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6.

Negotiating major and minor structures: Popular music and the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland

Johannes Brusila

Introduction

A national perspective on music implies an understandable yet problematic paradox. Its starting point is the nation state, which easily becomes a taken-for-granted, “natural” entity, born out of a seemingly teleological historical process, when, in fact, a closer analysis immediately reveals its complex and contradictory character. A national perspective inevitably involves a questioning of its own premises and asking, for example, what national music is, what are its boundaries, and whose music is included and whose is not. Moving to the next level of conceptualization and mapping out the various minorities and multicultural structures that exist within the framework of the nation does not necessarily solve the problem since these entities always exist in relation to the first, that is, the nation. Yet, these issues are worth pondering as they are crucial to the whole concept of nation.

In this chapter, I focus on one minority, namely the Swedish-speaking population of Finland. I am particularly interested in how this particular ethnicity is constructed through popular music and how different individual senses of belonging are negotiated, both in relation to social and musical structures that manifest major and minor positions. The juxtaposition of major and minor has, in this case, both an ethnic and a musical structural function, although in a reverse way: the majority culture is associated with minor keys, and the minority culture with major keys. By focusing on a minority, I want to broaden the perspective on Finnishness and Finnish popular music in general and discuss the complexities that categorizations, such as major-minor and mainstream-subculture, comprise. In doing so, I discuss the risks of approaching identity as a singular fixed position, constructed in relation to a separate “other”. I argue that we need to liberate ourselves from many of the preconceived ideas of minority identity in order not to reconstruct the identity construction that we intended to deconstruct.

The Swedish-speaking minority of Finland

Swedish is the formally registered mother tongue of approximately 290,000 people in Finland, that is, approximately 5.3% of the total population. According to the Finnish Constitution, Finland is bilingual, and the public authorities are required to provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations on an equal basis. The official bilingualism of the state clearly makes the Swedish-speaking Finns, often called Finland-Swedes, different from many of the suppressed minorities of Europe. The Finland-Swedes are usually also well integrated in society and patriotic; they do not want independence, nor do they long for to some Fatherland that they would have left behind. Despite the constitutional support, the bilingualism of the nation is maybe not always carried out in daily life, leading to functional bilingualism for many native Swedish-speakers. The small size of the population group has, however, led to a situation where it is conceptualized as a minority. It is also increasingly conceptualized as an ethnicity, although it is, in social and cultural terms, a relatively heterogeneous group of people whose lifestyles in many respects resemble those of the majority.

On one hand, the Swedish-speaking population of Finland is characterized by some cultural and musical traditions and practices that differ from those of the Finnish-speaking majority. However, on the other hand, many Swedish-speakers have held key positions in the musical life of Finland; and the history of, for example, the popular music of Finland is also the history of many Swedish-speaking musicians of Finland. Thus, it is interesting to study the musicians and how they negotiate their position within popular music as this also illuminates, on a more general level, the development of Finnish popular music, how it has been conceptualized, by whom, and with what consequences.

The self-identification of the Finland-Swedish minority is constructed through a positioning of the self in relation to three major “others”, that is: Finnish majority culture, the culture of Sweden, and what might be summarized in the concept “international culture”, which, in the case of popular music, is concretized in the use of the English language (see Brusila 2009; 2015a; 2015b). It is these three cultural spheres that are perceived to be different from, and sometimes even a threat to, the so-called Finland-Swedish culture. An individual musician’s self can be positioned in many different ways, and many Swedish-speaking musicians have made a career singing in Finnish or English for the majority population. However, when Finland-Swedish popular music and particularly its linguistic dimensions are explicitly debated in public, Finland-Swedishness is typically constructed in relation to these anti-poles.

I visualize this identity formation in a schematic diagram (see Fig. 1). The core of this Finland-Swedish self-identification positions itself in relation to the three fixed points of the outer circle; that is, its self-identification is based on a feeling of difference, or distance, from the Finnish, Swedish, and international cultures. In this core, popular music is institutionalized in small-scale activities within the home or Swedish associations, and it is often supported by the third sector. Between the core and the outer circle is a complex, diversified border zone, where many Swedish-speaking musicians have operated in practice, switching between languages, musical genres, and structures.

