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Making Music Work.
Culturing youth in an institutional setting.

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I still do not know what writing a book like this is really about. What I am certain of, though, is that it has changed me in some ways and I would like to thank all those people who took part in this changing.

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I wish to dedicate this book to the lads and the staff at Elmridge youth club.

To Susy and Dimitris.
And to Anna.
Making music work
Culturing youth in an institutional setting

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1 Introduction; culturing youth: the institution, leisure and music

This book centers on a particular kind of activity; the playing of rock music in the context of a municipal youth club in a city suburb. But the aim of my project is not limited solely to the study of music. It is a study of events and of relations between people in a public institution; the youth club, the young visitors and the staff working there. What is studied is mainly interaction at a micro level; how social practices that make up everyday life are produced and reproduced, how these practices are used and made sense of, how people use a cultural medium such as music as a kind of pivot, or catalyst, that can bring to the fore both joys and conflicts. And, also, how music-playing so to speak mediates in the process of growing up.

I began studying the group of young people in focus in the autumn of 1988 by doing fieldwork at the youth club in Elmridge. Elmridge is a suburb built in the late 60's and quite similar to the one I had grown up in myself and left about ten years earlier. But I was not out to seek similarity or memories of past times and I was quickly made aware of the fact that there are many differences, not only between the place and the time, but also in what my role in this new setting was. As an illustration, and a first acquaintance with the boys in the focus of this study, I offer this event which took place at the beginning of my fieldwork period:

I am sitting taking my lunch at the grill bar at the petrol station, when two of the boys from the youth club, both eighteen years old, come in. They see me and wave. When they have ordered their meals at the counter, they come and sit down at my table and we chat for a while. After some time they start to ask questions about me and what it is that I am really doing at the youth club. I tell them that I am not working at the club, that I am studying at the university and that I am doing research. One of them asks if that means I am going to write a book, and when I answer in the affirmative, he wonders if it will be a real book, "with a hundred pages or so". We talk about me getting paid for doing this, nine thousand a month, and he thinks that sounds good. "Is there any phone number to call", he asks; writing a book about youth for nine thousand a month is something he would really like to do, "seriously". I start to say something when the other boy interrupts and tells the first one that if he were to write a book of a hundred pages, it would surely
tum out to be one word per page. The first boy retorts, but simultaneously turns to me, that this is what a book about youth would contain. Or even better, "a book with only blank pages", because "that's what youth is, empty", he says.

Now, I have written this book and it does contain many pages and many words; but, for these boys, those pages might perhaps just as well be blank. The language and style in which I write is far from the everyday reality of the young people I write about.

One can also reflect on what is expressed in the "mock-serious" statement about a book on youth having only blank pages. And, why does he use the more abstract and "official" word "youth" to describe, and at the same time maybe distance himself from, a category of people he himself belongs to. In a sense, he is telling me that a book about "youth", seen through the eyes of the adult world and written in its language, will not be comprehensible to the young people that are its subjects. And maybe also that a book about what is really "their" world would be incomprehensible to me, an outsider.

What struck me was also his use of this concept of "youth" in an abstract, more generalizing, way. As if when talking to me he was using the "adult" way of talking about himself, because he thought that was what I would understand. And, in so doing, confirming and upholding the division he seemed to take for granted between the youth, and the adult world.

Furthermore, as I gradually came to discover, the idea of writing a book at all is something that certainly was not part of the world of this group of young people. In fact, a person who admittedly has stayed on in school longer than necessary is by definition a fool, and the university is hardly more than a bus stop in their eyes.

So, I was made aware of distance but also of trust as the boys gradually started to show me things that were their secrets and hidden from the staff. For the staff, though, I was an adult, supposedly agreeing with what they saw as their task of taking care of the young people and keeping them out of trouble. Thus, I found myself in a web of relations in which my role was as much exploited by those I was studying, as I am now exploiting them. As a participant observer, or as the recent debate in anthropology has put it, an observing participant, I am a part of the processes and
relations I describe. If ethnography, as Tyler puts it, "makes no break between describing and what is being described", the point here is not to dwell on an issue of what can, or cannot be described. It is, rather, to shed light on my role as participant in the description and subsequently as the author of this text.

This work is the result of my participation with staff and young people at the Elmridge youth club from October, 1988 to December, 1990. It is a description of the life at this club and how the relationships within it, between the staff and the young people as well as within these groups, give rise to different ways of, so to speak, working these relations through. The focus is on examining how a social order is construed and worked out between people of different ages, in this case, through a particular kind of communication; music. Studying music-playing in context and in relation to the particular location in which it takes place, as I will argue, enriches the understanding of both music, youth and, in this case, life within a particular kind of social institution. The focus is on a group of boys who, at the beginning of the period, were between 14 and 17 years old. At the end of my study, they were two years older and many things had happened during this time. I see this in a sense short, or long, period of their life as an ongoing process where both elements of change and stability are present. They spent a large part of their free time at the youth club, but they had a different position there at the end than they had in the beginning. How this position, or "place", was conceived of, created and upheld is one of the main issues in this work.

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1In Clifford & Marcus (1986), Marcus & Cushman (1982), Marcus & Fisher (1986), what is termed experimental or post modern ethnography is extensively discussed as a new strand of anthropology as opposed to "realist" ethnography. The emphasis is on reflexivity; reexamining the role of the ethnographer, his participation, and the status of the ethnographic text. For a critique of this perspective, see Sangren (1988).


3In fact, in 1987 there was a girl band playing regularly at the club. They had left when I arrived and, consequently, this is a book about boys.
The Swedish youth club

On my very first day at the youth club, the staff presented it to me with the words that it was a "good" club as "not only unattached youth"1 come there. As I was not familiar with this expression, I wondered what the implied problem with the unattached could be. Where did this concept come from, seeing that it was not what the staff called the young people on an everyday basis. The term they used was "the visitors", which was also an expression that intrigued me as I felt it implied a certain kind of distancing as well as a feeling of being a host, of entertaining guests. I realized that studying the staff of the youth club could be as important as studying the young people.

Notions of "unattached" or unorganized youth, and young people as "problems" have their historical background. In so far as such notions are present in the description, I shall regard them as being grounded in context, as elements that can help to achieve an understanding of the youth club practice. Knowledge of diachronic aspects can be informative even if the main focus in this work is on the synchronic dimension, with emphasis on the place of such notions in the life of this particular youth club.

The concept of the youth club itself has undergone changes. With its origin at the beginning of this century, the emerging institution was called "hemgård", home club. After World War II, the term became "ungdomsgård", youth club, and in the few last decades the concept changed to "fritidsgård", leisure-time club.

As Olson2 shows, one of the principal aims for organizing leisure time was for central and local government to exercise control over what was seen as "problematic" youth. The youth club as an institution is a result of a political process originating at the turn of the century. According to Olson, the view of "youth as problem" was a reaction of liberal and moral conservative middle-class society to "rough" working-class youth. This youth group was considered a threat since the advent of industrialization and urbanization had led to the breaking up of traditional social patterns and values, where leisure and work had not been separated, and thus to the emergence of free time. It was mainly working-class boys who were seen

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1The Swedish term is "föreningslös ungdom", literally youth outside organisations; political, religious, tetotallers and sports movements making up the Swedish tradition of popular movements. The translation "unattached youth" is used by Olson (1992).
2Olson (1992).
as hanging about the streets and posing a threat to traditional Christian values. A problem sometimes arises in relation to this view when translated into the study of contemporary society. It can pertain to what can be called a romantic view of youth: everything that young people do is by definition good and they are oppressed by adults, or the state, whose actions are by definition bad. The point, though, is not to confuse such a view with the rather self-evident fact that every society has instruments of socialization, and that it exercises control over its citizens. What is interesting, though, is the notion that in order to legitimate the existence of an institution entrusted to work with people’s leisure time, those people might have to be defined as problems and in need of disciplining. As Gusfield has pointed out, modern societies “display a culture of public problems” by accrediting a certain phenomenon and naming it as a problem, thereby also suggesting a “structure developed to deal with it”. This gives rise to what Gusfield calls the “troubled persons” professions that “bestow benevolence on people defined as in need”. Those professions claim “ownership” of a problem by having exclusive information about it: “to ’own’ a social problem is to possess the authority to name that condition a ’problem’ and to suggest what might be done about it. It is the power to influence the marshalling of public facilities”. Furthermore, it can lead to particular definitions of people in certain situations, what Hockey and James calls “the creation of dependent persons”. Their arguments are developed through examining how metaphors of the child are used when taking care of elderly people, thus making a “social and cultural construction of dependency through the denial of personhood”. Petersson, though, in writing about Swedish youth policy, argues that it has “largely to do with the socio-political technique of guiding youth”. This guidance is then the leading notion which binds together two principles of the welfare state. The first having to do with a freedom of choice or, rather, of not being

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1The view that industrialization and urbanization was such a fundamental break has, for example, been contested, see for example Ambjörnsson (1988), p. 238. This is not the place to expound on this issue but the point is, of course, that there is a history before and beyond every “breakpoint”.

2Goffman (1968) and Sennett (1980), among others, have examined similar issues; this will be extensively discussed in chapter 6.


4Ibid., p. 433.


forced to participate in official activities and the other with the idea that there should "in every block and behind every street corner, be a youth leader present loaded with knowledge and ideas about 'what the next hours should be used for'". Petersson also claims that youth policy creates a generalizing concept of youth within which all youth can be gathered and strategies for social action can be worked out and legitimized. This type of generalization is analogous to the one Gusfield describes above and, of course, to the organizing of leisure.

In Sweden, at the beginning of the century, the control of leisure was claimed by liberal and Christian organisations who had taken it upon themselves to start "youth centres", modelled largely on the ideas of the British settlement movement. Later, "youth care" was entrusted to the "popular movements", ranging from political organizations such as the workers movement, to religious, sports and tetotaller organizations. In 1954, via a general state grant to existing youth organizations, parliament called for such organizations to "organize leisure activities for young people who were outside associations, and who otherwise were threatened with social maladjustment". At the same time, the organization of leisure became subject to state intervention and youth clubs gradually emerged in most Swedish communities, originally from the late thirties onwards, run by the municipal authorities. The big increase in municipal youth clubs, though, did not come until the sixties and early seventies, together with the large housing programme "miljonprogrammet", the million programme, and the advent of the big city suburb, in Swedish often referred to as the "concrete suburb".

The picture that emerges in the official documents is one of cross-fertilization between municipalities and youth organizations of popular movements. This also applies to the education of youth leaders that takes place at folk high-schools, which can be associated with the popular movements but at the same time have their place within the Swedish adult education system. Bearing this history in mind, a youth club can be said to have this specific type of pedagogical background. At the same time, it is also a municipal institution. This coupling seems to have worked on a kind of agreement that there is a social need for youth clubs. As related above,

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1Ibid., p. 172 (my translation). The last part of the quote is in turn quoted from Langager (1985) whom Petersson refer to on this issue.
Olson argues that the notion of controlling the time of the "unattached", or unorganized, youth, who were not participating in activities of the established youth organizations, has been the leading conception throughout. The idea has been to present youth with the good influence of the organized life within organizations by way of the youth club, and in this quest, most political actors have seemingly joined forces¹. In the present situation, all youth clubs, since the early seventies, are under the control of the local authorities, mostly run by the park and recreation boards of the municipalities (kommunens fritidsförvaltning). They are now part of city planning and mostly work in close cooperation with schools and social authorities.

The youth club can thus be seen as an institution, so to speak, in between school and social authorities. It has professional contacts with both and it fills a gap between teaching and controlling. What the pedagogy of the youth club might be, as well as the young people’s views on its activities, will be examined in this work. As the view that youth clubs should, and does, deal with social problems concerning youth seems to be a part of the history, it remains to be seen if, and how, it is realized in the process of contemporary youth club life.

Work and leisure

The Swedish word for leisure is "fritid" and this word can be directly translated as free time. As leisure time in the Swedish context, and especially when related to youth, has been talked about by politicians and proponents of pedagogy more in terms of problems than in terms of freedom, a dilemma emerges. The problem is on one level quite obvious. If you give people a period of time you call their free time, it follows that you have to grant them the freedom to do what they please during this period. But as leisure time has become part of society’s interest in socializing its citizens, leisure time has to be organized.

The concepts of leisure time and free time are discussed by Goodale and Godbey² who point out that rethinking this concept might not be so simple

¹For a discussion in summary, see Olson (1992) p. 223-233.
²Goodale & Godbey (1988).
and straightforward. Quoting de Grazia, they separate leisure and free time in search of a definition:

Time is a major element, since today’s leisure is measured in units of time - hours, days, weeks. Work is included because today’s time is considered free when not at grips with work. Work is the antonym of free time. But not of leisure. Leisure and free time live in two different worlds. We have got in the habit of thinking them the same. Anybody can have free time. Not anybody can have leisure. Free time is a realizable idea of democracy. Leisure is not fully realizable, and an ideal not alone an idea. Free time refers to a special way of calculating a special kind of time. Leisure refers to a state of being, a condition of man...

The emphasis is thus focused on the activities of leisure, its content, if you will, and also on the concept of leisure as being important for identity formation, and maybe as a kind of self-fulfilment. So, two ways of viewing leisure can be distinguished. The first pertaining to a notion of leisure as rest, or pastime, implying a state where nothing "serious" should be done, as time off from work. The other to a notion of leisure as a kind of work, as an engagement in activities and something of importance to the individual, as work towards self-fulfilment.

Both these notions can be informative when studying young people’s music-playing; it is their free time in the sense that it is self-governed, and it is a form of leisure that I will claim is definitely not "just" a pastime but, rather, important for their identity. It can act as an arena where relationships as well as views and stances can be acted out. If, for example, in music-playing, free time can become leisure, and thereby acquire a meaning, it becomes doing something, instead of merely doing something, passing the time. And the way music-playing acquires a meaning, and a context, by and for the people involved, is the focus of this study.

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2 Goodale & Godbey arrive at a definition of leisure from their philosophical perspective: "Leisure is living in relative freedom from the external compulsive forces of one’s culture and physical environment so as to be able to act from internally compelling love in ways which are personally pleasing, intuitively worthwhile, and provide a basis for faith", p. 9. This is extensively discussed in their book.
Culture and context

The theoretical and methodological perspectives employed in this study and the central concepts used are inspired by and relate to everyday-life sociology, but also to other micro-sociological approaches such as ethnography of communication\(^1\) and to the ethnographic tradition more generally. Inspiration is also drawn from Giddens’ theory of structuration\(^2\).

The approach can be seen as a micro perspective emphasizing human communication and interaction, and the relationships between people, seen as a social process.

Naturally occurring interaction is the foundation of all understanding of society. Describing and analyzing the character and implications of everyday life interaction should thus serve as both the beginning and the end point of sociology. This includes the perceptions, feelings, and meanings members experience as well as the micro structure they create in the process...people are shaped or socialized by interaction as well as instrumental in shaping the character of interaction...(and)...social structure, organisation and order do not exist independent of the people that interact within them\(^3\).

Ethnography of communication deals mainly with language interaction through the analysis of speech events. But the important concept of "communicative events", as employed by Dell Hymes\(^4\), also points to an interest in situations where language proper is but a part of communication. Rather, the focus is on how people interact, by whatever means. In this


\(^4\)In Hymes (1964) a very broad spectrum of what can be studied within this concept is presented: "...(1,2) the various kinds of participants in communicative events – senders and receivers, addressee, interpreters and spokesmen, and the like; (3) the various available channels, and their modes of use, speaking writing, printing, drumming, blowing, whistling, singing, face and body motion as visually perceived, smelling, tasting and tactile sensation; (4) the various codes shared by various participants, linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, musical and other; (5) the settings (including other communication) in which communication is permitted, enjoined, encouraged, abridged; (6) the forms of messages, and their genres, ranging verbally from single-morpheme sentences to the patterns and diacritics of sonnets, sermons, salesmen's pitches and any other organized routines and styles; (7) the topics and comments that a message may be about; (8) the events themselves, their kinds and characters as wholes – all these must be identified in an adequate ethnographic way. p. 22-23. He also sees the concept of communicative event as "the metaphor, or perspective, basic to rendering experience intelligible", p. 29.
sense, I use this concept as a means of emphasizing events and situations in the description because they contribute to the understanding of people’s actions. This, of course, represents a selection and it could easily happen that the focus is shifted to the extraordinary instead of the everyday.

But if events are to be seen as containing cultural meaning and as parts of cultural process, they must be put in a broader frame of reference. Hannerz has recently problemized the notion of culture as shared meanings and pointed out that researchers tend not to emphasize diversity and differences within a group in favour of homogeneity and that which is considered shared. Through the notion of cultural flow, he puts the emphasis on process rather than structure: "even as you perceive structure, it is entirely dependent on ongoing process." Hannerz also notes the need to diversify concepts of culture in the face of the shift to studying our own Western society and he prefers the term "contemporary complex cultures" to, for example, notions of modern society. The way to study this complex, cultural flow is, following Hannerz, to examine three interrelated dimensions of culture:

1. **ideas and modes of thought** as entities and processes of the mind – the entire array of concepts, propositions, values and the like which people within some social unit carry together, as well as their various ways of handling their ideas in characteristic modes of mental operation;

2. **forms of externalization**, the different ways in which meaning is made accessible to the senses, made public; and

3. **social distribution**, the ways in which the collective cultural inventory of meanings and meaningful external forms – that is, (1) and (2) together – is spread over a population and its social relationships.

Hannerz goes on to emphasize the distributive aspect he sees as hitherto neglected but stresses how the dimensions interrelate and how complexity in one dimension affects the others. This way of reasoning has a bearing on the present study in that it deals with a complex situation in a complex culture. The youth club is a public institution, not unlike school in certain

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1 Hannerz (1992), see for example p. 5 and p. 69.
2 Ibid., p. 4.
3 Ibid., p. 6.
4 Ibid., p. 7.
respects, but a place where young people go to by their own free will. In it are produced cultural meanings, not only in interaction but, in this case, also in another specific and public form, music. At the same time as the club can be seen as a pedagogical institution and the young people as belonging to youth culture, it is also, and as I see it perhaps even more, a microculture\(^1\) made up of the people present at the club, whether they are working there or visiting.

As said, Hannerz takes his starting-point in anthropology in discussing the central definition of culture as something shared and problemizes the "sharing" in terms of flow and distribution. Another frame of reference, dealing with similar issues but from a sociological and an action perspective, can be seen in the works of Anthony Giddens\(^2\). He concerns himself not so much with how to understand the notion of shared culture but with how to understand the way we shape and order this flow. By taking his starting-point in the theory of action, Giddens has expounded the notion of structure. Action must be situated "in time and space as a continuous flow of conduct" and "an understanding of social systems as situated in time-space can be effected by regarding structure as non-temporal and non-spatial, as a virtual order of differences produced and reproduced in social interaction as its medium and outcome"\(^3\). This view also emphasizes process as an ongoing flow and shuns any objectification of structure. By way of what he calls the duality of structure, Giddens instead sees "structure as the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction"\(^4\).

Rather than seeing the staff and the young people as belonging to two entirely different cultures, I will place emphasis on the relations and interaction between them. The staff group and the group of young people can only in a certain sense be termed as separate and specific cultures. The staff may seem to be a homogeneous group and have the same education while differing in age and social background. In fact, some of them are not much older than the oldest of the boys and come from a similar working-class background. Their common denominator is, of course, that they are

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\(^3\)Giddens (1979), p. 2-3.
doing a job; but that job, as I will describe it in Chapters 4 and 5, is not easy to define. It develops in complex relation to the ongoing events at the club and through constant dealings with the young people. They, in turn, have grown up in the suburb and all of them have a working-class background belonging to the "respectable" rather than the "rough" working class. Their parents, for example, all have jobs and none of them are on welfare. Still, as I describe in Chapters 2 and 3, the boys split into two rock bands and develop two distinctly different approaches to playing music. So, the emphasis here is on both groups, and in a sense on neither of them but rather on the relations between them. All are knowledgeable actors engaged in structuring and distributing cultural meanings and taking part in communicative events.

When studying human communication, a question of power and hierarchical relationships is always present. Of course, human communication can, in a sense, be said to be undemocratic in that it can possibly never be conducted on absolutely equal terms. Hierarchies come into play when people meet. But a successful instance of communication does not necessarily mean establishing a similarity of thought or opinion, it can instead be the establishing of a kind of difference between two parties. Agreement is not so much the merging of positions as it is the compromising in order to reach what can be called a working order. Human communication can be said to be a negotiation of meanings in order to reach a mutual, or functioning, understanding not necessarily of what the exact topic is but of what we are doing when we interact, and of who we are. As will be discussed in chapter 6, the issue of power should not be seen as a simple question of top down oppression and control but rather as a complex process.

In order to capture this dynamic, I prefer the concept of microculture to that of subculture. As Wulff uses it, "the purpose of the microculture concept is to suggest that the social distribution of certain elements of meaning is restricted in absolute terms. It draws attention to those meanings and overt cultural forms which appear among small numbers of interrelated individuals, and to the ways in which these are fashioned in

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1Similar perspectives are developed by Evaldsson (1993) and Forstorp (1992), in their respective fields of language socialization and text practice.

processes occurring within the limited social frame”\(^1\). I also agree with her interest in studying “personalities”, “localities” and “events” in the microculture\(^2\), emphasizing both an individual level, a situated one, and an action perspective.

A study of the context where communication takes place is crucial to achieving an understanding of people’s actions. The context is also something more than a description of the setting in terms of only its physical characteristics. The perspectives of the different actors and their ways of relating to (using) the place they choose to visit is as important, if not more so. The setting comes into being through the various interpretations and uses people make of it, and within it. Thus, in this study, the definition of the youth club as a microculture should be understood as the researcher’s interpretation both of events taking place and the visitors’ and the staff’s perspectives (which certainly do not have to coincide or agree with one another). The staff’s education and pedagogical policies are also important as is the previously discussed concept of the institution, the “Swedish youth club”. The focus here is on the role of music-playing as a communicative event that serves as the pivot for understanding social processes.

**Music as culture**

The concept of culture is also a major element in the tradition of Ethnomusicology\(^3\). As my study of music takes a stand in favour of a cultural perspective, this tradition can serve as yet another point of departure. As Nettl\(^4\) points out, the development in the field has lead to a discussion of its central concepts. Quoting Merriam\(^5\), he designates the interest from the study of “music in its cultural context”, via the notion of “music in culture” to the conception of “music as culture”\(^6\). This represents both a

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 24-26.
\(^3\)For a bibliography of this field, see Schuursma (1992).
theoretical and a methodological shift of interest from a focus on music as a system informed by the knowledge of the culture it is situated in, via the notion of "a holistic view of culture as an organic unit," to the view of a study of how music "accommodates" culture. I concur with this latter interest described thus by Nettl:

It might identify certain central values of...society such as hierarchy or individualism and show how these are reflected (or perhaps violated) in musical conceptualization, behaviour, and sound.²

Nettl points out that the notion of music as culture deals with studying a relationship between music and culture and that it must entail a definition of both. I have spelled out a view on culture above. A view of music could be seen as related to this, and I would like to conceptualize it as music as communication. This study will not deal with notation or descriptions of music as such. In so far as examples are given, they are seen as situated in the presentation and as elements in a relationship, or a discourse, in progress in this particular setting. This is a more dynamic approach where elements of culture or music are not separated, but where the emphasis is on how they interrelate. It can be informative for a study of, for example, the history of a musical genre that is reused in novel ways, even if the emphasis here is on how particular songs and events acquire a place in the interaction and the relationships at the youth club. Incidentally, this way of reasoning can also resolve one of Nettl’s concerns regarding the emphasis in much ethnomusicology research which he sees as too specific (having mainly to do with the traditional focus on far-away cultures with the emphasis on the notion of unity and the shared culture). By way of Hannerz’ notion of cultural complexity, I will develop the perspective of studying music, and musical meanings, artefacts, and reactions, as part of interaction, pointing to their uses as statements that comment on a situation, resolve felt conflicts, create friendships or, so to speak, “deal” with life situations.

Such a view, coupled with the study of youth, comes close to a concept of identity and identity forming. I will see playing music as one important element in the life of the boys I study. It is important in the forming of what can be called an identity, even if the notion of creating an identity might be met with an objection: it can suggest a stagelike development

¹Ibid., p. 131.
²Ibid., p. 132-133.
from something unfulfilled to something more "finished", from the simple and unstable to the more complex and stable. This is particularly important to contest as this study deals with youth and with the beginning of music-playing. I would like to describe music-playing as an important aspect of identity that is focused on in this study, but it is not my aim to fully describe the forming of identity. Furthermore, I try to describe a complex situation where music-playing is but a part of the relationships the boys I study live within, what I do is to focus on it as one important part.

Studying youth

In his evaluation of Swedish Youth research \(^1\), the Norwegian sociologist Ola Stafseng notes that there is a tendency among researchers to "start anew" and not to build so much on other Swedish research, in spite of the fact that this is a large field with many active researchers in Sweden. As can be deduced from his evaluation, this has something to do with what seems to be an unclear definition of the subject. The question of what should constitute youth is not a simple one and furthermore it is laden with presuppositions and common-sensical notions. The question is also whether there can be a definition without the baggage of notions contained in the very legitimacies of the field \(^2\). The evolution of youth research has come about through the notions of youth as a special age \(^3\) and of youth as connected with social problems \(^4\). Critical researchers note what can perhaps be called a jump directly over to these notions investing a certain taken-for-grantedness in them and thereby risking blurring the issue \(^5\). Stafseng also argues that the field is interdisciplinary, but that it has failed

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\(^1\) Stafseng (1989).
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 100.
\(^3\) Often attributed to G Stanley Hall who, in 1904, published his study with the impressive title "Adolescence, Its psychology and Its relation to Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education".
\(^4\) This view is present for example in the Chicago school of sociology with one example in Cohen (1955).
\(^5\) See, for example, Mörch (1985), p. 28: "The problem related to most youth research is that it only to a lesser degree seeks to clarify the concept of youth itself, that is the relations that are dependent for the existence of youth as a special youth age (my translation).
to integrate. It lacks discussions that could examine central concepts everyone uses, like youth and adolescence, that adhere more to their different definitions from mother disciplines, mainly different traditions within psychology and sociology. Be that as it may, and there is some truth in the critique even if it can be said to pertain to a notion of cumulative science and homogeneity in the field, the point is rather that youth research might deal with phenomena that do not easily lend themselves to conceptualization or placement in stable categories. In one sense, this book also starts anew. The phenomena studied here are multifaceted and complex and the perspective developed is complementary to traditional youth research in certain respects. I do not study deviancy or seclusion, but relations.

It is also important to realize that the starting-points of youth research can be similar to starting-points of social action, or institutions. Regardless of whether researchers are critical of, or concur with, notions of youth as a social problem, their foundations of research are obviously that youth can be singled out as a special category to study. What I would like to point out is that this study is mainly descriptive. I do not take my starting-point in a predefined notion of an environment where social problems thrive. But, since I came to discover that such notions are present at the club, these conceptions necessarily form part of some of the important elements in the description.

Many studies of youth, e.g. in the tradition of what has been labelled the Birmingham school, emphasize youth in terms of subculture and specific cultural forms that most often are seen as being in opposition to, and deviating from, mainstream, adult or school culture. In this respect, the present work is complementary as it deals with relation and not seclusion, with the, in a sense, ordinary and not the avant garde. I do not see the boys studied here as a specific subculture in the sense the term is used in the Birmingham tradition. This is not to say that they do not display a kind of resistance but, rather, that the content of this resistance, as studied in context, can take on other, sometimes more subtle and intriguing, meanings than when seen only as subcultural conflict.

1Stafseng (1989), p. 81 and p. 100, where the author also notes the fact that SCB (the National Statistics Office of Sweden) "can go on measuring 'youth' with the age category 16-24 years of age without meeting heavy scientific criticism".

2See, for example, Cohen (1973), Hall and Jefferson (1976) and Hebdige (1979). For a historical note see Hall (1993).
This study can also be seen as complementary to Paul Willis’s study "Learning to Labour"\(^1\), with which it has some similarities. He, too, focuses on working-class youth in relation to an institution, but from a subcultural perspective emphasizing a school counter-culture and he does not deal with music.

Another related study is Fornäs et al\(^2\) who studied music-playing in three rock bands, although from a more psychoanalytically influenced tradition. The present study is complementary in the sense that I study music-playing in the context of an institution and in that I study the very beginning of rock band playing. Both how the boys learn to play and form their first band and how they develop as musicians whereas Fornäs et al study bands that have been playing some time even if the members are young and at the beginning of a possible career\(^3\).

An outline of this book

In order to reach an understanding of music-playing and youth club life viewed as a process, I have chosen to present this study in a particular way. It can be read as containing two parts, Chapters 2 and 3 and Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. These are framed by this introduction and Chapter 6, which contains a theoretical discussion of the issues that will be focused upon in the preceding chapters.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I have chosen to follow a chronology of events and to highlight a presentation of the group of boys and their music-playing. The material for these chapters is based mostly on field notes, and thus the description is more narrative in character. The description is also, but to a lesser degree, based on audio-recorded conversations. The relatively limited use of audio tapes is due to the difficulty in making recordings in

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\(^1\)Willis (1977), for a discussion of Willis’s book from an ethnographic perspective see Marcus, G, Contemporary problems of ethnography in the modern world system, in Clifford & Marcus (1986), p. 165-193.


\(^3\)For studies of more established bands or bands "on their way up" see for example Cohen (1991a). See also Chambers (1985) and Frith (1978, 1981, 1988) for a discussion of rock music in the international context.
this environment which is characterized by motion and noise rather than stillness. The analyses of songs, though, which I present in Chapter 3, are based on audio and video recordings made in the context of a concert.

Chapters 4 and 5 are more thematically outlined and here I will highlight events and conversations in order to show relations within the youth club and place emphasis on certain themes which I have deemed important. The focus here is on the youth club and both the staff’s and the young people’s notions of it and of each other, and their ways of dealing with the relations they live within. These chapters are based on field notes but also to a large extent on audio-recorded conversations and recordings of staff meetings. I have also interviewed members of both the staff and the young people.

The idea behind presenting this material in two parts is to enable each part to be sufficiently elaborated. I do not typographically divide the book in parts one and two. It is not a division but rather a highlighting of the interrelatedness of two aspects that have generally been studied separately, concentrating first on music-playing and the young people’s formation of two bands and their music, and then on their relationship with the staff and the youth club’s way of working. So, again, it is not a division that first concentrates on the music and then on the context separately, but on the interrelation of those two aspects viewed and presented from two perspectives that enhance the understanding of both aspects. As said before, music-playing will be viewed in a broader context involving social process and thus constitutes a key to understanding this process. The two aspects are then elaborated and brought together in the final analysis in Chapter 6.

My reason for studying the use of cultural expressions, be it literature, mass media or music, with ethnographic methods is grounded in the belief that these methods are best suited to give an understanding of people’s perspectives. One aim of this study is to give a description of young people’s music-playing that can lead to an understanding of the social processes involved. Once on the empirical level, there arises the need to understand people’s own conceptions-in-use, their way of dividing the world and living within it. Therefore, concepts that are used by people will also be used in the description, albeit necessarily filtered through my selection and analysis.

To sum up, in this study I am concerned with how youth culture, youth and relations to social institutions interrelate and become visible in a microculture. The interest here can thus be defined as an interest in rela-
tions within an institution, centering around cultural expressions as an inherent part of those relations. But what this institution is will not be taken for granted, or predefined. In so far as there are notions of problematic youth or of a need for "social work", these are examined as part of the youth club practice and seen as elements that are shaped by it as well as shaping it. It remains to be seen how such notions, as well as others, are conceived of and used by those who come to the youth club and those who work there. It is in a social practice, which can be seen as an ongoing process of events, constantly created and recreated by the actors taking part, that cultural use and expression acquire one kind of meaning. And it is there that this specific instance of music-playing for the young boys, and pedagogy for the staff, meet, interact and are studied.

Questions that I will attempt to study are: what do the "first steps" in learning to play rock music look like? What happens when young people are given the opportunity to express themselves? How do they make use of it? What is rock music like when it is performed by young people? What kind of situation in life does playing music become part of and how does it relate to that situation? And, in what ways are the relationships with the institutionalized adult world worked out?
2 Hard work and real fun

Elmridge youth club

Elmridge youth club is the meeting place for many of the fourteen to eighteen-year olds in the suburban area of Elmridge. To me, Elmridge has the feel of a typical city suburb. It is quite large, with around 6,500 inhabitants\. It has a large shopping centre with a post office, a bank, a restaurant and several other shops. Currently, at a time when many department stores have financial problems, the largest one in Elmridge is expanding, taking space from the parking lot outside the shopping centre. Situated in the same low, square building as the shopping centre is also the public library and near by is a kindergarten and other social service facilities, for example, the district nurse and dentist.

Many people who live in Elmridge work outside the suburb, at the factories in town or in shops in town centre. Elmridge can be considered a working-class area. The mean income in 1989 was around 100,000 kronor\(^2\) per year; this figure in the municipal statistics also includes an adjoining residential area consisting of smaller houses where people with higher incomes live. These people rarely come to Elmridge centre except to shop. I draw the conclusion that the people living in the central part of the suburb, where the youth club is situated, thus have a lower income than is shown in the municipal statistics.

The apartment buildings that make up the central part of Elmridge start on both sides of the centre and extend behind it. They consist of white three-storey brick houses with twelve apartments in each. The houses are arranged symmetrically in rows of six. As a first-time visitor you could easily get the impression of an area very neat and well-ordered yet impossible to find your way around. The rows of houses stretch around for nearly a kilometre both in length and depth, giving Elmridge the form of a square patch, but with somewhat rounded edges. In the middle of this area, just behind the shopping centre and over a small hill covered with oaks and

\(^1\)In 1989 according to municipal statistics.

\(^2\)Approximately GBP 7,800 or USD 12,000 in 1993.
elm trees, is Elmridge School. This is a comprehensive school with around 500 pupils in classes seven to nine. From the school, just across a tarmac-covered playground forming a square, is Elmridge Youth Club. It occupies about one third of a building that also incorporates the school gymnasium. The buildings are built in a typical late sixties style, square angled with yellowish bricks and a sheet-steel roof painted a dark colour.

The door of the youth club is made of steel, painted black and with inlaid panels of armoured glass. Taped on to the glass is a handwritten sign giving information about the opening hours, and behind the door is a small entrance hall with another door. It could be the entrance to any Swedish municipal office building and only the sign above reveals that this is in fact the door to Elmridge Youth Club.

The first thing that greets the visitor; or, rather, the first thing that greets me when I pass those doors for the first time are a few upturned heads and curious looks from about twenty young people, mostly boys. They are sitting at small, round tables in a large rectangular room, 12 by 5 metres. Towards a corridor the room has a wall consisting of narrow planks with slats in between that let you see through it, thus creating an open space. On the opposite wall is a door and six windows looking out towards a small asphalt yard with some tables, and behind that is the mini-golf course.

There is an opening in one of the walls of the room forming a kind of counter at which some boys are standing buying sweets and coffee. The room behind the counter contains kitchen facilities and storage space for the soft drinks, sweets and other things the youth club staff sell. On the opposite wall, there is a 100 litre aquarium and some green plants in pots standing on bricks or directly on the floor. The room is filled with the round tables and about 40 people can sit there comfortably. It gives a nice and tidy impression. Sometimes a newspaper may be lying abandoned on a table, but mostly somebody would pick it up and place it in the newspaper rack. This room is called the café.

