

FESTIVAL LANDSCAPE IN SWEDEN

NATIONAL REPORT FOR FESTudy

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Introduction

Historically there have certainly been practices similar to the festival form of expression (often bound to the summer season) prior to the mid-1900s. However, it seems that the development of a more contemporary festival form remains a post-WWII phenomenon, perhaps more influenced by the development of cultural expressions in neighboring countries such as Finland. The earliest music festivals in Sweden were formed in the 50's and 60's. So today there are examples of older festivals which have undergone many changes over the years, but also a large amount of more recent festivals. The number of festivals has increased markedly in the last decades and festivals have become an established expression within the event industry.

The festival form seems to have become more prevalent in general – regardless of artistic expression – however, music is the most visible within mainstream media and consciousness. Still, this has not successfully translated into a place on the agenda in the political sphere, nor in the cultural budget. From a public policy stand point the most important cultural document has been the 1974 cultural proposition. The goals and arguments in this document have been dominant in the organization and priorities of the cultural infrastructure. Festivals are not mentioned in this document, perhaps because of the strong emphasis on institutions and the relatively low prevalence of festivals at that time. Swedish policy for the arts has, and continues to have, a strong focus on public financing and institutions as the providers. This has been seen as the solution to the overall goal of reaching all citizens and eliminating class differences in access to cultural expressions.

Today 40 music festivals are organized in a national association, *Svenska Musikfestivaler* (SMF), formed in 1988. The initiative came from several festivals mainly situated in the northern part of Sweden. Several other music festivals are members of *Folkets Hus & Parker* (FHP), an association encompassing multiple types of organizations. FHP currently lists thirteen festivals on their homepage, but not all are solely music festivals (e.g. Stockholm Pride). However, researchers (Andersson & Getz) have used FHP to collect data on music festivals in 2008, and at that time there were sixteen festivals heavily dominated by music. It seems that membership, as well as the festival landscape in general, changes from year to year as new ones enter while others fail or change in fundamental ways.

In contrast to its Scandinavian neighbors the Swedish festivals and festival association has still not been successful in creating suitable forms of funding of festivals, nor have they achieved the necessary legitimacy needed to create a space for a positive political discourse. Similarly it has been, and remains, hard for SMF to fund their own work.

Current policies

Political discourse

Since the shift in power from the *Social democratic party* to the *Alliance* (comprised of the four right-wing parties) effort has been put to change both the cultural infrastructure as well as the goals of cultural policy – thereby replacing the agenda set in -74. Festivals are however still largely invisible in national public policy. In later public documents festivals are mentioned only briefly together with other forms of musical organizers. *The Swedish Arts Council* (Statens Kulturråd) pointed out that festivals are important within the tourism industry and that public financial support does not match the importance of festivals in producing large musical events that reach broad audiences.

A question that can be raised from an outside perspective is whether cultural policy in Sweden should be interpreted as arts funding policy or social policy? Some types of art have become nationally acceptable as qualitative whilst others are excluded (meaning they have to rely mostly or solely on commercial financing). This has in general, when music is concerned, tended to mean that some genres (typically those that require artists to obtain higher education) are considered of interest because it provides income for educated practitioners (and so per definition must be qualitative).

Festivals are more of a concern on the regional and local level. Regional musical institutions as well as municipalities are themselves organizers of music festivals. Municipalities and regions have become more conscious of their own image and of the importance of local culture to attract tourists and new residents. In this context festivals become a way of creating an appealing image of the area through a cultural manifestation. An example of this kind of symbiotic relationship is *Hultsfredsfestivalen* in the small town of Hultsfred. This connection became problematic when the festival had to file for bankruptcy as several types of operations and educational programs were built around the festival.

For musical institutions festivals can be a way to bring other genres to the public than the ones they usually focus on. There is also a new understanding of the festival form as efficient in ways different from static organizations. Newer texts have placed focus on festivals as form suitable to promote “what is new” in the musical domain, due to its ability to handle changes (flexibility). This is probably related to an overall “projectification” of work and public actors using private ownership forms.

