



# “From Dalarna to the Orient”: Falun Folk Music Festival

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## Abstract

This article discusses the Swedish festival Falun Folk Music Festival (FFF) and makes use of interviews with key organisers, readings of festival brochures, and other material. I begin with a look at the intentions, motivations and negotiations of the organisers leading up to the first festival in 1986, and from there I discuss the way FFF contributed to a change in Swedish folk music discourse towards logics of professionalisation and cosmopolitanism. FFF negotiated between professionals and amateurs, traditionalists and experimentalists. This paved the way for the vast palette of musical traditions, soon to be called “world music”, to reach a Swedish audience. I argue that the cosmopolitanism of FFF, rather than being the main ideological goal of the organisers, worked as a means to an end, namely the professionalisation and artistic recognition of Swedish folk traditions. It also seems to have made the festival relevant in the cultural policy climate of the time.

KEYWORDS: Falun, folk music, festival, world music, cosmopolitanism

## Introduction

Falun Folk Music Festival (FFF) was an annual folk music and world music festival held in the small Swedish town of Falun between 1986 and 2005. The purpose of this article is to investigate how this festival played a part in shaping Swedish folk music discourse towards logics of cosmopolitanism and professionalism. I will discuss how the idea of cosmopolitanism, now so frequent among folk music enthusiasts in Sweden, was not the main focus of the festival organisers but rather a means to an end in their efforts to raise the status of traditional Swedish music.

It is important to stress that FFF was not working in a vacuum – it was simultaneously parallel to and intertwined with political, societal and cultural discourses of multiculturalism and professionalism, and similar developments can be seen in other countries. There are also related musical phenomena from the same period that deserve studies of their own.<sup>1</sup> In this study, I focus on the intentions, motivations and negotiations of the festival organisers in relation to the discursive change within the Swedish folk music genre. Therefore, the main

material consists of interviews with three key players in the festival. They were chosen for the study due to their multiple roles as organisers, musicians, and folk music researchers. One of the interviewees can be considered the main initiator of the festival. Paired with secondary material, such as the brochure for the first festival and social media discussion, the material makes visible how the festival organisers negotiated and reacted to the discourse logics connected to the folk music genre of the time. As an analytical tool, I borrow the concept of discourse logics as introduced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1990; 1985) and as further developed by Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007). I apply their terms pragmatically and see logics as a way of categorising strains of ideas within discourses.

I want to start by making two broad claims about what characterises the current folk music community in Sweden. Following their inclusion in the Swedish parliament in 2010, the right-wing political party Sverigedemokraterna ("Sweden Democrats") made efforts to tie folk music to their nationalistic-conservative political agenda (Kaminsky 2012a; Teitelbaum 2017). As one example, Sverigedemokraterna motioned in 2013 that government funding of traditional Swedish music should be dramatically raised – but at the expense of multicultural musics and projects. This motion was loudly and heavily contested by a more or less united folk music community. Ideas of mixing music cultures as a natural way of creating folk music are prevalent in many popular and academic descriptions of Swedish folk music from recent decades (Kaminsky 2012b; Teitelbaum 2017: 116; Tiderman 2002). As such, my first claim is that many who play, dance, and listen to folk music in Sweden today regard it to be a particularly eclectic, open and inclusive genre that naturally holds elements from diverse cultures. It is characterised by an internal logic of cosmopolitanism.

My second claim is that although a feature of folk music is, when compared with other music genres, its less distinct barrier between amateurs and professionals, folk music in Sweden is becoming increasingly professionalised: many folk musicians accept and identify with ideas about being an entrepreneur, and they take business courses and make business plans. Currently, Swedish folk music is included in higher education and in cultural policy funding systems, making it one of only a few music genres besides classical music where it is possible to make a living from concerts without being famous in the mainstream (Fredriksson 2018; Lundberg 2014b).

Both developments can be described as part of larger simultaneous political projects, not least when it comes to entrepreneurship (Jacobsson 2014; Svensson & Tomson 2016), but the shift seems to have been more dramatic in terms of folk music than in terms of other music genres. One could certainly discuss and contend the details and meanings of these characteristics, and cosmopolitanism especially is a "messy" and compromised term (Stokes 2008: 7). The Swedish folk music genre is, as Teitelbaum (2017: 106) has noted, a fairly homogenous white middle-class phenomenon. Thus, I am not claiming the existence of an actual cultural cosmopolitanism in Delanty's (2011) sense, but rather the self-representation of a cosmopolitan idea, an "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" (Sassatelli 2011). That said, it is safe to say that none of these ideas were included in the notion of traditional Swedish folk music as it was constructed in line with the logics of nation-building and nationalism in the early 19th century (Ling & Ahlbäck 1980), which is similar to many other Western folk music traditions (Bohlman 1988; Ferris & Hart 1982).

