

TAITEEN KESKUSTOIMIKUNTA
Tutkimus- ja julkaisuyksikkö

ARTS COUNCIL OF FINLAND
Research and Publications Unit

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Matti Lahtinen

EVALUATING MUSIC POLICY

Applying Ethnomusicological Frame of Reference
to the Study of "A Political System Directing
The Production of Music"



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De uitleentermijn is verstreken op:

10 OKT. 1997		
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Arts Council of Finland
Research and Publications Unit
1991

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Layout: Auli Irjala
Cover: Jukka Urho

ISBN 951-47-4485-3
ISSN 0788-5318

Arts Council of Finland
Helsinki 1991

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1. Introduction

This paper presents an on-going research project on music policy in Finland. The main goals of the project are to evaluate Finnish music policy and to create methodological tools for the analysis of cultural policies in general.

The means to direct musical activities of the citizens do not vary very much in the world. Most laws, acts, and directives seldom have direct influence to musical culture, but they set conditions to music-making and performing. - Music education is usually financed through public budgets and regulated by the laws for this support. - Many types of grants are given to individual artists, groups, and musical organizations; professional musicianship seldom is totally self-supporting. - Many institutions for research, promotion, and information work through public financing. - Music-business is regulated through laws for controlling economic activity. - Certain expert organs, like arts councils have been founded for public decision-making. - Copyright organizations get their right to collect money for authors through the process of public law-making.

How to approach the variety of music with macro-level tools?

In the politics and in scholarly macro-level approaches "The Arts" is seen as a homogeneous unit or as a set of ones. However, the sphere of arts is very heterogenous. Terms like rock, pop, heavy, ska, bluebeat, classic, popular, art music, texmex, dance music, contemporary music, light music, schlager etc. indicate the existence of different subcultures of music and also separate value systems. The case is similar within other forms of art.

The tools to analyze a culture on the macro-level are unable to measure the many layers of this large sphere. The quantitative methods of statistics, sociology, or macro-economics are not created to study phenomena of quality, i.e. the cultural values on micro level.

2. The Ethnomusicological Method

The basis of ethnomusicology is an anthropological perspective to a musical culture. The broad concepts of culture and music are the core of ethnomusicology.

Here I refer to the article of Mr Philip Donner "Two realities - The Frame of Reference of Music"¹. He presents the ethnomusicological frame of reference. The basis of the ethnomusicology was originally formed by the late Professor Alan P. Merriam as "the study of music in culture"². In the case of the project MusPolRa music policy is considered as a part of a musical culture.

Music should be studied on three analytical levels, those of concepts, behaviour, and product. Birth of a musical product - a socio-musical event, a musical instrument, music sound or a political decision concerning music - is a three-step process. (See Figure 1.)

Each individual has his or her own "view of music, his own body of musical concepts, on the basis of which he conceives his own musical activity"³. These abstractions, in the case of music policy the "wished state of affairs", direct the behaviour of the individual, thus activity in music emerges. A process of feed-backcontrols the correspondence between a concept and a product.

A musical culture and musical ideas, however, do not live isolated. Individuals are the basic units of thinking, idealisations, and activity. People communicate with each other and innovations and, again in the case of music policy, the choices are presented. The actual decisions are made in a process of interaction between individuals within the political and the artistic system of the culture. On the level of culture a change or the dynamics of culture is the result. (See Figure 2.)

¹DONNER, 1983

²N.B. here "culture" is to be understood in the anthropological sense of the word.

³DONNER, *ibid.*, 195.

3. Music Policy is a Part of a Music Culture

The socio-economic basis of a culture, i.e. the modes of production and the forces of production, sets conditions also to the modes of artistic production. The social system reproduces the labour force and indicates the division of labour - professionalism and "amateurism", the role of sexes in music etc. The political system of a society uses the normal measures; laws, acts, directives, and financial support in guiding the production of the arts, including music, towards the wished state of affairs. The ideological system are the abstractions - values and beliefs - shared by the majority of the people within a culture. (See Figure 3.)

According to the ethnomusicological frame of reference decision-making in music policy is guided by the ideals possessed by individual persons within the state, regional, or local bureaucracy and the organizational level of music life. These individuals take part in the process of interaction between the artistic production and the political system of the society. In this process the musical concepts of the individuals actualize.

4. Cultural Administration and Levels of Decision-Making

Organs of cultural and political administration are the formal places and occasions where the decisions concerning cultural policy are made. These organs act on different levels of the political system. Their decisions can be divided according to their geographical coverage (municipality, region or state) - and according to the axis general/detailed.

It is time saving that a higher-level organ decides the general frames of cultural politics and and respectively a lower-level organ applies them to reality. Exceptions of this rule can be seen either as malfunctioning of the system or as a means for supplementary policies.

