical of the conceptualization of the Greek crisis as a single event. As he notes: ‘Indeed, the fact that a critical situation is presented as simple at all must raise suspicion. Nevertheless, the images circulated internationally claim an objective critique of a monolithic event—the Greek crisis—disguising the intricacy of current local circumstances’ (Knight 2013: 153).

In employing the ethnographic narrative technique, my aim was to shed light on what happens on the micro-level, away from the crisis mediascapes constantly on display by international media. I have done so in order to construct a counter-narrative of survival rather than collapse, bringing to the forth the discrepancies that constitute modern-day Greece.

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<sup>24</sup> The phrase ‘forever a loan’ is a pun probably inspired by the ‘forever alone’ comic character. According to the online site *knowyourmeme*: ‘Forever Alone’ is an exploitable rage comic character that is used to express loneliness and disappointment with life’. For more information, see: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/forever-alone>.

These are further evident in the jazz scene of the city and the transformations it has undergone during these years. After the Olympic Games in 2004 it was the general consensus that Athens had proved it can rise up to international standards of what it means to be a modern global city. Thus, the posh jazz clubs and bar restaurants of the late 1990s and early 2000s with their exotic drinks and foods added to this imaginary of the modernizing city drawing at the same time on a multicultural ideal. And of course the concept of modernization in Greece has always been tied to its western legacy, excluding Greece's eastern cultural affiliations as signs of backwardness (Herzfeld 1987).

Jazz fitted very well into this Western style cosmopolitan imaginary, as well as that of Athens having a cultural life equivalent to other European capitals'. But what was more important at the time is that the middle-class, well-educated Athenians, both in Greece and abroad,<sup>25</sup> in their late 20s and early 30s could still afford to 'consume' anything related and adding up to this rapidly modernizing identity. Whether it be a concert, clothing, expensive restaurants or travelling. Referring to the transformations in the social strata starting in the 1980s Souliotis points out that 'The first important outcome regarding the cultural economy was the widening of the social base for the cultural markets' (2013: 62). However in the post 2008 period these generations as well as the younger ones started having one of the higher unemployment rates.<sup>26</sup> The kind of modernity they could afford changed abruptly after 2010 and was far away from the fancy bar-restaurants of the early 2000s.

Furthermore, with the development of the jazz scene and its popularity among wider audiences these venues during the crisis ended up having as customers jazz aficionados as well as the performers' students who could

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<sup>25</sup> Greece has been No.1 country in student mobility in the UK from 1996 to 2001.

<sup>26</sup> According to ELSTAT [Hellenic Statistical Authority] unemployment during this period was shaped as follows:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Ages 15-24</b> :	32,2%	45,5%	56,6%	57,6%	49,8%	47,9%
<b>Ages 25-34</b> :	17,2%	25,5%	32,8%	36,5%	34,7%	31,3%

<<http://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/42a81f31-ef87-4014-825c-bcc6021a7032>>

barely afford the entrance fee and a beer. And even though the cocktail bars at Syntagma are reminiscent of this era, and also attesting to the multiple statuses that jazz acquires depending on the venue, most of the posh clubs of the 1990s and early 2000s became unsustainable. The crisis amplified this phenomenon bringing jazz into the *kafeneia*, as more professional musicians in Athens were in search of new venues.

Transformations in the Athenian live music scene during the recession indicate the prioritization of a globally-informed locality, on multiple levels. The musical capacity that developed during the 1990s and 2000s was considered of lower quality or less ‘authentic’ than international jazz artists. However, during the crisis this served as the main tank from which bar owners drew their musicians when they needed to create an affordable cosmopolitan imaginary. Jazz in the *kafeneio* is the perfect example. Within this space two very different and contradictory social imaginaries are being merged. On one hand jazz—a music genre considered to be foreign to the local culture until today and often related to elitism—and on the other hand *kafeneio*, a predominantly local way of socializing associated primarily with traditional Greek musics or *rebetiko*. As will be made clear in chapter 4 where I discuss thoroughly the case of Louis, a *kafeneio* in the area of Kerameikòs, *kafeneio* poses as the ultimate space where the transition towards a low-budget cosmopolitanism takes place.

On the macro-level, jazz in the *kafeneio* is not a new phenomenon. Krisila cites several sources from the 1920s press, suggesting that the *kafeneia* of the era were turned into dance halls. As she notes (2017: 13):

Jazz music in Greece started to spread through the cosmopolitan dance venues of the new upper-middle classes where authentic jazz-bands would play, but the new social conditions that started to develop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in jazz and its dances prevailing even in the small micro-kafeneia of the working class.

Several of the descriptions from the sources she cites (ibid: 70-71) are quite telling regarding a vernacular cosmopolitanism prevalent in the era, evident

in the use of traditional instruments in *kafeneia* to play jazz dances in order to satisfy the needs of the youth:

many micro-kafeneia at night were turned into dance venues where with the accompaniment of an organette the beauties of the neighbourhood would dance fox-trot or shimmy.

Even in Greek *glèndhia*,<sup>27</sup> in taverns and ouzopoleia [ouzo drinking venues] the musicians would play the new music with santours, guitars, and amateur mandolins.

...the youngsters complained and so the violins and santours started playing fox trot...and they would dance in pairs like in the *dancings* and the other high society dance venues.

On the micro-level, however, jazz in the *kafeneio* presents a clear break in the ontology of jazz live music in Athens, during the transition from the 1990s and early 2000s. In this transition—from an era dominated by consumption euphoria, when the appropriation of foreign cultural forms was a sign of modernity and upward social mobility, to an era of economic decline post-2010—jazz as a cultural practice was reshaped, in order to adapt to the new economic condition, for the same audiences that could no longer afford it. This transition is what I refer to as ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’, characterized by violent changes and frictions, as jazz music became available to wider audiences due to price-dropping, but within a precarious working environment for the musicians. As I will discuss in chapters 2 and 3, ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’ is full of paradoxes, evident in the interplay of the superculture and the subculture and the ways in which musicians theorize it, at times being frustrated over the conditions of the live gigs and at times celebrating the very event (crisis and decline of the superculture) that has left them unemployed, allowing for ‘good’ music to flourish.

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<sup>27</sup> For *glendi* as a cultural concept and particular type of festivity see Kavouras (1991).



## Chapter 2

### Between Scylla and Charybdis

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The individual musician occupies a seemingly paradoxical position in ethnomusicology.

(Rice 2012: 299)

This chapter follows the trajectories of four musicians—Yiorgos Georgiadis, Babis Tyropoulos, Kostas Yaxoglou and Michalis Evdaimon—from their first contact with music during their early childhood, to their first steps towards music professionalism. They were all active during my fieldwork and at different stages in their professional careers. Michalis and Babis had started more recently to get involved with the jazz scene, while Yiorgos and Kostas were already established members of it.

Further to the people above, another figure appears in between the musicians' narratives: George Kontrafouris, to whom I refer by his last name, Kontrafouris, as does everyone in the scene. This is also helpful in avoiding confusion with Yiorgos Georgiadis, as they share the same name (Yiorgos-George). Kontrafouris is an emblematic figure and one of the people who helped establish the Athenian jazz scene. I interviewed him in 2014 in the tiny village of Ayios Lavrentios, in Pelion, during the *Music Village* community-festival, where I conducted fieldwork for the research project *Western Art Music at the Time of Crisis*.<sup>1</sup> His views often challenge established concepts, such as the division of work and play described by many professional musicians and discussed extensively by Tsioulakis (2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Kontrafouris participated in the *Music Village*, teaching a workshop on jazz together with Christos Rafalides. For an ethnographic account of the *Music Village* and its community-driven character and organization during the crisis see Vavva (2015).

Kontrafouris's pertinent insights pointed me towards the emergence of a new *ethos*, as he described it, regarding musical life in the Greek capital in the post-2010 era.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of narrative, this chapter is structured around long excerpts from the interviews, allowing my musicians to be heard directly, and providing a glimpse of their characters to the reader. In doing so, I lack any delusions of authentic representation and I am fully aware that their narration remains orchestrated by me, both as an interviewer as well as the writer of this text. As Timothy Rice also notes in his ethnography on Bulgarian music regarding what he calls 'dialogue in monologic form': 'Of course, my own monologic authority is present in selecting the quotes and creating them in English translation [...]' (1994: 12). This also applies to my case as I too had to translate the chosen interview excerpts from Greek, creating them anew.

But before I delve into this 'dialogue in monologic form' and the musicians' voices, I present a moment of ethnographic reflexivity, spanning from my first encounter with the scene in 2011 in the venue of Santa Botella, to the fieldwork conducted for the PhD in 2015-2016. I describe the sites where fieldwork encounters with the key people in the ethnography took place: the bar Santa Botella, LAB|Music Education and Afrikana jazz club.

### **In the field: From the Scene to the Classroom and Back Again**

#### ***The Scene***

Afrikana, The House, The Party, Pottery, Jazz point, The Cellar (Athenaeum), Nixon. All of the above are part of a wide network of live jazz music venues that has grown within the historical city centre over the past few years, during the crisis. Some venues continue hosting live gigs, others have closed or stopped hosting live gigs while new ones have opened. My first encounter with the Athenian jazz world came in 2011, when I attended one of the gigs of Crazy People Music—a jazz, funk, latin band—which took place on Wednesday nights at Santa Botella, a small bar relatively close to the centre. Yiorgos, their bassist was my bass guitar teacher at the time. I was amazed,

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<sup>2</sup> An extensive discussion regarding the new *ethos* is included in the conclusion.

not to say shocked, the first time by the vibe of this place and the music as well.

One year later, in 2012, I conducted a small-scale fieldwork project regarding these live gigs in relation to the crisis. In my fieldnotes at the time, I tried to depict my first impression:

It's been a year since I came here for the first time and the setting is quite the same. The place is packed—it's the first live [gig] of the season—the same low lighting and walls painted red reminiscent of a brothel or a Parisian café during the interwar years. *What would brothels and Parisian cabarets look like? I've never been to either. Not even in Paris! Hmmm... 'Imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity', Appadurai<sup>3</sup> on my mind again.* This time we have arrived on time, around a quarter to eleven, they haven't started yet. They have the same set-up again, squeezed in the corner are the drummer, the bassist and the keyboard player, and Tsakas with Andreou<sup>4</sup> in between the audience. How many times I laughed at the thought that the trombone would end up on someone's head!' (author's fieldnotes, February 2012)

Why was I so surprised? Maybe because jazz has certainly not been part of the Greek music imaginary until recently, or maybe because I knew nothing about Greek jazz at that moment. But I was not the only one. When I interviewed a member of the audience back in 2012, he described to me the first time he attended Crazy People Music's gig also emphasizing his surprise and excitement:

At some point, two friends of mine had started taking trumpet classes with Antonis, Crazy People's trombonist, and they asked me if I'd like to go and listen to him. They told me, 'He's playing at a *magazi*<sup>5</sup> at

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<sup>3</sup> (Appadurai 1996: 3).

<sup>4</sup> Dimitris Tsakas and Antonis Andreou form the bands' brass sections, playing saxophone and trombone respectively.

<sup>5</sup> The term *magazi* literally means shop and is used to denote a wide range of places from small music venues to bars as well as stores in general.

Panòrmou [Str.], will you come?’ I was going through a phase at the time, I wouldn’t say no to anything or anyone. I mean, I really couldn’t care less for their teacher’s live gig. You know, I imagined a kind of a *decadence* [sic]. Some poor old music teacher, in a *magazi* like a *boîte* [sic] or some *èntehno*<sup>6</sup> venue, a decadent band playing a bit of jazz and jazz standards, you know. Kind of a miserable situation. We’ve related it to Greek reality, I mean you are a music teacher, you finish some music school and then you work for a *merokàmato*.<sup>7</sup> There’s this misery in Greece, not without reason. There is no audience. Anyway, I had no expectations for what I was going to see.<sup>8</sup> In the end, what I saw left me speechless, because it was an amazing band and I didn’t know anyone at the time, I knew nothing about Greek jazz musicians. And what I’m listening to is just awesome! I see Antonis, an amazing trombonist and then I see a guy playing the double-bass. Pizzicato. I went and asked him if he was teaching electric bass; I wanted to take classes with him.

Our surprise regarding the high level of performance was not unjustified. Even though the jazz music scene nowadays is one of the most active in Athens, it was not until the 1990s that the small community of jazz aficionados started to develop into an actual scene, including a radio station, a magazine, a small number of venues and an even smaller audience (Tsioulakis 2011). Conservatories until the 1990s offered only Western art music performance courses and until recently, there was no degree officially recognised by the state regarding jazz performance. The only exception is the jazz programme in the Ionian University that was established in 1992.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The term *èntehno* refers to the art-song genre which is very popular in Greece.

<sup>7</sup> The term *merokàmato* means ‘one day’s work’ and is mostly used in a negative way signifying jobs that don’t pay well. ‘Working for a *merokàmato*’ is a phrase used often to denote the state of doing jobs with no significant earnings that just help you get by.

<sup>8</sup> The verb ‘see’ in Greek is often used alternately with ‘listen’ when it comes to live gigs, i.e. ‘see a gig’ instead of ‘listen to a gig’, suggesting that the visual aspect of the performance is equally important to the sonic.

<sup>9</sup> Despite the programme’s success, the Department has faced severe reductions in teaching staff, up to 50%, during the period of the recession bringing forth the possibility that ‘the program will be in grave danger of no longer being offered’ (Touliatos, Jacono, Leptos, Mavromatis, 2012) as mentioned in the external evaluation report of the department. A copy of the detailed report (in English) is available online:

< <http://music.ionio.gr/en/news/3150/> >

Thus, live performance remains the means through which professional musicians can claim recognition of their skills and professionalism in the music circles and subsequently prove their value. This value can be translated in two ways in terms of labour: more live gigs and more students. As far as the gigs are concerned, the more active a performer is, the more likely it is for her to be heard by fellow musicians and to be asked to participate in various projects as a session musician.

Also, a band like Crazy People Music that has had a steady audience during the last eight years is more likely to be employed by a bar owner on a weekly basis, especially during the crisis, where live music has been used as an added value in order to attract customers. As Yiorgos commented in an interview we conducted after their live gig in 2012, when I asked him how things were during the crisis:

Things are moving slower. Our *merokàmato* is reduced. I guess this is because the consumption of alcohol is actually reduced. It is something that happens everywhere though. But what we are saying and what the owners are also saying is that we shouldn't complain. That night the streets were empty, all the bars in the area were empty and we were full.

Apart from the live gigs, Yiorgos is employed as a professor by LAB|Music Education, as are most of the highly-acclaimed professional musicians on the scene. This is where I was headed on October 5, 2015, to start bass guitar lessons, as part of my fieldwork methodology.

### ***The LAB***

It's 5 p.m and I'm headed towards the LAB, a music school in Eksàrheia<sup>10</sup> in order to register. Right outside, I see Babis, a friend of mine and a guitar professor there. Babis, an alumnus of Nakas and recipient of its Berklee scholarship has spent a lot of time during the previous years travelling to Austin, Texas for extended periods and performing there, trying to figure out

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<sup>10</sup> Eksàrheia is an area in the centre of Athens, mainly inhabited by artists and young people. It is often referred to as the anarchist area of the city, as clashes between the police and groups of the extreme left are a daily phenomenon.

how to get a permanent visa. During the last three years he has been stuck in Athens looking for ways to go back. Seeing that I am ready to enter the building, he asks me what I was doing there. ‘I’m starting lessons with Georgiàdis, I’m here to register’, I replied.

‘Ok, before you go inside, let me tell you a few things first. They have a 45-minute class which is bit expensive, 140 euros per month. Then you can have a 30-minute class for 100 euros, or a group class for 90 euros. You can register for that and if no one else comes, you will be on your own. Come on, let’s go inside together, I’ll fix everything for you.

As we enter the building, there is a room on our left where the secretary is. Babis introduces me:

- This is Georgia Vavva and she wants to book a test-class with Georgiadis.
- Ok, let me see when he is back, Marion.
- Oh, yes! I think he is in America with the aunt.

The secretary looks at Babis clearly confused while Tsioulakis comes immediately to my mind.<sup>11</sup> Three days later, I go for my first class. I am walking towards the school and I can already hear the sound of drums coming from the LAB. As I am getting closer I can hear *bouzoùki* and *baglamàs*, something like rebètiko<sup>12</sup> music coming from across the street. I instinctively turn around to see where it’s coming from and I see a barber shop. At least, so it says on the sign...I try to take a look inside but it’s too dark; I can only see the figures of some old men sitting there. I have some time for a smoke so I roll a cigarette and smoke it while I’m staring at some posters for upcoming live gigs.

After a few minutes, I go inside and sit in the waiting room next to a gentleman who doesn’t look like he belongs there. He’s too formally dressed.

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<sup>11</sup> Tsioulakis refers to the terms ‘Uncle/Aunt’ being used by musicians [moussikoi] to address the singers of the Greek popular music industry: ‘*moussikoi* mainly regard the singers as their employers. They often refer to them as the Boss (*afentikò*), or the Uncle/Aunt (*theios/theia*), both labels stressing their role as power-holders rather than fellow musicians’ (2010: 130).

<sup>12</sup> *Rebètiko* is an urban-folk music genre of the 1960s, very popular among young people. It is mostly performed in *tavernes* [taverns], where people eat, drink and sing along. The music ensembles usually consist of guitar and *bouzoùki* and in some cases *baglamàs* (a small-sized bouzouki), percussion (spoons, darbuka) and violin.

The secretary tells me I can head upstairs to the classroom as the other student should be finishing by now. Giorgos, my teacher, is in room 301. I take the stairs up to the third floor while I'm taking a careful look at the building and the rooms. *Hmm...Modern music but not so modern a building...* Here I am, in front of room 301. It has a glass door, so I can see inside. There's a guy, a student, with a double bass and in the corner I can see Giorgos. I nod at him and he comes outside. We hug each other as I haven't seen him for a long time.

- Are you back? What are you doing here?

- I was in London last year but I'm back now.

- Can you wait for 10 minutes because we're not done? We don't usually do that, sorry.

- Sure, no problem.

I wait outside, and from room no. 302, I can hear a female voice singing. After 10 minutes, Giorgos opens the door and I go inside. He is showing the other student how to hold the double bass in order to move it to another room to practise. After catching up a little bit about the PhD and about my (not) playing the last few years, he asks me what it is that I would like to do with him and on what genre I would like us to focus. I told him jazz was my primary interest as I hadn't actually done any before and would like to study it.

- Ok, let's remember some of the stuff that we did.

- I don't remember anything!

- Oh, come on, it's not possible. Play C major, the Ionian.

- I don't remember it in 3 octaves.

- It doesn't matter. Start!

I go on and play it and my fingers start remembering. We go on with D Dorian etc. At some point the door opens; another professor enters and he greets Yiorgos.

- You forgot your underwear at my place.

- Oh, ok.

- Are you crashing at my place again tonight or are you going to your mother's?

We all laugh. Inside jokes, I'm thinking. He leaves and we continue with some exercises in octaves for the right hand. Our half hour is almost to its end so we discuss a little bit about the programmes being offered by the music school. Individual classes are 140€ per month for a 45-minute class once a week, 100€ for half an hour and 90€ for 45 minutes in a group class. And apart from these ones, there is also the professional programme where you get 6 hours of classes every week, divided over two days. The first day includes instrument classes with all the other students of the professional programme (divided by instrument, i.e bass, guitar, drums), and the second involves playing with two other professors in a band consisting of bass, guitar and drums. But as soon as I hear the cost I am left speechless. 250€ per month. Who can afford that at this time? As I'm about to leave, I ask him about his family:

- How are your kids doing?

Yiorgos smiles and after a while responds.

- I was away in America for 10 days.

- Oh really? How come?

- With Arvanitaki. Manhattan, Boston, then Montreal. But it didn't go well.

- Why?

- It's not like the old days, people are not coming, they're old now. And the second generation doesn't care about all this.

- And what about Crazy People? When are you starting? Are you at Afrikana again this year?

- Yes, but it's gonna be late, around December. Antònis<sup>13</sup> is still on tour with Pink Martini.

Globalization processes have made the world a smaller place and interconnected to a great extent (Appadurai 1996). Yiorgos, a Greek jazz

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<sup>13</sup> Antonis Andreou is the trombonist of Crazy People Music.



bassist, is touring the States performing Greek music with a Greek *èntehno* singer and mainly for the diaspora, the first generation of which is too old to show up and the second does not care about a motherland they have probably never seen. The tour of Pink Martini, an American band affects the beginning of the live season of Crazy People Music in Athens and Babis is probably looking for ways to go back to Austin.

### ***And Back Again***

From Santa Botella in 2012, my fieldwork for the PhD thesis in 2015 would bring me to The Lab and subsequently to Afrikana, a new jazz venue established during the crisis, at Gkàzi. Gkàzi is a gentrified area downtown, literally meaning ‘gas’, named after the gas factory that operated there until 1984, which has now been turned into an art space. Crazy People Music have been playing at Afrikana every Wednesday since 2014. Given that the previous venue, Santa Botella, reminded me of a brothel with its red walls and low-lighting, I found it quite ironic that the new venue is actually located in an area full of brothels situated side by side to bars in one of the most vibrant night-life areas of the city. Afrikana is on the ground floor and, right next to it, there’s a big pink neon sign with the inscription ‘STUDIO’. Double irony, I would add, as next to the ‘STUDIO’, at Afrikana there are people actually playing music. The venue is packed as usual and considerably bigger than Santa Botella. It has a stage which is a bit elevated from the rest of the floor, so the musicians are not among the audience. People are dancing and, even though it is mid-week, the live show goes on until late. As I am leaving, I pass by the ‘STUDIO’ thinking that here customers pay for sex and right next to it at Afrikana customers pay for jazz. Then Babis comes to mind who often makes parallels between musicians and prostitutes, commenting on how some venue owners act as pimps, pimping out the musicians. All of a sudden ‘STUDIOS’ and jazz venues are no longer only in spatial proximity in the alley I leave behind; musicians and sex workers get entangled in a strange path of thought inside my mind as I walk towards the main road.

I had to take a taxi home after the gig ended at 2.30 a.m., so I walked down the little alley in order to get to Ierà Odòs, literally meaning Sacred Road, as in the ancient years it connected the city of Athens to Eleusina where the

Eleusineian Mysteries were held in honour of the goddess Demeter. The pilgrims that used to walk down Ierà Odòs with their torches, symbolizing Demeter's search for her daughter Persephone in Hades, have now been replaced by youngsters queuing outside night clubs and pop stars' concert venues until the early morning hours, alongside a terrible traffic jam at weekends. However, it is Wednesday night, it is late and there is not a living soul. No pilgrims, no torches, no cars, no girls in mini-skirts, no pop-stars, just pink neon signs of 'STUDIOS', the street lights and a car passing every now and then. And hidden in the alley, Crazy People Music disrupting the silence with their bass, drums, trombone and saxophone and people dancing to the sounds of funk and bebop until 2 a.m. Finally, a taxi arrives and I wave at the driver. He stops and I get inside. I am so tired and unfortunately he's in the mood for talking. You can almost never get away without a talk in a Greek taxi. As soon as I close the door, the 'interrogation' starts:

- Where did you come out from? Are there bars in that little alley?
- Yeah, there are some.
- I've picked someone up from here before, from the middle of nowhere.
- Yeah...
- Do you know if there is anything going on at the coastal?
- I have no idea
- Any party, anything odd going on?
- Don't have a clue.
- (Making a call) 'Hey, is that thing on at Vouliagmèni lake<sup>14</sup> today? Can you check it on the internet? Yeah, can you check it on the internet and call me back?' (ends call). We made it on time for Petroùpoli, for Iròdeio<sup>15</sup>...Now if I go down south empty, I'll have to make 100 euros to come back to make it worth the ride. But you never know, there are people who don't care even

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<sup>14</sup> *Vouliagmèni* is a suburb in the north part of Athens, inhabited mostly by upper-class Athenians. The taxi driver is referring to the lake that exists in this area where concerts are taking place during the summer.

<sup>15</sup> *Petroùpoli* is an area in the west part of Athens. In this area, there is an open-air theatre where many live concerts are hosted during the summer. *Iròdeio* is the ancient theatre on the south part of the Acropolis. Many concerts take place there during the summer months, as it is the main venue of the Greek Festival, which is being held every summer.

now with the crisis, like that other, that crazy guy who hired me to drive him to Thessaloniki. 700 euros!

- From here, Athens?! That's like 500 kilometres!

- Yeah, and then he asked me how much it would cost to bring him back. 'The same', I told him. But he was in no need [for money]. He was a cardiac surgeon. But you know, in the end he's the one I'm gonna give all my money to.... I can't stand it here anymore...another week and I'm gone. I'm gonna take the truck again. Go to the house up the mountain, take my shotgun. I'll hunt some deer...something like that... .. Have you finished school?

-Yeah, long ago.

-And university?

-Yeah.

-Did you get a job?

-Yeah, kind of.

-Did you get yourself a man?

-Yeah.

-You're fast! What sign are you, Gemini?

-No. Pisces with Gemini.

-Ha! Don't get married unless you're together for at least 7 years. Gemini with Pisces. You won't last a minute!

-Oh, no. He's not Gemini. Gemini is my horoscope. He is Libra.

-Libra?! What did you get yourself into? Jesus! Libras...They shout, they shout and in the end they become gay.

-Oh, I see.

-I'm telling you. It's not that I believe in signs, talking bullshit like these astrologers...The things I'm telling you are drawn out of life...

Fortunately, by the time the taxi-driver has revealed to me this ultimate truth of life, we have arrived at our destination. I get out thinking at the same time that people are going crazy with the crisis. What is wrong with this city? Sum up of the night: a brothel called STUDIO, a jazz venue called Afrikana and a taxi driver organizing his route according to the concerts taking place

all around the city. Music makes this city go round during one of its worst periods since the *Metapolitefsi* era.<sup>16</sup>

It was during this era that Greece strengthened its European orientation following the 1976 historical phrase ‘Anikomen eis tin Dysin’ [We belong to the West] of Konstantinos Karamanlis.<sup>17</sup> With Greece’s entrance to the Union in 1981 and the establishment of the European citizenship in 1993, local musicians could easily access academic institutions in Europe as well as pursue careers abroad. These musicians formed the basis of the new music scenes of Athens, related for the most part to Western popular music genres.

Following this reflexive account, I will now move towards the analytic part of the chapter. The aim is to set the backdrop for the post-2010 period, arguing that professional musicians have always had to deal with crises in their professional and personal lives and required resourcefulness to handle them. This charged relationship with the Greek popular music industry has been one of the main points of collision which has triggered different trajectories for each one of them.

All of them, each one in a different way, constitutes and forms part of what is today considered the jazz scene of Athens, but not in a strict genre sense. Following definitions of genre (Fabbri 1981; Frith 1998; Moore 2001), we end up with a rather ‘static picture [...] with clearly defined boundaries, whereas in fact genres are constantly changing as an effect of what’s happening in neighbouring genres, as a result of musical contradictions, in response to technological and demographical change’ (Frith 1998: 93). While Frith is correct in his view of genres as fluid rather than bounded, he fails to recognize another essential factor in their formation, that of human agency and of individuals involved in diverse music cultures (Slobin 1993; Titon

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<sup>16</sup> *Metapolitefsi*, literally meaning ‘post-regime’, is the term referring to the period after the fall of the military junta in 1974 leading to the legislative elections and the subsequent change to a democratic regime in Greece.

<sup>17</sup> Konstantinos Karamanlis was the founder of the liberal conservative party *Nèa Dimokratia* [New Democracy] in 1974 and served as prime minister after the fall of the dictatorship, from 1974 until 1980. Being a great supporter of the European orientation of Greece, he was the one to initiate accession negotiations with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1975. The exact phrase he used during his speech in the Greek parliament in 1976 was the following: ‘Hellas, politically, in terms of defense, economically and culturally belongs to the West’. A link with this particular excerpt is available on YouTube: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi75X\\_IGWoo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi75X_IGWoo)>

1994). Thus, I am oriented towards a concept of *scene* as being formed by the people, including performers, audiences and venue owners, who partake in it and form it through their choices.

What follows is a narrative constructed from my questioning of the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of the musicians’ music-life trajectories and choices. As Ramnarine suggests: ‘Taking into account their musical biographies demonstrates how musical activity at the level of the individual calls into question the boundaries that are constructed between musical traditions’ (2003: 58). The excerpts are carefully chosen to illustrate the friction between the superculture and the subculture (Slobin 1993) evident in every step of their musical lives.

In the first two sections, *Improvising the road to professionalism* and *Messing around*, the superculture is to be found in the dominant soundscape of the musicians’ early age, present in their family environment and their schools, pertaining mostly to Greek music or Anglo-American genres such as rock. In the second section, *Institutionalization*, the superculture addresses state level policies regarding the evaluation of music degrees as well as the role of specific institutions in the transmission of jazz in Greece. In the third section, *The road towards professionalism*, the superculture presents itself as a space of ‘work’ (Tsioulakis 2011), represented by the big shows of the music industry. Musicians’ choices whether or not to engage in the industry challenges their professional status and their ability to make a living as working musicians. Hopefully, this kind of analysis will prioritize the conceptualization of the jazz musician not as someone who is capable of improvising and performing songs from the *Real Book*, but as someone who constantly renegotiates between the given and the self, between what is available in the local conditions and what is imagined, usually in the far away ‘out there’. Finally, the title of the chapter refers to this dilemma and friction between the superculture and the subculture, as a choice between two bads, either ‘selling-out’ to the industry or playing exclusively jazz and not being able to make a living out of it.