This evening, when I first come to the club, the large room is half full with card-playing, coffee-drinking, loudly talking and laughing youngsters who all appear to be around the ages of sixteen or seventeen. Some of them are perhaps a few years younger or older. Most of them are dressed in jeans, often worn and torn at the knees or patched with pieces of other jeans, or, sometimes with patches that have come from other, more colourful clothes. They also have T-shirts with the name of some rock
group or the company name of some local enterprise. Some of the young people are wearing thick, black or brown leather jackets and others have jackets made of cloth in various combinations of colours in a style popular in Sweden at the end of the 80’s. Almost all of them have expensive sports shoes of well-known brands and some are even dressed in Nike or Adidas sports outfits, complete with trousers, sweatshirt and jacket. At first, I do not notice the few girls present sitting in a group at a corner table. Though some of the girls are moving about or sitting at the same tables, most of them do not participate in the boys’ activities or in the conversations that take place across the room between groups at different tables. Most of the girls are dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt and seem to be the same age as the boys.

As it happens, some of the staff are also sitting at the tables, but I cannot at first tell them apart from the other visitors. They are dressed in a similar fashion and look almost as young. At one table, staff-members and visitors are involved in a game of cards, and I can hear laughter and some quarrelling about someone cheating. The atmosphere seems quite relaxed even if there is a lot of commotion.

This large room is to the right of the entrance doors. To the left is a long corridor and right in front is the other corridor, with the plank wall to one side, about 30 metres long and with a door at its end. These two corridors make up the main routes through which one can move through the youth club. Further along the main corridor is a room of about 10 by 5 metres, containing a television set in front of a big bluish-green sofa with room for seven or eight people. On the other side of the room, there is a dart board on the wall. On the opposite wall is a row of tables, each with four chairs.

This room is known as the "sitting-room"1 and the most obvious activity taking place here is, of course, watching television as the TV set is here. But the sitting room is also a place where you can go if you temporarily want to leave the more hectic environment in the café or in the corridors.

A plan of the Elmridge youth club is shown below in order to give a more comprehensive picture.

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1In Swedish: uppehållsrumsr.
The music workshop

The long corridor continues but is interrupted by a glass door with a small hallway behind. Here, there are four doors leading, from left to right, to a storage room, the music room, the billiards room and a room used mostly for adult weaving classes. In the store, there is an old TV, a video, a lot of tools, an assortment of lightbulbs, rolls of paper and other paraphernalia.

The music room is rather small, 3 by 3 metres, with light green walls and one window high at the far end. It has inlaid metal bars in the wall below forming a kind of ladder up to the window. Just under the window is a set of drums of quite good quality with a bass drum, snare and two tom-toms, two crash cymbals and a hi-hat. Covering one of the walls is a
low, black wooden shelf on which are one bass and two guitar amplifiers and one PA\(^1\) to which a microphone is connected. On the opposite wall are two electric guitars and one bass guitar on metal stands and towards the far wall there is a synthesizer. The two big loudspeakers stand in two corners. The walls are covered with small black-and-white posters, the size of an ordinary sheet of copying paper, showing a rock star and one year in the history of rock. The posters seem to have been copied out of a book.

It is in this room, the "music workshop" as it is called, that the young people, who are the focus of this book, engage in their musical activities. This is where they play, rehearse and generally spend a lot of their time. The workshop is almost always occupied. From the outside you can hear rock music played in different styles and at different levels of skill. There are heavy metal bands that have played together for years and which sound as if they are about to release their first record at any time, bands that come to the youth club only to rehearse in the workshop. And, there are a couple of fourteen-year olds, regular youth club visitors, playing for the very first time, trying out the instruments and the amplifiers.

The first time I enter the workshop, I am together with Ann, one of the staff members who is showing me around. In the workshop, there are two boys, both aged around fourteen, one on the drums and the other on the electric guitar. They are playing a tune of four chords and with a distinct heavy metal sound\(^2\). The drummer is off beat, but the guitarist manages to hold the tune together, keeping the beat and making the drummer follow. When we come in, the two boys stop playing and turn to look at us. Ann tells them to go on and she asks them to play their song for us. They start playing and this time the guitarist sings the lyrics too. The text is in English, but it is difficult to distinguish the words. The voice is quite thin and the singer is shouting into the microphone rather than singing.

When they finish, Ann gives the agreed-upon explanation of my presence. She tells the boys that I am to be at the youth club as a sort of

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\(^{1}\)PA = Public Address, the electrified system used to amplify voices. Here, it is used for singing.

\(^{2}\)The genre of heavy metal is the one most popular among the Elmridge youth at this time. Early bands like Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple are currently not so popular though and it is in its 'eighties form with bands like Guns’N’ Roses and Bon Jovi as a couple of proponents that the genre has reached its local popularity.
apprentice staff member\(^1\). She says that I am interested in music and music-playing and that I am going to make a study of them. At the mention of music they listen, it seems, a little more attentively, but they are otherwise quite unresponsive. When we leave, the guitarist turns around and says: "well, bye". He is a smallish boy, with his blond hair cut short in the sides and in front but left quite long at the back covering his neck down to his shoulders. Apart from this somewhat distinctive haircut, he is casually dressed in jeans and a sweat-shirt.

As we leave and move down the corridor, I can hear the music start again. We go on to the café and sit down with another staff member, Marie, who says that the visitors sitting in there had asked about me when they had seen me pass by. She had told them that I was studying music and that I was going to work at the youth club to see how a music workshop is organized. Someone asked if I was on some kind of unemployment scheme and she said no I was much too old for that.

After a while I go back to the workshop, knock on the door and enter with the key I have been given. The two boys are playing the opening bars of a rock standard: "Eye of the tiger". The drummer is still off beat. They continue playing for a while, and I sit quietly listening. Suddenly they stop and the guitarist turns to me and asks if I can play. When I do not deny that I can, he asks me to take the bass guitar. They start playing the first tune, the one I had heard when I was in with Ann earlier. I try to follow on the bass. As the drummer still has problems, I follow the guitarist who has a good sense of rhythm and can hold the beat.

Brunis, as he is called, has been playing the guitar for two years, ever since he was twelve. He has no guitar of his own so he comes to the youth club to play and before that he used to borrow a guitar from a friend. Together with his classmate, who has played the drums only for a month, he comes here almost every day. This day, they have been playing since one o’clock, and now it is six in the evening. He asks me if I have ever played in a band and says:

"that’s what’s really fun”.

As I came to discover, there are not so many fourteen-year olds who play in bands in Elmridge. As this also is the age when young people start

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\(^1\)This was a role I decided upon at first as it is a role that is different from that of a regular staff member. Before you can study to be a youth club leader you have to work for six months at a club. I also stated that I was doing research at the university and that I was interested in studying music-playing.
coming to the youth club, this is a place where they can start looking for people to play with if they want to be in a band. This is what Brunis wants. He has got his friend to start playing with him, but it does not work very well. He is keen but seems to lack musical skill, something Brunis feels even if he never says so and thus is not really interested in playing with him. When they do, Brunis plays almost as if he is on his own and does not seem to care so much about what the drummer does and how it sounds.

When he says with emphasis that what is really fun is to play in a band, he does not mean a band with his friend as drummer. He seems to be dreaming of something better.

The café

The café is the meeting place at the Elmridge club. Here, you can sit at a table and play cards or board games, or you can sit and read a newspaper since the club subscribes to the two local papers. The visitors usually meet in the café, and then decide what to do: play table-tennis, watch television, or just hang around in the café chatting, or have something to eat or drink.

In the café, music is played almost all the time. On the wall are two loudspeakers connected to a tape recorder in the office. The club has a few tapes of rock music brought by some of the staff members, but the visitors can play their own tapes as well. They usually ask first as the office is not a "shared environment". They are not explicitly prohibited from going in there, but they are not supposed to do so if no staff member is there. Still, there is no "keep out" sign on the door, just a tacit understanding that the office belongs to the staff. In the café, people of different ages meet, boys and girls mingle, staff members play cards with a boy of eighteen, a girl of fifteen and one of the younger, mentally retarded kids that come for a couple of hours every afternoon after special-school.

One evening, two boys are sitting at a table playing on the acoustic guitar that belongs to the club. The older one, around nineteen, with long curly blond hair, is holding the guitar and is engaged in teaching the other one to read music. He, a rather stout, dark-haired boy of seventeen, is drawing lines on a piece of hot-dog wrapping paper. The older boy writes a note on one of the lines, then plays it on the guitar and says:

"well if that’s a D, what’s this then...".
He then writes another note on the lines and plays it. The younger boy tries to figure it out but suddenly looks up from the paper. He then takes the paper and on the back he draws one long line. He then divides the line in sections, representing the frets of the guitar, the line being the string. The two boys then cooperate in placing the notes along the line.

The younger, stouter boy, is called Grubbe, an abbreviation of his surname. He is a drummer and he has been playing for almost a year. He is in a band, playing in the workshop and now he is also interested in learning to play the guitar better. He has played the guitar before, in a band at the "Bullerfabriken", the "Noiseworks", an old factory converted into rehearsal rooms for rock bands organized and run by an adult educational organization. There, the bands can book rooms for two hours every week.

"There, I learnt to take my first chords and open bottles with the snuff box", he says.

That only lasted for a short period, though, and he is now playing at the youth club, changing from drums to guitar as they have a drummer already.

Another boy, with fair and rather short hair compared with the others, comes in and sits down at our table. He is the lead guitarist of Grubbe's band. He is called by his surname, Jonson, and he has been playing since fifth grade when he was eleven. He started with the classical guitar and took lessons for some years and he is the only one in the band who can read music, saying that it is:

"good to know but it's not at all necessary".

He says he had wanted to start playing when he, together with some friends, had watched music videos with the band "Kiss". They wanted to have a band and Jonson wanted to play the guitar. This band never started though, being more of an idea thought up at the spur of the moment, but this idea of playing the guitar and starting a band rooted itself in his mind. Now, at seventeen, he has played in several bands and he has become quite an experienced instrumentalist.

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1Still active, but at the height of its popularity during the seventies, the American band Kiss was considered to be the epitomy of vulgarity by parents and schools in Sweden and some of their concerts were banned. The music critics saw them more as ridiculous and overdone, and their musicality was at times questioned.
Jonson takes the guitar from Grubbe and begins to play some chords in a fast, heavy metal style. The lads start discussing songs and Jonson plays the opening bars of three different tunes:

"We have to write the lyrics" he says. "Don’t play that secret one", Grubbe says when Jonson suddenly begins on a new tune. "What secret, there’s nothin’ secret about that one" he retorts.

But he does not continue to play. Instead, he turns to me and asks me to play. I have to take the guitar. The attention of everyone around the table is focused on me and I have to somehow establish my status as someone knowledgeable as far as playing rock music is concerned. Nobody says anything while I try to play a standard twelve-bar blues and improvise on a blues scale. Nobody says anything afterwards either and I do not know at all what they think. Still, this is the first important contact and their silence and the fact that they continue to let me be with them and occasionally play is a sign of a sort of acceptance. It is enough to show that I am able to get some sounds out of the guitar that can be identified as rock music. Then, for them, I supposedly know something about it.

Playing in the workshop

The singer in the band, a big boy somewhat older than the others, arrives and we all go towards the workshop. There is the sound of heavy metal music coming from inside and we stand and listen.

"This band’s really good" someone says, "an’ they’re tight”.

The playing stops and we go in as the band’s rehearsal time is up. You can book the workshop for three consecutive hours once a week if you want a regular period. In the mornings, and before five o’clock, time is free and anyone can go in and play provided that they have a "music workshop card”, which costs 100 kronor per term. Also, guitar cables and drumsticks have to be rented for 10 kronor each on every occasion.

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1This genre has its roots mainly in guitar-based rock. The guitars’ amplifiers are set on high distortion, thus producing a “thick” and “heavy” sound and the notes are also played quite fast.

2The distinctions within the music that can be called “Rock” are many. For a fuller discussion on Rock and its history see, for example, Chambers (1985) and Frith (1978, 1981, 1988).
Well inside the workshop, Mats the singer, starts talking to the members of the other band while they are putting away their instruments. As they are packing, they ask Mats and his friends to play so they can hear their sound. They plug in the workshop’s instruments and play two songs that have a punkish sound but with definite heavy metal influences. The judgement of the band that is leaving is that they are "too dull, it all sounds the same". This is not at all said in a mocking or negative way, though, but more as a statement of fact and something they can learn from, like informed and well-meaning criticism. Mats retorts that a comparison would be unfair as they have only played together for a month and the other band for years.

When they have left, Mats says "let’s do the yodeling-tune!", but Grubbe refuses and says that he really does not want to embarrass himself. Mats starts to yodel down the microphone. He has a strong, deep voice and it sounds quite good and, above all, it sounds funny. Strange and amusing at the same time, especially as Mats makes funny faces as he sings and moves around in a mocking way, almost like mimicking a rockstar on stage. He holds the microphone in one hand and frantically waves the other around. He tries to persuade Grubbe to play:

"if you wanna become something you shouldn’t be afraid of playing... you mustn’t think it’s ridiculous...if you do, you shouldn’t try to go for it!".

Grubbe starts playing, crouched behind the drums, with a mock-angry expression on his face while Mats yodels and the rest of us laugh.

This is the "secret" song Grubbe was referring to earlier. It consists of yodeling with a straight rock’n’roll, four-beat accompaniment on the drums with the emphasis on the second and fourth beat. Grubbe is not really that embarrassed, though. My impression is that he considers it somewhat out of style and nothing that should be presented to others, like me or the other band. Mats' criticism of not daring, and of not "going for it" is a challenge, though, and it eventually makes him play.

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1The Punk style became popular in England in 1976 and was widespread in Sweden from 1977 up until the mid eighties. Its hallmarks were a raw, simple and powerful style of playing, and "angry" lyrics criticizing society. The punk movement had a DIY approach urging kids to learn three chords and go out and play. On punk, see, for example, Hebdige (1979) and Brolinson & Larsen (1990), p.321-330.

2This beat is the most common accompaniment in rock music. If musicians are asked what rock is, the only sure fact they would all agree on is this.
The song came about during a workshop session when the drummer had started beating out a rhythm, the guitarist had followed, playing two chords, and Mats, lacking a text, had simply started to yodel. Now they play it on the initiative of anyone in the band, sometimes increasing the pace so that it goes faster and faster until it becomes too fast to play and someone has to give up and all of them break out laughing.

The next day, the band is back in the workshop. A boy I have not met before is now on the drums and Grubbe is playing the guitar. Karlson, the new drummer, is a thin, rather tall boy with long fair hair. He, too, is around seventeen and like the others he is wearing jeans and a sweatshirt with a jeans-jacket on top. The band has no bass player and now they are teaching a song to a prospective band member. Jonson, on the lead guitar, stands in front of him, so that he will be able to see what Jonson is doing, slowly playing the chords of the song. The bass player is somebody’s friend, one of the youth club regulars, who can play the guitar but has never played in a band, nor actually played the bass before. He tries to follow, picking out the bass-note of every chord and Jonson helps him when he cannot find it. They run through the tune a few times and then Jonson summons the others and they start to play.

The song has a punk sound. It is rather fast. The two guitars are played in a fast, beating way, with the distortion on the amplifiers at maximum. They mostly use the lowest strings on the guitar and hit them quickly and fast with the right hand, always using a plectrum. With the left hand they take a chord that is reduced to its two lowest notes:

The dots represent the fingers of the left hand on the strings across the guitar neck. On the first fret of the neck this chord is an F major. This chord, one of the most common ones, is also difficult for all beginners to learn. It is a barré chord, i.e, the whole forefinger has to be pressed hard on all the six strings. This is difficult to achieve without much practice, and the lads continue to use the reduced variant for a very long time. The
result of this practice is a more "harsh" and "raw" quality, and a low, "dark" sound.

When I hear the song, the lyrics are sung in a shouting style. There are three verses and the chorus is also repeated three times. The text is in Swedish and Mats sings from a piece of paper on which the lyrics are written in this fashion:

The Escape
I was mugged in the street I don't have any
money left I was mad like hell
I think I'll go I'll go away, escape
somewhere far far away to
no man's land. I wanna have peace and quiet
be able to take it easy and believe that the future
have it good as hell, it starts to look like a hell. it looks
dark as hell. I'll go away escape somewhere
far far away to no man's land,
it is my last year in this damned life.
I shed a tear as I leave my time. I'll go away escape somewhere
far far away to no man's land.

Flykten
Jag blev rånad på gatan jag har inga
pengar kvar Jag var förbannad som fan
Jag tror jag drar jag drar iväg flyr
nästans. Långt långt bort till
ingemansland. Jag vill ha lugn och ro
kunna ta det lugnt och tro att framtiden
ha det bra som fan, det ser ut som fan det är
mörkt som fan. jag drar iväg...flyr nästans
långt långt bort till ingemansland
det är mitt sista år i detta jävla liv
jag gräter en tår när jag lämnar min tid, jag drar iväg flyr
nästans långt långt bort till ingemansland

1This was the way the lyrics were written down by Mats. The division of verses and chorus is not done in writing; instead, he had filled the sheet and any line would finish at the margin as the paper ended.
A song like The Escape has its own life within the group. It started as a combination of chords Jonson made up at home and that the band developed further in the workshop. The music consists of two sets of four chords each, put together as the verse and chorus of the song. The band then started playing it at the workshop and Karlson supplied the drum part as he went along. When Grubbe had learnt the guitar part, Jonson put in a guitar solo after the second verse.

When they play the song this evening, the solo sounds like a typical heavy metal solo with very quick movement up and down a harmonic scale. The song will change with time though, with the band members playing their parts differently and constantly developing them. Even the lyrics are changed to fit in better with the melody, or simply because the singer likes a new phrase better than the old one. Finally, when a song has been played so much that the band does not find anything more to change, it is dropped from their repertoire. The first time I heard The Escape, it had a punk-style sound with heavy-metal influences and later the whole song became totally heavy metal in style.

The lyrics of The Escape had been written by Mats. When I ask how he came to write it, he says he started with the idea of someone being assaulted in the street and what he would be thinking and then the rest:

"just came out like this".

The content, or any particular interpretation of the lyrics, is never discussed by the band. Rather, the song is used as playing material, stuff that you use for playing. You are a band when you have a song to play, and particularly, when you have written it yourself. This is taken for granted within the band and they can pass judgement on other bands by saying in an indignant tone of voice:

"but they're only playing covers!".

In as much as the band is striving towards a particular style, for example a heavy metal sound, they use different elements they consider belong to the genre and that they think sound good. The guitarist setting the amplifier for a good sound, making up a solo, the drummer developing a beat. In the same way, also the singer or writer develops the lyrics. They too are typical of the genre. Just as a guitar solo typically contains fast

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1For other descriptions of music making in young bands see Berkaak & Ruud (1992), Fornäs et. al (1988) and Ohlund (1988).
running up and down a scale, the lyrics contain some themes that come back in many of the songs. They are part and parcel of the genre.

The band...

During the last months of 1988, the band continued to play during their regular booked rehearsal period and also at other times when the workshop was free. At this time, the band consists of:

Jonson - lead guitar  
Grubbe - guitar  
Karlsson - drums  
Mats - vocals

They have no regular bass player, but the friend they have taught their songs plays with them from time to time. Also Niklas, aged sixteen, sometimes takes part and plays keyboards without officially joining the band. This turns out to be a problem as opinions are divided within the group as to whether a synthesizer really should be included. Grubbe and Karlsson, who spend a lot of time together playing without the others, talk about the synthesizer as being despicable. They do not consider it a good instrument to use and feel it makes the music too complicated. Mats, by contrast, feels their songs are too simple as they are and he thinks they need something more. He says he wants the band to sound more like "Helloween", a German heavy metal group often played on the tape recorder in the café, having a "thick" and "heavy" sound according to Mats. Jonson does not seem to be against the synthesizer, but is more interested in the guitars. At least, this is my impression as Jonson does not say anything about it and does not interfere in the discussions.

He is the one who has composed the music of the band's four songs. They always start with a short, two-bar, guitar riff¹, a musical phrase often quite equilibristic, that ends in a broken chord corresponding to the last note of the riff. He then tries out one more chord that he thinks sounds

¹A widely used term in rock music, a riff is a short, catchy, phrase often played on the guitar or synth and is an important element in a song.
good together with the first and decides how to play them, as they will then form the verse of the song. The chorus is then done in a similar manner and the two parts are subsequently combined. Sometimes he lets the second guitarist play the chords and himself continues the riff throughout the whole song.

For him, the synth is apparently alright, provided that it stays in the background playing the chords and has no solo part. Playing solo is clearly Jonson’s responsibility. He often mentions Yngwie Malmsteen as the best guitarist. "Yngve" as he is called at the youth club, is a Swedish-born, but American-based heavy metal superstar. He has made a certain style of guitar playing popular, a very fast and equilibristic style with influences from classical music, with Bach-like scales played very fast. The lads agree that Yngve is the best guitarist technically, that he is "cool", but not all of them have taken such a liking to him as Jonson has. Some, for example Grubbe, seem to think the music is too "soft" and perfectionistic, something Grubbe seems to dislike. Yngwie Malmsteen does not belong to the "hardest" of heavy metal musicians, he is more mainstream in style except for his outstanding guitar playing and does not have an "evil", or secret, image like some other bands, for example Metallica. He has moved from Sweden to the US and has since featured on Swedish television where his home in California was highlighted as was the accident he had with his Jaguar. Grubbe recognizes his talent but feels that the image is somewhat ridiculous.

"You shouldn’t be commercial" is what he says.

...split up

One day, Mats is standing outside the club. He is holding a guitar case in his hand. He too has, for some time, wanted to play the guitar and now he has bought one from a friend for whose band Mats had helped arrange a concert.

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1 As an example for the musically interested reader, here is an example of a beginning of one of his songs:
"It’s a really great band, real tight, and there’s a guy playing four synths at the same time” is his appraisal.

The guitar cost him 1800 kronor, but it is almost new.

"It costs 2800 new! And I got a broken fuzz-box¹, too, thrown in the deal; it was full of beer but I fixed it in ten minutes”.

He is the only one in the band who has a steady job working as a janitor in one of the shopping malls in town and thus he has money to buy the guitar.

We go to the workshop and he takes out the guitar. It is pearl-white with black fittings and its shape is somewhat distorted, being rather elongated compared to the typical shape of an electric guitar. It looks rather like the instruments most heavy metal guitarists use. He looks proud as he plugs it in for the first time and plays his first chord. He knows three chords, but only with a simple, beginners grip. He is not able to take a barré-chord, with the left fore-finger tightly pressed over all the strings. Thus he takes an F-major with two fingers only on the two lowest strings. This is again the reduced chord mentioned earlier. With his right hand he strikes rather heavily on the bass strings on the first beat and then more softly on the higher strings. It does not sound good, but he continues his practising stubbornly. He does not stop until the door opens and Grubbe enters. "Is this your guitar” Grubbe asks me. By pointing I indicate that it is Mats’, and Grubbe looks surprised. On request he lets Grubbe try it. He takes it and plays a few bars of The Escape, Paint It Black, a Rolling Stones tune he has learnt and ends with some solo improvising. Brunis’ friend, the off-beat drummer, comes in and sits at the drums. He tries to follow Grubbe’s playing without really being able to. He asks Grubbe how to play and he, being himself a drummer, goes up to show him. Mats takes his new guitar, puts it in its case, and leaves the room. Grubbe and the other boy take the two workshop guitars and continue, Grubbe showing him how to play a particular rhythm on the guitar instead of on the drums.

Grubbe is in his first year of vocational training at upper secondary school (gymnasietet yrkeslinje), learning to be a construction worker, a roofer (byggplåtslagare). Like the other lads he lives in Elmridge,

¹An electrical device which can enhance the distortion of the sound, giving a “fuzzy” sound where the notes tend to be heard together. It is a small box coupled in series with the amplifier and operated with a foot switch.
together with his mother and younger brother in an apartment building quite near the youth club.

He started playing the drums two years ago when he and his friends at the club wanted to try out the instruments. Actually, they had all started with the drums trying them out together and when Karlson, whom he most often played with, showed better progress, he had turned to the guitar. Grubbe also has earlier experience with the band he played with for a short while at the Noiseworks. Now, he wants to play the guitar in a band instead.

One evening he is sitting in the cafe, playing some heavy metal riffs and a few bars from a song on the acoustic guitar. He says it is an Yngwie Malmsteen tune he learnt from a friend who is really clever at finding out the chords of songs by listening to records and trying on the guitar, chord by chord. He asks me to play and to teach him something, and I play a blues scale. He takes the guitar back and I help him memorize the scale.

This way of learning by copying someone else but without asking too much about it is typical. It is as if you should not ask but be able to do it in practice.

Grubbe is interested in playing different types of music or, rather, in trying for a short while, and he has learnt a tune of Yngwie’s that has a definite classical sound. He plays it together with Karlson in the same manner as they used to play the yodelling tune, as a kind of fun-to-play, practising-piece that they can play in different ways every time and even play differently with every verse, increasing the beat, trying to outdo each other in pace or in innovativeness on their instruments. Karlson, like him, is in his first year in upper secondary school, but doing the two-year social studies course. They usually call each other in the morning, and they decide that there is probably nothing interesting going on at school and they agree to meet at the workshop instead later during the day. Then they will go back to sleep, eventually meeting at the youth club around noon and then playing in the workshop until dinner time.

One evening in the cafe, I notice a definite change in Grubbe. He has cut his hair. It is very short at the sides and it is cropped at the top. But it is left longer over the forehead, and quite long at the back, covering his

\[ ^1 \text{Compare Fornäs et al, p. 228.} \]
neck. The most distinctive feature, though, is the colour. His hair is dyed a light red, making Grubbe’s head look even more conspicuous.

“What’ve you done to your hair”, I ask him but he does not answer. He just offers a smile and a straight look. Everybody around the table teases him about his hair, commenting on it in different ways. He, himself, sits without answering, with an air of what can only be described as pleased defiance, seemingly enjoying the attention and still with the smile on his face. As a matter of fact, Grubbe has left the band. He has started missing rehearsals and then stopped playing with the band altogether. He states that he does not feel like playing with them anymore.

Grubbe has developed his playing, changing orientation towards a more punk-rock style, with a somewhat simpler way of playing, but more forceful with more drive and power. This change is also one of the reasons for his leaving the band as he says that they have become too mainstream heavy metal.

This change in his opinions about music can be seen as a forming of what can be called a musical awareness, something which compels him to take a stance and act upon it.

Later, when I ask Mats if he is not coming to the workshop today, he says: ”don’t feel like it”

And then he leaves. As it turns out he, too, has left the band. It seems to me that he does not feel comfortable with the others and he says he has different ideas about the music and so he has decided to leave and play on his own.

At first, I was startled by the fact that members left the band so suddenly and, in Grubbe’s case, seemingly lightheartedly. It might seem strange that two members quit just when the band seems to get under way. When their first few songs are ready enough and they even start to talk about trying to get a ”gig”, to play at a concert. But it is not a sign of indifference to music-playing but rather the opposite, they have in a sense had to take a stand on how they should play. It is now that differences of opinion start to become important; when the members start to get to know each other, not only as buddies at the youth club chatting in the café, but also as fellow-musicians who have to create music together and who have to agree on many things. Different musical preferences and different

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1See, for example, Berkaak & Ruud (1992), p. 73, who note that the only thing certain in playing rock music is that bands split up.
personal likes and dislikes become important. The disagreement over the synthesizer, being only one example, made the different band members take a stance. There are different ideas, not only about how the music should sound but also on the notion of why you want to play at all.

Another issue, like the synth problem, which also has a bearing on the notion of having to take a stand on music, is the question of the band’s name. Until now, the band has had no name. As Grubbe once said:

“well, we’re just a band, we don’t need any name”.

But the issue has actually been avoided. The question of a name is an important one. If you choose a heavy metal name, for example, you define yourself as a particular sort of band and the only one who seemed to want this identity was Jonson. He had suggested the name ”Angel”, but no one else agreed. Grubbe was the most negative, even if he never started a real argument about it.

Now, when some of the original members have left, ”Angel” will instead becomes the name of a reformed band and replacements for the lost members have to be found.

One afternoon, when I go to the workshop, Brunis is there with his friend who is sitting at the drums. They ask me to take the bass guitar and join them but as we talk, Karlson, the ”Angel” drummer, enters and goes up to the drums. Brunis’ friend makes way and leaves, saying he has some homework to do. Brunis starts to play the song and I follow on the bass. Karlson listens for a few seconds, then takes his drumsticks out of his left back-pocket and starts playing. Immediately it sounds much better than before, tighter and more easygoing. Brunis finds he can play more freely now that he has a drummer who can hold the beat and who immediately seems to understand his intentions. Karlson seems to have an instinctive feel for how the song is composed, when the verses end, the chorus starts, and Brunis can even play a solo. Of course, Karlson has played many tunes like this before and knows the standard heavy metal accompaniments. For him, it is not difficult to play Brunis’ song. They are both playing in the same genre. They do not talk much. There seems to be no need for that and when they do, it is to explain where a break in the tune is to be made. And then it is Brunis who takes the opportunity to try something new and he says: ”No, like this” and shows what he means by playing, emphasizing by jerking his whole body when he wants the break to start.

It is not strange that Brunis and Karlson play together. All the lads playing at the workshop and belonging to the regular visitors at the youth
club know each other. Other members of bands who only come to practise at the workshop might be unknown to them or be mere acquaintances. The lads can meet outside of booked rehearsal periods and play at the workshop in different constellations, as Karlson and Brunis just now. For Brunis, this means that he has a chance to get to know older boys and play with those who are more experienced. He has already played together with Jonson, Grubbe and the others and it is natural that he is asked to join Angel now that they have suffered such losses. He does not need to be asked twice, even if he has to leave the guitar to only play the bass guitar.

Angel

Jonson too lives in Elmridge, in an apartment building, where he had moved only a year ago with his family when his father, who is a technician, got a new job at the hospital in town. Before, they lived in a town of similar size about 300 kilometres away.

He goes to the same school as Grubbe but in the auto-mechanics class. He, too, is in his first year.

In the band, Jonson is the one who contributes the innovative musical ideas, even if his music-playing and songwriting are clearly within the heavy metal genre. He usually sits at home playing on his acoustic guitar, making up riffs and putting chords together into songs. He does not have, as Mats had, any definite idea that his music should sound like that of some other band. He has come to know the realities of playing together with other people in a band. For example, that you cannot force your will on the other members too easily, especially as Grubbe and Mats are both quite strong personalities. So, Jonson becomes more tactical. He is content with the fact that the band is playing largely his material, even if the different members develop their own respective parts. And, of course, a heavy metal song cannot be played like a 50’s rock ‘n’ roll tune, so the band sounds more or less as he wants it to. And, in addition, his role as the lead guitarist is never challenged. He is also quite good at finding the chords of tunes from listening to the records, sitting at home with a tape recorder and his guitar, trying to hear how Yngwie Malmsteen plays. He almost always comes to the workshop with some new ideas for a song. Not all of his ideas are worked on, though, and the band, at the time Mats and
Grubbe left, had only three songs ready, having rehearsed those again and again, and they had not been composing new ones from the ideas Jonson brought.

The band has had a trying-out period, during which they play together a lot, learning each other's style of playing and trying out different tunes, sometimes covers, sometimes an idea someone came up with. Eventually, they compose some songs that are then played over and over again, representing a new phase in their development.

As mentioned above, having a song that is of one's own making is an important step in the life of a band. You are on your way to becoming a "real band".

The band in its first form never really left the first phase. They were more of a group of friends whose common denominator was their regular attendance at the youth club. They had different ideas about music that were never really brought out into open conflict or in any discussion on what the band, their band, should sound like. They had started out just with the idea of wanting to play. And not knowing beforehand how the realization of this idea would turn out and develop. But they had no great insight as yet into what it could be like to play rock music together or of the different problems they would encounter. Now, when they had got under way this has led some of them to decide that they want to play in a different way. Grubbe and Mats have left, and the band has reformed.

For Mats, the split is a failure. He had the idea that playing in a band would mean a possibility to actually make music of the kind he himself really liked and he thought it would be easier than it turned out to be. He was the one who had the least experience of playing music previously. He thought that if you just worked hard enough, and did not fool around too much, it would be possible to achieve a good result in the end. He had put in a lot of effort and now he was the most disappointed. He felt he had kept to his part of the deal, he had written the lyrics, and now the rest of them did not keep to their part. His main concern, though, was the writing of the lyrics and he seemed to see the performing as something that should be easy. He did not like the fact that playing, rehearsing and developing the music, had to take so much time. In the workshop, he usually sat and waited for the others to get ready with this or that, but when they finally played, somebody was bound to get lost and play the verse instead of the chorus, or miss his entry. And then they would sometimes start laughing and play some other chords or funny riffs for a while before they returned
to the song they ought to be playing. Mats seldom took part in this kind of "flipping out" but would sigh, and sit quietly until they started playing seriously again. Sometimes he would get angry too, and start yelling at the others. Jonson would be the one to try to get the band back in order, and he was never the one to lose his temper.

Mats, though he has a deep voice and is not afraid to sing out, has not yet developed as a singer and what he wants is to practise. As for playing with Grubbe, Jonson and the others, he lacks the patience, and the understanding of the fact that playing in a rock band means something else for them at the time.

For Mats, this is the end of playing rock music. He never plays again and a couple of months later, in the spring, he tries to sell the white guitar to me for 1000 kronor. He says he needs the money to get his motorcycle on the road.

For Jonson, the demise of the band seems to be no disaster. He is as calm as ever, and in his usual style of avoiding conflict, he never talks about Mats and in particular never about Grubbe. He continues to play at the band’s regular hour, now together with Karlson, Niklas on keyboards and Brunis on bass guitar.

And, they have found a new singer: Svennis, who is one of the regular visitors at the youth club and who belongs to the inner circle of the band members’ friends. He is seventeen, plays no other instrument and has, like most of the others, no formal musical education. He is a heavy metal fan and he is willing to try the singing. It is he himself who has come up with the suggestion, maybe somewhat surprisingly. But it is nothing strange for the lads, though, to let a friend try when he says he wants to, even if he has no musical background. As it turns out, he is quite a good singer, with a strong tenor, and a natural vibrato. He is not afraid to sing out either, even if his first attempts do not sound too good. It also takes a little while before he becomes good, or rather acceptable, at hitting the right key. Even so, in a surprisingly short time, he becomes a good enough singer, well up to the musical standards of the rest of the band.

The name "Angel" now becomes definite. Jonson thinks it is a good name, saying:

\footnote{There is actually a band with the same name, playing in the same genre and with girl members exclusively. They were not widely known at this time, though, and Jonsons’ idea of a name has no reference to that band.}
"well, all bands have names like this, don’t they”

He seems to make no great distinction between names in the heavy metal genre. In heavy metal, there are names alluding to heaven together with names alluding to hell, even if the latter are more common. Hell and Satan are more often mentioned than angels. For the lads at the workshop, these are just names that belong to the style. If you are a heavy metal band, your name and your songs will typically contain these themes. Still, choosing the name Angel does not represent a challenge to anything, even if, in this case, it would be more of a mock-challenge to, for example, the youth club staff.

