

Performing in Sweden

Immigrant musicians' possibilities and impossibilities of musical participation

Jonas Ålander

Abstract

This study investigates how an Immigrant identification affects musicians' possibilities to perform in Sweden. This is investigated through a discourse theoretical analysis of interviews with seven musicians. The analysis shows several intersections where an Immigrant identification has affected the informants' lives and careers, hence contributed to shaping their working conditions. For example, the Immigrant identification can be related to the informants' possibilities of being granted access to the stage. Several informants have experienced discrimination because of their appearances and as a result taken preemptive measures to fit envisioned expectations by changing name or by avoiding performing at certain music venues. The Immigrant identity is also shown to be closely connected with music genres and ideas about authenticity, which limits the availability of musical pathways. This occurs, for example, when an artist considers which genre to engage in because of how the genre relates to an Immigrant identity. The study shows that when musicians' careers coincide with an Immigrant identification, participative conditions often prove immutable and hegemonic. There are however expressions of change and resistance toward prevailing participative conditions among the informants, but they do not perceive these conditions to be given enough attention in society or by the music industry.

Keywords: migration, immigrants, music, musicians, Sweden, participation, discourse theory

This study investigates how an Immigrant identification affects the practice of music artistry.¹ The focus is on musicians' experiences of such an identification and how this have affected their possibilities to perform in Sweden. To be identified as an Immigrant is to be subjected to an us and them thinking. Values, attributes and abilities are ascribed to those identified, and this may affect their possibilities of participation in various social settings (Darvishpour & Westin 2021).

The combination of working as a musician and being identified as an immigrant is often troublesome. An experience common to many immigrated musicians and other aesthetic professionals is that of being met with suspicion, exotification and exclusion when entering the cultural domain in a new society (Sievers 2014; Baily & Collyer 2006). Research shows that an immigrant identification may be an obstacle for persons struggling to be acknowledged as proper professionals. Hindrances referred to often include discrimination and disbelief in immigrants' aesthetic qualifications, but also fortified networks and a fear of change among

1. In the study, the term Immigrant (with capital I) is used when it refers to a specific identity.

organizers and arrangers (Martiniello 2015; Sievers 2014; for a Swedish context cf. Feiler 2010; Sernhede 2018; Pripp 2006; Ålander 2020).

Migration is a common and constantly debated topic within Swedish society and politics. The combination of music and migration is a rather small research field that gained momentum in the 1980s and has grown in scope over time, often in connection with national and international migration flows (Ronström & Lundberg 2021). Research has mainly focused on geographical or ethnic identifications or specific musical expressions, artists or constellations (e.g. Hammarlund 1993; Ronström 1992; Westvall, Lidskog & Pripp 2018). This study departs from the Immigrant identification and focuses on how such an identification could influence participative conditions. By describing and analyzing the experiences of musicians who also have experienced being identified as Immigrants, it is possible to show how an Immigrant identification affects the career as a musician. In addition to clarifying participative preconditions, the study may also contribute to a possible change of these preconditions.

Musicians and the Immigrant identification

In this study, seven musicians in Sweden are interviewed about their experiences of the intersection of the music profession and the Immigrant identification. The public understanding of what it means to be a working musician – judging from media representations (see Ålander & Volgsten 2021) – is often ambivalent. The profession is subject to both mystification and respect. Musicians are considered important in many societies, including Sweden, albeit their social status is at the low end. To be self-employed is a rule rather than an exception, and the economic situation for artists is often uncertain and unstable, despite the mythical image of “the wealthy superstar” (Lilliestam 2009; Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011). Furthermore, musicianship many times involves a balancing act where both respect and high economic status are sought for. These aspects are not always compatible, as “artistry yields dignity and respect, while status results from commercial viability” (Scarborough 2017:173–174). An uncertain employment situation might for instance mean that artists must renounce their artistic integrity and “give in” to economical necessities to retain a successful career (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011; Becker 1951; Hoedemaekers 2017). Artistic integrity is closely connected to specific music genres, which in their turn are surrounded by more or less explicit ideas of what is right, wrong, good, bad, and so on. Criteria for the valuation of musicians oftentimes include authenticity, i.e. being “genuine” and “true” to something (cf. Moore 2002), a feature which may reach beyond the musical characteristics of genres and include aspects such as nation, class, race, gender, and sexuality (Brackett 2016:4). Finally, the music industry also plays its part and often takes advantage of the situation by exploiting “labour by keeping alive vain hopes of glory” (Toynbee 2000:33). The professional musician is thus often forced to balance on a knife’s edge to reach fame, respect, and a sustainable economy.