## Improvising the road to professionalism

17/10/2015,  
Harmony I

- I don't want to leave, go abroad.  
-Why?  
-I've got my band here.  
-Oh, come on now! For the band?  
-You also need a budget in order to  
leave.  
-My sister is in Berlin. [...] It's not  
that easy abroad if you haven't  
studied abroad.  
-I looked for random jobs.  
-And how is it with music abroad?  
-Tough [...]  
-The level now here is good,  
especially jazz is on the rise a lot  
lately.  
(author's fieldnotes)

Class is about to start in the big practice room on the second floor of LAB | Music Education. Harmony classes are offered for free to all the students who take instrumental or vocal classes at the LAB. I am seated on one of the grey plastic chairs that face the white board. I am waiting for the teacher, 'spying' on my new classmates and taking notes discreetly. I really doubt they have any idea what is going on in my head. *Will I need this? Should I take notes and write down whatever they say? Will it matter at all in the end? Where will I find the crisis in here? I don't even know if I am in the right class. Should I take Harmony I or Harmony II? Are the crisis and B ♭ maj7(#11) related?* A week later, I ended up in Harmony II and stayed there for the rest of the year, so inevitably got some new classmates along the way. I guess the ones appearing in the introductory dialogue above will forgive my eavesdropping.

If I could go back in time, though, instead of worrying silently about fieldwork, globalization theory and the upgrade, I would rather tell them that they are very lucky to be able to study jazz, funk, rock and metal in a music school. With popular musics excluded from conservatoire education, the first

generations of jazz musicians were self-taught, trying to make music from scarce sheet music that at times comprised only a list of the scales, Dorian, Phrygian, Ionian, or by listening to vinyl, cassettes and later on CDs, before YouTube permeated music life as entertainment as well as an educational tool. The origin of their involvement appears lost in the deep past and does not seem to matter anymore as much as their ability to continue. Or so they believe. The contribution of these first generations to the scene is invaluable though. George Kontrafouris is one of these people who helped establish the Athenian jazz scene. Let's allow ourselves a small time travel from the Athenian urban scape of Molotov-ridden Exàrcheia and LAB's classroom, back to 2014 under the big plane tree in one of Ayios Lavrentios's *kafeneia* at the central square.

- Would you like to talk to us about your path in music?<sup>18</sup>

- You've got the wrong guy here... But I will try to say it this way. Since I am still able to play and get involved with music and be here in the *Music Village*,<sup>19</sup> I believe that this path will carry on. Now, about what happened before...It happened. My constant preoccupation is about losing interest, it is the only thing that worries me. Now, whether I play well or not, this is another thing. What I care about is playing, and since I am able to play and be interested in music, I will go on. Now, since I have been playing all these years, I will be playing somewhere. It is only natural. You know, I go to places and either I am either playing in Salamina<sup>20</sup> or in Paris, the reason I go there is to play. I don't think that the chord changes, I am playing the same C major. It does not change seasonally, it is not a tomato! Do you understand? If I believe in it, it will get through, if I don't it won't. But everything is fine.

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<sup>18</sup> The interview with George Kontrafouris was conducted in 2014 by the author and Alexia Kallergi, in Pelion during fieldwork for the research project *Western Art Music at the Time of Crisis*, funded by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs - Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning' - 'Aristeia II'. The findings of the research have been published in the Greek Musicological Journal *Polyphony* 26 (2015).

<sup>19</sup> The Music Village is a festival or a 'music community' as the organizers call it, that comes together once per year in the village of Ayios Lavrentios in Pelion. It spans across two weeks and comprises of concerts, talks and performance workshops of classical as well as traditional Greek and world music. George Kontrafouris taught a jazz workshop in 2014 together with vibraphonist Christos Rafalides. For more information see Vavva (2015).

<sup>20</sup> Salamina is an island of the Saronic Gulf, very close to Piraeus, the port of Athens.

And I have been playing a lot during the past years. In Finland, also with my Baby Trio.<sup>21</sup> *Mia harà!* [Great!]

- So, how did jazz and going abroad come up..., from Greece?

- Jazz, now that's a good question. I believe..., my personal opinion is that we all emerge as a result of our generation. So, of course I did not start by listening to jazz. I started by listening to rock. This is why I am saying that we are the makings of our generation and of our environment. With rock - at least my generation - with rock you start paying attention. Slowly you move into jazz rock or blues and slowly if someone wanted to, could enter into jazz, something like this. From rock I went to blues because it fitted well with the piano, the blues and all that, and so I got into jazz. [...] And if you ask me now what I like the most, it's the blues, but I have realised by now that you can do everything in your own way. But I never studied properly, I had some private classes in New York but I never thought to study properly. When I was older, 36 years old, I decided to go [to study] because I saw that I was encountering the previous generation and I would encounter the new one too a lot. I saw everyone more advanced, more trained, and I said that I should go too. I went to Finland<sup>22</sup> and it was good for me because I studied again, I concentrated. I summed up the knowledge I had and that was already functional. And I learned a lot. But I was old when I did this, I was 36 years old. I didn't go there when I was young. *Eimai entelos apo to club kai to live* [I am totally coming from the club and the gig].

Kontrafouris was one of the teachers of Kostas Yaxoglou, the teacher I am waiting for, in order to start the *Harmony I* class at the LAB. Kontrafouris was teaching at Athenaeum, the second conservatory Kostas attended. Kostas recalls this era as the period during which he immersed himself deep into jazz music:

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<sup>21</sup> Baby Trio is an institution established in 2009 by George Kontrafouris. Two musicians (drums/guitar) under 25 years old participate in the formation of the trio and as soon as they turn 25, they leave the group. As he stated: 'this project was created to express the naivety, the teenage enthusiasm and what generally makes an impression on a young musician when he starts playing in a band with his friends ... ultimately, it expresses all "non-realistic expectations" that exist before "normal life" takes on.'

<https://www.jazzonline.gr/musicians/item/202-baby-trio.html>

<sup>22</sup> George Kontrafouris studied jazz in Finland, in the Sibelius Academy.



-So afterwards at Athenaeum it becomes jazz and only jazz. I gave up everything else, I did some theatre at the time and some other stuff. [...] So in Athenaeum we enter in a situation of a cult, how to say it, in a...

-Sect!

-Sect! We disappear from the world and our existence is solely related to jazz, and jazz until '55, nothing else! We didn't know who was..., let's say Herbie Hancock, and afterwards, we don't know what it is, we only know till Miles Davis, we don't care about what happened afterwards! It's despicable! (laughs)

A communal feeling was prevalent at the time and conservatory teachers acted as mentors, introducing younger musicians to what they had discovered mostly on their own. As Kostas mentioned in the interview we had towards the end of the school year, after we had analysed Duke Ellington's Prelude to a Kiss, Jobim's How Insensitive, the incredible solo of Cory Henry in Snarky Puppy's Lingus and Chopin's Op.28, No.4; harmonized Miles Davis' Blue in Green and made a chord chart of Arianna Grande's Almost is Never Enough among many others, he recalled the days he was a student in Athenaeum where Kontrafouris used to teach in the 1990s:

Fouris<sup>23</sup> knew all the hard bop, all the pianists that existed, and had this little notebook with all their solos transcribed. He would sit with a cassette player and make the transcriptions. All of this shows some great love for this music. Or for example Kenny Barron, he had studied and knew Kenny Barron's music inside out. At some point he took classes with him, so he was playing Kenny Barron to Kenny Barron himself who was like 'All right man, yeah!' [...] Kontrafouris would show you the essence of this music. He would invite us home and play some incredible discs for us, he would give us information, we learned things that... *Tote den ipirhe internet, ipirhe o Kontrafouris!* [At the time there was no internet, there was Kontrafouris!] He would make you enter another universe. He was Miyagi, welcoming you to his garden.

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<sup>23</sup> Fouris is one of Kontrafouris's nicknames used by people in the scene.

### *Messing Around*

Knowledge has not always been openly available, especially before the advent of the internet, and contact with various genres of music was dependent on time and place or particular people who had the chance to travel or obtain recordings and who would then transmit the knowledge to others, as Kostas explained. One of the ‘urban legends’ regarding the very early stages of jazz in Athens I have heard during fieldwork concerns a book of scales that was not passed around, with the owners acting as the safe-keepers of this great jazz secret and not ‘revealing’ it to others.

Jazz was only a small part of the Greek soundscape some decades ago. And as Kontrafouris mentioned, *we are all children of our generation*. With jazz not being part of the dominant Greek soundscape, most of the musicians that are now prominent figures in the Athenian jazz scene started by experimenting, before entering into a more formalized institutional knowledge with the establishment of the ‘modern music’ curricula in conservatories such as Nakas in the early 1990s. Outside of Athens, though, things were even more difficult, as Kostas recalls from his early years growing up in Sparti [Sparta]:

-We didn’t have many conservatories, so I started with a piano teacher... No! keyboard, it was keyboard. And because I didn’t know how to read [notes] but had a good ear and liked to catch on tunes that I listened to the radio, my teacher did an interesting thing. He gave me tapes and told me ‘*vgale* [learn] this song’... For the next lesson, instead of giving me books.

- What kind of songs?

- Greek. Hatzidaki, Theodoraki, Ksarhako.<sup>24</sup> So, this is how I started. At some point, *na ‘nai kala o tipos* [bless the guy], he told my parents ‘Oh, he is good, you should get him a piano and he should continue a bit more seriously, etc.’ So, I bought a piano. The interesting thing with the piano was that my parents would often invite people to our house and I took on the role of the entertainer,

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<sup>24</sup> Composers Hatzidakis (1925-1994) and Theodorakis (1925) are the two emblematic figures that established the *èntehno* [art-song] genre, combining Greek folk music with intellectual poetry. Xarchakos (1939) is another well-known representative of the genre, also known for the music of the film *Rebetiko*.

so this was *treli meleti* [crazy study], because there was no other place for me to play. They used to tell me ‘Play this song, do you know it?’ And I would answer ‘Ma pos paei?’ [How is the melody?] And they would say ‘Like this’, and sing it for me. So, basically this is how an informal, non-typical ear-training started. This is what helped me afterwards and this is why the jazz genre was more familiar to me, because I had to improvise a lot. Imagine a *context* [sic] where you have some people *apo kato* [in the audience]. There is no radio, there is no YouTube, you don’t know the songs, you’ve listened to them once. So, you have to *fake* [sic]. In the meantime, I liked this, I mean doing this, the entertainer. Obviously it is only now in hindsight that I theorize all of this and rationalise it. Now I see that all of this helped me, because I compare it with other acquaintances and friends who had a more typical...

- Yes, who went straight on to educational institutions.

- Of course, I had no teachers, I mean imagine that I listened to the blues scale [for the first time] when I was in the third grade of junior high school. A friend from Athens came by my parents’ house and said ‘Oh, you have a piano, I know this: the blues scale.’ And my reaction was ‘Blues? What’s that?! Wow!’ And we were in shock! And I played rock with some friends, etc, whatever we could do, and in general I got into it more seriously when I was older. When I say older I mean when I was 19, when I came to Athens to study. I went to ò, Pantelis Benetatos was there, who is a very well-known pianist.

In Kostas’s case, prior to attending music institutions such as conservatories, the family environment was the one providing a context that would foster music taste and education. Another important milieu of musical and social interaction has been the school environment. Forming bands in schools is still very popular nowadays and for many the first step towards music. Michalis Evdaimon, an electric bass player and the coordinator of the funk band class in the LAB in which I participated, had his first contact with the instrument this way. The bass has always been less popular than the guitar or the drums and many bassists started by taking up the role that no one wanted.

- Somewhere between sixteen and seventeen with my then *parea* [friends] at school we talked about forming a rock band. And all the instruments were already taken. I said, 'I'll play the drums', and the other guy said 'But I am playing the drums.' Then I said, 'I'll play the guitar'. 'But I am playing the guitar', another one responded. And I was like, 'And what am I supposed to do, you guys?' And they told me, 'play the bass.'

- Typical story! But did you play music at all before this?

- No [I didn't]. I was sixteen years old. I played with a borrowed bass, it totally sucked. The guitarists would show me how to play and I didn't have a pick so I played with a *dekàriko*<sup>25</sup> [penny]. It wasn't the euro back then.

- *Ti les twra!* [Wow].

- Yeah, we were just kids. [Going around] with the instruments without cases, just like this. In the trolley car, along with the old women [coming back] from the *laiki*.<sup>26</sup> Epic stuff. Studio etc. So, at the time we had no idea what was going on. But I liked it, and I was hooked, and I wanted to study, and my friends were attending the conservatory and they told me 'you should go too'. And I started finding out about the Greek scene and I listened to *Kiourtsoglou*,<sup>27</sup> *ki epatha plaka* [and I went crazy] and I said, 'opa what's this?!', and I went to find him and took classes with him.

- Where did he teach then?

- Nakas. He is still there.

- So, around what time was that?

- This must have been around '95? Something like that.

Experimenting alone with the instrument using coins instead of picks and trying to appropriate the Anglo-American traditions of rock through playing in bands is one way to enter the path of music professionalism. However, in the case of Babis, who is an electrical guitarist, experimenting started with

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<sup>25</sup> *Dekariko* was the silver coin of 10 [Deka] drachmae, when the monetary unit in use was drachma. Drachma was replaced in 2002 by the euro.

<sup>26</sup> *Laiki* is an open market mostly for groceries and fruit. Every neighborhood has its own *laiki* which takes place in designated streets once per week. During this day a very common image is that of a congested bus, as older women and men embark on the local route carrying their shopping trolley bags full of groceries back home.

<sup>27</sup> Yotis Kiourtsoglou, an electric bassist, is an emblematic figure of Greek Jazz. He is the founder of the groups Iasis and Human Touch.

some original craftsmanship, as he had no instrument to start with. Instead he invented one:

- How did you start playing music?

- I would listen to music and I liked it and I kept nagging at my parents to get me a...

- What did you listen to?

- Hendrix, Queen. That sort of stuff, rock music. Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple.

- And you took classes afterwards?

- No, what do you mean classes? In the beginning I bought a *palami* [palm]<sup>28</sup> from a *panigiri* [street fair] that you poke it and it goes *pin pin*, and I put some threads on it instead of strings let's say.

- *Palami*? What do you mean?

- It was a fake thing, I put on some threads I didn't know how many...It was a palm from a fair.

- How old were you?

- I was in elementary school. But not young enough to be doing something like this. I mean, it was not a game for me, I had this need to hold something in my hands because I liked what I was listening to.

- So you listened to Hendrix in elementary school?

- I might have been in the sixth grade when I did this.

- And how come? Did they listen to this music in your house? Or friends?

- Now, how did this come up... We were on a day trip with the school in Agios Kosmas<sup>29</sup> and some guys from high school were playing volleyball and they put on Smoke on the Water, and I was there on another day trip with elementary school and I froze and I was like 'What the hell! What is this?' And then my father got a CD player because he enjoyed music. I was still in elementary school and we went to Praktiker and bought a Hendrix compilation. I was enchanted!

- And what about the instrument?

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<sup>28</sup> During the interview, an extended discussion followed regarding the 'palm' Babis refers to but I never managed to clarify what he meant with the term. It is probably some palm-shaped toy sold in fairs.

<sup>29</sup> Agios Kosmas [St. Kosmas] is a big sports facility in the south of Athens and many schools organized day trips there.

- I got an instrument later on, in the first year of junior high when I convinced them [parents] and got Stella, a cheap ass guitar that I spotted years later in a website with the worst made guitars in history. The company that built it was actually a washing machine company. I had found that cheap one in the ads.

- Electric?

- Yes. A piece of shit. [...] I think that I learned most of the things I know about music with this ‘guitar-palm’ or with air guitar, because at that time I was totally in it and ‘played’ and did not care about actually playing the instrument. I was listening... I mean..., you have to want to learn the music first and the instrument afterwards.

Many of today’s prominent musicians did not even start by playing the instrument they play today, let alone jazz. Yiorgos, my teacher in electric bass started with the piano and the accordion. In his case, too, school was the springboard in order for him to start playing:

- I was at a TEI<sup>30</sup> for librarianship, I studied there. But I also had a thing for music because my father played the accordion at the house. He was a practical player, he didn’t know how to play with the right fingers or... But he had and still has a better ‘ear’ than me. So do my two sisters. But music was present in the house, we were not afraid of music, because you know, there are people who listen to music and close the doors. They are ashamed of the exposure, the sound, they are afraid. But I started playing the accordion because I liked some songs from school, from high school, The street had its own history, etc. From the school celebrations.<sup>31</sup> This is how I met my best friend; we both played the accordion. I was trying to play some stuff, I made it to an extent, I was stuck with the accordion and when I went to high school this thing had to evolve in some way. I had started piano lessons, but I didn’t have a piano.

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<sup>30</sup> T.E.I stands for Technical Educational Institution. T.E.I belongs to tertiary education and was recently equated with University level degrees.

<sup>31</sup> The street had its own history is a very popular song by Manos Loizos. The lyrics were written by Kostoula Papadimitriou in the 1960s but the song became popular only after the end of the dictatorship and was linked to the anti-dictatorial movement. It is part of the song canon to be performed in schools throughout Greece during the celebrations for 17 November and the fall of the junta. The first recording was made in 1965: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4IjzkW2wqw>.

I forced them so I could take classes, because my father wouldn't pay money for the conservatory. I went to a teacher and he would tell me 'Will you get a piano or not?' And I would do some finger exercises on a table. But I didn't get a piano so all this went away, my experience of all of this was not good. [...] Then I continued a bit on my own but I was stuck. Everyone started with the electric bands to play Satisfaction, Beatles and that kind of stuff.

- When was that?

- Around '82 until '86. Then it wasn't going anywhere, I wasn't playing in bands and everyone formed bands. I felt that from the electric [sound] I had to go to other groups. More acoustic, something like *rebetiko*, *laiko*. Because of the accordion. [...] I didn't quite know what I wanted. [...] The music I would listen to at my house was some Latin that my dad used to listen to, Theodorakis, Hatzidakis and some classical music, some Russian revolutionary [songs]. But I didn't have the back up of rock music. I listened to Deep Purple, then I started listening a bit to Iron Maiden, but at the time I didn't play the accordion, I had stopped. I was trying to figure out *what to do with my life*, I was admitted into a school of librarianship; somehow it seemed off. And a friend of mine told me 'start playing the bass, no one plays the bass' and he lent me one. [...] And I was like, 'Bass? Ok!Bass!' I also liked the riff from rock n' roll, Elvis Presley. I liked it a lot. And so I started, I wanted to go somewhere, I started classes at Fakanas conservatory.<sup>32</sup>

The first years of experimentation resulted in a search for formal education for most of the musicians in this thesis, in one of the leading institutions of the 1990s, the conservatories of Nakas, Fakanas and Athenaeum.

### ***Institutionalization***

Institutionalization has been a major theme in ethnomusicological studies, particularly in relation to folk and 'new folk' genres (Ramnarine, 2003; Keegan-Phipps, 2007). These studies trace the changes between early revival

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<sup>32</sup> Yiorgos Fakanas is a renowned electric bassist and founder in 1997 of the Art Music School (Odeio Technes – Fakanas). For more information see the article in Bass Player magazine by Chris Jisi, volume 19, no.13, December 2008: <https://www.jazzonline.gr/en/articlesinterviews/interviews/item/1866-y-fakanas.html>.

efforts and the more recent re-appropriations on a national level through educational institutions. In this, they emphasize the creative mixing of folk music with genres such as Cuban drumming (Ramnarine 2003: 76,78) or jazz (Keegan-Phipps 2007: 92) within the spaces of particular educational institutions: the Sibelius Academy in the first case and the Folk and Traditional music degree course of Newcastle University in the second.

Jazz in Greece has also been the result of intense institutionalization. The basic distinction between this and institutionalization practices of folk music in the above examples is that jazz was not already part of the local culture. Thus, institutions such as Nakas Conservatory, one of the first to establish a jazz curriculum, did not repackage and renegotiate an already established tradition to sell it as an educational good, but rather imported an 'academic' version of it, as it was being practised in the U.S and particularly at Berklee College of Music. A second flow of North-European jazz was initiated in the 1990s, after the entrance of Greece to the European Union which facilitated travelling and studying in European countries, when it came to practical and financial matters. It is only during the past decades that these flows have started to diminish, with the establishment of the jazz performance course in the Ionian University in Corfu in 1992, as well as the incorporation of other popular musics, such as rock, pop-rock or metal in the curriculum of some private music schools in Athens.

However, before the occurrence of jazz flows from European and American academies, a small local community of jazz musicians had started to establish during the 1970s. This first generation was self-taught and fostered through endless hours of listening and transcribing jazz recordings, and organizing seminars and live gigs at the jazz club of Barakos in Plaka. Along with Greek musicians returning from abroad (France, Berklee, Musicians Institute LA), they provided the first teachers for the newly founded departments of 'modern music' in conservatories. Jazz was promoted as a counterpart to classical music not only stylistically but also historically, thus the identification 'modern', as opposed to classical music that was deemed 'old'. Jazz was 'serious' enough in order to be integrated into the conservatoire system in the private sector (but not into public music schools), and provided what was considered a 'respectable' popular music



alternative to the classical music curriculum. Nakas in central Athens was the first conservatoire to establish such a curriculum in 1990, and Athenaeum and Fakanas followed in 1997. During the early 1990s, Nakas was the only institution where one could study jazz ‘properly’ following a conservatorial type of training and the only one to offer an alternative to classical music education. Jazz then was often chosen over classical music, as a way to avoid the ‘demanding’ classical training and as the only alternative close to popular music, since other genres such as rock were not deemed worthy to become the subject of official musical training at the time.

Thus, most of the musicians’ experimentations that involved forming bands, using coins as picks, switching between instruments and genres while trying to figure out *what to do with their lives*, ended up with them setting foot at the door of one of these conservatories. This was the case with Kostas when he came to Athens after being admitted to the Theatre Studies Department at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens:

- When was that?

- Around ‘96. It [Nakas] had just started. There were a lot of people, imagine that we were four persons in a private lesson. You would pay for a one-to-one class...

- But you would have a group class?

- Yes.

- Why? Because they didn’t have enough hours available? The teachers I mean.

- It was total panic at the time. But of course we didn’t know that then. We also had money back then, there was money...

- So this was the so-called modern division?

- Yes. Imagine the teachers back then were Spyros Panagiotopoulos, Takis Paterelis, Giotis Samaras. So being in such an environment, watching these people playing... For me that gig that I saw at Paràfono,<sup>33</sup> it was Benetatos [piano] with Kiourtsoglou [bass] and Stavropoulos on the drums.

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<sup>33</sup> Kostas refers to *Paràfono* [Dissonant], a jazz venue established in 1981 in the area of Exarcheia that housed live gigs exclusively with Greek jazz performers, contrary to Half Note. Paràfono closed in 2010, to the disappointment of many members of the jazz scene.

Stavropoulos was also here at the LAB, he was also known as ‘Rambo’. It was a shocking thing to see. Having in your ears only the Greek [music] and only three-voice chords, seeing these musicians of this level. So I think that after this... I remember this live [gig] very well, I was also sitting at the front. [...] Anyway. So when I came to Athens as a student I started messing around with a lot of stuff, theatrical, with bands, just anything, with *rebetiko* orchestras. In one orchestra I would play the guitar and do *amanedes*,<sup>34</sup> and in the other I would play the keys and play rock, and in the other *èntehno*, whatever came around. So at some point during the first months I went to Nakas.

- How did you find out about Nakas?

- A friend of mine told me ‘Oh, Nakas has a good department’. So I went and asked, ‘Hello, do you have jazz piano here?’ Because I didn’t want to do classical. And they told me, ‘Yes, go to this classroom Mr. Benetatos is there’. I went to Mr. Benetatos and I said to him ‘Hello, I want to start the piano’. ‘Oh, wonderful, go register and come next week to have a class’, he replied. And I went, and Pantelis gave me a cassette, I didn’t know what jazz was. I had listened to some stuff because some friends of ours in Sparti listened to jazz and when we went to their house we would listen to jazz, but that was it. He told me, ‘take this cassette and listen to it’. And he had made this mixtape with Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson, Duke Ellington. A cassette. So imagine, it was 40 minutes. And some pieces by Michel Camilo..., the last piece was Michel Camilo’s. Michel Camilo was meant to mark me because I like Latin a lot and in the final exams I played this piece by Michel Camilo, Blue Bossa with a technique Camilo used, the stride piano. It was a technique they had in the 1930s in America where they play boom boom [sings] in the bass, but with a rhythmic signature of tumbao. A hybrid thing Camilo had done. It was really hard. My [music] knowledge was limited back then, but I liked it. You know how it is, you listen to it and figure it out. And I did and it grooved. I had terrible issues, I didn’t know the scales, but it worked. And

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<sup>34</sup> Amanès [pl. amanèdes] is an improvisational type of maqam singing common in rebetiko songs.

Paterelis<sup>35</sup> was there, I appreciate him a lot. And he was a bit distant then, he wouldn't talk much. And he was like 'come here son' and 'well done' etc. This stuff is important because I was twenty years old, I hadn't had teachers [until then] so I said to myself, 'nice!'

Nakas's contribution to the Athenian jazz scene has been a catalyst particularly in relation to the scene's academic orientation. Nakas's success was built, among other reasons, because of its collaboration with Berklee College of Music, being one of the four foundational institutions of the Berklee International Network. In this way, Nakas attracted many students who wanted to obtain its scholarship, which covered part of the expenses for studying at Berklee. As such, it secured for many years a constant flow of students who had the dream of Berklee deeply-seated in their imagination. Babis was of them.

- I attended Nakas because I wanted to go to Berklee. And when I auditioned for the first time, they were like 'you play well my friend but yeah, right, suck it up now', because I didn't know how to read [notes] and what D minor7 ♭ 5 was.<sup>36</sup>

- So, you didn't take classes at Nakas, you went [auditioned] straight for the scholarship.

- When I lost the scholarship, I said *ok* [sic], I want to go to Berklee. I was crazy about it. At the time I saw it as a springboard in order to do something, to play, to meet musicians. I thought to myself, I need to learn and I also need the scholarship because it is too expensive, so how will my chances get better? By enrolling at Nakas.

- How old were you then?

- In 2006? So, twenty...Twenty-five years old?

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<sup>35</sup> Takis Paterelis is a saxophonist and emblematic figure of the Greek jazz scene. When I conducted fieldwork he was performing his project titled 'A Love Supreme', a tribute to Coltrane, in various venues around Athens.

<sup>36</sup> While I was editing the interview excerpt with Babis correcting my translation, when he read the above passage he commented: 'You know why I mentioned D minor7 ♭ 5 back then in the interview? It was not a figure of speech. This was exactly the chord they asked me about and I didn't know'.

- So, what was this Berklee programme?

You're supposedly able to study part of the Berklee curriculum here. So when you go there afterwards you don't need to take *Theory I*; you can take Tronzo's class which is about live playing. [...] It was hard.

- Why?

- Because I don't like the conservatory as a concept and it was also very demanding to score *Summertime* for four winds and rhythm section, when the only thing you know is Fa-La-Do-Mi, Mi-Sol-Si-Re-Fa.<sup>37</sup>

- Oh, so you had these courses at Nakas.

- Yes. Arranging, harmony. It was considered a requirement, that you know a lot of stuff that I didn't.

- And how long did you stay [at Berklee]?

- In total it was..., September, October, November, December; in total it was four months.

Babis was forced to interrupt his studies in Berklee mid-term due to family issues and come back to Athens. In the next section, he describes his effort to be part of the professional music scene of Athens and the difficulties he encountered. What he shared with others was the unaffordability of music education. Despite Nakas's tempting Berklee perspective, the cost of its programme proved to be a barrier. Another issue that could avert someone from spending money on this kind of education is that the diplomas issued by conservatories in jazz performance are not officially recognised by the Ministry of Culture and Education, as opposed to diplomas in classical music. This is an example of how the superculture defines which music is valued and which not, through state policies. Thus, jazz classes are not a worthwhile expense for parents as they do not count towards an official qualification of any kind. Michalis also took classes at Nakas, only for one year before figuring out *what to do with his life* after high school, as he narrates:

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<sup>37</sup> Babis here refers to a common mnemonic method used in almost all conservatories, in order for beginners to learn the notes of the treble clef staff distinguishing between notes on the lines and notes on the spaces.

- I had classes only for one year with Kiourtsoglou, this was a lot ‘extra’ for my parents, you know to pay for.
- Yeah, Nakas is expensive.
- Yes, it was. But for one year I savoured it, I still remember our classes, Kiourtsoglou is a *daskalos* [teacher].<sup>38</sup>
- And what genre did you do?
- I wanted to learn jazz.
- How come?
- I had listened to Jaco Pastorius. And my brain moved! A friend of mine told me... He said ‘Have you listened to Jaco?’ And I’m like ‘What is this thing?’ I only used to listen to metal and rock back then. But I listened to some classical music too, you know, I listened to stuff. So I listened to Jaco Pastorius and I am saying ‘Oh! O Xristos ki i Panagia! (Jesus Christ and Holy Mary!) What is this?’ And then I started listening to other bassists. Victor Wooten had emerged at the time, he had just released his solo album, it was only bass and he played inconceivable stuff. Patitucci and all the heroes of the electric [bass], so I was amazed and I said, ‘this is what I want to do’. And I wanted to learn jazz, so I had classes with Giotis [Kiourtsoglou], and these classes provided solid basis for me, in order to learn. And then I stopped and my parents convinced me to study something.