The name Angel is neutral, it leads to no reactions from anyone (except from Grubbe, who thinks the name is ridiculous, and belongs to the genre “heavy metal in diapers”1). This might be what Jonson wants. He is interested in the music, not in challenging anybody or criticizing anything, and, so it is an expression of his complacent style of avoiding conflicts.

With Svennis, Angel develop a slightly different style of song-making. He likes to sing in English and has, together with Jonson, started to put together English lyrics. They consist, even more, of typical themes and, at times, even direct phrases are derived from other heavy metal songs. This change in language also influences the music. This is still made up by Jonson in the same way as before but the lyrics now consist largely of separate phrases, and do not really tell a story, like Mats’ lyrics had done. Jonson’s style of building a whole tune on two or three riffs, or short phrases, is more consistent with this new style of writing lyrics. Now the singing becomes, more than before, just another instrument.

Svennis uses a piece of paper with the lyrics written on it, and the first few times a new song is played, he sings from the paper, changing the phrases, sometimes putting them in a different order or just changing a word. He does this in order to make the song easy to sing, to articulate certain words better or to be able to hold a note longer because it fits better with the way the guitar is played. He works with the text in order to make it fit musically with the way the other band members play. But he does not interfere with how the others play, rather he tries to fit in the lyrics with the music, never suggesting a change in the way someone else

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1This nickname “blöjhårdrock” is used to differentiate and to mock particular artists who are considered too “soft”. For Grubbe this means a lack of the raw, harsh and fast sound he prefers, and, as he says: "the’re only singing about love all the time"
should strike a chord. At first, he sings the melody following closely the way Jonson plays the guitar. But after about a month of playing together, he starts to develop the melodies, giving the singing a more elaborate role in the band’s music. This makes Jonson, in some instances, start following the singing with his playing, instead of the other way around, as before.

As I see it, this change also makes the music more distinctively heavy metal with a more melodious quality. And if it has been a little rough at the edges before, it now becomes clearly more mainstream to my ears. The final addition of the synth, and the singing in English, gives the band a "thick" sound, maybe more melodious and complicated, but also maybe without some of the force and "rawness" it had from the beginning.

One of the new songs, "Ride the Light" was written by Jonson, with the lyrics developed by him and Svennis in the way described above. Svennis has it written down on the piece of paper which he will use until he has memorized the words. On the paper, the following was written in English:

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looking in the darkness
trying to escape
searching for the capture
to make it away
ride the light
ride the light
wings of heaven
before I make my move
I'd better be shore
I can't make mistakes
the enemy is behind
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In this version, there are two verses and the chorus: "ride the light, ride the light, wings of heaven". The phrase "to make it away" is put in afterwards, to give the first verse four lines so it will synchronize with the music. When played at the workshop, the song can be played with four verses with Svennis repeating the two existing ones.

This text depicts more direct action. The theme of escape, of getting away, is still present, just like in "The Escape", but now with a different feeling; there is an enemy close behind. Here, an actual chase is taking place, not like in "The Escape", where a more metaphorical language was used, giving that song more of a feeling of loneliness, lament and also
anger. In addition, the typical phrases "ride the light" and "wings of heaven" make the whole text become even more a part of the music. They are phrases that sound good and their literal meaning is secondary. The singing in a sense becomes just another instrument in that the voice is treated as a sound and not, for example, used to make the words distinguishable. "Ride the Light" is different to, for example, "The Escape" where a more direct "story" can be discerned from the lyrics. The text of "Ride the Light" is built out of different elements, easily accessible from within the genre and the important thing seems to be that the words sound good together with the music, that the typical phrases give it a certain heavy metal touch. And the escape is an old theme with the band, it is close at hand. If they have had an escape song before, why not have another one? But this time, I would argue, it is not so personal, not so powerful. It is much more mainstream in character.

Lars Keso

Grubbe and Karlson are sitting in the café one afternoon. They are unusually quiet, their heads bent as if in mourning or praying.

"Hey, what's up" I ask, and Grubbe's head turns to me and his face lights up: "It's our punk group", he says, beckoning me to listen.

From the café loudspeakers comes music of a slightly different kind to the music I had heard Grubbe and Karlson play before. This is much more straight rock in four-beat, with three or four chords played fast and with a lot of attack. Grubbe is playing broken chords, not picking or doing any elaborate fingerwork on the guitar. The song has a clear punk sound to it with much distortion on the guitar. Grubbe is singing the lyrics in Swedish, but there are only a few phrases and I cannot discern the words.

Karlson takes the tape and they go back to the workshop where they had recorded the song. They have brought an ordinary tape-recorder and placed it in front of the row of amplifiers and loudspeakers. The recording is surprisingly good considering the circumstances, but it is still somewhat distorted and "fuzzy". Grubbe thinks, though, that it is quite alright, as he says:

"it musn't be perfect".
They start to make a new recording of the song. It is called "The Third Eye" and it has the following content: The "I" in the song is, together with his grandfather, trying to find "the third eye", first on grandfather himself, then on Dad and then on grandma. But, it is impossible for the poor grandfather to understand what they are looking for. Even if the chorus of the song leaves no doubt: "The third eye is on the behind". Grubbe sings the vocals in a low, rather hoarse voice; or rather, he talks and shouts the lyrics rather than sings. This adds to the punk impression of the tune. When they play it, he does not bother much about setting the amplifiers, or for that matter, tuning the guitar, which adds to the fuzziness of the sound. This conveys a feeling of their style; being a little out of tune, and gives the impression that this is not entirely unintended. As if what it is all about is just to go up there and play. To do what you feel like just now, what you think is fun, without bothering about technicalities. It is as if a kind of haphazardness and disorderliness have become the style.

The song has been made up by Karlson as a kind of mock-song. Maybe as a reaction against the more mainstream style of Angel and as if he needs an outlet for something he cannot get by playing with that band. He has not, as Grubbe has, made any decision to leave Angel, although he shares Grubbe's views about the music. He still likes to play with Jonson and the others, and his position of being one of the best drummers at the club is never disputed.

Grubbe and Karlson have continued to play together after Grubbe left Angel. They have been playing for fun, trying out different styles, playing heavy metal riffs, part of the Yngwie Malmsteen classical tune, a children's song and the national anthem in a rock version. When the two of them play together, they almost never talk. They know each other quite well, at first nodding to one another when one of them wants a tune to end, or a change in the tune to take place, without stopping playing or talking about it. Later, they only need some emphasis on certain notes, some special way of playing, to know each other's intentions and their playing becomes increasingly "tight". When Karlson had written the lyrics of the song "The Third Eye", he had no definite idea of how the music should sound. But when they start to play it in the workshop, it is natural to start with a fast rock beat, as this is what they have been playing for a while. For the guitar part, Grubbe uses some of the riffs and combinations of

¹The music and the full lyrics of this song as played at a concert are presented on page 67.
chords he has been playing, and then starts to sing the lyrics, fitting the words to the music. He does not bother much about finding a "singable" melody. Rather, he uses a "talk-singing" style, giving the song a quick pace in the singing too. This gives an impression more of power and drive than of harmony and melodiousness. It sounds more like the punk of the late 70’s, with its style of anger and directness, than the more melodious heavy metal of the late 80’s, even if both the drumming and the guitar playing are somewhat more elaborate than in the original punk style. Grubbe and Karlson are pounding away on their instruments in the punk style, but with more skill, and a more complicated way of playing as in heavy metal. It is more the sound of the tune that is punk with the playing influenced by the heavy metal style, somewhat more complex. They have grown up with this, and have learnt to play in this tradition as it has prevailed in Elmridge for the last five or so years. Now, they are changing to the "simpler" punk-style which is more direct, uncomplicated and with a feeling of playing-for-fun. And with the two styles somewhat merged together.

Their style can be seen as a way of "mocking the genre", of making up songs that are deliberately somewhat ridiculous, and that are not to be taken seriously even if they are presented in the same way as serious songs. Thus, they are commenting on the whole idea of rock music playing, like saying – hey, this is what it’s all about: having fun! The name of the band is derived in a way similar to that of the song. It is a "fun" name: "Lars Keso and the drawer". Lars being a very common Swedish Christian name and Keso being the word for cottage cheese. Then the drawer, as in a chest of drawers, is added.

Grubbe thinks the name sounds good:
“it’s a good name, it doesn’t mean anything”.

It was thought up on the spur of the moment, and decided on unanimously and has never been disputed.

They also have a third member. One of their friends, who comes to the youth club from time to time, plays the bass and they are satisfied with this. No synthesizers, but just, as Grubbe expresses the matter:
"Full volume and full distortion on the amplifiers, and then go!".

One of the most distinctive features of this band is that Grubbe and Karlson start what can only be described as a promotion campaign at the club. They frequently play recordings of their songs in the café and Grubbe is often heard saying: "we’re the best, aren’t we!". Every new song they turn out, they play for friends and in the cafe and their follow-
ing among the visitors increases. During the first months of 1989, they become well-known in the club. They have also created an image for themselves: the band with the filthy lyrics. As Grubbe says:

"Well, when Karlson wrote The Third Eye, everything just started, so he made up our image".

They say that, as they use a lot of dirty language in their everyday conversation, this is also the easiest to use when it comes to writing texts as well. This image also has to do with being offensive as the lyrics soon provoke reactions from the staff.

**Having fun and going for it**

The young people I followed during the first months of my field work at Elmridge youth club are only some of all the visitors who regularly go there. Of the ones who play in the workshop, I have concentrated mainly on: Jonson, Grubbe, Karlson, Brunis, Mats and Svennis. I have come to know them in the café and in the workshop, and I have followed the development of their rock band which was formed in September, after school had started. The boys are all part of a group of neighbourhood friends. Most of them have gone to Elmridge school, but are now at upper secondary school, and they are almost all taking vocational courses. Most of them are seventeen, except Brunis, who is fifteen, and Mats who is twenty. They all met at the youth club, where many of them have spent numerous evenings and afternoons ever since they were fourteen or fifteen, and they are all interested in playing music. Even if some of them have not started playing at the club, they have got most of their musical education there, all except Jonson, who has taken classical guitar lessons. Still, his education in rock music has been largely associated with the workshop. Their musical development has taken place there, from having some skill in playing the guitar or drums, having learnt a few beats and a few chords. Starting to play them together with others, trying out coordination and then trying to make it sound like they want it to sound.
When the lads, as I will call them henceforth1, talk to me about playing music and how they started, they describe an instance remembered or some special feature that can serve to answer my typical question of how they began playing together. The story of how you start with an activity that is important in your life, and which you decided on more or less yourself, is important. Still, it is not an issue talked about in those terms in this context. Nobody within the group discusses how, why, or when they started playing, unless they are asked. There is no preoccupation within the group with issues of how to describe to others what they do, or of talking about how their interest in starting to play came about. Either they already know each other’s stories, having followed it themselves, or it is so self-evident. You start to play because you want to, you feel like it. Jonson’s story of watching rock videos, and wanting to start a band when he was a kid, is one way. Karlson, in turn, says:

"well, I listened to a lot of music and then I wanted to try and play it too", "we started to play the drums 'cos they made a lot of noise"

He and Grubbe have both started at the workshop because it is available. As Karlson says:

"if it hadn’t been for the workshop, I wouldn’t have started playing at all".

Brunis wanted to play in a band, making music himself that sounds good, as does Mats, who even has a clear idea of how it should sound.

The music they had all grown up with is mainly heavy metal, but none of the lads are knowledgeable about its history as a genre, with its roots in the late sixties, and in the rhythm and blues and rock music of that time. They have a very varied knowledge of this, with bands like Led Zeppelin or Deep Purple, which are among the pioneers of heavy metal, hardly ever mentioned at all2.

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1When talking about themselves, Grubbe, Jonson and the others do not use any other denomination than "we" or "us". In order to use a term that can describe this group of young people in this setting without being too abstract, I have chosen "the lads". This concept is also used by Willis (1977) to describe working-class boys in what he calls a school counter-culture. "The lads", though, can take on a quality of seclusion or of a gang in constant opposition to authority. This is not intended here. Rather it is used to describe a feeling of belonging and of relating to the group of visitors as a whole, and to the staff.

2See also Berkaak & Ruud (1992), p. 57-60, who describe a similar way of relating to the history of rock music.
The earliest band mentioned is, in fact, Kiss, the band Jonson had watched on videos when he was thirteen. Kiss originated in the seventies and has always appealed more to an audience younger than the lads. They have an image of "nastiness", with painted faces and black leather clothes, and a singer who has the habit of waving around his extraordinarily long tongue. Among the older lads, Kiss is not taken seriously but is seen as belonging to the category of "heavy metal in diapers", an epithet, as said before, communicating contempt.

The common denominator for the lads at the Elmridge club is that they all think the band should not be too mainstream. But opinions differ as to what this implies. Mats likes "Helloween", a band that has a more elaborate sound, using synths, but still playing with a fast beat and a quite rough guitar. Jonson likes Yngwie Malmsteen, who is the heavy metal equivalent of the rock 'n' roll guitar hero. Grubbe and Karlson are those with the most elaborate views on music. For them, a band should not be taking it "too seriously", and you should be able to hear that in the music. The opposite of being serious is, as they say:

"to have fun". "You can hear directly if they’re having fun, you hear it in the music". They also state that "you shouldn’t be commercial".

To be commercial means to be in it only for the money and only turning out the same kind of music all the time. According to them, this can be seen in lyrics with only "I love you" texts. Thus, being commercial can clearly be heard in the music, just as they say they can hear if the band is having fun or not. One of the bands mentioned as fulfilling the criteria for good music is the American group "Metallica" about which Grubbe and Karlson tell various stories: they only make a record if they feel like it, going to the studio and recording without any elaborate planning beforehand. If they do not feel like recording they just leave without bothering about having booked an expensive studio and losing a lot of money. They are certainly not commercial.

They also like the Swedish group "Ebba Grön", one of the pioneering bands of the Swedish punk movement which originated in the late seventies. And they mention Björn Afzelius, who is more in the protest-song tradition from the "music movement" of the late sixties and early

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1Metallica did at that time have an image of "secrecy". The members were for example never presented with name or picture on the album covers. Their music could be described as a "hardcore" heavy metal. In 1992, though, they had four consecutive hits highly placed in the MTV chart.
seventies. He is still an active part of the Swedish music scene, though, and it is his later style of songwriting that Grubbe and Karlson are referring to.

All these are mentioned together as bands having "lyrics that criticize society", but it is not so much the content of the texts that seems important. It is much more the whole style and the image of the group or singer. They represent a critique against society just because they are not mainstream. They do not take it too seriously and they are having fun. In itself, this is a critique.

In the same sense, Karlson's lyrics in "The Third Eye" can be seen as a critique. It is certainly not mainstream and it is not complacent. To Grubbe and Karlson, the music of Angel has become just that. Singing in English and using too much complicated instrumentation blur the part that is "fun" and maybe has the power to criticize. For Grubbe, this is also an image of Jonson's complacency. Karlson, though, is now a member of both bands. But even though he still likes to play with Angel, and he does not leave the band, his sympathies lie with Lars Keso. And of course, he has founded the band together with Grubbe. Lars Keso is their band and to them it is not mainstream. Through it they can live out the act of not taking it too seriously, and of having fun. This is, to Grubbe and Karlson, what playing in a rock band is all about.

This stance can be said to represent, if not necessarily a pointed critique, some kind of comment on the musical context. The whole concept of Lars Keso, the band's image, can be seen as a comment on the immediate situation the lads live in. As a reaction or expression of the views Grubbe and Karlson hold about Angel and about making music. And it is also a reaction to the youth club, and the youth club staff, as I will describe later on.

Another concept that can be used to describe their views about making music is that of a personal, or an "own", way of being or of doing things. As Grubbe and Karlson often say:

"It's important that it sounds like your own".

This is not only the same as saying that you should have your own style. In addition, it is not only important that you have consciously chosen a genre within which you want to place yourself, but more important still, is to, within the genre, have something which is distinctively yours. This goes deeper than saying that you should not sound like somebody else. Of course you should not do that, unless that is your very point. But instead,
you should be able to show that you are capable of making your contribution, either individually as an instrumentalist, or with a text, or with your image as a group. This is your own way of doing it, which can be a comment on the genre and can also constitute your critique of the genre or of your immediate situation. This might be taking the interpretation too far, as Grubbe and Karlson only say that it should sound your own, but my point is that this expression refers to not only the sound, but also how you play, how you write songs and texts, and how you look and act. This would be a better interpretation of the expression "having your own style" and this is why the lads talk about "ownness". It contains something more.

Jonson, by contrast, never talks in this way, and Mats has been directly influenced by "Helloween" and sees their sound as something to imitate. Both he and Jonson seem to have the attitude that one has to work to get results, Mats with the lyrics, and Jonson with the music. Jonson, at least, views it as a long-term project, having had experience from playing with others. And he has the view that practice and skill give results. He, too, has idols and, like Mats, he uses them as examples, trying to learn something by playing like them. And he himself has learnt to play their songs from listening to records, or learnt from friends. He tries to develop his guitar-playing, and he practises a lot on his own, as well as playing in the workshop. He is the only one who tries to learn the latest, quite difficult, development in heavy metal guitar playing. Playing very fast scales with both hands, on the neck of the guitar, and he is not at all bad at it. The songs he composes, in fact, have a quality of an "own" style, something Grubbe and Karlson are searching for. If Angel has become somewhat more mainstream, it is not because of Jonson. It is more the synth, and the new style of singing, even if that has actually made Jonson change his playing somewhat, and together this makes the band sound more mainstream heavy metal. The simplicity of the original musical idea gets somewhat lost on the way, as they develop it into a more elaborate, more typical, heavy metal tune. The quality of commenting on the genre is not there. Or rather, it is not there yet because Angel has chosen a more difficult genre, and they are still in the process of learning, of "getting in".

In addition, the demands of this genre are higher, as there is so much more to compare with. As it is the heavy metal style that prevails at the youth club, both with those who play themselves, and with the rest of the visitors, that genre is better known. Angel will be compared with other bands and it is easier for Lars Keso to be considered as having a sound of
their own. Angel will have to work harder and become more skilled for this to happen.

Jonson is interested in developing the music through developing his own guitar-playing and he does not interfere so much with how the others play their instruments. The band's songs are developed through playing. They play them again and again during their sessions at the workshop until they are satisfied they "know" the tune. Thus, the Angel members work hard to produce the sound they want, but work at it individually. There is no "director" of the music, but the band members work on their respective parts according to their individual ideas of what it should sound like. Karlson wants a fast rock beat, Niklas, the keyboard player, has a more quiet and melodious streak, and Jonson wants the equilibristic guitar to prevail. Still, they all have a feeling for the collective effort involved. The fact that they all develop their instrumental parts individually does not mean that they have no conception of the whole. Or that they do not care about the end result. It is Angels' way, though, to play the songs over and over again, and the belief is that the band will become "tighter" and play better together. The music will come out right as a result of the effort if they work hard. Still, even if Jonson can be said to be the leading figure in the band, nobody will take any orders from him. And he is wise enough not to give any, even if it is he who tries to maintain order when somebody "flips out". And of course, he makes up most of the music. The point here is that nobody tries to force any musical ideas on anybody else. The collective result, the sound of the band, is really the merging of the individual contributions, and they all have the same goal. To make music they like, and not to take the easy way out, as in a sense Lars Keso has done, not bothering about tuning the guitar, or about rehearsing.

What Angel is doing is taking it seriously. They are working to achieve some end result, even if the goal is not all that clear. Nobody talks about making demo tapes to play to local concert managers, for example. They do talk about concerts, though. That it would be great to play in front of an audience some time. Their attitude is best summarized by Mats' words which I had heard at the beginning of my stay with the band, to "go for it", to try to make it at least up to a point where they have made some music that they themselves like. And to work hard.

To sum up, both Angel and Lars Keso had been formed in the autumn, when school started and people came to the youth club more regularly again. They had started as a group of friends who went there regularly and
had an interest in playing and some ability as well. They had eventually decided to start playing together in the workshop. At first they had tried out different musical ideas, learning to play together, listening to each other. Then making up a song, playing it over and over in order to play it better and better. Eventually, they split up into two bands, realizing that some of them had different ideas about how the music should sound, as well as having completely different approaches towards what playing in a rock band should be like. Lars Keso can be described with the metaphor "to have fun", comprising all the elements described above. For Angel it is "to go for it".

These different approaches to playing rock music can be seen in relation to the broader concept of the Swedish rock music scene and the history of the different genres of rock music in this country. But, more important to this study, they can be seen in relation to their immediate environment. The youth club, the music played in the café, in the workshop. And the people who come there, the other visitors, and the staff. Before expounding on this line of analysis, however, the next chapter will attempt to give a closer description of the two bands at play.
The concert

The lads have taken a few steps towards becoming "musicians". They have reached the point in playing rock music where they are making their own music. Music that complies with the standards of the genre in which they have chosen to place themselves. They are in the process of realizing that there are demands made on them. They become more skilled on their respective instruments and the possibilities of really making their own mark, their own comment, are no longer as remote as they seemed some time ago. About six months after I started following them at the youth club, they start talking about playing at a concert, of going public. From the beginning, this was the only goal they all agreed on. It was one of the big goals, to get a "gig", but they had no real idea about when, or if, this was going to come true. None of them openly stated that they would like to become rock stars one day. The attitude was more like, as one of them put it:

"Well, we'll see what happens, but it would really be nice if...".

Now they are facing a new situation. They have some songs, and thus they have the possibility of going public. This would mean going public and becoming a rock band not only for themselves but for a larger audience. They, who some months earlier could only play a few chords, have now made music similar to the type that can be heard on records bought in record stores. They have made "real" music up to a certain standard they think well worth playing before an audience. This, which had earlier seemed beyond reach, has now become a reality. It was something extraordinary before and, of course, they still do not know what it would be like, but they feel it is within their reach.

I would see this as an instance of socialization into becoming a musician, but not yet a professional musician. Maybe they can be called "music players" or "rock players" as none of them ever uses the word musician or ever discusses the possibility of having music as a profession - something that is still too extraordinary. To become socialized into a kind of musicianship means having an awareness of themselves as a band and as
individual band members. It also means that a musical awareness comprising a stance on what music to play, what image to have, etc. becomes further developed. To be a band becomes part of their identity. As I described in the previous chapter, Lars Keso in particular had started to promote their music by talking about it and by playing recordings in the cafe. But almost all of the lads in the two bands were careful to make sure that it was known at the club that they were playing rock. The moments in the cafe waiting for their respective rehearsal sessions to start were an important situation where they would slowly gather and work themselves up for the session.

**Going public**

At the beginning of March, 1989, the youth club in the suburb adjacent to Elmridge announces plans to organize a rock concert with local bands. The information is spread to the staff of all the youth clubs in town through their regular meetings. The staff at Elmridge approach both Angel and Lars Keso and ask them if they want to play at the concert. There will be seven bands playing and each will get around twenty to thirty minutes' playing time. The club is in the basement of the school gymnasium, and the concert will be held in a room ten metres long and six metres wide. The staff of the club organizing the concert borrow some of the amplifiers and loudspeakers from the Elmridge club, and a small mixer and PA from another club. They have the whole show meticulously planned. They gather the bands together to discuss the concert. They decide on the playing order and then reverse it for the preceding sound-check, so that the band which will play first at the concert will be the one to make the sound-check last, thus playing the concert directly afterwards. This is done for practical reasons and to keep things in order. And thus, the bands will also know when they are due both to carry out the sound-check and to play.

The mixer and the amplifying system are not of top quality and the members of the youth club staff are barely capable of operating them. Still, they have managed to rig up the microphones, connect the cables, and they have put up spotlights and built a small stage at one end of the room.
Angel spend some time on their sound-check. They have problems with the volume and the mixing. Sometimes the sound comes out too weak, and when they increase the volume, the sound becomes too distorted instead. They, as well as Lars Keso, have borrowed the Elmridge workshop instruments, which are acceptable but not of the best quality. The guitars are somewhat difficult to tune properly, and this is also the case with the bass. With the help of one of the leaders, who adjusts the mixer, they get an acceptable sound in the end. The trouble is that the different levels of volume and distortion have to be set on the amplifier, not on the mixer. This means that every band member has to remember his individual settings as everything will change from one band to the next.

Lars Keso come to the sound-check, but the members do not bother too much about it. They take the same instruments Angel have used but they make one change. The bass player leaves the bass and switches to guitar instead, the band’s line up thus consisting of drums and two guitars. They play one song rather quickly, just turning up the amplifiers to almost full distortion, and then they leave the sound-check.

The concert is due to start at 8 o’clock, and at 7.30 the room begins to fill up. There are the youth-club regulars, friends of the other bands and a large number of the youth-club visitors from Elmridge. This is the first concert for both Angel and Lars Keso, and all their friends have come. Grubbe, in his usual style, has advertised the fact that he is going to be on stage, and has thus prepared the audience by talking about the concert in advance at Elmridge. Many of the visitors also know some of the Lars Keso songs, having heard them in the workshop, or having heard about them. Angel’s music is not so well-known beforehand, as there is seldom anybody but the band members in the workshop when they play and they do not talk about it outside the band.

Presenting live: Angel

Jonson and the band come on stage. They all look somewhat tense. They seem concentrated, and do not look at the audience at all while connecting their instruments, except Karlson, who just sits behind the drums and looks at the people, smiles and winks at somebody. Suddenly, before they can start playing, one of the youth club leaders goes up to the microphone and
adresses the audience. She announces that there is to be a short break and
that soft drinks and sandwiches can be bought. Everybody has to leave the
room during the break and this upsets the audience. Someone says "why
the hell do we have to go out", and there seems to be no apparent reason.
Jonson and the others remain on stage concentrating on tuning their instru­
ments.

Niklas is the first to be ready with his preparations and he plays a few
random chords. Then Jonson tries out the volume level on his amplifier
with a single chord. They have not understood that there will be a break
and they are surprised when it is announced, and people start leaving.
They become somewhat put off by this, and Jonson stands and watches
with a surprised expression on his face as the room slowly empties. The
break was planned by the staff for somewhere in the middle of the concert
as they felt it would be suitable with a pause, but it seems the bands had no
clear idea of exactly when it was to occur. And the audience knew nothing
about it at all. Even though it gave Angel some extra time to tune their
instruments, they were not too happy about it. They had come onto the
stage prepared to play, had started to tune and set the levels on the
amplifiers with some care, trying to beat off nervousness, and wanted to
be ready to start with the best possible sound. They continue to adjust the
amplifiers and microphones while waiting and the room fills up a quarter
of an hour later.

Some of the young people from the Elmridge club shout as they enter:
"Svennis, get out" and "throw him out", in a mocking voice, and they start
to laugh and clap their hands.

Jonson looks around to see if the others are ready and then nods to
Svennis. He takes the microphone and says: "well, now we’re gonna play a
tune called The Light".

Karlson counts in by the stroke of four with the drumsticks and they
start to play.

"The Light" is a fast, heavy metal tune with the verse played very fast
and consisting of altogether five chords. Described in a simple chord
analysis the song can be written thus:

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{introduction:} \\
\frac{4}{4} & | & \text{Em} & / & / & | & \text{Em} & / & / & | & \text{Bm} & / & / & | & \text{C} & / & / \\
\end{array}\]
verse:
| Em | Em | Bm | C |
| Em | D | Bm | C |
Chorus:
| Em | D | Bm | C |

The song can also be depicted graphically:

- Intro 8 bars
- verse 12 bars
- chorus 8 bars
- verse 12 bars
- chorus 8 bars
- interlude and solo 4 + 12 bars
- chorus 8 bars

The introduction consists of the four bars played by the guitar in the fast "beating" style, with the drums just beating out the first stroke on bass-drum and crash-cymbal. This is then repeated once more but with the drums falling into the very fast beat used in the verse, playing quavers on the snare drum. After these eight bars, the singer comes in, singing the verse for the next eight bars with the same chords, in the same pattern as before. When the drums start their fast beat, the bass starts playing crotchets and the synth follows with a high organ-like sound.

When the verse ends and the chorus is to begin, Svennis makes a mistake. He repeats the first line of the verse instead of beginning the chorus which is played at a slower pace with the guitar playing a broken chord for the first two bars as the drums are playing crotchets. For the last two bars, the guitar and drums simultaneously increase the beat playing quavers. These four bars are then repeated once and then the verse starts again. For the chorus Svennis, is supposed to sing:

*look out, the light*
*running in the night*
*escape from the pack*

The mistake makes Karlson stop at the first bar, but Jonson quickly understands what has happened and he switches to playing the verse for those four lines. Karlson and the others follow. When Svennis has sung the line he gets to the chorus and they play the eight bars without any problem. But with the next verse the same thing happens again, with the difference that this time Svennis sings the words of the chorus but on the melody of the verse. Jonson does not stop playing the chorus chords though, but repeats the chorus with four extra bars. Karlson, who now is not sure if Svennis
will sing three lines of the chorus or two, just plays the chorus for two lines, which is the correct way. Thus, Svennis and Jonson are on the last, added, line of the chorus when Karlson starts with the verse again. Svennis stops singing and Jonson is now playing the verse without the voice. He starts to play a solo which, considering the circumstances, is quite good. But when they come to the chorus again Svennis is not sure if they are going to continue with the solo, so he misses the first words. Jonson too has held the last note of his solo in order to continue if no chorus will come, and it is Karlson who distinctly plays the beat of the chorus making Svennis sing, but with the solo guitar still playing. Jonson, finds the melody of the chorus and plays it in unison with the singing. After this last chorus, the song ends abruptly without any special finishing touch, just a marked beat on the snare drum and cymbal.

The song lasts one minute and forty seconds and afterwards the reaction of the audience is mixed. Not many have understood what has happened as it really is not too apparent if you do not know the song. It could be heard that something had gone wrong but not many had realized that the band had been completely lost twice during the song. Brunis shakes his head and starts to say something but does not. Jonson looks embarrassed and so does Niklas. Only Karlson laughs a little and Svennis does not seem to bother. He looks happy at being on the stage singing, and he does not quite understand what has happened.

The audience applauds somewhat half-heartedly and some of the Elmridge kids shout and whistle. Rather quickly, Niklas plays a chord on the synth. It is the opening chord of the next song. This makes Svennis say: "now we’re gonna play a ballad called..." but there he gets interrupted by someone in the audience who shouts "Edelweiss". Svennis laughs: "well, yeah... no this one’s called... Flash by Night". "What did you say?" someone shouts and he repeats the name and adds: "a song Niklas wrote".

Niklas has already started to play the introduction of the tune which consists of four chords in four bars played quite slowly and softly on the synth with a pianolike sound. After this, the rest of the band comes in. The guitar playing the same four chords, and the drums in a slow four-beat.

\[ \text{\textbf{\text{\textit{J}}}} = 110 \]

\textbf{introduction and verse:}

\[ 4/4 | Am // | G // | F // | G // \]
Chorus:

| Em / / / | G / / / | D / / / | G / A / |

I--intro 8 bars--I--verse 8 bars--I--chorus 8 bars--I--interlude/verse 4+8 bars--I--chorus 8 bars--I--interlude/solo 4+16 bars--I--chorus 8 bars--I

In this tune, it is the singing that holds up the melody, the rest is accompaniment. If in the previous song Svennis had used the talk-singing style, he can now sing out much more. He holds the tone on many of the vowels and follows the pitch of the chords that falls with the first three chords and rises with the fourth. The lyrics of the song are:

falling, in my love
need you, through the night
far away, in the sky
flying, far from you

far away, in the night
flying on, flash by night

far away, in the night
flying high, flash by night

feeling far behind
need you, touch me now
far away, bells are ringing
for you, and my love

There are no real mishaps during this tune except that they play slower and slower. With every verse the beat slackens somewhat. After the second chorus comes the obligatory guitar solo by Jonson. He plays a slow and melodious solo without any equilibristic fingering. After this, the chorus is repeated once more and then the tune ends quite abruptly having lasted for two minutes and forty seconds.

Afterwards the audience applauds, but during the song whistles and shouts from the kids could be heard. At the very beginning someone in the audience shouts

"how fuckin’ bad!".

All this is said in a supposedly joking manner, but it appears that the audience does not like the performance. They seem uninterested in the music, especially the Elmridge kids who have come to see Jonson and the
others on stage. They too take part in mocking the band, laughing and pointing at them.

Svennis says: "Well, we’ll take a last tune called Flashes in the Night".

This is a typical Jonson tune, based on a guitar-riff that runs through the verse, and then a middle section for four bars. Then a short chorus consisting of the words "Strong and heavy, running in the night". The musical idea is the same as in the last song with a falling pitch in the first three bars and then rising in the fourth. This pattern is then repeated for the whole song. This time, there is no solo, but a break after the second chorus where the drums stop playing and the guitarist play the chords in a somewhat rougher manner. This song takes two minutes after which Svennis says:

"well, that was all".

They turn off the amplifiers, unplug their instruments and leave the stage. The audience is noisy and someone shouts "fuckin’ crap!". Others are shouting and still others applauding.

So, Angel leave the stage after their first concert, having played only three tunes and with the feeling that it did not go too well at all. They do not blame Svennis for what has happened, and they do not talk too much about it. They just comment on the fact that they missed so much in the first tune. How could it happen? Svennis does not say much either, only that he had forgotten the lyrics of the verse and had ended up mixing them up with the words of the chorus.

It seemed to me that all the effort they had invested in rehearsing had come to nothing, maybe they had not realized what being on stage would be like. Before I expound on this issue, though, I will first describe Lars Keso’s performance, then discuss the music of the two bands at the concert and finally comment on the consequences of the concert.

We want Keso! We want Keso!

If the audience wants a show, here it is: Grubbe comes on stage, picks up the guitar and fastens its strap. Then he goes up to the microphone and tests it by letting out a deep grunt. Around his head he has a speckled bandana, and he is wearing a pair of glasses on which he has glued two cardboard cones cut out from an egg-box. The audience greets him with
laughs and shouts his name. He tries the guitar and starts to tune it. It is quite out of tune and it is not really that much better when he is finished. He takes a can of carbonated soft-drink he has brought with him, obviously shaken before hand, and the contents spray out as he opens it. Some of the Elmridge friends clap their hands rhythmically and shout "Grubbe! Grubbe!" with real admiration in their voices unlike the mocking tone they had used with Angel. Grubbe drinks from the can and puts it on top of an amplifier. The other two band members have finished their preparations. Someone in the audience shouts: "come on, come on!", and Grubbe shouts into the microphone: "One, two, three, four!" and they begin the first tune without further ado.