Regions have varied problems to contend with which also affect spending. So far the decentralization of the cultural budget has shown that some regions, such as the northern ones, still need an institutionalized structure because of the lack in freelance musicians able to make a living there and the vast travel distances for audiences from central/south of Europe. Travel is a costly item. This is a deterrence to de-institutionalize and use more project-based forms like festivals.

More and more festivals are used as an example in discussions of entrepreneurial practice within the arts sector. The ‘enthusiast’ (“eldsjäl” in Swedish), being important in starting festivals, is compared to the entrepreneur and often in conjuncture with Richard Florida's theories on the creative class and the geographical aspect of culture. This is a discourse that has penetrated some of the southern regions

that are now in charge of bigger cultural budgets. Festivals and other types of attractions are seen as cultural and financial engines, also as important aspects in “branding” the region. The expectation is to attract more residents and convert this attraction into larger regional markets and higher tax-incomes.

Managing many different stakeholders as income sources means balancing different values and interests, something that has long been standard in the world of festivals, but has been more unorthodox for other cultural expressions. This way of working (in shorter stronger bursts of activity) is becoming more common within the cultural sector and may increase the status of festivals – such as modeling organizations after festivals.

Financial support and sponsorship

Due to a lack of public objectives (or really even recognition of festivals as a specific form within the public financial framework) there is no continuous (comprehensive) collection of data on festivals. The only readily available data to give some overview on basic matters (such as number of concerts, size of audience and financial sources) was collected by SMF on its members in 2010 (see Table.1). This information cannot be used for generalization due to a concentration in genre, specifically chamber music, jazz and opera, resulting in a lack of (more commercially viable) genres such as pop, rock, hard rock, and indie.

Cultural budgets have changed in last few years – so that the public expenditure on culture has increased at the national level (with much emphasis placed on children and young people), whilst it has been cut on the local level in light of the recession. At the same time there is a shift in responsibility along with a decentralization of money from the national level to the regional. Now multiple sources of financing is rapidly becoming standard (however demands for co-financing still remain within the realm of public finance – for example receiving regional money might be dependent on first securing municipal support).

Many existing festivals strive to become an established part of the cultural offering, and therefore wish to secure continuing financial support through institutionalization (to some extent). Public grants have typically only been afforded to organizations that produce concerts all year around. It is possible for festivals to receive financial support on a state level, but they cannot apply specifically as festivals.

There is a mish-mash of public money sources being used. Some festivals that incorporate an element of theatre can apply to receive money on the basis of being “a free theatre group”. Two festivals belonging to SMF have been given grants based on their participation in the *European Capital of Culture* (for 2014), others created and run by institutions (such as museums) are able to apply specifically for those projects. In Sweden there are also national music associations based on genre (like jazz and chamber music) that disperse public funds on behalf of the state to its members. Festivals organized by an association member (person or organization) can indirectly put on a festival with this state sponsored money. Because there are no specific categories of financial support applicable to festivals it is difficult to assess how much is spent on festivals. There is no quantitative knowledge as to how change in overall budget has impacted on festivals.

Table.1 Amount of concerts, audience, public support and income (in 'thousand Euro) for 2010

NORRLAND: 261' km², 54 municipalities, approx. 12% of total population									
	No. Concerts		Audience		Public support			Income	
	≤25	>25	≤3500	>3500	Municipal	Regional	National	Sponsors	Tickets
1	X		X		3'	4,5'	-	28'	58'
2		X		X	124'	100'	128'	122'	2 687'
3		X		X	78'	6,5'	2'	12,5'	14'
4	X			X	22'	0	0	16,5	28'
5	X		X		10,5'	12'	4'	2'	16'
6		X		X	155,5'	0	33'	11'	50'
7	X		X		41'	8'	0	4,5'	10,5'
8		X	X		78'	0	0	7'	55,5
9		X		X	12'	0	33'	5,5'	89'
Avg.	30		2 012	28 490	58' €	14,5' €	22' €	23' €	334' €