Michalis obtained his bachelor degree in marketing, after which he dedicated himself to studying bass. He did not attend a conservatory again but rather developed his own method:

- So I started studying eight hours per day. And 10 hours per day grilling my brain. On my own. But I did a peculiar study. I went to my stepfather, who was a very well read person, he would read about everything. He is an

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<sup>38</sup> *Daskalos* [teacher] is a term used for instructors in elementary school level education and considered inferior, as opposed to *kathigitis* [professor] which is used in high school and university. However, the word ‘teacher’ in the Greek context is also used to denote someone who is a ‘guru’ or a ‘master’, thus someone who has had a great influence through teaching in a wider sense, affecting one’s life philosophy. In this sense and as it is used by Michalis, ‘teacher’ is of higher value to the term ‘professor’.

engineer from Metsovio.<sup>39</sup> And I said to him, ‘listen to this’. And I put on Coltrane. He knew Coltrane because he listened to jazz, but he didn’t know Giant Steps. I told him ‘I know that you don’t understand what’s going on, but I want to develop these skills. I want to be able to do it. Not to become Coltrane, but...

- But follow the way.

- Yes. And he’s like, ‘look, you probably have to read some stuff’. And he gives me 30 books having to do with psychology, with *advanced cognition* [sic], with the way the brain works, with systems theory, mathematical philosophy and stuff to help one understand exactly how a system works. How you have the *input* [sic] and with the appropriate processing, you have the *output* [sic]. So, I started studying all of this, taking notes and I took more books during these two years that I didn’t have a job and my parents fed me and I was ok with that.

- At what age?

- Around 24? I had graduated and was trying to get a job. And I sat down and wrote it and kept notes and studied at the same time and realized that it was working and I wrote a book. And this book remained in the drawer for seven years.

- And what is the book about?

- It is..., it is called *The Organisation of Musical Information* and has to do with the way the musician’s brain works, based on science, and how knowledge works and the way we learn. And I placed all this in the context of the bass, in order to learn the fretboard. In sum, because I was learning on my own how to study seriously, I had to come up with a method that I would not question. And one that would be scientifically founded. So I studied research done in Harvard with musicians, pianists and brain scientists; they conducted experiments with the musicians to see how the brain works.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Metsovio is the Polytechnic School of Athens, considered one of the best in the country as well as abroad.

<sup>40</sup> Michalis recently translated the book into English and made it available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Organisation-Musical-Information-Michael-Evdemon-ebook/dp/B078YH5HTL>.

In the absence of funds for formal music education, Michalis continued self-educating himself in a very creative way, manifesting some true ingenuity in creating his own method for learning the instrument based on cognitive science. Meanwhile, Nakas's expensive programme as well as the establishment of new jazz programmes in other conservatories led Kostas, who had already become involved with musicians on the Athenian scene, to leave Nakas for another emerging jazz programme established in Athenaeum:

- Why did you leave from Nakas?

- I left because I had become very good friends with Yannis Papanastasiou and Manos Theodossakis, who played in Savra and Apurimac [bands]. Manos Theodossakis is now the Big Band's<sup>41</sup> maestro. So we were friends, we were also the same age and they told me 'we are going to Athenaeum, there is this jazz department with Sylvios Syros and he is a very good teacher, you should come. It's also cheaper than Nakas.' [...] Athenaeum did the following: they lowered the fees and increased the hours. For example, the theoretical courses were two hours. I did the full cycle that was four years. So we had theory, then another two hours of improvisation, two hours harmony with Manos, one hour instrument classes with Kontrafouris at the piano. [...] And two-hour group [playing]. So it was a big enough package. While at Nakas we only did one hour, 45-50 minutes, three students together.

- This is so weird. I mean they didn't have enough teachers, and they would put so many students together? [...] What about all these people who had come from..., Where did they study, all these who taught at Nakas?

- Nowhere. What do you mean where did they study? They probably had some [classical] piano diplomas and then on their own.

- So all this flow to the States etc. started later on.

- Yes, this academic thing. Even Kontrafouris who was essentially self-taught but an extraordinary case, he went to Finland later on. In order to structure all this accumulated knowledge. This is what he told us 'Guys, I want to go to

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<sup>41</sup> Here Kostas is referring to the Big Band of the municipality of Athens. Yiorgos Georgiadis is employed in the band as well.

Finland' [Sibelius Academy]. And I think that he was about to do a PhD but he stopped. He couldn't take it anymore, he wanted to play.

With jazz being offered only in private conservatories for a fairly high price, those who could afford to pay for this kind of education inevitably belonged to the emerging middle and upper middle classes of the 1990s. Due to the unaffordability of music education, one strategy, as the musicians discussed, was to take classes for a limited time, i.e for one year, and then to continue as self-taught musicians. This changed with the establishment in 1992 of the jazz programme at the Ionian University, a public university<sup>42</sup> that offers officially recognised undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Music Studies with the option of specialisation in jazz performance.

### ***The Road to Professionalism***

The notion of professionalism is a rather debated one and characterized by the absence of an all-encompassing definition, due to variations related to different music cultures and groups. Ruth Finnegan (2007 [1989]: 14) in her study of local music suggests the idea of an amateur-professional continuum rather than a clear-cut distinction between the two, a view shared also by Cottrell (2004) in his study of professional musicians in London. However, there are some criteria in place used to distinguish professionalism. One of them is being paid to play (Merriam 1964:124), even though Finnegan (2004[1987]: 15) suggests that amateur local musicians in their use of the term professional 'often refer to evaluative rather than economic aspects [...]'. The conceptualization of playing music as 'work' (Cottrell 2004:9) is another element pointing to professionalism, together with flexibility, a particularly important trait for those working as session musicians. Hofman (2015), who theorizes musicians' work in terms of 'affective labour', describes an interesting distinction regarding professional musicians in socialist Yugoslavia: between those 'working in "the service industry"

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<sup>42</sup> Universities in Greece are public and are not allowed by law to charge fees for their undergraduate degrees, as the right to free education for all Greeks is protected by the Constitution (article 16, paragraph 4). However, universities are allowed to charge and regulate the fees for their postgraduate programmes.



(*uslužne delatnosti*) including the *kafanas*, hotels and restaurants or community celebrations, and those working in the *estrada*, i.e in concert halls, radio and television and the recording industry' (Hofman 2015: 7). However, as she notes, it was difficult to maintain this division in practice. Even though there is no such distinction in place in the Athenian context, the practices that Hofman describes as being present in the first group, related to precarity, the absence of long-term contracts and negotiation of wages with venue owners, are very similar to the ones in Athenian professional music circles.

Being a professional musician in Athens requires engagement with various activities (performing, teaching), as well as with various genres. The latter is not a particularity of the Athenian context, but a rather common phenomenon in urban environments as part of the musicians' adaptive strategies (Cottrell 2007; Neuman, 1978; Umney and Kretsos 2014). Being flexible and able to switch between different styles is a requirement for session musicians, according to Cottrell: 'These different skills are fundamental to a musician's employability: the more styles in which you are convincing, the more work you are available for, and the busier and therefore wealthier you are likely to be' (2004: 58). Tsioulakis suggests two further criteria that qualify someone as a professional musician in the Athenian context. Firstly, one needs to be a skilled performer of a specific instrument rather than a singer.<sup>43</sup> This evaluation is further related to gender-bias, as in Athenian professional music circles singers are mostly female and instrumentalists are mainly male. Secondly, one has to have worked *nyhta* [night], thus in the music industry (Tsioulakis 2010: 52).

Since the 1980s the dominant soundscape of the Greek popular music industry provided a steady workplace for a variety of high-skilled musicians who played in bands supporting the famous singers, either in recordings or live shows. The three most popular genres were *èntehno* [art-song] and *laikò* [urban-folk] as well as the *laiko-pop* that emerged during the early 2000s. The majority of the musicians do not value these genres, nor the singers in the local star-system, who they often refer to using the derogatory term

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<sup>43</sup> Further to the singers that are considered non-musicians according to Tsioulakis, Finnegan mentions that also music teachers, while making a living through music, were not considered professional musicians (2004[1987]: 278).

*tragoudiàris*(male)/*tragoudiàra* (female); performances with them are called *douleià* [work]. Working in the big shows of mainstream genres and especially *laikò* is often referred to as *nýhta* [night] or *douleuo nýhta* [working in the night]. These shows usually start around 11 p.m and end in the early morning hours. *Nýhta* does not only refer to the hours, but also, with a negative connotation, to the wider circuit related to the big venues.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, for many musicians it has been a necessary evil, as playing for the music industry was the only way to make a living as professionals, with really high earnings from the late 1980s until mid 2000s, starting to follow a downward course after the crisis.

The choice of not working in the industry in many cases meant that one could not make a career as a professional musician, thus make a living out of music performance, as smaller gigs of the jazz or rock genre were not enough to support oneself. Working in the music industry was considered by many a sacrifice they were not willing to make, as for Michalis during his early years:

- I had decided earlier on [not to], because around my twenty somethings I had the chance to get into the Greek music industry.

- How?

- I had met T.B and he was D's bassist at the time, a very good bassist and he had a full career, his own albums etc. So I got into all of this and we played together. Anyway, I did some recordings for EMI etc. And T told me 'this is the moment, go for it'. And..., seriously, I don't know how I did this, but I told him, 'T I want to study the instrument well. I don't want to work for music. I want to study the instrument, I want to become very good and I don't want to make money out of music.'

- When was that?

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<sup>44</sup> It is common knowledge that the big night clubs are controlled by criminals, usually referred to as *nonoi tis nýhtas* [godfathers of the night] or *Bravoi*. The phenomenon started during the 1980s, and a series of gang-related murders of venue owners and rival gang members has occurred since, over the control of specific areas of nocturnal Athens. The best-known case is that of Babis Lazaridis, owner of the nightclub Mouses who was shot dead in 2008, as he was exiting the hotel where he was staying in the south suburbs of Athens. At the site with him was his partner and well-known *laiko* singer Vasiliki Iliadi, who suffered minor injuries. For more information on one of the best-known gangs named as 'Crime Syndicate' see <http://www.tovima.gr/relatedarticles/article/?aid=95337> (in Greek).

- At the same time, when I was 23. I mean I could have been working as a full time musician since then. So now I wouldn't have a mortgage. But I didn't, and I kept music high up on its throne and said that I will only study and play only jazz and play what I like. But I had to work. I couldn't find a job so I became a graphic designer. [...] My best friend was a programmer and we had found some new platforms used for doing presentations in companies, so I would put on my shirt, take my laptop and go to big companies, I had a hell of a job, working with Nestle, Coca Cola, Diaggio, Johnny Walker. And at the same time I studied [bass].

Michalis, having rejected work in the music industry, employed another survival model which is common among musicians, especially of the alternative scene. He found a day-job and kept music as a side-project. This allowed him to play only the music he valued. For Babis, things were a bit more complicated as he wanted to make a living exclusively out of music performance. The abrupt return from the much-desired Berklee due to family issues brought Babis face-to-face with the same question, regarding the choices he had to make in his effort to follow the path towards music professionalism. Babis describes the crossroad at which he found himself:

- Afterwards [after Berklee] things did not go well. I played for one year, *tin eida oti* [I was in the mood] of 'you know what?'. I said that I only wanted to work in music; I played with *tragoudiarides èntehnous* [èntehno singers] that no one had heard of, in case something would happen. I was like, *ok* [sic], I will do anything now. I busked, playing on the street and this yielded double than all the *tragoudiarides* together, double and triple.

-Really?

- Where? In Ermou?<sup>45</sup>

- Ermou and Thisseio,<sup>46</sup> and on the islands during the summer. I have played at Paros, Naxos, Crete. So, after I did this with..., for October, November,

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<sup>45</sup> Ermou is the main pedestrianized commercial street of Athens leading from Syntagma to Monastiraki and Thisseio and is a common site for street musicians.

<sup>46</sup> Babis uploaded a video on YouTube from this period under the title '*Playin' for our dinner' Guitar Night*'. As a description to the video Babis has written the following: 'Stavros and Mitsos stopping by for a jam

December, January, February, March, April, the thing with the *tragoudiarides* I am telling you was going on for about seven months. They were five, six names *pou den ta kserei i mana tous*<sup>47</sup> [totally unknown], and rehearsals and live [gigs] and in general all those people who played there, they didn't care about the money, they were in it only for the fun of it. That's why I'm telling you..., having experienced this [circuit], wanting to make money out of it. *Den paizei* [there is no way to make money out of it]. Do you understand where the problem lies? That a working musician in Athens today cannot make a living out of it, except for very few.

- During the *bouzoùkia* age, one could be a working musician.

- Yes, indeed...Is *bouzoùkia* something you are looking into? Because you keep mentioning it.

- I am trying to tell you that many people from the jazz and rock scene had this as their basic income, or from *èntehno*.

- Yes, of course. [...] What you are saying is true, *bouzoùkia* was what you could do in order to make a living as a musician.

- To have this as a basic income.

- Not only as a basic income, but to make *trelo xrima* [loads of money]. When this came up with Kokkinou and Petrelis...<sup>48</sup> I had this offer to go to Kokkinou and Petrelis during that period we were talking about, just a bit before leaving for Texas. *Tria katostarika tin vradia* [300 euros per night]. For two nights per week.

- When was that? Do you remember?

- 2009? 2009 or 2010? ... Why didn't you go?

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Charalampos Babis Tyropoulos - old crappy \$50 modded guitar through 5W pignose amp pushed to the limit!

Stavros Anifantis - acoustic patience

Mitsos Matzafos – conducting?

The video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vY2SG-ad5qg>.

<sup>47</sup> The idiomatic phrase *den tous kserei I mana tous*, literally meaning 'not even their mother knows them' is a hyperbole, often used with reference to artists to denote someone who has not managed to establish a career and is therefore essentially unknown to the audience as well as the professional music circles.

<sup>48</sup> Elli Kokkinou is a famous female singer of the pop/urban-folk genre, who was very successful during the late 1990s until mid 2000s. Thanos Petrelis is another famous singer of the *laiko* genre who emerged in 2004, after his appearance in the Greek TV talent show Fame Story. Both Kokkinou and Petrelis have not been part of the big shows in Athens during the past years.

- Because you can't do something you consider... .. And another big issue and responsibility of all these people playing at *bouzoùkia* but..., ok, acceptable because they have to make a living somehow. Is that..., in this country and in the environment I live in, the problem is exactly this, Kokkinou and Petrelis, and I am supposed to support that? However, if I did go I would shut up about it. I can't stand this thing [they are saying] that 'the audience does not get it', but 'let's play with Kokkinou and Petrelis' and buy a house in 2000 and then play a jazz gig and say that here no one understands nothing.

Babis's decision not to work in the music industry practically left him unemployed as he did not teach at the time and had no other gigs. He did not have a day-job either. Not fitting into any of the survival models of the professional musician in Athens—which included either working a day job or in the music industry—made him feel desperate and worthless. It was at this point that he decided to go to Austin, Texas:

- This was an act of desperation, because I was having a hard time here both personally and professionally. I mean you reach a point, to situations that I have forgotten now... .. However, I try to remember all this stuff because I also teach now. And I was like 'you know man, I don't play jazz, I don't play at *bouzoùkia*. So I'm worthless? I have nothing to say, do I? What am I playing, what have I been doing? Drighi drighi all these years'. I mean ok, I thought I should get my shit together, to escape this post-adolescent syndrome and *do something with my life*, other than music. Because this is how it is here. If you are a musician, and if you are the kind of person who is more preoccupied with being socially accepted—something that has not been my concern—you start thinking like that. And let's say yes, I WANT to play good music, I WANT to be a better musician, I WANT to do something with music, so THIS is the way boy: work, *skylàdiko*, *èntehno* and jazz. This is the way, so do THIS. And you have to support and enter the mould. You have to be squeezed into the mould.

- What do you mean?

- You have to study the melodic minor, you have to play in these jobs that exist for you to play at in order to be a professional.

Babis's comment is very important because it places jazz not on the side of the subculture, but as part of the norm as far as the options of a professional musician in Athens are concerned, indicating that by 2010 there was already an established jazz scene in the city. Performing jazz, as Babis suggests, forms part of what is expected from a 'respectable' professional musician alongside playing for the industry. As he could not find his way into any of the prevalent models of music professionalism in Athens, Babis oscillated between Athens and Austin for the next few years. In the meantime, he sold one of his amps in order to pay tuition at a school for lifeguard training, because at the time it seemed like the occupation was not overcrowded, as he mentioned.

He then got the gig at Nixon with the Deep Throat Sessions, by chance as he claims, when some fellow musicians introduced him to Michalis Kapilidis, the drummer of The Deep Throat Sessions, one night at Kerameio bar, saying 'This is Babis we talked to you about, he just came from Texas.' Following this, his engagement with the Athenian live scene and jazz professionals made him known and secured him a teaching offer at the LAB. As I have discussed in the Introduction and is also made clear by Babis's narrative above, live performances are the only way for professional jazz musicians in Athens to prove their value and to make a living. Live performances translate into more live gigs and offers to play with other musicians, and finally more students. Thus, playing live is far more than a music performance, it is also a promotional activity that can secure more 'work'.

For others like Yiorgos and Kostas, their professional careers evolved parallel to their music studies, bridging their way from studying into professionalism in a more straightforward way. Yiorgos, after a period of wobbling between academic and music performance education, trying to figure out *what to do with his life*, decided to leave the TEI of librarianship where he was studying:

- So I start studying music more seriously, and because of a series of events I started playing with a group, because their bassist had left. Until then, I had never played before, this was my first... And from that point, I got totally hooked on music, and 25 years have gone by since then and I am still doing

this thing. Then I started double-bass, because a friend of mine gave me jazz mixtapes, but I liked something in it without knowing what it was; I started double-bass at Nakas, but classical. I had a lust for the guys with a classical education, serious education. [...] I spent some years there and I quit before the diploma, I was in the second or third year of *Anotèra* and I would directly take the exams for the diploma.<sup>49</sup> I was good, but despite this *den to ha* [I wasn't fit for it]. [...] Anyway, I abandoned the classical, I didn't go for the diploma and I said, I'll start playing pizzicato. Without bow. And I started alone, from the beginning, I tried to classify what I know, what I don't know, but I was already playing electric [bass] by then; I was making a living out of it. But of course I had a house where I lived until I was 32, I left my parents' house at 32, I had my mum peeling apples for me. (laughs)

- Yeah, I totally get you.

- My father was negative about all of this. Because I helped him since I was little at the construction site; he was a blacksmith, and he was like, '*what's going on now, what is the asshole doing?*' He would come home dead tired and would see me with a bass playing *boom boom boom*. And freaked out. Anyway, at some point things started to flow, actually what was good, was that I played all the time and I persisted. [...]

- And when you're talking about the electric [bass], that you made a living, what did you play?

- Always jazz. Always jazz or jobs, for some years I played with Agamous Thytes,<sup>50</sup> I haven't worked *nỳhta*, fortunately. But I played a lot, there were not many double-basses [double-bass performers] then.

- When was that?

- Around '93-'94. Maybe a bit later. In '87 I finished [school], in '89 I went to Fakanas, yes, around '93-'94 But I played with various musicians *ki evgaza*

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<sup>49</sup> The curriculum in the Greek conservatories is comprised of 4 stages lasting from two to three years each, *Prokatartiki* [Preparatory – 2 years], *Katotera* [Base level-3 years], *Mesi* [Middle level – 3 years], *Anotera*[Higher level – 3 years] leading to Ptyxio (11 years) which is the first and lowest recognized qualification one might have. Another two are required for the Diploma (12-13 years) which is the highest. This course/plan is often followed by students starting at a young age. There are however ways, usually for adult students, to circumvent this as one has the right to enter straight into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of *Anotera* after placement exams, or to go straight for the Diploma and not the Ptyxio as in Yiorgos's case.

<sup>50</sup> Agamoi Thytai was a performance collective created in the 1990s by actors Ieroklis Mihailidis and Iasonas Atheridis and performer and comedian Dimitris Starovas.

*to psomi mou* [made a living]. But it was hard in the beginning, the first years were hard financially. I wouldn't go on vacation in the summer or stuff like that. I mean, I wouldn't come to limits for things, I didn't want it all, I was patient. *Afto*. [That's it].

Professional musicians seemed to be acquainted with austerity a long time before it was officially imposed by the *troika*. It is somehow their natural habitat. Back in the 1990s, however, the European orientation of Greece was not at all related to fiscal surveillance, but on the contrary to a widening of opportunities. Kostas, one of the few at the time interested in Latin jazz, had already started to earn money performing in various bands parallel to his studies. Playing with other musicians in professional settings offered him further training before he decided to embark on a jazz performance degree in the Netherlands.

- So at that point when I started at Nakas, I also start playing with a band called *I savra ton vasilikon dromon*. It was a well-known rock band. I also recorded. Big nerve!

- What do you mean?

- *Den iksera pou pan ta tessera*. [I didn't know my right from my left]. But they took me, rehearsals etc. This was a big *school* because the guys were totally in it and they would rehearse three-four times per week. Three to four hours. With extraordinary musicians, I learned a lot. The first piece I had to do for them was a blues in B. In B! And the next one was a New Orleans [sic] blues in C# major. All black [keys]! But I had plenty of time back then. So, from there on, I met various musicians who were young at the time and then we cooperated a lot, with Yannis Papanastasiou the saxophone player, we are also best men. And he told me at the time 'You know I play with a Latin band and the pianist left'. And I had played that piece to them, a Latin piece with a bit of Montuno, I knew nothing else about Latin. And he told me 'How about coming over? You play, you are good'. And of course then, and also now, this is what happens with bands, you look for *pitsirikades* [young guys], who have time and are willing to get involved. And without a lot of money. And I said ok, and this is how I went to Apurimac. They had a lot of gigs, so



my practice would take place during the gigs. And the same year, no, next year in September, the jazz department of Athenaeum started with Sylvios Syros who had just come from France. Around '97, yes, September of '97 to '98. I left Nakas.

- Do you remember the fees at Atheaneum at the time?

- Hm... If I say 100.000 drachmas?

- So 300 euros.

- I think it was something like this.

- Yes, it sounds realistic.

- 100.000 drachmas when, at the same moment, a good *merokàmato*<sup>51</sup> for Apurimac was 30.000 drachmas.

- So 90 euros.

- One *merokàmato* for Apurimac which was a 7-8-member band [playing] in small venues.

- But Apurimac was a well-known band; I guess that this would not be the standard *merokàmato* for a less-known band.

- No, this was not the standard. I played with them until 2002. In 2002 I left; I joined the army. I came back and by chance I visited my sister in London and by chance a friend of mine called me. I had given him some documents to take to the Netherlands and he told me 'there is an open day in the Netherlands, come over'. So, I took a plane, EasyJet, and I went to the Netherlands. It was November 2003. [...] Fortunately, I got accepted to Amsterdam Conservatory and I also took with me Spyros Manesis who is now the well-known Spyros Manesis.

- So, how did the Netherlands come up?

- I had the information about the Netherlands since 1997, from friends who were already there. In 1997 in the Netherlands, they would take people for free, it was a socialist government back then and there were no fees, but the auditions were very strict.

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<sup>51</sup> *Merokàmato*, literally meaning a day's pay, is often used by musicians to refer to the fee for a gig. In everyday language it is mostly used to denote precarious, low-paying jobs one does in order to meet basic needs and are being compensated on a daily basis, as opposed to more stable jobs that pay by the month and include a fixed salary.

With Greece's entrance to the European Union, further opportunities arose for musicians to study abroad. The Netherlands has been a popular choice among them, one reason being the low fees; today many active musicians on the Athenian scene are graduates of jazz university programmes and academies of the Netherlands.

Although jazz is often used as a strict category having very specific connotations, musicians' trajectories towards it have never been a straight line and they also vary a lot. Their route goes through the dominant soundscape, through day jobs, through adolescent rock bands, through educational institutions in Greece and abroad. Most importantly it goes through choices they constantly have to make. This section followed musicians as they were trying to find their way into professionalism, before becoming established in the scene. One of the questions most of them faced, was *what to do with my life*, which in most cases posed the dilemma of following an academic education and getting a *serious* job versus the precarious life of the jazz musician. The second question that inevitably came with choosing the life of a musician was how to make a decent living from a music genre that remained on the outskirts of the Athenian soundscape and without giving in too much to the music industry. The demand for choosing became even more pressing in post-2010 Athens. The problem was that the alternatives were not laid out in the open, but were rather invented as various people, not only musicians, were trying to find a way through the crisis following alternative paths. Some of them are today's venue owners.

P.S - Spoiler alert<sup>52</sup>

Yiorgos still continues his performances with various groups every week in Athenian jazz venues, with Athens' Big Band as well as with Arvanitaki, a famous èntehno singer. He also teaches electric bass at LAB|Music Education. Kostas has followed a similar trajectory, playing with various bands and also teaching occasionally in elementary schools. In September 2018 he was excluded from teaching 'piano' in public schools, because his university degree was in 'jazz piano' performance, indicating the superculture's impact on the employability of these musicians. Michalis established the Funky Lab band alongside Marios, a drums instructor from the LAB, and three other students. He performs in various projects and plays with his own trio every Monday at Zitto, a new bar in Exarcheia. Kontrafouris turned 50 years old in September 2017, a birthday that was celebrated in Kerameio bar, including a lot of jazz and souvlakia from the neighbouring Elvis. He plays every night, from the smallest to the largest venue in Athens, in Finland and wherever else the music takes him; at the same time he is a lecturer at the Ionian University. He frequently runs marathons all around the world. Babis left his job at the LAB and is now in Japan on tour with Roxy Roca, a band he played with during his time in Austin. 'This is where the money is now', his American friends told him. I am getting ready to write my next chapter. In it I will place my interlocutors in the dystopian post-2010 Athens and follow them through their choices again. These two chapters are my way of paying a tribute to the people who have been my teachers and guided me around, inside and out of the scene, through their priceless insights.

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<sup>52</sup> The Post Scriptum is written employing the 'ethnographic present' in order to bring together the temporalities of fieldwork and writing.

## Chapter 3

*‘The crisis has been great for music but not for the musicians’*

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[...] as communities under the pressure of globalization and political instability fragment and ‘deterritorialize’, as Arjun Appadurai (1990, 1991) put it, ethnomusicologists have been drawn to the study of individual musicians who are trying to make sense of collapsing worlds, create new individual identities, and knit themselves into emerging or newly encountered social formations.

(Ruskin and Rice 2012: 299)

This chapter follows the same musicians and their choices in the post-2010 period. Through their narratives I trace the reversal of power relations between the superculture and the subculture (Slobin 1993) that occurred due to the abrupt decline of the Greek popular music industry in which many of them were employed. I document the strategies that they used in their search for alternatives, or as Ruskin and Rice put it above, in their effort to make sense of collapsing worlds. As I discuss, the strategies they set in motion to deal with the declining superculture resulted in the rise of small-scale performances. At the same time, the use of live music as an added value by venue owners led to the prioritization of a globally-informed locality, since local jazz musicians provided a much cheaper alternative to their international counterparts.

Drawing on Graeber’s (2013: 224) discussion of the distinction between ‘value as referring to a commodity for sale and values as our ideas about what’s important in life’, I trace the boom of small-scale live performances back to the shift in values that was triggered by the disruption of capital

circulation. If money was the means by which power elites—represented by the music industry—had managed to define the value of music over the previous years, the scarcity of this medium of circulation (money) allowed for a bottom-up regulation of music values. Post-crisis, music-making became a ‘playground’ for the musicians who were now allowed to define the field according to what they themselves valued. This was further demonstrated by their ability to continue performing, in contrast to many pop singers who were forced to withdraw from performance or to cash-in their previous success in neighbouring countries such as Cyprus, Israel and Dubai.

The chapter opens with a fieldnote excerpt, which functions as an introductory note on the interview I conducted with Zoe Efstathiou during one of her visits to Athens. Zoe, the first female alumna of the Ionian University in jazz performance, was the only female performer I interviewed, and the only performer I interviewed who was not based in Greece when I was conducting my fieldwork. Our discussion serves as a reflection on a wider problematic I encountered during the early stages of the PhD, and that later on determined my theoretical and methodological framework. As a result, I shifted my focus away from a potential study of ‘protest music’ and towards musicians’ choices and strategies to deal with the crisis. Reflecting on the fieldnotes I cannot help but notice that my theoretical orientation was already there, long before I decided to ‘dress it up’ with value theory.

I decided to open the central chapter of this thesis with her narrative, as a way to account for the gender imbalance characterizing the jazz scene in Athens:<sup>1</sup> a scene which is male-dominated when it comes to instrumentalists, and female-dominated when it comes to vocalists. My focus on jazz instrumentalists has resulted in this thesis being heavily dependent on male representations of jazz in Athens. This is further related to my fieldwork methodology and my choice to take classes in electric bass, since there was no female electric bassist active in the jazz scene when I was conducting my fieldwork.

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<sup>1</sup>Umney and Kretsos (2014: 576), in their article regarding jazz musicians in London, also acknowledge ‘the comparative lack of female participants’ in their research, which according to them ‘reflects recognized gender imbalances in jazz (Heckathorn and Jeffri 2001; MacDonald and Wilson 2005)’.