Being classified as an Immigrant or foreigner adds further complications. Individuals identified as Immigrants are often lumped together and classified as a homogeneous group (Bartram, Poros & Monforte 2014). Ideas about national, cultural, ethnic and racial belonging are often used to justify an Immigrant identification, which creates different sorts of societal memberships by separating Immigrants from “non-Immigrants” (Hübinette, Hörnfeldt, Farahani, & León Rosales 2012). The Immigrant is furthermore frequently associated with negatively denoted attributes and characteristics, which to a considerable extent may force individuals into conditions of both possibilities and impossibilities (Lundstöm 2018). In Swedish, the term *invandrare* (immigrant) denotes someone who has immigrated but is also commonly used to categorize individuals and groups assumed to be immigrated.² A foreign sounding name, skin color, area of domiciliation or parents’ origin may therefore be sufficient markers for the identification of someone as an Immigrant (cf. Ahmed 2007). However, the term is even further ambiguous, as persons who share attributes related to the Swede or the non-Immigrant are sometimes not considered *invandrare*, even though they have immigrated. Despite (or perhaps because of) the ambiguous character of the Immigrant identification, the term is widely used in everyday speech, in political manifests, by media and several other institutions and social domains in Sweden. Given the relational aspect of the concept of identity, the Immigrant identification ultimately functions to differentiate and strengthen identities such as Swedes and Others or Immigrants (Haavisto & Petersson 2013; Darvishpour & Westin 2021; Brune 2015; Ålander & Volgsten 2021; Lundstöm 2018).

Theoretical Perspective: Practices and Socio-Political Dimensions

The concept of identity is understood here as a contingent “differential position in a system of relations” (Laclau 1990:217). As such, identities are discursive positions that subjects are associated with, actively reach for, and identify with. Identities are shaped by surrounding discursive elements and thus contextually dependent. The meaning of an identity change when established in another discourse. However, the unstable character of identities also enables change and agency (Laclau 1990, 1996; Howarth 2013). For example, when a subject who identifies with the discursive position “musician” instead is identified and thus treated in accordance with the Immigrant musician position within a given discourse, the subject experiences a *dislocation* (Laclau 1990), an interruption of the normal and expected. When this occurs the subject acts to resume the identification of the desired identity, the “musician”. Identities can thus be both desirable and undesirable and always entail acts of differentiation and identification. As previous research shows, the Immigrant identity and subsequent identification of individuals and groups as Immigrants, is widely used and therefore repeatedly given meanings. In this study it is those instances of meaning production that are analyzed. As analytical categories, the concepts of identity

2. The term was introduced in official documents during the 1960s, but already then deemed problematic because of its widespread use and ambiguous meaning (Ds 2000:43). For an overview of the term, see Ronström 1989.

and identification thus allow for revealing and outlining certain discursive positions, their meanings, and the way subjects act and relate to these. To further analyze the empirical material and find out how an Immigrant identification traverses and affects musicians' professional careers in Sweden, the analytical concepts *practices* and *socio-political dimensions* are applied (Glynos & Howarth 2007:103f). A practice is predominantly social or political. It is considered social when uncontested and experienced as a continuation of the expected. When a social practice is challenged, routinized and when expected paths are disturbed or *dislocated*, the typical activities of the practice change. It now becomes characterized by action – in the name of something worthy to fight for – in order to prevent or accelerate the transformation of the practice. At such occasions, the practice turns political. A characterization of a practice as social or political provides an initial way of understanding its participative conditions, as both normativity and change are revealed.³

To demonstrate the relation between social reality and a subject's actions, an analytical model containing four dimensions of socio-political reality is applied (Glynos & Howarth 2007:110f). The dimensions are positioned along two traversed axes, where the *ethical* and *ideological* and the *social* and *political* dimensions are paired.⁴ The former pair capture a subject's responses when confronted with dislocatory events as either ethical or ideological. When a dislocatory event occurs, the subject either engages with and acknowledges it, which is an ethical response, or is inattentive, tries to conceal it and cover over the experienced uneasiness, which is the ideological response. The latter axis relates to subjects' reactions in the mode of *public contestation* (Glynos & Howarth 2007:111), which leads to either the political or social dimension of social reality. Public contestation refers to "the contestation of the norms which are constitutive of an existing social practice (or regime) in the name of an ideal or principle" (Glynos & Howarth 2007:111). The political dimension is foregrounded when a subject publicly engages and contests social norms and orders, and the social dimension when a phenomenon is left without public contestation, or when a subject actively avoids or conceals it.

When the Immigrant identification gives rise to a dislocatory event, the two-axis system provide means to relate the subjects' experiences and consequent actions. A description of such relations clarifies the participative conditions of a practice further, and partly explains why and how conditions are maintained or altered. However, even though a dislocatory event might seem fundamentally unpleasant, it is also a possibility for change and creation of new social formations and identities (Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000; Laclau 1990; Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2001).

Informants and Interviews

The informants for this study were selected according to two main criteria. The first was that music performance had been the main source of income for a period of life, which would identify the participant as a professional

3. The participants operate in multiple music related situations, which taken together are referred to as a singular music practice – the music practice of a musician. Consequently, as there are seven participants there are seven music practices (cf. Glynos & Howarth 2007:104f).

4. The terms *ethical*, *ideological*, *political*, and *social* are used in accordance with Glynos and Howarth (2007:113–120).

musician. The informants' music careers vary in length, stretching from the 1960s to present day. All were active musicians at the time of the interviews. As most of the informants have extensive national, and some also international, careers they are widely known to the public. The reason to include the specific participants was that they have long and well documented experience. None of the informants are dedicated to a single music genre and their primary music genre varies.

The second criterion was that the informants had experience of being identified as Immigrants. The reason for the criterion was the study's focus on the Immigrant identity, and the way such an identification affects musicians' life and profession, rather than foregrounding representations of specific music genres, nationalities, or ethnicities, which are common starting points in research about music and migration. This approach thus complements previous research, and therefore, music genres, gender, and national and ethnic identities *per se* are not in focus. Instead, such identities and expressions serve as *adjacent or integral parts* (discursive elements) when the Immigrant identity is outlined.