It is a fast rock tune consisting of three chords. It is short, lasts one minute and twenty seconds, and it is played in a more traditional rock 'n' roll style. But it has a harsher, more punkish sound. The guitars are playing quavers with full distortion on the amplifiers, and the drums beat out a fast rhythm with crotchets on the bass-drum and semiquavers on the cymbals. As an introduction, the guitars play the first four bars alone, then are joined by the drums for the next four and after this, the singing commences with Grubbe shouting the words in the talk-singing style. The song has two verses followed by an interlude and solo consisting of a riff, a short phrase played on the guitar and repeated three times in harmony with the chords. Then the chorus follows, played in the same pattern and with the same chords. After this the interlude is repeated and the tune ends. The lyrics of the song are in Swedish.

\[ \text{Intro, verse, interlude and riff:} \]
\[ \frac{4}{4} | \text{F} / / / | \text{Bb} / / / | \text{F} / / / | \text{C} / / / \]
\[ \text{I--intro 8 bars--I--verse 8 bars--I--riff/interlude/riff 4+8+4 bars-I} \]

It started on a Monday morning
I went to school, stood on a bench
then a Greek came up to me
I said: you swine, you swine
It started on a Tuesday morning
I went to school, stood on a bench
then a Turk came up to me
I said: you swine, you swine

you're fat, and I'm not
you're fat, and I'm not
you're fat, and I'm not
you swine, you swine

Det började en måndag morgon
jag gick till skolan, stod på en bänk
då kom det fram en grek till mig
jag sa: ditt as, ditt as

det började en tisdag morgon
Jag gick till skolan, stod på en bänk
då kom det fram en turk till mig
jag sa: ditt as, ditt as

Du är tjock, det är inte jag
du är tjock, det är inte jag
du är tjock, det är inte jag
ditt as, ditt as

The words are hardly audible as Grubbe sings so fast and with a hoarse and loud voice. And also, as the guitars are out of tune, the impact of the song is one of power, rawness and even defiance. Grubbe does not seem to care about what the audience thinks. They clap their hands though, and greet the tune with loud, joyful shouts.

Somebody says "He's so fuckin’ cool", another one shouts "Grubbe", and still another: "Bathrobe, Grubbe, Bathrobe!", which is the title of another song.

"We were gonna play a tune called Jailed" Grubbe says. "Bathrobe" someone shouts but his friend sitting next to him says: "take it easy, it’ll come later". Grubbe continues: "Well, Jailed" and somebody in the audience starts counting in; "one, two...". There are laughs but Grubbe does not mind. He just looks ahead and shouts, "one, two, three, four" and the second song begins.

It starts in the same manner as the one before, with a four plus four bar introduction, with only the guitar playing the first four bars, and then the
drums coming in for the next four. And after this the singing begins. The 
lyrics are about a guy who has become involved with drugs, gets betrayed 
and finally ends up in prison. Here he is, now, repenting, thinking back on 
what he has done.

The tune consists of two verses, an interlude, then another verse. This is 
then followed by an instrumental verse with just guitar and ending with 
another instrumental verse, where the drums come in and play a roll on 
the snare drum with the bass drum keeping the beat in quavers. It has four 
chords and is a short tune, only forty-five seconds. It has the same sound 
as the previous one with Grubbe singing at an even faster speed, making 
the words almost impossible to hear. There is no chorus and no solo. The 
only thing that breaks the pattern is the interlude, but this only consists of 
the guitars holding the chords a little longer, letting them fade out, and the 
drums beating only on the first beat in every bar, for the four bars it lasts. 
The end of the song is abrupt and it is lead up to by the drums playing the 
roll and then the song ends with one extra beat on the first chord.

As soon as the song ends, the audience bursts into applause. They shout 
and whistle, and shouts of "Grubbe, Grubbe!" are heard as well as yeahs 
and wows. Someone shouts for the Bathrobe song, another for a drum 
solo. Grubbe says: "Well, as you wish, here is a song that's been our 
greatest hit so far...Sperm on My Bathrobe!". This is greeted with loud 
acclaim, applause and shouts. He counts in in the usual style and they are 
away:

*I have sperm on my bathrobe
the sperm, it won't come off
why is it only on one side
because I jerk off to my right

My mother has bought herself a new one
I got sperm on mine
and I lie and jerk off
and the sperm gets on my bathrobe

bathrobe – the sperm has to come off
bathrobe – the sperm has to come off
(repeat four times)
Jag har sperma på min badrock
sperman, den vill inte gå bort
varför bara på den ena sidan
därför att jag runkar på min högra sida

Min mamma, hon har köpt en egen
för jag, jag har sperma på min
och, där ligger jag och runkar
och sperman, kommer på min badrock

Badrock – sperman måste gå bort
badrock – sperman måste gå bort
(fyra gånger)

The song lasts for one minute and thirty-five seconds and is similar to the other two, only having a more rock 'n' roll feeling to it. It consists of three chords played in the same pattern throughout the whole tune. There is the usual eight-bar introduction, the two verses, one after the other with an eight-bar interlude played exactly like the verse. Then comes an eight-bar break, with the drummer playing only on the bass and snare drums, beating out the rhythm, and the guitars playing broken chords on the first beat of every bar. Then for the next sixteen bars, Grubbe sings the chorus line repeated four times, the third and fourth without the guitars. And then the song ends with an eight-bar coda, again played exactly like the verse, but of course without the singing.

The response from the audience to this song is even greater than before with shouts and loud noises and a lot of applause. Now somebody starts shouting for other tunes, ”Play Karin!”, but Grubbe retorts ”No, we’ll take that one later”. ”The Eye, The Eye, play The Eye!”, but Grubbe does not answer. He just says: ”Now we’ll play a song called…”, ”Karin” someone interrupts, but he continues, unruffled: ”we’re gonna play a song
called...” and then he mutters a name nobody can hear, doing it on purpose. "What?” come shouts from the audience. Again, he shouts something that is impossible to hear. He counts in and starts playing.

This is a tune no different from the others in style or performance. It lasts one minute and forty seconds and gets the same reception as the other songs did. When it has ended Grubbe says:

"It’s fuckin’ nice if you clap your hands to the songs now...well, you wanted to hear a tune before...The Third Eye”

He counts in and starts to play. This song is played somewhat slower than the others but has otherwise the same sound. It consists of chords played in a more developed pattern than before:

\[ \text{\textbullet } = 176 \]

Introduction:

\[
\begin{align*}
\frac{4}{4} & \quad | \quad D / / / | D / / C# \quad | \quad Cbm / / / | \quad Cbm / / / C# \quad | \quad D / / / |
\end{align*}
\]

Verse:

\[
\begin{align*}
| \quad D / / C# \quad | \quad Cbm / / / | \quad Cbm / / / A \quad | \quad G / / / | \quad G / / G# |
\end{align*}
\]

Interlude:

\[
\begin{align*}
| \quad A / / / | \quad A / / / | \quad D / / / | \quad G / / / | \quad A / / / | \quad D / / / |
\end{align*}
\]

Coda:

\[
\begin{align*}
| \quad D / / / | \quad G / / / | \quad A / / / | \quad D / / / |
\end{align*}
\]

I-introduction 20 bars – I---verse 20 bars---I---verse 20 bars---I-interlude 20 bars---I---coda 20 bars---I

The song lasts for two minutes and twenty seconds, and it has three verses, each followed by a chorus of one repeated line. The lyrics are:

Granddad and I were searching for the eye
when we found it, it was big and brown
oh, oh, oh, it’s my anus
the third eye is in the rear
the third eye is in the rear
Granddad searched for the eye on grandma
when he found it it was wet and deep
oh, oh, oh, it's gotta be the cunt
grandma's eye is wet, large and deep
grandma's eye is wet, large and deep

Farfar och jag skulle hitta ögat
när vi hittade det så var det stort och brunt
oh, oh, oh, det är ju mitt anus
tredje ögat sitter ju där bak.
tredje ögat sitter ju där bak

Farfar skulle hitta ögat på farmor
när han hittade det så var det våt och djupt
oh, oh, oh, det måste vara fittan
farmors öga är stort, våt och djupt
farmors öga är stort, våt och djupt

These are the first and last verses; for the second, Grubbe repeats part of the first and just hums some parts. It is not the same verse I have heard the last time in the workshop. Either he has changed something or forgotten some of the words. After the second verse comes an instrumental section where Grubbe hums the melody, and when he comes to the chorus he shouts: "Well, then, clap your hands!". Immediately Karlson stops playing on the cymbal, and starts to beat out a clapping-beat on the snare and bass drums instead. The audience start to clap their hands to the beat and continue to do so until the end of the song.

When it is finished and the usual acclaim has died down, Grubbe says: "Well that was our last tune, now we’ll do a tune for the audience, it’s called Karin!". The people in the audience who have previously called for that tune now rejoice, shouting "Karin, who?", "What Karin?". Grubbe just counts in for this last song and starts playing.

Karin is a fast rock 'n' roll tune, actually a twelve bar blues, with three chords in a pattern of:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textbf{\alone}=195} & \\
\text{4/4} & \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \\
\text{\alone} & \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \\
\text{\alone} & \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \\
\text{\alone} & \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \\
\text{\alone} & \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \text{\alone} \\
\end{align*}
\]
This is played on the guitars in the traditional style of alternating bass notes of the chords, which would have given the tune a blues feeling if it were not for the speed with which it is played. The lyrics are:

Karin, I'm jerking off on my bed, Karin
Karin, I'm coming, Karin
Karin, Karin, Karin

Karin, Karin, fuck Karin
Karin, sit on the finger, Karin
you, you, you

Karin, jag runkar på min sång, Karin
Karin, jag kommer, Karin
Karin, Karin, Karin

Karin, Karin knull Karin
Karin, sätt dig på fingret Karin
du, du, du

After having sung this, Grubbe shouts "Solo!" and starts to play a short solo on his guitar. He does not manage to hit too many right notes and the solo sounds terribly out of tune. He stops playing and shouts "Come on then, you lazy bastards!" and the audience starts clapping their hands again. Some have been clapping throughout the whole song but Grubbe wants to get the whole audience on their feet. When the tune ends and the applause starts he says "Thank you", and the three of them simply unplug their instruments and leave the stage.

The audience continues to clap for a while and some of the young people comment on the performance. Some are shouting: "Well done, Grubbe!", others are heard saying "Fuckin' good!" and one boy, not one of their closest Elmridge friends, says that: "that was the best ever played in this town!". Another boy shouts "Grubbe Meduza!" comparing him with the Swedish rock singer Eddie Meduza who is known for his songs and, particularly, for his lyrics, that go somewhat in the same style as Lars Keso’s.
Grubbe, Karlson and their friends are satisfied with the concert, they feel it has gone surprisingly well considering that it was the first time. Grubbe says that he had been nervous beforehand, so much so that when he had taken the soft-drink can his hand had shaken and the drink had sprayed all over the place. I, though, had the impression that he had done it on purpose since he did it on stage for everyone to see. It was not necessarily planned, maybe thought up on the spur of the moment but still, it fitted in with the show.

Angel music

The songs Angel played at the concert have already been described as leaning towards what can be called a more mainstream-oriented style. The lyrics are based on pre-existing themes and the music, with the addition of the synth, leans towards a more melodic sound. The songs, even if they have the Jonson touch, conform to a simpler way of making heavy metal music. They consist of an accompaniment of simple chords on the synth, the bass guitar adding a beat on the first note of every chord, and the guitar "filling in" the chords with the fast-played "beating" style, as I have called it. The only exception to the mainstream style is Karlson's drum-play. He often tries to increase the pulse by using a more complicated pattern of drumming, almost approaching the style which is most novel within the genre "trash metal". There, the drums are played so fast that the sound melts into a compact wall of sound. Now, at the concert, Karlson has not been able to use this style so much and, instead, has kept to the mainstream style. Especially in the ballad where it even looks like he is playing without enjoying it. He has an almost apathetic look on his face and is not so engaged in the playing as he was when playing with Lars Keso. Still, in the other two songs his drum sound contrasts just a little with the style of the others.

The lyrics of these two faster tunes are notably alike. They are centred around the same themes and sometimes even contain the same lines. The phrase "running in the night" seems popular with Jonson and Svennis. Of course, the lads' knowledge of the English language is limited, so the easiest strategy at hand is to take the "ready-made" elements from the genre they already know and build the lyrics on them. This way of
forming the text also gives it a quality of coherence. It seems "real" in the sense that it is very much like the lyrics of the music of their idol bands.

The theme of escape seems to prevail as it is present in every other tune. It depicts a situation where someone is chasing you, where you have to run away from something, often in the night. Also related to this seems to be more "mystic" themes; the light, the pack, the flashes that bring to mind not only a picture of urban jungles, but also a kind of Tolkien-like world. The mystic element also means that Angel’s music loses the quality of directness that Lars Keso’s music has and that was present in the first tune, The Escape. The music does not depict feelings that can be seen as directly experienced. Still, a more metaphorical language is used and does convey feelings, for example, of being chased.

This technique of creating the text, which could be called "brick-laying", might lead to the conclusion that the words, or phrases used in the lyrics, are equivalent to chords played on the guitar, and such a comparison is not out of place. The lyrics have their place in the song as a sound, not as a message. But there is still a kind of story that unfolds in the lyrics. The writer succeeds in putting together a story that holds together. At least enough for it to form a part of an acceptable, if very typical and mainstream, heavy metal song. Given the circumstances that the writer is a seventeen-years old native Swedish speaker who was never very good at school, it is quite an achievement.

The ballad; "Flash by Night" is the song with the most coherent lyrics. It was made up by Niklas, and has been included for a specific reason. When they have to decide what tunes to play, they discuss the necessity of having a ballad. This reflects some ideas on how to put together an acceptable programme for a rock concert.

Jonsons argument is that:

"well, you’ve got to have a ballad"

a slow tune in between the faster ones, that breaks the pattern and makes a contrast.

The song is a love story, or rather a story of longing for love. It is still written in the same manner as are the rest of the Angel songs. When studying the lyrics, one can almost see how they are put together. Each line consists of two phrases, almost stereotyped but fitting together to form

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1Compare Fornäss et al. (1988), p. 228, who also describe this technique but call it "bricolage"
a coherent line, for example, the line "need you, through the night". Furthermore, each single phrase corresponds to a chord in the music. With every other bar there is a new chord and a new phrase in the text. This, then, influences the singing-style which, too, conforms to this pattern. Singing the two syllables of the first phrase, then making a pause for breath, when the chord changes, and continuing with the three syllables of the second phrase of the line. This is repeated throughout the song and the note is held a little longer on the last syllable of every line. Only the next to last line has one syllable more, but there the word "ringing" is sung a little faster to conform with the rest.

Again, the theme of the song relates to the escape theme. They both have to do with being alone, and being away somewhere, or, at least, a feeling of being an outsider. In the Angel lyrics, a more metaphorical language is used with expressions like "flashes in the night", and "run through the night prevailing". It is a more abstract language than the language used in their earlier songs from the period before they formed the band. As will be remembered, the first song "The Escape" (with Swedish lyrics) was much more outspoken with its expression of anger and feelings of being outcast. Still, similar themes are there in the most recent songs too. The ballad, "Flash by Night" even ends in a way similar to "The Escape", except that a happier ending seems to be within reach and the suicide theme is not present. Instead there are bells ringing, even if they are far away, making the ending uncertain but leaving a feeling of hope. The lyrics of the two songs share a striving towards the theme of waiting for the unknown future, the future as it should be; the first song containing a more angry feeling of unjust treatment, the other a longing for love, but both containing the same theme of loneliness, and of waiting. A waiting for something else, something which you cannot control or influence yourself. Of growing up, of coming of age.

In contrast to the Lars Keso texts, though, the Angel lyrics do not have any immediate impact at the concert. As they are sung in English, they are more or less typical of the genre and also quite difficult to hear. This is no surprise. None of their friends in the audience had expected very much else, and the lyrics, and songs as a whole, do not communicate anything unexpected. People are there to see how Jonson and the others will manage on stage, not to hear their favourite music played. And, of course, as a

1See also Fornäs et al. (1988), p. 215.
show, which is supposed to generate a good contact between the band and the audience, the Angel performance was a failure.

None of the band members had successfully envisaged beforehand what it would take to do a good show at the youth club concert. Consistent with their approach of working hard, and of going for it, was their absorption in creating and rehearsing the songs, wanting them to sound as good as possible.

So, at one level of analysis, the Angel music can be said to contain certain themes that run consistently through their whole production. A certain picture emerges of their lyrics, as described above, that has features in common with their older style of writing, even if it is not as direct or angry as before and is dominated by the theme of escape.

On the level of the music as part of a performance, another picture emerges, one of how the music "works" in an immediate music situation before an audience, how it is played and how it is received in the specific context. Here, the lyrics are not so important or, rather, they seem to fail to make an impression on the audience. Neither does the music, and the whole performance is a failure.

A point here is that an analysis of a song or a text gains by knowledge of the situation in which it is created and performed. Similarly, a sociological analysis gains by knowledge of the specific musical qualities discussed within a musicological analysis1. The music of Angel does convey an insight into the youth situation; the theme of escape and the feeling of being outside, of waiting that are present in the lyrics.

Thus, to summarize, the approach to playing music, "to go for it" that Angel have displayed has not enabled them to present a successful show at the youth club. Rather, they have been too preoccupied with the music itself, missing what could have been a new phase in their life as a rock band. They have not become a "concept", "Angel – the heavy metal band", to their friends at the Elmridge club. In the following months, nobody talks about the band at the club.

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1See, for example, Fornäs et al. (1988) or Cohen (1991), who both manage to give insightful analyses from different perspectives.
Keso poetics

As described above, the Lars Keso performance was a success as a show. It is the lyrics of the tunes that are a significant part of this success, but more as a display of daring than a musical achievement. It is this daring attitude, together with the "filthiness" of the texts, that is the mark they have made. Their approach of having fun is more appropriate to this kind of concert, and it enables them to make good contact with the audience. And, they become a legend at the Elmridge club, not only with their friends but also with the staff of the club.

Their songs reflect well their style and attitude of trying to create simple tunes. Of using a few chords that are repeated in all the songs, and being more interested in creating a contact with the audience, of making a brawl and "having fun".

The sound of the tunes is reminiscent of the punk era, the late seventies, and its foremost Swedish proponent, the band Ebba Grön. The way Grubbe plays the guitar is very much in this spirit and only Karlson's drum-playing differs slightly. He plays in the more elaborate way of the heavy-metal style, having developed it to go with the Lars Keso music. In his style he is somewhere in between Angel and Lars Keso.

The songs are the results of musical ideas that came up while playing. In the workshop or at home, Grubbe and Karlson separately or together, try out different chords and riffs and put together a tune. The words are sometimes thought up on the spur of the moment, only to be changed, added to or discarded as the song is played. Or, the lyrics are thought up by one of them alone, usually Grubbe. The first tune they made up, though, "The Third Eye" was, as described earlier, composed by Karlson, and in this case the words preceded the music.

The first song at the concert is a Grubbe tune. It depicts a rather vivid, public, scene involving as themes both racial problems and personal ones. The setting is the school, maybe on a dull "Monday morning", where something "starts", presumably the same weary routine, the same kind of standardized life. Then, when something happens, a "Greek comes up", the "I" in the song reacts by calling him a swine. The same is repeated the next morning except that it is a "Turk" who comes up this time.

There are few racial problems in the town at this time, though. There are very few immigrants living in the suburb of Elmridge and there are not many in Grubbe’s school. In the lyrics, he is perhaps reflecting a more
general feeling of suspicion towards strangers and immigrants that prevails among the young people at the youth club. The jargon is filled with nicknames and sometimes almost proverbial phrases involving immigrants.

The song, though, cannot be said to be an anti-immigrant piece in the sense that it bears a strong, conscious message of certain groups being inferior to others. But, of course, this interpretation can still be inferred. The immigrant theme is handy and Grubbe here creates a contrast and a conflict designed to depict the feeling with which the song ends, one that is more personal. Grubbe, who is quite fat, turns the problem around in a typical way by saying that: "you’re fat, and I’m not". Just like in the case of the filthy language, he picks themes that are handy, themes typical of everyday life, and of his situation. Grubbe and Karlson say they use dirty words in their lyrics because they often use them in their everyday language and the themes in their lyrics can be more or less lived. And, also, they have chosen a musical style where this way of writing is appreciated.

The next song they played, "Jailed", is an example of what they, with a touch of irony, call "serious" texts. In this case, it is about narcotics and when asked about it, they readily expound on the message as a call to "stay away from drugs". In the context of the youth club, this is a well accepted topic by the staff in contrast to the other Keso songs; the staff has reacted negatively to some of the other lyrics, actually threatening to take measures against the band in the form of temporary expulsion. Now, with this song, the criticism is silenced. Still, the lads do have definite views on drugs and are against them. In fact, they are emphatic on this point. Still, the song is aimed at waving off the moralists.

Serious texts, for Grubbe and Karlson, almost become satire. This satire comprises the use of more generally accepted topics that can be part of popular debates or youth club policies. With "Jailed" the topic of drugs is used in the sense the youth club staff wish it to be. But the playing of this song becomes a satirical comment on this topic as its main purpose is to silence the criticism of the band’s other texts. They are not lyrics they would normally write. These themes are also more abstract than the usual Lars Keso style, with its directness and sense of defiance. They are not so much about life, or at least, not their lives, but fit more into a style of conformism and compliance with the staff’s ideas of what the band’s music should be like. Drugs are certainly not widespread in Elmridge, and when Grubbe and Karlson describe the situation they say:
"the only drugs here are beer and snuff".

The anti-drug propaganda among the young in schools and in youth clubs has been important and massive in recent years and it has created the theme of the anti-drug song used by Lars Keso in "Jailed", and it is perfect for fending off the critics.

The next song, "Sperm on My Bathrobe", describes a more homely domestic scene and it draws again on the personal style of writing that is the hallmark of Grubbe and Karlson. The theme of masturbation is prevalent. It is presented with black humour, and it is brought out into the open. It even involves the character of the mother, inferring her knowledge of the Bathrobe, hinting that it was originally hers as she felt compelled to buy a new, clean one. The lyrics also play with the theme of shame in emphasizing that the stains "won't come off". And it "has to come off", but still in the defiant style typical of Grubbe. As if saying: it would be best if it could be cleaned up and hidden, but as it cannot, well, we shout it out openly instead. It has the typical directness that gives a sense of lived reality in the song, like writing about a personal experience, and of the reaction and feeling that comes out of that.

In this, it differs from "The Third Eye" which is more of a fantasy story, though it too has a connection with real life in the selection of characters, Karlson's grandparents. The same sense of humour is present here, added to which is a sense of mock-mystery. The title "The Third Eye", and the concept of searching for it, pertains to a notion of there being some hidden mystic theme. But this is then quickly turned into a more prosaic notion, the eye turning out to be a metaphor for other bodily organs.

With the song "Karin" they return to the theme of sex and masturbation, this time with a definite object. Karin is a girl known to some of the Elmridge lads, though it is unclear exactly who the name of the title refers to. The song describes both the act and the fantasy having served as the inspiration for it, and it ends with the defiant line "sit on the finger". Again, it has the humorous slant, though more aggressive and abusive, and it has a feeling of self-assurance and daring. Like being able to bring out into the open all your sexual thoughts, and overcoming the shyness and the usual taboos this is normally associated with. And, having done this, you come out with the feeling of being on top. Judging by the audience's

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1As will be remembered, Grubbe lives alone with his mother and younger brother.
reaction, this is exactly what Grubbe has done. The comparison made by someone in the audience with Eddie Meduza was not out of place as he has used certain themes similar to those of Lars Keso. He too uses masturbation in one song but not in the same way as Grubbe does. Not in the direct sense, only in the imperative, not so much involving himself as the agent but more calling upon others to act. Grubbe, who has written most of the songs, is more personal in his songwriting, displaying both courage and a good sense of humour in going public.

The themes used by Grubbe and Karlson in their songwriting are not very common in the youth-club context, and they have a definite connection to personal life and lived reality. They use themes prevalent in everyday life. And themes related to the youth club life with their friends and with the reaction of the staff as an important factor to be dealt with, as in the anti-drug tune.

**Failure at the local scene**

For Angel, the concert was really a failure. Going public would be a kind of proof that they really were a band, that they could stand up to the demands of the genre, and, to the demands of an audience. As Jonson had once put it:

"that's what you fight for at rehearsals – to play at a concert"

They had hoped, and thought, that they had the skill, and the musical material, that would enable them to go on stage. At least they had wanted to try. But they had failed.

I would argue that the preparations and rehearsals they had been engaged in prior to the concert and, also, their whole style of playing alone in the workshop without letting their friends in, had made them ignorant of the audience. They had played at a concert, but not for an audience and had not thought at all about what it could mean to be in front of one. At the concert, they were dressed in their everyday clothes, hardly looked anywhere except at each other or at their instruments, and they hardly moved on the stage. Thus, they had no real stage show. Only Karlson, who has a different approach, had been "cool" behind the drums. Their friends from the Elmridge club had come to see something else. They had come to see their friends for the first time in an unusual,
exceptional situation – on stage. Their friendly, or mocking, shouts seemed more designed to comment on that fact. Like saying "hey, you’re still one of us, the gang from the Elmridge club, now let’s see if you can become something else". Angel’s music and their show, the appearance as a whole, was not enough to rise above that preconception. The extraordinary event that a success would still have meant did not become reality, this time, and they are still just Jonson, Svennis, Brunis, Niklas and Karlson to their friends, not Angel, the heavy metal band.

It is not that Jonson and the others have misunderstood the audience. Rather, it seems to me that they simply had no adequate conception. For them, it is the music that is important, to be well-rehearsed and prepared. Now, even that had been somewhat of a failure with the mistakes in the first song, even if they did not realize that not many in the audience had really understood how big a mistake it was. No one in the audience had commented on it, but for the band this was the immediate reason for the failure and it was about this mistake that they constantly talked the rest of the evening.

The music in itself has not been enough to attract interest. Even if two of the songs have the Jonson touch, this does not stand out and even if Angel is moving towards its own, distinctive, style, they are still a mainstream band and, as such, not a very good one. And, additionally, the youth club context, and the audience, does not seem to appreciate the situation. They want a show, Angel wanted confirmation. For them the scene is too local, their appearance there has been a failure. The audience has not understood or appreciated it.

All the hard work had come to nothing. Angel had made no positive impression, no comment on anything, except maybe on themselves. They are still the Elmridge club friends that have barely started playing the guitar. They are not a real band yet. Nobody has seen them as such, and they themselves have not been able to grasp what it would take to become one in this context.

**Success?**

The Lars Keso performance had been a great success. The audience had wanted a show and they had got it. There had been expectations from
many of their friends who already knew some of the songs and the band had been able to satisfy them. And many of those who did not know the band beforehand still seemed to like the performance. If a large part of the audience consisted of the Elmridge youth club friends having come to see Grubbe do something extraordinary, this is, in one sense, exactly what he had done. The reaction expressed in the statement from someone in the audience that "this was the best ever played in this town", can be said to refer to the daring and defiant attitude that the band had shown by playing these kind of songs at this kind of a concert. The youth club staff are not likely to approve of this kind of lyrics, even if they had not said anything. And, to stand up in public and sing about the things Grubbe had just sung about, is really an achievement in the eyes of their friends. Even if it may not be directly or consciously designed to annoy the youth club staff, it can still be perceived that way. Their friend's reaction is a recognition of the feat the band has performed, of their daring to publicly perform in this way in this situation.

This feat begins to take on almost mythical proportions among their friends. The show has been a success in the sense of having been a good show, but it also pins down Lars Keso as being "the band with the filthy lyrics". And the band which will always be connected with something funny. They have a particular expression of their own in the sense argued for above, especially in the way the lyrics are conceived. Even if this style is certainly not unprecedented, it is a while since anything like this had been heard, and never before in the youth club. Their expression, though, is seen by the audience as directly relating to the youth-club context. It is the fact that they dare to sing these kind of texts that is attractive. The way of actually uttering words like "sperm" or "jerking off" is the important feature, not only the musical qualities of the songs. At least, this is how the audience's reaction can be interpreted. What stands out as being novel and worth noting is, for example, the mentioning of masturbation in a text of this kind.

As this is the band's very first concert, it in a sense determines how they will be looked upon in future. And, it is the fact that they dare mention certain things that has caught on, but not necessarily as a conscious statement, or style of the band that would merit a comparison, for example, with some of the better bands in town. They are not seen as a protest band like those of the late sixties and early seventies, or as a punk band of the late seventies. They are still the friends from the Elmridge
club, just like the members of Angel were. One difference is that Lars Keso is now seen more as a real band, a band that is defined in a particular sense in the context. Even if they are seen as daring, they are more like clowns than protesters. The expectation when they play is that something funny will happen.

Lars Keso has made a show of it and has succeeded, but maybe at a cost. Their style is "to have fun", and they have had fun. But whether they can establish themselves outside the youth-club scene, when their friends are not there to cheer them, remains to be seen. For the moment, though, they are quite content with what they have achieved. They too express the view that the concert is the real objective of their efforts in the workshop and want some confirmation as a public band.

For Grubbe, this confirmation is in part achieved by the personal response he has enjoyed from the audience, even if he had taken a somewhat mock-angry attitude in the beginning. He had managed to get them going, clapping in time with the songs, and cheering, as they heard the words. He had got shouts of recognition and expressions of admiration afterwards. Still, the musical style has not received much comment, people had clapped their hands because they liked the show and because Grubbe had told them to. They had not done so spontaneously at the sound of the music itself, even if the tunes had been easier to follow and more accessible than Angel’s songs. In one particular sense, Lars Keso’s music can be criticized, just like their style compared with Angel’s can be seen as taking the easy way out. They do not put that much effort into making up the songs, wanting them to be more spontaneously created, just like they make a point of not tuning or soundchecking properly. The approach of having fun is in this sense easier than that of going for it. It is also more easily accessible for an audience and thus, also somewhat opportunistic. Still, it can also be argued that choosing a genre that has not been popular at the club for many years is quite daring. So this critique might be a little unfair. They have chosen their style because they like to play that way, not to win any cheap points. And, the music is most certainly part of the show. It has worked better than the Angel songs as a performance, and this is also how it is meant to be. The style of "having fun" does not require any musical excesses or equilibristic solo-playing. It thrives on drive, loud volume and speed, all criteria which had been met in the Lars Keso show.

Now Lars Keso has established itself as a band, though with a special mythology surrounding them and binding them to the particular context as
described above. They have actually taken one more step than Angel has done, but the question is in what direction this step will lead.

Interlude

In the months following the concert, both bands continue to play at the workshop, Lars Keso as before, in their style of having fun. For Angel, though, the aftermath of the concert means some definite changes that are to be significant for the future of the band. Svennis leaves the band soon after the concert. He has been asked to sing with some friends who play in a heavy metal band on its way to becoming more established on the music scene of the town. They had heard him with Angel and liked the way he sang, and so asked him to join them since they were without a singer at that point. And he readily accepts and thus leaves Angel. Also Niklas, the keyboard player, leaves as he feels somewhat of an outsider and also does not really want to put in so much time with the band. He seems to feel that it is not that important. Svennis on the other hand is exuberant with joy and feels proud at having been asked to join a band he considers more advanced and better than Angel. A real band.

Jonson takes the departures with a mild panic that soon settles into a reluctant acceptance of the state of things. He is not the one for openly expressing feelings, but rather wants to get on with what there is.

What has happened is actually not unusual in the life of a band, with new members taking the place of old ones, and changes occurring all the time\(^1\). Instead, new roles are imposed on the remaining members. Jonson becomes more introvert and concentrates on his guitar-playing and on creating new riffs and musical ideas even more than before. Brunis now takes up the guitar, and so the band again has to be without a bass player. He becomes more and more active and is often the one to insist on playing when the rest are tired and want to go home. He has also started singing and his guitar-playing is developing rapidly. He has become very skilled at accompanying, and he has developed a distinct sound that resembles the punk style of playing with the more harsh and raw sound quality. This

\(^1\)See also Berkaak & Ruud (1992), for example p. 63, who emphasize the manifoldness in contrast to unity as a better term to understand rock band playing.
gives the band back some of the feeling they had from the beginning, making Jonson come up with more rockish themes and riffs too. Also, the exclusion of Niklas’ synth means a step in this direction.

The spring of 1989 becomes a period of rehearsing and playing in the workshop. No new concerts are planned for either of the two bands. For Angel, it means writing new songs and developing a new, slightly different, sound. Lars Keso continue in the style that they have had from the beginning. The workshop is the lads’ most common musical context and it was there it had all started. It was through the workshop that the bands had been consolidated and formed. And it is there I have followed them most of the time. I also start to play the bass now and again with Angel, learning the new songs as they develop and taking a more active part in the life of the band. Jonson and Brunis seem quite happy with this arrangement as it provides them with a bass guitarist. It makes the sound of the band thicker and allows them to concentrate on the guitar-playing. Karlson does not seem to mind either. He is playing on in his usual style, apparently more contented with the new, more raw sound of the band.

With Lars Keso I sometimes sit and listen and make recordings of their songs, but I never play with them except occasionally with Grubbe or Karlson separately.

The workshop sessions – Angel at work

Jonson has by now, in May, 1989, composed some new songs and the band members have refined them in their usual fashion. Each member plays his instrumental part, developing it as they go along. The sound of the tune changes every time it is played. And after a while, when they feel they have found a satisfying way of playing, the tune is seen as finished. In the beginning, Brunis has some difficulties with his singing but becomes better and better in the next few months. His voice is quite thin and he shouts the words more than singing them. He does not have the deep voice of Mats or Svennis, but then he is only fifteen years old at this time. He plays the guitar and sings simultaneously, something that he masters after a month or so of practising.

They have now been playing for almost a year, and they know each other quite well, both personally and as musicians. The workshop sessions
have developed a certain pattern. They usually start in the same way every time and also end in a similar fashion. A routine has developed that is in a sense time-effective, but it is also to some extent quite wearisome to some of them.

They only meet during the regular booked rehearsal period, Tuesdays from 6.30 to 9 in the evening. Jonson is seen less often at the youth club and thus does not participate in any non-planned sessions where Karlson and Brunis more often play together with Grubbe instead. The band gathers in the café half an hour before to have a cup of coffee or a soft drink. Jonson usually arrives just ten minutes or so ahead of time, and sits down together with the others.

Angel, after the first concert and after the changes they have subsequently undergone, are, as I see it, now trying to consolidate their style. They are trying to find a new, or better, way of making music. Still, some of the problems persist and Karlson seems more and more dissatisfied even if he continues with the band. Jonson continues to compose his riffs and tunes, and he has started to move back to the style the band had in the beginning with the more straight, power-rock approach. The one who seems the most enthusiastic, though, is actually Brunis. He is the most zealous and even starts to take over Jonson’s role as the one who tries to keep the session in order and get the others to practise the songs and not flip out. He is also the one who has to learn the remaining old songs as well as take part in developing new ones.

In the wake of Brunis’ taking a more active role, Jonson becomes more of a spectator when it comes to organizing the playing. He is satisfied with playing his part and developing his songs and solos.

The sessions start with the tuning of the guitars and amplifiers, something that can take some time. Sometimes it goes on for twenty minutes or so, as Jonson and Brunis try to get their guitars tuned in unison and Karlson in the meantime gets more and more impatient, banging away on the drums. As a result, he, of course, disturbs the others and prolongs the whole affair. Due to the inferior quality of the youth-club guitars, the tuning is never perfect. Jonson is never really satisfied and always tries to get it better. When he has tuned the last string the first will inevitably have gone out of tune, and in trying to get that one right, he will most often change the whole tuning of the guitar. Brunis then has to begin all over again on his guitar, in order to get the two instruments in tune with each other. Brunis is most often content with less than perfect tuning, anxious to
get started. He wants to play the songs and seems to be happy with the situation, at last playing with a band. And a band that has existed for a while, has played a concert and has some material he can learn and play. He, too, likes the more straight-rock style that Karlson has always favoured and that Jonson now seems to approve of more than before.