Furthermore, the fieldnote excerpt serves as a way of deconstructing the polished ethnographic narrative. In it, I describe a typical day during fieldwork that included attending classes at the LAB, attending a rehearsal of a doom metal band that I had considered working with for the PhD before I decided to focus solely on jazz, and attending a live gig at Afrikana in Kerameikòs, not knowing yet that Kerameikòs would be the focus area in this thesis. It was only after the end of fieldwork that I came to acknowledge the importance of Kerameikòs, when I realized that I had spent most of the year attending live gigs in the four venues I discuss extensively in Chapter 4. I return thus to my notion of fieldnotes serving as *x-rays*, as I discussed in the Introduction. These *x-rays* reveal our pitfalls, our successes, our disappointments, and finally our way into knowing in the field. On another level, this opening section serves as a way to introduce the musicians as theoretical thinkers. I begin the chapter with an extensive discussion on a question that both Zoe and I shared, ‘Why don’t musicians protest through their music?’ In order to answer this question, I turn once again to Yiorgos, Kostas, Kontrafouris, Babis and Michalis, and to their narratives and their own theorizations of the situation, treating them as contributors to the theoretical discussion that follows.

31 May 2016, Tuesday

Live, Zoe

Afrikana

(author's fieldnotes)

We had an appointment for an interview with Zoe before her gig. 'After 8:00', we agreed. We arrived at the same time around 8:45. With her was the Latvian double bassist of her band; they are together in Denmark doing a Master's in music performance. Zoe was the former head of the piano department at the LAB, before going abroad. Yesterday she gave a seminar at the LAB on free improvisation and composition. Inside the bar the soundcheck has already started. I sit outside at a table, I can hear the keys, the double bass, there are people coming in and out of the bar looking for stuff, cables etc. Nausika, the owner comes outside to put up some posters for today's and tomorrow's gigs. I keep taking notes, focusing mostly on today's activities. I was at the LAB before and Michalis was giving an electric bass class to Marios, one of the drum instructors and the drummer of their band, Funky Lab. These people spend their whole day together, talking about music, playing music, listening to one another. It's their whole life and no crisis will ever change that. They have learned to exist within it from the very start of their careers. These genres have never been the mainstream and never will be. With no state funding, just relying on private initiative and a lot of unpaid labour. The question is why the bar owners keep investing in this scene and how. Sum up of the day up to now: I spent a few hours around noon with Slayerking<sup>2</sup> listening to their rehearsal in a studio in the south of Athens, then I had a rehearsal with the funk band at the music school in Exàrcheia, now an interview (if we make it) and a live gig to which my fellow classmates will also come. A world entangled around music. Performance, education, entrepreneurship. All facets of the same phenomenon, music. Everyone wants something out of it. Zoe comes outside, tells me they went sightseeing in the morning. They are

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<sup>2</sup> The Slayerking is a doom metal band from Athens or as they state 'Doom Metal with progressive, dark rock and gothic elements. And all this in Death metal sound.' For more information see their official website: <http://slayerking.com/> and their Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/pg/TheSlayerking/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/TheSlayerking/about/?ref=page_internal).

here only for a few days so trying to squeeze everything in. Last night was the seminar at the LAB and afterwards a gig in Athenaeum. Today Acropolis and the gig in Afrikana. Full schedule! I can still hear the double bass (with bow), as well as the drums. I keep wandering around this area during fieldwork. The ‘Athens jazz festival’<sup>3</sup> organised by the municipality of Athens took place two days ago just around the corner. Right across from me at the moment I can see the ‘dinner in the sky’ cranes. Brothels, expensive dinners on air costing 100 euros per person, small jazz bars, *skylàdika* [dog-dens], gay clubs, whatever one desires. A young woman walks past the bar and stops to listen. I am still sitting on a table outside waiting for Zoe. I know she is not coming because I can hear her playing the piano for the soundcheck. Next to me in another table there are two guys talking about intervals, the harmonic series etc.

#### **After-fieldwork Notes**

Everything went as planned. I did the interview, I saw the live but didn’t have the courage to go to Kerameio afterwards; other professors and the owner of LAB were there. Zoe with her trio played original compositions mainly, atonal and experimental. The highlight of the night was when one of the students of the LAB turned to his friends and classmates wondering: ‘Is it even possible to make a mistake in this music?’ The gig was followed by a jam and after a while I left. It was around a quarter to 2 and they were still playing. I know that when the lights turn off and these people get off the stage they have to go back to their homes, pay their rents, their bills, their *ENΦΙΑ*, take care of their children. However, it was not these moments of their lives that I came to know through fieldwork. The moment I came to know them was the moment during which they ‘offered’ to us from the stage ten and twenty and thirty years of struggling and of choices they had to make in order to continue to do this. These people have always had to deal with ‘crisis’. The ones who couldn’t didn’t make it on stage.

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<sup>3</sup> Athens Tehnòpolis Jazz Festival has been organized every year since 2001 by the municipality of Athens with free entrance, at the location of Tehnòpolis at Gkàzi. It is an international jazz festival with participations from multiple European countries. For more information see the website: <https://www.technopolisjazzfestival.com/index.php/en/>.



Somewhere in between the introductory fieldnotes and the after-fieldwork notes, in between the soundcheck and the gig, a brief interview with Zoe – the first female instrumentalist to have graduated from Ionio University – took place right before her gig in Afrikana. Zoe’s insights were invaluable as someone who is betwixt and between the scene, an active performer who emerged through it but is living abroad at the moment. As soon as I make the introduction she has a question for me:

- But what you are saying, with the crisis... May I say something?

- Sure! That would be my next question.

- I have a sense..., I personally... We have experienced things in Athens the last few years that we didn’t expect to, we have seen people searching in the garbage, children, I mean stuff, visual stimuli that did not exist before. I don’t see in the music that is happening at the moment – we’re not talking about every genre – but I don’t see the result. Many times...

- No, it does not exist.

- It doesn’t. I feel that it is like we are trying to avoid confronting this thing as musicians. And that there is more..., this thing that was always there in Athens and exists much more [now], which is the funk band. If the base [drums and bass] is there,<sup>4</sup> if it grooves etc. which has led to a rise of the level in funk music, at least this is what I see, also at the school [LAB] where I used to teach. More musicians come out all the time and people go out, but I feel that music is more [for] entertainment rather than a way of expressing what we have around us. Not all musics, I feel that in rock it is more evident, while in jazz or the more improvisational music it is more like a way out, to have a good time because of the crisis.

- That’s correct. [... ...]

- I’m saying this because I deal with this thing a lot lately and I think about it a lot... That, there is a need to express this thing.

- But how could this happen?

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<sup>4</sup> The original phrase Zoe used was ‘An to mpaso einai ekei’ [If the bass is there], meaning if there is a rhythmically stable and distinct groove.

- Hm, I mean I try to do it. Lately with the pieces I write, it's not that I am trying, it comes naturally.<sup>5</sup> There is this thing [idea] that Greece..., we see it as the summer ..., and all of this fits with Latin, with funk with all this that happens in Greece. But there is [also] this Greece that is..., the Greece that has a drama. Hm..., of Angelopoulos<sup>6</sup> let's say. I have been more affected by this and I feel that... I mean a music MUST exist that will express all this thing. And I am sure it is happening. It is happening for sure in modern music, composers, in *noise* [sic], in more... But I don't see it that much in improvisational music. And because I also did the seminar on free improvisation we were talking about, [I think] free improvisation is more fit to express this thing. And I, while before leaving Greece I played *jazz jazz* [sic], at the jam session<sup>7</sup> and normally, I mean normal jazz standards, and the pieces I wrote were more melodic. And then I left, and because I was away I felt this big need to express this thing that I had experienced. And within one year I started playing much more dissonant and much weirder. Thus, the people who listened to me now – we had a concert yesterday in Athenaeum – friends who came by would tell me ‘What have you done, why don't you play melodically anymore?’ This is why I am saying this, because I am processing it a lot lately and I notice the difference in myself, but when you are away it is probably different.

- It is very different when you are away, I remember during the first year of the crisis I was abroad and I experienced everything much more dramatically. When you are *ekso*<sup>8</sup> [abroad] you don't have the chance to understand what is going on and the only thing you perceive is the negativity. Of course you

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<sup>5</sup> For more information and to listen to Zoe's music see her personal website: <http://zoiefstathiou.com/>. Further videos are also available on vimeo <https://vimeo.com/zoiefstathiou>.

<sup>6</sup> Theodoros Angelopoulos was an internationally acclaimed filmmaker and producer, known for his long static takes, and made a series of political films about Greece. *O Thiassos* (1975) [The travelling players] is probably the most well-known. The film focuses on a travelling company of actors during the years of 1939-1952, a turbulent historical period for Greece including Metaxa's dictatorship, the Greco-Italian war, the Nazi occupation, the liberation and the civil war. More information about the director and the film are available at his official site: <http://www.theoangelopoulos.gr/onemovie.php?lng=ZW5nbGlzaA==&movienam=byB0aGlhc29z>.

<sup>7</sup> Zoe here is referring to the jam session that she established at Urban, a local café-bar in the area of Zografou.

The jam took place every Sunday, from 2012 – 2016.

<sup>8</sup> *Ekso* literally means outside. The notion of *ekso* is often used to denote anything outside the country.

see things more clearly. Because here you are forced to live it so you are forced to find ways to get by every day. And this numbs you, you don't want to accept it.

- Yes, exactly!

- And it is also a way out. So, you know, you can probably see it more clearly being *ekso* [abroad].

- I think so, yes. And it is also that, when you go abroad I think that you feel the need to express in the music you make the *topos* [place] where you come from. Because you feel that this is what you have to offer.

The end of the interview was signalled a little later by fellow musicians arriving at our table to greet Zoe whom they hadn't seen for a long time. Zoe expressed during our discussion one of my regular concerns, which finally came to be one of my main ethnographic challenges. Why are the musicians not expressing the socio-political situation through their music? Although there are songs with references to the crisis in various genres, a distinct kind of political song or genre pertaining exclusively to this period has yet to occur. And this shifted the focus from what musicians are saying towards what they do. The observation shared by Zoe and me, as well as by others, that music seems to be just for fun, might seem superficial at first, but indeed music served as a way out of this gloomy everyday life in recession Athens. Vassilis, the director of the LAB, also commented on this, pointing out that despite the depiction of the problem as being primarily an economic one, another reading of the situation highlights the psychological effect that the recession has had and the subsequent role of music:

On the other hand, I think that in periods of such great negativity..., because ok, despite the economic aspect of the problem, the problem according to me is mainly psychological, meaning that they bombard you every day and you have this insecurity, this negativity that *ola pane halia* [everything is a mess], thinking 'even if I have a job, tomorrow I might not have one; even if I have money, it's better not to spend it because tomorrow we might be starving, or not have medicine.' All this thing, which is the essential problem... But in times like this I think that

the people after a first ‘numbness’ when the terrorism has caught on, afterwards they realize that they cannot live this way. You can’t be living terrified in a cage at your house with the lights off *gia na min kais reuma* [as to not consume electrical power] and eat chick-peas because tomorrow I don’t know what... So, you are in a much bigger need to let off steam, whatever this is. For some this is music and they are lucky.

Vassilis here refers to the wide-spread feeling of fear and despair that followed the first years of the crisis, after 2010. In using the phrase ‘they bombard you every day’, he refers to the daily images shown on TV speculating on the country’s possible default and the chaotic consequences this might have, while transmitting live images from the riots that occurred daily in the Greek capital. Fear, disseminated through mediascapes, was used as a tactic both on a national as well as on an international level. In the first instance, the notion of fear and collective guilt<sup>9</sup> were employed to convince the Greek people of the necessity of the hard austerity measures to come. On an international level, the Greek case was used as a paradigm of what happens to the non-conforming members of the EU. As Knight points out: ‘The Greek crisis is employed as a trope in the political theaters of Europe as a shock tactic to justify socio-political change (2013: 153)[...] The reality and rhetoric of the Greek crisis, disseminated through international media, have been used to incite global fear, panic, and the search for accountability’ (ibid:157).

Within this climate of fear, music certainly appeared as a way out, as Vassilis mentioned. But it was not only music that acted as a way out, but going out in general. With home no longer being a safe place, but rather a place of misery, or what Herzfeld called ‘newly an oppressive space’ (2016:

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<sup>9</sup> An exemplary instance of the effort to build on the notion of collective guilt of the people rather than assume political responsibility for the country’s economic situation came in 2010 from the then vice-president of the Papandreou administration, Theodore Pangalos. Pangalos, while addressing the Greek parliament in September 2010, uttered the now-mythical phrase ‘Mazi ta fagame’ [We all ate it together]. ‘It’ refers to ‘money’ and the metaphorical phrase ‘eat the money’ indicates money that have been spent and not accounted for, here referring to the squandering of public money. For more information see: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/140898/article/ekathimerini/news/pangalos-stands-by-we-all-ate-together-statement>.

746), people would seek refuge from the ‘stresses of the home and the endless media coverage of the crisis’ (Knight 2013: 149, 2015: 125) in the public domain. Thus, the small-scale food and beverage industry boomed during the recession for two reasons. On the one hand, micro-businesses were seen as an alternative solution to the high rates of unemployment. On the other hand, even though the purchasing power of the people was reduced, the need for socializing increased, as Yiorgos explains:

For sure, clients are more *dagkomenoi* [huddled]. [Alcohol] Consumption has fallen. This, yes. But people keep coming to the *live*. Because they might be *varemenoi* [freaked out] by the crisis. They might be *varemenoi* due to various stuff that the crisis has created in general, we should explain this, and people want to go out. I also had some students and the rest of the teachers had some students who were architects or [civil] engineers and this industry has been severely affected to a great degree. And they would come because they always wanted to play guitar, to learn guitar for fun and now they got the chance. *Gia na min tous stripsei* [So they won’t go crazy]. I also think that the gyms have more people than before. *Gia na min tous stripsei*. Despite all of this, this bubble that burst, despite the difficulty, that I think bled us dry and it is all controlled by others, I think that as a people it did us good because it is ridiculous for a family to have five TVs. Plain and simple.

Yiorgos’s narrative above indicates the importance of socializing during the crisis, evident in the field of music culture by the attendance at live gigs despite the unaffordability of alcohol consumption by the audience. But his last comment, ‘it is ridiculous for a family to have five TVs. Plain and simple’, indicates another important issue. According to him, the crisis was not a matter of the current economic collapse but of the rampant consumerism that was prevalent in Greek society during the previous decades. Yiorgos’s observation seems to be in accord with what Marxist scholars suggest, namely that crises are an inherent characteristic of and are ‘essential to the

reproduction of capitalism’ (Harvey 2014: ix), provoked by its constitutive contradictions.<sup>10</sup>

### **Music Superculture as Economic Value**

The culture of excess that prevailed during the years prior to the crisis was not limited to cars and TVs but was explicitly expressed in music too. The 1990s and early 2000s were a golden age for Greek popular singers and the music industry, as the 1990s signalled the start of a twenty-year period of prosperity that ended abruptly in 2010. The big live shows of the Greek popular music industry acted as displays of wealth, both on part of the audience, and the part of the producers. Expensive shows, bottles of whiskey that would cost 250 euros, singers being ‘buried’ on stage under tons of carnations<sup>11</sup> and ministers dancing *zeibekiko* were the prevalent images during this era. At the same time, the industry offered a ‘survival’ solution to highly skilled musicians on the jazz scene<sup>12</sup> of Athens who were employed there while keeping at the same time jazz as side-projects, since the audience for this genre was considerably smaller.

Although the jazz scene in Athens goes back to the 1970s,<sup>13</sup> the relatively small audience, consisting mainly of musicians, explained the lack of an economically sustainable local scene. Furthermore, with jazz considered foreign to local culture, ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ jazz could only come from outside the country, with the value of foreign jazz prevailing over local jazz, a condition described by Sahlins as ‘the political economy of alterity’ (2013: 11). This was explicit in the fact that the main jazz venue during that era, Half

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<sup>10</sup> Harvey (2014) in his book *Seventeen Contradictions in the End of Capitalism* provides a thorough analysis of the contradictions, such as the one between use value and exchange value, that given the circumstances can lead to crises in capitalism. He divides them into three categories: 1. The foundational contradictions, 2. The moving contradictions, 3. The dangerous contradictions.

<sup>11</sup> A distinctive activity related to the attendance of live shows of the laiko genre, is that of throwing carnations to the singers. This act functioned as a symbol of wealth and showing off, since carnations had to be bought separately, from the girls called *louloudoudes* [flower girls] that were employed by the *magazia* exclusively for this reason, in order to make rounds to the tables and sell small trays with carnations.

<sup>12</sup> Many high-skilled musicians of the jazz and rock scenes were employed in the Greek popular music industry.

<sup>13</sup> I mention the 1970s as the start of the jazz scene in Athens, even though I discuss its origin in the 1920s in the first chapter, because it was in the 1970s that the scene started to form into what it has become today, including performers who are still active.

Note, hosted gigs exclusively with international artists - mostly from the US and preferably black, cultivating imaginaries of exoticism, and at the same excluding Greek jazz musicians despite the fact that many of them were trained in the United States, at Berklee College of Music.

As a result, local jazz musicians had to look elsewhere in order to secure their income, namely working in the Greek popular music industry as session musicians supporting the local stars. Big live shows provided extremely high incomes, rising up to 400 euros per night,<sup>14</sup> but were nonetheless devalued by the majority of the musicians as ‘low-quality’ music. These evaluations were not solely style-related, but signified two very different ontologies, as performing for the music industry was conceptualized as ‘work’ while performing jazz was conceptualized as ‘play’ (Tsioulakis 2011). This phenomenon is not exclusive to the Greek jazz scene but has been discussed thoroughly in relation to the London scene, as musicians in their effort to retain their creative autonomy have to deal with poor working conditions, signalling another distinction between ‘work’ and ‘creativity’ (Umney and Kretsos 2014).<sup>15</sup>

In the first instance then, as presented in Figure 12 (see below), the superculture (Greek popular music) acquired a purely economic value for them while the subculture (jazz) presented a value in itself and was related to pleasure, self-fulfilment and musical development. Nonetheless, the superculture was the one to provide their basic income and jazz was kept as a side-project for the nights they would not be working in the big shows.

<b>Superculture</b>	<b>Subculture</b>
Greek popular musics	Jazz/funk
‘work’	‘play’
Economic value	Value in itself/Moral values (pleasure/self-fulfilment/personal development)

Fig. 12 ‘Superculture vs Subculture’

<sup>14</sup> Even higher were the gains for the well-known singers who could earn up to 10.000-20.000 euros per night.

<sup>15</sup>For more on the issue of the ‘musician as worker’ see Cloonan (2014), and Sakakeeny regarding ‘live music performance as a form of labour’ (2015: 2).

This forced musicians to function on a double level of ‘consciousness’ as they would use their musical skills to cope with the singers’ needs in the industry in order to secure ‘work’, and at the same time they would resort to jazz when they wanted to ‘play’ and to engage creatively in music-making. This tactic resembles, in musical terms, what Gorz (in Harvey 2014: 273) calls “‘the crisis of the work-based society’ [that] forces individuals to look outside work for sources of identity and social belonging.’ Harvey continues: ‘It is only outside of work that the worker has the possibility to achieve personal fulfilment, to acquire self-esteem and, hence, “the esteem of others”’ (2014: 273).

As discussed in the first chapter, the relation of professional jazz musicians to the dominant soundscape of Greek musics has been a long and troubled one. Mainstream genres are often classified in terms of ‘heaviness’ and ‘lightness’, with *bouzoùkia* lying at the bottom of the spectrum and *èntehno* at the top. This distinction in terms of heavy vs light reminds us of the use of the ‘light’ metaphor in the polarized distinction of light vs art music, as a means of official categorization of music in Finland that Ramnarine (2003: 63) discusses.

In Greek popular musics, however, the heavier a genre is considered the lower the quality, hence the term ‘*vari skyladiko*’ [heavy skyladiko]. Professional musicians have and continue to be employed by various singers either of *laiko*, *èntehno* or *laiko-pop*. From the 1980s until the early 2000s these genres were at their peak. The first generations (70s) of professional jazz musicians were the ones to be associated mostly with the genre of *laiko* while younger ones now are mostly employed by artists of the *èntehno*. The relation to *skyladiko* has faded as Yiorgos explained:

- This is dead, a lot of years now.
- Before the crisis?
- Long before the crisis. *Skyladiko* had started to diminish, the last generation of this were people that are 55-60 years old [now]. Who are now the last generation of *skyladikon* who worked since morning, from night till morning,



they would come out of the club in sunglasses,<sup>16</sup> then they had studio [recordings]... Of course they made money, they fed their families but they had a very specific schedule.

The 'big money era', when professional musicians would work more than full time, is a distant one, echoed through stories of the older generation as Michalis also confirms.

- The older guys would tell me they had bunks at the studios. They would work five days, and in the morning they had theatrical shows and at noon the studios. They were constantly working, constantly. Non-stop. They would play and play and play. In the meanwhile it had run amok in Greece, they would make records all the time. [... ...]

- And what about the thing with the recordings? Was it around the end of '90? '95?

- No, since the '80s. Since the '80s, '90s, right until 2004, until the Olympic Games, the *grande* [sic] point of the bubble. *Ftynan aima* [they sweat blood], the guys would work and make money. Crazy money, lots of money, unimaginable money! And then, haha, the bubble burst and the thing started to retrench. So everyone retrenched. Things started to go south.

Apart from the money, though, another thing that was different back then was the existence of alternatives within the music industry, as there were many singers who would make recordings or put on live shows. Tassos, the guitarist who participated in our funk band workshop at the LAB, shared his insights from his friends.

- I had friends who played percussion etc. and when the [winter] season was over *etreme to fyllokardi* [their hearts shook in fear]. Where will they go, where will they play, what will they do?

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<sup>16</sup> The live shows of laiko would start around 11 p.m. with a house band or some other minor names and would go on until 6 a.m. in the morning, hence the reference by Yiorgos regarding the sunglasses.

- Look. This thing did not exist some years ago. You would leave from one artist, because you were bored or the money was not enough or ‘the singer *mou tin eipe* [got on my back] and I was pissed off’, and you would have fifteen alternatives. I’ll go there, I’ll go to the other, you would make some calls and the thing was settled. There were jobs, it was *hamos* [crazy], if you think about it now, some names that you now wonder who they are. From the *prota onomata* [first names] to the little ones. Everyone worked, everyone made money, one way or another. And they were all nagging above all that. You know, ‘popo all the time with this [singer]’ and ‘I changed and went to the other one with better money but he also etc etc’, and everyone was nagging.

The big shows of the Greek mainstream would start around 10 or 11 p.m. and extend until the early morning hours. The earnings might have been great but the exhausting work hours took their toll as Kostas commented:

But playing in the *pista* seven nights per week, if you talk with musicians that have done it they will tell you that ‘we made a whole bunch of money, we have spent everything and we are ruined both physically and psychologically’. Because this thing does not give you anything. In this sense.

Further to this, working *nyhta* would make one accustomed to a certain way of living that was difficult to refuse or change. But it could also prove challenging, as different performance requirements made it difficult to switch between styles, as Kontrafouris pointed out during our discussion when I referred to the relation of the first jazz musicians to the Greek mainstream:

- And this is where the spirit is destroyed. No, there was no other way out and it was also a trend then. And *bouzoùkia* were very profitable. And for the whole week, so you know, it was tempting. I personally believe that people can do whatever they want and build their life. It is not my place to judge, and we’re saying all this but... I mean if I go back home now and the house is burned to the ground and everything is burnt, I will have to do something to

raise it back up, you know there are the needs of life and all this. You can't judge it. But a lot of times you would get used to this way of living. I mean if you played six times per week and got 300 euros per day, you build a life.

- You get used to a way of living.

- Which one shouldn't. For me, for me. For someone else it might be ok, I'm not the one to decide this for anyone else. But then how will you go at the [jazz] club to play? It is different, you are alone, you are exposed.

### ***Superculture in Decline***

All the initiatives related to the music superculture, represented both by state and privately funded activities and institutions, were faced with the same challenge in the post-2010 era: the disruption of capital circulation and the scarcity of funds. It was thus these superstructures that have been mostly affected by the crisis. This resulted either in concerts being cancelled, or musicians being hired to perform and not being paid. Playing without getting paid is referred to by Yiorgos as *pesan kanonia* [cannons fell]. The phrase is used as a synonym for going bankrupt.<sup>17</sup>

-For example I don't know *an exoune pesei kanonia* [if cannons fell]. I have a very bad memory and I skip these... Dimos Amarousiou [Municipality of Marousi] held a concert with Crazy People Music that we played and didn't get paid for, Megaro [Athens Concert Hall] also owes us.

- From last year?

- No, from previous years. I am telling you now about cases after 2008. But this in particular was two or three years ago.<sup>18</sup>

- Was that from the feature to jazz that you did?

- I don't know. And some others too. Because all the funding was cut off after Labrakis's death and *meinan tapi kai psyxraimoi* [they went broke] and they owed a lot to their staff too.

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<sup>17</sup> The phrase has its origin to the Ottoman rule era. During that period when a businessman would go bankrupt they would literally fire a cannon so as to let everyone know in a quick manner.

<sup>18</sup> The interview was conducted in 2016, so Yiorgos refers to 2013-2014.

Megaro [Athens Concert Hall] was probably one of the cultural institution most affected by the crisis, as it faced a 60 per cent decrease in its funding by the state at the same time that private sponsorship became scarce (Furlanou 2015: 174), resulting in a great deficit.<sup>19</sup> Apart from big institutions, municipalities and the Greek music industry were also affected, as Michalis explains:

- I mean ok, I made it in time to work [before the crisis], I worked with *Marinella*<sup>20</sup> on a tour, we went to America. The whole of Greece, for two-three summers in a coach, concerts everywhere, all the time. At Pallas, Badminton.<sup>21</sup>

- Was this lately?

- Yes, about two, three years ago.<sup>22</sup> This must have been when I left. So then I left because I realized that even in these concerts the money kept decreasing. There was uncertainty, concerts would be cancelled. It could not go on anymore. At some point there were 30 agencies that booked the jobs in Greece.

- For this kind of artists? (Greek *èntehno* and *laikò*).

- Yes, agencies. They would book the jobs, the tours. Now I don't know if there are even five left. I mean everyone was at a loss. *Mpikane poly mesa*,<sup>23</sup> the theatres would have losses, the municipalities. At some point the state subsidies to the municipalities stopped, you would work for municipalities and you would never get paid. And you would cross yourself in order to get paid.

Even though the mainstream receded it did not disappear completely, nor has it lost its primary role in the Greek soundscape. The subsequent

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<sup>19</sup> For a thorough analysis of the effects of the crisis on western art music institutions see Poulakis (2015).

<sup>20</sup> Marinella is one of the most popular singers of the *laikò/èntehno* genre in Greece, with a career spanning for over six decades. She was formerly married to the great laiko singer Stelios Kazantzidis, with whom they also formed a famous duet.

<sup>21</sup> Pallas and Badminton are two theatres in Athens hosting theatrical and musical shows, with a capacity of 1500-2.500 people. Badminton, which is managed by the same people who manage Half Note, regularly hosts international music and ballet productions.

<sup>22</sup> The interview was conducted in 2016, so Michalis here refers to 2013-2014.

<sup>23</sup> Idiomatic phrase used for losing one's money due to investing on non-profitable activities.

transformations came in terms of scale. Fewer ‘big names’ were able to maintain a show throughout the year, and businessmen followed a strategy of gathering two or three big names in the same show so as to attract customers, while earlier on one would have a big name supported by less-known ones. Apart from this, their presence during weekdays has diminished. Most of the shows do not last for a whole season (six to seven months), as was the case until the mid 2000s, but rather perform for a consecutive period of two to three months, or at busy periods during the year such as Christmas, as Yiorgos mentions from his experience playing with Arvanitaki,<sup>24</sup> a famous *èntehno* singer:

- Now there might be some stars of the Greek..., of the Greek style music who have a heavy programme. They might still be on their heyday, I don’t know, who is it, Mazonakis?<sup>25</sup> Mazonakis is going well. Very well.
- Is he still making an appearance somewhere?
- Until the year before last he did and *ginotan tis poutanas* [it was total pandemonium] until late. Until very late, 5 -6 [a.m]
- But only Friday Saturday Sunday, I guess?
- Friday, Saturday, it might have been also Thurs... Sunday, no, I don’t think so, Sunday is out of the picture as a day. It’s gone or they start early.
- And is it for the whole year or for two, three months?
- There are some who are on their heyday like Remos,<sup>26</sup> who might start [the shows] in November and end around March, April. Before Easter. And then they have the summer concerts. But this happens to very few. To us it happened once.
- With Arvanitaki?

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<sup>24</sup> Yiorgos is a member of the group that supports Arvanitaki in her concerts, together with Alexandros Drakos Ktistakis, with whom they also play together in Crazy People Music.

<sup>25</sup> Yiorgos Mazonakis is one of the most successful laiko-pop singer.

<sup>26</sup> Antonis Remos, who started his career in the 1990s, is a very famous laiko singer who has collaborated with many composers, such as Mikis Theodorakis, Mimis Plessas etc. Remos met with Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the leader of the opposition party Nea Dimokratia, in 2017 when among other issues he complained about the crisis saying that the Greek popular music singers were among the first ones to be affected. For more information see: <http://www.tovima.gr/opinions/article/?aid=856071> (in Greek).

- Arvanitaki-Protopsalti. But no, it ended before *Apokries*<sup>27</sup> [the carnival]. In general, there are downturns, for example when people go out a lot during Christmas, then afterwards it [consumption] falls and it recovers after some time. And there you have a lot of bets [*peftoun stoiximata*]. There is this kind of stuff. [...]