The inclusion of the Immigrant identification as a criterion for the selection of informants is furthermore based on the widespread use of the term in Sweden and the consequences it brings about for those identified. The point is not to sediment the Immigrant identity as a singular and positive identity, rather the opposite as its ambiguous character is unveiled through the narratives of the informants. The narratives of the seven musicians represented in this study thus stand as examples of how the Immigrant identity manifests throughout the Swedish music domain.

To find the informants, a so-called snowball selection was applied (Bryman 2012). To avoid that the informants would be aware of each other's participation in the study and to better control the selection procedure, different initial contacts (snowballs) were used. When contacted, the informants were informed about how the contact was established. Informants of different age, gender and from various parts of the world were searched for. Of the seven informants, two are females and five males. Their age span between 30–70 years.

The informants were informed about research ethics during the initial agreement of participation and during the interviews.⁵ The information included a description of the purpose of the study, that the participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time without given reason. To further assure that the informants identities remain confidential, they were given fictive names.

The analysis was conducted by reading the material in search for situations and activities where the Immigrant identification and the music career intersected. Once identified, the notion of *practice* was applied to contextualize the music career and characterize a practice in accordance with the theoretical perspective. The identified situations were thereafter further scrutinized with a focus on described actions and consequences. In this procedure, the four dimensions

5. The interviews took place during 2017 and 2019 in private homes, cafés, and libraries. The interviews lasted an average of two to three hours and followed a themed script with question examples. The interview questions were divided into three main themes: early career, professional career, and immigration experiences. The themes often overlapped, which meant that the questions did not always follow the order in the script and that additional questions and sidetracks appeared. This was not interfering; it rather facilitated a more fluent narrative as the informants could describe their experiences as they happened instead of following the order of the questions.

of social reality was used to show how agency was expressed, based on the theoretical premises of dislocation and public contestation (Glynos & Howarth 2007). The analysis resulted in a thematic division of the empirical material into three primary areas where Immigrant identity was identified to have made a difference.

Identification and Music Career

In the following three sections, the interviews are thematically presented and analyzed according to three areas where intersections of the Immigrant identity and music careers was identified.

Towards the Stage

The informants – Matti, Assim, Yaya, Jean, Fred, Miranda, and Ndidi – have similar experiences of music during early childhood and teenage years. All but one was actively encouraged to pursue music activities and most of them participated in school music events. Matti and Assim studied music in higher education in Sweden whereas the remaining five were self-taught. One example of how the Immigrant identity manifested itself during the early career is stated by Matti, who during the early 1960s was bullied in school for being foreign and because his parents were poor and could not afford to buy instruments. “Over time you learned to endure, but then it disappeared.” As a member of a pop group, Matti became rather successful already at the age of 15, which for him meant that the bullying stopped.

When compulsory music education in Sweden is mentioned, it is not always described as particularly supportive, rather the opposite. For Yaya and Jean, the music classes almost made them lose interest in music, because the main content, Swedish pop and folk songs, was too different from their own musical interests. But school was also one of the first venues where many of the informants performed. School festivities and youth recreation centers were typical venues, and this continued throughout the school years as they were too young to perform in night clubs and bars.

Overall, the Immigrant identity did not manifest itself to a considerable extent during the early years and thus had insignificant impact on the music career development. In late adolescence, several of the informants started to establish themselves within more specific music genres and constellations and from then on, with an increase of public exposure, the Immigrant identification became more apparent.

The transition to a professional career is something the informants are quite specific about. In contrast to their relatively similar early career development, these events took place at different times. Although it often happened gradually, there were still decisive moments that primarily included recognitions by for example national TV, radio and news media, music magazines, official music releases or extensive touring. The Immigrant identification became increasingly perceptible in correspondence

with this shift. It was easier for the informants to recognize its existence and related consequences within their music practices, and the awareness of the probability of being identified as *different* grew.

A common situation when an Immigrant identification affects the possibility to perform is when access to the stage is either granted or denied. There were three primary ways in which this could show. An explicit denial to perform because of an Immigrant identification has never been experienced by any of the informants. But sometimes, when opportunities to perform disappeared for no convincing reasons, such thoughts emerged. Overall, the experience was described as painful, but the question whether the identification was the reason of denial was never asked, because no organizer would presumably admit that anyway. Instead of knowing, the informants were thrown into uncertainty and pondering.

The second way also involves experiences of uncertainty when access instead has been granted. This is the most common experience. Both Miranda and Ndidi joined music groups as backup choir singers in their early careers. In retrospect, when they talk about how and why they got these jobs, they relate it to their skin color instead of to their musical abilities. In one case, Ndidi also replaced a Black singer:

She [the former backup vocalist] was about to do her own thing so the band sought for a replacement, and they wanted a Black girl, of course, don't know why, but I guess it was exotic. (Ndidi 2019)

Miranda shares a similar story about when she and another Black girl joined a band. She talks about the band leader, whom she believes thought that the band would become more “international”, and that it would look good to include some “chocolate pralines” by having Black female members. Did Miranda's and Ndidi's skin color influence their possibilities to get these jobs? They do not know and neither of them remember reflecting about this at the time, rather they joined the bands because they regarded it as valuable steps forward in their respective careers.