International (English)

OUTER CIRCLE

Three major "others" of the core (for musicians not necessarily distant periphery but career goal)

MIDDLE CIRCLE

Combinations of belongings and affinities (major field for many professional musicians)

CORE

The core of the construction of Finland-Swedishness (small-scale activities, third sector crucial)

Sweden

Finnish majority

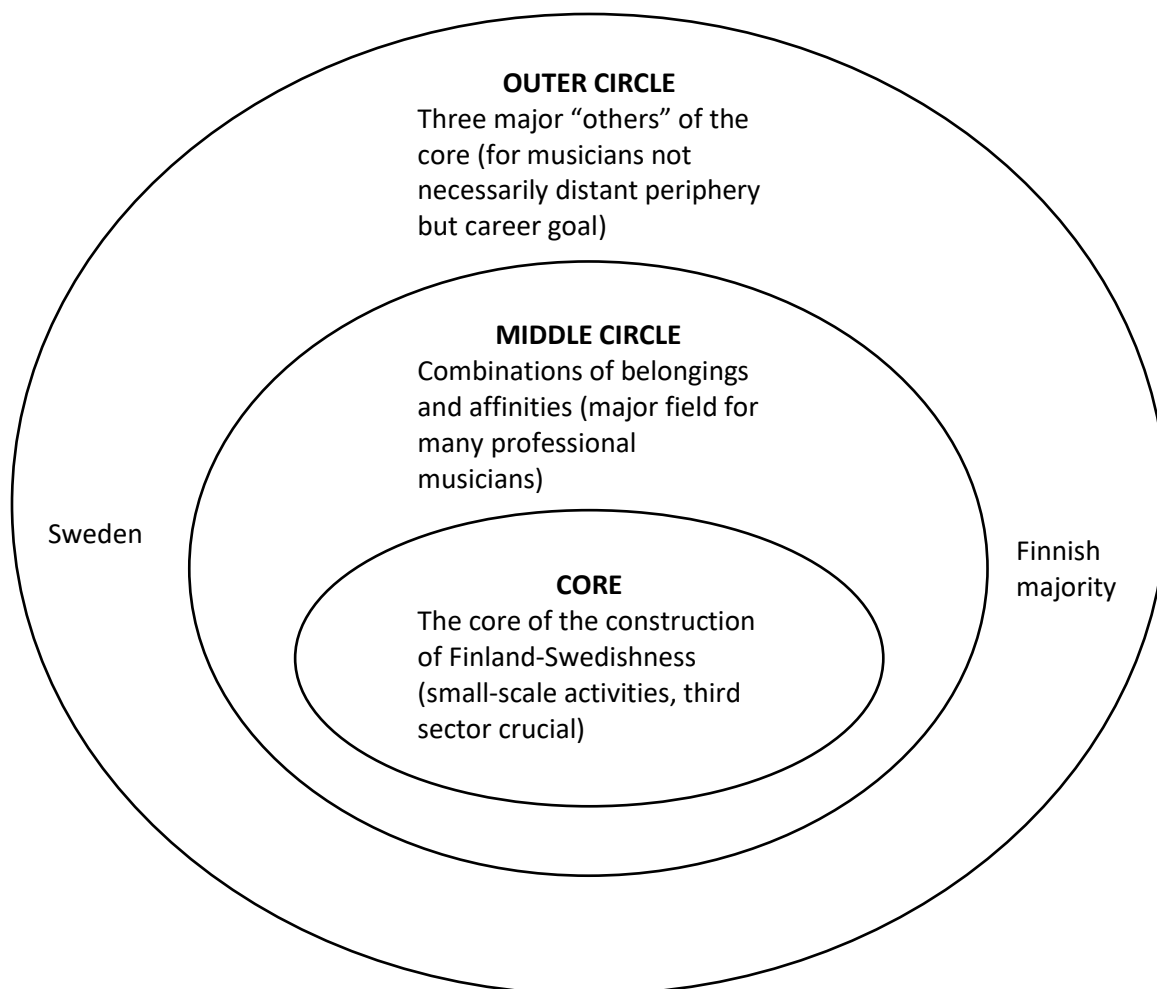


Figure 1: A schematic of the discursive construction of Finland-Swedishness. The core of Finland-Swedish self-identification is constructed in relation to the three major “others” of the outer circle. The middle circle consists of a diversified border zone where many musicians operate.