Michalis confirmed this, as he experienced the collapse of the music industry first hand. He had decided to enter music professionalism in 2008, and as he notes not all genres of Greek popular music were affected in the same way. The *èntehno* genre, which was generally considered more sophisticated, with the verses often talking about love, loneliness and sadness in a pseudo-philosophical style, was affected much more, whereas *laiko*, which was considered music for entertainment, managed to survive:

- And at some point I meet Vasso and she tells me, ‘you got to work’. I replied ‘I am working’. ‘No, I mean in music’ she says. She introduced me to Nikos Kapilidis, S,<sup>28</sup> Xristoforos Krokidis. And at that point I quit my job because there was a project with Thivaïos<sup>29</sup> through Vasso and it was this phrase..., I still remember it during a discussion with S. I told him ‘S I’m thinking of quitting my day job’. And he was like ‘Are you crazy. Ours is a shitty job. You have your day-job and can do what you like at the same time, you can study and play what you like. We have to deal with all the shit. And especially now that things are not good and the money is less... This year I didn’t earn a lot.’ And he told me a number and I freaked out. And I told him that I earned one tenth of it, working more than eight hours a day and also on weekends. But S didn’t know what it means to work in an office and I didn’t know what it means to work *nýhta*. And I was like ‘Jesus Christ and Holy Mary, what have I done all this time?’ So, I started. I started working with *Thivaïos*,

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<sup>27</sup> *Apokries* [carnival] is the period including the three weeks prior to Lent, with the celebrations taking place during February.

<sup>28</sup> Where my interlocutors make extensive reference to other people in the field with whom I haven’t been in contact I use their initials to preserve anonymity.

<sup>29</sup> Thivaïos is a famous singer-songwriter of the *èntehno* genre. A big controversy broke in the media in 2015 after his statements on the radio and TV during which he attacked the country’s youth attributing the high levels of unemployment to their laziness. Later on he went to claim that a five-member family can get by with 10-15 euros per day, eating 5 crackers, 3 olives and 1 tomato.

with..., with... [tries to remember], Alzheimer's! (laughs) Anyway, with various other *èntehnous*.

- When was that?

- It must have been in 2008. So I started full time [mpika me ta mpounia], I already gave lessons, I hadn't started yet at the LAB. But I never made the big money. I didn't live this. [...] I got in when the thing had started to fall apart. Of course the money was good when I worked. But then it started to decline a lot.

- You mean in terms of days? The days that you would play these live gigs or the *merokàmata* too?

- Everything. The days were fewer, it was at this point when people had started getting frightened and wouldn't go out much. The first thing I realised was that the *èntehno* took the damage. Straight away.

- Why?

- The bubble burst. I mean whoever was going to go out at that point would not go to sing the *kapsourotragouda* [love songs] and the heavy stuff and all this *psagmeno* [sophisticated] and I don't know what. People wanted to go out to have fun. This was the idea that I got from discussions we were having. And this is why it held, *i nyhta*, *to skylàdiko* withstood it. [...] And what survives at the moment is *vary skyladiko* [heavy skyladiko]. The more entertain.. [sic], like the departed Pantelidis.<sup>30</sup>

Michalis's account relates to the comment made by Vassilis, the owner of LAB, in the beginning of the chapter, when he talked about how people as a first reaction to the crisis were afraid and terrified, not knowing how to deal with the new reality that was emerging and not knowing what was coming next. As Vassilis pointed out, after this first phase, people realized that they cannot live this way and this is when socializing in public spaces and going

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<sup>30</sup> Pantelis Pantelidis was a singer-song writer and self-taught guitarist who rose to fame after releasing a number of home-made videos on YouTube in 2012, picturing him in his bedroom singing and playing the guitar. The videos made him immensely famous and popular and soon after a career followed with the release of a number of recordings followed by crowded live shows, with many referring to him as a phenomenon. His career came abruptly to an end after his death in a car accident in 2016. One of the first love-songs he released on youtube was the one titled 'Den tairiazete sou leo' [I'm telling you, you don't match] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vWWwd5Il6w>.

out in general started to take precedence. Michalis expands on this comment, pointing out that the more sophisticated and melancholic genre of *èntehno* was affected more than the genre of *laiko* which was related to dance and entertainment.

The crisis has had negative repercussions on mainstream music culture as this was the one to be related to a culture of excess that developed during the 1990s and early 2000s. Neoliberal capitalism provided the appropriate circumstances that led to the boom of the Greek popular music industry and its extravagant shows. At the same time, small-scale music making in genres such as jazz has always been at the margin of musical production, neglected and ignored by the state. What was more important, though, was that it was not dependent on any kind of state-funding but was rather sustained and promoted by a very small circuit of aficionados, including the musicians and very few venue owners. Thus, in a sense, the crisis-scape that prevailed post-2010 was one in which small musics found themselves for years, prior to the official beginning of the recession, as Kontrafouris pointed out:

- So have you seen any changes with the crisis?

- Of course. First of all, with the crisis, because there isn't this superficial entertainment one would see and all this superficial way of life any more, it's back to basics. Which is good. We were talking about this the other time too. We are all on the run. Earlier on, no one was running, they would all drink *frapè*.<sup>31</sup> I mean it [life] has returned to the very basics. And it has returned [to the very basics] in music too, I mean in all the genres. I see that they [the audience] go to small clubs, they monitor it [the music], they choose it, they are more careful now because they don't have [money] to spend. And the smaller ones survive, because the small ones have always been in crisis. The big productions and the big *pìstes* are the ones affected by the crisis because the small ones have always been on their own. So, probably now it is their natural environment. So, I don't think we have a problem with this. Of course

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<sup>31</sup> *Frapè* is a typical cold-brew coffee of Greece. Reference to drinking frape often has negative connotations as it is often associated with not working but rather spending one's day in coffee-shops.



this whole crisis has been very violent and everything that happened in this violent way, but at least as far as we are concerned...

The disruption of state and private funding for the arts affected the professional musicians' 'work' place. The cancellation of shows and the decline of the live music scene in Greek popular musics resulted in the release of what was considered a luxury or even an anomaly in neoliberal capitalist societies, namely free time. As Harvey (2014: 274) notes:

Allowing free time for more and more individuals to pursue their own objectives of self-realisation is terrifying for the prospect for capital's continuous and secure control over labour, both in the workplace and in the market. Capitalist 'economic rationality has no room for authentically free time which neither produces or consumes commercial wealth', writes Gorz.<sup>32</sup>

Jazz trained musicians who were employed as sessions musicians for short periods of time during the winter or for the summer tours by the pop stars had an advantage over both pop stars and musicians who played only *laiko* and instruments such as bouzouki or guitar that collaborated with them for decades. For the latter, there was no alternative as the relation between the musician and the singer resembled a relationship of 'ownership' and exclusivity as Michalis explains:

And then, when the thing exploded... Nothing. *Game over* [sic]. *Game over*. I know a lot of people who are on antidepressants. Because they had dedicated their life to playing..., one was playing with [P] for 20 years, 25 years, I mean he was not a musician, he was [P]'s musician. [...] And you know, we are in Greece. I mean a lot was *mavra* [black]. So the musicians would also gain a lot from this. But as far as music is concerned, leave it, this was forgotten. It was not even a theme for

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<sup>32</sup> Gorz (1989: 114).

discussion. Just to get the work done. So, the way it is now in terms of music it is clearly better, regarding the level.

Jazz musicians had all the time and the skills to continue the jazz gigs and partake in many different projects resulting in an unprecedented rise of small-scale jazz gigs in the Greek capital during the recession. The term ‘crisis’, as a negative concept indicating decline, did not apply to small-scale music making, as was suggested to me many times by multiple people in the field when I mentioned the theme of my research: music and crisis. ‘What crisis?’ was a common response. Yiorgos also tried to clarify this in the beginning of our second interview signalling that he felt uncomfortable with the term crisis as denoting decline:

-Actually is there in the title [of your PhD], the word crisis?

-Yes.

-So there is. Ok. Because what I want to say is that I haven’t experienced crisis. So my view is of someone who hasn’t had a decrease in his live [gigs]. If we discuss this issue of live gigs further without questions [regarding the crisis], I think that this thing has happened before. For example, there were times that almost all the *magazià* would close and one remained. Then some others would open and it was better. At the moment I think we are going through a general orgasm because the quality of the scene has risen, there are people coming from Ionio University which is very important. And by asking around in small *magazàkia* [small magazia] they manage to earn some live gigs. It is a rule that the new ones will earn live [gigs] with less money and they make prices drop. This applies everywhere, ok? Which is something... Now for better or for worse, I don’t know, I won’t judge it, I consider it to be this way everywhere. Because the fat cows’ era has ended, and of this thing that a so-called musical elite that plays a particular kind of music is comprised of five people. No. There are many more people now, much better players, more educated and they want to work too. So, of course the prices will fall and there are going to be more live gigs. Now, as far as the crisis is concerned, sure the crisis affects everyone and each of us, it is very important the

conditions that the venue owners impose on the musicians, guys *prepei na kopsoume harti* [we have to issue a receipt] because if we don't cut IKA...<sup>33</sup>

-Even in the small ones?

-Absolutely.

Yiorgos's comment regarding the 'paper' refers to the social security policies for musicians, which were put in place after the recession. Prior to the crisis, musicians playing live gigs would mostly work without social security benefits. But after the crisis, with the intensification of inspections at live music venues conducted by the 'Labour inspectorate' and the high fines imposed if musicians were not registered as working for the venue (10,500 euros for the business owner and 1,000 euros for the musician), things changed. Although this state effort to regulate live music performances had a positive result, namely musicians being legally employed, it had a negative one too, as some venue owners would take the social benefit fee out of the musicians' wage, paying them less than they would have if they worked illegally, while others would prefer not to host gigs at all. Sakakeeny (2015), in his article about black brass band musicians in New Orleans, also notes how the increased regulation of street musicians and live music venues contributes further to the precarity of working musicians.

### **Rise of Small-scale Music Making**

High-skilled musicians who had turned away from the Greek music industry came together with bar owners who needed to attract customers, especially during week days, and would employ music as an added value. While the big shows were cancelled one after the other, small-scale performances flourished. Ensembles pertaining to the wider jazz genre were ideal as they were composed of few performers and were thus versatile and flexible. Furthermore, they played in lower decibels than rock bands which could not be accommodated in regular small bars. All the above made them ideal and

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<sup>33</sup> IKA was the acronym for the largest social security organization in Greece. In 2017 it was renamed as EFKA. The idiomatic phrase 'to cut a paper' refers to the fact that venue owners were obligated to hire the musicians for one day (the day of the gig) and issue a legal receipt for their services.

proved to be an easy way for venue owners to attract the clientele they had lost, as Michalis explained when I mentioned the big number of live gigs taking place every night in Athens:

- This can be explained from the *magazia* mainly. Because of the crisis people won't go out. So the *magazia* hold live gigs in order to gain customers from the bands' fans. It's not that suddenly everyone became music lovers. And they are not trying to promote music either. Ok? They saw, they tried it, that the bands bring people. That they can have their own people. And a situation is created, ok? So, they maintain it. And many *magazia* will have a live [gig] that you'll say why do they have this live? Who are these [people]? And it's not that good. This is why it's crazy now. Of course there is a big offer, there are good bands, there are very good musicians. Everyone now, you know because of YouTube, you have to play [good]. So there are many. New bands and the older ones playing and collaborating with the younger ones, it's a nice situation. It is wonderful and it is this cliché they are saying, that during the crisis the artistic level rises, it is true.

- Yeah, and small-scale has risen, as you said before.

- Yes, the underground, the small has risen a lot and in many genres. Rock, metal is doing very well. It's not that they make money, but the level has risen. Jazz has risen a lot.

- I've seen this, a lot of *magazia* that put on jazz, funk, they move within these genres. Why?

Marios, the drummer of Funky Lab and a drums instructor at the LAB joined our discussion:

-There aren't a lot of jobs [in the music industry] and those who would do them [the jazz gigs], actually who would not do them because of the jobs, now they have the time to do them.

Michalis: Yes. Otherwise they would have all disappeared with the jobs. Earlier on this wouldn't happen a lot because there was not a lot of offer of musicians. They were very few. You know and when you are a musician and have suffered, have spent tons of money, if a job comes up that pays well,

you will do it. Except if you are like me and said no back then. And to me now in the summer some jobs came up with the *èntehnous* and I said yes.

While the musicians' payment kept decreasing during the crisis, live gigs secured a steady clientele on 'dead' days for the bar owners. Indeed, hosting a live performance could make the difference between an empty and a full venue. The employment of live music as an added value resembles what Morcom (2015: 303) mentions regarding dance bars in India, where dance was employed also as a way to attract customers and increase alcohol consumption. However, in the case of the Athenian bars, live music did not always result in higher levels of alcohol consumption, as customers would attend the gig, which was often free, buying one beer or in some cases nothing. This resulted in full bars with low consumption and consequently the decrease of the musicians' payment.

Apart from the low wages, this impromptu transformation of regular bars into 'music scenes' was accompanied by a significant lack in infrastructure, which in many cases caused the discomfort of the musicians. Kostas also brings up the issue of music being employed as an added value and at the same time comments on the performance conditions which are not ideal for the musicians:

- A lot. There are a lot of live gigs. Look, the good thing with the crisis is that people won't go out just to have a drink. The *magazì* must have something to offer. So I think that they resort to the live gigs, to live music. This is good because the more musicians play the better they become. But something has to be done about the circumstances of course [...]

- When you are talking about improving the circumstances. Regarding?

- Of acoustics

- The P.A or the space?

- The space, and that people should listen, you can't be going and... There is a space at Pagkrati that is also a gallery. I went the other day to see a live tribute to Billie Holiday. There isn't that much noise even during the first break in elementary schools.

- In the yard.

- In the yard. They were screaming inside. [I was like], ‘what’s your thing guys, what are you? Huns?’

Kostas elaborates on the behaviour of the audience which is shaped by the style of the venue each time, asserting that the conditions in the bars are not suitable for live music, since in bars the audience is inclined to be noisy. Apart from the audience, though, Babis points our focus towards the behaviour of the venue owners who often treat musicians as customer-bait; he is very critical of the situation and points out the exploitative and precarious conditions under which musicians have to work:

- This notion that during the crisis there is more music; sure, music is a way out when everything starts to collapse but the way out is certainly not what we see in all these little bars. I’m talking about the jazz scene now. Bar owners want to attract customers, swing and jazz has become a trend and there was already a big supply of musicians which came to fill a gap for the bar owners. They hosted gigs so that the bands would bring their audience to drink. But on bad terms.

-You mean regarding the musicians?

- Yes. I had booked a gig with a friend of mine at a venue downtown.<sup>34</sup> We went there, gave them a demo tape we had recorded in the studio and asked them if they would like us to play. They said yes, so we set up a date. And so we went, we carried everything, we brought all of the equipment cause the venue didn’t have anything. So half an hour before the gig we had five people in the audience. And the owner of the venue came to us furious and made us feel like garbage saying things like: ‘Are you serious? How is this possible? You claim to play music and have a band and there isn’t a living soul in here. And I have to pay my waiter today. How is the waiter gonna be paid? The waiter is not going to be paid cause no one has come.’ And the waiter just stood there shaking his head and blaming us. Do you realize what kind of situations we are talking about? She could be blaming the waiter for her

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<sup>34</sup> The venue Babis talks about does not form part of the jazz venues network of the city, but rather hosts live gigs of a variety of music genres.

empty venue. This incident captures the culture here.<sup>35</sup> I played in empty venues more than once in the States, but nobody ever held me responsible. This bar in Austin comes to mind which was a shithole and always empty; eventually they had to fire the waiter because they didn't want to sacrifice the daily live shows. (Back to Athens) And of course we packed up everything and left and said that we're never gonna play in a venue like this ever again. [...] So you see Georgia, my perspective ... Most people who are part of this circuit, especially jazz, because these are the ones I socialize with, consider me a conspiracy theorist, spiteful, pessimist or whatever.

- Why?

- Because they'll tell you, 'what [s the problem]? We just play more music, it's just that there is more music.' Which is true. Especially through the internet, anyone can get involved with music and learn and start his band and use the social media and blah, blah, blah and play and express oneself. But in the end who are the ones that can afford to do this, since it doesn't pay? The ones who've got money already or the ones who combine gigging with a day job. And I've argued with M over this because he was telling me that 'here, whoever wants to can do it. You got as far as Texas'. Yes, but my dad would buy me a car, and would pay for my studies and I would sit and drink coffee and play the guitar all day when I was 18 and 19 and 20 and 21. This is how it is. Music is a luxury good. And as long as a [genre of] music is a luxury good, or music [in general] is a luxury good, then it is something that is not from the people for the people. It is a lie, end of story.... What shall I play for you guys, I don't want to listen to anything in particular.

- Then don't.

- Bill Frisell? Nah.

As our interview came to end, Babis touched upon an important aspect of the music business in Athens, common both before and after the crisis and found across music professionals of various genres: the fact that professional musicians cannot make a living out of gigging alone. Most of them teach in

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<sup>35</sup> Babis's point in this story is that no matter what happens, the musicians are always to blame if a live gig does not go well financially.

private conservatories and a few in public schools, or play for the industry, or both, as a way to supplement their earnings. Some of them might even have unrelated day jobs, keeping music as a hobby rather than as a professional endeavour or a way to make a living.

But despite the difficult circumstances and the low wages, professional musicians continue their performances, the presentation of new compositions and recordings contributing in this way to the flourishing of small-scale performances, particularly in genres such as jazz. The transformations taking place since 2010 and the way they are conceptualized in musicians' narratives suggests a great paradox. If it wasn't for the crisis and the collapse of the music industry, 'music' as a reified entity would have remained at the lowest quality levels.

The crisis, according to the musicians, even though it made things hard for professional musicians, had a positive impact on the quality of the music that is being played. Thus, they have come to celebrate the very event—the collapse of the music industry—that has left them unemployed. As Vassilis, the director of the LAB sums up, the crisis has had negative repercussions as far as the musicians' profession is concerned but a positive impact on the music, shifting the dynamics between the mainstream and the smaller scenes:

- Now, regarding other positive and negative aspects of the crisis and in relation to your *intro* [sic] and the rest of the stuff you are looking into... When in the good times of prosperity musicians had a choice that was called *skylàdiko*<sup>36</sup> or whatever you want to call it, which gave a lot of money.

- *I know* [sic].

- Yes. Many musicians and good musicians were headed towards there. If they gave you *merokàmato* 200 euros, 400 euros, six days per week and *mavra* [black], this was too big a temptation to refuse. At this moment, this doesn't exist, it has crumbled, it exists to a much smaller extent, with lower *merokàmata*, much less *merokàmata* [in terms of days], this is the most basic problem. I mean what will you do? Even if you get a 200 euro *merokàmato*,

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<sup>36</sup> *Skylàdiko* [dog-den] is a derogatory term used for the *laiko* [urban-folk/pop-folk] genre and the venues of this genre.



if you take it two days per week for three months per year, you won't get by for twelve [months]. But the good thing on the other hand—thus we have a bad thing purely professionally in this sector—the good thing is artistic. Thus, artistically speaking because all of these people got out from the *patari tou skyladikou* [from the stage of *skylàdiko*], many nice bands have been created, bands we didn't have the previous years, there are many *live* [gigs], what you are saying. The bad thing is that there aren't spaces with the right infrastructure for these live [gigs]. And also financially it is a joke. I mean you have top musicians playing for 40 euros, for 30 euros, for 'paidia den eixe tipota [guys there was nothing]' and a lot of whining and a lot... And the *magazià* [venues]...many of them do it *arpahti* [on the cheap], 'oh, we don't have people what shall we do, let's put some live [gigs]'. Without advertising it, without the proper gear, without, without, without...

### **From Value to Values**

With the crisis, the biggest motive for working in the industry—money—vanished. Professional musicians in their search of alternatives turned to music genres they liked to play since one way or another their compensation would be at a minimum. This however made their economic survival very difficult, as Kostas narrates, when I reminded him of the phrase he told me during one of our Harmony classes:

- I remember at some point during one of our classes, you said that the crisis has been great for music but not for the musicians.

- Yes, because this thing exhausts you. Previously..., yes, that there aren't *merokàmata* anymore. Thus a musician is able to make a living, actually just to survive with the live [gig], but think that a musician needs equipment, any musician. How will you get the equipment, with what? I mean earlier on you could do some saving. Now if the money..., I see this with my friends who are not [working] in schools, I was at the school this year ok. And they run for the *triantari* [30 euros] to *penintari* [50 euros] and we talk about it and

they are my age, they have obligations, they have ΕΝΦΙΑ,<sup>37</sup> they have this and the other. And I'm not talking about having kids, forget it! To pay for rent... So, if your instrument breaks what will you do? What will happen? If you want to buy an instrument, with what? ... ΕΣΠΑ<sup>38</sup> for musicians? It does not exist, I looked into it.

- Yes, but what you are saying that it was good for music. What do you mean?

- In music... What I was saying is that exactly because there are no *merokàmata* [jobs] in the popular music industry, Portokaloglou<sup>39</sup> won't take you to play with him, Arvanitaki won't take you, you will have a few *gigs* [sic] with Arvanitaki. So you have more time and space to think what you actually want to do as a musician. So you will put on a concert at the Cellar in Athenaeum with your material because you have to promote yourself, to have a *marketing* [sic] as a musician meaning that here, this is who I am, this is what I do, so the others will come and look you up. So the thing starts working in a more logical way. I will make a project, I will play. A few years ago, let's see what is going on here with the Funky Lab [band] the guys have. For example, what happened here in the conservatory with the Funky Lab band, where you have two professors and one student, Katerina, I think that started as a class. This could not have happened a few years ago because both Marios and Michalis were too *busy*[sic] playing with the big names and play at *pìstes* [big shows venues].

It was not only the lack of funding that caused the decline of the superculture but also the difference in motivation of the agents involved in it, including the sponsors and the musicians. The businessmen who were responsible for funding the big shows were reluctant to do so during the crisis, since no surplus was being produced by their investment and, at the same time, musicians were reluctant to work in the music industry for crumbs. Contrary to the pop stars, who were dependent on businessmen to sponsor

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<sup>37</sup> ΕΝΦΙΑ is the government property tax imposed in 2011 upon all real estate assets, including houses, land and agricultural parcels.

<sup>38</sup> ΕΣΠΑ (National Strategic Reference Framework) refers to the funding provided by the European Union and managed on a local level to sponsor entrepreneurial and educational activities, research, public megaprojects etc. For more information see: <http://2007-2013.espa.gr/en/Pages/staticWhatIsESPA.aspx>.

<sup>39</sup> Portokaloglou is a famous *èntehno* singer.

their shows, professional musicians, now with a lot of free time on their hands, were able to book a number of small gigs around Athens and at the same time teach in order to boost their income, as Michalis explains:

I prefer it a million times to do this thing [teaching] and all the other small gigs. Rather than be with a big name and wait until they have a live [show], to be on standby and cancel classes. Also playing live gigs and projects with good musicians that I like and help me evolve musically. It is healthier. It's between us musicians, we don't have *firmes* [stars]. Or producers who don't know what they want exactly and I don't know why they even call them producers. It's like we got rid of all the sickness and only the healthy part has remained, where the price of all this is that it does not pay well. So there is tremendous musical development. But not economic. It's all up in the air. Because one month can go great, another month lousy. Nothing is stable and certain, and you live in this agony, but there is more health. In terms of psychological health and physical, in terms of having more time to see my children. And when I'm fed up I'm fed up regarding things that I'm interested in. I have played with musicians that I admired since I was a child.

Evidently it was not only fees for the big shows that were reduced, but also for jazz gigs. The question is why musicians kept playing jazz for 30 euros while rejecting jobs in the industry for 100? One might be tempted to answer this question by depicting a romantic view of this era, as one when people were set free from the restraints of capitalism, finally having the time to do what they loved. Indeed, this is an image constantly promoted lately by local and international media, constructing a narrative of how Greece re-emerges from its ashes and focusing particularly on the cultural and artistic boom in Athens.<sup>40</sup>

Michalis's narrative above reminds us that this is not exactly the case. The

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<sup>40</sup> The New York times published an article related to the emergence of Athens as a cultural capital after the crisis. See the article here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/travel/athens-after-the-economic-crisis.html>

recurrent use of words such as *agony*, *health* and *sickness* interchangeably, to describe both playing in the music industry and playing jazz, suggests that both worlds are related to conditions of precarity. We need to be reminded then that this artistic boom has come as an answer to a ‘pick your poison’ kind of question. However, what is important to observe is that values in the plural, thus ‘values-as-worldviews’ gained priority over economic value, when it came to choosing between these two conditions of precarity. The disappearance of economic value, as a criterion for choosing which gig to take or reject, mobilized incommensurable and incomparable values such as happiness and creativity, in order to cope with the new reality, as Michalis further suggests:

At some point you say that... ok, the country is completely destroyed economically, this is over, let's not fool ourselves. So, how will I spend my daily life? There's misery everywhere and complaining. I don't want to do this thing. But being more creative..., it's a way to move forward somehow. And you see that no one makes money. From the moment that no one makes money, as far as the professional part is concerned, I want to make sure that I will be ok, be happy with what I am doing, to wake up in the morning and be super-happy and not to have someone bossing me around and telling me what to do for pennies.

What is evident in Michalis's description regarding the criteria and motives over where to invest one's energy is a shift towards values in the plural, as opposed to value as economic incentive. Thus, while Graeber mentions that ‘values’ [as opposed to ‘value’] tend to take on importance either in societies without a commercial market [...] or, as in ours, in those contexts (church, home, museum, etc.) relatively insulated from it’ (2001:78), I suggest that incommensurable ‘values’ tend to become important also in critical moments such as the current socioeconomic crisis, where alternative moral projects need to be set in motion, so as to make sense out of a collapsing world.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Returning to my initial question and one of my main ethnographic challenges ‘Why do musicians not protest through their music’, also a theme in our discussion with Zoe in the introductory section of this chapter, the answer seems obvious by now. There was no time for protesting while one was struggling to deal with a new reality of which one did not know what to make. As Graeber (2001: 250) rightfully points out:

In a moment of profound historical change, no one involved could possibly know what the total system in question actually consists of. One is caught in what a Hegelian would call a moment of dialectic unfolding. Knowledge is necessarily fragmentary; totalities that the actors are working with are necessarily imaginary, or prospective, or numerous and contradictory.

In this light, and in their struggle to shape a liveable daily existence during this period of sweeping economic decline, the professional musicians I worked with were forced to re-evaluate what it is that makes life worth living and subsequently what kind of music was worth spending creative effort on. In this process and through their choices, they reversed the power balance between the superculture and subculture, acting as agents on a dual level, as performers and promoters of their music, two roles that could not be assumed simultaneously either by the Greek pop singers or the businessmen who funded them. The musicians’ take-over of the live music soundscape of the city is now evident on another level, one that I hope to be able to explore in a further study. Greek popular music singers faced with empty auditoriums, in their search for ways to revitalize their careers, turned to these same musicians they had been using for years merely as facilitators, as session musicians to perform other people’s compositions. It was during this moment, when their careers collapsed, that they were ‘suddenly’ forced to realize the creative potential of these musicians, assigning new roles to them as composers and arrangers.

## Chapter 4

### ‘It’s All or Nothing’

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This chapter looks at four venue owners,<sup>1</sup> Vangelis, Kostas, Nausika and Panos, and the jazz venues they manage, namely Kerameio, Louis, Afrikana and Spiti, which were established during the crisis, in the period between 2010 and 2014. These venues are located in the gentrified area of Kerameikòs, which I introduced in Chapter 1, and form the core jazz venues of Athens.<sup>2</sup> The four venues are different in scope and character. Afrikana and Spiti operate exclusively as live music venues, hosting live gigs every day with a relatively low entrance fee ranging from 3 to 5 euros. Kerameio is a café-bar and Louis a *kafeneio*. Kerameio and Louis are not live music venues per se but they both host live gigs once or twice per week, with free entrance.

This chapter continues in the same vein as the previous one in two ways. Firstly, it draws on anthropological theories of value, and particularly on the distinction between gift and commodity, as discussed in the work of Anna Tsing, in order to refer to the two ontological statuses of live music in the area of Kerameikòs. Secondly, this chapter shifts the focus towards the venue owners, whom I consider equally important for the development of the local jazz scene as the musicians. Greenland (2016) in his ethnographic study of the New York jazz scene also looks at the professionals, including the venue owners, involved in the scene considering them as integral parts of it, together with the musicians and the fans.

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to them as venue owners, even though they rent the spaces where their venues are located. In the Greek context, the term venue owner [*magazátoras*] does not imply ownership of the property, but refers to the person responsible for the concept and set-up of a *magazi*, as well as its daily management.

<sup>2</sup> In April 2018, Kerameio suspended the live gigs that were scheduled until June 2018, due to legally related issues.

In this chapter the venue owners contribute to the theoretical discussion, as they narrate their life stories after 2010, explaining the reasons behind their decision to open these venues and embark on such an endeavour for the first time in their lives. They offer another side to the story, often ignored in music studies whose focus is mainly on musicians. As I have argued in the introductory chapter, venue owners are also key agents, even though they are not musicians themselves (except the ones who own Spiti), as they have been connected to the jazz scene long before establishing their venues. Furthermore, as did the musicians in the previous chapter, they also theorize multiple aspects of the economic and political developments of the past years.

Their narratives bring to the fore the reasons for their professional choices and their turn to micro-entrepreneurship, which are inextricably related to the crisis and the precarious employment conditions that came with it. As their relation to the jazz scene in Athens unfolds during their stories, they explain how they came to be part of the jazz live music network. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the differentiations of the ontological status of live music in each one of them, drawing on the distinction of gift vs commodity.