Another example is when Miranda considered auditioning for a musical, a genre she has extensive experience with. In the following statement, she preempts a negative response to the possibility to participate:

I called the production and asked if I would even bother to audition, I asked with my skin color in mind, and no, I was told it was probably no idea. (Miranda 2017)

Yaya describes a similar experience when he talks about participating in a popular music show on TV:

The combination of who you are and your music, is significant. [...] If one participates with singing and dancing, being Black, then that artist or group represents the “African” part. [...] It feels very much as if you have a function to fill, it is not about the music. (Yaya 2019)

Several of the informants have performed in similar TV shows. Fred has a similar experience to Yaya's, the feeling of being included primarily because of what he represents rather than of his music. Related to the accessibility of the stage, race and ethnicity are in these examples experienced as important manifestations of the Immigrant identity.

Assim offers an explanation to why this is happening and describes what he believes is a growing tendency among music venue organizers:

They have a naïve way of thinking about musicians who have a different music tradition in Sweden. Organizers think too much about the "façade". It is like they think "in this festival, we need an Immigrant music group". (Assim 2017)

These statements suggest that organizers and other persons in leading positions are well aware of questions about diversity, but that the justification of participative conditions and inclusion primarily seems to rest on the public appearance of music collectives and venues, rather than on aesthetic and inclusive motives (cf. Ålander 2020). What is shown here is that participative conditions at times are believed to derive from the Immigrant identification and that this seems to be accepted or overlooked by the informants. Among the informants' statements, there are no outspoken intentions to change the conditions, and there is no public contestation to mention. The idea of a possible relationship between the Immigrant identification and access to the stage appeared at times, but overall, the participative conditions were perceived as typical and expected. This positions the informants' actions as social-ideological, an acknowledgement of participative conditions as typical and a compliance to the same. This illustrates a normativity of the informants' music practices, which characterizes them as social (Glynos & Howarth 2007).

There are also a few examples of when access has clearly been granted because of the Immigrant identification, which represents the third way of accessibility. Assim described more than one occasion when he had found out that the funding of some of his shows was intended for refugees' social activities, rather than financing concerts with a Immigrant band. He was certain that he and his fellow musicians were only invited because they were identified as Immigrants:

It is a very bad feeling when you come to a venue and understand that it's for that reason you're there, but then it is too late to pull out. It feels wrong to perform and I would like to discuss it there and then, but I no longer have that energy or the time to engage in such things. (Assim 2017)

An example of when the Immigrant, or rather national, identity was the reason of musical participation is Jean's recurring invitations to perform at the venue of a diasporic association.⁶ He was invited because he was identified as an "ethnic" of the nation that the association represents and from which his parents emigrated. Jean, however, was born in Sweden and has never been there. These performances were acceptable to Jean, however mainly as gestures of good will.

6. During the interview, the question regarding participation because of the Immigrant identification did not refer to a national identity. The connection was made by Jean and gives an example of how intricately connected a national identity can be with the Immigrant identity.

This last example also concerns accessing the stage, but this type of music venue can in contrast to many of the previous examples be perceived as “closed” to the public. This shows that the Immigrant identification as a condition of participation does not solely refer to public venues. Both Assim’s and Jean’s examples resonate with the common idea of using music to manifest or maintain a nation or ethnic group’s cultural identity and heritage.

To summarize this section, it can be concluded that an Immigrant identification has been perceived as affecting the process of accessing the stage. It is difficult to know whether the Immigrant identification is the actual reason of access or denial. However, it seems clear that race and ethnicity emerge as significant aspects that affect the possibilities of participation. Recalling the difficult aspects of maintaining an artistic music career, the Immigrant identification is added predominantly as a burden— even though it generates opportunities to perform. The informants’ music practices are so far highly social (Glynos & Howarth 2007), and thus marked by a rather firm status quo, with little or no change over time. Conditions of accessibility are largely coped with in an ideological manner, that is, they are perceived as expected and acceptable and therefore not contested, at least not in public.

On and Beyond the Stage

Another area in which the informants experienced an impact of the Immigrant identification was in relation to their physical appearances. In the previous section this was discussed in relation to accessibility to the stage. However, the Immigrant identification also occurs in many adjacent situations in a musician’s professional life.

Fred, Ndidi, Yaya and Jean mentioned that they are highly aware of their appearances when they introduce themselves to new people. They think about how they are perceived when entering new spaces, for example when meeting music venue organizers, other artists and music industry representatives, such as producers and record company directors. Fred mentioned situations when various Swedish speaking people have insisted on speaking English with him, even though he answered in perfect Swedish. Fred was annoyed by this, and it had occurred repeatedly. It was thus something he knew might happen when entering a new context.

Another aspect of appearance regards naming. Before Miranda picked an artist name, being Black and having a Swedish name was conflicting. “It always got weird when I came out on stage, the audience was expecting a blonde ‘Swedish’ girl because of my name.” This stopped when she started to use an artist name. Finding a connection between name and appearance made life easier. Another example is Jean, who also uses an alias when performing. He did not think his real name corresponded with his music, and so he decided to use an American sounding name. He says his real name is African, but he wants to be associated with the USA when he performs.

At first, these instances point to the political dimension of social reality. At the same time one can ask what it is that is supposed to be changed. Fred’s’

reply in Swedish is certainly a political act of contesting the identification, while Miranda's and Jean's reasons to use artist names correspond with the prevailing social order than to change it.