The tuning continues with Jonson or Brunis hitting a chord on the guitar to see how well tuned it is. They have a favourite chord that they change with time and it is usually the first chord of a song they are currently rehearsing. This also indicates that they want to start playing that song when the tuning is finished. Sometimes they start on different songs and then a minor battle ensues about which tune to play. Sometimes this is settled by Karlson playing the drumbeat of one song or another. The one he feels like playing first. When Jonson has made up a riff at home he will start the tuning with this, making the others curious and eager to learn. He then continues until Brunis has tuned his guitar and learns the riff by looking at him, trying to find the notes or chords. In the meantime, Karlson starts a beat he thinks suitable. Thus, the tuning automatically progresses into song-playing without any discussion. Often, they play one of the old songs this way, as a kind of warming up, or getting into playing. Sometimes, instead of a song, they improvise for two or three minutes on a simple theme with two or three chords.

This is inevitably followed by a moment of indecision where a discussion can break out about what to do next. This discussion is not only conducted with words but also on the instruments. The issues are which song to play and also if they should try to compose a new one instead. One of them starts playing the song he has been propagating for and one of the others can agree or disagree by falling in with the song or by sabotaging it and playing another one instead. Brunis is the one who wants to play the old songs most. He is in the process of learning and he feels the need to play them over and over.

He often says "let's take all the tunes so we remember them", and this is the way it most often turns out.

The opposition from the others is more on a joking level, no one will stress the issue or fight at any length. It is, rather, a way of determining the routine of playing. Jonson, though, does not care in the same way as before. As he had at the time of the concert. His effort is not half-hearted but he does not have the same drive anymore, he does not talk about concerts but sees the workshop sessions as the only life the band can have.
So, the rehearsing part of the session consists of playing through of all the songs at least once. Sometimes, two or three tunes are played twice or even three times. The few verbal comments during this time are restricted to commenting on the playing.

At the end of a tune, when Karlson and Jonson are unsure of how to end because Brunis makes no clear sign when he intends to stop, Jonson says "oh, is it finished? Which one is it you go down on, is it this one?"

He plays the chord he thinks Brunis should have played more markedly, thus making it clear that the song should end after that one. And he continues:

"I was waiting for that one all the time" and Karlson agrees, "so was I".

This just provokes a nod from Brunis, making it clear that he will play it like that the next time, and they move on to the next tune.

During this period, they compose five new songs similar to the old ones in style, but different in sound. This is, of course, due to the changes the band have undergone and, as mentioned above, to Jonson’s somewhat new orientation. Back to the original style of the straight-rock approach. In the lyrics, the same themes as before dominate with the inevitable escape tunes, "Escape from Violence" as one example. The texts, though, are never developed into a whole, coherent, song but consist, even more than before, of loose phrases which Brunis repeats to make up a full song. These phrases are also changed many times and so it is difficult to give an example of a whole text. Thus, with time, the phrase "I had an evil dream, in the night" gets reduced to "evil dream, the night" as Brunis changes it to fit the melody better. As he sings he puts more emphasis on the word "evil" and holds both syllables longer, reducing the phrase in order to make it sound more to his liking. The music always comes before the lyrics, and only when they get sufficiently far into a new tune do they start to think about the words for the lyrics.

The rehearsal of the songs lasts an hour or more. Sometimes it leaves them satisfied and sometimes not, and the mood for the day can vary. Sometimes they get stuck on some part, starting again on a song where someone makes the same mistake over and over. At other times, the rehearsal goes smoothly and leaves them with a feeling of satisfaction. On a bad day, the session usually ends here, with everyone agreeing to stop or with one of them, most often Karlson, rising abruptly to leave, saying: "alright, that’s it for today".

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On a good day, a third stage in the session follows. A freer part, where new material can be created and tried out. And the band can flip out, individually or together, starting to bang away on the instruments or play chords and trying out beats to see what it will lead to. Here, Karlson takes an active role, trying to make the others play faster and faster. He increases the pace and approaches the "thrash-metal" style of drum-playing with its very fast playing on the bass drum and cymbals as the main characteristic. When playing something new that could be the material for a song, Jonson, for it is still he who most often comes up with the musical ideas, tries to get the others to play it. He does not insist or stress the issue if he senses that the others do not want to. Instead, he waits till the next session and then takes up the tune at the beginning, thus making it more established every time. Karlson gets more interested in it and starts developing a serious drum beat instead of fooling around with the phrase as he does at first. Brunis only tries to follow with a simple accompaniment at first and letting Jonson develop his more soloistic part alone. The lyrics are never discussed at this point, and in fact never at all in the workshop. They are made up at home, most often by Jonson, and then developed while being sung by Brunis who will change them as he goes along.

This also means that there is seldom a story in the text. Instead, the bricklaying technique\(^1\) I described earlier still prevails. It is the music that comes first. This is the material to be worked on.

The concept of "going for it", which I have used to describe the approach to playing music found with Angel, comprises making up and developing tunes they think sound "good" and that are more or less in accordance with an established genre, the heavy metal style. For them, there is no clear idea of saying something with the lyrics. This is also in accordance with their views of other bands. The ones they mention are not mentioned for having taken any particular stance on some issue or having written critical texts, as is important to Lars Kesö, but only for their qualities as musicians. Jonson’s ideal of Yngwie Malmsteen is an example. Jonson is also the strongest proponent of this approach and Karlson is the one to disagree. His view is more in line with that of Grubbe. Jonson uses words like "fighting" (kämpa) when describing rehearsal sessions. "Going for it" means to work hard. The whole pattern of the sessions also supports

\(^1\)See p. 71.
an interpretation of their approach as almost puritan. They seem to feel they have to play through all the old material before allowing themselves to play something new, or to flip out or do something crazy or out of the ordinary. What Angel is doing during the workshop sessions is working, and they work hard in an organized way. Karlson, who does not like this very much, as he has begun to share Grubbe's views on playing music, has fallen into the pattern too. Of course, what he wants to do most is play the drums a lot, and so he complies. Brunis is in a slightly different position, developing his role in the band and wanting to learn the songs. His is a more personal project. He wants to learn to play his instrument better and in collaboration with the others. Only Jonson is left, in effect, with the idea of the band Angel as the product of hard work. Something they had all had a year ago, and something which, they believed, would eventually lead to some success on the local music scene. With the advent of summer, though, their playing has gone somewhat stale. It has become routine and nobody talks about going public anymore. They only use rehearsal time for playing together, not seeking every opportunity to be in the workshop, as they had in the beginning. It is as if playing music has become only a pastime. With the concert, they had been on the verge of passing a stage in their development but they have now fallen back almost to where they started; a group of friends who meet at the youth club and take advantage of some of its facilities. But, of course, they are better at their respective instruments, and they are probably somewhat wiser too.

The workshop sessions – Keso workshop
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In comparison with Angel, Lars Keso's sessions in the workshop can be characterized by the absence of planning or organization. Of course, this in itself is a pattern that lends itself to description. The most important feature of the Keso sessions is that they never play a song that is established within the band's repertoire. Thus, in the workshop, they will never play "The Third Eye", "Karin" or any of their other "hits". These are strictly reserved for live performances. Grubbe and Karlson think it tiring and dull to play the same songs over and over again, and Karlson especially feels more free with this routine, in contrast to the repetitive style of the Angel sessions. He is happier when playing with Lars Keso,
takes a more active part in what is happening and he is often the one behind different tunes they play.

Still, what is played is certainly not new material every time. Grubbe and Karlson have some favourite tunes that appear in every other session. The difference is that these tunes do not count as belonging to the repertoire, they are never developed into songs which will be used at a concert. At concerts¹, they play the same songs as before. There are only one or two additions of new songs. But in effect, their repertoire stays the same for more than a year. The songs that made them famous on that first night are firmly established as the material that has to be played and that the audience inevitably will call for at the concerts. So in the workshop they play other tunes. As Karlson puts it, tunes that:

"are fun to play, not sitting and wearing out the stuff we already know, we do a lot of other stuff, not our own tunes".

It seems as if the concept of "having fun" at all times, has become almost an obsession. When something does not feel fun enough, they just stop playing. However, they play remarkably well together. Karlson and Grubbe know each other inside out, as Grubbe puts it:

"we know each other's stuff, he feels what I'm gonna do".

When one of them starts to play some new phrase or idea, the other immediately finds an appropriate accompaniment, something he knows will come out well, and that they will both agree upon.

They have their regular booked rehearsal period but can be found in the workshop almost anytime it is free. As mentioned earlier, occasionally they go to the workshop and stay for almost the whole day instead of going to school, saying that:

"it is more fun to play when there's nobody else there"

They start with Grubbe trying out the guitar, not bothering to tune it unless it is totally out of tune. Instead, he turns up the amplifier to full volume and distortion and starts playing. Sometimes he corrects the tuning without stopping the others playing and eventually falls in with the song again. They play rather short tunes and phrases, maybe a minute long, changing from one tune to another when one of them initiates a new tune and the others fall in with it. These tunes are of varying styles, though mostly in the raw, punkish style that is the hallmark of the band. One tune is originally an Yngwie Malmsteen song with influences from classical

¹Lars Kesö has played in public a few more times after the first concert.
music from which they take a phrase consisting of a harmonious scale played solo on the guitar with the drums playing a standard rock beat. Then they increase the pace playing faster and faster until one of them cannot keep it up any more and the playing abruptly breaks down and ends in laughter.

Sometimes this develops into a kind of contest between them. The one who feels like it, or rather feels that playing works particularly well just then and wants to test his limits, will start the contest right in the middle of the tune, when they are already playing it. They never start it directly at the beginning of the tune, and sometimes it is played without any contest at all, and at the same pace all the time. This contest, though, is not so much a way of trying to outdo each other, but rather a way of testing their musical skill and doing it together, as a joint achievement. No one is the "winner", that is not the point.

Lars Keso also plays tunes which are similar to the Angel songs, and sometimes even a whole song which will then get a distinct Punk feeling with Karlson playing faster than he does with Angel. Another type of tune they play is in the thrash-metal style, played extremely fast. This never develops into a song used at concerts though. The only whole songs they play are covers of "Ebba Grön" songs that Grubbe has learnt from records or from friends. Playing covers is inconsistent with their view of music and they feel that the only decent thing is to play only your own material. This, though, seems to apply only to concerts where they would never dream of playing covers, and not to the workshop sessions where they sometimes do. It can be seen as a kind of homage to one of their idols, Ebba Grön, the only band whose songs they make covers of. But then, again, only in the workshop. The "Yngwie" piece is never played in its entirety and is used more as a training tune and for the contest. The Ebba Grön songs they play are "Staten och kapitalet" (the state and the capital) which in turn is a cover of the sixties/seventies music movement band "Blå Tåget", and which has a clear political content, and "Fred" (Peace), which is also a cover, originally played by the band "Hoola Bandoola Band" which also belonged to that movement. Grubbe and Karlson are not aware of this background, and see the tunes as original of Ebba Grön material. There are other tunes played but these two are the two most frequently played.

The tunes are most often played quickly in succession. Once, they played eleven tunes in twenty minutes, and they never play a tune twice or
dwell on any mistakes. When they do make a mistake, they just comment on it, someone saying:

"oh, this is how it should be instead, yes"

Then they play the phrase again and do not repeat the whole tune.

There are very seldom lyrics to the tunes they play in the workshop. When they play covers, they never bother to sing the words even if they know them. When they do sing, and then it is Grubbe who takes the microphone, they use a few phrases which fit almost any tune, stating that:

"we have a text we do with everything"\textsuperscript{1}.

One is in English:

"Big, wet, slippery pus in my eye"

And one in Swedish:

"I don’t wanna fuck a horse, I wanna fuck a cow" (Jag vill inte knulla en häst, jag vill knulla en ko.)

The English version is eventually used in a song played at concerts, the rest of the words undeveloped. Or, rather, with the rest sounding like English but not being any real words or a consistent text. In Grubbe’s words:

"I’m not that good at English so I just say things that sound like English"

The few new songs they compose during this period are formed in this manner of combining musical phrases and pieces of text they have tried out in the workshop into short tunes.

The approach of having fun, which the band adheres to, comprises the idea of never standing still, of doing new things all the time and not getting stuck in the same old routine. Still, paradoxically, this is exactly what they have done in their standard repertoire. This only very slowly undergoes changes, and then only minor ones. It seems as if they do not care about changing the image which proved to be so successful at the first concert and which has given them a following and a certain fame amongst their friends.

Still, though, this ideology, as it might be called, has also led them to try out various styles in their workshop playing. From thrash metal, main-

\textsuperscript{1}This type of phrase, sometimes referred to as "cod lyrics", is used in rock circles as a kind of practising text that can help the bands to develop a melody. I have no information, though, as to whether Lars Keso got this idea from another band or if they thought it up themselves.
stream heavy metal, punk, classical influences to folk music and blues. Grubbe is particularly interested in trying out different elements from other styles and he often asks me to show him the blues scales and folk music scales he suspects I know something about. He will then learn them, not to perfection, but enough to incorporate a blues tune and a folk music tune in the workshop sessions. He wants to know about a style, learn it to a certain degree and then see what he wants to do with it. More often than not he actually discards it, and it does not influence the style of the band. He is musically curious, makes excursions, but always returning to the original style of Lars Keso.

This is a conscious choice and the band retains its original features. But this is also the easy choice. They have found a successful formula and they stick to it. Of course, this is the music they really want to play, but the question arises whether the whole ideology of "having fun" is something that has been developed as a kind of defence of the chosen style. The rise of the band has been sudden after all, the first concert took place just a month or so after the band got together, and they have in a sense been stuck with their initial success. And after that, they continue in the same way. The "having fun" ideology has been developed and established, from its beginning in the feeling of what it was like to start playing in a band, and as a reaction to the approach to playing music they had encountered when playing with Jonson, Mats and the others in the first band. And with the approach of Angel that Grubbe in particular seems to dislike. Now, having fun has expanded into comprising almost a whole life style. However, Karlson continues to play with Angel and Grubbe's way of "shopping" amongst styles, for example, learning a blues scale, folk music or children's songs, very seldom makes its way into the band's concert repertoire and never leads to any changes in their principal style. So, even if Lars Keso in their workshop sessions have a much wider range than Angel in their choices of musical styles, they refuse to let that influence their principal style or, with the word they themselves use, their "image".

Maybe the concept of having fun has become a kind of obstacle to musical development. They have passed the first step that playing a concert represents, but have not taken any further step. And the one they have taken is a limited one. Their fame is confined to their circle of friends at the youth club and is ascribed to their ability to make funny and dirty lyrics. To use the expression, which is part of the vocabulary at the club,
and with an ironical twist: they have become world-famous in the whole of Elmridge.

Angel breakdown

During the time I have followed the lads at the youth club, the two bands undergo the changes I have described above. As might be assumed, the story here almost ends for one of the bands. As summer approaches, the Angel sessions become more and more repetitive. The new ideas Jonson keeps coming up with are not reacted upon any more. Karlson plays his part but puts more and more effort into playing with Lars Keso. Brunis is only interested in developing his personal skill and seems to think that with Angel there will not be another concert. Only Jonson struggles on with his songs and even he seems uncertain whether there is any point in continuing with the band.

In one of the last sessions, they are discussing whether or not they should continue to meet during the holidays. They compare their work and holiday schedules but do not plan anything definite, rather half-heartedly trying to find weeks when they will all be in town together. They end up by deciding to just wait and see what will happen. They would always meet in the youth club anyway and should not have to plan so much. Jonson talks about the rock band contest that takes place every year and wants them to enter it in the autumn and they all agree that it is a good idea, but they do so without much enthusiasm.

During the summer, there is no playing. They do not get together anymore and Angel breaks up. The band finishes its life without any loud bang or any big fight, the members just slowly stopping meeting. The differences of opinion that exist within the band never break out into the open. No conflicts are acted out, for example between Karlson and Jonson who stand for two diametrically different approaches to playing music. Jonson is too much of a diplomat and wants to avoid conflict, and Karlson has only bothered to develop his own instrumental part the way he wants it, not taking any interest in the others. And no discussions take place where different opinions can be exposed. Karlson, of course, is content with playing with Grubbe instead and now he puts all his efforts into taking Brunis with him. Brunis, from now on, becomes the third member
of Lars Kesø. He has occasionally played with them before, so Grubbe also knows him well.

Jonson now decides that there is no future for Angel and stops trying to hold the band together. After the summer, he starts to play with some other friends from outside the youth club, and joins their band. Here, he soon becomes a leading figure. The band plays in a style usually called "melodious heavy metal". This style has its roots in the "symphonic rock" of the seventies with bands like Pink Floyd and Genesis. One of the few bands playing in this tradition today is Marillion. They are also the idols mentioned by Jonson in trying to describe his new band. And eventually he enters the rock band contest with it. In the beginning, they book a rehearsal time at the Elmridge club but soon find a place of their own in the weekend home of one of the member's parents. And they move out as soon as their drummer manages to get the money to buy a drum-set. So, for Jonson, it seems he has finally found people to play with who are taking it seriously and who are "going for it". About the workshop, he says that:

"It's worthless playing just once a week, you don't get anywhere...an' it's better to practise many times a week for shorter hours each time"

And about the youth club, he says:

"Not going to the club anymore...it isn't too rewarding just sittin' there"

At the end of 1990, about one and a half years after the lads' first Elmridge band had been founded, he gets a regular job as a car mechanic at a garage in town so he gradually stops coming to the youth club altogether.

Caught in the roundabout

The contest mentioned above, the Rock 'n' Roll Roundabout as it is called, is an annual contest for amateur rock bands in the town. It is organized by the youth clubs in cooperation with an adult educational association, and it runs for several months. Every band gets twenty minutes at a youth club concert where five or six bands play and where a jury of ten youth club visitors selected by the staff vote on the qualities of the bands. The following week, the group of bands move to another of the five or six youth
clubs which have facilities for holding the concerts and play the same songs there. In the end, the ten bands that get the best overall scores play the finals held in the auditorium of a school in town. There, the audience again vote the winner. The first prize in the contest this year is a choice between a contract for a single record and participating, with all expenses paid, in an international "youth" or "peace" conference held in Murmansk in what was then the Soviet Union. There, they will perform at a concert.

Usually about thirty to forty bands participate in the contest and it is viewed as a big event in the music scene of the town. It represents a chance to become known and even if the more established bands are not too keen to play in youth clubs they cannot afford to stay away. So there will be many bands participating, representing a wide range of styles and ages. Amongst those are Jonson with his new band, and also Lars Keso who enter, giving as their reason that they want to play concerts, want to have fun on stage at other places than their own club.

The members of Lars Keso have definite ideas about playing in public. This is what is most fun, and in a sense the only thing that makes it worth the effort. It is immediately rewarding through the reaction of the audience. Playing in the workshop is fun too, they say, but playing at concerts beats everything. So far, they have been successful, and they have their following of Elmridge friends who come to every concert and shout for their favourite songs to be played. The famous first concert is now more than a year behind them, and they feel it is time to widen their popularity.

In the contest, they are assigned by lot, to the same group as a band they think is one of the best in town, "Identity", which plays in the "thrash metal" style. As Grubbe says:

"...if we get to the finals it's fuckin' good...Identity is one of the best but then it all depends on the audience...they have to feel what's happening...be noisy...act it out...have to like the music themselves...the music you play..."

Grubbe expresses his thoughts about competing with Identity but this is also an appraisal of the situation and of the audience. In order for it to be a good concert, the audience have to "feel" with the music, to act it out. They have to like it from the start. He seems to think that this is not a concert situation where an audience actively seeks out its favorite band and comes to hear their favorite songs, which indeed it is not. But the audience will not only consist of their Elmridge friends but also of the followers of
the other bands as well as of the regular visitors at the respective youth clubs. And the latter are going to vote.

Grubbe and Karlson frequently express their view of the concert situation being dependent on communication with the audience. In order for them to have fun, there must be a cheering crowd which likes the music and shouts and claps their hands. Or in their own words:

"it’s more fun to play live, to others"
"to come out and show yourself"
"monkeying about on stage"
"make a real fool of yourself"
"become notorious"

These are statements about playing live, illustrating a somewhat exhibitionistic streak. And emphasizing the relationship with the audience and the importance of this relationship to their own feeling. Lars Keso’s identity has become that of a performing live band and their aim is to produce a show on stage. And to make a show of themselves. Angel, in contrast, have only functioned as a band in the workshop, their identity being more related to the making of the music itself and the developing of musical skill; not to its function in public, to its communication outside the closed circle of the band itself.

Lars Keso comes to the contest with the same songs as in the past. They play five or six tunes of which only one is fairly new. In their usual style, they never make any adequate soundcheck before the concerts but just go on stage and get going.

Grubbe: We don’t care nothin’ about anything...we haven’t soundchecked once y’know...it doesn’t get any better if you do...just max volume and distortion...as long as you have fun...”

Apart from Identity, the other bands in their group are "The Crea Brotherhood" playing symphonic rock, and the all-girl band "Shylips" consisting of five girls between sixteen and seventeen years of age. They play a more pop style of music in the style often referred to as “West Coast”¹ and they play mostly covers. Initially, Grubbe has the most negative opinion of them. Not only should girls not play rock, they cannot, they do not have the feeling. His opinion of "The Crea Brotherhood", after having seen them at the first concert is:

¹The West Coast of the US, with a band like Toto as one of the foremost examples.
"No speed! They play one chord every fourth minute...they just stand there an’ don’t move...things have to happen all the time like when Brunis’ guitar fell to the floor an’ he had to play on his knees”

One of the concerts is held at the "Factory", an old factory building in town which has now been taken over by the town’s "rock music organization", organized and run by local musicians in cooperation with an adult educational association, which provides rehearsal rooms for bands and organizes concerts with both Swedish and international rock and jazz artists. It is the major and most important music scene in town for this type of music.

At the concert, Lars Keso are to play directly after Identity who, in turn, are preceded by Shylips.

The girls are dressed in their everyday clothes, though quite neat. They wear make-up and look like typical high-school girls, which is actually what they are. They start by playing four songs, all covers of rock standards and they intend to finish with the one song they have written themselves. The audience, about fifty people, have so far applauded generously, but not enthusiastically. But when the singer says:

"Now we’re going to play a tune called Lick me”,

attentive shouts and cheers are heard. The song is a typical rock song in four-beat and its outstanding feature, and what makes the crowd cheer, is of course its lyrics which are written in English:

I don’t know what I wanna do
besides just wanna get laid by you
my little pussy is wet and tight
come on lick me – through the night

Chorus:
Why don’t you take me to your bed
and lay your head between my legs
why don’t you take me to your bed
(repeat once)

Sex is all that I want from you
If you want orgasm I give you too
with my body and do it right
I will suck you – through the night

(chorus repeat)
I wanna have a sixtynine with you
and as you see that the sky get blue
tie me at your bed and fuck me hard
fuck me baby – through the night

(chorus repeat)

When the song ends, I see joyful and appreciative reactions from the audience, but not much surprise. Maybe the idea of singing a text like this is not at all that exceptional. It is somewhat unexpected for me because the Shylips do not have the appearance, or image in the way they dress, of being provocative or enticing and in their first songs there is no clue, or warning, of what is to follow. They look and act more like schoolgirls and then manage to turn the whole event into something else, and quite different, with their last song. The lyrics are in English and so is the name of the band. But, ”Shy-lips” in Swedish is ”blyg-läpparna” and if you add the letter d to ”shy”, making ”blyg” into ”blygd”, the word ”blygd-läpparna” means labia. Another twist in meaning in the same style, and one that I did not understand until months after the concert.

After the Shylips, Identity gives what seems to be a successful performance with the audience dancing in front of the stage jumping around and applauding. At the beginning of the show, after their second tune, one of the two guitarists goes up to the microphone and says:

”Well yesterday was international women’s day, now we’re gonna have a man’s day”

Then, he and the other guitarist take off all their clothes and continue for the rest of the concert stark naked. One of them does wear a woollen sock, strategically placed, but it falls off soon enough, and as the two of them move frequently and jump around the stage in full view, the guitars do not hide anything either. This too results in cheers from the audience but, again, not in surprise as, I have to admit, my reaction is. It does not seem that nudity or sexy lyrics provoke any feeling of shame or guilt, or for that matter, of showing off. It just seems natural and funny and will of course be something to talk about the next day. But it does not seem to be something radically exceptional for them as it is for me. Admittedly,

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1This line was difficult to discern from the recordings and so may not be accurately transcribed.
instances of provocation are common in rock music but I had not expected it here.

When Lars Keso come on the stage, the crowd has really been warmed up by the previous two performances. In the audience, there are seven or eight of their Elmridge friends and they start to applaud.

Grubbe takes the microphone and introduces the band by saying:

"Well...we're Lars Keso and we're gonna start with a song called The Third Eye...a fuckin' good song"

They start to play. Brunis on the second guitar plays the accompaniment and Grubbe the solo part. They play the song somewhat slower than at other times, and with some addition of solos. When they finish, the audience applaud but not as enthusiastically as they have for the previous bands, and some even start to leave. Grubbe sees this but, still in a good mood says:

"Now we're gonna take a somewhat faster tune...but not so fast as Identity for we're not that fuckin' good...Jailed...a song in Swedish...fuckin' good it is"

He makes the comment about Identity with some emphasis and seems to add the last phrase, which he had also used for the previous song, that it was "fucking good" to regain some spirit. As if to say, well, we cannot compare ourselves with them but we are here all the same, and we are good too.

When they are through, the response to this song is even less enthusiastic than before. There is only sporadic hand-clapping and even more people start to leave. Grubbe looks out over the emptying room and comments, with sarcasm:

"Oh fuck, what a lot of people there are here..."

But he can do nothing but continue:

"Well...we're doing a song about my old headmaster...its a boot in the head to him...he's just wrong he is...his name is Sture"

And they start playing again. In the middle of the tune, Grubbe shouts to the audience "come on, come on then!" but nobody complies and afterwards there is again only sporadic applause and no shouting or dancing in front of the stage.

"Can't you join in a little an' clap an' jump around a bit...it's real fun when you do...eh?"

Grubbe pleads. "Do it yourself" comes the answer.
"Well I was going to with this next song... Big, wet, slippery pus in my eye!"

And he starts playing directly. The song is faster with a beat that lends itself easily to clapping, but nobody in what is left of the audience complies. When it is finished, and the very scattered applause has ended, Grubbe, with a half-angry, half-forlorn expression on his face goes up to Brunis and Karlson and talks to them, trying to decide what to do. In the mean time, the friends from Elmridge start shouting, half seriously, half mockingly: "once more", "improvise" and "take Sperm", wanting to hear the old hit "Sperm on my Bathrobe". Grubbe goes up to the microphone and says in a determined and angry voice:

"we're satisfied"
"No...fuckin' hell...take Sperm!" they shout.
"Too boring" Grubbe retorts
"No...once more...come on Grubbe don't be a sap"

This time, he answers with a sharp, angry chord from his guitar but goes up to Karlson and says something. Coming back, he says with a sad voice: "we'll take our last one" and they play a very short tune, lasting half a minute, then unplug their instruments and leave the stage. They do not heed the calls from their friends who are now shouting for more in a totally mocking way, just as they had reacted to Angel at the first concert more than a year ago.

So, the audience let them down; or, of course, they themselves had not been able to maintain the atmosphere and interest created at the concert by the previous two bands. Even their own friends let them down and mock them when it becomes clear that their show is going to be a failure. Their music, and their approach of having fun, does not stand the test, it works only on the local scene, the youth club context, and not at a bigger event like the contest.

Needless to say, Lars Keso do not make it to the finals. They are in a sense beaten in their own field. The things that had built up their fame at the club, the filthy lyrics and the good show, were performed better by the other bands who surpass Lars Keso in every respect and ruin the day for them. This audience was not interested in songs about Grubbe's old headmaster, who they did not know. The material is too local and too dependent on the shared knowledge of the band and its history that only their friends possess. And the few who were present had furthermore turned against them. Lars Keso depends on those friends and on the
context of the youth club. There, they have found the facilities and the opportunity to play and to develop their musical skill as well as the ability to express certain feelings and to develop their own special style; to make a comment, both on the musical genre and on their own immediate situation, at the club, in school or at home. Now, they see that this comment is only viable in this particular context and fails outside it.

The waiting room

The group of friends, who more than a year before the contest had got together in the music workshop at the Elmridge club, has experienced many things during the time I have followed them. To sum up the story, they start a rock band, see it disintegrate and split into two bands with diametrically different approaches to playing music; the one following a mainstream heavy metal style and the other a more punk approach. They have played concerts and one of the bands has been successful, albeit only in the local, youth club context.

Now, Lars Keso is in a sense back in the workshop while Angel have never really left it. The excursions out into the larger music scene have been a failure for the former group which proved too dependent on its original context. And the latter group has broken up. Jonson has had to take his interest elsewhere in order to play at the contest and on the larger scene.

The workshop is a place where the lads can meet friends who are likewise interested in playing rock and in trying out the various instruments the club provides. At first, they had no clear idea of what it would be like to play in a band. Some, like Karlson, started out with the idea that it would be fun to try and make sounds like the music they listen to so frequently on tapes and records. Others, like Brunis or Jonson, started out with the notion of wanting to play in a band.

The youth club itself is a place where music is frequently played on tapes, live from concerts with local bands, and by friends rehearsing in the workshop. And by the visitors just fooling around with the club's acoustic guitar out in the café. Many of the lads have Walkmans on which they play their favorite music during the day. Music most certainly plays an important role in the life of the young people at the youth club. It is part
of the environment and, with the workshop, they are given the opportunity of actually playing themselves.

As time passes and the first band is formed, differences of opinion are also acted out, differences that eventually lead to the disintegration of the band. Mostly, there are differences about what kind of music they should play. As their musical skill increases and they see that the music can be made to sound good, the question of what style to adhere to arises. In learning to play tunes of the heavy metal or the punk genre, there might be different kinds of work involved, and different efforts. In heavy metal, they have to practice more as the music is more complicated and demanding. In the punk-like style, there is instead a need to be direct and establish audience contact. And then, also, different lifestyles are involved in the two different approaches that start to crystallize within the group.

Now, the inspiration from idols becomes important as a means of identifying their own affiliation to different musical ideals. Idols are used both to draw inspiration from, and to legitimize and confirm the lads’ own views of music. Idols are, of course, present from the very beginning, but at first they are talked about as makers of music that sounds good and that the lads might want to copy. Later, they become attached to a certain way of looking at life and at playing music that is important to the lads themselves. Thus, Grubbe and Karlson expound on the mythology surrounding the band "Metallica" as proponents of the style of "having fun", not being commercial, mainstream, etc. And Jonson, in turn, being from the beginning more interested in developing his own musical skill, focuses on the musical skill of Yngwie Malmsteen.

The way they learn to play also to a large extent determines what they continue to play. Jonson, who has taken lessons, is interested in using more complicated chords and more elaborate fingerwork. Grubbe, who learnt, like most of them, by watching others and imitating, has learnt a few chords and a simple grip for the left hand which he uses. He adopts a punk style and develops the approach of "having fun" to go with it. Jonson, in contrast, thinks that musical skill will lead to success and develops the approach of "going for it", thinking that hard work is the way to get results. For him, this also means that the music he makes becomes in a sense more introvert. He does not seem to conceive of, for example, the lyrics as something that should communicate any special message to audiences, but only as another typical ingredient of the music, like an additional instrument. Grubbe is more extrovert from the beginning. He
takes his texts from his own life and expounds on the idols he sees as representing a critical viewpoint, like Ebba Grön. He is more intent on showmanship than on developing the music. His lyrics, and in this instance they are different from Jonson’s, describe his own situation and feelings whereas Jonson uses ready-made themes already present in the genre and typical of it. His music is more a comment on the genre, whereas Grubbe also comments on his own situation. In this sense, his music does express more an "own" way of being than does Jonson’s.

As the lads move on, the two bands "Angel" and "Lars Keso", which represent the two approaches, become in a sense consolidated. An important step is represented by the first concert through which they get a chance of displaying their skill to others. Going public in a sense means becoming musicians. Instantly, they are given the chance of becoming "rock stars" of sorts, the greatest symbol of the whole business. Grubbe, who is better prepared to "live the symbol" with his showmanship, succeeds with his band. Jonson, in spite of his greater musical skill, fails and in doing so is in a sense confined once again to the workshop. Lars Keso, though, acquires a certain fame but becomes dependent on the circle of friends and on the youth club context where their show works.

Still, the lads have taken an important step. What had from the beginning been seen as beyond reach, in a sense extraordinary, the idea of actually playing at a real rock concert, has now become part of everyday life, at least for Lars Keso. This, in a sense, represents a change in life.

But their style of having fun seems to become almost an obsession. They are famous at the youth club for their filthy lyrics and the fact that they dare display them in the open. But, this fame also makes them dependent on this context and means that they do not develop over the next two years. Grubbe never furthered his interest in different musical styles and new material never came to be part of the band’s repertoire. They do develop, though, the idea of not tuning properly or soundchecking, contrasting themselves with Angel and their hated approach of taking it too seriously.

In the meantime, Angel soldiers on but finally disintegrates. Jonson finds other people to play with outside the club, more willing to make a serious effort than Karlson and Brunis are. The latter in turn now fall in completely with the Lars Keso attitude instead.

Finally, Lars Keso fails completely in the rock band contest. On the larger music scene, their style is done better by others, even Shylips, and
they do not get the response they are used to. So they, too, withdraw to the local context, the youth club and the workshop. It can argued that they in a sense become painfully aware of the fact that when you go public, seeking recognition, you cannot be totally in control, it is up to the audience and they did not share Grubbe’s opinion of the band’s value. Even their friends have let them down and at the first sign of failure started to mock them, just like they did with Angel at the first concert. Lars Keso has an "educated" audience at the youth club, one which knows the prerequisites and so the band is successful there. But they are far from having such an audience at the contest and consequently fail in that context. Angel, though, has had neither.

So, in a sense, they have both been put in their place, and that place is back at the youth club, back in the workshop.

And the workshop is the room in which they have been waiting for things to happen. Waiting for friends to play with, waiting to become better musicians, to get to play at a concert. When the opportunity is there to do something extraordinary, to become a real band, they try to take it.

Doing the extraordinary is, in a sense, actually to do the "real", or at least the wished for thing. For the lads, the period of adolescence is a time of waiting. A time of unreality and a time they know will pass, the life they know will change. The things they do now will not be the things they do tomorrow or the day after. Becoming a "musician" is for them a real development, a real change in life. It is doing something new and different. It represents a chance of growing into something else, something out of the ordinary and the expected. And something that for most is only a dream – to become a rock musician.

But it does not work out that way.
The workshop

I have so far focused mainly on two bands and their music and how they developed into becoming musicians of a kind. Now, my focus turns to the youth club, the immediate setting for the activities of the lads.

In the previous chapter, I left the description of the lads at the youth club at a point where their music had gone somewhat stale. They were left with a feeling of having failed and having been confined to the local scene. In the following months, the lads hardly talked about the contest and did not attempt to get gigs. My description points to the youth club as an important agent for the development of the bands, and as a place they strongly relate to and depend on.

The bands are back where they started after the excursion into the larger music scene of the town. Only Jonson has decided to leave the workshop and continue his music-making with other people outside the youth club.