It is important to understand that this is a general description of how an ethnicity, called Finland-Swedishness, is constructed, not a description of the essence of Finland-Swedishness, or of how all Swedish-speaking individuals understand their identity. As a discursive construct (following the theories of, e.g., Barth 1969; Hall 1996; Hall 1992), this Finland-Swedish formation is a process and subject to continuous negotiations. In fact, for many Swedish-speaking musicians, the outer or middle circle can form a central stage for their professional activities, working in, for example, a multilingual environment, or singing only in Finnish for a Finnish majority audience. It is the complexity of these career choices and their linguistic dimensions, which I turn to now.

The core

The conceptualization of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland as Finland-Swedes is an example of how both national and minority identifications have been constructed since the birth of the nation-state ideology. The concept of Finland-Swedish, and thereby the whole idea of a socio-ethnic group based on linguistic affinity, is not a very old phenomenon. Although there have been Swedish-speaking people in the geographic area of what is today known as Finland since at least the thirteenth century, this population did not form a clear cultural or social group with a shared identity in the modern sense. It consisted of both socially and culturally diverse population groups, stretching from the social elite to peasants and fishermen living along the coast. However, as a result of the birth of Finnish nationalism in the mid-1800s, many people whose mother tongue was Swedish began to identify themselves as a group in their own right. An ethnicity grew out of this formation, and finally, the construct was manifested by launching the concept “Finland-Swedishness” in the 1910s (for concise descriptions of the development, see Lönnqvist 2001a).

As in many similar processes throughout Europe, folk music played a crucial part in both nation building and the construction of minority ethnicities. The folk culture of a population was seen as an undiluted expression of the people’s soul and as evidence of a consistent, significant cultural past. During this period, the choice between minor and major keys became a fundamental signifier of ethnicity (Jalkanen & Kurkela 2003, 84–85; Kurkela 2008; Kurkela 2012). As part of the nation-building process, the Finnish national character was constructed as being sentimental and melancholy, and these qualities were associated with minor keys. Consequently, the culture of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland was constructed as its “other” and being closer to Western culture, and also happier and more cheerful. These ethnic characteristics were in turn associated with major keys. Thus, traditional folk tunes in major keys were given a key part in the Finland-Swedish formation, and they have lived on in this context as new arrangements for choirs and school songs. Even today, popular dance music, which is still clearly diatonic in character, follows this same division: bands performing for the majority population use minor keys, and the minority musicians use major keys (Brusila 2009; Brusila 2015a).

In my schema, I have classified these musical phenomena – which are more or less explicitly denominated Finland-Swedish or typically associated with some kind of Finland-Swedishness – as the core of the Finland-Swedish formation. These musical practices exist in at least a

more or less permanent relation to so-called Finland-Swedishness, although it would be impossible to create some kind of a quantitative, demographic, geographic, or even linguistic definition of their exact degree of Finland-Swedishness. Music is commonly carried out in Swedish, predominantly small-scale activities in the private sphere, including folk music but also choir singing, the Nordic singer-songwriter tradition called *visa* or *literary visa* (compare Nyqvist 2015; Rhedin 2017), the variety tradition of youth organizations, as well as children's music and *snavsvisa* (drinking songs).

It took a long time before popular music, and various forms of industrially produced and media disseminated music in general, was included in this formation. In Finland, as in many other European countries, the acculturation of Anglo-American rock proceeded gradually from national schlager (*iskelmä*) and copies of foreign influences in the 1950s and 1960s to the establishment of a national rock tradition sung in a local language from the beginning of the 1970s. Although many of the key musicians and business executives in Finland who were involved in this process were Swedish speakers, popular music sung in Swedish or based on musical elements associated with the Swedish-speaking population never gained a position in the music industry because of its minimal market potential. In the twentieth century, Swedish-language popular music thus became confined to small-scale contexts and formal settings.