There are also situations when the Immigrant identification has manifested through explicit racism, sexism, and other sorts of discriminatory expressions. Social media is mentioned as a space where such conduct thrives, but it has also occurred during performances. Occasionally some of the informants have experienced racist shout outs from individuals in the audience and other degrading treatment perceived to be results of an Immigrant identification. This has primarily occurred during events where the informants have been invited to perform but not starred as the main performing artist or activity. Corporate parties, night clubs, cruise ships and city festivals are recurring examples of venues where this has happened. Such experiences have been more frequent in the countryside and in smaller towns than in larger cities. Besides comments like "go back home", Ndidi summarized the commentaries as for the most part "brainless and disparaging in general".

The first reaction to offending treatment was usually surprise and anger. But during a performance, the most common response among the informants was to ignore it and go on with the show. However, after some reflection, the overall reactions were anger, sadness, resignation, and a sense of vulnerability, all summed up by Yaya saying "... yeah, such things hurt". When Yaya was younger, he used to get angry on stage:

I pointed towards those in the audience who made comments and talked back in the microphone in front of everybody, but I don't do that anymore, it just creates a bad atmosphere. (Yaya 2019)

Fred does not want to contemplate about such experiences too much. He thinks that it would only lead to a downward spiral where he would end up suspecting people to be racist: "it won't take me anywhere". Instead, he tackles such situations by thinking about how he behaves and what kind of energies he transmits. "Even if there are racists, they are the way they are, it is nothing I can change, the only thing I can do is to try my best".

Yaya's and Fred's experiences are similar, but their reactions vary. Fred usually does not interfere, but rather ignores the experience and acts in a social-ideological manner. Yaya, on the other hand, engaged in and confronted the situation and thus emphasized the ethical-political dimensions. However, it is important to notice Yaya's change in attitude over time. Today he ignores such dislocatory events, as it is likely that a confrontation would make it worse. He thus shifted to the same social-ideological position as Fred, a shift that corresponds to Assim's previous comment about lack of energy and time to engage in similar situations.

Most of these situations were envisioned beforehand as probable and therefore somewhat predictable by the musicians. They were aware of the probability of being perceived as different (Immigrants) and thus likely expected to behave and be treated thereafter, to be stereotyped. A compliance with such a

thought would present an option to act accordingly and preempt the chance of discomfort, at least as long as the consequence of such an action would be perceived as a more acceptable experience than the opposite.

Matti and Jean have not had similar experiences, which they both think have to do with their music. Jean, deeply involved in the hip-hop stage, offers an explanation to why he has not experienced racism on stage:

Rap stands out, it's a forum where racism doesn't fit. Pop is a more general stage whereas hip-hop is a closed stage. If you go to a hip-hop concert and say racist stuff, then you will get everyone against you. (Jean 2019)

Matti, who primarily has played *dansband* has a similar idea. (Dansband is a music genre influenced by country and schlager music mainly developed in Sweden.) The only complaints he recalls have been related to musical content, never to his personality and gives the explanation that "the audiences at dansband events are there to dance, that is what counts". He has never experienced any racist or discriminating treatment at all, that he can relate to an Immigrant identification, throughout his professional music career.

Another similarity between Mattis' and Jean's experiences is where they perform. They both primarily performs at closed venues, where only initiated participate, who share ideas about what it means to participate and "know" how to act and interact (cf. Brackett 2016). This explanation further resonates with the discussion above about appearance, where types of venues are mentioned as especially bothersome, venues that can be considered public.

The discussion about appearance stretches beyond race. As becomes apparent, the Immigrant identity also resonates with ideas about music genres and authenticity. One aspect of music genres as social phenomena is their connection with both individual and collective identity (cf. Brackett 2016). Both genre and authenticity come up when Assim recalls overhearing a conversation between his sound engineer during sound-check, when a couple in the audience asked what was going on:

I was close and heard, our sound engineer said there was going to be a concert with [Assim's band], and then the couple replied angrily – "no, that is not possible, it is midsummer's eve for heaven's sake!" (Assim 2017)

Later, the organizer told Assim that he had received letters with complaints, stating that a culturally diverse band was not acceptable on midsummer's eve, especially not at that venue. Assim felt unwelcome and uncomfortable, but it was not totally unexpected as he is very much aware of the increasing nationalist and racist movements in Sweden. The occasion and venue are both strongly linked with traditional and national celebrations, which means that they are likely to contain rather sedimented ideas about appropriate content and what is considered authentic. One might think that the Other, the non-Swede or the Immigrant are unwelcome at such festivities, but this is unlikely as diversity often is cherished there. This does however not

change the fact that Assim reacted the way he did. The complaints against his performance were most likely not aimed at him or the other members on a personal level, but rather to what they and their music were thought to represent. However, Assim related the complaints to being identified as an Immigrant. Besides feeling excluded, he also thought that his music was out of place because of the identification. This exemplifies how an Immigrant identification affects his musicianship.

