

## MUSIC LABOUR OF LOCAL MUSICIANS IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF KRIŽEVCI, CROATIA<sup>3</sup>

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This dissertation represents the results of a music ethnography of the town of Križevci and its surrounding villages in central Croatia. The aim of the research was to show the role of local musicians as workers within the context of local social life. The selected musicians were those who earned money through their full-time or part-time music labour, who were mostly only locally visible, and who worked within the local social infrastructure, including concerts, dance venues, festivals, etc. In that way, the selected musicians acted as agents of local social life and were subsequently involved in the creation of local cultural identity. Through focusing on music labour within this local context, the ethnographic research aimed to examine the economic reality of the researched musicians, to bring forward the aspects of their lives as workers, and within that reality to consider the value and importance of music for the society and communities in which the musicians work.

The diverse stories of local musicians and the changing situation in local infrastructure have been observed in diachronic perspective, over the past 70 or more years, reflecting politico-historical changes of pre-socialist, socialist and post-socialist times. The results of ethnographic research in the town and surrounding villages show that the infrastructure previously induced the appearance of a large number of self-taught musicians. The interviews and conversations with retired musicians and organizers show that the local social events were largely supported by local musicians, and vice versa. The local musicians also generated changes of trends and fashion. For example, in the town in the second half of the 20th century, the bands changed from being jazz and dance bands in the 1940s and 1950s, to early rock bands of the 1960s and 1970s, when the regular town dances disappeared, then the tamburica bands returned to fashion in the 1980s and 1990s, whereas after the 1990s a greater diversity of styles occurred along with the rise in the number of performances of various non-local musicians. In the villages, the changes in music included a gradual substitution of traditional instruments (such as tambura and dude bagpipe) for electric ones, with the result that a large number of self-taught musicians emerged when these instruments became economically more available. However, in time, the players also changed from

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being local, domestic ones, to those in professional bands from other villages and towns.

In both of these contexts, the described changes demonstrate a shift from more participatory to more presentational practices in the sense that they became less spontaneous and more professionalized. Such cases have been recorded elsewhere in Croatia, too, where the modernization process, such as electrification, building of roads, and the availability of radio and television, led to changes in previously closely knit village communities, resulting in less communal activities in which the villagers previously made music by themselves.

A lot of the mentioned changes due to modernization in the second half of the 20th century were deliberately designed by the socialist government, as is evident through historical documents and articles. The important events in both town and villages, for example weddings, slowly shifted from private homes to public venues, since these types of venues started to become more accessible. Social life in socialism revolved around venues and institutions which were communally governed and owned. In the town, they included the Youth Hall, Cultural Hall, Town Hotel and occasionally other sites. The town popular music and dance bands had a certain amount of stability as a result of this infrastructure. In one case, a town band in the early 1970s was booked by the hotel management on a yearly contract, playing dances on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. In villages, the government encouraged and even forced the building of social halls which served multiple purposes, and soon became the most important segment of the village social infrastructure. Most of the village social halls in Križevci area are the fire halls of the volunteer fire departments, but were previously used by numerous other civil organisations such as youth organisations (*Omladinska organizacija*), women's organisations (*Aktiv žena*), as well as folkloric societies, football clubs, scouts, and others. All of these organisations used the fire department's infrastructure to organise their events, the most important of which were the dance parties (*zabave*).

The dance parties were autonomously organised by civil organisations, and included music, dancing, games, eating and drinking and at the same time, through money collected by selling tickets or food and drinks, the civil organisation would earn the means for some further activity. In other words, the new and modernized presentational social practices included a great deal of participation of the community even though it was in a different form than before. A similar situation is evident with music. Even though the music practices in socialism were less based on spontaneous communal dancing and singing, and the new venues and infrastructure dictated changes and amplified sound, the music professionals who accompanied social events were still local, or trans-local, from neighbouring villages and areas. Furthermore, the amount of village dance parties encouraged a great number of local people to start learning an instrument and form a band, because the demand for bands was high and the potential economic profit non-negligible.

Through the process of professionalization of local musicians, the economic model, conditionally speaking, changed at least twice. The local musicians in the town and villages before and in the 1950s who provided music for events, dances and weddings, were only occasionally paid with money. Their motivation for playing was drawn primarily from the fact that they were members of the community who took part in these events, but they were also frequently compensated through food and drinks, the economic value of which should not be neglected. This model, however, was already beginning to change in the 1950s, when musicians who relied on a relatively stable local socialist infrastructure started to expect to get paid with money. The third change happened in the post-socialist period with the disintegration of socialist infrastructure, when local musicians resorted to expanding their visibility in order to compensate for the decrease in local demand for music.

In the villages, the organisation of the social infrastructure through various civil societies had its peak during socialism, and a large amount of regular dance parties dictated a high demand for local musicians. Today, due to complex socio-political changes, social life in villages is practically non-existent and the sparse local musicians no longer direct their work locally. In the town, the social infrastructure and the local musicians continued to work together on the production of the local social life, but the socio-political changes likewise caused a gradual decrease of demand for local musicians. The musicians answered the changes through adopting different strategies for maintaining their economic sustainability, expanding their networks, but still regularly retracing their pathways »back home«.