As a consequence of the small-scale nature of the commercial operations, the main emphasis of Swedish-language public music-making has, during the last ten to fifteen years, shifted to the so-called third sector; that is, to non-governmental foundations and associations whose explicit purpose is to promote Finland-Swedish culture. Thus, for example, youth associations in the countryside have arranged dances which have been the main stage for Finland-Swedish *dansbandsmusik* (dance-band music) (for *dansbandsmusik* in Sweden, see Lilliestam 2017). Ever since the 1980s, many cultural foundations have also supported popular music record productions, although, especially in the rock scene, receiving grants was long seen as an embarrassing and questionable move from the perspective of an artist's credibility (Brusila 2008, 21–22). Digital technology has offered new opportunities for musicians who deliberately choose to write and perform their lyrics in Swedish, since they can now produce their own music and release their material on the Internet. However, despite of the cultural importance of this activity, it still remains rather modest in financial terms, and singing in Swedish in Finland has remained a fringe activity in the national popular music market.

As a consequence of the structural shortcomings, many rock and pop bands explain that a major obstacle to writing Swedish lyrics has been the lack of role models (for choice of language, see Brusila 2015c). The motivation to nevertheless write lyrics in Swedish can be a sense of identity, a lack of language skills, or even a wish to make language a political statement. The decision can also be based on artistic ambitions and authenticity ideals, intertwined in the discourses surrounding popular music styles. As a first step of embracing a new international genre, be it rock 'n' roll or rap, the English language of the original artistic models has often been used. The use of English is explained to be authentic and "sound right", even if the language skills would not be quite sufficient for using it. This initial phase has been followed by seeing one's mother tongue as authentic and credible. In the Swedish-speaking regions of Finland, this has also often included using some of the very strong local dialects, which are often spoken and understood by only a few thousand people. For example, in the music of the band 1G3B, a humorous effect is born of an incongruous combination of a very rural dialect and heavy metal music with distorted guitars and a drop-down tuned bass playing power chords in Aeolian, Phrygian, or Locrian modes over intense drum patterns on double bass drums (Brusila 2010). The humorous aspect can incorporate polysemic qualities

that open the songs to different interpretations, ambiguities, and encodings related to social status and belonging. However, lately, many bands have emphasized how they can be more truthful and honest when singing in their own dialect, which thereby becomes an aural trigger that connects the musical expression with personality, local community, lifestyle, and values.

The middle circle

As already mentioned, my schematic outline of Finland-Swedishness can give a false impression of this discursive formation as being something that is solid and compact. In fact, it is in the nature of cultural formations like this that they are processual and relative. Thus, the core of the whole formation of Finland-Swedishness is in no way the core of all the heterogeneous and kaleidoscopic forms of Swedishness that exist in Finland. To reflect the multiplicity of how different individuals can relate to the construction of Finland-Swedishness, I have chosen to add a zone to my schema between the core and the outer circle. By doing so, I want to emphasize how many people, from a national perspective, have been important intermediaries of international influences but also influential in the creation of local industry structures and acculturated musical styles.

Swedish-speaking businessmen and women became key figures in forming a national music industry already when the first publishing houses and music shops were launched. The basis of the most important Finnish music company of twentieth century, Fazer, was laid in 1897 when Konrad Georg Fazer and Robert Emil Westerlund founded a music shop in Helsinki. The company grew into a Finnish major corporation by expanding into all fields of the music business and, not least, by buying one independent competitor after another and thereby creating a back catalogue with the most important recordings of Finnish popular music. Also, the first successful independent company to produce rock music, Love Records, was formed in 1966 by three Swedish-speakers, Henrik Otto Donner, Christian Schwindt, and Atte Blom. As a part of its leftist idealistic policy, which emphasized offering an alternative to the established “commercial” industry operators, the company also released, for example, Finland-Swedish *visa*, theatre music, and folk music. As a rule, the market potential of Finland-Swedish music has otherwise been so small that all entrepreneurs, no matter what their personal cultural belonging has been, have focused on producing Finnish majority music.

