

## Conference Special Session



9th Conference of the Hellenic Sociological Society  
Athens, October 30 – November 1, 2024

**“1974 – 2024. Society and Sociology in Greece fifty years after the restoration of democracy”**

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## SPECIAL SESSION

**Artists/creative workers (or) professionals: critical reflections and methodological issues on "post-professionalism"**

The panel is part of the research project “Labour Precarity and Social Cohesion: The Case of Cultural and Creative Industries (LaPreSc)” that is carried out within the framework of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan Greece 2.0, funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU (Implementation Body: HFRI - Project Number: 16313, Beneficiary: University of Crete).

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## Special Session Summary

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### Coordinators

**Christina Karakioulafi** Associate Professor, University of Crete

**Sissie Theodosiou** Associate Professor, University of Ioannina

**Alexandros Baltzis** Professor, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

**Ioannis Tsioulakis** Associate Professor, Queen's University Belfast

Creative/cultural sectors are often dominated by working arrangements, learning practises and access mechanisms to professions that do not conform to typical notions of professionalisation and formal dependent work. Conditions in the cultural/creative sectors often reinforce the image of fluid occupational categories and volatile work/professional identities. These include the lack of a regulatory framework for access to the professions, the existence of informal learning pathways, the -simultaneous or successive- multiple job holding with very different working arrangements and the significantly high rates of invisible/unpaid labour. These are compounded by the blurring line between professionals and amateurs, or even between those who practise a profession systematically and those who come from other professions and only practise it sporadically. The challenges are exacerbated by the importance of the working arrangements that lie in the 'grey zone' between paid dependent work and self-employment/freelancing, in which workers operate as entrepreneurs who are, strictly speaking, neither 'traditional' employees nor entrepreneurs nor truly self-employed. With this in mind, the aim of this session, which focuses on the performing arts professions (artists/creative professionals), is to highlight the methodological issues raised by qualitative and quantitative research, both in relation to the criteria for understanding professionalism/professionalisation and the construction of professional identities, and in relation to the study of work arrangements and regimes that lie in the 'grey zone'.

## Special Session Information

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18:30 – 20:30, 31.10.2024, Online (Zoom)

**Achilleas Piliouisis, Alexandros Baltzis:** Quantitative methods in the study of artistic and creative labour

**Sissie Theodosiou, Ioannis Tsioulakis:** Music is my life: 'do-it-yourself' careers and professional musicians' life stories

**Christina Karakioulafi, Chara Kokkinou, Thodoris Koutros:** Employment regimes and professionalisation in theatre: working 'on stage' and 'backstage'

**Antigoni Papageorgiou:** "No pain, no gain": immaterial work, management, and education issues in performing arts

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## Abstracts

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### Quantitative methods in the study of artistic and creative labour

**Achilleas Piliouisis** PhD candidate, School of Journalism and Mass Media Studies, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

**Alexandros Baltzis** Professor, School of Journalism and Mass Media Studies, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

The paper discusses the problems of studying work in the cultural and creative sectors. As part of a project carried out within the framework of National Recovery and Resilience Plan ‘Greece 2.0,’ funded by the European Union-NextGenerationEU and implemented by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (Project Number:16313), a study on social cohesion and precarious work in these sectors has been designed and is currently underway. In particular, the issues to be discussed concern surveys of artistic and creative labor using quantitative methods. The heterogeneity and diversity of working conditions and labour relations in these sectors pose a number of challenges in the attempt to achieve the standardization that quantitative data collection implies, but also in the attempt to operationalize the fundamental constructs for empirical research by producing observable and measurable indicators. The paper discusses the difficulties and challenges involved in this endeavor.

## **Music is my life: 'do-it-yourself' careers and professional musicians' life stories**

**Aspasia (Sissie) Theodosiou** Associate Professor in Social Anthropology and Performance Studies, Department of Music, University of Ioannina

**Ioannis Tsioulakis** Associate Professor in Anthropology and Ethnomusicology, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queen's University Belfast (UK)

The study of creative labour focuses, among other things, on key questions around the issue of professionalism: who and based on what criteria is considered as a professional musician? What problems are raised by the constant alternation between sub-, hetero- and multi-employment in the career of a creatively working individual and in the constitution of their own professional identity? In what ways is work seen and experienced as a profession?

