



Summary of
report no. 25



THE SWEDISH NATIONAL
BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS
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Career Opportunities

In music and the creative industries in Sweden

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Preface

There is evidence that music and other forms of entertainment are becoming a major growth industry in the global marketplace. Sweden is far ahead in this development, but the future remains uncertain. While the creative industry is becoming an affair of national economics, conditions for the prospering youth only worsen in the communities. The Swedish music industry is at risk of losing a foothold because of cutbacks in youth recreations and culture. The closing of recreational facilities, cutting back on the public music school, plus the fact that there are few live venues are all examples of this. There also seems to be a tendency for women in the music branch to drop off along the way. In many ways the future of the creative industry is relying on the possibilities youth meet in the form of a broad cultural life and spare time on their own conditions in their own communities.

Photo: Jenny Morelli



Photo: Patrick Degerman





The Creative Industries

The National Board for Youth Affairs has examined the opportunities for youths in the so called *Creative Industries* at the request of the government. We have decided to define the situation from the basis of a specific sector – the music industry – that is a well-established creative industry in our country. Music is fundamental and a focus in the creative industries. It is heard in films, computer and video games, on CDs and other media.

“Career Opportunities” is a compilation of our survey. It contains the most important conclusions from the survey, local examples, and interviews with young musicians and inquiries to researchers and diverse contacts.

The conclusions of the National Board for Youth Affairs are characterized by the fact that we have focused on the music industry. Some parts can however be used as a basis for the creative industries as a whole, or can be used for other specific sectors.

The Youth Board has, according to the conclusions in this study, submitted proposals to the Swedish Government and the local authorities in order to improve or reinforce the future possibilities of the coming adult generation and therewith Sweden’s possibilities in the future of these industries.

Breeding Ground for the Music Industry

The market for music and entertainment is built upon people being able to do and take part in what they feel is interesting and exciting. The music industry’s breeding ground is therefore built upon recreation, culture,



Photo: Cristián Serrano

activities within clubs and educational associations, public music schools, as well as the free and open opportunity to develop interests and talents.

It is the conditions in this breeding ground for the youth and in the transition to professional careers that decide how the creative industry will evolve. It is also to a large degree the youngsters who choose or influence the content in the creative industry since it is they who are the first to interpret and create new trends. Therefore, the communities and state should contribute to the Swedish music and creative industry with support and should be focused on removing obstacles and creating the right conditions and circumstances.

In many of the regions which have contributed most to the prosperity of the Swedish music export there is a clear political intuition for listening to youth and creating conditions that allow youth to do the things they are interested in. In these communities,

there are meeting places and venues for live music which create a broad collaboration between club activity- and culture workers, educational associations, and local trade and industry. There is also youth influence in the local politics.

Impact of the Social Economy

A starting point for the study of the creative industry is the fact that the activities within the social economy are fundamental since much of the basic schooling takes place in associations, clubs, cooperatives, foundations, etc. – activities which are organizationally independent from the public sector.

Club activities are of particular importance, as well as other forms of education within

the so-called Swedish adult education. This consists mainly of the activities of 147 folk high schools and 11 educational associations in the country. All together it is a great deal of short and long-term courses, study-circles, cultural projects, cultural events etc.

Since the end of the 70's it has been possible to establish a study-circle within an educational association in order to play for example pop and rock. The association provides the premises, sometimes instruments and related equipment, and often an instructor. There are even types of "music houses" in many districts that have rehearsal and recording studios and meeting-places. In conjunction with the study-circles, many organizations offer courses in sound technique, recording, composition and so on.



Photo: Christian Serrano



Photo: *Christián Serrano*



Photo: *Christián Serrano*



Photo: *Jenny Morelli*

All these organizations are financed with state funding, and in certain areas the local governments provide some extra economic support. The Swedish government sets goals and supports certain areas of youth recreation through club activities and to a certain degree through cultural politics. The role of the state is limited to indicate goals and guidelines in connection with different forms of subsidy. The actual organization is formed at the local level by the associations or by the municipality. Cultural and recreational activities are however voluntary municipal commitments.

A large part of youth recreational activities is in organized form. Four out of five youngsters in Sweden are involved in some association or organization. There are no real statistics that can show the actual extent of club activities for music, film, theatre, etc. However most Swedes are members in some form of association¹, and music associations are popular and appropriate platforms for youngsters interested in music to practice their music and pursue their interests towards community decision-makers. In a study made in 1995 it is revealed that girls and boys were equally involved (ca. 80 percent) in some association, and about 8 percent of both sexes were members in a music association.²

Music is a very large part of Sweden's popular movement, and popular music has a distinct dominance. From a youth perspective, there is much more to this industry than just business. With the right means, the joining

¹ See i.e. Häll 1994, Nilsson 1998

² Nilsson (The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs) 1998. The study's selection includes fully 3000 youths aged 13–25, with a decline of 29 percent.





