

The double feature of musical *folkbildning*: three Swedish examples

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The purpose of this article is to analyse three case study examples of musical folkbildung in Sweden. The first case study is from the establishment of the state-funded Framnäs Folk High Music School in the middle of the last century. The second case study, Hagström's music education, is from the same time but describes a music school run by a private company. The third case study concerns a contemporary expression of folkbildung, namely hip-hop. The theoretical framework that inspired this article stems from the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The double feature of folkbildung appears in terms of: elitist and democratic tendencies, high and low taste agendas, control and freedom.

Music may be and has been learned and taught in various ways, depending on the setting, time period in history, and musical context. For almost a hundred years in Scandinavia there has existed a musical learning setting as an alternative to traditional education in schools. This tradition is part of what in Sweden is labelled *folkbildning* – a movement to provide voluntary education for ordinary people. Hundreds of thousands of Swedes have learned music through such education. *Folkbildning* can also be used as a means of describing the process of learning in which self-education is an important dimension. In Scandinavia *folkbildning* is regarded as being crucial to every human being's liberation regardless of tradition, class and place in society (Gustavsson, 1995).

The educational activities in folk high schools and educational associations are the most typical examples of Scandinavian *folkbildning*, but activities such as the folk libraries and educational national broadcasting could also be included as examples of *folkbildning* (Larsson, 2007). Municipal music schools could also be seen as musical *folkbildning*, as they provide tuition on all instruments and singing at a reasonable price (e.g. Brändström & Wiklund, 1995). Almost every Swedish community of today has schools for music and arts and 363,000 pupils attend these, which is remarkable for a country with only nine million inhabitants (SMoK, 2010). Also, in a more general sense, music learning in religious and evangelical organisations as well as garage bands could be considered part of the context of musical *folkbildning*.

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The word *folkbildning* has no direct counterpart in the English language, but directly translated, it is a two-part construction. The first word, *folk*, refers to the idea that education is for the masses, as opposed to more exclusive education. The second part of the word, *bildning*, connects to the heritage from German Bildung-theory, and the German word 'bildung' may be read as synonymous with 'bildning', even if the usage is slightly different. In Denmark and Norway, which share the same tradition, the word bildning is synonymous with the Danish and Norwegian word 'dannelse' (Nordskog, 2008). From a global perspective the African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1999) had similar thoughts about self-education and its connection to German tradition of bildung-theories such as the Scandinavian *folkbildning* movement. Accordingly, he was strongly convinced that people would be able to reach empowerment and emancipation through self-education.

Folkbildning may be considered a particular learning tradition within a specific context and with a specific purpose, for example when democratic consciousness is taught to people who live in poor circumstances. Gustavsson (1995) argues that *folkbildning* is the result of the meeting between the individual's experience and the collective experiences of mankind.

Folkbildning has often been claimed to be a radical force intended to change society, but at the same time *folkbildning* has also been a preserving and a conservative force in society. This paradox is called the double feature of *folkbildning*. On the one hand, people believe they can achieve emancipation through education and through expanded knowledge. Larsson (1995) states, 'groups of people who at various times challenged elites of society used *folkbildning* as an accessible way' (p. 41, our translation from Swedish). Thus there is a democratic educational ideal within *folkbildning* with an emancipatory goal where the overall aim is to transform society (Rydbeck, 1997). On the other hand, *folkbildning* has been used as a means of social control such as discouraging drinking and getting them to 'behave correctly' in politics. Waldén (1994) writes in a similar way about how strikingly often *folkbildning* is about bringing out the 'good taste'. It may be seen as taming the people, but this discipline is made without coercion. Onsér-Franzén (1995) writes about the '*folkbildning* activist', who believes that everyone has the right to society's cultural offerings. This is an example of a democratic ideal. At the same time, there is a belief that people should be informed about the 'proper' or dominant culture, which may be viewed as a more elitist educational ideal. This is another example of how the double feature is visible in the *folkbildning* tradition.

In the composition of *folkbildning* there is a cluster of ideas representing what Liedman (1997) calls frozen ideologies. This means that the ideals of *folkbildning* are not necessarily conscious or explicitly formulated. They may be considered latent ideologies but nevertheless they exercise a powerful influence over the actions of people. Latent ideologies work below the surface and are taken for granted by the agents of the field. According to Liedman, manifest ideologies are explicit and consciously formulated statements with an ideological content that unites assertions based on reality, values and norms. In educational contexts, syllabuses, study literature, and documents are expressions of manifest ideologies. Manifest ideologies may well conflict with historically conditioned latent ideologies congealed into frozen ideologies.