In the early 20th century, the renowned painter Anders Zorn organised the first fiddler competitions, *spelmanstävlingar*, which would soon spread throughout the nation.<sup>2</sup> Here, folk music was "projected as an individual art of especially gifted

men" (Ronström et al. 2001:4). Some years later, *spelmansstämmor* ("folk musicians meeting") would emerge and replace these competitions. *Spelmansstämmor* are gatherings of fiddlers with a focus on the communal aspects of music: much of the music takes place off-stage in the form of *buskspel* (lit. "bush-playing"), a sort of busking without the solicitation of money. Entry to these gatherings is often free, and the fiddlers who play seldom get paid. As Ronström et al. describe, these "non-competitive events emphasized informal, low-keyed interaction through and around music, such as playing together in larger, ad hoc groups just for fun" (Ronström et al. 2001: 5). The communal, homogenic form of the *spelmansstämma* was important for the development of FFF.

## Fun in the Bushes

During the development of Swedish folk music, and up to the present day, the region of Dalarna has held an exceptional position. Ever since the era of national romanticism Dalarna, and particularly its central area with the communities around Lake Siljan, has been seen to have an especially vibrant and thriving musical life, with many famous fiddlers living in or coming from the area. It had a strong focus on tradition, tourism and leisure, and this is still the case today. In the recent place-branding project "Trademark Dalarna", the word Siljan was associated with "assets" like tradition, music, culture and handicrafts (Region Dalarna 2009). The southern part of Dalarna, with small industrial towns such as Borlänge and Avesta and mining villages such as Grängesberg, has never, historically, been regarded as a flourishing cultural area. However, the residential town of Falun has focused a great deal on service- and knowledge-based industry as well as on culture.

In the late 1960s the use of folk culture from Sweden and Dalarna by the pop group Tages (Arvidsson 2005), as something of a response to the collaboration between the Beatles and Ravi Shankar, coincided with the rise of the Swedish left-wing music movement.<sup>3</sup> Following folk revivals in many parts of Europe, traditional music during this time garnered appeal amongst these alternative music scenes, even if its function was mostly emblematic. As Arvidsson (2008) noted, one track on a progressive rock music album would often be in the style of traditional music to signify allegiance with the ideals of the reimagined notion of the "folk" as the socialist "people" (Ronström et al. 2001).<sup>4</sup> During this time, a group of young people originating from the Siljan area started to make themselves known to the folk music community. They were talented folk-fiddlers, *spelmän*, but they also made a point of introducing the music to new audiences. They organised courses and concerts, and published records, notebooks and other literature, and could thus be described as embracing what Lundberg et al. (2000) call the "maker" side of the musician's identity. They did not consider themselves entrepreneurs, and while they had one foot in the traditionalistic environments of Siljan, they had the other in the left-wing music movement. One of the fiddlers, Per Gudmundson, described this double existence:

I got this image once that, especially here in Dalarna, it was like two parallel worlds that docked together. A political consciousness. Many of us were part of the (anti-war) Vietnam-movement, anti-nuclear power movement, voted for more or less...or, well, sympathised with the far-left ideologies. At the same time as many of us were passionate about things like Anders Zorn. (...) Karl Erik Forslund's books *With the Headwaters to the Sea* became standard works that you'd go through and learn about the history of the [Dalarna] countryside.<sup>5</sup> So

it was like...Anders Zorn and Karl Marx walking arm-in-arm over the meadows by the Sjugare village [laughs].<sup>6</sup> (Gudmundson 2014)

Even though there was some acceptance of and interest in folk music in the alternative music scene, my interviewees were not content with how it was received in society in general. Magnus Bäckström, who would be the main initiator of the festival, described what motivated him during this period:

It [folk music] didn't exist at the music schools, it didn't exist in the concert halls, it didn't exist at... It kind of only existed in the summer when it was supposed to be a bit of fun for the tourists. Or...well, it existed but it wasn't acknowledged. It was like, you know, 'the fiddlers play with more enthusiasm than talent', 'Well well, it's fun in the bushes but not on stage', it was a lot like that. It was looked down upon. (...) So at the same time as one played just for the sake of the music itself, it was also a cultural political struggle [small chuckle]. To bring forth, in different ways, this music and give it a place in society. (Bäckström 2014)

Bäckström and his comrades had the impression that the music that they loved and cared about was not accepted in the same way as other cultural expressions of the time. He described folk music as being imbued with a sense of being representative of the region, county or nation and in the left-wing movement as the proletariat-as-folk, anti-imperialist music; seldom, however, was it seen as music in its own right. It was music for tourists, and because of this it went unacknowledged; it was fun in the bushes, but looked down upon and didn't belong on stage. In my interview with Per Gudmundson, he described how the connection to tourism was, and in some ways still is, perceived as a problem for them:

There is an entertainment industry around Siljan that builds on traditional culture, but it's about... like entertaining conference guests by standing on one leg, playing Gärdebylåten on an ocarina<sup>7</sup>...which is, we can feel that it's a rather one-dimensional and shallow relationship with folk culture. (Gudmundson 2014)

Gibson and Connell have described how traditional music, when commercialised for tourism, is often transformed to be more accessible for Western ears and eyes – either focusing on the spectacular or simplifying the music to be exotic but never challenging or being too different to what audiences were used to (Gibson and Connell 2005). These descriptions of how folk music is emblematically used as a resource could be described as a spectacle for tourism. Implicit in my informants' descriptions is also a focus on the past tense – this was not considered music in the here and now, but rather a re-enactment of a music that once had been; it was a representation of music in an ideal society. The commercial aspect seemed to stand in contrast with another notion of folk music – that it was expected to be uncommercial.

And the thing is that [the notion that folk music should be uncommercial] also existed in the seventies movement. I remember that. To be uncommercial basically meant to play for free, right. Even when you'd be asked to play for [folk] dancing, they'd ask "could you come here on the 17th of August and play" and it was like...if you said that you wanted payment, they'd be like "what do you mean? We who are dancing don't get paid!" (Gudmundson 2014)

To play for free could be conceived as a requirement for authenticity – if you want payment for your work and thus attempt to rise above those who, for example, dance to your music, then you are not considered authentic. This can be described as a logic of authenticity through amateurism.

From the perspective of the future festival organisers, traditional Swedish folk music as a musical practice during the 1970s could be characterized as articulating several social logics derived from multiple discourses: traditional music; left-wing music movement; (right-wing) traditionalism; tourism; the past tense. Through these inter-discursive articulations, traditional folk music was effectively situated outside the field of commercial popular music as well as outside more highbrow cultural circles. Folk music was, as Magnus Bäckström put it, a music that didn't really belong anywhere.

## Urbanisation, Professionalisation and Renewal

The Falun Folk Music Festival was, and is, generally recognised as being a world music festival. Whether viewed as a Western fetishisation and modification of musical elements of non-Western musical cultures for a Western market (Connell and Gibson 2003: 145) or as a portal for the Western world to discover and engage in discussions with a wide range of musical expression (Stokes 2012), the world music genre has been an important component of Western music markets and communities for quite some time. As musicians from other parts of the world toured more regularly in the West, there arose a need to label these heterogonous sounds. In June 1987, music-industry professionals famously met in a London pub and dubbed the marketisation of music from non-Western countries and European/American folk music, sometimes fused with Western pop, “world music” (Bohlman 2002; Brusila 2003; Frith 2008; Taylor 1997).

Traditional music from many parts of the world was of course not unknown in Sweden when FFF started. At an international level there had been festivals, most notably Womad (Magaudda & Chaircraft 2011), which for a few years incorporated pop and traditional music from around the world. Bäckström, Gudmundson and their friends often played outside Sweden, mostly in so-called folklore festivals, which were gatherings for international folk dancing. In this way, they came into contact with folklore ensembles and musicians from the countries they visited. Simultaneously, there was also an interest in non-Western music in the left-wing music movement, in line with the same anti-American political ideals that made Swedish folk music a viable style in the progressive left-wing music movement (Arvidsson, 2008: 198). Swedish ethnomusicologists such as Owe Ronström, Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag had been visiting international conferences where they were met by many different musical cultures and artists, and according to Ternhag, there had for some time already been informal discussions amongst ethnomusicologists and musicians about starting a music festival of international music, but no one had quite fleshed out the idea (Ternhag 2014). According to Magnus Bäckström, the penny dropped when he was standing on a bridge in Falun, looking out over the small river there:

It was... the first thought. ‘Dammit, we need a festival to promote this music [Swedish folk music], its artistic values’. To see it as music, not just like a... well a ‘fun amateur thing out in the bushes’. Not just a *spelmansstämma*, but [a festival] that puts these talented artists that also exist, that puts them on stage, so it becomes a real concert. (...) Swedish music was the starting point, and to

clearly show at what level this is at, you bring in the equivalents from other countries and... mirror the Swedish folk music by bringing in [music] from Ireland, from the USA and from Hungary and from Africa and... like that. Only the best of this music. Then, perhaps, Sweden will start to understand how great our own folk music is, artistically – that it is an art form. An art. Not just a popular movement, but an art form too. (...) All other genres have their festivals, but folk music doesn't have any, because we have (...) the alibi *spelmansstämma*, which fills this function. But it doesn't do that thing, it doesn't do the trick, it doesn't have that effect. (Bäckström 2014)