Photo: Cristián Serrano

of pastime with profession becomes a possibility. Along with cultural efforts in politics, these activities within the social economy have created a cultural breeding ground that has led to the rise in musical interest and abilities. This is one of the reasons that Sweden is reaping economic success in this area.

Altered Conditions

The success of Swedish pop music in the 90's has allowed the music business to be more easily accepted as a serious industry and expectations of future success have risen. At the same time, many communities have cut back on activities that are important for the creative industry's breeding ground. It is mainly in the form of subsidy to educational associations, culture and music schools, and recreation center activities. These are activi-

ties that need to have priority in the light of the future.

The local deterioration can be described with a few concrete examples. One such example is the public music school that in some communities has been an object of major savings, despite that its importance is well recognized in music circles. Even the access to live scenes is heavily reduced, a situation that was completely different about ten years ago. There is a need for more small and medium-sized scenes and a need for receptiveness to the requirements of the organizers; something which is necessary in order to create better opportunities for practicing musicians and audiences to meet.

There have also been cutbacks in the activities of recreation centers in many communities. Changes in opening and closing



Photo: Cristián Serrano

hours and different objectives have reduced the possibilities to for example play and rehearse music. Some communities, mainly in larger cities, have also closed recreation centers.

Moreover, subsidies to adult education have declined during the 90's, mainly through extensive municipal cutbacks. This has led to changed conditions for educational associations. The consequences have become raised fees, consolidation of local departments, as well as major reductions in personnel. Another tendency is that the popular movement's traditional ideology is being diluted as far as independence from the public sector is concerned. The popular movement and especially adult education have to a greater extent taken over service responsibilities. They are a part of the so called third sector between industry and the public sector and are responsible for much of the

development of the cultural and social values in Sweden, which in the end leads to a creative industry. It is important that this third sector is kept unbiased in order for the productive breeding ground to prosper.

There is additionally a lack of sensitivity in listening to the youngsters' will of developing new culture and recreational activities. It is important to bring up plans for youth music to the political platform in communities to find a way to collaborate with youngsters on their own conditions. A gender perspective within such plans is necessary, as our studies have shown that the music branch is highly dominated by males.

Young People's Free Zones

The creative industry of today is dependent on functioning bridges between the recreational life and the professional life, where there is a possibility to continue on a career basis for those who choose to do so. Besides the infringement of the community service on Sweden as a popular movement, there seem to be commercial interests moving in on the free zones where young people have so far been relatively undisturbed in their pursuit to develop their personal interests. It is important even in the future to keep the social economy, the third sector, apart from the monetary economy. There must be a distance between the recreational sphere, where interests are tested and talents are developed, and the professional sphere.

If the free zones where people do what they are interested in have a press upon themselves to generate results, many will choose other routes with their interests where they can be free from such pressure. And the



Photo: Christian Serrano



broad base, the breeding ground as we call it, is thereafter not as broad.

Requirements for a Living Music Industry

On the municipal level, where the actual responsibility for cultural activity lies, there have been initiatives taken in for example culture and music schools, which have indirectly been of importance for the music industry. The best climate for the creative industry is in communities where there is a widespread cooperation with the development of club activities and initiatives in the trade and industry. Where possible, collaboration will arise in different ways; clubs work together with educational associations, some may start a record company, some arrange concerts. If the conditions are favorable, it is possible for a living music scene to develop. The state contributions that have been of importance in this matter have all been indirect. They are mainly cultural grants and subsidies to adult education.

The local commitment and underlying interest of the youth can hardly be subsidized directly through state support. Such support should be directed towards making it possible for individuals to put words and commitments into action. Otherwise there is a risk that direct political economic contributions along with the order of trade operations account for focused.

Initiatives that do not favor the broad spectrum.

Naturally, it is important that there is diversity in the practicing of music. It is only the youngsters themselves who can decide what is right for them. There are hundreds of genres

of music and subcultures, and there are new ones developing constantly. They are not all equally commercial at any given time, but no support or contributions should influence them in any standardizing form – this would definitely do more harm than good in the long run.