In Finland the organs of state-level make the decisions concerning the whole area of Finland. In the music policy this type of organs are the Parliament, the State Council, the Ministry of Education, the Arts Council, and the Music Council.

The overall frames of politics are created by the Parliament. The State Council and the President nominate the members of the cultural expert organs, prepare the motions for laws (for example the copyright law, the law of the state support for music schools and institutes, or the law for collecting the empty cassettes fee) - and the annual state budget. More detailed and lower-level decisions are made by the Minister or by some officials in the Ministry of Education after or without a statement of an expert organ, the Music Council or other Council of Arts.

A smaller geographic area is covered by the decisions of the Regional Arts Council. On municipal level the local Municipality Council sets the general frames of politics in terms of finance and the Cultural Board or cultural officials more detailed decisions.

In this case, the question may be put as follows: What is the connection between a Parliament session and a piano-lesson in a music school?

5. Music Organizations

Each society applies its concepts of political processes also in directing artistic activities. In the industrialized societies the concept of democracy is one of most importance. This concept is, expressed in numerous ways, the ideal basis of all the policies in these societies. The citizens, or the People are supposed to be the core of all the political power. According to this principle each individual and organization has the right to participate in the decision-making in the matter of his/her own.

In the Finnish political system this "Will of the People" is canalized through different organizations which the individuals freely form in order to put forward their common ideals. This is also true in the Finnish musical culture. Within the ethnomusicological frame of reference the musical organizations can be seen as complexes of individual concepts of music.

These organizations may be different by their nature. Labour organizations have as their goal to improve the status and working conditions of musicians or composers. Amateur musicians' associations integrate their members to common activities.

Copyright organizations guard the rights of the composers, text writers, and producers. Scientific societies are places for intellectual discussions.

In order to make their "will" come true all organizations strive to influence the organs which make the actual decisions concerning music. The organizations contact the decision-makers on all levels. It is not unusual that the politically powerful organizations have obtained a share of power even though their share of the musical life may be modest.

6. Description of the Project

The Music Council suggested in 1987 that a research project should be established to collect and analyse information of the political decisions directing musical activities. The practical purpose was to create basis for the decisions of the council. The research project started in 1988 and is financed through the Research and Publications Section of the Arts Council. By June 1990 four persons have worked as researchers in the project and three reports are published:

6.1. A journal is a proof of life⁴

Every form of music has its means of communication. The media form an important means even for small groups to spread out information of itself. It is also a way to integrate the supporters in the group. At the time of the research more than 150 publications concerning music appeared regularly in Finland. Many of them are presented in the research report by Mr. Timo Laitakari. The amount of the publications reflect the rich variety of organizations and musical ideologies in Finland.

Most of the journals are organs of some organizations, professional, amateur, educational, or scientific. Each of them reflect different systems of values. Usually the organizations and their media guard jealously their own area and compete heavily with each other for private or public funds.

⁴LAITAKARI, 1989.

6.2. Supporting the recorded sound is financing the companies⁵

The small markets of recorded sound in Finland set limits for the commercially operated enterprises to serve all the small groups of interest within the field of music. Upto the beginning of the 80's the main form of public support to the recorded sound was canalized through the annual state budget. Then two forms of support to music was introduced.

The Rome agreement was ratified by the Finnish authorities in 1983 and the fee for empty cassettes was enacted in 1984,. Most of the money collected through these means are directed to support the production of recorded sound in one form or another.

The ratifying of the Rome agreement contained a special solution in Finland. It was agreed with other parties of the Rome agreement that the money collected in Finland of the radio and TV broadcasts of foreign artists are not delivered abroad but remain in Finland to be used to promote Finnish music. Simultaneously with the ratifying of the Rome agreement the Centre for the Promotion of Performed Music was founded under the auspices of the Ministry for Education.

It is essential, referring to the concept of democracy above, that the organizations possessing the authority to act on behalf of the artists, broadcasting companies and record industry were taken as members of the Centre.

Through the annual revenues of these two forms of financing (in total nearly FIM 100 Millions, or USD 25 Millions) the Finnish recording industry and artists can produce more "non-profitable" jazz, folkmusic and art music recordings.

The research person was Mr. Jari Muikku, now working as a producer in the Music Information Centre in Helsinki.

⁵MUIKKU, 1989.

6.3. The actual decision-maker or a paper tiger?⁶

The real interaction between the artistic and political systems of the Finnish society is seen every third year during the nomination process of the state expert organs, the arts councils.

The many cultural organizations suggest their candidates for the posts and after long discussions and proposition of the Ministry of Education the State Council nominates the members of the Councils.

The Law and Act for organizing the promotion of arts say that the duty of the commission of music is to "promote creative and performing artistic work, knowledge and activities of arts, and the kind of research which is important for the arts".