For many businessmen and musicians, the language barrier has not necessarily meant an insurmountable obstacle but a border to be negotiated. Until the mid-twentieth century, many Swedish speakers in the coastal cities had an immigrant background, and their families had adopted Swedish as mother tongue as this was the main language of the urban middle class. Thus, for example, George de Godzinsky, who was one of the most famous composers and conductors of Finnish *iskelmä*, musicals, and film music, was born in Russia in a family of multinational ancestry. Many had a Jewish background, such as entertainer, drummer, and tap dancer Jacob Fuhrman (who made a career under pseudonym Jaakko Vuormaa), guitarist Herbert Katz, pianist Hillel Tokazier, and singer Marion Rung. Others were of Swedish ancestry, for example, Ture Ara (pseudonym Topi Aaltonen), who has been called “the first true Finnish *iskelmä* star” (Pälli n.d.), and composer and founder of record company Finndisc, Erik Lindström. Some also had a Norwegian background, such as actor-singer Leif Wager and the vocal trio Harmony Sisters.

The multicultural and multilingual background, and the fact that many Swedish-speaking musicians who grew up in the cities learned Finnish well enough to perform in Finnish, have

made it possible to switch between languages depending on the audience's expectations. However, if a professional musician wants to create a sustainable career, this requires a certain amount of sensitivity. The use of Swedish can annoy a Finnish majority audience, and the use of Finnish can mean that the artist loses his or her audience in Swedish-speaking regions, where Finnish can be seen as a betrayal of the Finland-Swedish identity and language policy. Other bands can cross the language borders freely, but these are usually less well known in the media and mainly perform covers, for example, at weddings and birthday parties. One such band member called his group "a piece of the scenery" or a "scenery band"; the band does not want a strong stylistic or linguistic profile because it is hired to adjust itself to the occasion, to blend in with the background.

Many of the artists who use different languages call themselves, at least to some extent, bilingual or multilingual. However, as a rule, they use only one language in their music, and even if they switch between languages during their careers, they will use one language at a time, for example, on one record or tour. Thus, the various forms of bilingualism that can be found in everyday verbal interactions, such as language borrowing, interference, or transference (see, e.g., Romaine 1989, 50–51), are, at least to some extent, absent in the song lyrics. The only genre where language alternation and code switching are common, even within one song, is hip hop, where rappers with diverse linguistic, dialectal, and slang backgrounds cooperate. Often, this is explained as a natural consequence of the fact that the rappers participate in each other's performances and recordings. The use of one's personal verbal style in various contexts also emphasizes the importance of originality and accentuating the rapper's personal voice in a credible style. Language is used to manifest the links between music, identity, and themes dealt with in the lyrics. In some cases the mixture of languages can reflect a shared attitude and a feeling of social belonging or of being an outsider, or a tolerant multicultural ideology.

The level and character of multilingualism in an artist's work is the result of deliberations concerning social and artistic self, image, and personal voice. For those musicians who previously have been singing in, for example, English, it can be a radical change to start using Swedish. The use of one's mother tongue is often said to affect the use of voice and, in general, how the text is performed and what impression the singer makes. It can offer a more authentic expression, but at the same time, it can feel too personal and revealing. As singer-songwriter Frida Andersson explains, "It is easier to write in English because Swedish is my emotional language, Swedish makes everything naked, direct; it hits you right in the face" (Törnroos 2013). The singers also have to think about how they pronounce Swedish. If they choose to pronounce it in a way that resembles standard Swedish pronunciations used in Sweden, rather than standard Finland-Swedish, they can receive criticism in Finland. Even tiny distinctions in the pronunciation can be key signifiers of identity, and the deviations between spoken and sung accents seem to be of a particular and relatively constrained type (compare the sociolinguistics of British pop singers English pronunciation, Trudgill 1983, 158–159). The selection of linguistic forms from different codes may be due to mixed motives, and a combination of different linguistic features may be very functional in retaining a balanced public and self-image.