The discussion about how music genres connect to the Immigrant identity was also mentioned by Yaya, Jean, and Miranda. They expanded the argument about music genres to include authenticity and credibility, signs of how the Immigrant identification affects an artist's choice of music genre. Yaya argued that when you perform in Sweden it is important to think about what you say because the reception depends on who you are and how you are perceived:

I can't go out on stage and sing explicit lyrics because it would be linked to my skin color, where I come from and so on. But when someone else does the same thing, someone who doesn't look like me, it gets a little cheeky and cool, it becomes acceptable and more like a statement. (Yaya 2019)

Miranda reflects about singing dansband music, a genre she feels distanced from. "I would never sing dansband myself, I don't think outside of the box, I put myself in categories" she says. If she would sing dansband, she thinks she would be questioned, and continues "but if I did a gospel record, then it would be accepted immediately". Miranda's worries show a preconception about what it would mean to engage in dansband, which hinders her to do it. According to her, a lot about being an artist is about "fitting genre, style of music, appearance and so on". She is aware of categorizations and complies to them, as to challenge them would be too unpleasant.

Another aspect of music genres that was discussed during the interviews concerns the identity of listeners. Jean believes that when Immigrants listen to hip-hop, they must justify and defend the music. They can't just listen to it, which he says the non-Immigrant can do.

Yaya also talks about the connection between the Immigrant identity, hip-hop, and authenticity:

Hip-hop and immigration are very interconnected, but this is dual, if you are an Immigrant it is taken for granted that you can rap, and if you are Swedish and rap then you are not genuine. [...] in the suburb, Petter [Swedish hip-hop artist] was illegitimate and The Latin Kings [Immigrant hip-hop group] genuine, the opposite of how they were perceived in society overall. (Yaya 2019)

In these quotations, Miranda, Jean, and Yaya use music genres to exemplify how individuals, identified as Immigrants are tied to discursive meanings, which reduces their freedom of choosing a music genre.⁷

7. For a discussion about the relation between hip-hop, race and identity, see for example Harrison (2015).

To conclude this section, it can be ascertained that the Immigrant identity manifests throughout the informants' music practices and that the Immigrant identification is perceived to affect their participative conditions. The informants think that appearance, music genres and authenticity are central to the identification. They also think that certain musical expressions are perceived as expected to be performed or used by persons that are identified as Immigrants. This exemplifies how one may be identified as an Immigrant both because of who someone seems to be and by what someone does.

Changing the Stage

This section describes how the informants experience their participative conditions in the music industry and how they engage in changing these.

During the interviews, the informants were asked how they thought the Immigrant identity was managed within the music industry. Fred summarized by saying "the subject is taboo, it is very hushed, the society looks like it does, everything is so tense". Except for Matti, the informants quickly got into discussing discrimination, racism, and similar matters – topics that were claimed to be debated far too little within the industry even though being recognized as problematic and important. The informants think this is problematic and that it should change, but specific forums and discussions for such topics are missing. When asked why this seems to be overlooked Miranda explains:

People [in the music industry] get scared because there are no prepared answers, you don't know who should be answering, and you are also afraid to answer, because if someone addresses it the focus will end up there.

(Miranda 2017)

Yaya has a similar thought. He thinks it is problematic to discuss participative conditions within the industry since there is no given platform. He feels as if it is not really "allowed" to talk about it and elaborates what it would mean to illuminate these issues:

You do not discuss it because you do not want to be the one who complains, because then you become a problem, [...] no one dares to take that path, because if you do, you run a lot of risk of being excluded. (Yaya 2019)

Yaya experienced this while being part of a music collective that decided to go against the record company's artistic demands for music sounding a bit "African". The collective lost their contract and soon after the record company had found another band that sounded very much like Yaya's. Without support from the record company, it became hard to release music and get gigs. "It was obvious that the new band was replacing ours, so the record company had 'Africa' represented again".

Assim mentions a hesitation within the music industry to approach these topics but takes a different stance and highlights the artist's role. He thinks that as an artist and Immigrant, it is important to try to see the full picture.

Such artists need to be attentive and, if possible, try to resist racism and discrimination. If they don't, "it will lead to a slow but sure exclusion, where you will end up in isolated venues, playing in private parties, weddings and for other Immigrants". Political involvement has always been important to Assim.

Ndidi recalls being more engaged when she was younger. She shares Assim's political interest and has as Assim also lost the energy to actively involve. Today she feels more afraid and needs to be careful about how and where she exposes herself. She then broadens the topic and says that the discussion in the Swedish culture sector about these issues is too narrow, not entirely absent but more needs to be done. She thinks it is growing and that new young musicians lead the way: "I see that it is changing, but it is mostly articulated within the Black community, and the transfer of the discussion to the overall society at large is unfortunately unsuccessful".

Fred and Yaya stress the importance of self-confidence. When you are new to the music business, it is hard to make your voice heard because of hierarchy "no one really listens to the new guy".

The informants' experiences show that there are ongoing discussions and struggles about the meaning and handling of the Immigrant identity within the music industry. Also, there seems to be a rather conscious lack of support of such discussions, which contributes to a hegemonisation of the informants' music practices. Such conditions would explain, at least to a part, why change and resistance seems so hard to achieve for the informants, and why their struggle declines over time. It also clarifies why what initially seems like political-ethical positions instead turns out to be positions where the informants find reasons to not contest or challenge prevailing social orders.

Matti and Jean do not talk about the music industry in the same way as the others do. For Matti, the music industry has never been problematic, rather it has met his expectations. Related to mainly being a dansband artist, he says he has never reflected about questions regarding migration or ethnic or cultural discrimination. Jean also says he has never experienced this in the music industry. To him these fights are fought in other areas, in society overall. Regarding the music industry he replies, "I have other things I think are more important to take care of, so someone else may take that battle".