As I described in Chapter 1, Kerameikòs is traversed by two big avenues, Ierà Odòs [Sacred Road] and Piraeus Street. Kerameio and Louis are located to the North of Ierà Odòs, where streets are named after historical battles of the Greco-Persian wars, while Afrikana and Spiti are to the South of Ierà Odòs where streets are named after the Eleusinian Mysteries.

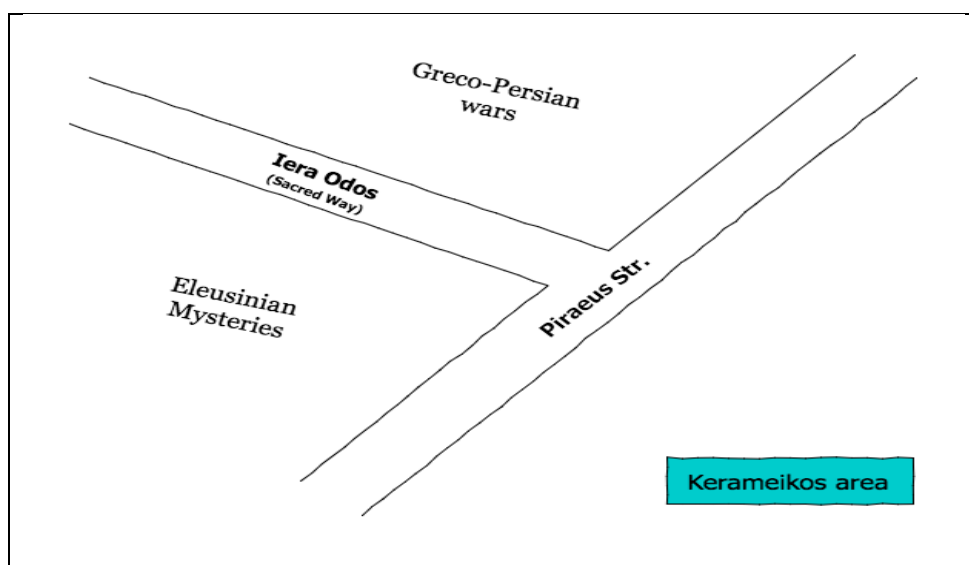


Fig. 13 Kerameikòs's main avenues

## **Gifts and Commodities**

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, a large part of the literature on value theory in anthropology draws on the distinction between gift and commodity, with the two standing for different systems of social relations or ‘as icons of different systems for making value’ (Tsing 2013: 22). Tsing challenges this distinction and argues that, ‘despite the power of capitalism, *all* capitalist commodities wander in and out of capitalist commodity status.[...] Capitalism always requires non-capitalist social relations to accomplish goals’ (ibid: 37).

In this debate, the notion of commodity is also challenged. Tsing (2013: 22) makes clear that she draws on Marx (1992 [1867]) to define commodity but refers also to other theorizations: ‘Appadurai (2012), for example, defines commodities as any goods in exchange. [...] Following Kopytoff (1986), Appadurai rejects a gift-commodity distinction because anything exchanged is a commodity’. David Harvey (2014: 25,26), on the other hand, distinguishes between commodity and product, noting that the mediation of money as a means of making a claim over the social labour of others is what differentiates a commodity from a product, giving the example of the tomato one grows in one’s garden for one’s own consumption as opposed to a product on sale in the marketplace. Timothy Taylor (2007: 282) also points out that money transaction is not an adequate condition in order to make something (in his case music, live or recorded music) a commodity; rather its use to generate surplus value is what makes it one. Following Tsing, I argue that live music in the venues of Kerameikòs attains the ontological status of both (gift and commodity) at the same time.

Although none of the venue owners I discuss in this chapter had previous experience, or knew how to run a business, they were all connected to the jazz scene as audience members or musicians. These venue owners faced the same question that the musicians were faced with, on their paths to professionalism and in the aftermath of the crisis: ‘What am I going to do with my life?’ In this moment of decision-making, as they will narrate, capital that was accumulated during the previous decades of economic growth was re-invested in endeavours related to the musical affinities that were nurtured during the previous decades. In all cases, the transformation of live music into



a commodity depends on alcohol consumption. In Afrikana and Spiti, even though there is an entrance fee, this is to be paid on top of the first drink and not as one enters the venue. In Kerameio and Louis, jazz is clearly offered as a gift, as Vangelis the owner explains, since the gigs usually do not produce surpluses:

The musicians don't know that, and they don't need to know. They get paid, I will pay the musicians a good *merokàmato*. If we may call it *merokàmato*, because they are artists, they are lovers of what they do, most of them. Now whether the *magazi* will suffer losses or not, that's my problem. It's a risk and I assume responsibility for it. Most of the time it's even, but there are times when it's passive [at a loss]. And you know..., some people think, 'ok the *magazi* is going well and even if one, two, three or five live gigs don't go well, and there's a loss this is fine'. But this is not true. It's a *magazi* for making a living, it's not for fun. Another important thing is that I want to have free entrance. And whoever gets it.<sup>3</sup> Anybody can enter, have a glass of water without anything else, no minimum consumption and this kind of stuff. I offer the music. And whoever gets it. One might enter and have a drink or not. They are not obliged to. Because I offer the music. That day, when there is [live] music, I don't sell beer, I offer the music.

Rather than a capitalist commodity, live music in this case entails the transformation of previously established social relations into free live music. Money transactions are involved between Vangelis and the musicians, but not necessarily between the audience and the venue, because as Vangelis explains one can attend the live gig without ordering a drink, thus alcohol consumption is not obligatory. Furthermore, in providing a stand for the local jazz scene, Vangelis reproduces what he experienced in Paràfono, as an audience member. However, in both cases of Kerameio and Louis, the 'luxury' of not charging an extra fee for the gigs is made possible by the fact that both venues

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<sup>3</sup> Vangelis here refers to his policy regarding the free entrance, something that not all people agreed with.

have a steady clientele throughout the week, making the cost of holding one or two live gigs per week—offered for free to the audience—manageable.

The venue owners of Kerameikòs employed live music, as a result of long-standing relationships with the musicians, who in many cases asked to play there. This was in contrast to a number of other bars in the city center, where live jazz music was employed as ‘customer-bait’ on weekdays, and in many cases musicians were expected to bring the people. Thus, in Kerameikòs, the line between music as gift and music as commodity becomes blurred. These two ontologies of live music often co-exist, constituting two ends of the same spectrum, reminding us Tsing’s point, namely that: ‘capitalist commodity value is everywhere created through tapping and transforming non-capitalist social relations’ (2013: 21). The jazz venues of Kerameikòs, building upon this dual ontological status of live music, played a crucial role in promoting the local scene in the post-2010 period, when international artists had become unaffordable for venues of this size, as well as for venues with a long-standing tradition such as Half-Note. In the section that follows I pass on to the life-stories of these individuals post-2010 and treat them in the same way as the musicians, as theoretical thinkers.

### **Persian Wars, Ceramic and Sujuk – Almost.**

#### ***Vangelis, Kerameio [Pottery]***

After an hour-long wait at the bar I am finally sitting with Vangelis, the owner of Kerameio. We are sitting in the backyard, in one of the custom-made tables made of chestnut wood. The walls have been recently painted in a bright green colour, featured in the video Terry Vakirtzoglou has released recently.<sup>4</sup> The floor is covered with old, worn out, black and white tiles that were here originally before the space was transformed into a bar. Vangelis insisted on keeping them, as he narrates:

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<sup>4</sup> Terry Vakirtzoglou, a vocalist and composer, made a video for her song This mountain of mine in Kerameio. Many musicians of the Athenian scene appear in this video.

You know people don't get to the essence of things...When we first came here, there were people telling me that I need to replace the tiles and throw them away. And I said that this is what will bring people in the *magazi*. I could have put some plastic tiles on top of it, crystal clean and nothing would show, [but I didn't]. So they would tell me, 'look there, the tiles are broken'. But I've got a friend, a musician, Yoel, who is from Cuba. And every time he comes here he is really moved, because it reminds him of the houses in Cuba. 'This is exactly how the houses are in Cuba,' he tells me. You know, these are old buildings. They are old. Why should everything look luxurious? Do you understand? And he comes here and he is moved. He tells me, 'I come here because you make the best mojito and this *magazi* reminds me of Cuba.' ... There is also the yard. In the beginning I kept wondering why people keep coming when the weather is nice and they sit in the yard. But if they have grown up with a balcony, they will come to the yard, it makes sense. Where will they go? In Ampelòkipous<sup>5</sup> you have to raise your head like a chicken drinking water to see the sky.

By the time he was explaining to me the philosophy behind the restoration of the venue, we were already half way through the interview which started with Vangelis trying to figure out how to place himself in it. 'In what capacity do you want me to talk to you? As a venue owner or as an audience member?' Vangelis' question caught me off-guard. I had just finished explaining to him the theme of my research and the reason for our interview. I could not help but smile, as his question immediately brought to mind methodological issues regarding the interview and pre-assigned roles that the researcher assumes or assigns to the interlocutors (Jackson 1987:42).

'I know that you are both', I reply, and I take a few seconds before proceeding to my next question. Before I have time to 'assign' a role to him he interrupts me:

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<sup>5</sup> Ampelòkipoi [lit. vine gardens] is one of the most densely populated areas of Athens, very close to the city centre.

I consider myself an audience member, I mean what happens here..., the fact that we have live gigs, it's totally coincidental. Or let's say inevitable. When the logic and dynamics that are needed for the music are already there, then there will also be places for all this to bear fruit. You can say that I started with scarce resources, just because I had many friends who were musicians, I knew them for years, from *magazia* like Paràfono which was a jazz hangout, there was music every day, mainly, well not mainly—only jazz. I had the acquaintances and this favoured the situation for the creation here of a small scene. I'm telling you with scarce resources, with nothing. Someone else might not have done it. I didn't study music and this is one of my regrets regarding my childhood, so I gave all my energy and *meràki*<sup>6</sup> to listening, searching and this is how it happened. And this is why I ended up making a small music scene. Which as you can see is twice a week, it is not very regular because this *magazi* was mainly meant as a means to make a living. It wasn't meant to bring music to the fore. Music comes as a way to, how can I say it, as our fun, the thing we like, our craziness. And one could say that we are very lucky to be able to do it in such times.

As Vangelis narrates further below, Kerameio was one of the first venues to open post-2010 in the area,<sup>7</sup> at the beginning of a gentrification-like phase during the crisis in the area of Kerameikòs, like the one that had preceded it in Gkàzi in the early and mid 2000s (Avdikos 2014). Alexandri (2018: 37) refers to the phenomenon of 'nightlife and culture-driven' gentrification as being characteristic of many crisis-stricken Mediterranean cities, as evidenced by research conducted in Greece (Alexandri 2014), Spain (Janoscka *et al.* 2014) and Italy (Semi 2015). Vangelis is honest about the issues and problems accompanying the transformation from a residential area

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<sup>6</sup> The term *meràki* can acquire both negative and positive connotations. It can be associated with grief or pain, or with love and enthusiasm for something. For the use of the word in music and dance context see Tsounis (1995: 92), and for its association with joy and grief see Herzfeld (1996: 162). In the above passage the term is used to denote enthusiasm, love and passion.

<sup>7</sup> One of the older, probably the oldest venue in the surrounding area is Astàri [lit. primer/undercoat for painting], a small traditional *kafeneio* in Metaxourgheio, established in 2002.

to an ‘entertainment playground’ (Alexandri 2018), when I ask him about the first years of the venue:

- When did the venue open?

- 2010. June 2010. We didn’t have in mind that we will have [live] music, but this is how things happened. It seemed that the people in the area could embrace the *magazi*, it was one of the first in the area, so it was something new. Many others followed and there was a boom in the area, an upgrade in a manner of speaking, but on the other hand, one might say that there are lots of people coming, there is noise, disturbance... Many problems, which normally, as a venue owner, I shouldn’t be talking about them to you and hide them. But one cannot deny that there is noise disturbance for the residents, it changed their lives. And Kerameio has its part in it, with the loud music, with jazz musics that are in a way you could say stiff, not so easy. But the ground was proper [the circumstances were right]. Musicians from the whole range have played here, I have the craziness and I want everyone to play here, so they can have their cut, to take the stand because I experienced this as a listener at Paràfono. It was a space that functioned as a stand for new musicians, it was for those who did not have the luxury to play at Mègaro [Athens Concert Hall] or Half Note. [...] There [Paràfono] kids became men and now they are older, they have found their path, some stayed, others left, went to the States. Because there were also losses. In a sense they left for the best, but for our part it was a loss, we lost them [as musicians]. So I’m trying for my part to embrace the scene, by opening up and trying to have both older and younger musicians. An amalgam, to graft the old with the new, so there will be continuity. The musicians, let me tell you what they think of the *magazi*, they find it friendly, they feel it as their own, they like it, they come here. The majority of them says there is a vibe here and they want to play here, while they don’t feel this way in other venues. It’s because we do it from our heart, we don’t...

Vangelis confirmed to me what I already knew from the musicians on the jazz scene. He is a jazz aficionado who has been following the local scene for many years, long before the crisis, attending constantly the live gigs in

Paràfono. During a period when Half Note ignored Greek jazz musicians, Paràfono did not only act as a venue for the promotion of the local scene, but it also nurtured a generation of audience members, one of which was Vangelis. Although he actively supports the local scene, as he explained above, his intention was not to create a jazz venue, as he explains further:

- How did you decide to open the *magazì*?

- For the *merokàmato*. I was a collector in an insurance company that closed, and fortunately they compensated us. Because if this had happened now, we wouldn't have gotten a penny. It didn't close actually, they just reduced the personnel. There were cut-backs. They knew how things in the market were going to move, and what was about to happen in the following years, so they started reducing the personnel, the budget and they left. Not completely, but they moved on to more populous markets. They went to Ukraine, to Malaysia, to countries with a big population. They took from Greece what they could and that's it. So they gave us compensation, and I found myself without a job at age 52. So I had this fund, this compensation I'd got, but I also didn't know what to do [with it]. Where would I go at 52 years old to get a *merokàmato*? To be able to sustain my family. And Spyros<sup>8</sup> came up and asked me, he was in a similar position, and he told me, 'do you want to open a *magazì* to put bread on the table?' I said, 'I'm in. We'll roll up our sleeves and work.' We found this place, it was a disaster, a disappointment just looking at it, you didn't have the heart to...

- So it was closed before?

- It was vacant.

- And what was it before that?

- It was a *kerameìo* [pottery]. This is why we kept the name.

'Really?' I respond surprised. I always thought that their decision to name it Kerameìo was an act of paying tribute to the area and its ancient history, when it was a settlement inhabited by potters.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Spyros is Vangelis's business partner.

<sup>9</sup>For more information visit the site of Ministry of Culture: [http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj\\_id=2392](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2392).

The pottery that was located there, before Vangelis and Spyros turned it into a bar, was a modern one, though, owned by Yiorgos, a modern Greek, who was caught up in the makings of the crisis, as Vangelis explains to me:

- Yes, Yiorgos was here making ceramics. He let go of the place because he couldn't afford the rent, and for two and a half years the place was vacant. So we found it, it was totally abandoned to its fate and we said that if we smarten it up we might be able to make a *merokàmato*. Because nobody could guarantee that all this would end up somewhere, right? And for the first five, six months we didn't make a penny. We kept it open until 6, 7 a.m. in the morning in case clients from other *magazià* would come, something that did happen in the end. It was one of the first ones in the area, it lit up the neighbourhood. After the first six months, things started going well and a friendly atmosphere was created.

- And how were things when you first got here?

- Tough. The night was tough. And still is. They still break into cars, there are thefts, they've stolen bags from inside here. And you can't control this, how can you? You do what you can but... When it's too crowded, you know, the devil is busy in the highwind.<sup>10</sup> But on the other hand, we lit up the neighbourhood, people came. They came to know Kerameikòs, because Kerameikòs was a historical area of Athens. Of classical Athens. But no one cared, it was neglected and still is. It could have been promoted differently. But they [the state] wanted to make Olympiads, they wanted surveillance systems, Siemens, this and that and all the funds went there, while they could have invested in the area.

Vangelis' bitterness, regarding the lack of any state strategic plans for the promotion of the area and its associated history, comes hand in hand with a critique shared by many regarding the 'fat cows' era and the distribution, or rather, the squandering of public money, which culminated in the organisation of the Olympic games in 2004. Greece was living its modern

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<sup>10</sup> The original phrase in Greek was '*O lykos stin anampoumpoula hairtai*' which could be translated as 'the wolf gets lucky in the whirlwind'.

myth, a rather controversial one, though. On the one hand, the media and politicians celebrated the return of the Games to its homeland, and on the other hand, strong criticism focused on the extremely high costs and expenses that came with the construction of the sports facilities, which were completely abandoned after the Games. Academics such as Leontidou (Leontidou at al 2007) and Stavrides (2005) have argued for the continuation of the ‘state of exception’ that was imposed during the Games–related to neoliberal policies regarding city planning and construction–until today.

Apart from national pride–stemming from negation of the ridiculous cost of the Games and related to nationalistic views of the continuity of the Greek civilization from ancient times to the present–the Games were also involved in multiple scandals, including the ‘C4I’. C4I [Command, Control, Communication, Coordination & Integration] was the surveillance system provided by Siemens under a non-transparent outsourcing process, ensuring the safety of the Games in 2004. Despite its astronomic cost–260 million euros–the system was never operational. In 2008, the C4I case went under investigation as part of a bigger scandal related to Siemens, which included the bribing of Greek officials in order to win public contests for the provision of supplies, services and systems to the Greek state.

However, the mega projects of 2004, part of which was also the Metro [underground] of Athens resulted in the development of the area of Rouf, starting with Gkàzi and subsequently Kerameikòs. After the rapid rise of the area which went on until 2008, the crisis caused the price of property to fall allowing for the emergence of an alternative culture. Where the state was absent, private initiatives promoted the cultural capital of the area. Part of it was also Kerameìo, with the jazz gigs it established, initially once per week. ‘So when did you start the live gigs?’ I ask Vangelis:

- After a year and a half. Friends who were musicians would come here and at some point we said, how about making a *live* [gig], to see how it goes. Anyway, with minimum equipment, one would bring the drums etc. and somehow it happened. And we realized that there was some response. You know how it is, until it becomes known. Later on with the mobile phones, Facebook, etc... Now you send a message and it goes out to 400 recipients, so



now it is very easy. Then it was mouth to mouth, ‘come on Sunday’, something like this. And one brought the other. Since that guy played, we’ll have to get the other to play too...

- Did you start with two days per week?

- No, no, just once per week, on Sundays. We have had gigs twice per week for the last two years and I do this because I can’t fit them all in. And they complain, ‘when will you have us?’ So I tried out Wednesday too and it went well. But sometimes it can be tiring. Because there are people here too that know nothing about jazz or they might not care about the music. They come here because they want to go out.

The free entrance policy results in a mix of the jazz audience and the regular customers who do not always enjoy the gigs. Right next to Kerameio is Elvis, not The King himself, but a souvlaki-place owned as well by Spyros and Vangelis. One of the place’s most well-known mottos, appearing often on the blackboard outside the *magazi*, is ‘Tetoia etroge i Mantona ki ekane kormi kolona’ [This is what Madonna ate and had a perfect body]. Just around the corner, about 200 metres away, on Leonidou Street is Louis, the *kafeneio*.

### ***Kostas, Louis***

Emmanouil Retsinas, the so-called Louis, is characterized by one word, an adverb: *almost*. Almost ugly, almost good-looking, almost lazy, almost uneducated, almost an atheist. What do I mean by atheist? This: Louis is the kind of guy who never sets foot in church – almost – except for the odd funeral, baptism, or wedding. Including his own. Twice. Three times, almost.

You couldn’t exactly call him an upstanding character. Almost, though; almost a man of principles, almost a man without principles. In a word, contradictory, multi-faceted. Trustworthy, almost. Almost OK.

No sooner do I try to describe the guy than I visualize him in my mind’s eye getting ready for his first wedding ... No. Not exactly then. A bit earlier. When they sprung the trap on him. Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place! Just a second, though, I’m

doing this all wrong. First, you have to understand just what kind of guy he is. I say ‘kind of guy’ advisedly. It’s almost impossible to get a handle on a character like his. Think of a river. Think of all the little streams and brooks flowing into a river. That’s Louis: the river.<sup>11</sup>

The above is the opening paragraph of the novel *Red Dyed Hair* by Kostas Mourselas, one of the best-selling novels of the *Metapolitefsi* era, published in 1989 in Greek and translated into English in 1992. The novel is set in post-war Greece, in 1950-1960. Its main character, as one might suspect, the so-called Louis, acted as an inspiration for the owners of the *kafeneio* who named it after him, as Kostas, one of the owners, explains to me:

The name comes from the character of a book by Kostas Mourselas, *Red Dyed Hair*, Louis. The so-called Louis who is characterized by an adverb: almost. I read the book in 1990. The main character [of the book] lives in Ayia Sofia,<sup>12</sup> it’s one of the places where I grew up. All the stuff he narrates in the book, the places and all this, I’ve lived them. Morgkentaou Street in Nikaia,<sup>13</sup> which is described in the book, is three alleys down from Megalou Konstantinou [Str.] where I used to live. I know Lazari’s *ouzeri* [*magazi* for drinking ouzo], I know everything that is being described. Vourla, an area that accommodated the first brothels in the ‘50s. Or maybe a bit earlier, then they were turned into a prison. I’ve been through all these streets, I liked them. So the book’s main character is Louis, who hangs out in multiple *kafeneia*, he likes it. He is a leftist, hunted down at that period, his father was also hunted down during the civil war. And at some point I meet the real Louis, his name was Manolis Aftias, he was a real person.

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<sup>11</sup> The excerpt is from the English translation of the book by Fred A. Reed. I have changed the first phrase to match more accurately the Greek text.

<sup>12</sup> St. Sofia is an area in Piraeus.

<sup>13</sup> Nikaia is a suburb of Piraeus, in the west of Attica. Nikaia was established in 1923, and was a refugee settlement created in the aftermath of the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), to accommodate the refugees coming in.

‘I didn’t know that!’ I reply with surprise. I always thought that Louis was this imaginary character moving between the bohemian and the lumpen<sup>14</sup> created by Mourselàs, the author, in order to provoke the petit-bourgeois that had started to emerge in Greek society after the civil war (1946-49). Kostas continues his story regarding the real Louis:

He was a friend of Mourselàs [author]. [His name was] Manòlis Aftiàs. He died in 2012. So, I meet him in ‘92-’93 in Perama.<sup>15</sup> This is where he lived, it’s also written in the book that he had a shack there. An incredible *anthropos* [human being]. At some point we were trying to decide with Yiannis [business partner] how we would name the *magazi*. Yiannis gave me ten names and I’m like, ‘yeah, ok, we’ll call it Louis’. And he said, ‘Ok! *Tin kaname Louis*’.<sup>16</sup> So if we disappear at some point...Louis [the book character] was named after the marathon runner<sup>17</sup> because he had arranged four weddings and never showed up to any of them. And this is how this phrase came to be.

A marathon runner, a social outcast drawn out of a novel, tsipouro and jazz all came to meet up in the area of Kerameikòs, during one of the country’s worst periods economically. How did it all start?

The *magazi* started three and a half years ago. I was looking for a place all over Athens. When I’m saying all over Athens I mean it, I changed three pairs of shoes. It took me around four months. I went to a lot of areas, even though I didn’t care about the area much. I would walk and rather look at the corners, the venues. This one..., it was a good one. I

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<sup>14</sup> In Greek the term lumpen is used in a negative way to describe working class or marginalized parts of the population who lack any class consciousness.

<sup>15</sup> Perama is a working-class area on the western part of the Piraeus port, known for the ship repair docks based there. The area is also famous because of the birth of *low-bap*, a characteristic Greek style of hip hop that emerged there in the 1990s, by the band Active Member.

<sup>16</sup> There is an idiomatic phrase in Greek, that could be roughly translated as ‘Turning into Louis’ [*Tin kaname Louis/Ginomai Louis*], used when someone puts on a disappearing act, or when one flees unexpectedly without anyone knowing.

<sup>17</sup> Kostas refers to Spyros Louis, a water-carrier who won the first modern day Olympic marathon in 1896 and became a national hero.

had walked around Pagkrati, Vironas, Vrilissia, Melissia, Piraeus, Nikaia, Korydallos,<sup>18</sup> but mostly in the centre. Because what I had in mind fits more with these areas. But I had not searched this particular area, it just came up. I got up one Sunday morning, it was raining. And I said, ‘I’ll go for a walk’. It all started around 2013.

Kostas decided to turn to entrepreneurship, despite not having any previous experience in the sector. Several structural adjustments that came as part of the memorandum agreement post-2010 affected various professional sectors including the one where he was previously employed, namely freight and haulage. He waited three years in vain for things to change as he explains:

I owned commercial vehicles. Nothing to do with the sector [food & beverage]. At some point in 2010, the liberalization of professional licenses took place. A lot of money was lost during that period from many motorists. I was patient for three years in case the situation changed, but it didn’t. So I sell the cars, I have some money—a little—and with my partner we start fixing this *magazi* from ground up. We could have had double the expectations...But we sat here, we fixed it with a little money and we got what you see here. Which is...how did this lady call it the other day? ‘A very beautiful nothing.’

*Kafeneio*-type venues, a predominantly local space of socializing initially to be found in rural Greece, started to mushroom during the crisis as they provided a cheap alternative to the expensive bars and restaurants of the 2000s. Further to this, they proved to be very popular entrepreneurial alternatives for people around their 30s who were either left unemployed during the crisis, or were in a fruitless search for a job. In some cases these *kafeneia* are set up as cooperatives with a strong political dimension characterizing their organization as well as their activities.<sup>19</sup> Kokkinidis, in

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<sup>18</sup> Areas of Athens.

<sup>19</sup> For the emergence of alternative organizational forms during the recession see Kokkinidis, 2015. Kokkinidis drawing on fieldwork in Athens examines three cases of businesses which ‘have adopted the status of a cooperative as their legal property form as there is no legal recognition for workers’ collectives’ (ibid: 855). One of the case studies in his article is

his thorough discussion of cooperative *kafeneia* and their self-organizing practices, suggests that these autonomous spaces fashion “rule-creating” rather than “rule-following” subjectivities’ (2015: 848). As far as music is concerned, *kafeneio* is associated primarily with Greek traditional musics or rebètiko; it is very common for small groups of two to three musicians—usually guitar and bouzouki, or oud—to play there. Therefore, although Louis is not set up as a cooperative, its particularity lies in the fact that it plays jazz music not only during the live gigs but all-day long, as Kostas narrates:

We only listen to jazz and nothing else. I like it, this purely folk American music, I really like this music with its sounds, with all this muddle and the freedom contained in it. [...] I’ve been to Paris to some jazz venues and I liked the sound that was coming out of them. So, I have chosen to listen only to this music here. It is a bit tiring for the morning audience but... And we have live gigs once per week. As long as the conditions allow us to, because in the summer it’s a bit difficult with the doors being open and all the noise [...] This area is a bit like jazz if you think about it. It has its freedom. A very alternative crowd. Many artists. It has this free spirit. It is an urban scenery but it has a particularity. I see this from the people coming to the *magazi*..., it has everything. Here, within a distance of 25 metres, there is an alley which is a real neighbourhood. I grew up in Nikaia in a settlement, we come from Asia Minor, and I grew up in a real neighbourhood, with derelict low-storey houses and all of this. I didn’t believe that in an urban spot at the centre of Athens, there would be a place like this. I didn’t know the area [Kerameikòs] that much.

*Kafeneio* challenges the narratives about a lack of mixing between the lifelong residents and the gentrifier population, as argued by Alexandri (2015a: 1639). The morning clientele of Louis is comprised mainly of the elderly neighbours living in the surrounding houses, now in their 70s or 80s,

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*Pagkaki* [bench], one of the first cooperative *kafeneia* to be established in Athens in 2008 in the area of Koukaki. For a further analysis of cooperatives in the area of *Exàrcheia* see Chatzidakis (2013).

who spend time at Louis playing backgammon with Kostas, drinking their coffee or just gazing towards the horizon—the most prominent activity of the *kafeneio*—while complaining about the jazz music playing through the speakers.

Both Vangelis and Kostas aspire to a notion of jazz as a popular or even traditional music. Vangelis, as he mentioned, discovered jazz through rock and the blues, following a similar path to the one Kontrafouris had described, saying that ‘we are all products of our generation’. As Vangelis narrated:

When I was young, like most people start, because I am born in ‘58, I had some music influences from my brother and from the parties that took place in the neighbourhood, so I started listening to some pop and rock. Some soul, rhythm n’ blues. So, then I started reading a lot. I started reading about and engaging with rock, and looking into rock I reached the blues, I reached back to the roots, I saw what was happening with jazz music, that it’s another branch of traditional music. You know how it went, it was being played at *panigiria* [street festivals] and funerals, it was a street music. And then the need was created to enter into *magazia*, to become an entertainment music, in the dancing halls where the hardworking people would go to dance, to have fun and let off steam. At the same time, you had the gospel background from the churches with the black element and this spiritual uplifting and the union with the divine.