The theoretical framework that inspired this article stems from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and his work about distinctions of taste and forms of capital. Taste is,

according to Bourdieu, socially constructed and connected to social hierarchies, status, and tradition in society. In addition, social groups have acquired different amounts of symbolic capital, such as cultural capital or academic capital. In this system of symbolic capital, some art forms are regarded as having higher value, such as classical music, while other art forms, such as Swedish accordion music from the 1940s, may be valued as low-art in the socially defined struggle over what is 'good taste'. Bourdieu suggests that the 'economic failure' of a high-art product 'reversed economy' sometimes creates cultural status because of its exclusiveness, although only a few people have experienced it.

Distinctions between 'high' and 'low' are clear in the musical *folkbildning* as are the tensions between the commercial and non-commercial. The latter is what Bourdieu used to call 'the eternal conflict between arts and money'. Here, Bourdieu's notion about symbolic violence is also a parallel to the fostering and taming dimensions of *folkbildning*.

This article will focus on musical *folkbildning* in Sweden by analysing three case studies. The first one is from the establishment of Framnäs Folk High School in the middle of the last century – a traditional and more or less emblematic form of musical *folkbildning*. The second case study, Hagström's music education, is from the same time but describes a music school run by a private company between 1946 and 1982. The third case study concerns a contemporary expression of *folkbildning*, namely hip-hop.

The different cases will be presented with similar topics derived from the theories of Bourdieu and Liedman, as presented above. The main topics may be understood as: the heritage, the institutional framework, struggle for acceptance, internal and external discourses, and identified paradoxes in the different cases. Detailed presentations of the methodological framework of each case may be found in Brändström (2007), Söderman (2007) and Thorgersen (2009).

The purpose of this article is to present three examples of musical *folkbildning* in Sweden and to illuminate how the double feature of *folkbildning*, distinctions of taste and ideological tensions, are expressed in these music educational contexts.

Case study 1: Framnäs Folk High School

Music has been part of Scandinavian *folkbildning* since the late 19th century, but regular music instrument tuition did not exist to any substantial extent before 1930 (Larsson, 2007). After that there was a growing interest in learning music, and in the middle of the 20th century music was the largest area of study for the adult educational associations in Sweden (Bohman, 1985). The educational associations ABF (The workers' educational association) and IOGT (International Organisation of Good Templars) mostly concentrated on organising music study circles. These music study circles began with listening to music or music history but gradually music making and learning to play an instrument became more and more important (Larsson, 2005a). The music circle may be seen as a precursor to the municipal music schools and cultural schools of today.

Framnäs Folk High School was founded in 1952, from an initiative by the ABF and the labour movement. Framnäs is situated outside Piteå in the northern part of Sweden. The explicit purpose of this establishment was to educate music instructors for the many music circles in the country (Larsson, 2007, 2009).

Brändström (2007) carried out a study aiming to investigate the recruitment and the study environment during the first five years of Framnäs' history. In the rolls of students there was information available about name, age, place of residence, earlier education, work experience, and the father's occupation. To elucidate how the students experienced their time at Framnäs during 1952–1957, interviews were also carried out with four former students.

There were in total 53 students in the music programme at Framnäs Folk High School between 1952 and 1957. Most of the students were men from working-class backgrounds and with seven years in compulsory school as their highest level of education. They were mostly recruited from the countryside in the northern part of Sweden. Many of them had experienced manual labour before they started to study music. The typical music student at Framnäs came from an aspiring working-class family with a certain belief in the importance of education. Those who qualified as music instructors could be labelled as upwardly mobile and their music studies may be seen as a way to invest in cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Brändström, 2007).

The study environment represented a typical example of the aforementioned double feature of *folkbildning*. The school culture may be described in terms of control, an ideology of conscientiousness, and belief in authority. All the students as well as the teachers and the rector lived at the school. By tradition folk high schools were organised as boarding schools and teachers and students were expected to be together in leisure hours too (Larsson, 2005b, 2009). The rector exercised control over the students' behaviour, for example that they kept their rooms in good order (Ambjörnsson, 1988). On the other hand, there were liberal features in the school culture, such as zest for education, friendliness and care. If some of the students experienced personal problems, the teachers and school leaders quickly came to their assistance (Brändström, 2007).

Another aspect of the double feature of musical *folkbildning* that emerged was between folk education's tradition of self education, group teaching, and playing music by ear, and the individual teaching with emphasis on a note-based repertoire of the conservatory tradition. During their time at Framnäs the students were not allowed to play music other than the classical repertoire and individual instrument tuition was the dominant form of teaching (Brändström, 2007). In Liedman's terms (1997), the music pedagogical position of the conservatory tradition could be understood as latent or frozen ideology.