The negotiation of ethnicity as part of the artist's career also includes combining structural elements from different genres of music. Already when the Finnish mainstream popular song tradition *iskelmä* (schlager) was born during the first decades of twentieth century, several Swedish-speaking musicians played a key role in creating the new musical formats and industrial practices. For example, Georg Malmstén (1902–1981), whose father was a

Swedish-speaking Finn and whose mother's roots were in Russia, combined structural elements from various traditions into his personal, popular mix. He could use features from a Western tradition, for example Finland-Swedish archipelago waltzes, Swedish popular songs, and Central European entertainment music in major keys, but also elements from Finnish folk song tradition and Russian music in minor keys. This mixture became very popular, and Malmstén has often been called “the king of Finnish *iskelmä*” and even “the father of Finnish *iskelmä*” (Pälli n.d.). In popular discourse, he was also often called “Molli-Jori” (minor-key George) which he, at times, felt was a personal insult because of the ethnic connotations of the expression (Jalkanen and Kurkela 2003, 303–304).

Another bilingual artist, Lasse Mårtenson (1934–2016), also successfully combined the Scandinavian literary *visa*, the national romantic song tradition, and the popular songs recorded in Sweden in the 1940s and 1950s in his compositions. He made a career as a pop singer, recording hit songs written by him and others, but he also composed music for several popular plays, movies, and television series (for details on Mårtenson's career, see, e.g., Jalkanen 1992, 111–114). Despite his national success, he often emphasized how he had never felt at home with some of the central elements of Finnish mainstream popular music (interview March 14, 2007). According to Mårtenson, the Slavonic character of Finnish popular music, with its predominant use of minor keys, made it too sentimental for his taste. Thus, he could avoid minor tonalities, and when using minor chords, he could add a minor seventh or sixth to the triad and juggle with minor and major thirds to soften the harmony. By doing this, he avoided fixing to “either minor or major, but can move in between, and sort of swim in between all the time” (interview March 14, 2007). This can also be noticed in Mårtenson's composition “Stormskärs Maja” (Maja of Stormskär), which was created for a television series set in the Swedish-speaking archipelago. With 30,000 sheet music copies sold, it is one of the most successful instrumental compositions in Finland ever. Harmonically, the composition combines minor and major keys, but also minor seventh and minor sixth chords, in such a way that the overall tonal character is strongly influenced by the Dorian elements in the melody and by the open chords, which come to signify the traditional archipelago context. The composition is an example of how Mårtenson was able to negotiate himself a position in Finland, both creatively and in terms of career choices. In many ways, he is indicative of the musicians and industry staff members in what I have termed the Brackish Water. He worked using both Swedish and Finnish but without ever anchoring his career or public image exclusively in either linguistic group or its arenas.

The outer circle

The outer circle of my schematic presentation of the Finland-Swedish formation consists of the three major “others” of Finland-Swedishness: Finnish, Swedish, and international cultures. The juxtaposition of Finland-Swedishness in relation to these three counterparts is crucial to the whole construction. However, it should be emphasized that just as the entire Finland-Swedish self-identification is in reality processual and continuously changing, so is the position of these “others”, and so particularly are their implications for different Swedish-speaking Finns. For artists, the natural starting point or end goal may be to work primarily in Swedish in Sweden, in Finnish in Finland, or in English on an international market. In other words, they are functioning in the fields that in fact are major “others” when Finland-Swedish ethnicity is constructed. In this field, their linguistic-ethnic background is often hidden, or neutralized, as it has no relevance. In some cases, the artists adapt their linguistic-ethnic background to suit the cultural expectations that the new audiences have of Finland-Swedishness. In such cases, Finland-Swedishness becomes an “other” for these cultures.

For Swedish-speaking musicians who have grown up on the west coast of Finland following Swedish music media, working or moving to Sweden is not a big step. The major key tonal language and pronunciation of Swedish are familiar from a young age. As one of these musicians, the dance-band vocalist Hans Martin, explains, to speak a standard form of Swedish as spoken in Sweden can feel like the most natural choice for public use, instead of using the very local dialect as used at home: “I suppose my first ‘real’ language [not dialect] was the Swedish language spoken in Sweden and it is very hard for me to speak anything else on stage” (Martin, interview November 25, 2007). In Martin’s case, this has helped him to become one of the most successful Finnish artists in Sweden. For other artists who do not know the standard pronunciation used in Sweden, the differences can lead to significant obstacles, and Swedish record companies have also tried to iron out the Finland-Swedish accent.