The stage as a requirement for music to be (taken) serious(ly), or even for it to be considered real at all, was a recurring theme in my interview with Bäckström. The antithesis to the stage is here the bushes – the most off-stage venue one could imagine, metaphorically hidden from public view within branches and leaves, in the very nature that is used for the eyes of tourists in brochures or in the old painting style called *kurbits*. In this same way, the *spelmansstämma* is repeatedly mentioned as an antithesis to the festival. It should be mentioned that Bäckström does not seem to regard these things as bad in any way, but rather the opposite. However, with regard to the cultural political struggle of raising the status of this music, he emphasised that the primacy of the *buskspel* and *spelmansstämmor* was an obstacle that folk music needed to get over, an alibi that prevented progress.

The festival would have music and artists from all parts of the world on stage next to Swedish folk music artists. And not only would there be music; there would also be dancing, food, drinks and handicrafts from around the globe. There would be courses in everything from Egyptian belly-dancing to American old-time fiddle, Swedish blowing-horn crafting to Haitian drumming. And it would take place right there in Falun. But Magnus told me that Falun was not the most obvious choice:

...the first thought was Rättvik, Leksand, the Siljan valley. Automatically. But... a mere second later, it was just as natural to consider Falun, because it resonates in something. I think that is very important when it comes to [the place of] a festival: that it has a resonance to it. (...) [Falun] resonated as the capital of Sweden's folk music county. And that it had a concentration of folk music people there, and there were young seventies-people, *proggare* [progressives]. There weren't old national romantics; there was... another kind of people that started doing other things with the folk music. And it became a sort of... community there. (...) So that it became as good as it got, I don't think it would have happened if it had been located in... Gävle or Linköping or wherever. I really don't think so. I think the strength of the festival was that it happened in Falun. And that it wasn't in Rättvik, on the other hand! (Bäckström 2014)

The choice of Falun thus rested on two thoughts: first, that it was a break with the automatic, normative, idea of folk music as something that belonged in the countryside, close to nature and the traditionalistic environments of the Siljan area; and second, perhaps more importantly, that Falun represented for him something new – urban, young, informed – while still having a core of folk music artists and audience. The choice of Falun might, while still signalling rurality and tradition to a truly urban audience due to Falun's location in Dalarna, be described as a political logic of urbanisation (Sassatelli 2011: 18).

Building on these first thoughts, Magnus pitched the idea of a festival with international as well as Swedish music to his friends at a dinner party in Falun and the work was soon underway. It would take several years from that dinner party to

the first festival. The world music festivals of the 1980s have been described as reflecting “major changes in global economic and cultural systems” (Ronström et al. 2001). The premise of FFF was consistent with cultural policy development in Sweden during this period, where ethnic and cultural diversity and multiculturalism became strong discourses (Lundberg, Malm, & Ronström 2000: 42). This enabled the festival to receive strong and long-lasting funding from the national touring organisation Rikskonserter, which was essential for FFF as they provided funding, facilities and even administrative staff. Rikskonserter's role as enabler for new music contexts has been discussed by Gustafson (2011:175). The financial support from national and local cultural policy was combined with an entrepreneurial way of working with sponsorship deals and local businesses. According to Magnus Bäckström, most of the work leading up to the first festival involved communicating at the local level with stakeholders in and around Falun. This included different organisations and companies, from the university to banks and even the local army base, as a way of including them in the project as well as securing sponsorship deals for the festival.

[Sponsorship] wasn't just 'any business', it was built on a relationship (...) a resonance. (...) Number one was to include them, number two was... that they became 'hostages'! If STORA [a big forestry corporation] joins, stands behind the festival and sponsors it and is engaged in it, then that means something for the local politicians, it means something for the outside world. (Bäckström 2014)

The festival organisers would also attempt another considerable break with the emphasis on amateurism and non-commercial aspects of folk music:

In those days, fiddlers generally didn't get paid anything, right. They were supposed to come and 'light up the evening' and such. (...) So then we decided that all musicians that we engaged would be engaged on fair terms. Everyone got to stay in hotels all week, even those that came from... the Siljan area, for example. And everyone got fair pay. (Ternhag 2014)

The festival's strategy of paying all musicians fairly was mentioned by all of my interviewees as something they took pride in and that they deemed both important and new (for the folk music genre). This could be described as part of a political logic of professionalisation, with the clear intention to change the idea of what it meant to work as a traditional folk musician. Another reflection of this was that they created the first business forum for folk and world music professionals in Sweden, namely Norrsken, where performers, organisers, marketers and record labels would get together to find beneficial means of collaboration.