SVEALAND: 91' km², 96 municipalities (incl. Stockholm), approx. 40% of total population									
	No. Concerts		Audience		Public support			Income	
	≤25	>25	≤3500	>3500	Municipal	Regional	National	Sponsors	Tickets
1	X			X	0	0	1191'	55,5'	345'
2	X		X		9,5'	1'	0	11'	5,5'
3	X		X		16,5	1,5'	0	0,1'	8'
4***	X			X	11'	8'	0	0	22'
5	X		X		14'	10'	0	8'	31'
6	X			X	55,5'	78'	44,5'	145'	389'
7	X		X		0,8'	2,5'	0	4,5'	22'
8	X		X		36,5'	9'	22'	1'	33,5'
9**	X			X	0	0	0	0	22'
10	X		X		39'	32'	0	14,5'	57,5'
11	X			X	89'	0	111'	111'	189'
12		X		X	28'	0	0	45,5'	32'
Avg.	15		2 053	13 191	25' €	24' €	114' €	33' €	133' €

GÖTALAND: 87' km², 140 municipalities, approx. 48% of total population									
	No. Concerts		Audience		Public support			Income	
	≤25	>25	≤3500	>3500	Municipal	Regional	National	Sponsors	Tickets
1***	X		X		5,5'	22'	0	0	11'
2	X		X		6'	0	12'	21'	60'
3	X		X		15,5'	19'	19,5'	0,5'	2,5'
4	X		X		20,5'	0	8'	7'	10'
5		X		X	3,5'	23'	16,5'	3'	35'
6***		X		X	8'	0	0	0	13'
7	X		X		8'	5,5'	0	7,5	49,5
8	X		X		0	0	0	0	11'
9*		X		X	0	79'	0	0	53'
10	X		X		0	0	0	0	20'
11	X		X		0	0	0	0	0
12	X			X	50'	203'	333'	36,5'	58'
13	X		X		18,5'	17,5'	0	0	12,5'
14	X		X		18,5'	4,5'	0	0	23'
Avg.	22		1 470	7 125	11' €	26,5' €	28' €	5,5' €	25,5' €

*2009, **2008, ***2007

Andersson & Getz (2008) report that perceived dependency among a group of 14 music festivals in Sweden was highest with regards to paying customers, local authority (municipality), police and other public services as well as national artists who perform. Dependency was somewhat smaller with regards to sponsors and government grants, suggesting that the level of state support is low. It was also clear that festivals in the public sector do not worry about municipality grants, in perceiving themselves as institutions they count on permanent support. In this research calculating average percentage of revenue showed ticket sales to be approximately half of the income (47,08%), followed by local government grants (21.54%), fees from concessions (18,77%). Corporate sponsorship was fairly low at 10% of overall revenue. The researchers suggest that Swedish festivals will have to learn more about developing sponsorship, and finding alternative sources of funding.

Contrasting this to numbers collected by SMF from 35 of their members where overall revenue was 95,569 million SEK (approx. 10,3 million euro) with almost half coming from ticket sales (42,92%) and sponsorship accounting for less than 10 percent (6,42%). State support is not insignificant (18,37%) it is, however, limited to very few festivals – about 90% of the national spending went to four festivals.

Andersson & Getz (2009) also conclude that sponsorship is underdeveloped in Sweden and that there is a lot of potential that has not been realized. Talking about “title sponsors” (a sponsor that adds its own name next to the festival name) they found that no festival in their sample had one. Public festivals and private festivals have developed financing from sponsorship better than nonprofit festivals. The composition of sponsors also differs, where private festivals have small sponsors and public festivals are sponsored by other public companies (under political control).

Regulation

Because festivals are not really considered to be a specific form of cultural expression, but rather one form similar enough to others (whether it be in the realm of music, literature, theater etc.) and therefore not in need of its own politics, there is no specific regulation pertaining to festivals. Instead rules are applicable in different cases depending on the specific situation. It is also often subject to interpretation. This creates uncertainty and inconsistency. An example is discussions between certain festivals and STIM – an interest organization protecting copyright interests and distributing royalties. Costs for music concerts are based on visitors per concert which is problematic if many concerts are in the same area at the same time and open to all festival visitors. Everyone cannot be listening to all concerts but STIM cannot know who is listening to what. Festivals disagree with the formula used to count the audience. Another example is that of police services, where the line between private and public has sometimes been muddled. Events like festivals seem to have been generating opportunities for police to charge for their services, services that should be readily available to the public. This practice exists in a grey area and judgment is made by local police on a case to case basis.