It is easy to imagine the skepticism of young people considering the idea of persons in



*Illustration:
Christian Serrano*

authority who will decide which music is good and might have the chance to compete on the market. The concept is that the state should support certain music activities which have cultural values, especially the Swedish tradition, and which do not have very large commercial prospects. If the state assists a portion of the music life in this way, then there is a need for the applications to be looked over so that the youth and their music





Photo: Jenny Morelli

are not discriminated. According to the perspective of the National Board for Youth Affairs, it is the youngsters who really need support for their culture practicing. The general culture support goes to the established culture-system, and there is evidence that new cultural movements are outside this system.

The attitude of upbringing, which still arises within the public life of culture, can be a major obstacle. This reveals itself partly in the attitude that youths should learn "good culture", as well as the organization of events for youngsters which have a message and an educational purpose which usually does not have anything to do with the actual cultural experience. It is easy to be reminded of the innumerable events like "Rock against drugs" or "Music against racism". In contrast to "adult culture", it appears that youth culture is not always allowed to exist solely for the sake of the experience. Most young people feel an instinctive distaste towards distinctive purposes to teach what is good or how one should live. All forms of political contributions aimed to bring forth a creative industry should be neutral in their relation to styles, forms of expression, or quality demands.

It is not possible to control this process from above, as it is created from the ground level and is ever changing and subject to trends. A sensitivity to what is going on and a compliant attitude towards youngsters who want to do something is required from both the municipal and the state levels, even if it does not always fit into the conceptual system of the adult world.

New Routes for Music

There are however alternative routes to discover and choose. One such alternative for today's bands is to take advantage of the digital technology and the Internet. Therefore, the building up of the infra-structure for the new technology on a broad level is important for the youngsters' possibilities.

It is also possible to start an own record company, a path more and more bands are choosing. This way most functions are in a smaller scale and above all for less money. This involves recording in a simple recording studio, perhaps in a local music club. Additionally, there is usually no budget for record covers, video production, and marketing. An obvious means of reaching out is through the Internet. There are many sites on the Internet where new unestablished bands can be

introduced, and even sold. There are also a variety of music fanzines/ underground magazines that are usually focused on a narrow genre.

One tendency in development we see today is that different sectors of the creative industry are nearing each other through the same medium. We can see films, listen to music, read books and magazines etc. If we want, we can do it simultaneously. Many of the products and services which we have approached in other ways are now concentrated in the screens on our desks.

Within the music industry there is a large amount of web sites developed during the past years where we can find demo music of unestablished bands, read about new musicians, follow their popularity in different votings, buy music or even get hold of it for



Photo: Thomas Furusten



Photo: Thomas Furusten

free. They are often called virtual meeting places. According to the reasoning of above, this evolution could be a direct result of the industry's colossal size with large merged corporations. The majority of these web sites and other new types of companies have their origin in the youth's grass roots level. Modern technology opens up the possibilities, and the youth of today in this way have more power to control the development than young people have ever had before.

Competence Within the Music Industry

This is a modern industry and one of the most expansive economies today. Within the Swedish creative industry, it is only the music environment and the music business that follow tradition. The prevalent route to go for people in the music branch, which nowadays is upgraded to the music industry, is "from the streets". In other words, there is often a strong interest that drives a person to find a way to play music in their spare time – often through club activities. This way they develop a network of contacts and learn the necessary rules of play and methods. After awhile – often after an unsuccessful

staking as pop star –they find different types of work in the music industry. This can include different careers within record companies, music-publishing firm, employment within the club activities, or maybe careers as music journalists.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of youths are spending their free time on games, and are very focused on the new technology and the opportunities the Internet brings. They are building networks and are developing a proficiency that is often in a leading position. These youths are sought after in the industry where the Net and the new technique are an important platform. It is the competence evolved from the intense interest which is the most important and most driving.

While creativity has begun to be classified as an industry and not just a pastime, the demand for this competence has grown. There are now university studies that are focused directly on the creative industries. The question is how this more theoretic learned knowledge can measure up to the knowledge of the self-learned enthusiasts.

This type of education can also provide alternative routes into the industry for those who do not have access to the right networks. It is likely a good way to increase the amount of women, since women more than men tend to go the educational route.

Need for Live Venues

Actual places for concerts are very important in order for things to evolve, not only within music but in other areas of the creative industry as well. However, the conditions are not the same everywhere.

Because of brusque municipal saving contracts, many live scenes were lost in the 90's, and not all of them have been able to return as the economy recovered during later years. The situation in Stockholm is catastrophic. Nineteen percent of Sweden's youth between the ages of 16 to 24 live in the province of Stockholm, but there is not a single medium-sized venue at the time of this report.