As a reaction to what they saw as folk music's focus on the past, the festival also seemed to tap into what could be described as a logic of renewal. The Ethno youth camp was introduced as a part of the festival in 1989 and has outlived the festival. Today there are annual Ethno camps in ten countries, which bring together talented young traditional musicians from all parts of the world and give them the opportunity to learn music from each other (Fredriksson 2018: 97). Other regular programme features that also focused on young musicians such as Ungt Folk (Young Folk) and Gränslust (Borderless) were also introduced over the years.

In creating the Falun Folk Music Festival, the festival organisers attempted, and in many ways succeeded, to re-articulate the discursive context for Swedish folk music. They employed strategies such as the juxtaposition of global musical

elements on stage next to Swedish folk music artists, the entrepreneurial use of partnership deals with local businesses, the focus on renewal through the promotion of young people (for example, the establishment of the Ethno youth camp), the principle of paying artists well, and the location of the festival (placing it in Falun instead of in the Siljan area). These logics of urbanisation, professionalism and renewal were exemplified in the description of the Turkish zurna-player Ziya Ayetkin in the festival brochure for the first festival:

Ziya Ayetkin is a *folkmusiker* [folk musician]. He is part of a long unbroken line of musicians who created and upheld traditional Turkish modality. For Ziya, tradition is not a prison that binds him by the rules: Do this! Do that! Not like that! Tradition is instead a never-ending source of possibilities. (Bäckström 1986)

The use of the word *folkmusiker* is significant here as it is a label that at the time signalled a subject position of professionalism and urbanism. This is in contrast to the label *spelman*, which has been described as connoting a more traditional approach to playing folk music (Eriksson 2017: 20; Johansson & Berge 2018; Kaminsky 2012b: 109–111; Lundberg 2002, 2014a).

## From Dalarna to the Orient

In a text presented at a Norwegian folk music convention in 1993, Magnus Bäckström described how the festival was seen as a threat by members of the fiddler community:

We are provoking the established fiddler community. (...) What we in our naive enthusiasm see as strengthening local and regional identity and its uniqueness is at the same time [seen as] a threat to the (...) fundamentals that the fiddler community is built on. (...) The conservation culture, built on other values than purely musical ones.<sup>8</sup> (Bäckström 1994)

It seems as though the festival from the very first year took some steps to counter this scepticism. Consider the very first image taken from the very first festival brochure for FFF in 1986 (Figure 1). It portrays an unusually large, but otherwise typical, *spelmanslag* ("fiddle group"). The image strikes me as somewhat unexpected in the context of the program, considering that the values associated with the *spelmanslag*, which in many ways are analogous with those of the *spelmansstämma*, were what this festival set out to oppose.

If we continue reading the festival brochure, we find that this logic is subtly repeated. The article on the courses offered is entitled "From Dalarna to the Orient", but it states that the biggest course, both with regards to the number of students and instructors, is "of course" about playing Swedish folk tunes on the fiddle. After this come articles describing the *spelmanslag* that will play and the "all-night dancing" that will occur, as well as some shorter articles about the *spelmansstämma* that will close the festival, the open stage, lectures, instrument makers and so on. A two-page article presents the main sponsor, the forestry company STORA and its subsidiaries.





Foto: Björn Henriksson

*Spelmansrörelsen i Falun är stark! I huvudstaden i landets främsta folkmusiklandskap finns både kunskap om andra kulturer och en egen livskraftig tradition – grunden för hela folkmusikfestivalen.*

FIGURE 1. “The fiddler movement in Falun is strong! In the capital of the country’s foremost folk music county, there is knowledge both about other cultures and about its own vital traditions – the foundation for the entire folk music festival!” (Bäckström 1986)

Photo: Björn Henriksson, used with permission. <sup>9 10</sup>

To fit with the theme of cultural heritage, STORA is presented as “the world’s oldest company”, referencing archival documents from the year 1288. Next is a two-page article about folk music in Dalarna by Gunnar Ternhag. After this, we come to the actual concerts. The first 29 pages of the 57-page book are almost entirely about Swedish music. We read presentations about fiddle music (a tribute concert to the legendary fiddler Hjort-Anders) and blues (Pelle Lindström, Peter Carlsson and Peder Ekerlund) from Dalarna and other parts of Sweden (Burträskara and Spelmän från Skene), herding music, choir song and Saami *jojk*.