Above, the analysis has focused on participative conditions in the informants' practices related to the music industry and overall music domain. In the next part, the informants' own efforts to change current conditions related to the Immigrant identification is analyzed.

A recurring topic is the perception of the Immigrant identification as an asset, or tool, which can be used to elaborate and transform social order. The informants do this from their positions as artists, from which they can connect their audiences to each other and "educate" them. This was not

apparent to them initially, but something they became aware of as their professional careers progressed. Being a musician means to perform on a stage from which many can be reached. Miranda remembers being part of a music show in which the theme was inbetweenness (*mellanförskap*), the feeling of being caught between different identities and therefore never being recognized as authentic enough to be fully accepted in a community. The show was successful and received a lot of positive response from media, and from persons in the audience, who expressed their appreciation as they could identify with the topic. Miranda felt “that it [the Immigrant identification] might not only be about skin color, but about exclusion”. For her, exclusion was previously heavily related to her skin color, but now it became related to the Immigrant identification. The response further meant that she became aware of the power position from which she apparently made some sort of difference.⁸

When Ndidi became successful, she realized that she was a role model for Immigrants and received similar comments as Miranda after shows where audiences expressed their gratitude for her “being in their lives”. She elaborates the purpose of being an artist, saying:

It is important to be able to show the way, and if I can do that through my music, then it is the most important thing I have, a damn responsibility, I realized that it is my duty to increase knowledge, understanding, respect and so on. (Ndidi 2019)

Yaya and Assim describe how they had used their positions as artists to talk about and educate fans and listeners about cultural diversity and integration. In the early days of Assim’s professional career, his band of mainly immigrated members decided that it was important to introduce the band in Swedish. They printed leaflets and various short texts about the band and its music to convey ideas about cultural diversity. Such actions derive from a call for change, in this case a lack of knowledge about cultural diversity, which leads to a political–ethical action.

Yaya thinks that his music educates because it “does not sound the way [he] look[s]”, and that this makes people confront their prejudices. When he sees everybody dancing together to his music he thinks about integration, and he always tries to share his thoughts: “during gigs I usually say something positive about cultural diversity, I do it to show that you can like each other even if you do not come from the same place”.

This last statement is an example of when the artist actively uses a perceived Immigrant identification to contest oppressive social norms. In this case, in the name of acceptance and democracy, Yaya makes his performance political, by using it as a forum to convey what he thinks is a social problem. This is a clear political–ethical position, which indicates that the informants’ music practices’ dominant social character is weakened as they also include clear political aspects, despite these not being as common or visible.

8. However, when the show was given at other venues, such as corporate parties and night-clubs, the reception changed. There was a different audience and atmosphere, which Miranda sometimes perceived as hostile.

Intersections and Consequences

The analysis suggests that the Immigrant identity manifests in the informants' music practices in ways similar to other parts of society (cf. Darvishpour & Westin 2015). There are multiple intersections where an Immigrant identification affects artist's lives and music careers. Hence, for musicians identified as Immigrants, the already harsh reality of working as a musician is supplemented with further concern.

A first intersection regards the process of getting access to the stage. The informants in this study cannot recall that they have experienced denied access with explicit reference to the Immigrant identification. Occasionally, they are given access to the stage with overt reference to it, but the most common experience is to be granted access without knowing whether it depends on the identification or not. Regardless, the very possibility that the identification might have anything to do with the reasons for stage access is generally perceived as burdensome by the informants, resulting in an uncomfortable condition of uncertainty and discomfort.

A second intersection concerns appearance with which the Immigrant identity is commonly connected (cf. Ahmed 2007). This causes artists to ponder about how they are perceived by audiences and the music industry, as the musicians are aware that the Immigrant identification might entail expectations of certain behavior associated with the that identity. As a response, to avoid or minimize the experience of such treatment, artists may take preemptive measures, such as using a "fitting" artist name or engaging in music practices that would not foreground the Immigrant identity.

A third intersection concerns the character of the venues and their geographical location. The analysis shows that the more specific or esoteric a venue is, the less the risk is of experiencing stereotyping and abuses, and that xenophobic experiences are more common at venues in smaller cities and in the countryside.⁹

The analysis also shows that the Immigrant identity is closely connected to music genres and ideas about authenticity (cf. Brackett 2016). Hence, a fourth intersection can be seen when artists consider whether and how the Immigrant identity is associated with a particular music genre before engaging in it.

When these intersections are viewed through the scope of *social* and *political practices*, an overall predominant social character appears (cf. Glynos & Howarth 2007). This suggests that the informants' music practices rather than being distinguished by transformation and change are characterized by routine, prejudice, and social reproduction. A reason why some of the informants have less adverse experiences of the Immigrant identification than others, may then be that they besides being the "right" people, play the "right" music at the "right" venues.¹⁰ Hence, the Immigrant must find his place and music, or find him- or herself to be constituting a "different" or exotic element in an alien context, and as such a reason for a dislocation

9. These locations correlate roughly with places where less immigrants live in Sweden (HübINETTE 2019) and where the support for stricter migration policies is stronger (VestIn 2018).