Meanwhile a major restructuring of the record industry has taken place. This, along with the fact that the Swedish music market is relatively small, has led the international record companies to develop Swedish talents directly for the international market. These corporations have no interest in making long term investments by allowing the artists to tour in Sweden. The small record companies still existing in the country seldom have the

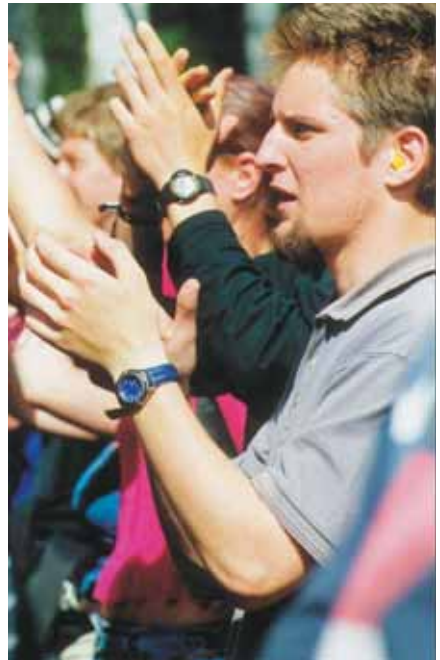


Photo: *Christián Serrano*



Photo: Thomas Furusten

resources to send their artists on tour. Many organizers also consider it a hassle to deal with the problems in coordinating live music and alcohol.

The consequences of this development is that the living pop and rock scene in Sweden is in the process of shrinking. The forward growth of new music generations is therefore clearly threatened.

An Inequality Industry

Why is it that men make up the majority of those who are active within the music environment? One possible explanation would be that men are simply more interested in music, but this is not the case. There are no real differences in interest between young women and men, when it concerns the listening of music.

Another explanation is that the traditional form for reproduction within the music business is what keeps the women on the outside. In other words, the infrastructure of the music business is built up by men and therefore functions in a way that is suitable for men. Even new networks tend to bind together groups of men with other groups of men. The gender differences are derived by men in some way organizing themselves in ways that create conditions for success in advancing music from the recreational level, that is to say by starting bands and different types of networks.

Still another explanation is the out-of-date "rock myth" which involves men's behavior and which is created by men. This rock tradition is quite sexist and beholds strict gender rolls. This sexism does not seem to be dying out. It is ever prevalent within one of the newest genres, namely hip-hop.

It is conceivable that young women do not want to play or make a career out of music to the same extent as young men. However, the gender differences which have other reasoning, or which occur in diverse activities within the music and creative industry, are signs of a lacking in equality within the working environment.

The apparent imbalance in equality between the sexes is a very old-fashioned aspect of an otherwise modern industry, and an important development area. An active equal opportunity movement is required in continued initiatives in the music industry. This type of consciousness must also be created within club activities, which act as the school for areas of this industry.



The music industry at first hand deals with allowing young people's creativity, enthusiasm, and involvement to develop on their own conditions. In this way we can improve or reinforce the prospects of coming generations and therewith Sweden's prospects in this new industry.

Overall Conclusions

Contributions from the state and municipalities should at first hand be supportive in order to create the optimal conditions and terms for a Swedish music and creative industry.

The breeding ground for the Swedish music and creative industries is made up of activities within the recreation and culture environments; that is to say, in non-governmental organizations, clubs, educational associations, public music schools, recreation centers, etc.

The future development of the creative industries is determined by the youths' opportunities in this breeding ground and in the transition to professional careers.

It is the young people who define or influence the substance in the creative industries, as it is the youngsters who are first to recognize and create new trends and new movements. Young people's creativity, enthusiasm, and commitment are vital resources that must be taken care of.

Photo: Thomas Furusten

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

The Swedish Parliament's youth policy objectives are that young people in Sweden should be given the pre-requisites to live independent lives, that they should have real influence, and that society should make use of the resources that young people offer. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is a government agency that collaborates with others to achieve these objectives.

- We co-ordinate the follow-up of central and local government initiatives for youth.
- We follow the development, we analyse and we propose measures to improve living conditions for youth.
- We work to encourage regeneration of youth activities organised by local government and organisations.
- We are responsible for the EU programme YOUTH and other forms of international youth co-operation.
- We distribute public funds to youth organisations.
- We supply information and generate public opinion on youth policy issues.
- We provide civic information on our web site Ungdomskanalen (The Youth Channel).

Our target groups are primarily decision-makers and people working with youth issues..



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