On page 30, we begin slowly to leave Sweden’s borders with a concert by the Danish band Rejseorkestret, although they are mentioned to also have a Swedish repertoire. Next come several Norwegian fiddlers and the Norwegian national instrument hardingfela is presented, as is a Finno-Swedish *spelmanslag* called Helsingby Spelmän. Next, the first non-Nordic act is presented, namely Boys of the Lough, a band with members from Shetland, Scotland, England and Ireland, who are presented as “ambassadors for folk music from the whole world”. Klezmerim is presented as a mix of “gypsy-music, big band swing and Dixieland (...) eastern European folk melodies, crazy vaudeville-humour and all kinds of playful shenanigans!” followed by the introduction to Turkish zurna-player Ziya Ayetkin and davul-drummer Halit Drogul. The Greek singer and researcher Dymna Samíou and her accompanying band Epirus are presented next, and then a spread is devoted to the Swedish international music ensemble Orientexpressen. Next to be presented are the “master of the Bulgarian bagpipe”, Kostadin Varimezov, and a Ugandan hi-life orchestra, who are followed by a three-page article on “the uncrowned master

of the raga", sitar player Ustad Zia Muhiuddin Dagar and a thorough description of Indian classical music. The last artist presented is Flaco Jimenez, "accordion king from Texas" (Bäckström 1986).

Because of the way that the brochure's images and texts are communicated and organised, they could be interpreted as being aimed at those who would consider the festival's multiculturalism to be a cause for concern. For example, it is interesting to note that the two artists who are described as "kings" or "masters", suggesting very high quality and status, are presented as the very last artists in the 1986 festival brochure. On the whole, the foreign artists, who at that time in Sweden would have been perceived as exotic, feature strongly in the festival brochure. However, the authors appear to ease them somewhat into the brochure: first by including reassuring articles about the strong folk music tradition of Dalarna, and then by including articles about the Nordic contributions to the festival, which are followed by the relatively unknown Celtic genres and then, finally, the Greek, Turkish, Indian and Ugandan contributions. The brochure reads like a journey that could have been given the same name as the festival's course package – "From Dalarna to the Orient".

The motivation for starting the festival (as stated in all three interviews) was to raise the status of Swedish folk music by mirroring it in foreign music. This is confirmed in a documentary about FFF made by Swedish Television where Bäckström says that he hopes that "this international outlook, where people can see the value of these small international folk cultures, will make people see the value of our own domestic folk culture and music" (Falun Folkmusikfestival 1987). However, that heightened status was contingent on the festival's success in presenting the foreign music as holding high value, quality and artistic standards in itself. On the other hand, there might have been an expected uncertainty, if not an overt one, about how some parts of the audience would react to the foreign elements. Magnus Bäckström told me that this concept, of starting in Dalarna and Sweden and branching out to the rest of the world, was not purposely tactical. Still, the way the primacy of the Swedish folk music tradition is presented here could be described as working tactically in Michel De Certeau's (1984) sense, to ease the transitional anxiety for a subject invested in the earlier discourse of folk music. This apparent tendency to ease the audience into the international music genres can also be found in the naming of the festival, where it is named "folk music" rather than "international", "global" or "ethnic" music, all of which were initially considered (Ternhag 2014). The presentation offers stability while effectively concealing political (and musical) change from those that would feel a sense of unease with this changing musical landscape.

## On the Fence

The Falun Folk Music Festival would become an arena for contestations of the public space in Falun. In its first few years, one of the main attractions of the festival was the sense of carnival it presented to the streets of Falun, with exotic food and drinks, and with entrance fees charged only for the indoor concerts. According to my informants, every year more and more focus was on the street party, making the concerts seem more of a second priority, since many of those who came to the festival explicitly to party were local or regional residents who might not have had a particular interest in the music (see Bohlin & Ternhag 1990: 37). This was increasingly seen as a problem by the organisers, who decided to remedy this by "moving the music out into the festivities", so they created a festival area in a park

called Läröverksparken, built a fence around it and charged an entrance fee.<sup>11</sup> There would still be indoor concerts in Kristinehallen (the community building) and the local churches, but the heart of the festival would be outside in the fenced area with big stages and tents for the concerts, thus moving the festival closer to the rock festival format of the newly started Swedish Hultsfred festival (Bjällesjö 2013) rather than that of the classical music festival. This would also be where most of the food and drink vendors were placed, encouraging those who were primarily interested in participating in the carnival side of the festival to pay the entrance fee. That move was described by my informants as both economic and artistic. There was a feeling amongst the organisers that the street party was a serious economic problem, since they would take advantage of the festival's resources but not contribute to it economically. There were also concerns about the musical quality should the focus move from music to drinking parties (Ternhag 2014; Bäckström 2014).