Ultimately, what is the role of work related to creativity, emotion and aesthetics - as embodied in the production of symbolic goods and practices - in the biography of our interlocutors in the field, and in the constitution of their artistic subjectivities? Drawing on ethnographic research and 'in-depth' conversations with musicians in urban centres and peripheral areas of Greece over the last 15 years, in this presentation we attempt to highlight the dynamic multiplicity that characterises biographical approaches and life narratives in the analysis of creative work. In the light of the contingent and fluid conceptualisations of professionalism/professionalisation in CCIs, particularly in a world of advanced 'precarity', we suggest that critical approaches and reflections on professionalism can only be developed in conjunction with an understanding of the significance of life narratives. To the extent that the latter can demonstrate succinctly the ideological, affective, and embodied aspects of work experience as represented in the dynamics of the artists' narrative time, they can ensure an understanding of the political economy of the profession. At the same time, they can highlight that the ability to experience one's professional life as a linear experience of continuity - in 'biographical time' (Banks, 2019) - while undoubtedly socially differentiated and reflecting established patterns of social inequality, can remain, nonetheless available as a resource even to those who are severely affected by conditions of precarity.

## **Employment regimes and professionalisation in theatre: working ‘on stage’ and ‘backstage’**

**Christina Karakioulafi** Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Crete

**Chara Kokkinou** PhD candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Crete

**Thodoris Koutros** PhD candidate, Department of Sociology, University of Crete

The aim of this paper is to explore the challenges that arise from examining the work/employment and professionalisation/identity construction of artists and creative professionals in theatre who work both 'on stage' (actors) and 'backstage' (directors, set designers and other professionals except for technicians). In particular we will focus on the factors that make it difficult to identify the employment regimes using with the typical notion of dependent salaried work, because although there are similarities in terms of ‘dependency’/working conditions, they usually acquire employer characteristics [self-production, setting up non-profit companies (AMKE)] or are self-employed/freelancers. These work arrangements and employment regimes in the ‘grey zone’ between depended work and entrepreneurship not only make it difficult to construct professional identities, but also have an impact on the formation of collective labour interests and claims making.

The proposed presentation, part of the research project "Labour precarity and social cohesion: The case of the cultural and creative industries" carried out within the framework of National Recovery and Resilience Plan ‘Greece 2.0,’ funded by the European Union-NextGenerationEU and implemented by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (Project Number:16313) is based on the findings of a) qualitative research with semi-structured interviews with workers/union representatives, b) study/analysis of the Collective Labour Agreements concluded in the sector, the statutes of trade unions/associations and their announcements/publications regarding the consultation/bargaining process with employers.

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**‘No pain, no gain:’ immaterial work, management, and education issues in performing arts**

**Antigoni Papageorgiou** Post-Doctoral Researcher, Department of Economic and Regional Development, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences

The paper foregrounds aspects of immaterial work (Lazzarato, 2007) in the field of performing arts, focusing on how contemporary work identities are constructed. The aim is to understand how work is reorganized in industries where there is a lack of university based performing training and early career professionals learn by doing, getting 'on-the-job training' while being very much embedded within the market realm. Drawing upon interviews with male and female performers, the paper maps technologies of discipline, control, but also autonomy (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011) that artists employ to navigate their working realities. It examines how performers see their work, treat their bodies as 'hardware' (Witz et al., 2003), as an inexhaustible source of 'natural capital' (Mitchell, 2014), and establish themselves as entrepreneurs and managers of themselves (Pongratz & Voß, 2003). Lastly, we interrogate what would be contemporary and relevant approaches for arts education in Greece but also more widely, as university education historically favors the narrow Cartesian rationality that distinguishes the mind from the body (Taylor, 2014). We do that, by problematising the current restructuring and deregulation of university education.