The music contest, the "rock 'n' roll roundabout" proved to be a disappointment for Lars Keso and also for Jonson who, with his new band, failed to make an impression and reach the finals. As has been described earlier, the contest is part of the organized activities of the youth clubs in town. It also represents a merging of these activities with the independent rock organization, which runs the "factory" where the last concert was held. The contest becomes a manifestation of the town's rock scene, and it is also given some attention by the media. The following year, it is expanded to encompass the whole region with bands participating from other towns as far away as 100 kilometres. The best bands are even presented in the regional television news during the contest. This expansion gives a more official standing to it and, as a consequence, Lars Keso decides not to enter the contest any more. There has, of course, always been a hierarchy of bands, as expressed, for example, in Grubbe's admiration of "Identity", but in the contest, more established bands had mixed with beginners. Now, Lars Keso continue to play at the youth club and in Elmridge but without aiming at the larger music scene in town anymore. Thus, the only scene they relate to is the Elmridge club, and the
occasional concerts they play at other places are at local festivals in the suburb organized by the staff, and with the club’s equipment and the musical instruments.

If the youth club and its music workshop is not an environment where attempts at professional or semi-professional musicianship can flourish, what is it? It does give the lads the opportunities to learn, play and maintain a certain standard of musicianship, but only up to a point. This is partly for economic reasons since good quality equipment is expensive, but it is also related to how the activities at the youth club are organized. Also, another important element is the relationship between the staff and the lads. These issues will be focussed on in this chapter.

**Booking time**

The music workshop at the Elmridge Youth Club was set up on the initiative of one of the staff members who himself played in a band. In 1980, he had had a rehearsal-room of his own which people from the youth club, as well as his own friends, used for playing with their own instruments. After some years, the youth club staff decided to furnish a room at the club instead, to buy instruments and thus to start regular music activities there.

As has already been said, the workshop attracts local bands who need a room to practise in and who do not have the necessary equipment. Often, it is the drummer who can not afford to buy good quality drums, and they thus turn to the youth club. Most bands book a regular rehearsal session and come only at this time and they do not mix with the other youth club visitors. There are thirteen fixed rehearsal sessions in the week, two per weekday of three hours each. The hours are between 3.30 and 6.30 p.m. and between 6.30 and 9.30 respectively. On Fridays, there are three sessions. From 2 to 5 o’clock, from 5 to 8 and then from 8 to 11. On Saturdays, there are two sessions, from 6 to 9 and from 9 to midnight. A band is only allowed one booking weekly, and even if there are sessions available, something which did happen one term, they are not allowed an extra session. Rather, those remain unbooked.

During the period of my stay at the club, the only bands that were formed by youth club regulars were Angel and Lars Keso. At one time or another, most of the musically inclined lads at the club played in these two
bands. As will be remembered, the Angel members, before the band’s demise, used their regular time and did not try to come back and play at other times. Lars Keso, in contrast, often play at other times when the workshop is free, as it mostly is during the daytime, or when a booked session has not been attended by the band that made the booking. Grubbe and Karlson then approach one of the staff members and ask him or her to open the workshop, which they readily do. The privilege of being in the workshop goes to those who ask first. If somebody else wants to play at the same time they have to negotiate between themselves.

When asked about booking time, Grubbe and Karlson indicate a preference for playing at irregular intervals rather than having their fixed hour one day a week:

K.E.: How does it work ... the music workshop?
Grubbe: Well, first of all, you have to get this music-workshop card .. to be allowed to be in there, and then you just go in ...
Karlson: If it’s free
Grubbe: Yeah, free ... you can book a session, some days a week ...
K.E.: What’s best then?
Grubbe: A session is best ... but it’s more fun to go in and play when there’s nobody there ...
Karlson: Like when you feel like it!
Grubbe: -Like when you have an erection!

In line with their view of playing music as something which is destroyed if taken too seriously, they express the feeling that too much organizing is also a menace to creativity. They have more fun if they can just go in and play without having planned it in advance. Even if they realize that it would be best to have the fixed session as well, so as not to be excluded from playing altogether, they seem, just when they have stated this, to feel a need to emphasize the spontaneity of the matter. Also, Grubbe characteristically adds a remark that equates the spur-of-the-moment feeling of playing for fun, with a sexual feeling. As if saying that playing music should be an almost biological or instinctive activity, and not an organized one.

1From now on, presentations of dialogues will be given in the format below. This is partly because there are longer sections of text and because the material consists of interviews and recordings of staff meetings.
In addition, the booking of the sessions for rehearsals are decided on by the staff and the time limits are set by them. In trying to get in at other than the specified sessions, Grubbe and Karlson are making a breach in, what to them is part of the adult world as represented by the staff – the power to decide who goes where and when.

The quintessence

To be allowed to book a session, you have to be at least five in the band. The reason for this is that the staff want the workshop to be used by as many people as possible. They do not want the room occupied by only one person or a group of two. The reason for this is that it would not be right for such a group to take up resources when there are other bands with more members. The staff’s argument is one of “equality of opportunity” and effectiveness. The idea is to make the most use of the workshop and to spread the opportunities to play. Of course, this also means that the staff make a kind of evaluation of the bands, where only their size count. If they have less than the five members, they do not qualify regardless of how musically advanced they might be. Still, there is no other evaluation of the bands and no judgements are passed on different styles of music or individual skill. Anybody can book a session as long as the band has five members.

The rule, or model, explaining why there have to be five in a group is reflected in the Swedish system of ”studiecirklar”, study groups, organized by the adult education associations (studieförbund)1 where this number is the minimum in order to be eligible for state support. It can be claimed that this number of five in a group has acquired an important standing as a conceptualization of the study group within this system. Any activity organized within the youth club that in some way resembles a study group is organized so as to comply with this model. When the idea came up of doing some overhaul work on the mopeds many of the visitors drive, the staff discuss the suggestion at one of their regular, weekly staff meetings. Here, Richard, who is the head of the club, discusses this issue with another staff member. Richard, who is one of the oldest, in his mid forties, also has a background as a trainer and organizer at the local football club.

1 The ”studieförbund” are the adult education associations of the popular movements.
Richard: -Well, of course, if they start to fool around with the engines it won’t be half an hour ... they’ll be at it the whole evening ... so it’s a question of ... if we dare. But in the beginning you won’t be able to leave ’em alone, you’ll have to be there all the time probably.

John: -Well, I was thinking ... around two hours ... or so?

Richard: -I think they’ll be at it the whole evening!

John: -Yeah, more than that probably.

A little later in the discussion:

Richard: -But what do you mean, is there any ... I mean, overhauling mopeds, is there any ...?

John: -Well, we’ll get a syllabus and then we’ll have to find something, of course it’s good to do some theoretical stuff, so we follow ... and then we can do it as a study group ...

Richard: -Then you’ll check it out, if there’s any written material ...

John: -I’ll do that!

Richard: And then five it is to be a group so we can take seven or eight ...

John: -Yeah, no more than that!

Richard: -And then you’ll have to tell ’em so they won’t think ... if there’s going to be mostly theoretical stuff ... so that they won’t go tuning their engines and fooling around.

The idea of having a moped course has not been talked about previously but had probably been prepared or at least thought about beforehand by John. In this discussion, he and Richard jointly negotiate and decide on the organization of this future activity. The general idea of overhauling mopeds is moulded into the form of a study group, with a mostly theoretical content, where books seem to be the object they agree upon, not engines. In his concluding remark, Richard also gives voice to his fear, and to what was probably on his mind all the time. The reason the lads want to overhaul mopeds is to tune them and make them go faster, something which is illegal.

For the music workshop, though, this model of the study group is not so suitable. Most bands have a traditional rock setting with four members. They are not inclined to take on an extra member just because the regulations stipulate this. Bands from outside the youth club solve the problem easily by using an extra name, but bands consisting of youth club regulars have difficulties, as they are known by the staff. Still, no frequent checks are made during the year as to who is actually present during practising.
time. Only at the end of the year do the staff go through the booking files to see if any changes will be necessary. Also, if a band shows up regularly and seems to be making a serious enough effort, nobody bothers much about the fifth member who always seems to be indisposed. Lars Keso, for example, with only three members has no difficulty in keeping the rehearsal time throughout the year. So, it seems that the staff do not strictly uphold the rule of five. They let it pass provided that it is not made into an issue by the lads.

Furthermore, the actual room is small and quite crowded with five people playing simultaneously. Even if there are five instruments around; the drums, two guitars, bass guitar and a synthesizer as well as the PA-system, there are only three amplifiers. Thus, it is impossible to play all the instruments at the same time.

Still, for the staff, the administrative aspect of organizing the activities effectively and filling the room is the leading notion as far as the workshop is concerned. They do not adapt this system to comprise bands with fewer members than the stipulated five in any other way than the kind of tacit understanding described above. This example hints at a double way of working where pragmatic and administrative considerations are intertwined with more ideological or pedagogical ones. In order to examine this notion, the youth club practice will be further described below.

Paying for the privilege

Besides booking time, there are some other rules which the visitors have to follow in order to be allowed to use the facilities. One of these concerns the music workshop card.

Anyone who wants to come to the youth club first has to buy a membership card which is valid for all the youth clubs in town. The card costs twenty kronor per term, really a symbolic sum of money. But this is not enough to gain access to the workshop. In addition, a workshop card costing about 100 kronor has to be bought and without this card you are not allowed to even enter the workshop. In the following conversation, taken from a staff meeting, the routine of selling a workshop card is explained to a new staff member, Maria. The most active in the discussion is Sven. He is in his middle or late twenties and has a background as an active tennis player before he studied to become a youth club leader.
Sven: -On Thursday if I’m not here.. I suppose I’ll go home at five, when those skinheads arrive, none of them has paid, and they were allowed last Thursday on condition ... but not once again ...

Richard: -You mean a new season ticket
Sven: -Yes, or monthly card, whatever they want ...
Richard: -Yeah yeah
Sven: -So whoever lets them in HAS to check that they pay ... and we can, we don’t have to be nice to them, it was them that beat up (inaudible) ... so we can be tough in return ...

Richard: -A monthly card is 30 kronor and a season ticket or whatever you call it ...
Sven: -It should’ve been 120 for the spring term but ... I started to sell in December and I didn’t know so I took 100 for the spring term too, so we’ll have to correct it next time ...

Richard: -The spring term is longer and that’s the reason for it being 120 ...
Sven: -mm, But now it’s 100 for this spring term
Maria (the new staff member): -Is this any kind of special card we write ...
Janet: -Ordinary receipt ...
Sven: -007 receipt!
Janet: -Oh!
Richard: -And then you take notes ... there in the kitchen there’s a list ...
Maria: -Yeah I saw it there...
Richard: -Where you write ...
Sven: -It’s a whole bloody procedure, it is, first you write a 007 receipt for 30 or 100 kronor, then you take this receipt and go to the cashier report and write on the three lines at the bottom; music-workshop receipt number ... haha ... and then you put a mark on the receipt, and write M.H. (her initials) beside, this shows you’ve put it in the cashier report and noted the receipt number. Then you go to the cash register, button fifteen I think it is ... well, it says music workshop on it, you register 30 kronor, then you write on the cupboard-door where the flour and stuff is, the name and the date UNTIL WHICH they’ve paid, not what they write ...
Maria: -The last date they’ve paid for ...
Sven: -Up to when they’re allowed to play, yes
Maria: -All right
Sven: -But we, we can rehearse a couple of times, we’re not so good at it ourselves ...

The procedure is so complicated that Sven explains it in detail, emphasizing each step in order to be certain he himself has got it right. The reason for having this complex system seems to be taken for granted. At least, it is not discussed or questioned. It has to do with the statement of accounts where everything the club sells is registered, but also with the system of control for checking on which cards have expired. In order to be flexible and also sell monthly cards, the control system has to be
effective, and the staff need a list where they can see the exact date when visitors' cards expire. The monthly cards are for individuals who want to try out the workshop but who do not want to commit themselves to a long period. Of course, these individuals cannot book a regular rehearsal session with the monthly card and so are confined to the free hours.

At the beginning of the excerpt, Sven talks about the skinhead band, and he makes it explicit that he wants them to be checked when he is not there himself. He is indignant and seems determined to make them pay. He is offended by their failure to comply with the regulations. He seems to assume that they are trying to get out of paying the fee and, as he remembers that they were allegedly implicated in a fight a while back, he is even less inclined to let them get out of paying. This way of letting a moral judgement form the background to action, is not uncommon amongst the staff of the youth club. In this conversation at the meeting, the introduction of the new staff member to the workshop procedure becomes somewhat secondary and the main issue becomes the check on the membership cards. This is brought about by Sven's irritation with the skinhead band and, in turn, brings about a revision of the procedure that works as a recapitulation for the whole staff and also as an admission of how ineffectively the cards are usually checked. This is the continuation of the meeting:

Sven: -I don’t know really, there aren’t so many, well now there are some ... well, I’m a bit careless myself with that … I put in those who usually go there ... you take for granted and then they don’t have the card, there are very few really ...

Janet: -But now some have paid though ...

Sven: -Maybe eight have paid ...

Janet: -There were three last week ...

Sven: -Then it’s seven, eight ...

Richard: -We talked about this, I think we decided we’d check on that ... you’ll just ask like ”may I see your card” if I’ll open the door ...

Sven: -I had one more suggestion that we’d run a membership check now, we haven’t done that once during the autumn ... but then I wasn’t working last Thursday ... I think we can do that tonight! Now we’re so far gone into the year so now everybody should have a youth club card and if they don’t they can go home and fetch 20 kronor.

Here, the staff get annoyed since they have been careless about checking cards and the discussion degenerates into how many, or rather how few, have actually paid. They seem to feel as if they have been fooled, and Richard remembers the last staff meeting where somebody had suggested that they check the workshop cards. Sven brings up his suggestion from
that meeting of a total check also of the youth club cards and moves that 
this be carried out the same evening. Nobody seconds this or even com­
ments on it and it is left unanswered as Richard continues to run through 
the agenda.

Sven expresses the feeling that the lads are fooling him, and expands the 
problem from the workshop cards to all visitors at the youth club. This 
feeling does not appear to be shared as nobody seconds his suggestion. 
Still, often it is moral indignation and judgement that is the inspiration of 
the action the staff decide to take. It is as if the action has to be justified in 
this more personal sense, not only as a result of the administrative rules. 
Janet, one of the older staff members, feels that Sven is going too far, and 
that the issue is not really that important. Sven, on the other hand, is the 
one who has had to deal with the workshop lately, and he is more directly 
involved. Thus, he also personally feels more strongly about issues that 
concern it. Here, though, he is taking it too personally as if the lads 
reluctance to pay is explicitly directed against him. But the conversation 
has become an issue of teaching the new staff member old routines, and 
only incidentally has the insight emerged of how careless he himself has 
been in checking the cards, and maintaining those very routines. His 
original irritation, though, is with the skinhead band, which did not consist 
of youth club regulars but had booked a weekly practice period and came 
only once a week, thus making it difficult for him to collect the fees. Now, 
he redirects this irritation to all other workshop-card holders and even to 
all other visitors at the club.

What are they doing with the money?

The idea behind the fees for the workshop is to generate funds so that new 
equipment can be bought as the old equipment wears out. The lad’s money 
should go directly back to them, as a result of the high standard the work­
shop is able to maintain. Broken drumskins, sticks and cables can be re­
placed and the amplifiers can be repaired when they break down.

Also, there is an additional fee for drumsticks and guitar cables. They 
have to be rented for 10 kronor every time somebody wants to use them in 
the workshop. The reason for this is mainly that sticks and cables break 
easily. Every session in the workshop is sure to produce at least one
broken drumstick or bent cable. As these are expensive, the staff decided to charge a fee and thereby cover some of the costs.

But the main reason for introducing fees is a different one. It is to induce the lads to buy their own equipment. This is again motivated by the staff in a moral fashion. If they get their own cables and drumsticks, they will be more careful with them, thus learning to respect the material they use and not throw it around carelessly just because they know it is not their own and they will not have to pay for it. This is an adherence to a kind of pedagogical paradigm where the staff can make the lads see different values, mainly respect and responsibility, by making them feel directly responsible for the effects of their own actions. But this is done in a more elaborate way than simply saying that visitors have to pay for what they break. Instead, the staff are inducing them to pay beforehand, by coercing them into buying the items that are likely to break, thus making them more careful from the beginning. And, of course, the club does not have to pay for the damage.

The first thing Grubbe comments on in response to my general question about the workshop is the music workshop card costing 100 kronor per term. He states rather matter-of-factly that:

"you’ll have to get this card" and that then you "just go in".

He regards the card as a necessary evil but nothing to dwell too much upon. Instead, there ensues a minor battle about the payment. When the lads decide to start playing they have to go to the staff and buy the card. But when they are already in the system, after the first term, they just wait for the staff to approach them for the fee and they do not volunteer to pay on their own accord. The battle then takes the form of apologies for not having that amount of money just then and after that there are promises to pay the day after or next week. This applies to the club regulars and not to the outside bands like the skinhead band Sven originally had an argument with.

Eventually, though, the lads pay, and they seem to care less about the outcome of the battle and more about the actual playing out of it. This is more important. The point is to see how far it can be taken, how long they can avoid paying and not to be able to finally get away with not having paid. This is also a silent battle, it is not discussed or planned at all among the lads. It does not take up their time but is only effective when acted out

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1A good quality cable costs over 100 kronor.
in the actual fights, on the occasions when they are approached by the staff. And that only occurs when staff members remember, which is not necessarily every time they see the lads concerned.

The staff sense that the battle is really an unnecessary one, and they are annoyed at having to nag about this issue. It threatens the good relationship they want to have with the lads. But the indignation of the staff is also due to an argument they frequently use in explaining the workings of the club. That they cannot understand why the lads do not pay, seeing that the money goes back to them again. "They're not paying us, they're paying themselves!" and "It's their workshop!" are ways of formulating this argument. The feeling is that the lads are really conducting a battle against themselves without realizing it and the staff, who are there only to help, are being unfairly treated. According to the staff, the lads do not recognize the proper roles the staff have, as the ones who provide the means and opportunities to play music, but seem to see them only as a hindrance.

**Hidden treasures**

For the lads, the practice of having to rent drumsticks and guitar cables is a despicable one. They feel the staff is trying to make money out of them and they do not understand the argument that the money comes back to them. Jonson, who had the more serious approach to his playing, is the only one to get his own cable. This, he says, is because he has got tired of the club’s cables which are of poorer quality and often bent and difficult to use. First of all, he wants better quality, but he also says that he does not want to rent a cable every time he decides to play. This is in line with his character of caring more about the quality of the sound, but also of being more prepared to compromise rather than fight.

Grubbe has a different strategy. As he is learning to be a roofer in school, he knows something about how ventilation systems are constructed. His idea is to hide a cable inside a ventilation shaft in the roof of the workshop, and so always have access to it whenever he wants to play. The staff is not always very particular about checking that cables are returned properly. When they ask, Grubbe will answer that yes, he certainly has

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1Compare Willis (1977), p. 70, who studied a "school counter culture" where hierarchies are clearly defined and notes how teachers avoid fighting lost battles but see to it that important ones never are fought.
returned the cable. Sometimes there is a different staff member who collects the cables from the one who hands them out, thus giving an opportunity to snatch one away.

The cable in the ventilation shaft is available to all who know about it, not just Grubbe, and it is used frequently. The staff never find out and they are still annoyed about the problem with the drumsticks and cables. As nobody except Jonson buys his own, and the strategy of inducing the lads to learn the moral lesson of respecting the property of the club seems to be a failure, the staff discuss other alternatives. This excerpt is from the same staff meeting as above:

Richard (recapitulating the last meeting): -Well, if we should try to remember, maybe, because I’m not sure, what we decided about the music ... we talked about drum sticks that break and cables and all that ... so then we said that we should NOT let them have sticks or cables and stuff like that but ... or if you’re with them on Tuesdays or if Sven is in there with the punk band ...

Sven (laughingly): -Sven and the punks! Never! I’ll never go in with them ...

Richard: -Alright then it’s me and the punks, when we’re in there ourselves, then we can use ‘em..

Sven: -Rent as usual, that is

Richard: -Yeah, that’s right, then the group that’s in there can ... but as soon as they’re finished or if you go out of there, then you take the stuff with you ... and then we’ll tell them to buy their own equipment ... that’s how we said, if I remember

So, this decision is, in a way, intended to further implement the notion of getting the lads to buy their own cables and drumsticks. It is not a very pragmatic idea, though. The staff is very rarely together with the lads in the workshop, and when they are, it would be a peculiar strategy to take the sticks and cables with them when they want to leave the room. And, it would also mean taking away a piece of equipment from somebody who had actually rented it. If this strategy were to be fully implemented, it would compromise the whole activity. But, as it turns out, the lads still do not buy the equipment and the staff do not insist on it in any consistent way.

The problem here is that the staff’s reasoning is far from the reality of the workshop and they have difficulties in assessing or evaluating what goes on in there. The music as such is rarely heard by the staff and it is not the basis of any assessment of the activity as a whole. Instead, the visible results are the broken equipment. In line with the moral argumentation of the staff, this can be seen as, in a sense, incriminating the lads. They are seen as not having respect and refusing to buy equipment of their own
almost as if they would prefer to break the club’s equipment instead. Cables and drumsticks are not seen by the staff as material that will have to be renewed with time, a view which might be more natural when it comes to playing rock music.

The difficulties the staff encounter in implementing their own decisions are further illustrated by an example concerning sports. Indoor-hockey is a very popular sport at the club and is played most often in the sports room, but also twice a week in the gymnasium next door. The problem here is similar; equipment breaks easily and disappears. The staff again discuss this issue at a staff meeting:

Richard: -Let’s repeat that stuff about the hockey sticks an’ all ... did we say they have their own sticks in the sports room ... and balls they can pawn or was it borrow
Janet: -For the youth club card ...
Richard: -Pawn for the youth club card ... and in the school hall they can borrow sticks and balls as long as we have any left ... and they could also borrow the masks, 'cos they made an awful noise about the knee-straps ...
Ann: -I have to ...
Richard: ... but they were only to be used for some tournament ...
Ann: -Now I have to ... I got to say ... last Wednesday I was in the school hall and then one of the goalies, one of them had all the stuff but the other had nothing ... and that meant that if I didn’t lend them gloves and knee-strings they wouldn’t be able to play with the large goals 'cause you can’t stand on your knees for an hour without the knee-strings, you just can’t ... your knees will hurt like hell ... and then I figured, when I’m in here, there’s nothing can get lost when I’m in here ... 'cos I felt it was wrong to refuse them ... so I broke what we decided last Monday ... I just couldn’t
Richard: -I would have ...
Ann: -yeah, well, I thought when you sit in there, it’s just crazy to have it like this and not let them have ... so I said okay this time and that I would bring it up again today ...
Richard: -well, it’s just a question of what we’ll do so we’ll be doing the same ...

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Ann: -I thought it felt so darned wrong when I knew we had it and I was sitting there an’ all ...
Sven: -That makes a difference ... if you’re sitting there ... and watching so they’ll put them back ...
Ann: -well, I felt just so stupid ... there the stuff was and they couldn’t borrow it ... and then they said “ohh then we can’t play today” so there you are ...
Richard: -alright, from now on, then, they’ll borrow face-masks and knee-strings when we’re with them in the hall ...

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Ann: -It would be best if they bought their own stuff ...
Sven: -But something’s wrong here ... when they’re training they don’t have any stuff but when there’s a match on suddenly they do ...
Richard: -exactly ...
Ann: -well, it felt totally wrong ... when we had the stuff and I was in there ...

Just as in the case of the workshop, the staff’s concern seems to be a mixture of economic and moral considerations. First of all, they do not readily accept that things get broken or stolen, as they are expensive to replace. But added to that is the feeling that the lads are deliberately breaking things or stealing or trying to get out of paying. It incorporates a feeling of having been almost personally insulted, as if the lads are doing all this to them, the staff. So, in a sense, all trouble of this kind is seen as a failure with respect to how they themselves are doing their job. They at first respond to the problem by trying to take away the opportunity for wrongdoing and, hopefully, make the lads learn a moral lesson at the same time. The staff then discover that the proposed action might go against the basic idea of the youth club, namely, to provide opportunities for different recreational activities which, of course, includes the availability of the necessary equipment. An adjustment is then usually made, compromising between the different demands.

Basically, though, the principles behind the activities are only rarely questioned by the staff, if not triggered by some practical question or problem. Ann above has to insist many times and in an emphatic tone, how badly she feels about the hockey game, thus making it clear that the rules decided upon at the staff meeting make the job awkward. It puts her and all staff members in a difficult, even impossible, situation if the rules are to be fully implemented. The retraction of the proposed rule is then made on the grounds of getting the staff out of future awkward situations, rather than on the larger issue of whether it is right to hold on to the equipment just because it runs the risk of being damaged or stolen. Ann raises this issue, and even if Sven at one point agrees with her, neither he nor anybody else takes this as a challenge to discuss working principles. Rather, they end the discussion by again casting suspicion on the lads. Ann then repeats her bad feelings about the affair and the issue is subsequently dropped. Her insistence works as an instigation to revise the rule, but not as an invitation to discuss the principle.

There is a similar pattern when the issues concern the music workshop. As stated above, it is never discussed whether cables and drumsticks should be considered as material with a short life. And that you have to count on renewing them at short intervals in order to run an effective music work-
Rather, a similar moral argument as in the above example prevails and it is triggered by a direct situation, for example, that somebody has not paid, or that the staff search for a cable for a concert and find a broken one. Another situation can be that a staff member has found him or herself in an awkward situation, like Ann just now, or Sven in the previous example.

What is beginning to emerge here is a picture of the staff’s ways of reasoning, their beliefs and views of the lads. Also, contrasted with this is a picture of the lads’ ways of dealing with this. The strategies of both groups are in sharp contrast to each other in this type of description. It highlights discussions by the staff, of imminent problems that have to be dealt with, and the lads’ reactions to rules they find oppressive and hard to accept. The point here, though, is not so much to see the lads as engaged in some kind of guerilla warfare against what they see as the narrowmindedness of the staff. Rather, it is to highlight some of the ways in which the people, who are responsible for organizing the youth club activities, think and act, and how the people who use the youth club facilities, respond to this. And, how their ongoing actions jointly shape the practices of the youth club.

Many of the differences can be ascribed to a very basic and simple fact: the lads and the staff have different conceptions of what the club is, and should be. They do not subscribe to the same definitions of what happens at the club, and do not share the same goals for the activities. For the lads, it has to do with their leisure time, they want to have fun, and not be disturbed while having it. The staff have pedagogical ambitions, they want to teach common-sense morals.

This differentiation seems fairly obvious as far as the lads are concerned, but it becomes problematic for the staff. It seems they, in a sense, feel that staff and lads alike should have the same preconditions and share the same understanding of the functions of the club. Hence their frustration with the small battles that ensue, and their distrust of the lads. These

\[\text{Willis (1977), also notes a similar kind of differentiation. The difference, though, is that it was clear to both groups, the boys and the teachers in his study, that there was a differentiation and even animosity between them (see for example p. 62-63, 70 and 130). Here, though, the notion is that these relations are not so strongly defined as divided by the staff, something that can be problematic for them as they seem to adhere to a mixture of roles. This notion will be further discussed in the last Chapter.} \]
conflicts are carried on as part of the everyday life of the club and are not
colimited to the more specialized activity of the music workshop.

The musical box

So far, the lads have been able to cope with the various rules. They
manage to hide the cable, they dodge payment of fees and they succeed in
borrowing the hockey equipment. These things do not represent a big
problem anymore, and when talking about them to me, these are not issues
to be upset about. When they find solutions to the problem, for example
the vent shaft, the nuisance of having to rent a cable is cleared away, and
they are free to go about their business as they want to.

Soon enough, though, a phenomenon new to the club is introduced, and
this will, for some of the lads, represent a new disturbance, instead of a
positive addition to the club environment as it is intended by the staff.

The staff is approached by a company which rents out jukeboxes, and
becomes interested in the offer to place a jukebox in the club. Playing a
record would cost 2 kronor of which 60 öre would go to the club and the
rest, 1.40, to the rental company. The matter is discussed and decided on
by the staff at a regular staff meeting. They order the jukebox which will
be installed in the café. The staff inform the visitors about it some weeks
before it actually arrives, by telling them in passing, but nobody seems to
react in any particular way. Only when it has been set up and been in
operation for some weeks does it become a target of opinions:

Grubbe: -And now we can't play tapes in the café anymore ...
K.E: -what, why ...
Karlson: -they've ... a a fucking jukebox, for forty-eight thousand ...
Grubbe: -course they've disconnected the speakers and bought a jukebox ... to get
money from ...
Karlson: -then they get money ...
K.E: -really ...
Grubbe: -can't play tapes in the café ... oh bloody hell ... it makes you sick ...
Karlson: -can't watch the video either ...
Grubbe: ... make money on us ... the idiots ...

There is great indignation over the fact that the jukebox has meant the
elimination of what is important to Grubbe and Karlson and many of the
120
other lads. They are no longer able to play their own tapes in the café. Not all of the lads do this, it is mainly those who play in the workshop and their closest friends who have developed this habit of bringing their own tapes, often with whole LPs recorded. Grubbe and Karlson also used the hi-fi tape-deck to play the tapes they record in the workshop. All this makes the café a more homely place for the lads, with their favorite music being played. There are others, though, who have other preferences and feel disturbed. Some of the girls, for example, sometimes leave to go into the sitting-room instead, and some members of the staff sometimes feel disturbed too.

For Grubbe and Karlsson, though, the end of playing tapes is a heartfelt issue. Their indignation is real and their interpretation of the staff’s action is somewhat conspiratory. For Grubbe, the main fact is that the jukebox has been used as a pretext to disconnect the speakers, thus depriving him of the possibility of listening to "his" music. He brings his own tapes with music from records but also likes to hear his friends’ tapes, and so have access to more music. Not many of the lads have their own hi-fi’s at home, and so the tapes are a way of developing their musical knowledge. Also, as Grubbe and his friends spend so much time at the club, this is one of the few places where they can listen to music with some continuity.

The tapes are most often recordings of whole LPs, or compilations of the songs of only one or two bands. Most typically, they have one LP or group, on one side of the tape and another on the reverse side. The lads then sit at a table in the café listening and discussing various issues ranging from the music that they are listening to, to completely unrelated matters.

In addition to this, the possibility of playing their own tapes is important as it enables Grubbe and Karlsson to play their recorded music from the workshop. They want to hear their music played in the café, and for Grubbe this is also a part of a kind of "public relations" scheme of promoting Lars Keso, and, of course, of promoting himself. It represents a way of becoming, as he said, "notorious" just like playing live was. On the personal level, this is his strongest reason for being frustrated. He has lost a chance of "going public" and of drawing attention to himself. The fame of Lars Keso and of Grubbe’s filthy lyrics is upheld by frequent

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1See p. 27.
2The visitors use mainly C-90 cassettes that normally have space for one LP per side.
3See p. 56.
performances. This has given them continuous attention from their friends and from the staff, and Grubbe revelled in it. Now the musical box has at one blow destroyed all this and Grubbe’s anger and frustration is considerable.

Karlson’s indignation in this conversation is focussed on the economic aspect. He first points out the fact that the jukebox is a costly piece of equipment, naming the exaggerated figure of 48 000 kronor, as if implying that the club puts its money into expensive gadgets instead of on the lads. He is then seconded by Grubbe on the issue of the staff making money out of them, the lads, who will now have to pay the two kronor in order to listen to music. Any argument to the effect that the club will now get more money to buy better equipment is not recognized. This is, in any case, not directly visible, only the impossibility of playing their own tapes is. And this certainly hurts too.

On the occasion referred to earlier, when Grubbe and Karlson had played their first Lars Keso songs in the café, two members of the staff were there too:

Janet: -What’s that, ”Helloween” or what?
K.E. -No no it’s them playing ...
Ann: -No wonder we thought it sounded like that then ...

Their remarks are utter ed with a mixture of a clearly derogatory and a somewhat joking tone of voice. To them, Grubbe and Karlson are not doing anything in particular, just listening to a tape as they have done so many times before. The attitude of the staff towards that is not derogatory, but they do not see it as an activity of any particular importance either. The principal feeling for some of them, though, is that they sometimes get tired of hearing the same tapes over and over. This feeling is shared by some of the visitors too, and at times the staff ask for the volume to be turned down or for a change of tape. Sometimes they order the lads to turn the volume down and sometimes a staff member does it himself.

The tapedeck, as will be remembered, is situated in the reception-room which is normally out of bounds to the lads. Still, they go in quite freely to change tapes. Most often a staff member is in the room or thereabouts but when nobody is in, the door is kept locked and they have to ask someone to

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1See p. 45.
open it. There are complaints at the staff meetings about the lads going into the reception-room, which is also where the staff have their desks and some of their equipment. They want some place in the club where they can work without being disturbed. Even so, a balance has been struck where the tacit understanding seemed to be that the lads would go in only in connection with the tapedeck, be quick about it and then get out. They would not touch anything else or stay on in the room. Still, the staff is not content with the situation and when the jukebox solution presents itself, it is readily welcomed.

After some months, the jukebox becomes an integrated, and for most lads unproblematic part of the life in the café. It has records of various styles, ranging from pop ballads, chart pop to mainstream rock and heavy metal. There is always someone to put the two coins in the machine and select a tune. When Grubbe, Jonson and the other heavy metal fans sit in the café, their choices dominate. The jukebox has songs by "Helloween", "Bon Jovi" and "Yngwie Malmsteen" but not, for example, "Metallica". Of those in the machine, "Helloween" is the only band to somewhat satisfy Grubbe’s and Karlson’s ideal of good music¹ and is often played. But, these two do not always have their say when it comes to selecting the songs. Some of their other friends have other preferences and, as a result, the music played in the café becomes more varied.

The opponents of the jukebox have accepted it with only a few complaints, which are then met by the staff with the arguments that now more people than Grubbe and Karlson can play their favourite music, and, in addition, the club gets more money to invest in the music workshop. Grubbe and Karlson and many of the older lads often take a seat in the café, put on a record, buy a cup of coffee and read the morning paper. All of them thus adjust to the new situation without much ado, and the old practice of playing tapes is subsequently dropped. This might seem incongruent with the strong reaction of Grubbe and Karlson, the fact that they react so strongly and then readily adapt themselves, but this is not necessarily so. Their anger is directed at those responsible for the change and this feeling is the one that remains in the sense that it helps to establish and maintain a difference and a distance between the lads and the staff. It is a confirmation of a feeling of division between these two groups that some of the lads seem to want to uphold. They seem to take the opportunity to

¹See, for example, p. 50
wallow a little in feelings of unfairness by keeping up their complaints. In fact, even if they do use the machine they still, a year later, express the same frustration and anger at no longer being able to play tapes. They then sound as if the whole affair is quite recent and not from a year ago. Thus, the jukebox is used as an issue that upholds a kind of differentiation between them and the staff.

Cops and robbers

What makes this issue evoke such strong feelings is also the fact that nothing can be done about it. In the beginning, some of the lads see the loss of the tape-playing possibility as a limitation of their freedom, but no one ever thinks about taking any action against it. They always use the jukebox when in the café, and never refrain from doing so as if to make a kind of protest against it. Grubbe and Karlson accept the situation and retain only their muffled anger, maybe because they cannot find a way of re-establishing the old situation. They do not seem to see this as an option, to try to find some compromise or discuss with the staff about letting them play their own tapes now and then.