During the 1960s there was a remarkable expansion at Framnäs. The reputation of the school was growing, and students came from all parts of Sweden and also from abroad. The general and musical level of education became higher, which was connected to a structural change in the whole of society. The educational opportunities, including music, increased for large groups of people. At that time the hegemony of Western art music got weaker, and jazz and other Afro-American genres became more and more accepted in music education. The acknowledged quality of the music education at Framnäs resulted in a separation of the music instructor programme from the folk high school in 1978. The music teacher training was taken over by the School of Music in Piteå and received university status (Brändström, 2007; Larsson, 2007). Nowadays, Framnäs is a wealthy folk high school focusing on preparatory education where pop, rock, and folk music share the space together with the classical heritage.

To sum up, Framnäs Folk High School has in retrospect to be considered as relatively progressive and musically radical, compared with other Swedish music institutions. The school introduced different kinds of modern music relatively early. It is worth mentioning in connection to the next case that in the year 1969 Framnäs was the first Swedish teacher-training institution to permit accordion as a study instrument (Larsson, 2009).

Case study 2: Hagström's music education

In 1946, directly after World War II and six years before Framnäs started their *folkbildungning* in Piteå, Hagström started a private music school with several locations throughout Sweden. At that time the company Hagström owned had developed from a one-man importer of accordions to a multinational producer, reseller, importer, and exporter of accordions and other popular instruments (Thorgersen, 2009). While the foreign markets were growing, the Swedish market as well as the rest of the Nordic countries was becoming saturated with accordions. In order to sell more instruments, Hagström had to come up with a way to create more customers and to get already existing customers to buy their instruments. At a casual meeting of three leading figures in the company, they agreed to open a set of music schools connected to the Hagström shops, which were already spread over most of Sweden and some regions of Norway, Denmark, and Finland. Hagström continued to provide music education until they ended business in 1982/83.

In a recent PhD project, Hagström's music educational activities were analysed (Thorgersen, 2009). The study was based on interviews with former teachers, shopkeepers, managers and pupils, archival material, and press. The results showed that Hagström, while being commercial and thus not primarily interested in cultivating people's tastes and educating for societal conscientiousness, shared most other features with the *folkbildungning* movement. To some extent Hagström also lived up to the *folkbildungning* ideals more than the state-funded educational associations. Hagström had their roots in popular music and stayed true to that heritage until the end. Hagström's music courses provided an opportunity for Scandinavians with lesser cultural capital to learn how to play popular music on popular instruments.

Unlike the educational associations, Hagström was not dependent on state funding and could choose their teaching methods and educational content fairly freely. Democracy and freedom from state government are considered a central element of *folkbildungning*, but at the same time the *folkbildungning* movements were (and still are) run by political parties and the church. The education at Hagstrom presented a challenge to dominant models of music education resulting in Bourdieuan terms in a tension between definitions of good music and the desire of the establishment to find ways of repelling newcomers to the field.

In 1960 a heated debate broke out between Hagström and some of the educational associations regarding education for the accordion on the one hand, and classical music education on the other. At the time music activities in the educational associations were by far the most popular courses involving more than 100,000 Swedes every year (Bohman, 1985; Larsson, 2005a; Thorgersen, 2009), and Hagström had courses all over Sweden, some in cooperation with educational associations but most were independent. The Central Committee for Musical *Folkbildungning* had issued a decree in the late 1950s stating that 'educational associations should be very restrictive, since the accordion among other

factors has limited harmonic capacities' (*Tidsspegel* no. 6, 1960 p. 4, our translation). Accordion-based popular music was still the most popular genre in Sweden in the mid 1960s, according to a large study of Swedish taste in 1965 (SOU, 1967).

In a time where classical music met tougher competition from pop and rock in regard to audience and jazz in regard to cultural capital, representatives of the cultural elite chose to attack the established accordion education as developed by Hagström and some of the educational associations. While the debate involved a large number of people and never was properly resolved, it seemed to have cleared the air somehow. The accordion era was reaching its end, and the debate ended. Hagström began offering courses in electric organ, electric bass, and synthesizers, always trying to educate for the popular musicianship. It is interesting to note that despite their new focus on electronic instruments on the production side of the business, Hagström never offered courses in electric guitars.

Hagström probably educated about 200,000 people of all ages in music courses between 1945 and 1982 when they ended all business. The music education they provided might be characterised as being at the intersection between commercialism and idealism. Hagström provided courses without any cultural agenda where everyone all over Sweden could afford to attend. They provided an education that set a standard for the municipal music schools which developed at Hagström's tail. No one took over Hagström's role on the private schooling arena, but gradually new, informal and non-institutionalised popular musical genres appeared.