His description resounds almost in unison with the one provided by Kostas. Both venues form part of the ‘jazz neighbourhood’ of Kerameikòs. Professional jazz musicians spend time in Kerameio regardless of the live gigs. I cannot think of one time that I was there and I did not see Kontrafouris or students and other professors from the LAB. At Louis, I would also see musicians, knowing that they had a gig at Kerameio, grabbing a bite just before their live gig, or vice versa: musicians playing at Louis and when Louis closed going to Kerameio, which stays open until late, to have a drink. The venue owners circulate in the venues as well, so it is not rare to see them attending live gigs at each other’s venues. In order to arrive at the next venue,

we need to cross Ierà Odòs and find ourselves on the other side of Kerameikòs, the side people refer to as Gkàzi or Kerameikòs depending on their music affiliation. If one is going to a mainstream club then it is Gkàzi, if one attends some small hip venue then it is Kerameikòs.

### **Eleusinian Mysteries, Africa and Bougainvillea**

#### ***Nausika, Afrikana***

Afrikana, housed in a low-storey building, stands at the corner, towards the end of Ierofantòn Street, right next to a STUDIO. Its electric-blue façade is partly hidden behind the flowering green trees, sprayed with lime sulfur. Many people think its colour is inspired by the Aegean blue, but this is not the case as Nausikà, the owner, explains:

The name was in honour of...., anyway my grandmother used to travel to Africa a lot with my grandfather, they would travel all around Africa over the year. That's it. They would describe things to us, they would bring things from over there. These objects were everywhere inside the house. And then, I had this need no matter what, to see this continent that was so much present in my house without me being acquainted with it, I mean without me knowing this culture. My grandfather was a merchant, but I don't know exactly what he did, no one knows. But legal stuff, I think. My grandmother didn't work, so they would go around, here and there, they would come back with stuff, the whole house was within this culture and as I was growing up I had a huge attraction towards this culture. Starting from the music, the people. I lived abroad for some time and I had many African friends. [...] And I had the chance to travel in the end, it was something that I had wanted for a long time. I didn't go there as a tourist, I went as a volunteer one time and then with another team to film some musicians, in Burkina Faso. We were going to make a project with some musicians in a village. My partner at the time was a musicologist in Paris where I used to live. And he had this sponsorship to make a recording for a company in Paris that did world jazz music. [...] And the second time I went with a friend of mine who worked. It was through London, there was this

organization that volunteered and gave contraception classes to women in Malawi. It was an incredible *project* [sic]; there was a theatre in the capital, where we lived, and through theatrical role playing they taught the women how to resist men who wanted to have unprotected sex [...] So, I had a very ‘inside’ experience. And I wanted the *magazi* to be like this from the beginning. To be tropical. This is how I imagined it. It will be called Afrikana and this is how it’s going to look. With blue on the outside, because I had seen this colour in Africa and I was amazed. And I was trying in my head to remember this particular shade of blue.

Nausikà’s turn to micro-entrepreneurship, even though she had no previous experience in the business sector, came around 2012 after she was fired from Eleftheroudàkis, one of the oldest bookstores of Athens, which was established in 1898 and shut down definitively in 2016.

There was the potential, a family fund that we wanted to invest in some kind of venue, to do something. I was fired from Eleftheroudakis at that point, I worked there for seven years. [...] I really don’t know how my parents got to trust me. It was a crazy endeavour, you don’t know what you are doing, with no experience at all. I still can’t believe it myself. But I put a lot of work in, I gave it three years of my life.

In naming the venue Afrikana, Nausika drew on the material culture present in the house where she spent her childhood, and her subsequent trips to the African continent. In choosing jazz as the main musical orientation of the venue, she recreated the musical cultures she encountered the previous decades in the Athenian nightlife:

I love jazz, I’ve listened to it since I was sixteen, I used to go to all the music venues around here. Paràfono, Bacaro. I went to Half Note every week, mostly on Mondays because the entrance fee was 15 euros. Normally it was 25 and in order to sit at a table 35 or 45 [euros]. [...] The thing is that I wanted to do something on my own, to do my own job and I always liked the night and live music and I was myself pretty



much around, I worked in bars, I was fascinated by this thing and I decided to do this, very timidly at the beginning regarding live gigs because I didn't know, I was not in these circles. I've always been a part of the audience, but I had no experience in the f&b business. Just, out of love, I wanted to create a jazz scene that would give the opportunity to musicians who at that period, for some reason lots of the venues had closed, and they didn't have a home. I did a couple of live gigs in the beginning to see how it goes and I run it as a bar in an effort to get into things, because it's difficult. I was also on my own, it was night and all this kind of stuff, many issues. Bureaucracy is tragic, they won't let you... I don't know what to say, even to open a *periptero*<sup>20</sup> you have to go through hell. At some point I was about to give up, because I had some problems with the city planning commission, I don't even know for how long. [...] I had decided from the beginning that I wouldn't bribe anyone and I would do everything on my own. Consider that I didn't even hire an engineer, I would go to the city planning commission all by myself.

As Nausikà narrates, the whole process took her around seven months. She started looking for a venue in September 2012 and by March 2013 the venue was operational. In between, bureaucracy and constant change of the legislation, as well as problems with the previous owners' license, made her life a living hell, as she notes:

I don't know where to start. The venue's layout was illegal, because the guy who transferred the license to me had probably bribed the planning commission and they allowed him to have four toilets. So, they had to be demolished. But I didn't know that. So I get the license, the venue is ready to open and the health authorities come for inspection. And they tell me that I need to rip the toilets out. Seriously, I was crying, I had

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<sup>20</sup> *Periptero* is a kind of small kiosk to be found all over Greece, selling products ranging from newspapers, ice-creams, drinks, and cigarettes to books, toys and painkillers. For a traveller's account of *periptero* see: <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/greece/articles/an-ode-to-the-periptero-greeces-answer-to-convenience-stores/>.

looked for a specific type of tile all over Greece, like the one in the English tube. Only one company in Thessaloniki imports it. I had looked for it everywhere and now I was watching them destroying it. Then they had to rip some things off the bar because a new law had come out. Every month, this is the funny<sup>21</sup> thing. They would come here with new requirements. I would go to the city planning commission, every week, and every time I went they would tell me that the law had changed. I was crying, I had no one to help me. And at some point I had been so many times to the city planning commission with all the blueprints etc. and they told me ‘*Kyria mou* [My lady], are you an engineer or not?’ What they meant was, ‘have you studied this thing or not?’ They thought that I was the engineer. This is how many times I had been there.

The area’s popularity and association with the arts was one of the main reasons for choosing to open the venue there, as Nausikà continues:

Because it was an area that had started to thrive and it was a bit more artistic. And I’ve always been a centre-person, I also live here so I wanted to be close. It was my neighbourhood. So I looked for some *magazia* but it was very hard. [...] This one was a club, an *after* [sic]. It would open at 11 pm and played techno, it would bring DJs. And by coincidence I checked the ads that day. And I see it. I went crazy. I called and I came to see it with a realtor, it was falling apart, everything was ripped out, electric devices etc. because the previous renter owed a lot.

The building where Afrikana was located was previously a club, probably a legacy of the 1990s when the first phase of gentrification in the area started. It was around this time that the transformation of Gkàzi started, as Souliotis describes: ‘Quite well-off liberal professionals, small retailers and artists opened bars and restaurants in derelict historical neighborhoods (Psirri, Gazi,

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<sup>21</sup> Here the word funny (in Greek *asteio*), is used in the sense of absurd/illogical.

Metaxourghio), launching processes of land use change from manufacturing to leisure' (2013: 64).

Although Afrikana is located on the side of Ierà Odòs which is mostly associated with Gkàzi and mainstream entertainment, its location in a small dark alley kept it away from the noise and superficial entertainment present in the area's main square. Its proximity to a 'STUDIO' provoked some funny mix-ups as Nausika mentions:

-The ladies next door are very elegant. They order sushi at least three times a week.

-Have they been here long?

-Yes, longer than me. It's one of the most expensive ones. Foreigners who have heard about it come here. And sometimes they come in the bar and ask us, is this number 11? And I say 'No, it's next door.' In the beginning clients would come in, have a beer to relax and then they would go next door. We had many incidents like this. Of course, they would realize that it's a bar here, but maybe they thought that because it is next to the brothel it will be an underground bar or I don't know what [...] But this thing, being located next to the brothel..., at one point I thought 'that's bad', but on the other hand, I thought it was also cool. It's cult. A guy who came here told me that 'in 10 years your *magazi* will be considered cult'. And I hope it [Afrikana] will still exist. Why not?

-Yes, the signs are good.

-Well, never say never, we get by day by day. We don't make any plans, only if it has to do with repairs etc, because I don't believe in... I don't make plans any more, I have stopped after everything that has happened. In general I am very romantic, but also down to earth because I've experienced this thing [crisis] first-hand. It was a very *hardcore* [sic] situation. Anything can happen. So, we go day by day, step by step and slowly.

Nausikà's last remark, regarding the absence of long-term planning as a new state of being, due to what happened during the crisis, brings to the fore an important issue discussed in the literature by a number of anthropologists (Knight 2015; Knight and Stewart 2016; Bryant 2016; Sabaté 2016), who

approached the crisis in relation to changes in temporality and historicity. Bryant, in discussing her ethnographic examples from Cyprus, describes moments of ‘crises’ as *critical thresholds*, and argues that these moments become ‘crises’ exactly because they bring ‘the present-ness of the present to the fore, [...] giving to the present the status of a threshold’ (2016: 20). As we saw, this has been true for almost all the people in the field, musicians and venue owners alike, when the present gained importance over a collapsing past and a non-existent future. This has triggered a shift in decision making, prioritizing short-term over long-term, as Bryant discusses in relation to the Spanish mortgage crisis, and also presenting a very different rationale to the one prevalent before the crisis. As Bryant suggests ‘The prosperity of domestic economies, in turn, was consistent with a linear understanding of life projects, within which the purchase of a home appeared as a landmark event’ (2016: 108). This linear understanding was disrupted, as Nausika’s words imply making long-term thinking and decision making an absurd as well as a meaningless activity.

### ***Panos and Yiorgos, Spiti [Home]***

Spiti is located in a little alley, not very far from Afrikana just two blocks down, in Evpatridon Street. Evpatridae, after whom the street is named, was a family of priests in ancient Greece. Ierofantes, the chief priests of the Eleusineian mysteries, always came from the family of Evmolpidae. Today they are connected by the presence of jazz venues in both streets named after them, Afrikana in Ierofanton and Spiti in Evmolpidon Street. Spiti opens around 8 p.m., as it operates exclusively as a live venue. I am waiting outside for Panos, one of the owners, who is also a flamenco guitarist. The other partner, Yiorgos, is a trumpeter and could not be present for the interview as he had a rehearsal. I am standing in front of the venue’s burgundy red wall, under the giant bougainvillea, staring at the posters for the upcoming gigs, when Panos arrives and unlocks the door. I have never seen the venue so quiet and empty. Soon enough, we are sitting at one of the tables and Panos starts explaining how he and Yiorgos decided to open the venue in Kerameikòs. As was the case with all the jazz venues in Kerameikòs, the restoration and

decoration of the venue was made by the owners themselves with help from friends and family rather than with professional crews, as Panos explains:

- It was as you see it more or less. But we didn't hire any crews, it was just the two of us with our parents, we painted the walls, made repairs, this kind of stuff.

- And how did you pick Gkàzi?

- Clearly because of the Metro [underground] and accessibility issues. We had experience of venues, where we went to live gigs, and we had to go to the end of the world. So we said, there is no reason for not being centrally located, even though the area is characterized otherwise.

In his last comment, 'even though the area is characterized otherwise', Panos refers to the area of Gkàzi and its association with mainstream and superficial entertainment, which according to him does not fit very well with the style of Spiti. Spiti, is located on the border between Gkàzi and Kerameikòs. It is situated in a little alley which is typically considered part of the area of Kerameikòs, but it is in close proximity to the central square of Gkàzi which is full of cafès, bars and restaurants, found side-by-side one to the other, forming a long line of entertainment venues in the two pedestrianized streets surrounding the square. The existence of the Metro station, which was established in 2007, posed a strong motive for them in choosing the area over others, as it made the venue accessible. The number of vacant spaces, due to the crisis, was another motive. This was the case with most of the jazz venues, particularly Afrikana, Kerameio and Spiti. However, the decision to turn to entrepreneurship is another story, as Panos narrates:

It all happened during a transitional period when I quit my job. Both I and Yiorgos quit our jobs and decided to get involved with music. I was an automation technician, Yiorgos was in civil aviation, anyway it was something other than music. But in the meanwhile we kept performing. We were engaged with music, but not professionally. And when we decided to dedicate ourselves to this, for two to three years I intensively threw myself into it, studying, having classes, performing. But I

realized that there was more to be done, if I wanted to make a living out of it. That I should occupy myself with something, if not as a musician, at least with something that has to do with music. Because the situation had already started to decline so we said, let's go for it, it's all or nothing. We will either make a space where we will be able to house some activities and at the same time not be obliged to be in an office doing something irrelevant...But in the meantime we realized that many things are involved and it is not as easy as it sounds.

Panos was working in the UK, when he decided to come back in 2011, just when the crisis had officially erupted. Below he explains the reasons why:

I did my Master's in Sheffield and then I worked, outside Birmingham. I spent four years there. I came back around the end of 2011. I had some issues with the army and other stuff. And things had come to an end, I couldn't see myself there [in the UK]. I would see the pros, how I lived and I said to myself, 'Ok, if you stay more you'll be tempted by the money and you will never leave.'

Panos's indication of money as something he should be running away from vividly supports the claim made by Sahlins that there is no such thing as a rational economic man (2013: 163,64), and that rational consumption may be rational, as regards the perpetual capital accumulation (Harvey 2014: 274), but does not govern human rationality and decision-making. Panos's comment indicates that there were other values in play when he decided to leave a secure working environment in the UK and come back to Greece in 2011, an apparently very 'irrational' decision.

- So you left [the UK] with the prospect of coming back to do what? Work as a mechanic?

- No, for music. Which was not an option, I realized this later down the road, I didn't want to see it in the beginning. I thought that I could do some other work simultaneously... But then this thing happened and I thought there is no

way I will go to work eight and nine hours for 400 euros, there is no way, because even if you had built a good CV, it did not matter.

One phrase uttered by Panos remained in my mind, which was indicative of the state of mind during times of such an economic upheaval, when decision-making acquires the status of a ‘life or death’ kind of question: ‘The situation had already started to decline so we said, let’s go for it, it’s all or nothing.’ The ‘crisis’, a word that in Greek means also judgement, indeed presented itself as a moment for decisions to be made. Knight and Stewart, building upon the concept of crisis as judgement—reminding us of Lambek’s association of ‘judgement’ with ethical values—suggest an ethnographic approach to crises that will empirically capture ‘the actual decisions or non-decisions that people make, and actual temporal processes by which they judge responses, if and when they manage to do that’ (2016: 11).

In the case of these venue owners, the criteria for choosing a professional career changed during the recession, as Panos indicates, since the previous motives, related to professional and economic development, were no longer in play. As was the case with professional musicians, when economic incentives disappeared, alternative ‘values’ had to be set in motion as to make decisions for one’s life. Working in an office ten hours per day for 400 euros was not seen anymore as something ‘worth spending one’s creative energy on’ (Graeber 2001: 45). However, this turn to entrepreneurship was not always smooth, particularly for people like Panos and Yiorgos who were inexperienced. Panos referred to the problems they faced:

- We opened around November 2014, worked during December, January... In January we shut down, January, February and reopened in March. We were closed for around one month and a half, there was this turmoil, we closed and reopened.

- Why was that? It didn’t go well?

- Because of a lot of things. We didn’t know how a venue operates and we didn’t know that you need to have a budget in place in order to support a venue from zero. And we also didn’t see it so much as a business, we went

for it in a very emotional way and we said ‘let’s go for the music.’ And that’s ok, but when you put down the numbers they don’t add up.

The owners of Spiti are the only ones among the venue owners in Kerameikòs who are active on a dual level in the jazz scene, both as hosts of live gigs and as active musicians themselves. Thus, Spiti serves as a space where they house their own activities, related to the musics they play such as flamenco as well as jazz gigs. Most of the musicians are also their friends, as they all partake in the same music circuit, as Panos explains when I ask him about the groups that perform there:

- And how do you choose the groups that play here? How do you make the deals? Do they come and ask you to play?

- Usually they come and ask us, even though the ones who play are either friends or acquaintances, or we have played together, something like this.

- Yes, because you are part of the scene.

- This is how it started and how a core of musicians was created who play often. They are people who have come, have helped, it’s a bit like...I wouldn’t say a collective, but at least, they are people with whom we are in contact.

- So, how is it now that you have also seen the other side of it, the entrepreneurial? How have things been for you?

- Very hard. Very. I mean, we haven’t decided yet if it is sustainable. We are waiting to see what will happen during this season, which is a bit more organized, more stable regarding the programme, the hours, it is as it should be. So we will wait until the end of the year in order to decide if it can go on or not, whether we have to change something. What we can afford [...] Now we also aim for people outside of the scene. If you manage to get someone who is watching the news and will say, ‘huh, what’s this? I’ll go to check it out.’ Like one goes to Badminton or Gazarte. If you manage to build this kind of circle that will keep expanding, then there is hope. Otherwise I think it is difficult.

- How do you plan on doing this?



- We are trying in every way we can, through advertising, through Facebook, we are talking with some radio stations but the sums they ask for are... They are out of touch with reality.

### **Turn to Micro-entrepreneurship**

All the above venue owners were caught up in the recession post-2010 and decided to make a turn in their professional careers, towards micro-entrepreneurship. The main reasons they gave for their decisions were related to the disruptions in traditional forms of employment. As Tsampra (2018: 6,7) notes:

[...] in 2014, Greece and Spain recorded the highest long-term unemployment in EU28 (followed by other peripheral countries). [...] between 2008 and 2013, youth unemployment increased 59 per cent in Greece [...]. In 2015, Greece still suffered unsustainable rates of youth unemployment (51.8%), followed by Spain (48.6%), Croatia (43.1%), and Italy (40.5%).

One of the first effects of the crisis was the shutdown or shrinkage of local SMEs [Small and Medium-sized Enterprises], as was the case with Eleftheroudakis, the bookstore where Nausikà was employed. The closure or downsizing of multi-national companies, like the one in which Vangelis worked for the past twenty years, and their move towards other markets, are other facets of the economic crisis, inherent in capitalism and analyzed thoroughly by Harvey in his section on 'uneven geographical development and the production of space'. As he eloquently points out, '[...] the search for the new, billed as the search for competitive advantage, becomes critical to capital's capacity to reproduce itself. Above all, uneven geographical development serves to move capital's systemic failings around from place to place' (2014: 161).

A second facet of the ongoing transformations was the liberalization of closed professions, a requirement of the structural reforms to be undertaken by Greece, as part of the memorandum agreements. The Greek government

was obliged to take measures towards the deregulation<sup>22</sup> of several professions, including those of dentists, pharmacists, taxi drivers etc. One of the first sectors to be affected, in 2010, was that of freight and haulage, causing long nationwide strikes, with several repercussions regarding gas and food distribution.<sup>23</sup> Kostas, faced with increasing losses, decided to sell the trucks he owned and invest his capital in Louis.

The third reason mentioned by Panos and Yiorgos, who are also the youngest among the venue owners, had to do with ‘the dramatic wages<sup>24</sup> and pension reductions’ (by nearly 30%)’ (Tsampra 2018: 8), as a result of the shrinking economy. The average minimum wage for a single adult ranged from 430 euros (after tax) for those aged under 25 to around 530 euros (after tax) for those over 25 years old, at the same time that youth unemployment peaked at 50%.

Under these conditions, self-employment seemed like the only way out for those who could afford it, and this is one of the reasons that micro-businesses (of one to five employees), particularly in the food and beverage sector, boomed after 2012. The turn to micro-entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon, though. Similar processes took place in another period of economic stagnation, during the 1980s and early 1990s, as Souliotis mentions: ‘Young people were re-oriented towards services like restaurants, bars and cafes rupturing the continuity with parental occupations. They created small entertainment businesses in the 1980s and early 1990s with

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<sup>22</sup> Regulation is related to conditions affecting market entry and market behaviour or conduct. For a detailed analysis (ordered by the European commission) of the effects of liberalization of closed professions in Greece, supporting that this led to further opening of the market, see Athanassiou et al. (2015). The report can be found online [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/effects-reforms-regulatory-requirements-access-professions-country-based-case-studies-0\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/effects-reforms-regulatory-requirements-access-professions-country-based-case-studies-0_en) . Regarding the intensity of the reforms see Athanassiou et al. (2016).

<sup>23</sup> Knight (2015: 75,80) provides an amusing description of what happened in a queue outside of a gas station in Trikala. The queue was formed due to the lack of gas in every gas station of the city, as a result of this particular strike that took place from July 26<sup>th</sup> until August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010.

<sup>24</sup> According to evidence provided by Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), the statutory minimum wage in Greece decreased by 24% in the period between 2010-2017. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/eu-member-states/statutory-minimum-wages-in-the-eu-2017>

minimum financial resources and based on personal work and aid from their social networks' (Souliotis 2013: 64).

Most of the structures where these jazz venues are located were previously derelict and abandoned. After the bubble of the early 2000s burst in 2008, the fancy lofts and restored neoclassical buildings stopped popping up and many buildings in the area were left vacant. Current venue owners with the help of friends and family, rather than with professional crews, managed to restore them with a relatively low budget and personal work. Only in this case they did not rupture the continuity with parental occupations as Souliotis mentions above. They ruptured the continuity with values promoted by the neoliberal market economy, such as upward mobility and rampant consumerism: values that were prevalent in Greek society after the 1990s and until the mid 2000s.

What is important in this case, though, is not the well-known and thoroughly analyzed, worsening of the employment conditions during the recession. What is important to look into is the kind of businesses unemployed people turned to. Means, money, objects that were being used to survive and make a living in the previous neoliberal capitalist mode were being re-appropriated through their sale and re-investment, so as to materialize dreams related to leisure or professions that were not seen as worthy pursuing during the previous years of economic growth, such as music making, or opening a bar as opposed to 'real' work.

Redundancy payouts originating in the collapse of the economy and the shutdown of businesses, trucks that could not be used to produce surpluses—all symbols of a collapsing capitalism—were used in order to turn dreams that were carefully nurtured during the previous decades into reality. Since capitalism could no longer give false hope in the form of money, social recognition or upward mobility, hope had to come from within and from dreams that capitalism had rendered value-less thus far. In this transformation the venue owners of Kerameikòs initiated two different ontologies of live jazz music in the post-2010 era, as gift and as commodity, with the boundaries between the two quite often getting blurred, as I have discussed in the beginning of the chapter.

And even though their descriptions of jazz sometimes evoke an essentialized notion of it, reminiscent of what Fry calls a process of 'black

negotiation with white expectation' (2007: 275), they did not resort to the stereotyping tactics of Half Note who would hire almost exclusively black musicians. They rather created a network of jazz venues in the Greek capital supporting local jazz professionals, in the midst of the worst period the country has gone through since the *Metapolitefsi* [post-regime] era. In this, it is not a coincidence that most of the venue owners in Kerameikòs identify with a conceptualization of jazz as a popular music form, rather than as concert music. This is the kind of performance that they promote, a participatory rather than a presentational (Turino 2008: 23,65) one. After all, this is how jazz got introduced in Greece, as a dance form during a tumultuous period.

## Conclusion

### Towards a New Ethos

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This thesis has presented a close view of the live music network of jazz in Athens during the recession, describing how the key agents in the scene responded to the challenging economic environment, and transformed an already established musical tradition to fit in a world of less. This is primarily an ethnographic work, contributing to the study of globalization and cosmopolitanism in relation to music and economics. A second point that has emerged from this ethnographic work is related to reconsidering jazz histories in the plural. This ethnography encourages us to think beyond a master narrative of jazz and to adopt a more pluralistic approach to its histories.

I am arguing that the history of jazz today is also being written in places far-away from the United States, due to the circumstances that allowed its emergence in the first place. Taylor Atkins (2003: xiii) points out that ‘Jazz, though certainly born on U.S. soil, [...] was a harbinger of what we now call “globalization.”’ What the chapters in Atkins’s volume demonstrate is that ‘peoples around the world have been actively constructing their own systems for performing, understanding, evaluating, and discussing jazz’ (ibid: xx), thus, I would add, carving out their own jazz histories and stories.

This is a story about a local jazz scene, during one of the worst periods in Greece’s recent history. As such, it is a story marginal both to jazz studies and crisis-related studies. It talks about a ‘peripheral’ jazz scene, invisible to the dominant jazz narrative, and does not talk about protest and drama, the first thing that comes to mind when talking about music and crisis. I consciously chose to distance myself from media-oriented conceptions of the crisis as being only about drama and disaster. This was an ethical choice, as I explained in one of the first texts I wrote after the end of my fieldwork, feeling troubled and guilty because I had not focused on protest music:

Conflict, drama, disaster were and still are the only ‘acceptable’ words when talking about the Greek case. But they are not mere words, they are way beyond this. This is the way in which the Greek recession has been conceptualized both locally and world-wide, as a mono-dimensional phenomenon, as Knight has argued, following a mass media guided model, deliberately stressing the element of ‘drama’, because ‘drama’ sells. It sells on TV; it sells on funding applications.

But what about this frantic layer of highly contradicting realities simultaneously taking place? What about the creative ways in which musicians try to adapt to new circumstances? What about the transformations taking place in that little crack formed between the disaster and everyday life that has to go on? How does everyday life go on? What about the choices musicians make? What about the shift in their motives for making these choices? How do power relations between different music cultures shift when disruptions of such scale happen? How does a whole scene, including the venue owners, the performers and the audience respond? How is the current reality informed by the delusional dreams of the 1990s and early 2000s? How does globalization work in reverse, not as expansion, but as contraction? Drama sells but blinds us with numbers. And although numbers are useful, they cannot provide answers for the precarious existential condition of today’s world.

*Ten minutes for nothing! Make some poetry, some love, something! What do you want to do in your life? Be a musician? So do something different. There are many guitarists that play louder and faster than you. You have to do something else. Be a poet. Tell a story. It has to do more with sport than with music what you did. I never felt that you wanted to enjoy. Music should be like a caress. Try to tell a story. Just tell a story and people will remember forever.*

(author's fieldnotes, Sežana 2010)

I never thought that my MA thesis would find its way eight years later into my PhD, as I could not imagine how classical guitar festivals and Roland Dyens<sup>1</sup>—the classical guitarist who uttered the above, during a masterclass in Sežana, Slovenia in 2010<sup>2</sup>—could be related to the Athenian jazz scene during the recession. However, I could not think of a better alternative to open up this final section, as this thesis has come to be an assemblage of stories: those of the life-worlds of professional musicians and venue owners in the urban setting of Athens, trying to come to terms with and invent alternatives to the dystopian ‘brave new world’ that emerged in face of the economic collapse in 2010.

As I have already discussed, the position of storytelling within academic writing is ambivalent, as Steven Feld notes, in a quote I often resort to: ‘OK, Stories are not analyses in the academic scheme of things. But this does not mean they are unanalytic. Stories, as shown many times and ways by Michael Jackson, as well as by Kathleen Stewart and Keith Basso, all brilliant among anthropologists for their equal talents as story writers, analyze by the way they encode memorability’ (2012: 8).

As Feld suggests, stories become analyses the moment they are narrated by the people in the field, choosing what to include and what to omit, recreating past events as they want them to be remembered in the present. In

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Dyens (1955-2016) was a composer and active performer of classical guitar. His work included original compositions as well as arrangements drawing on multiple genres.

<sup>2</sup> The student had just finished playing Fernando Sor's Theme Varie, a virtuosic piece of the repertoire of classical guitar. The masterclasses were part of Kras Guitar Festival 2010.

the ethnography these same stories undergo a second level of analysis, when I choose what to include and what to leave out. It is in this double ‘montage’ that memories become stories. As Michael Jackson has pointed out very eloquently, stories in their retelling are constantly reshaped: ‘It is a truism that all stories get subtly reshaped and reconstrued every time they are told. To extend Heraclitus’s metaphor of time and the river, one might say that it is impossible to ever tell the same story twice’ (2013: 227). And to de-romanticize them, I need to remind the reader that these were not stories narrated among friends gathered around the fire, but stories narrated on my request, in front of a voice-recorder and an ethnomusicologist (or to their eyes a student or a friend), looking for connections between music and the crisis.

Ramnarine, in exploring the applicability of the concept of storytelling further—not as a narrative technique but in musical performance—and drawing on Benjamin’s concept of the storyteller as a teacher or sage, notes that ‘memories do not always achieve the status of “history”’ (2014: 84). Storytelling then serves another purpose when involved in ethnographic research: that of turning unofficial narratives, ignored by the dominant ideology, into history by bringing them into the public domain.

It was during one of those moments that Kostas, unfolding his musical life-story during our interview, stopped and insisted: ‘Make a pause here [...] I think we should record this’, even though we were already recording. The pause was made from the narrative of his life events, to tell another story from the early 2000s, involving the music industry, a very famous Greek singer and a ‘revolutionary’ song recorded for a philanthropic cause, which ended up bringing profits mainly to the already wealthy singer. He kept insisting on the importance of that story: ‘So, this was a project, listen now carefully, *giana meinei kiolas* [so this will remain].’ The moment of the interview, and the fact that it was being recorded, appeared as a chance to ‘write down’ past events with the intention to leave their sonic imprint for the future, a sonic imprint that would otherwise be lost. As he concluded: ‘I said this because it was a chance to record this and have it, because we talk about this in the *kafeneia*, they are widely known stories.’