For Swedes, Finland-Swedish can also sound exotic – or enchanting, as the Swedish pop artist Bo Kasper describes it, “beautiful, charming, meditative, and deep” (Ginström 2014). However, it is not easy to capitalize on the exoticism that Finland-Swedish culture can signify in the international market. When this has been done, the concept has usually been based on references to Nordic mythology. For example, Gjallarhorn manage to create a career in the world music scene with versions of Finland-Swedish medieval ballads and folk music. The heavy metal band Finntroll terms its style “trollmetal”, and according to the band, Finland-Swedish singing is a key element of their “trollstyle”. In such cases, Finland-Swedish traditional melodies and modes, as well as pronunciation of Swedish, often signify a general, pre-modern “otherness”, rather than a particular ethnicity for the listeners.

For those Finland-Swedes whose Finnish is weak, it can be an almost insurmountable task to create a career singing in Finnish, although record companies have tried to persuade the artists to do so. Then again, for bilinguals whose Finnish is equally strong or maybe even stronger than Swedish, it may be a natural choice to use Finnish. One of the pioneers of Finnish rock lyricism, Dave Lindholm, has such a bilingual background, and when, in the beginning of the 1970s, he changed from singing in English to singing in Finnish, it was a way of finding a personal voice that felt natural: “When I started to write in the same way that I spoke, things started happening” (Holmberg 2010). In Lindholm’s case, “singing like talking” meant using Finnish in the form of traditional Helsinki slang, which contains elements of Swedish, Finnish, and even some Russian from the beginning of the twentieth century. For the majority of the population, he is still known as the key creator of Finnish rock lyricism, and not many know about his Finland-Swedish background.

The Finland-Swedish audience can sometimes react with indignation when an artist changes his or her musical style by incorporating elements of minor-key-based Finnish *iskelmä*, singing lyrics in Finnish, or switching to pronunciations used in Sweden, as these choices can signify an abandonment of the Finland-Swedish identity. A successful career in the major Finnish market, especially, can create a distance from the minority environment to the extent that the linguistic accommodation is understood to be an act of disloyalty. If artists who have created an image as performers of Finnish music with Finnish lyrics stick to their standard repertoire and language when performing in their Finland-Swedish home regions, the audience may greet their show with mistrust. Thus, for example, Charles Plogman (interview December 12, 2008), who has made a successful career as a singer of Finnish *iskelmä*, has received much criticism for his style in his home region: “If you sing in Finnish in Ostrobothnia they shake their fists at you.” This is a problem, particularly when an artist has

become famous for a personal repertoire and does not want to switch to, for example, cover versions. This type of cross-over is a breach against basic authenticity ideals of popular music, but it is also a sociolinguistic status dilemma if the accommodation is felt to be ingratiating, associated with suspect motives, or exaggerated, or when it is simply perceived as a betrayal of a person's original group belonging (compare Bell 2006, 649).

In this respect, English appears to be more neutral, and its adoption a means of reconciling ethnic tensions. As a result of tradition and genre conventions, it is, in sociolinguistic terms, a prestigious language, representing the norms and measures of success that the artists in many genres identify themselves with (compare Hene 1997, 137). Musicians have already learned the pithy catchphrases at an early stage while listening to their international idols, and therefore, see English as their first language in this field of creative expression. For the Swedish-speakers, this could be a particularly functioning means of expression because of linguistic-ethnic reasons. Until the birth of a local rock tradition with Finnish lyrics, summarized in the concept *suomirock*, rock bands often consisted of many Swedish speakers. A good example of this is the progressive rock band Wigwam, which was founded by three Swedish speakers, Ronnie Österberg, Vladimir "Nikke" Nikamo, and Mats Huldén, with Englishman Jim Pembroke. Also later, many bands that have performed in English, such as Hurriganes and Hanoi Rocks, have had Swedish-speaking members, although they never have brought up the linguistic background of their individual members. For the artists who have tried to achieve international success, English has been a self-evident choice due to its importance both as a language of daily communication and as the main language of lyricism in this field. This is concisely summarized in the electro-pop ensemble Le Corps Mince de Françoise's comment reflecting upon their international success in relation to their language choice: "We wouldn't be here if we hadn't used English" (Le Corps Mince de Françoise, interview June 1, 2009).