Case study 3: Hip-hop as contemporary *folkbildning*

In the same way as the Swedish working class once found a way out of their marginalised position through *folkbildning*, today's young immigrants access Swedish society by articulating their position through hip-hop. Through hip-hop they achieve the knowledge of how African Americans in USA have fought for 'black' pride and political awareness. The knowledge of the social exclusion that exists in the USA can thus be applied to the awareness of their own social reality. In Sernhede (2002) the informal and self-chosen learning activities among the hip-hop young people with immigrant backgrounds were very close to the pedagogical model from *folkbildning*: the study circle. According to Söderman (2007), hip-hop may be seen as an expression of contemporary *folkbildning*.

There has been an educational side to hip-hop culture, since hip-hop emerged as a vibrant subculture in the area of Bronx in New York in the 1970s (Toop, 2000; Chang, 2005). Afrika Bambaataa, one of the founders of hip-hop and the global organization Zulu Nation, started hip-hop as an educational movement, among other things, in order to combat crime, violence and drugs in New York. Swedish rappers, who follow the pedagogical way presented by Afrika Bambaataa and others, were investigated in Söderman (2007), which constitutes the empirical data of this case study.

In the study the rappers talked about hip-hop as a political tool. Political engagement may be promoted by a connection to hip-hop. The music is described as a language that can communicate with people who do not usually read newspapers; as an informative force, which makes it suitable to use as a vehicle for political messages. The rappers expressed a conviction that there is an embedded emancipatory and empowerment force

within hip-hop music, which can plead the cause of marginalised people by giving voice to them.

Marginalization and alienation were recurrent themes in the talk of the rappers. Women and immigrants are two groups that are described as marginalized in society. A female rapper in the study talked about how she was the only foreigner in her class at school in Sundsvall where she grew up. She dreamed of being blonde so she would look like the other girls in the class. A male rapper experienced feelings of alienation when he started upper secondary school and was the only foreigner in his class. The rappers in the study are convinced that injustice exists in society and that people with foreign background are being marginalised and stigmatised in contemporary Swedish society.

The rappers want to be the voice of marginalised people. One of the rappers wishes to give voice to the groups of people whose voices go unheard. Another's mission is to get young people of different social backgrounds to get to know each other, from a local as well as a global perspective. A male rapper in the study works with integration among schools in Malmö, which is a city described in Swedish media as the most segregated in Sweden.

A constant theme in the rappers' talk was the power of knowledge. Since its emergence 35 years ago, hip-hop has been associated with social activism and education. The aforementioned Afrika Bambaataa has talked about knowledge as the fifth element of hip-hop, which has inspired the rappers in the Swedish context. One rapper expressed the importance of knowledge and education in her talk. Another rapper described how he started to do well at school thanks to hip-hop. He thus bestows a compensatory function on hip-hop and expresses the possibility of achieving traditional knowledge through hip-hop.

Like the Scandinavian '*folkbilders*' in the past, the rappers wish to become the mouthpieces of the marginalised and stigmatised members of society. At the same time the double feature of Scandinavian *folkbildning* is made visible in the talk of the rappers: a democratic educational ideal with an emancipatory purpose to empower people where people are the subjects interacts with a elitist ideal where people are the objects and good taste (the 'good' and 'right' hip-hop) is imposed from 'above'.

Discussion

The double feature of *folkbildning* is evident in these three case studies. They all share vital characteristics of *folkbildning*, such as the mass appeal and the emancipative intention and a tension between the democratic and elitist tendencies. The emancipative and more radical force represents what Liedman (1997) labels as manifest ideology. As has been shown in the article, the manifest ideology of musical *folkbildning* tends to be in conflict with the latent or frozen ideologies with a more elitist content.

There are striking similarities in the ways that *folkbildning* ideals operate in the different cases, even if the outcome and musical content are different. The master-apprentice tradition of music tuition and learning is, for example, always more or less present as one aspect of latent ideology. The double features of *folkbildning* regarding taste is a part of a societal struggle over what is considered valuable music which in turn communicates how different social groups are respected, taken into consideration, and empowered in society (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984).

In the case of Framnäs the 'good taste' is represented in how the tradition of Western classical music, which may be regarded as 'high' art, dominated the musical content. One could also see how the latent ideology of the conservatoire tradition is mirrored in the one-to-one teaching and the master-apprentice model. At the same time the influence of the democratic educational ideal was clear when it came to giving ordinary people the chance to attend higher musical education.