This thesis tells a story, mediated by the ethnographer, about the city of Athens and its professional jazz musicians and venue owners during the



recession. It tells a story about a paradoxical moment in the history of a musical subculture, during which it downsized economically, and at the same time expanded musically. It tells a story about the transition from the euphoric 1990s and early 2000s to a place and time at which a new system had to be imagined. It tells a story that, if retold, might, or would be completely different. My fieldwork was conducted five years after the official beginning of the crisis in 2010, at a period during which people had gone through the first shockwave, and those who could had started rebuilding their lives. This new start had a seed of enthusiasm within it, as I myself experienced, watching the local jazz scene being built back up with new venues and new projects, live and recorded.

Towards the end of my PhD, in 2018, when I met again some of the musicians, a pervasive feeling of resignation echoed through their words. Many mentioned that 2017-2018 has been the worse year they can remember in terms of employment. Some of the most active musicians had indeed stopped playing music as a conscious choice, refusing to give up their creative potential for 30 euros, and choosing instead to make a living only through teaching or looking for other alternatives. Some of the venues, facing issues with the municipality or the neighbours, had to cancel their gigs and it is unknown at this point if they will be able to resume their activities; others proved to treat musicians unfairly, repeating the same old story of the past. Although my engagement with the scene started in 2011 and is ongoing, this thesis is based on intensive fieldwork conducted in the years 2015 to 2016. As such, it tells the story of a particular place, at a particular time, but even in its extreme particularity, it is still important as ‘to listen carefully to stories is to take local subjectivity seriously’ (Feld 2012: 8).

### **On globalization, cosmopolitanism and values**

One of the key questions explored in the thesis has been about the relation of the global to the local, and its renegotiation during the transition from a period of economic development to one of abrupt economic decline. As such, it contributes to the literature of globalization theory, but not of a notion of globalization associated with economic growth and worldwide music dissemination, or a ‘celebration of *world music*’s globality and its perceived

power to undermine boundaries’ (Tragaki 2015: 247, emphasis in the original). This ethnographic study explores globalization associated with economic decline and the subsequent prioritization of locality due to the scarcity of funds. Jazz was employed as a paradigm of a musical genre initially made accessible through the global circulation of capital, peoples and sounds that was already in place in the 1920s, as I discussed in the Introduction. By examining the Athenian live jazz scene thoroughly in the post-2010 era, I traced the subsequent changes that came as a result of the disruption of the conditions that made it available in the first place, namely capital circulation.

Prior to discussing the transformations in the fields of the global and the local, and the superculture and subculture, it is important to make a few points regarding the status and ontology of jazz music in the Athenian soundscape prior to the crisis. The contemporary Athenian jazz scene started to develop in the 1970s, in the form of a small community of dedicated musicians who were mostly trained in classical music and learned jazz through recordings. This scene flourished further during the 1990s, with the emergence of local jazz programmes in conservatories and with the access to European and American educational institutions (Amsterdam Conservatoire, Berklee). The economic spirit of the era was evident in the spaces where this musical subculture flourished, and in that period (1990s-2000s) jazz was associated with bar restaurants with cosmopolitan aspirations, acting at the same time as symbols of the modernizing city, as I have discussed in Chapter 1.

Souliotis, whom I often quote in chapters 1 and 4, talks about the transformations in the cultural markets that took place in Athens since the 1970s, as a result of ‘tertiarization, growth of middle classes and enhancement of cultural capital, aesthetization of consumption, [and] neoliberalization associated in Europe with European Union policies’ (2013: 62). As he suggests, within this period of upward mobility, middle and lower class youngsters would show a distaste for the vernacular culture, including taverns and clubs. Souliotis, in his analysis, rather than engaging further with the multiple and contradictory identities adopted simultaneously by audience members or ‘consumers’, as he labels them, chooses to attribute this distaste

for the vernacular to the friction created by social mobility, from the previous lower class towards the new upper-middle class position.

It is at this moment, as he further suggests, that the cultural markets—and here we have again another notion of the invisible market but in cultural terms—respond to this tension by inventing ‘modernized ways of popular entertainment [...]’ (ibid: 63). As he argues, the entrepreneurs of the 1990s, ‘created their restaurants and bars according to their personal tastes’ (ibid). Souliotis’s analysis, although mistaken in its polarized representation of ‘homogenous’ working and middle classes trying to escape their humble descent by disassociating themselves from anything deemed *laikò* [‘folk/popular’], is correct regarding the extent of the trend that emerged in the 1990s, namely the ‘appropriation of symbolic goods coming from Western Europe and the US (genres of music, cuisines, garments, etc.)’ (2013: 63). Jazz has been one of those ‘symbolic goods’, as Souliotis names them, following Bourdieu.

However, as Sahlins discusses, analyses drawing heavily on the notions of ‘tastes’, ‘capital’, and ‘commodities’ are inadequate models to account for economic change seen as a transition ‘from one value situation to another’ (2013: 166). As he notes: ‘Here again, in the understanding of economic change, is another disabling effect of subsuming the cultural and historical forces that constitute the values of persons and the objects of their existence as individual preferences’ (ibid).

My alignment with value theory as a more appropriate model to theorize economic change, both during the 1990s (as a transition towards a neoliberal economic model) and during the tumultuous period post-2010, draws on Sahlins’ comment above. In this light, the 1990s could be theorized as a period in which ‘the political economy of alterity’ prevailed, as I discussed in the Introduction, due to capital circulation. Jazz within this paradigm attained the status of a prestige good, but only when the performers originated in the exotic elsewhere, be it the United States or Europe, with the local musicians functioning as the alter-ego, or what in Greece we would call ‘the poor relative’ to their international counterparts.

Within this period of economic euphoria, music coming from outside the country acquired value automatically, and furthermore local music acquired

value only if it circulated outside the country and then came back in. More specifically, international musicians were considered *a priori* better, and the local ones had to establish their fame abroad initially, and then have their value recognised within the country.<sup>3</sup> The late 2000s would be characterized by the total reversal in these power relations, not only between the local and global condition, but also between the superculture and the subculture. The reformulation of the Athenian jazz scene during the recession offers valuable insights on both matters. As far as the first issue is concerned, as I have argued, the recession advanced the local condition as opposed to the global, in two seemingly opposing ways: in the first instance we had the prioritization of Greek vernacular musics, and in the second, the prioritization of cosmopolitan musics performed by Greeks, affirming what Turino (2000) has argued for, that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not competing but rather complementary terms. The above, combined with the dystopian economic condition of the late 2000s, form what I call ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’. Low-budget cosmopolitanism is, put simply, national and cosmopolitan aspirations combined, when there is no money.

On the one hand, we have the example of Half Note, as discussed in the first chapter, the dominant jazz venue in the city until 2010, which finding it could no longer host international productions and artists, turned to the local scene, the cost of which was manageable. What is interesting though is that it did not turn to local jazz musicians, except to a limited extent, but to artists performing Greek music, thus opening its doors to the superculture, or to what it considered its ‘quality’ branch, namely *èntehno* and traditional Greek music. As Yorgos Haronitis wrote in a 2015 article for the venue’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> One of the most characteristic and under-researched cases in Greek music is the emergence of the Greek black metal scene in the 1990s. The three founding bands of the scene, Rotting Christ, Nightfall and Septic Flesh were ignored and often ridiculed in Greece in the beginning. It was only after their recognition abroad, establishing what is known until today ‘the Greek sound’, that their value was recognized back home.

<sup>4</sup> Available in Greek on the online edition of Athinorama magazine: [http://www.athinorama.gr/music/article/kanoume\\_flash\\_back\\_sta\\_20\\_xronia\\_half\\_note\\_Jazz\\_club-2509834.html](http://www.athinorama.gr/music/article/kanoume_flash_back_sta_20_xronia_half_note_Jazz_club-2509834.html).

Thrasos Eirinis makes the choices of the foreign groups that perform over the last years in ‘Half Note Jazz Club’, not for whole weeks anymore but in four-day sessions. And during the years of the crisis, the club has ‘opened’ its programme to artists of wider popularity but of guaranteed quality.

Half Note’s policy, in its supposed dedication to ‘quality’ music even post-crisis, reveals a lot about the kind of jazz they promoted pre-crisis. Jazz was categorized and promoted as ‘high-quality’ music, away from the ‘despicable’ Greek popular musics, particularly *bouzoùkia*, that were in their heyday until the mid 2000s. What is really interesting, though, is that the performance conventions and practices of Half Note were identical to the ones at *bouzoùkia*, from which they distanced themselves. Although the venue was relatively small in size, there were designated zones according to which prices were determined, the closer to the stage the higher the price. In order to reserve and sit at a table, one was obliged to order a bottle of alcohol (whiskey, vodka etc.) per four persons, or a bottle of wine per couple. The exact same policies were in place at *bouzoùkia*, where one would tip the maître to get a table closer to the *pista* [stage] (Tsioulakis 2018: 42), and an obligatory purchase of one bottle per four persons was in place. Thus, seen from the viewpoint of consumption practices, attending a jazz gig or attending a show of Greek popular musics was part of one and the same act, that of ‘expenditure on ostentatious performing arts [as] a means of transforming money power into another form of power: status’ (Morcom 2015: 298).

Thus the venue’s decline during the crisis might be explained in another way, as for many of the audience on which the venue was dependent, jazz was another prestige good to be discarded as not-so-necessary during the crisis. At the same time, the younger generations of dedicated jazz fans, which grew with students from local conservatories and universities, could not afford these kind of venues, while the older generations that were nurtured inside Half Note’s walls had already decided a few years into the crisis to establish their own jazz venues.

In the case of Half-Note, then, and as far as the relation of the global to the local is concerned, we have a turn not towards the local jazz scene, but

towards a locality that pre-crisis functioned as the determinant par excellence of the ‘Otherness’ of the venue within Greek culture, through the venue’s disassociation from it. Half-Note, investing in the expensive translocal music (US jazz), cultivated an otherness within the Greek soundscape, exactly because it did not identify with local Greek music, neither folk/traditional nor Greek jazz. One cannot fail but notice the irony of turning to it post-2010, trying to use it as a life-line.

On the other hand, we have the emergence of a distinct network of jazz venues, with the ones at Kerameikòs forming the core of it, operating exclusively with local jazz musicians. In this choice, the venue owners reproduced the music culture they had experienced during prior years, in a much more affordable way for the audience, but with negative repercussions as far as the musicians’ fees were concerned. Consequently, the ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’ I argue for is not an even, celebratory cosmopolitanism, but a rather uneven one, full of asymmetries and characterised by a great paradox: good for ‘music’ as a reified entity, or for the audience who had access to top musicians for a maximum of a five-euro entrance fee, but at the same time very bad for the ones who were responsible for its emergence from the very start, namely the musicians, as Kostas indicates:

However, what’s interesting is that, even though we have the crisis now and..., live gigs are a disgrace, I mean you go to play for 30 or 40 euros. And for the younger ones it’s even worse, but despite all this you see that there are new fresh projects, with compositional aspirations, while in my day when I started, [having a] jazz group meant that we will play *All the things you are* and how it’s called, *The Bossa*, Jobim etc, normally [in their original format] because this is the way we should play them.

Kostas points to the emergence of new cultural practices regarding jazz performances in Athens, which move beyond a mere reproduction of the pieces comprising the jazz canon, and towards a significant rise in the number of original compositions, projects and recordings by Greek jazz musicians. This contributed towards legitimizing the term Greek jazz as a large repertory

was created during the years of the crisis.<sup>5</sup> Combined with the abrupt decline of the music industry, which no longer provided a viable option for the new incomers, this contributed to the emergence of a new ethos in the scene.

### **Towards a New Ethos**

But what is so striking about crises is not so much the wholesale reconfiguration of physical landscapes, but dramatic changes in ways of thought and understanding, of institutions and dominant ideologies, of political allegiances and processes, of political subjectivities, of technologies and organisational forms, of social relations, of the cultural customs and tastes that inform daily life. Crises shake our mental conceptions of the world and of our place in it to the very core.

(Harvey 2014: ix-x)

The now eight-year period that has intervened since the beginning of the crisis gave rise to significant changes in the jazz scene. There were several contributing factors that played a role in the emergence of a new ethos, as this was not solely an outcome of the recession. One of them has been the establishment of the Jazz Department of the Ionian University, with its graduates having a strong presence in the Athenian scene in the late 2000s. My argument is that the economic crisis accelerated the transition towards this new ethos, by decelerating the rhythms of neoliberal processes and formations, such as gentrification and the extravagant shows of the popular music industry. In this way, the crisis provided the circumstances for the emergence of this new ethos, by rendering obsolete the previous cultural practices and power relations between the superculture and the subculture of the euphoric 1990s and early 2000s.

This idea of a new ethos, as is the case with most of the insightful ideas, came from one of the people in the field, namely Kontrafouris. In his words:

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<sup>5</sup> Cyrus (2014) in her article regarding the ‘work culture’ of session musicians in Jamaica’s recording industry from 1957-1979, also describes how the innovation and quantity of work that was created during the recordings led to the emergence of new genres such as ska, rocksteady and reggae, which came to be emblematic for the country.

- But regardless of the crisis, the new musicians have new ‘specs’. They are different models. More evolved. They don’t have the taboos my generation had. [...] For example you see this new group now, Next Step,<sup>6</sup> they’ll go ahead and make a tribute to Radiohead. And they are all friends with Takim,<sup>7</sup> even though they are not related at all [musically]. And Meretakis who plays in Takim goes and sees Next Step, there is no taboo any more. They have realized that each one of them plays music and in the bigger picture, if they play and have gigs, everyone will have gigs.

- There has been a boom with the small live [gigs] over the last years, all of a sudden there were small live [gigs] in small *magazia*.

- Yes. Yes. Of course all of this is *low budget* [sic], this is why. But there are also projects that are not *hýma* [sloppy]. They are like ‘I have a group, I’ll go on and present, I’ll go on stage’. They are active, they have a vision. And I think this is how it is going to be from now on. I don’t think it will change. This is how it’s going to be, it’s done. We will consider it as a given. Which is something, in order to create a scene. To consider it as a given, regardless of whether you like it or not. Otherwise it’s a community. It’s the kind of community with five [people] who are engaged with it and they don’t care about anything else. But the scene is something that breathes within all this *dròmeno* [happening]. I can’t bring an example, but you know what I mean. Even if I don’t monitor the *rebètiko* scene, I know that there is a scene nonetheless and I understand it. Even though I do monitor the *rebetiko*. But let’s say that I don’t; I know that there is a scene and that if I want to, at some point, I will find the places where they make it [this music]. This is what I mean by scene. The fact that I consider its existence a given. Regardless of whether I’m in it or not. Otherwise it is a community, something that is closed, and the people in it don’t care about anything outside of it. This is what I believe, I’m saying what I believe. And it [a scene] exists in all the genres... People who make this music and if you want to, you can find them.

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<sup>6</sup> He refers to the Next Step Quintet, a band formed by alumni of the Jazz Department of the Ionian University.

<sup>7</sup> *Takim* is a ‘folk-ethnic band’ as they label themselves. More information is available in English on their Facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/Takimband/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/Takimband/about/?ref=page_internal). See also, an indicative video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dw8BZgHcb2A>



More easily. It's not hidden. You'll ask, 'who is there?' 'This one and this one and this one.' And after 10 years it will be others, and their students with their teachers. And they will be the same and even better. This is what I mean by scene. That exists for a long time. In other genres it might exist longer, in jazz I think [it's] the last 7-8 years, the younger ones emerged too. Also, the younger ones do another thing which is very good. When they go to play somewhere, they go because they like it and because they have something to offer. When they go to play somewhere they don't..., of course they will do it *vioporistikà* [to make a living], we are not *àyla pnèvmata* [immaterial spirits], we have to get by somehow. However, they go only as long as they like it and are able to function. A thing I consider very good, because the ethos changes, and the ethics change, which is what is most important. Ok, the notes are notes, *Do* [C], the notes will be the same throughout the years. But I see it with the young ones now. For example Kostis<sup>8</sup> did the orchestration for Papakonstantinou.<sup>9</sup> He didn't do it [as] work. I'm not saying that Papakonstantinou is work, but you understand. He's wonderful and *gamàtos* [awesome]. [...] But it is something they would do either way. Even if they were at home, they would think something like this. So they consider that they can function [within it] ... This changes the *ethos*. There is another *ethos*, and this is how the *ethos* in playing will change, and at our 'working place' where we circulate.

- They won't consider it *work*.<sup>10</sup>

- No, no. First they consider it playing. Which for me, is tremendously, and extremely, fundamentally different. From the previous situation.

Kontrafouris's elaborate comment regarding the change in the ethos of the jazz scene indicates a change in the power balance between the superculture and the subculture. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the younger jazz musicians do not function as mere session musicians supporting the shows of the Greek

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<sup>8</sup> Kontrafouris here refers to Kostis Christodoulou, the establisher of the band 'To pragma' [The Thing] – grecofuturistic jazz.

<sup>9</sup> He refers to Thanassis Papakonstantinou, a very famous and established *èntehno* singer-songwriter, often experimenting with various genres.

<sup>10</sup> Alexia Kallergi, a member of the team of the research project *Western Art Music at the time of crisis*, was also present during the interview and made the above comment.

stars, but are actively engaged as composers and arrangers in projects that interest them. In this, they overcome the distinction of work and play that was prevalent during the previous decades.

The economic crisis decelerated the development of phenomena related directly with neoliberal economic policies. In the case of the jazz scene in Athens, this was evident in the decelerated rhythm of gentrification in the area of Kerameikòs post-2010, allowing for the emergence of an alternative culture, and furthermore in the shrinking of the popular music industry. It was in this Badiou-ian ‘evental space’ that what Graeber calls alternative ‘moral projects’ (2001: 21,22) started to emerge:

However primitive the models Kluckhohn actually produced, he did at least open up the possibility of looking at cultures as not just different ways of perceiving the world, but as different ways of imagining what life ought to be like—as moral projects, one might say.

It is imperative, in historical moments of great disruption, for one to be able to imagine that a different world is possible. But we need to be reminded constantly that, in such circumstances, imagining a new world does not constitute a romantic act of self-realization, but rather a forced and violent one, as indicated to me multiple times by the people in the field, who used the word ‘violent’ to refer to what happened during the past years.

As I argue, in analysing the choices of musicians and venue owners post-2010, we cannot reduce the cultural and historical forces to individual preferences, but must value transformations that occurred when people were forced to adjust their wants, or what they thought they ought to want, to that which was permitted or dictated by the collapsing socioeconomic world in which they found themselves. Graeber (2001: 3), drawing on Kluckhohn, in order to answer the question ‘So what, precisely, are values?’ argues that:

The central assumption though was that values are ‘conceptions of the desirable’—conceptions which play some sort of role in influencing the choices people make between different possible courses of action (Kluckhohn 1951: 395). The key term here is ‘desirable’. The desirable

refers not simply to what people actually want—in practice, people want all sorts of things. Values are ideas about what they *ought* to want. They are the criteria by which people judge which desires they consider legitimate and worth-while and which they do not. Values, then, are ideas if not necessarily about the meaning of life, then at least about what one could justifiably want from it.

Value theory proves to be very helpful on another front, that of challenging the idea of the ‘rational economic man’, this mythical creature that economic theory argues for and anthropology against. The economic crisis provides an example of what people do when things go wrong, and as such it is an ideal field to explore questions of this nature.

Looking at the agents involved in the live jazz scene of Athens, one might notice that they all took terribly irrational decisions, both before and after the crisis. When asking oneself, ‘what am I going to do with my life?’, the obvious answer would never be ‘quit university and play the bass’, or ‘cross the Atlantic and go on tour’. Later on, when the question became ‘How will I become a professional musician?’, again the obvious answer would never be ‘don’t play for the music industry, the only way to make a living as a musician in Greece’, or ‘reject the 300 euros-per-night gig in the industry because it is a sell-out, and become a life-guard instead’.

Even more irrational was the act of abandoning a steady job in the UK, to come back to Greece in 2011 and invest whatever money you have left to open a music venue, in a city labeled as ‘a failed city for consumption’ (Chatzidakis 2013), at the same time that 500.000 of the youth of the country abandoned it to build their lives elsewhere. Throughout the thesis, it seems as if these particular individuals showed abnormal behaviour, if we are to think in market economy terms, often running away from money instead towards it, as I discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4. Did they all get capitalism and life in general so wrong? Or could it be the other way around, that economic theory has got the human condition all wrong? What the life-choices of all the individuals in this thesis make clear is that there are other sorts of values governing human choice and judgement, much more critical than capital accumulation and self-interest.

The crisis offers a particular window in time and place to explore the alternative moral projects that all these individuals set in motion when they were forced to create an alternative way of life. Economic value might have been a strong incentive during the previous decades, but when this was no longer in play, as far as the musicians are concerned, they turned to their creative potential. This creative potential could be theorized, to borrow Weiner's (1985) concept, as 'inalienable wealth'. Even though Weiner uses the term to refer to objects, I would go even further to suggest that music skills, too, constitute a kind of 'inalienable wealth', as economic value can be taken away but musical skills not. One might wake up one day and be poor, but it is rather improbable that one will have forgotten how to play the guitar. This creative potential proved to be crucial for the renegotiation of the new reality, in the case of the musicians. In the case of the venue owners, capital accumulated during the previous decades or originating in the collapse of the economy, was re-appropriated and re-invested in order to materialize with bricks and cement, inside the walls of their venues, their own social and cultural histories carved out during the past decades.

I argue that globalization processes and capital circulation during the previous decades allowed for the prioritization of values coming from outside the system. Interestingly enough, the disruption of capital during the recession prioritized values from within, as local jazz musicians provided a much cheaper alternative to their international counterparts, while invoking the cosmopolitan imaginary related to the Anglo-American music traditions that was nurtured during the previous decades of economic growth.

Finally, while Graeber mentions that "'values" [as opposed to "value"] tend to take on importance either in societies without a commercial market [...] or, as in ours, in those contexts (church, home, museum, etc.) relatively insulated from it' (2001: 78), I suggest that incommensurable 'values' in the plural tend to take on importance also in critical moments such as the current socioeconomic crisis, where alternative moral projects need to be set in motion, so as to make sense out of a collapsing world. *Kerameikòs* then emerges as a space where jazz venue owners and musicians are actively engaging in the 'politics of value' as described by Graeber (2001: 88):

The ultimate stakes of politics, according to Turner, is not even the struggle to appropriate value; it is the struggle to establish what value *is*. Similarly, the ultimate freedom is not the freedom to create or accumulate value, but the freedom to decide (collectively or individually) what it is that makes life worth living.

In the aftermath of the crisis, musicians and venue owners, in their renegotiation of value as a notion of what is important in life, are collectively creating a ‘low-budget cosmopolitanism’, embracing contradiction, not to resolve it in a celebratory way but as a way to make ends meet when everything is about to collapse; and at the same time they are invoking past intimacies of the modernizing city, in their effort to re-engage with a world that they no longer recognise. Kostas, the owner of the *kafeneio* Louis, when I asked him why he chose jazz, for a venue that has been exclusively associated with Greek traditional musics or *rebetiko*, replied:

I like contradictions. Listening to Nina Simone and at the same time eating a picante sujuk [spicy sausage] ... With an egg on top of it. *Den tairiàzei* [it doesn't match], but this is what jazz music is about. I think.

In the same way that I have concluded this chapter with a quote from one of the people in the field, in the spirit of developing this collaborative work, at the end of this thesis the last word will go to one of the musicians. The next part entitled Epimetro, which could be roughly translated as Postscript, is a reflexive account of Babis's tour in the United States with Roxy Roca.

## Επίμετρο [P.S]

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### Στο δρόμο... [On the road]

Friday, September 23, 2016 - 11:00<sup>1</sup>

On the road... From the cheap motel floors of the South to the North East coast suburbs of the American dream and from the depths of Mississippi to the Bronx...

Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee...A wail of the breaks dissolves the phantasy of the myth of wandering. In the background a song sounds almost out of place. The song of a generation that discovered itself and got high on it by diving into the hedony of adventure, of escapism, of the poetry that was offered not as a way of saying but of being.

Kansas, Kentucky, N. Carolina, Virginia, Ohio... So much music, countless gas stations, unreal encounters and stories, filthy band houses, giant mansions of music aficionados, private events for the elite, open concerts by lakes and rivers. Sometimes you stumble upon more dignity under the bridge than inside the church.

Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut....Being chased, sleep deprived, break ups, driving and driving. From the multi-faceted megacities and the jazz clubs of NYC to the countryside of Indiana and the fish-towns of North Atlantic. What day is it, what city is it, what time is it here? The faster you go on the road, the more air you swallow.

N. Hampshire., Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts... Burlington and Heady Topper. From the big festival with the Roots and the Green River fest after-

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written by Babis, after his tour in the States with Roxy Roca, and was uploaded on the website of LAB|Music Education where he was employed at the time. The original text is written in Greek and translated by Babis into English. Photos are taken also by him.

party that was headlined by the Tedeschi Trucks band, to small joints baptised by Krasno, Scofield, C. Henry.

The reward of the first note. The offer to play Blues Bender in Vegas, the illegal dives at Niagara Falls.

Staring out the window towards the rainy horizon, enchanting landscapes, contemplating again and again what resembles Kerouac's writings. All around and within.

*'Where are the nests of the moles of the underground?'*

From Austin to the mourning of Orlando, Dallas and Baton Rouge, elections and the weird reflexes of a people, the engines of cornucopia and the poison of greed, poverty, fear and hatred. Thousands of miles. Love is what keeps you smiling, when you are so tired.

*'...will they ever be, I wonder, as many, as deep, to bring down the world on a sunny day?'*

A long time ago I was walking down South Congress, and heard the familiar sound of Billy Gibbons wailing from the Continental Club. A little further down the strip I sat with an older gentleman of the streets for a chat.

After a few words with pain in my heart, and in my stomach, the Epilogue of Factotum came to mind. 'If you are gonna try, go all the way. Otherwise, don't even start ... You will be alone with the Gods and the nights will flame with fire'. I thought ALONE for sure... and maybe this old grandpa is God.

For how long will you be able to trust your struggle when you end up more and more lost? How different would life be if it were me up on that stage tonight? 'Look old man the concrete is still wet ... give me your knife'.

Six years later, I stared at what still remains carved, for a long while, before going in to play.

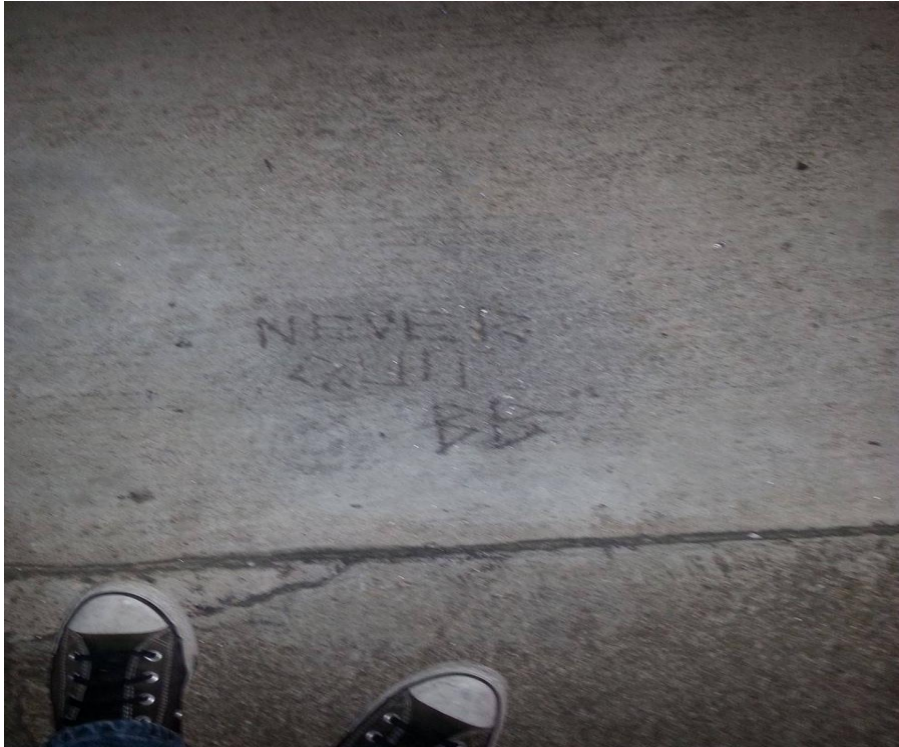


Fig. 14 (Never Quit B.B)

In retrospect, life doesn't change that much if it is you up on the stage here tonight. It changes during the nights you spend outside, trying to get in.

At any given moment, there is a river for us to cross filled with sacrifices, fear and doubt. And an impulse, a calling. It doesn't matter what we find on the other side, whether we get there, or whether we drown. What matters is that we jump in, that is the gift we hold and can share with the people. The people are the journey after all. This is the only way to be alive.

The ones who forget where they started from arrive nowhere.

Be for real. Trust your struggle.

Music is denying thyself. First and foremost, we play to bring people together. To come together. Not to stand out from the people, but to meet them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This phrase originates in the poem *Kapnismeno Tsoukali* by Yiannis Ritsos, part of which was set to music by Christos Leontis and sung by the well-known Cretan musician Nikos Ksylouris. The song is called 'Here, my brother' and the verse is as follows: 'Γιατί εμείς δεν τραγουδάμε για να ξεχωρίσουμε, αδελφέ μου, από τον κόσμο. Εμείς τραγουδάμε για να σμιζουμε τον κόσμο' [Because we don't sing to stand out, my brother, from the people. We sing to bring people together.] The song is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vOn7IhfhzE>.





Fig.15 Babis

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