The upholding of the differentiation is intuitive, like feeling that the staff by definition will never be on the same side as they are, and that any compromise will still be on the terms laid down by the staff. In one sense, this would actually be true. A scenario of different hours for the jukebox and the tape deck would put the emphasis on organization. A timetable would have to be created and this represents a way of thinking more in line with the youth club as an institution, and would be far from the ideology of "having fun" where you would put a tape on "when you just feel like it".

So, nothing is done to change the new situation and, instead, Grubbe and Karlson retain their hard feelings and uphold the differences.

When the jukebox has been in operation for about a year, something happens that brings it back into the focus of attention and discussion at a staff meeting:

Richard: -Well, I'd like to start with this ... last Monday or Tuesday, wasn't it ... when the that machine broke down. Is there anybody who would ... somehow ... know anything about who it was could've done it ...
Janet: -well it was me that was ... who was there in the cafeteria ... I was with those girls baking a cake ... and then this lad comes up and says that it's broken ... "Are you pulling my leg" I say, 'cos he looked so funny you know ... looked so funny like (several staff members laugh)

... well he did somehow ... "you joking" ... "no" he says, "come an' see for yerself" ... so I went there, and there, there was just dead silence in the cafeteria ... so I asked there must've been someone who'd heard ... nobody said anything and there was a funny feeling in there ... so either there's some who'd seen it or they wouldn't have looked so funny ... and then some girl said "well you can't hear it if the music's not on" ... but then I asked if it was broken before ...

Ann: -BEFORE they start jumping on it ... would hear if it was ... you'd think ...

Janet: -and I asked was it broken when you started playing ... "yees" ... then why didn't you call me then.."noo, I wanted to see if it worked anyway" ...

Ann: -well, there are effective ways of finding out ... just to close down the billiard room and the sitting-room and the sports-room for a couple o'days ... then they'll tell ...

Janet: -what was that...I don't follow ...

Richard: -Has anybody reported this to that ... eh ... well ... there's a phone number there

Ann: -no ... I don't know if John has ... he's the one that had some contact ...

Janet: -well, when John ... 'cos John picked up the broken glass ... it looked like ... maybe they'd had a chair, 'cos there was like a small small hole in the middle ... so maybe they had a chair ... and ... pushed ... and you won't be able to find out who was there ...

Ann: -Well you do if you close down ... it'll be tiresome for a while, of course ... usually comes out though ...

In this discussion, Janet, Richard and Ann, one of the younger staff members, represent three different trains of thought. Janet is concerned with telling her story and does this very vividly, but she is not able to really understand what has happened. She has to recapitulate the event and relate it to her workmates and is somewhat confused at not quite being able to figure out the chain of events leading to her being told that something has happened to the jukebox. She speculates about how the people responsible could have broken the glass panel on the machine. Ann’s reaction to this story is one of indignation and she starts to expound on how to find the culprit. Richard is more intent on what to do with the broken jukebox. Even if he starts the discussion by asking for the guilty one, he does this rather hesitantly, as though just wanting to get the issue started.

None of them can give a more exact explanation of what has happened. The jukebox has been out of order before. It sometimes fails to work when a coin is inserted, and this time the visitor who has paid has apparently been violent with it and broken a panel of glass. Janet can only speculate as to who it is and how it has come about, but she is not able to extract a full picture from what she has been told.
Ann’s idea is to close down part of the club, thus creating a split within the group of visitors and someone will then give information on the culprit. Janet is so involved in her story that she fails to take this in, even when Ann repeats it. Richard seems to ignore it and he takes a more pragmatic attitude towards how to get the jukebox mended. So, in this case, it is Ann who feels indignant, just like Sven previously had, and again the proposal for strong measures is ignored.

According to Janet’s story, one of the girls had pointed to the fact that the jukebox was already malfunctioning, thus lessening the importance of what had actually happened. The broken panel on the jukebox is somewhat justified by this fact or, at least, attention is drawn away from the issue of who is guilty of breaking it. Janet becomes involved in arguing about this and at the end of her story, she can only speculate on what has actually happened to the jukebox. Janet is more complacent and has not pressed the visitors as to who actually broke the glass panel. She only asks if any of them has "heard" something, not "seen" anything, thus not directly incriminating those present. It is almost as if she does not want to find out who it is, as this will mean that more serious, official action will have to be taken. As the issue of trying to find out who did it is not expounded, it is subsequently dropped and will not be discussed again. It seems that there evolves a tacit understanding that this question will not be further pursued.

The question of the jukebox triggers other, similar, issues at the staff meeting. This is the immediate continuation:

Susan: -Well, then, I can say that the bag of stolen sweets was lying in my hall when I came home on Friday night ...
Richard: -with the sweets in it ...
Susan: -YES ...
Janet: -what bag ...
Susan: -so I’ve put it back in the ...
Janet: -haha
Susan: -some of it ...
Richard (laughingly): -so that talk I had was effective ...
Susan: -some of it can’t be used 'cos it’s ruined ... but some of it is ...
Janet: -but I think ... 'cos I asked John but he didn’t go past there when he took out the garbage ... so then it has to ...
Ann: -it could’ve been a lad who ...
Janet: -There was no ... was no delivery that day ... it’s a bit strange that this door was unlocked ...
Ann: -probably some lad had opened it... Because it can't be, we have to lock it from the inside... can't be closed from the outside...

Richard: -well, let's take the machine... we have to call and say it's broken down... does anybody know the number or can call... no?

Ann: -if I get the number, I'll call...

Richard: -I think it's there somewhere... glued to the jukebox... and now about the door... again I'd like to plead... it happens now and again... you can't, it's not enough to just look in... to the billiard room for example... and think it's closed... you HAVE to go there and pull on the window or the door or whatever... and check in the staff-room 'cos it doesn't have to be in the evening... someone might've opened it during the day to get some air... and the same in the sports room... they might look like they're closed but you have to get up there and pull 'em... and really make sure they're locked... an' I don't know but I'd want you to write this in the minutes... and it's the same... it's... when they're in the workshop... it's very easy, they just open the handle and shut the window and it looks like it's closed... so it's not enough just to look... you have to pull at the doors and windows or we'll have all those problems... and what's most worrying is... well, now it was sweets that's not so... but next time there's hullabaloo in there... with ketchup on the walls and stolen equipment and we don't get anything on the insurance... there's no breaking in... it was open...

Instead of continuing to discuss the jukebox and whether or not they should concentrate on finding the culprit, the staff turn to other, related issues. Susan, one of the younger staff members, who usually takes sides with the lads even if she is not so outspoken, has remained silent until now. She reports that some sweets that had been stolen a few nights earlier have been returned and found outside her own apartment, on the other side of town. Richard immediately relates this to his talk with some of the lads after the theft and he sounds as if he is both happy and a little surprised at the fact. Janet continues her old train of thought, of finding out what has actually happened, but this time with this new issue of the sweets. Apparently, a door to the youth club has been found open and through which the culprit is supposed to have entered. At the mention of the door, Richard holds a kind of speech, urging caution when it comes to doors and windows. It is not easy to see if the windows are locked or just pulled shut. You have to test them to make sure. In his capacity as manager of the club, he sees it as his duty to point this out. It is intended more as a reminder than a reprimand and nobody takes it as such either. It is almost like a gathering of forces to fight back, or to nullify the possibilities of a break-in, with all the problems this would bring about.

Implicit in these two excerpts is the idea that having to find the culprit will mean a more official involvement of the police, and of the social authorities. This seems to be undesirable and so when Ann’s, and earlier
Sven's frustrations result in suggestions of more severe and official action, this is quietly rejected as nobody else seconds it at the time. The event has more the function of a release of personal and temporary aggressions within the organized form of the staff meeting, when you are among your peers and can get a certain amount of agreement in principle. Explicitly, Richard talks about lads breaking in, and speculates on what can happen in the future, implying that more serious crimes can be committed. The theft of the sweets is not seen as so serious, especially since they were returned, anonymously of course, when he appealed to the lads. Still, this implication is not based on any previous experience, nothing of any greater value has ever been stolen and the incidents that have occurred are considered by the staff more as annoying mischief than criminal activity. Here is one more example:

Janet comes into the music workshop together with Henry, one of Grubbe's friends at the youth club. He says to Janet, referring to Grubbe, who stopped playing when they entered:

Henry: -Well, ask 'im, 'e knows ...
Grubbe: -What?
Henry: -well, you said you'd go back ... yesterday ... that's why ...
Grubbe: -whaddyamean ... I know nothin' ...
Janet: -Well, it's nothing really ... just wanted to check, so we'll know ... well, the window was open ... nothing about it, just so we know so nothing happens
Grubbe: -oh yeah ... well, I just went home ... I wasn't here ...
Henry (to Janet): -yeah, well, just don't you blame it on me ...
Janet: -well, no ... it's just so we'll know ...

Janet and Henry leave the workshop.

K.E. -What was that all about ...
Grubbe: -well, they'd left the window open last night and we'd come back an' steal some sweets but then we never did ... I went home instead.

Here, Grubbe does not at first know what this is all about and when he understands the issue, he still does not know what Henry has told Janet. As I see it, he pretends not to understand until Janet, somewhat defensively, makes it clear that there will be no repercussions and that she only wants to know what has happened. The reason is that the staff found a window
open when they arrived in the morning. Grubbe merely states that he had gone home the previous evening and so he does not know anything, and Henry also succeeds in diverting any suspicions that could fall on himself. Janet has not really learned anything about the event except that Grubbe and Henry apparently are innocent and the question about who had opened the window has been avoided.

Janet, being more complacent as a person, is never the one to call for hard measures against the lads. She does not support them either, as Susan often does, but she usually remains neutral. Here, she is placed in a situation she does not like much and she is not really interested in finding out who the guilty person is. Rather, she is drawn into the situation by Henry who aggressively accuses Grubbe of being involved, in order to divert suspicion from himself. He takes the initiative, and in the workshop it is an easy matter for Grubbe to do the same too. The two of them jointly succeed in wriggling their way out of the situation. And doing it through a kind of jargon\(^1\).

Henry here, of course, tells on Grubbe, who is in fact his friend, but he knows that this does not really represent any danger, that Grubbe is perfectly capable of handling the situation. This event is not discussed by them and leads to no animosity, or anger on Grubbe’s part against Henry. At least, it is never referred to again and the two lads continue to be friends. Grubbe just brushes it off with his rather casual explanation when Henry and Janet have left.

So, it is as if the staff’s indignation at what they consider mischief never leads to any serious or official action. This strategy, of course, enables them to maintain a façade of a well-managed youth club, and a sense that there really are no large problems to deal with. Still, the frustration exists and influences their view of the visitors but the lads sense that there will be no real repercussions, and so Henry’s telling on Grubbe is no real danger.

**Differentiation**

The staff’s ways of reasoning about these events represent a move from the individual and personal to the general and collective. Individual problems, and the suspicions cast on individuals as culprits and causes of trouble, are

\(^1\)Willis (1977), also notes jargon as a way to get away with forbidden actions without losing face. See, for example, p. 29-32.
transposed to apply to the whole group of youth-club lads. This generalization works as a buffer for the staff, who, in practice, are reluctant to turn to official sanctions to deal with the problems such as, for example, calling in the police. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, it represents the incrimination of a whole group of people instead. Breaking in or the reluctance to pay fees are seen, not as individual actions, but almost as potential properties of youth. This is a dilemma for the staff insofar as they do not want the individual to get into trouble and become subject to actions from the social authorities, as would be the case if the police were to be involved. The staff certainly want to protect "their" lads and all the offences that are actually committed are, everyone agrees, minor. It is more mischief than crime. The police are, instead, only used as a deterrent factor, and they are sometimes invited to the club to lecture on issues like drugs. There is a room at the club reserved for the police and a patrol is sometimes there, about once or twice every six months. Richard once calls on this patrol to "have a talk" with some of the lads, but he is sure to make clear to the officers that he only wants the talk, and that no other measures are to be taken.

Thus, the more general accusation made by Sven, Ann and Richard is more an outlet of frustration. Still, it does imply a view of the lads as problems. And, of the staff as the ones responsible for rectifying those problems. The upbringing role the staff subscribes to has, as described earlier, a strong moral component. It has to do with teaching moral standards of responsibility. As the pragmatic problems that emerge in the club have to do with economic factors and the destruction of equipment, the moral emphasis comes to centre around respect for property. The staff justifies this emphasis by arguing that the property in reality belongs to the lads themselves, that they are in effect only destroying their own opportunities for having fun.

At the Elmridge club, Sven and Ann most readily assume the role of moral educators and try to make more general points of direct issues and confrontations, as Sven did on the issue of checking membership cards at the beginning of this chapter. As will be remembered, this was triggered by frustration over the visitors’ actions. In contrast, Susan and sometimes Janet have a different style which, in comparison, might seem more complacent. It avoids conflict and does not lead to frustration for them to the same extent. Susan, when she describes this in an interview, gives a picture of herself as being somewhat different from the other staff members:
Susan: -Well, I'm not the one to go with the whip all the time ... you can't do this an' you
can't do that and me ... you can fuss with me an' insult me like ... well, not like
that but ... then there's all the youth club leaders ... there's different groups
among the lads that you turn to ... maybe I don't see what the others are doing ...
/ ... but I only think about this when I see what the other people on the staff are
doing ...

Sven has another, somewhat self-critical, view when interviewed about the
club and his relationship to the lads:

K.E: -So maybe you even feel a little mad at them?
Sven: -Noo ... it's us that's made 'em like this ...
K.E: -how do you mean?
Sven: -well, it's always served up on a silver platter ... we never demanded from them that
they take any initiatives an' responsibility ... an' you can't do it ... if they throw a
newspaper on the floor we just go an' pick it up, well most of us do ... an' then
you shout now an' again an' get angry ... well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little but
that's the way it is, like ...

Sven remarks that it is in a sense his own fault how the lads turn out. He
sees his position as the role model who, by his own actions, teaches the lads
moral standards. The problem for him is that the staff are too complacent
and do not demand anything from the lads. Ann, for her part, sees her role
as a guide and helper:

Ann: -I mean people have to take responsibility for their own life an' you have to ... you
have to think for yourself ... that's what you should get the lads to realize ... how
does this society work an' how does this youth club work ... Yeah, how does
everything work really ... because often ... I've been thinking this myself, why do I
live ... why am I here working eight hours a day an' eating an' sleeping ... I think
many ... like they don't have any influence over what they're doing really ... but
they just go along all the time ... it's so easy just go along ... in school ... at sports
an' at the club an' you can go along at work then later when they start working ...
so ... everything is just so ready-made nowadays ... I think that's important that
you get the lads to feel ... like this thing I've decided an' this thing I've done ... for
myself like ...

Ann's more existential argument has the aim of getting the lads to take
responsibility for their lives and not just "go along" with whatever
happens. She sees it as her objective to get the lads to feel they take
responsibility for what they do at the youth club.

The dilemma for Ann, Sven and the rest of the staff, is that when it
comes to the everyday life of the club and the instances when moral issues
and responsibilities come up, they themselves are often frustrated and
angry at some mischief they consider to be the lads' doing. In practice, this
type of frustration is never positive but, rather, consists of reactions like Ann’s when she once said:

"why do they throw their used-up snuff onto the ceiling, they don’t do that at home, do they".

In so far as this is transformed into some action taken against the lads, it is more along the lines of Richard’s "talk" that also eventually led to the return of the stolen sweets. It is never a question of guiding the lads through problems they themselves formulate.

The lads, for their part, do not see the members of the staff as individuals, even if they have definite views on who they like and who they dislike. Grubbe and Karlson, in their feelings about the jukebox, also have a view of the staff on a generalized level. To uphold a division between them and the staff means to see them not as individuals but only as "members" of the staff. They expound on personal qualities only when they have a negative opinion of somebody:

Grubbe: -an’ her ... she seems to hate young people ... she’s really chosen the wrong profession she has ... she got called a bitch ... even written on the wall ...

Positive opinions can be created, when, for example, talking about a specific instance or quality that would act as an explanation of somebody’s character:

Grubbe: ... but he’s fuckin’ good in that way ... but he’s got this craze like ... he can get really moral like y’know ...
Karlson: -but if you ... thinking about what he’s sayin’ ... he’s right like’ ...
Grubbe: -yeah, ’cos he wasn’t the cutest little lad when he was small ... like ...
Karlson: -an’ he doesn’t want us to ...
Grubbe: -yeah, he wants ...

Here, the staff member gets a positive assessment even though he is often involved in controversies with the lads and gets indignant at them. Still, he talks to them and tries to work things out directly and this is what Grubbe is referring to in his first remark. Then their view is that he is more knowledgeable, because when he was a lad he had been more like them. He supposedly knows the trouble you can get into, and does not want them to

1See p. 124.
make the same mistakes and Grubbe and Karlson recognize this as a sympathetic quality in him. But it still does not lead them to do what he wants or even to talk to him differently than they do with the other staff members. He is seen as too "moral".

So, for the lads, the only mitigating factor involved in trying to take the role of upbringer and controller is that some of the staff themselves know, supposedly from their own experiences, what kind of trouble you can get into. And, this does not mean that the lads will listen to this, or act accordingly; it is only a way of formulating an explanation of the staff's actions. For the lads, the club is not a place to be given lessons in, and they seem more to see the staff's actions and views as unavoidable qualities of being grown-ups, as if being older automatically constitutes a need to teach and reprimand those who are younger. Something that the staff members just cannot help.1

Talking

So, the staff and lads maintain a differentiation and a division between their respective groups and, as a prerequisite of this they uphold a more generalized conception of each other. Susan sums this up in relating what she sees as the lads' perspective. For the lads:

"mum an' dad is mum an' dad, all grown-ups are grown-ups ... it's not the same thing as boys an' girls ..."

Grubbe, in turn, sums up what he considers to be the main characteristics of the staff in his remark on the previous page about having a "craze" for "morals".

The differentiation on the part of the lads is maintained mainly through the style of interaction. The inner circle of older lads at the youth club, to which all the music players and their closest friends belong, has developed a certain style of talking in encounters with the staff. The example of Janet is one instance of this, with the result of luring her into forgetting her original objective of finding out about the open window. Another quality

1Compare Willis (1977), p. 62-63, who describes differentiation not as a breakdown but as a system that works because both parties know each other's strategies and have ways to counter them. Here, though, there seem to be similarities, for example, in the lads' views of the staff, the issue can be more complicated and subtle.
is overfriendliness¹, where a member of the staff would be greeted in a slightly exaggerated way and asked about his or her health with pretended concern. This is done in a tone of voice and wording which is hardly noticeable as special to anyone else but the lads, and hardly ever by the staff member subjected to it. Instead, they take the inquiry as genuine and report happily on the state of their health.

In a sense, the jargon becomes institutionalized. This excerpt is from a conversation with Hanson, one of the older lads, eighteen at the time:

Hanson: -well, it’s like we’re looking for someone to pick on every night ...
K.E.: -How do you ...
Hanson: -pick on them?
K.E.: -yeah ...
Hanson: -everything they do is just wrong ...
K.E.: -an’ you let ’em know it ...
Hanson: -yeah ... maybe they say something ... an’ you turn it round like ...
K.E.: -an’ who do you do it to ...
Hanson: -well, Sven ... an’ Susan ... Susan it is this week ...
K.E.: -so it’s periodical, is it ...
Hanson: -eh ... just turns out ... like ...

What is going on is a game with language on different levels, where the point for the lads is to come out on top. There will always be some double meaning or ambiguity in what is said, and the important feature is that something is going on which the staff do not understand, and this will make them look funny or fooled. Hanson’s way of describing this is like a successful strategy almost consciously organized, but he also states that it can work more spontaneously. It ”just turns out” this way. So it is more of a tacit strategy but one that the lads immediately recognize and excel in, thus very often keeping up a kind of double interaction with the staff.

The style, of course, differs, depending on who is involved in the conversations and what subject is discussed. The main issue, though, is that it leaves the lads with the feeling of being on top, of having instigated an interaction in which an ambiguity which only they can sense has been upheld. Partly, this is a myth as some of the staff members understand, but many times it leads to the staff being frustrated without quite grasping the

¹See Willis (1977), p. 13, who also notes this phenomenon.
reason why. When Ann had "given in" to the lads and let them borrow the hockey equipment, this could be seen by the lads as a kind of victory for their style of nagging and looking desolately at the ruined game. For her, though, it was more of a moral dilemma in terms of the organization of the club’s activities and not a question of her being tricked into doing something she would ordinarily not do\(^1\). But when Janet had had to abandon the question of the window being left open, she had clearly been outmanoeuvred by Henry and Grubbe.

Susan is the only one to play the game with the lads on their own terms. In this excerpt, she talks about conversations with the lads that can evolve into a playful flirtation:

Susan: -It’s the older ones I usually talk to ... I don’t know if it has to do with me ... if I ... like ... hahah ... I almost think so ... ’cos they ... um ... er ... actually ... fool around like ... an’ then I do it to them of course ... I think it’s just as much fun to fool around with them like ... it sure is ... I mean I’m not the one to ... hahah ... pull away when they get going at it, makin’ suggestions ... it’s just a matter of doing the same ... an’ then it’s even funnier for them ... 

K.E: -yeah ...

Susan: -an’ I think that’s quite funny too ... an’ if I get embarrassed it’s real fun too, I think ... you ’ave to play ’em along a bit too ... can’t be a stiff like ...

K.E: -so it’s some sort of contact ...

Susan: -sure is ...

Sven, on the other hand, gets into a different situation when he reacts to Grubbe’s and Karlson’s songs:

Sven: -well now, Grubbe and the rest of them ... the band ... well, Lars Keso ... they had their show down here with those abominable lyrics with ... well, only cock an’ cunt an’ fuck ... an’ then people told them ... shit, you won’t be allowed to play with those lyrics ... an’ then Grubbe comes up to me an’ says “now we’ve got some new lyrics” ... an’ what do you think they were about ... pollution, all of them, all the news everything about pollution ... It’s a sign that somewhere it’s there ... they know what it’s all about or they’re thinking about it ... otherwise they wouldn’t write all their songs about pollution ... an’ you often get to hear, shit, you don’t ’ave unbleached paper here fuckin’ polluters ... in many situations ... so they, yeah ... they’re aware in many situations ... ’cos things are like they are ...

This event is similar to that described in chapter 3 where Lars Keso use a “serious” lyric to fend off criticism. Not that Grubbe and Karlson are uninterested in pollution or other social problems, for example, drugs but

\(^{1}\)See p. 117-118.
here they use themes they know Sven will be impressed by, and then he will probably leave their other texts alone. They are only diverting attention, and having a laugh at his expense at the same time. In fact, there were no anti-pollution lyrics, but Sven never bothered to check this out. His gullibility is also a result of wishful thinking. He is almost exuberant over the change in the band’s repertoire, because he so very much wants them to be persons who are aware and responsible.

So, this almost constant ambiguity on the part of the lads is constitutive of the interaction between them and the staff. Only through playing along can a more personal relationship be established, as in the case of Susan. With her, the language game is also slightly different. It almost helps to create contact instead. But with most of the others it establishes and maintains distance, and is a constitutive factor in the differentiation thus created within the youth club.

But a similar kind of jargon is also prevalent among the lads themselves. Not with the purpose of keeping up a division or distance between them in the same sense as with the staff, but still upholding a hierarchy where the verbally more clever dominate. There are clear differences in the style of a conversation between, for example, Grubbe and Karlson, who are good friends and will not try to outdo each other verbally, and a conversation taking place at a full café table with many lads competing to take the floor. Paul, eighteen years old, and one of the regulars, here talks about his experience of some relations within the group:

Paul: -oh God, it's tough sometimes 'cos you 'ave to be on the alert all the time like ... you mustn't be uninteresting yerself like ... that'd be embarrassing ... an' if you say anything wrong..ohohoh that'd be just wonderful ... yeah it's too fuckin' ... soon enough you 'ave to keep yer mouth shut ...

K.E: -among the lads?

Paul: -well, just Hanson is enough ... enough with one of 'em saying summat an' then someone starts laughin' an' then, well an' his mate in turn ... well, if he thought it was funny then I might as well laugh too, an' then it's turned out this way ... Hanson's a fuckin bastard at singling you out ... an' getting everyone against you oh oh / ... somebody asked me for a fag an' I'd only got two left so I says I 'aven't got any an' then he comes up an' says "you smokin' again" ... he just put me ...

K.E: -Hanson?

Paul: -yeah ... "I know you've got some" an' he starts tearing at my pockets an' then he takes out his own fags "I know how to offer" like ... oh it was fuckin' close I nailed 'im ... / ... but it's different not to be the victim ... listenin' to Hanson nagging at somebody ... then he's funny like ... but when you're the victim ... well, he's funny that way when he's pinning somebody down like ... he always gets something in, an arrow smack in the heart like ... but when it's you that gets it ... but now I've learnt ... you just have to be dead fast an' give 'im a comment back
Paul’s strategy to fend of Hanson’s verbal battering is to find something equally embarrassing with which to counter him. He also stresses the speed and skill that has to be employed in order to manage to stay on top. Later in the conversation, he expounds on what he considers his strategy with Hanson:

Paul: -It’s just like he’s testin’ how far he can go with people ... how far he can push ... to what limit he can push you like ... I used to ... my limit, I used to take it a bit before that, so he won’t get down to my real limit like ... well, I mean I don’t really know what ... so if I’m a little mad like ... an’ he starts ... you just have to react immediately rather than just go an’ get angrier an’ angrier an’ then get real mad like ... never know what happens then ...

 Apparently, Paul consciously reacts to Hanson’s bullying before he himself can get really angry and a real fight breaks out. This kind of reflexivity that Paul, and to some extent Hanson earlier, displays, is not commonplace, though. Most of the lads do not talk about how they talk, they just do, but Paul is more observant about what happens around him.

The jargon is acted out with different degrees of mastery. Mats, the singer in the first band, is in one instance involved in a party game where the task is to guess words. The word ”fat” comes up in the game and nobody can guess it, when one of the players suddenly shouts: ”like Mats”. Mats, who really was quite corpulent, reacts immediately. He throws his empty coffee-cup at the speaker and says with a perfectly calm but at the same time very hard tone of voice:

Mats: -You don’t say such things y’know ... some people are actually very sensitive about this kind of talk ... I’m not like that ...

The boy who spoke gets angry with the thrown cup but is at the same time somewhat embarrassed and, above all, confused by Mats’ reaction. At his way of turning the statement around by saying that he himself is ”not like that” and at the same time reacting to the contrary. Mats continues, and emphasizes the comedy of the situation without letting go of his hard voice and stern look by telling him:
"stand up if you wanna sit down" and immediately after: "shut up if you wanna speak".1

He verbally masters the event and turns the embarrassment away from himself and onto the one who originally instigated it.

The jargon is a way of constantly upholding the relationships between the lads, and the ones who master it well, like Mats, Hanson and for that matter Grubbe, are on top. This seems actually to be the most important ground for establishing hierarchies within the group. Being a good musician does not amount to much if you do not master the jargon. Jonson, for example, who is the best guitarist but does not have the same verbal skill, is never prominent in any other way. Grubbe always gets the better of him and he even states once, when the former has just left the club, that

"Jonson ... even the name's ridiculous".

Grubbe, of course, who is engaged in his personal project of promotion, of getting "notorious", often uses his verbal skills in telling everybody about Lars Keso and about his songs. The lyrics of those songs can also be seen as part of the jargon. This is how Grubbe describes the writing of lyrics:2

Grubbe: -it was just idiot-lyrics ... filthy ... it's not that hard ... that's the way we talk all the time ... you just take it ... comes out of yer head like ...

As the lyrics have been important for the band's success at the Elmridge club, they are also part of the reason for the dependence of Lars Keso on the club and on their friends-as-audience. Their music and their performances are in a sense a result of the relationships with their friends and with the staff. It is almost as if they are a part of the ongoing discourse in the youth club, a part of the jargon. The more Grubbe promotes his music and his style at the club, the less it seems to be viable outside of it, the proof, of course, having emerged at the "factory" concert described earlier.3

The lyrics play a part in the differentiation from the staff. Many of them react negatively to the words and, as Sven stated earlier, had even talked about expelling Lars Keso. Grubbe does not find it hard to talk his

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1Compare Willis (1977), p. 29-30, who describes jokes and humour as a way of mastering relations.
2See also p. 48.
3See p. 93-99.
way out of the threat but he also takes the opportunity to feel somewhat frustrated with the idea that the staff have actually thought about forbidding him to play. And this, of course, helps to maintain the division.

Angel’s lyrics, in contrast, are never part of the club jargon. This is partly because they are in English and not in Swedish, but also because their content is further away from the everyday life of the lads. As will be remembered, they are more in line with the mainstream heavy metal style using typical themes from that tradition. Even if some of the themes, as for example the escape theme, can be related to the lads’ situation they are not as direct as Lars Keso’s texts.

Grubbe’s lyrics instead work as a comment on the immediate situation, both in their content, their filthiness and in the way they are used in the ongoing flow of interaction at the club. Both in relation to Grubbe’s friends and to the staff.

To conclude, the description of various instances of interaction can be moulded into a picture of a kind of jargon that prevails at the club. This takes on different styles depending on the individuals, and whether it has to do with interaction between the staff and lads, or within the group of lads. The mastering of the jargon is important for the relations within and among the groups. For the lads, it is a way of reversing the inequality of the relationship with the staff, an answer to any attempt at imposing moral imperatives or control. For the staff, it creates consternation and frustration.

**Time and Place**

Another issue, which is important to an understanding of the dynamics of the different relations at the club, is notions of time and place. The differentiation between the two groups can be related to these.

For the staff, life at the youth club is divided into different sections according to a curriculum. It is governed very much by the division of time that has to be made in order for the club to be able to function effectively. There are different activities which have to be prepared, paperwork to be done and meetings to go to; and all this has to be organized. The notions of time that ensue become important.

Also, the actual club is the centre of interest for the staff, whereas for the lads there are also other important places in the suburb and the town.
This, after all, is where they live, even if the core group of youth club regulars spends a large portion of their free time at the club.

Questions of time and place are often interrelated, as will be seen in the description that follows.

The opening hours are, of course, the most conspicuous factor in the division of the day. As the sign outside the door says, the club is open weekdays from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 9 30 p.m. On Fridays, though, the club closes at 11, on Saturdays the opening hours are from 6 p.m. to 12 o’clock and on Sundays the club remains closed. When there is a staff meeting on Mondays, the club is also closed between 12 and 3 in the afternoon. During the daytime, most of the people who come to the club are the visitors from the school but also some of the older lads like Grubbe and Karlson who come to play in the workshop after having decided that school is not interesting that day. In the evenings, there is a mixture of younger and older visitors, but the older are in the majority.

The opening hours have been under debate within the staff. Earlier on, the club had been closed on Saturdays too and some of the staff had taken it upon themselves to change this:

Sven: -If I say somethin’ they listen ... I can put forward my wishes an’ if you do it good enough you’re successful ... so a lot of things have changed ... if you bring it up ... I don’t think I’ve had a no to anything I really fought for ... open on Saturdays, that was tough in the beginning but finally they agreed ...

K.E: -so on Saturdays it was closed?
Sven: -yeah that was the first thing I made a fuss about ...
K.E: -an’ it’s the club that decides ...
Sven: -well, there are some recommendations but you ... there was great resistance in the beginning ... I think it was Ann who was with me from the beginning ... an’ then I got Richard ... / ... for me, the reason for staying open on Saturdays is to offer an alternative ... I think that’s obvious ... otherwise we can’t say anything, if we’re not open ... why there’s all that fuss down town ... so now we offer an alternative

The idea that Sven had fought for was for the club to be able to compete with the Saturday night life of the town. The ”fuss down town” refers to the fact that the city-centre is the meeting-place for the lads during weekends and there is some concern among the staff about this. They feel the club is a better alternative.

Karlson and Grubbe instead describe their entire weekly schedule like this:

K.E: -What do you do in the winter, then ...
Karlson: -the club ... go to the club ... the pizzeria on Sundays ...
K.E: -the one down here ...
Grubbe: -yeah ...
Karlson: -the club on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday ... if you’re not doing anything ...
Grubbe: -homework ...
Karlson: -eh ...
Grubbe: -Friday?
Karlson: -out fucking! ... eh, well no, out with the girlfriend ...
Grubbe: -an’ then Fridays ...
Karlson: -an’ then Fridays it’s the ... beer ...
Grubbe: -the beer ... the sweetness of the beer ...
Karlson: -Saturdays too it’s the sweetness of the beer ...
K.E: -at home ...
Grubbe: -at some mate’s ... if he’s alone ... an’ then out on the town ...
Karlson: -an then Sundays it’s the pizzas ... sit there till nine, nine thirty then you go home ... watch some video ...
Grubbe: -Sundays are a bore ... really are ... I think ... like the club should be open Sundays ... five to nine would be just smashin’ ...
Karlson: -then we should be runnin’ ... runnin’ it ...
Grubbe: -that would be just perfect if they were open Sundays ... they could close Fridays instead ‘cos nobody’s here then ... except the small ones ... there’s five or six coming ... but they ‘ave these borin’ mini-discos like ... from third grade on ... where we’re not allowed ...
Karlson: -that’s hard ...
Grubbe: -yeah, we think it’s fun to go to the disco too ...

When Grubbe and Karlson jointly come up with a detailed weekly schedule in this discussion, this is a description after the event, a way to talk about what they usually do. Their description implies a ritualization and a notion of time as somewhat repetitive. The week for them has this character of things frequently done, where the youth club, the nights on the town and the pizzeria are the focal points. These are the activities chosen to be retold when the issue comes up in conversation, thus putting the emphasis on leisure time, and not, for example, school which is not mentioned at all. At the end of the excerpt, they suggest having the club open on Sundays too. Karlson’s notion of them running the youth club is made in the jargon-like mock-serious style but is still serious in the sense that it conveys a feeling of the club generally ”being run” by people other than the lads. It places
the emphasis on this fact, rather than seriously pleading for a takeover of
the club.

Grubbe’s statement that nobody comes to the youth club on Fridays, as
this is one of the nights for going out on the town, is valid for the older
lads who only gather at the club, or at somebody’s apartment, and then get
on the bus to the city centre. This is the same for Saturdays too and the
alternative that Sven pleaded for does not appeal to the lads.

In the afternoon, the club closes for an hour between five and six
o’clock. The reason for this is the staff’s decision to have a break during
the day. Furthermore, they often state that it is important that the lads go
home to eat, so they get a proper meal and do not just buy some sand­
wiches, or even sweets, at the club instead.

Inevitably, some of the lads stand at the door at a quarter to six, waiting
for the club to open. If a staff member comes back after the break, the lads
are quick to start a pleading and nagging routine with the objective of
being let in before six o’clock. A struggle starts where the outcome is quite
clear to all, they will not be let in before time. But, there are always
reasons presented as to why it is imperative just that day. There is a
hockey game on at exactly six o’clock and they need to change. Someone
from the staff has asked them to come in earlier, they have to make an
important telephone call, and other pleas to that effect. More often than
not the staff member is confused and takes the issue inside, asking the
other staff members who have allegedly given the lads permission. During
the time it takes to resolve the matter, the time approaches six, and a com­
promise is often reached where the lads are finally let in five minutes or so
before time. The staff do not consider this as a breach of the rules, as five
minutes are not important when the club was ready to open anyway. But
for the lads, this is a victory of sorts as they have succeeded in breaking
the rule, if only by a few minutes.