In light of these examples, it seems that a large proportion of the musicians who somehow feel a connection to the formation "Finland-Swedishness", along with its core elements, will actively reconstruct their identities during their careers. This process can also incorporate a contrast between the Finland-Swedishness, which is manifested at the core and a cultural and language policy that emphasizes mono-linguistic minority solutions, and the daily life of the individual person (for a comparison with the tensions Irish-speaking musicians face in relation to the English language, see McCann and Ó Laoire 2003). Finland's Swedishnesses create a heterogeneity and flexibility that is typical of discourses such as this. At the same time, the public Finland-Swedish discourse can include demands for uniformity, which in turn can result in a feeling of marginality at the level of the individual (see, e.g., Lönnqvist 2001b, 449–450). From a musician's point of view, the question ultimately concerns to what extent an individual can balance between being only an object, subordinate to the power of discourse, and being a subject, who can actually negotiate a position in relation to local demands and expectations.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I discuss popular music in Finland from the perspective of the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland. Popular music is an interesting, albeit not fundamental element in the construction of Finland-Swedishness. It forms a field where personal identity determinations, linguistic choices, musical preferences, cultural practices, and institutional processes jointly participate in the forming and reforming of ethnicity. The Finland-Swedish formation is mainly constructed in relation to three major others: Finnish majority culture, the

culture of Sweden, and international culture. Between the core of the Finland-Swedish self-identification and these “others” is a multifaceted middle ground, where in fact many Swedish-speaking musicians operate.

In the Finland-Swedish context, language choice is a crucial question for an artist who wants to develop a professional career, but it also has significant consequences for amateurs since it determines the framework for communication, social networking, and even stylistic features. It is not only the decision to use a particular language that is important, but also the choice to combine and alternate languages, and, of course, the decision to avoid another language. In a sense, language constructs meanings through wide-ranging associations that reach far beyond the level of semantics. Also, musical structures convey meanings that are associated with ethnicity. The linguistic affinities have, as mentioned, since the nineteenth century, been partially connected to keys so that the Finnish majority culture is associated with minor keys and the minority culture of the Swedish-speaking population with major keys. However, these lines of affinities are not fixed, nor do they form static categories that individuals would need to submit themselves to.

A musician’s creative work incorporates an opportunity to negotiate differing opinions and positions in the ethnic framework. The combination of music and language offers polysemic possibilities, which artists can use to express humorous, ironic, and ambiguous ideas. For many Swedish-speaking musicians, the Finland-Swedish construction, as summarized in my scheme, is only one dimension of their artistic work. At the level of the individual, we are talking about processes where an artist negotiates his or her multiple identities. These identities are partly linguistic, musical, and ethnic, but they are also professional and social, and all these dimensions interact in complex ways. At the level of society, the ethnic construct is not necessarily a one-dimensional force. We can speak about multiple ideologies that offer differing interpretive and experiential frames with regard to music. And it is within this field of multiple identities and multiple frameworks that musicians, thanks to the creative potential offered by art, can both stabilize and critically study the varying cultural positions present in society.

Thus, it is worth bearing in mind that we should not approach Finland-Swedishness as a rigid framework for all personal experiences. Such an approach would easily run the risk of ignoring many ambiguities and complexities that, in fact, can be key elements of Swedishness in Finland. Both the general Finland-Swedishness and Finnish majority culture have always included different ways of breaking the major divisions. In other words, music has offered a way for majority groupings, minorities, and minorities within the minorities to create for themselves alternative identifications and new possibilities of expressing themselves both artistically and socially. This makes a national perspective on music challenging, but also fruitful, when discussing the role of popular music in society and the life of individuals.

Interviews

(Translations from Swedish to English by Johannes Brusila)

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