The fenced festival area did not go over particularly well with some of the festivalgoers. Some in the audience felt that the organisers had sold out or even stolen the festival from the people of Falun (Bäckström 2014). According to Magnus Bäckström, things nearly came to blows with some people and he was "almost afraid to go out alone to his car" some nights (Bäckström 2012). Some people hold grudges even to this day. In the comments section on a Facebook post from 2013 in the Facebook group "Vi som minns Falun Folkmusik Festival" (Facebook 2013) where someone put up a photo from FFF, one person commented that FFF "used to be good, until someone came up with the 'brilliant' idea to start charging entrance, you profit-hungry screw-ups!", to which one of the former organisers answered: "and you're one of those who think folk musicians live on bread and water". The way the organisers argue for their decision to confine the festival to the fenced area can be seen as a logic of quality through professionalism, which in this instance clearly clashed with logics of authenticity through amateurism. The problem of balancing commercial success and credibility is discussed by Jonas Bjällesjö in his dissertation about the Hultsfred rock festival. He discusses David Laing's (Laing 2004) thesis that there is a conflict between "the carnivalesque" and "corporisation" in festival environments, but argues that this was somewhat unwarranted in the Hultsfred context, suggesting rather a symbiosis of sorts (Bjällesjö 2013). In the context of FFF, there seems to have been a little of both: on the one hand, the carnival dimension stood, according to the organisers, in the way of both the economic viability and the musical quality of the festival. On the other hand, the collaboration with local businesses, vendors, food-stands and sponsorship deals that it led to was a large part of the festival's initial success.

Conflicts between the logics of professionalism-turned-commercialism and authenticity seemed to reoccur during the festival's final years. There were rumours before the festival in 2000 that soul singer Eric Gadd was booked, which was much debated in an e-mail list for Swedish folk music. One comment was "Change the name of the festival. Remove Hjort-Anders from the logotype" (Diskussionslista för svensk folkmusik & för svensk folkmusik, 2000).<sup>12</sup> During the 2001 festival, a local arts community even handed out flyers protesting against what they perceived to be the commercialisation of the festival. But the broadened focus of FFF would continue. At the very last festival, in 2005, many of the performing artists were considered too mainstream for the folk music community, among them popular pop/rock singers Mikael Rickfors and Mats Ronander and hip-hop and soul artists Timbuktu and Kaah. The local council's part in funding the festival was very much criticised in local media, especially by the local political party Falupartiet. When

FFF closed its gates for the last time, it had lost a great deal of support both from the local community as well as from sections of its core audience.

## Conclusion

In 2018, the Sweden Democrats restated their claim that traditional Swedish music is threatened by multiculturalism. This was once again firmly rejected almost unanimously by the folk music community in several debate articles with hundreds of signatures (Moberg 2018). The well-known folk musician Ale Möller, who was a regular artist at Falun Folk Music Festival and who ran the world music tent there for several years (he was also involved with other concerts), stated in one of the articles that folk music is "positively stimulated by impulses from the music of non-Western cultures" (Möller 2018). Where previous discourses on Swedish folk music focused on regional music in a national context, the folk music community would, during the course of FFF, shift towards understanding local music in a global context. Or as Brusila (2003) puts it: "local music, not from here". At Falun Folk Music Festival, traditional music was presented in new contexts – as globalised, as professional, as young. However, it renegotiated these logics through music's affective dimensions: its fantasmatic promise of a stable, authentic world and its message of "unity through diversity" (Delanty 2011: 649; Ronström et al., 2001) with a "reflexive inter-relation of cultures" (Delanty 2011: 651).

<u>Swedish Folk "Pre-FFF"<sup>13</sup></u>	<u>Swedish Folk "Post-FFF"</u>
Authenticity	Artistic quality
Amateurism	Professionalism
Tourism	Carnival, art
Bushes	Stage
The past	Renewal
Spelman	Folkmusiker
Region ← → nation	Local ← → global
Regionalism	Cosmopolitanism

Without resorting to the kind of "dichotomous visions" of traditional and urban festivals that Sassatelli (2011:17) rightfully opposes, one could visualise the discursive transformation discussed in this article in a list of dichotomies, such as those above. However, the view of folk music as traditionalistic and conservative was, of course, not simply replaced by a notion of a modern and cosmopolitan musical genre. It should rather be argued that additional logics were tapped into while certain aspects of the earlier discourses were toned down or re-contextualised. For example, the logics of authenticity through amateurism -- the "fun in the bushes" -- was still enacted at FFF, as can be seen in many video recordings from the festival. However, it held a different place than before. Where *buskspel* is central to a *spelmansstämma*, it was important but peripheral to FFF. Additionally, even though a great deal of focus was on youth – with the Ethno camp, Ungt Folk and Gränslöst – the festival also had initiatives such as the "grey panthers", where they honoured ageing fiddlers (Bäckström 2014).