Cultural issues and strategies

For institutions and municipalities festivals can be just another tool to bring culture to the masses. For other festivals, seeking financial support from public sources, it is typically not enough to focus on the artistic side of things. Ideas about either democratization (through a change in venue or the concentration of activities in time) or economic development are usually necessary arguments.

The first of these, democratization, has a long standing place in art policy and is sometimes a formal criterion for support. The CEO of the newly formed music institution *Music Development and Heritage Sweden* (Statens Musikverk), Stina Westerberg, recently stated in a news article that festivals are great door openers for new audiences because smaller genres and innovative music is placed in a different environment than the regular concert halls. Strong local ties help to gather needed human resources for festivals to reach wide audiences. This seems to be a common reasoning among officials, but not yet reflected in policy.

Economic arguments are also commonly used to explain why municipalities support festivals. When asked about the importance of *Sweden Rock* to Sölvesborg municipality a government authority pointed to the fact that the festival attracts 35 000 visitors from more than 50 countries which is great for business, it also increases visibility of Sölvesborg because of visiting journalists. Hässleholm municipality, home to another festival, suggests it attracts young culturally interested people to move there which increases tax revenue.

The practice of free entry is more extended in festivals of broad expressions such as ‘city festivals’ organized by municipalities, also festivals with concerts in specific types of venues such as churches where the practice is to not charge visitors. Free entry is however not too common for music festivals.

Research and literature

Much of the literature is not research as such but is instead reports or descriptions from festivals, often chronicling the growth or change of the festival along with photographs and interviews with visitors as well as organizers and musicians. In the popular press and mainstream culture focus is often on the big festivals in the pop-rock genre where visitors camp in the area. The discourse is often one of initiation, where participation marks the beginning of adulthood for young people, or with a strong focus on community and friendship.

Research into festivals is a really small field in Sweden. Typically the studies belong within the fields of tourism, event management or sociology. Research into festivals’ social and cultural impact has been sparse with emphasis placed more on economic issues and management. It is possible to find chapters or shorter paragraphs on festivals in research concerning musical events in general, which mirrors the situation in public policy documents (where festivals are piled together with other organization forms).

Researchers Tommy Andersson and Donald Getz have written several articles within the field of event management that are based on data from Swedish music festivals.

- In a four country comparison (Getz & Andersson, 2010) of stakeholder dependency respondents indicated that they did not feel overly dependent on any singular category of stakeholder. However, general patterns of relationships did reveal links to dependency. The public sector was predominant in terms of perceived stakeholder importance, but there were also a focus on customers and suppliers (mostly venues). Perceived dependence on corporate sponsors in the sampled countries was uniformly low although lowest in Sweden. Paying customers were more important in Sweden than the other countries.
- In the article *Festival Ownership. Differences between Public, Nonprofit and Private Festivals in Sweden* (2009) Andersson and Getz propose a model of festival institutionalization comprised of three different forms of ownership (public, nonprofit and private), they are compared in terms of governance, structure and content using empirical data from the 14 largest live-music festivals in Sweden. Results show differences between the three models related to e.g. wage expenditure, decision styles, volunteer involvement and service quality. This builds on another article from 2009 (*Tourism as a mixed industry: Differences between private, public and not-for-profit festivals*) where public, not-for-profit and private festivals seemed to offer similar festival experiences and had similar mandates, but they differed considerably in terms of revenue sources, cost structure, use of volunteers, corporate sponsorship, decision-making and perhaps a main difference being the cost to consumers. Efficiency was revealed by a high labour productivity in not-for-profit festivals (similar to the health sector). Overall the festival sector showed results similar to what has been found in studies of other mixed industries.