The actual power to decide the matters in the Councils is very limited. The ministers are heads of their offices and he or she has the final word, also in the matters of music. The Music Council gives statements and propositions. Only the grants for artists are finally decided by the Councils. All other matters, state support to music organizations, summer festivals, artists' pensions etc. are decided outside the expert organ.

6.4. The winner takes all⁷

It is supposed that cultural (or arts) policy is a fruitful symbiosis of two different systems within a culture. The politics should, ideally, facilitate creative and performing artists and their audiences in developing the quality of musical culture better and better.

However, it can be seen that some areas of music are taken almost totally under the auspices of the society, nationalized, one might say. Art music takes the major part of all public support, while others may use the waysthey can to finance their activities, usually through commercial means.

⁶OESCH, 1990.

⁷This part of the project is still continuing.

The democratic system supposes that the musical organizations are channels of the opinions of active music people, both professionals, amateurs, researchers, and others. They have their representatives in many money-delivering organs and they have contacts to individuals on every level of the decision-making processes.

The large qualitative changes in the forms of public support, like giving a new law or act, founding new forms of collecting money for music etc. mean usually many years of activity of individuals and organizations. These processes are interesting turning points in music policy where the interaction of the politics and arts can be seen in detail. Here also the many musical concepts within the musical culture are present.

APPENDIX

Figure 1. The ethnomusicological frame of reference, the model.
Source: Donner, 1983.

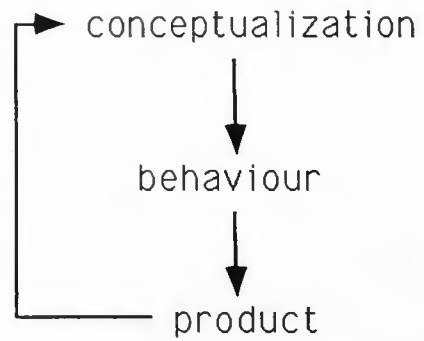


Figure 2. The model of cultural dynamics. Source: Donner, 1983.

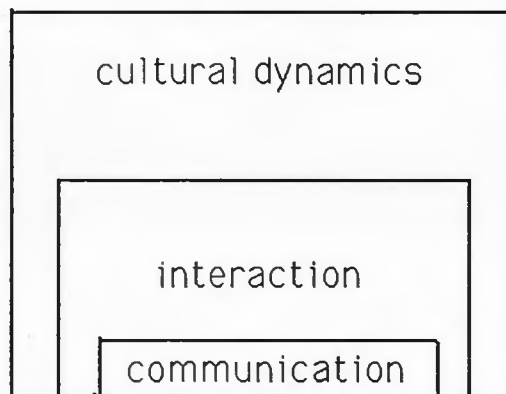
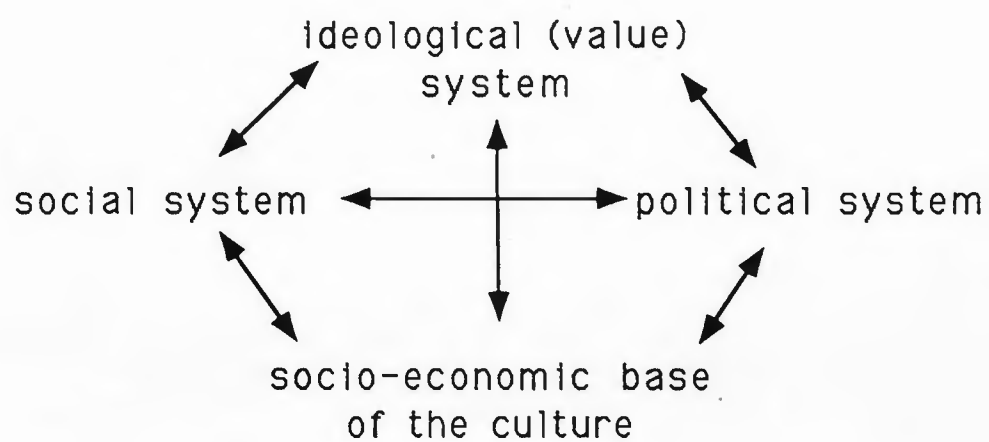


Figure 3. A hypothetical model of culture.



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Taiteen keskuslaitos, tutkimus- ja julkaisuyksikkö
Arts Council of Finland, Research and Publications Unit
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Directing the Production of Music".
Arts Council of Finland. Helsinki 1991. ISBN 951-47-4485-3.



Toimittajat – Editors:
Ritva Mitchell & Eija Ristimäki
Taiteen keskuslaitos – Arts Council of Finland
Tutkimus- ja julkaisuyksikkö – Research and Publications Unit
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PL 293 – P.O. BOX 293
00171 Helsinki
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ISBN 951-47-4485-3
ISSN 0788-5318