While world music is often seen as a genre that emphasises fusion over traditional arts and music, the organisers of FFF demonstrate how global music traditions may be drawn upon by folk music culture leaders as a mirror that allows them to raise the status of their own national folk music tradition. In this sense, cosmopolitanism becomes a means to an end: the professionalisation and artistic

recognition of Swedish folk traditions. Here, cosmopolitan ideals are revealed to be a cultural resource, as a way to secure cultural policy funding, as FFF organisers intertwined cosmopolitanism with the logics of the cultural and ethnic diversity of mainstream society (Lundberg et al. 2000: 42). Importantly, this process also made the festival relevant to a new, young and urban audience, breathing new life into the local valorisation of Swedish folk music. However, FFF was also a disruptive force in the Falun community, throwing into sharp relief how cultural traditions can manifest divisions and contestations as communities negotiate their values in terms of the extent to which folk traditions should be commodified. Media here played an important role in giving local actors voice in the process of this negotiation. The fact that such contestations have persisted into the Facebook era exemplifies the continued politicisation of folk music in this community.

As I have argued, the Falun Folk Music Festival contributed to a re-contextualisation of Swedish folk music discourse by forging new chains of equivalence between professionals and amateurs, traditionalists and experimentalists. It can be seen as paving the way for the vast palette of musical traditions that would soon be called world music to reach a Swedish audience. From the initial thought of mirroring local Swedish musical traditions with “the world” came opportunities for cultural encounters leading to the folk music genre’s internalised logic of cosmopolitanism as well as a new urban and rural audience and an increasingly professional community of artists.

Even if Falun today bears no visible sign that a festival that brought together a whole world of heterogeneous musical expressions once took place in its midst, FFF clearly had the lasting impact of changing the musical geography of Dalarna and Sweden. Music festivals are contingent on the social relations of which they are comprised. However, as the story of this folk festival reveals, as they disappear, we see that they inevitably leave their traces behind. Physical places, as well as musical discourses, are transformed by festivals in unexpected ways, together with the “ideological and aesthetic linkages” (Magaudda & Chaircraft 2011:188) between the communities involved.

## Endnotes

(1) Together with FFF, the course for musicians at the folkhögskola (“folk high school”) in Skinnskatteberg in 1987-1988, and Peter Oskarsson’s production of the play “Den stora vreden” in 1988, have both been noted by folk musicians as being important musical phenomena during this time.

(2) Anders Zorn was one of the most prominent painters in Sweden in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He came from and lived in the parish of Mora in the Siljan area of Dalarna and is often considered to be one of the artists who created Dalarna as a tourist attraction, much to his own dismay. Zorn was also important for folk music since he established the competitions in traditional fiddle music that are held each year (Eriksson, 2017; Hamrin, 2007).

(3) The 1968 Tages movie *Dalania*, directed by Peter Goldman, saw *kurbits* and midsummer poles refurbished as stage props together with the music of Tages and master-fiddler Päckos Gustaf (among others). It is available for streaming on SVT Öppet Arkiv (Goldman 1968).

(4) In this context progressive rock, *progg*, refers to the music of the progressive left-wing music movement in Sweden, rather than the musically progressive prog rock genre, even though a few bands spanned both genres, such as Samla Mammas Manna (Arvidsson 2008).

(5) "Med Dalälven från källorna till havet" (Forsslund, 1919) described the culture, nature and history of the province of Dalarna. Ethnologist Anders Häggström discusses how these kinds of provincial works effectively shape cultural identity as much as they describe it (Häggström, 2000).

(6) All interviews are translated from Swedish to English by the author.

(7) Fiddle music is essential to summer tourism in Dalarna, especially when it comes to midsummer celebrations. Even if most tourists do not travel to the region specifically for the fiddle tradition, the importance of this emblematic use of folk music as the soundtrack for the region of Dalarna, as well as, by proxy, Sweden (Hamrin 2007), cannot be overstated.

(8) Gärdebylåten is a well-known march in traditional Swedish folk music style; the recording by Rättviks spelmanslag became a massive radio hit in the 1950s (see Ramsten 1980 for in-depth coverage). Regarding the quote, Per later clarified that the "one leg and ocarina" part was an extreme example – but tourism's use of folk music as emblematic resource was, and indeed is, perceived as a problem.

(9) The author's translation.

(10) Photo from a gathering of fiddlers at Dalarnas Museum, printed in the festival brochure for FFF 1986. Used with permission from the photographer: Björn Henriksson.

(11) At the time of writing, my sources are unclear as to which year this transition took place. One source says 1991, but it probably happened a few years later.

(12) Hjort-Anders Olsson was a famous fiddler from Dalarna, whose iconic silhouette since the first year in 1986 has formed the logotype for FFF.

(13) The labels "pre-FFF" and "post-FFF" are not intended to describe the festival as the single turning point in folk music in Sweden. FFF spanned the years 1986-2005, and there were many societal, political and musical events and phenomena during this time, as discussed elsewhere in this article.

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