10. This underscores the ambiguous meaning of the Immigrant identity and show that there is a differentiation between Immigrants and Immigrants within the informants' music practices (and society overall). In this study, the differentiation is likely related to ideas about which music "they" perform, how "they" look and where "they" come from.

in the social order of the domain. The two clearest cases of when this social, or better, hegemonic order is upheld and participation is free of friction, are those active within the music genres hip-hop and dansband.

Despite these predominantly socially characterized music practices, the analysis also reveals certain 'political' acts instigated by the intersection of the Immigrant identity and the artist career. There are no predominantly politically characterized practices in this study. Instead, instances of political aspects are visible when for example stage access, physical appearance or the engagement in specific music genres are contemplated in relation to the Immigrant identity, or when artists reply to derogatory statements, or try to educate their listeners about cultural pluralism. Such actions share a political character, but the purposes are not uniform. This was evident when the socio-political dimensions were considered in the analysis. It then became apparent how certain responses to dislocatory events resonate with social and political aspects of informants' music practices, and thus how and why changes to current participatory conditions may occur or not.

The analysis shows two rather clear patterns. The first is a recurrent socio-ideological position, which implies that dislocatory events often remain publicly uncontested by artists despite being recognized. However, this does not mean that they do not want to resist, but rather that their will to resist remains hidden. This attitude towards dislocatory events remains unchanged over time and is the most prevalent in the analysis. An explanation of this pattern on a structural level may be that explicit and overarching problematizations about the domain's participative conditions – related to the Immigrant identity – lacks organized and public arenas. The reluctance to discuss participative conditions related to the Immigrant identity within the music industry also supports this explanation. An explanation at a personal level may be that a political response would lead to a worsened situation where the musicians would risk jobs and reputation. Yet another explanation may be a gradual sedimentation of dislocatory experiences to such an extent that they have become normalized and therefore no longer registered. A consequence of this is the preservation of a status quo, and as such, the position resonances well with the social character of the informants' music practices.

The second pattern starts out as a political-ethical position, but then changes into the previously described socio-ideological position, as the informants contested dislocatory events more frequently during their early careers than at later stages. This suggests that an acceptance of oppressive social structures and relations develops over time. However, this change is ambiguous since musicians who are new to the music business express that they do not have enough status to raise their voices, as they assume that no one will listen to them. In contrast, musicians with more experience instead say that they were attentive and engaged in problematic situations when they were younger, but eventually learned to live with such circumstances or have given up the fight. But with the socio-ideological position in mind, this points to yet another contradiction, since that position stays solid over time.

Hence, it is questionable if senior artists' efforts to change the domains' participative conditions had any effect. If it did, this suggests that it is necessary to be both new and rather famous to make your voice heard.

Discussion

From the viewpoints of the informants in this study, the Swedish music domain is distinguished as unchallenged and considerably hegemonic when it comes to questions of the Immigrant identity. Besides the usual tribulations associated to an artist career, the situation for Immigrant musicians is thereby further strained. There seems to be several interlinked reasons for this, the main being simply that resistance towards prevailing participative conditions rarely is expressed publicly. This can be put in connection with the lack of organized platforms and forums where issues related to migration can be articulated, and to the unwillingness to discuss such issues due to a fear of retaliation and exclusion, and finally, to the deficient communication between groups, such as the Black community and the "rest" or "musicians" and "industry representatives". The situation is deadlocked, and the struggle to change participative conditions, consequently, lacks traction.

The recurring socio-ideological position does not contribute to change but leaves musicians in a hegemonized position where exits are blocked, and change seems distant. However, hegemony assumes antagonistic relations. The music domain is not exempt from overall societal discourses and political trends, and neither is the Immigrant identity. The situation should therefore be discussed with reference to the overall society. But in this case the antagonistic relation is very indistinct as it is not possible to grasp the society as a single antagonist. This ungraspable antagonist can be viewed as an example of the outcome of structural discrimination, where societal policies and processes lead to the exclusion of "others" (cf. Behtoui & Jonsson 2013). Besides explaining the informants' experiences of subordination, a reference to structural discrimination shows that when participative conditions are contested, it does not primarily concern the Swedish music domain and musicians within it – but rather societal injustices toward Immigrants in society in general. This way of contesting participative conditions might seem to be a rather altruistic stance, but it can also be perceived as a key to how the consequences of the intersection of musicians' careers and Immigrant identifications can be handled and changed.

The meaning of Immigrant is an elementary starting point if one wants to change current participative conditions. To instigate change, however, the identity as a discursive position must first be recognized, since the current meaning of the Immigrant is constitutive of a new identity (cf. Laclau 1996:29–35). This also means that the hegemonic order must initially be upheld (although it may seem blatantly counterproductive) also by those who want to change it, in order to change it. However, all social orders assume some sort of organization, and the intersections revealed in this study may

serve as initial sites where change could be initiated. Resistance is visible when the informants publicly contest the Immigrant identification both on and off stage. This is an important remark, since such activities serve as concrete examples of how both identity, on which identifications rest, and participative conditions could be contested and changed. In conclusion, it can be stated that current participative conditions in Sweden are trouble- some for Immigrant musicians. There is resistance but it does not seem to be taken seriously or be given attention – not by the music industry, not by media and not in political discourses. Rather, it seems as if part of an Immigrant artist's career is to submit to discrimination and not to be listened to.

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