Another field of tension in the first case is between control and freedom in the folk high school environment. The rhetoric was that the school form emphasised free, voluntary and self-regulated learning. This manifest ideology is far away from what many students experienced as a closed study situation, which in turn was a consequence of Framnäs being organised as a boarding school.

In what may be described as a 'musical IKEA-model' (Jansson, 2006), Hagström offered inexpensive music education to the people, as an aspect of the democratic educational ideal. At the same time the model was based on notation and musical theory as important content in the music education, which may be seen as a more elitist educational ideal. In that respect there are structural similarities compared with Framnäs.

Accordion music was in the 1940s and 1950s the most popular genre (SOU, 1967); the cultural elite at the same time regarded accordion music as something tasteless. Hagström was a private company and wanted to reach ordinary people, and the accordion was a very popular instrument connected to the working class. Dimensions of subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995) are obvious in Hagström's strategies for adapting to and attempting to shape the field of popular music, for example when they integrated the 'hip' electric guitar or the synth-guitar into their instrument production.

As in Scandinavian *folkbildning* of the past, the hip-hop rappers in various ways represent the unprivileged groups of society in the 'new' transformed multi-cultural Swedish society. A democratic educational ideal permeates the rappers' talk and activities. They appear as activists, and in many ways they represent a counterculture (cf. Onsér-Franzén, 1995). They are idealists who are fighting for the right of marginalised people to raise their voices and to change their life situations. But at the same time these rappers represent the 'good' taste, which is the 'good' non-commercial hip-hop in this case. It may thus be seen as an aesthetic education in order to immunise people against the commercial culture (Persson, 2000). Although this is all about an aesthetic training in order to inoculate people against commercial culture, it has its roots in bourgeois ideology. Thus, these rappers may be seen as being both culturally conservative and culturally radical, which is in line with the double feature.

As an interesting side note, this also points to a limitation in the Bourdieuan framework, since these rappers both represent and oppose the good taste at the same time. The same may, even if more subtle, be argued about Hagström and the subcultural capital of the accordion community contrasted with the overall status of accordion music in society. However, to slightly stretch Bourdieu's field metaphor, it might be fruitful to regard these double features of taste as overlapping, sometimes contradictory and constantly changing fields where one field might be subordinate to another in some instances while primary in others.

If the double feature of *folkbildning* was evident in the discussion of taste, it is even more so when it comes to questions of how the three cases relate to social and governmental issues, democracy and freedom. This is perhaps most evident in the second case, where

Hagström on the one hand represented democratic values by providing music education to even the smallest villages for a sum of money affordable by most people. On the other hand the Hagström music schools had a traditional authoritative style of teaching where the student had little impact on the content or methods of the course.

In Söderman (2007) there are examples of master–apprentice tradition from the hip-hop culture. The discourse of ‘right’ musical learning, which is often regarded as imitating the master, seems to be a very strong tradition in music education. That is why the master–apprentice tradition colonises and influences a learning practice in hip-hop. The model of learning peer to peer is a common feature in hip-hop culture, which is called ‘the disciple model’ in Söderman (2007). The hip-hop disciple (the pupil in the learning context) is educated in order to educate other people in a master–apprentice setting, which is in line with Framnäs’ way of educating teachers for the study circles.

Hagström was not dependent on state funding but still received some money through the cooperation of some of the educational associations, collaboration about which both actors kept silent. Through being a heavy economic actor, Hagström managed to change the availability of music education in the Nordic countries, but the didactic content was left more or less unchanged. Framnäs adapted to a conservatory tradition of both teaching and repertoire, while still having an independent agency. It was always completely funded by the state.

Right now there is an ongoing academicisation and institutionalisation of hip-hop culture in the USA (Watkins, 2005). In 300 colleges and universities in the USA, there are hip-hop related classes, programmes, and courses. In Sweden, several of the *folkbildung* organisations are discussing how they can incorporate hip-hop into their musical education and *folkbildning* activities. It is obvious that they cannot do the same with hip-hop as they did with rock music in the 1980s and 1990s: just give the youngsters instruments and a place to rehearse. The activities in the hip-hop group are not organised in the same way as in rock groups (Söderman & Folkestad, 2004). The rappers in case study 3 have created organisations where young people can learn and practise artistic skills from the hip-hop culture.

This article has described how different musical learning settings, which may be regarded as *folkbildung*, are double-featured. They include high and low taste agendas within formal, informal, institutional, non-institutional, private and state-funded settings. It is tempting to draw the conclusion that musical teaching in most cases includes aspects of both democratic and elitist educational ideals. A certain degree of symbolic violence seems to be present even when the democratic ideals and intentions set the preconditions for the education.

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