The research articles and dissertations are either case studies or have used the festivals organized in FHP and not SMF. Therefore it is not possible to generalize findings. There is seemingly a lack of focus on the overall situation for festivals in Sweden or public policy matters. Because of this a study was commissioned by SMF. The study *Sommarrum för själen*, completed in 2008 by Bengt Lidström, compared the situation of festivals in cultural policy, as well as festival financing and organization in three countries (Sweden, Norway and Finland). The conclusion is that the progression in political and financial support for festivals as well as for festival associations has been faster in Finland and Norway. Festivals are largely rendered invisible in cultural policy resulting in problematic financial situations. Lidström argues that cultural sponsorship is underdeveloped but well suited to the festival form because it is a limited event. He also suggests along with Sven Nilsson (a researcher writing much in the spirit of Richard Florida) that the growth of the festival and event industries show that there is an alternative way of organizing cultural life than institutions.

In *The music festival as an arena for learning* (2007) Sidsel Karlsen uses a case study to show how festivals can afford audience a way to maintain/develop musical identities, and be an outward manifestation of community identity as well as an occasion to reinforce social and cultural identity in the host municipality. Festival-related learning in audience can be expressed in terms of learning music, learning about music and learning via music, similar to outcomes of other informal ways of learning.

Karlsen & Nordström (2007) showed that festival managers engage with multiple stakeholders that take on multiple roles and that relationships often become symbiotic. These could be seen as interrelated strategies used to increase sustainability for the festival. In a Swedish example (*Festspel I Pite Älvdal*) authors show how this can be done by using reference groups in programming. A successful strategy is to seek cooperation and mutual beneficial relationships. The study also provides empirical support to the model of institutionalization by Andersson & Getz (2009) that show how institutional status effects stakeholder management.

National landscape of festivals

Organizational forms are varied. There are festivals organized by municipalities and various types of institutions as well as private non-profit and private for-profit organizations. Festivals are most frequently in the public and nonprofit sectors, but for-profit companies also produce them. More and more public institutions are “outsourcing” or dislodging projects such as festivals and events from the main organization to shed or diffuse risk (or perhaps to simplify the decision making structure).

Andersson and Getz state that the common observation that the festival sector is dominated by not-for-profit organizations is correct (*Tourism as a mixed industry: Differences between private, public and not-for-profit festivals*, 2009), and this seems to be the case in many countries including Sweden. Perhaps, due to the economic structure surrounding festivals in Sweden, we can see a larger percentage of small festivals relying to a great extent on volunteers.

In the sample gathered by Andersson and Getz we find that seven were run as not-for-profit organizations, while four were projects of (and owned by) local governments and the remaining three were private companies. The average age of these festivals was 14 years (range 2–38) and only two festivals had not produced the festival continuously (they had each missed one year). Their festival managers had an average experience of 4,5 year (ranging from 1-11 years). It is unclear how representative this sample of 14 festivals is.

According to data comprised by SMF the majority of festivals do not have anyone employed throughout the year, the ones that do typically have one (there are notable exceptions with *Dalhalla Opera* having 14 employees). Overall the human resources available to the SMF festivals consist of 3% year round employees, 25% employed during the period surrounding the festival and the rest, 72%, are volunteers. Many of the bigger festivals also create opportunities for other associations, such as sports clubs, to take on responsibilities for pay. Both public and nonprofit festivals use this type of arrangement.

The vast majority, in fact almost all, of festivals in Sweden take place in the summer, typically between the month of May and September. In later years a few winter festivals have appeared. Outdoors concerts are impossible during the winter months because of the weather. The typical

problems or threats that confront festival organizers are (1) bad weather and (2) high cost of artists (particularly travel costs for festivals in the north, far from central Europe or cheap communications).

From a geographic standpoint it could be expected that festivals will (to some extent) follow patterns of population and communication structures. This would mean that the majority of festivals are organized in the southern parts of Sweden with a few northern festivals in places that have strong regional music institutions and good travel connections. This is a pattern that is noticeable from Table.1 with festivals in Norrland (the most northern part) concentrated along the coast.

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