A similar small battle ensues around closing time when some of the lads
make a point of starting some time-consuming activity they have no
reasonable chance of finishing before time is up. Or they buy a last cup of
coffee and sit in the café drinking it slowly.

The lads do not see time as scheduled, especially not while at the club.
Any comparison with school, which in conversation is often referred to as
"insane" and which has its fixed timetable, is considered to be particularly

1See Willis (1977), p. 26, who describes a similar phenomenon he notes as a way to
"master the system and play with it".
annoying. Especially since somebody else decides about the hours. Instead, they attempt to break every time-schedule by creating disturbances and extending the limits of the fixed schedule.

For the staff, the set timetable also in a sense determines what the youth club work is. Opening hours are the time when pedagogical activities are implemented and the staff’s authority is in effect. The visitors are, so to speak, treated to the organized leisure time. Outside these time limits, the staff have no authority, and outside the opening-hours, their working hours, is the staff’s own leisure time.

The staff meeting

Every Monday at noon, the staff have their meeting where they discuss the events of the previous week and plan for the next one.

As can be inferred from the earlier descriptions of those meetings, one important function they have is to act as a forum for and an outlet of frustration and indignation that some of the staff feel towards the lads. This has a consolidating effect within the staff group and nobody openly disagrees with the indignation of another staff member, even if his or her suggestions might be considered too extreme. Instead, these are not implemented or are met with an understanding silence.

For the staff, these meetings are very important. They not only represent an opportunity to air frustrations, but they are also often an opportunity to talk about the job and relate it to more abstract notions. A way to clarify the goals and justifications of work. Not surprisingly, they take on an almost sacred role for the staff.

As the club is closed during these meetings, the staff has made it clear that there are to be no disturbances. Still, it is common for someone to come over from the adjoining school to collect a forgotten glove or something similar. The staff allow this but explain that they too ”need some time for themselves” and that they do not like to be disturbed. At the meetings, various problems that have emerged during the past week are discussed, such as, for example, the damaged jukebox and the changes in the rules brought about by events like the destroyed sports equipment. Also, the staff members report on conferences and meetings they have been to. The youth club is one of 13 main clubs in town and they all cooperate and have frequent contacts with the municipal board and the
director responsible for the clubs. At staff meetings, everybody has a say, and there is an informal atmosphere. Only Richard sometimes attempts to keep to the agenda, as he did when lecturing the others to be cautious with the open windows.

One of the staff is appointed to take down the minutes, and it is most often he or she who will be the one to try to keep the meeting in order when somebody does not keep to the agenda. The meetings have some fixed items on the agenda and these are read out by whoever writes the minutes. It is "last week’s minutes" that will be read out and commented on, "the week to come" where everybody will state their plans for the week and remind the others about the coming activities decided upon earlier. Another standing item is "courses and conferences" where those who have taken part in activities outside the club are required to report.

Within this form, various issues like those already described will come up. In addition, a large portion of the meetings consists of discussions about the working-hours. This occurs because somebody wants to change an evening or a day, and tries to get somebody else to take it.

The staff meetings are an issue for the lads too. They think of them as the time when things they have no influence over are discussed and decided on. In a discussion about who decides in the club, Paul expresses an opinion of the staff meetings:

Paul: -They decide at the staff meetings ... they discuss us lads like ... if they’ve seen us drunk sometime ... things like that ... an’ discuss individuals like ... an’ then they’ve got secrecy ... an’ that shit ...

He expresses the feeling that the lads are singled out and discussed individually in a public way by the staff. The notion of secrecy is interesting as it implies the discussion of problematic issues, for example, having to do with the police or the social authorities. The word secrecy is actually used by the staff but only to convey a feeling to the lads that they will not spread any confidences or secrets that have been shared with them. For Paul, though, the interpretation is the opposite, he instead gives the discussions of the staff an official character. This feeling is not entirely unfounded, however. The lads are discussed as individuals and as problems, but as the earlier descriptions have shown, the staff avoid raising the issue to a more official level, and soon transform the individual problem to a general one.
The example of Hanson can be used as an illustration of this transformation. Paul has already talked about his problems with Hanson who was bullying him and putting him in awkward situations. He also says that:

Paul: -well, if you're with 'im on yer own like, he's a real mate ... fuckin' good like ... but then with the others y'know ... then it's just ... y'know ...

K.E: -how come?
Paul: -misplaced childhood ... haha..
K.E: -oh really ... haha ...
Paul: -well, no ... he's always been like that ... he always has to be so fuckin' cool all the time ... I don't get that ... /
... well, I don't understand Hanson ... but the staff don't treat Hanson the same as they treat us ... I mean Hanson's been drunk outside the club ... real pissaed like ... he's been in the club real pissed ... they just asked 'im to leave, didn't expel 'im or anything ... I mean if I was to do that ... /
... many others' been in the club when they were drunk an' been expelled like ... he's treated so fuckin' different ... but he's special ... don't know how to explain it ... he's got a strange personality like ... real strange ...
... oh fuck, they've really fallen for 'im, they 'ave ...

Paul's anger at Hanson is basically due to the fact that he can get away with things that are impossible for any of the others, like being drunk at the club. Grubbe is expelled for a week when he comes in drunk on a Friday night. The punishments are implemented immediately, and then confirmed and written into the minutes at the staff meeting on Monday. Hanson, instead, according to Paul, got off lightly with only a half-hearted reprimand.

A similar view of Hanson is presented by the staff:

Ann: -One that I feel both positive ... but sometimes I'm quite cold ... well, that's Hanson ... It's like sometimes I can't stand the lads ... there are some you have mixed feelings about ... who are real nice sometimes ...
K.E: -but he's both ...
Ann: -yeah really ... both ways like ... sometimes you get so irritated you just want to ... aouch ...
K.E: -how do you treat him then?
Ann: -well, up to a point you fight back ... but then you can't take it ... can't discuss with him ... 'cos he's always so clever and knows when somebody else should be expelled and ... and then he's the one to follow the rules least of all and worst like ... and then he's one of the oldest ... so one moment he's playing dad and fixing everything and the next he's like ... just like he's eight years old and don't know anything ...
Ann conveys the feeling that she cannot handle Hanson, and that she gets angry at his verbal ability to confuse, and sometimes be very proper and law-abiding and at the next moment behave like a child. The reason for her frustration is also that she considers it particularly annoying that someone who shows himself able and responsible, thus having reached some stage of maturity, then willingly regresses back to childishness. This is a common enough notion among the staff that can take the form of outbursts like, "is this what they would do at home" when confronted with, for example, broken equipment.

With Hanson, though, this is accentuated as he is the focus of attention almost every day. The staff develop a special view of him, and he is generally considered a trouble-maker. The word used, when discussing him, is that he is "annoying" or "difficult" (jobbig). The staff often reprimand him and comment among themselves on how impossible he is, but at the same time they actually treat him in a manner contrary to this. Hanson is also talked about in words to the effect that "you can't be angry with him for long, he is so charming you know" and "he does have a certain charm, doesn't he". In a sense, this is a defensive stance. The staff leave him alone, because there is no point in arguing with him. It will not help. Instead he is seen as "charming" and this epithet functions as an explanation or justification of his behaviour. Paradoxically, though, the picture of Hanson that emerges from this description is that of a person who is not only annoying and tiresome to deal with. Calling him charming is almost like a metaphor for viewing him as stupid, and so much so that there is no point talking to him.

The concept of charm is thus used as a more generalized epithet and has the effect of the staff not having to treat Hanson as a problem. If they do, it might warrant some more official action. And as the earlier descriptions show, this is something the staff generally avoid.

Hanson has, in a sense, been defined out of context, as if not really belonging to the youth club, even though he is the source of constant frustration to the staff. This stance also explains why the staff do not react in the same way to him as to the other lads, hence Paul's annoyance at Hanson being able to get away with being drunk at the club.

For the staff, this is a way of dealing with the lads. Even as they assume an upbringing role having to do with moral standards of respect and responsibility, and mainly with not destroying property, they are still not prepared to implement any official action towards those considered as trouble-makers. The lads are "their" lads and the staff are concerned about
their well-being. They do not want them to get into trouble with the authorities. But, it can also be claimed that making a problem official will make it known among the municipal officials and the club might get a bad reputation. This, of course, could be a reason for not involving the authorities.

Thus, the prevailing notion of how the lads should be treated or, in other words, how the staff’s work should be done, is by way of a more informal way of action. Formal or more official actions are not chosen even if they are often advocated by the staff members when they feel frustrated.

Instead, it is what can be called the borders of the youth club, the opening hours and the organization of time and the actual physical space of the club, that form the basis of the staff’s way of doing their job. In practice, these are issues they deal with in the day-to-day interaction within the youth club. The open windows, the broken or stolen equipment, the attempts at disrupting the opening-hours and dealing with those they consider to be trouble-makers all form part of everyday life for the staff. And these instances are discussed as down-to-earth and very practical problems affecting their job and also, in a sense, their health.

Getting in

When Grubbe had organized for the window to be left open in order for him and his friends to come back to the club at night, the reason he gave was to steal sweets. Such break-ins had occurred some times and were the subject of the discussion at the staff meeting described earlier, when Susan described the return of the stolen sweets and Richard had lectured the rest of the staff on the importance of checking the windows. Stealing sweets is not the main objective for the lads. The sweets themselves are not an issue and are never discussed. Rather, the breaking in can be seen as representing a way of breaching the opening hours. Being inside the building at night is a way of mastering the youth club, of being able to move freely on the premises regardless of the staff and unknown to them. In the daytime, limits are set by the staff who are in possession of the keys, the booking timetables for the music workshop and also for some of the other

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1Willis (1977), p. 26, who describes this as a way to "win symbolical and physical space against teachers aim".
rooms. There is a timetable for access to the billiard room, and when equipment for playing and for sports can be borrowed or hired. Thus, almost any organized activity must be preceded by a request for permission to use both the equipment and the room. This is seen by the older lads as a method of control, a disturbance and something which takes away part of the fun.

Taking some sweets is, in a sense, a way of making a mark, of showing that they are able to come and go at will and thus to break the staff’s power to decide about the club. Nothing else is ever taken or destroyed, the break-ins are not designed with any such purpose. Rather, a window will be left open during the evening and the thrill is to see if anyone in the staff has found out about it or if it is still open. The lads then go in and stay for a short while, take some sweets and leave. They never talk about this as breaking in or stealing, the words used are, rather, ”coming back”, implying a certain familiarity, as if they are only going back to their own place to collect something they have forgotten.

Judging by Richard’s reaction at the staff meeting, he does not consider the taking of sweets to be such a serious issue but he still wants an end to the mischief. It can be argued that his argument that next time equipment will be stolen and there will be ketchup on the walls is too strong, as far as the youth club lads are concerned. Instead, the issue takes on the character of small strategic battles, where the lads devise ways of getting in after hours, and the staff keep watch in order to fend them off.

This ability to move freely inside the youth club at any time is a way of extending the limits of what the lads consider ”their” club. In addition, some of the rooms are more private than others. The staff rarely go to the billiard room and the music workshop unless they have a particular errand there. Thus, their movements around the club are, if not confined to, at least mostly centered around the café instead.

If the lads have developed a certain habit of breaking in, the staff in at least one instance ”broke out”, thus extending the limits of the club in a different way, by taking it into the home of one of the lads. This excerpt is from a conversation with Hanson.

Hanson: -an’ then y’know her ... she ... at Johnny’s party ... she was gonna ... just opened the door an’ came in an’ says she wanna check out who’s there ... who’s younger like ... she shouldn’t ’ave the right to ...

K.E: -what, at his place?
Hanson: -yeah.
K.E: why ...

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Hanson: -they were gonna work in the field ... she says ... things like that y’know ...

The same event was also related by some of the others:

Karlson: -well, I think ... all right if ... under a certain age ... if they see somebody going past on the bike with a bag of beer it’s none of their fuckin’ business ...

Grubbe: -they make it their business ...

Paul: -an’ then they check on parties ...

Karlson: -well, that’s just ...

Grubbe: -they came to Johnny when we had a party ... the social workers and club staff come in ...

K.E: -why ...

Grubbe: -there were so few people at the club ... an’ they come up to the grove ... the clump of trees like ... an’ look at us an’ ...

Paul: -they don’t want us to sit there ... but it’s no part of the club ...

Karlson: -no ... none of their fuckin’ business ...

Grubbe: -it’s public property ... it’s our little territory here in the ...

Karlson: -summer

Grubbe: -summertime ... spring, summer an’ autumn ...

The event of the staff’s visit to the party originates in the feeling already relayed by Sven that the club should constitute an alternative at the weekends to going down town or partying at the home of friends. In this case, it was also the home of one of the few lads who had his own flat and the staff saw this as a potentially ”bad” place. It was for the club to become an alternative to such parties that Sven had fought with his arguments for opening on Saturdays. But since not so many lads came to the club that night, the staff apparently saw fit to visit the party in order to see what was going on. Mentioning the social worker, who sometimes visited the club, and the staff’s statement of their going to ”work in the field” gives the whole issue an official character. The lads seem to feel that the staff disturb them at home, thus doing something which is clearly not within their authority.

The lad’s style of telling these stories is also one of conscious overreaction. As if paying back by claiming that the staff brought in the social authorities and seeing the event as an official call, whereas the staff themselves see it as being unofficial and more of a preventive nature. Still, it seems to have been an action thought out on the spur of the moment, maybe as a result of the frustration felt when no lads were coming to the
club, just as when Sven proposed a general check of the youth-club cards. Only with the difference that this time the proposal was implemented.

Hanson often uses the style of exaggerating the willingness of the staff to take official action:

Hanson: -if, for example, two lads 'ave been drinking an' the club staff find out they call the parents an' that's all right with me ... but to involve the school is not all right ... they do ... they do all the time an' ... I mean that doesn't help at all 'cos then you 'ave to go to psychologists an' all ...

Grubbe has similar arguments:

Grubbe: -oh those rules ... if you're drunk like an' come near the club ... just if you go past the club out here ... Karlson: -not sober ...
Grubbe: -if you're not sober ... you get expelled for a week ... if you pass the minigolf course here ... climb over the fence you're on the club's premises ... they can expel you for a week ...
Paul: -an' run after you sometimes ... / ... yeah, it was ...
Grubbe: -yeah, she ran after Tony when he was drunk an' says she's gonna call home ... so he came back in ... to the club ... real pissed he was ...
Paul: -she followed 'im ...
Grubbe: -brought 'im back to the club...an' then she called home to his parents ... he got expelled ...

These examples are presented as evidence of the staff's position of being opposed to them, the lads. Furthermore, they are taken as proving how the staff actually exceed their authority, making home-calls and bringing somebody back into the area where what he has done is considered a crime, and then expelling him. They are frustrated at what they see as intrusions onto their own "territory", just as the staff did in the earlier examples with the open windows, etc. And, just as Hanson earlier used the staff's words "working in the field", Karlson here too uses the staff's concept "not sober", a more official usage as opposed to the more common "drunk". As if they use the staff's terminology to further accentuate the distance between the two groups and the differentiation thus becomes consolidated.
Going places

In the description above, the lads describe the grove where they spend a lot of time in summer. This is a grove of elms in the middle of the suburb, between the school and youth club and the shopping-centre. The following is a continuation of the description above:

Grubbe: -it's public property ... it's our little territory here in the ...
Karlson: -summer
Grubbe: -summertime ... spring, summer an' autumn ...
K.E: -where ...
Grubbe: -where we hang around at the weekends when it gets warmer an’ you can ‘ave short sleeves an all ...
K.E: -up there behind ...
Karlson: -between the club and the centre ...
Grubbe: -an’ someone brings a cassette recorder an’ you go around with yer hands out an’ collect money for batteries ...
Karlson: -an’ then down to the centre to buy batteries an’ then you just sit there an’ turn the volume up ... an’ then just sit there an’ have fun ... an’ talk ... shout at the coppers when they come around ...
Grubbe: -that was before you were eighteen like ... I’m still not ... got scared like an’ took yer bag an’ ran away fuckin’ fast ... an’ hidin’ it somewhere ... behind some trees ... they always found ‘em ... that’s strange like ...
Karlson: -last summer wasn’t it ... we was sittin there ... our place like ... we’d had quite a few ... then the coppers came ... an’ I tried to throw some leaves over it ... tryin’ a hide it ... an’ Grubbe takes ‘is fuckin’ crate o’beer an’ runs down to the centre like ... an’ the coppers come from there too ... Grubbe falls ... bang ... with the crate all over ‘im ... up again fast as hell an’ away ... oh that was really some ...
K.E: -did they get you?
Grubbe: -no ... then I ran up past the dentists with the crate an’ all ... ran like hell ... an’ the coppers went round to get me ... an’ I hid in the grass ... was a metre high it was ... the crate on my belly like ... an’ the coppers didn’t find me ... they didn’t see me ... that was fun ...

The description of the grove and the summertime activities evoke memories of the events of the previous summer. The story gets retold as it probably has many times before, and they get really exalted at the memory of being chased by the police. It is part of the mythology of the lads and their life in Elmridge. It is told more vividly than any story concerning the youth club. Another place they frequently go to during the warmer months is the nearby river:
Grubbe: -well, last summer ... we were out an’ had some beer ... on a week-day like ... on our way back from work ... it was so hot an’ Karlson had some beer an’ got a bit too drunk like ... an’ then this boat came in ... on the river like ... an’ Karlson wanted to play tough ... make a nice dive there ... but he hadn’t reckoned with the water like ... real pissed he was ... so he fell flat on ’is belly like ... with sunglasses on an’ all ...

Karlson: -yeah they pulled me out an’ I was all red ... they just laughed, on the boat like

K.E: -where’s that?

Grubbe: -where the locks are ... it’s six or seven meters it is ...

Paul: -just threw myself out...oh shit, the water! haha ...

Grubbe: -bang ... aah, aoh ... hey, Grubbe, something’s broken in my body, I’m spitting blood ...

Karlson: -I coughed up blood like ...

Grubbe: -it’s my spleen, it’s my spleen ...

Karlson: -an’ there I was looking so stupid ...

Grubbe: -the lock’s the place to go in summer ... an’ have a swim or whatever ... nights an’ all ... nightswim ... it’s very nice down there really ...

Again, a story is created out of an event that occurred in a particular place, something worth remembering. They relive the event in the vivid, joint storytelling that ensues when the summer activities come up. In telling the story, both Grubbe and Paul take the part of Karlson, mimicking his sad state after the dive.

The stories told relate some achievement and some funny situation where the lads are portrayed as somewhat clownish heroes. In both stories, there is an element of clumsiness and of humour and they are the ones to get into some kind of trouble. In both, there is some third party who they are dependent on, or who they relate to in some way. The police are chasing them because they have been drinking and are under age, and the people on the boat are laughing at the failed diving attempt. They convey the feeling of being watched, being losers, but also in the end having turned the situation to their advantage. Grubbe escapes from the police and Karlson, even if he is in some pain, creates a laugh for the others. He is the centre of attention for a while and he comes out of it with a good story to tell.

The themes of these stories, I would argue, are in a sense reminders of the music they create. They contain notions of having fun, of directness, and also the theme of escape – of being chased and of being controlled. There is also a similarity to the style of the jargon – the notion of coming out on top in the end. The stories can be said to have a mythical quality as they serve both to create a history of the lads and to give a picture of the
relations they live within. They get to be stories that become important to the formation of an identity, maybe in a way similar to the lyrics and the musical stance the lads have taken.

Strangely enough, no such stories are created around events which take place at the youth club. Instead, there is the constant complaining about the staff, and the different rules imposed on the lads. It seems that the activities that give rise to this kind of mythology usually occur outside the club. Also, the lads feel strongly about what they see as the staff’s attempts at extending their authority and controlling those places and activities too.

One activity, which has been going on for a long time, is a poker game. It started at the club and involved many of the lads at different times. As the game got under way, it was moved out of the club and now they play at home. Paul, who is deeply involved in it, gives a description of how the game originated and how it is played. He does this in relation to the youth club and, in a sense, contrasts the game with its activities:

K.E: -so how do you feel about the club?
Paul: -bad ...
K.E: -bad?
Paul: -they don’t ‘ave any things for us to do ... any activities ... oh fuck, we’re only here ‘cos all our mates come here ... I mean you can’t take ‘em home, every fuckin’ mate, to yer own place like ... you come here an’ sit an’ talk about the weekend ... /
... I mean it’s so fuckin’ dead like...so now I’ve started to play cards ... We play cards like ... me an’ a couple more ... Johnny ... an’ Grubbe an’ Svennis ... those lads an’ a couple more ... an’ we sit at Johnny’s place ... that’s quite cool ...

K.E: -well, what do you play?
Paul: -well ... we open with the jacks ...
K.E: -yees ...
Paul: -fuckin’ interestin’ ... but not if you lose ...
K.E: -noo ... what are the stakes ...
Paul: -noo ... we play one-crown ... so you bet a crown like ... an’ then you can open on any value ... it’s up to you ... I can open on a fiver a tenner ... thirty is the limit to open with ... but then after you bought a card an’ that ... then it’s free ... oh oh oh fuck, I’ve been playing for three weeks now y’know ...
K.E: -aha ... that’s nice ...
Paul: -an’ they’re really mad at me ...
K.E: -are you winning?
Paul: -we ‘ave this bonus y’know ... straight is the lowest ... then you get a fiver from every player ... then ten for a flush, fifteen for a full house, thirty for four-of-a-kind an’ fifty for a straight flush ... well I’m one eight ahead like ... so it’s ... oh fuck I feel sorry for those who lose ... real hell it is ...
Paul: -yeah one thousand eight hundred crowns ... Svennis owes me six hundred an’ sixty an’ Grubbe four hundred an’ forty ... then it’s the hundred an’ one on two hundred an all ... oh fuck I’ve got some real luck I have ... but it’s lucky in cards an’ unlucky in love as they say ...

Here, Paul develops the story of the card game in spite of the fact that the conversation originally dealt with a question about the club. He makes an elaborate description of the stakes and the money involved and emphasizes his own extraordinary luck, but he also contrasts it with the cliché lucky in cards and unlucky in love. He starts by relating the feeling of boredom with the club and states that it is only a meeting place. This is the continuation of the story:

K.E: -do you get the money ...
Paul: -yeeah ... but we’re playing so much now ...
K.E: -that it evens out in the end ...
Paul: -there’s the risk I’ll play down an’ play up again ... so it’s running along so to speak
K.E: -aha ...
Paul: -but if somebody wants out he’ll pay up or collect like ... oh oh oh I mean I’ve had twenty four-of-a-kinds’ an’ half of ’em I’ve bought on a pair ... that doesn’t make it any better ... yeah it’s so fuckin’ good to sit there with a pair, an’ then the triplet, an’ then you look at the last one ... no!
K.E: -how many times do you buy ...
Paul: -once!
K.E: -oh ... 
Paul: -that’s right..I don’t know how many ... y’know twenty times! twenty times ... I mean really ... what I’m ahead on is all my four-of-a-kinds ... you get thirty from every head like ... an’ there’s four of us ... an’ twenty times ... that’s one thousand eight hundred ... so it’s a fuckin’ lot of sums y’know ...
K.E: -so how did you start playing ...
Paul: -well, Mats, y’know ... he had some markers an’ he says if we should play sometimes ... an’ we played Chicago an’ that ... small stuff ... at his place ... that’s where everything started like ... an’ then we didn’t play for a while an’ then we started again ... an’ then we stopped ’cos I was losing for a while ... an’ then I joined in once an’ was lucky an’ then you just keep on playin’ ... but now we’ve been playing a bit too much an’ you get tired ... just like with the club ... now it’s much more fun to come to the club ... I don’t know ... y’know I work shifts like ... now it’s five to one like ... an’ then I can come to the club ... but then next week I work one to nine, then one to eleven an’ then one to nine, one to eleven, one to five then on Friday ... so I won’t ’ave a chance to meet with the lads ... if we’re not playing cards ... ’cos then we’re at it the whole night ... doesn’t bother me, I start work at one o’clock anyway so I can stay up until three or four in the morning ... I’ve time to sleep anyway ... so it’s cool ...
The picture of the game that emerges is that of a serious activity where a lot of money is involved and an organization comprising the players’ working or school hours and of someone’s home. Also, the lads manage to keep to an economic system of betting, and most importantly of debts. Paul will not claim the money but knows that his success might level out in the end. The game is something continuous that influences the relationships among the lads even when they are not actually at the poker table. Around it, Paul creates a story with the same mythological qualities as Grubbe’s and Karlson’s before. And even here, Paul does not let go of the subject of the youth club’s boringness. He continues:

K.E: -you used to come here a lot, though?
Paul: -here?
K.E: -aha ...
Paul: -I was here all the time I was ... It’s just, fuck, a couple of weeks since I started to stop being here ... oh oh ... it’s the same with ... you remember the older lads ... they’re twenty, twenty-one ...
K.E: -yeah, some ...
Paul: -well, anyway, they were at the club a lot ... then they too realized that it was so fuckin’ borin’ here so they stopped comin’ ...
K.E: -what’s boring?
Paul: -There’s nothing to do ... I mean the indoor-hockey ... yeah, well, we play that a lot and the sports hall that’s fuckin’ good ... I often ... tomorrow I’ll be there ... it’s good to get real tired like ... then I mean billiards I don’t know how, darts that’s boring, there’s no playing-cards an’ I got tired of playin’ chess since last summer ...
K.E: -there are no playing-cards ...
Paul: -no
K.E: -did they take them away?
Paul: -yeah, just ’cos we played for money ...
K.E: -oh ...
Paul: -Ann heard that we were playin’ for money, y’know ... I lost a thousand on one hand ... he had four-of-a-kind an’ I had a full house ... he put in two hundred-notes an’ I lost a thousand ...
K.E: -were you playing here?
Paul: -NO ... an’ then Ann says like ... ”well I’ve heard that you play cards here for money” ... it can be like we play Chicago ... you go to hundred-and-four an’ we play fifty øre ... well the difference times fifty ... that doesn’t get too much ... no hell, oh fuck it’s so fuckin’ borin’ when you can’t play cards ’cos you can do so fuckin’ much with it like ... so many different games ... everybody at the club wanted to play cards ...
In the story of the card-game, Paul expounds on two trains of thought. The game is surrounded with the same kind of almost mythological qualities as in Grubbe’s and Karlson’s stories, but there is also the frustrated feeling that the staff interferes with and hinders everything that is fun at the club. Again, he conveys the view that the staff exceed their authority by acting against something which takes place outside the club. And, the activity itself, the poker-game, is moved out of the club where it had actually originated. It is not something that is fun to do at the club.

The club and outside

The activities the lads engage in, and which are depicted in these kinds of mythical stories like the ones described above, thus mostly take place outside the club. In their stories, the lads are always the active parties and most often come out on top. Most stories about the youth club are negative in the sense that they have to do with the feeling of being controlled. Still, the club is the place the lads most frequently go to. In the schedule for the week related by Grubbe and Karlson, the emphasis is on the week-ends. It is part of the mythology that the lads are out drinking every week-end. Many times they are actually at the club instead. Paul’s simple but obvious explanation is that you cannot bring all your friends home, and that the club is the meeting place for the lads. You have to go there in order to meet, especially during the wintertime.

The stories about the places outside the club are surrounded by feelings of being on top. Even if the lads are in awkward situations, like being chased by the police, they always manage to get away in the end. This conveys a feeling of control as opposed to being controlled. In contrast, the stories about the youth club contain a strong element of having unintelligible rules imposed on you, of being controlled. And just as the lads try to breach the limits of the club by getting in at night, they see the staff as trying to do the same to them. By making home-calls and expelling people.

Still, the lads also like to revel in the feeling of frustration they direct against the staff. Their actions are often exaggerated in the stories told, and it seems the lads want to uphold the differentiation that exists between the two groups.
This differentiation is also maintained by the staff who, in their way of discussing different problems in the club, tend to transform the individual to the general. Also, they have an ambition to teach the lads moral lessons to the effect that they should learn to respect property and not break things.

The practice of the youth club that thus emerges is heavily dependent on this differentiation. The relations between the staff and the lads are to a certain extent based on mutual mistrust. This mistrust, though, is not based on the actual conflicts that take place but seems to be created, upheld and augmented in the discourse within and between the groups. The actual conflicts act as a catalyst. The staff, who at the meetings need an outlet for their frustration, create a picture of the lads that is in a sense an incrimination of them. The lads, in turn, exaggerate every sign of control and see the staff as imposing rules and wanting to make money out of them. The division is also partly upheld by different objectives and differing views on what the club is, and what it is for. The staff's way of organizing activities is through the model of the adult educational associations and based on time schedules and booking-plans, whereas the lads want the freedom to go where they like any time they like. And, do what they choose to do there.

Still, the youth club is the place where most of the lads spend their leisure time, and where the staff have chosen to work.
5 The institution as friend?

At the end of the previous chapter, the lads are somewhat frustrated by what they see as intrusions into their territory. This feeling of frustration has its analogy in the staff, who, in turn, are disturbed by the nighttime visits and by the activities going on outside the club and outside their control. The description centered on the ways the activities of the youth club are organized and also on the ways they were talked about and responded to. In order to develop the picture further, I will now focus on some other factors that are important to understanding the lives of the two groups at the club. The first part of the chapter deals with the staff’s way of conceiving of their job and the lads’ views of them in turn. In the light of this focus, I will then examine the issue of organized music-playing before turning to describing the change that the lads experienced in the last months of my stay when it came to notions of music-playing, the youth club and working.

Let’s be friends.

So far, my description has mainly dealt with the practices in the club and how life there is ordered through interaction between the staff and the lads. This has been viewed through the differentiation between the two groups and the way this process is achieved and maintained. What is important in this context is of course the way the two groups conceive of their respective roles and of each other.

One day, two members of the staff put up a large poster on the glass window of the reception-room. On the poster, a description is given of what the staff think the work is all about, and what they see the leaders’ functions to be. It depicts the education needed for the job and outlines the most salient features.

What stands out on the poster is the notion that the staff should function as a kind of "deputy parent" or "extra buddy". The two concepts are actually coupled and no division is made between being "parent" and "buddy". Instead, the idea is that the staff should be able to help when somebody has problems and nobody to turn to. They offer support in
hours of need and see this as one of the most important functions of their jobs. Sven, who together with Ann and Susan made the poster, expounds on the issue:

*Sven:* - well, the kids, the young people ... they always tell me like ... "shit you don’t do nothing, watch the telly an’ play cards all the time" ... but it’s our way of making contact an’ good relations with the young people, it’s part of the job ... It’s fuckin’ difficult to make them see that ... so you always get to hear like "hell you’re not doing anything" but I really think we do ... I’ve written down on a poster what it is a youth club leader does ... cause we’re supposed to be everything like ... buddies ... an’ if they have problems you get to be the therapist (kurator) ... an’ if the girlfriend’s left an’ they’re here a lot more ... they may be at home for two hours each day, when they’re awake that is, an’ they’re here for seven or eight hours ... sometimes from three to ten o’clock ... You’re both a buddy and a surrogate parent

Even if Sven is somewhat distressed because he is not getting the recognition he feels he deserves, as not many seem to understand the "real" function of the staff and their way of creating contact, he strongly emphasizes this friend/parent role. It represents the upbringer, someone who is on the side of the young people and who is able to understand and to help.

When it comes to the help offered, though, to a large extent it turns out to be more of an ideal than a reality. This is the immediate continuation of the conversation with Sven:

*K.E.:* - is this common? Are there many that come an’ talk about such things?
*Sven:* - well it has to do with you as a person I think ... they might not come to me if they have som love trouble with the girls in ninth grade ...
*K.E.:* - no, no ...
*Sven:* - but I think that Susan for example ... out there ... there they often discuss these things with the ones they have good contact with ...
*K.E.:* - are there any boys that talk to you about something ...
*Sven:* - no, actually they haven’t ... not here ...
*K.E.:* - or with somebody else?
*Sven:* - I’m sure it happens, but I mean that’s something that should be even better 'cos that’s what we’re here for ... that you should dare talk to us here ...

Mixing the friend and the parent role can be problematic. The staff’s way of dealing with this seems to be through "talking". The universal solution to both concrete personal problems and the problems of having a good relationship with the lads is being able to sit down and have a talk about it.
But, such instances seem to be rare. Susan, who has a closer contact with some of the lads and who is often involved in the jokingly flirtatious encounters described earlier, adds to the picture:

Susan: ... well it’s much ... on the surface like ... they run ... they run around here like ... an’ don’t think so much ... but if you ... like ... talk to them then a lot of things come up ... how they think ... their opinions like ...

K.E: -how do they think?

Susan: -I haven’t discussed this with them actually ...

K.E: -you haven’t ...

Susan: -no ... you don’t get into any deeper discussions ... more on the surface like ... has to do with me I suppose ...

K.E: -oh, why ...

Susan: -well, if I start discussing their thoughts and opinions, they’re caught with their guard down like an’ don’t know what to say ... at least that’s what I think ... an’ then there’s just laughing an’ you can’t talk to boys ’cos it’s just sex all the time an’ then you just have to catch on to that ... an’ dear me, that’s the only thing that counts ... they really like talking about that ... you can ... might talk about that ...

Susan, too, seems to feel that talks of the type where the grown-up youth club leader helps the young boy or girl to overcome some serious problem are important. She does not seem to consider the talks about sex as so serious when she says that she does not get into ”any deeper discussions” and she is annoyed by the lad’s constant talk about sex. In a sense, she seems more intent on keeping to the therapeutic definition of her job where the more formal conversations are important to her task as youth club leader.

Still, the talks about sex in the more joking style are an important way of making contact with the boys, as she herself notes in passing immediately after:

Susan: -well, if there’s five or six of them I can sit down an’ they’ll start to giggle like ... an’ then you say ”um um ho ho whisper whisper” like an’ then it’s just on ... an’ I think it’s quite fun ’cos then you get to hear their thoughts an’ opinions like ... an’ then you comment on that so they get to think a little ... ’cos for them it’s like in Playboy roughly ... looks like it when you hear them ...

But the main point seems to be to be able to rectify what she sees as ”wrong ideas” about ”real life”:

K.E: -how do they talk ...

Susan: -well ... ”makin’ it” an’ being real happy and pissed ... like that ... an’ what it was like with her and things like that ... rather harsh somehow an’ nothing to do with
feelings ... when they’re talking ... but then in real life it’s different when they really get a girlfriend ... but the jargon ... you hear it an’ then you say "well it’s not really like that is it” an’ then sometimes you can say "what, what I didn’t hear that” an’ sometimes you can use your own experience an’ tell them about relations an’ well like that ...

K.E: -like that?
Susan: -well, not the sexual part but still ... ’cos it’s like ... it’s new to them ... I think it’s real exciting when someone grown-up talks about what it can be like ... sure they’ve got mum an’ dad to watch but they’re so very old ... mum an’ dad are mum an’ dad ... all grown-ups are grown-ups, it’s not the same as boys an’ girls

Susan vividly describes the talks she has with the lads, almost to the point of identifying with them when she says that she herself finds it "real exciting" when grown-ups discuss their experiences. At the same time, she upholds the idea of the up-bringer or the "life-guide". She wants to confront them with real life experiences instead of what she sees as their male-chauvinist opinions. This way of communicating represents a division she seems vaguely aware of. The first part of this concerns the more personal and informal way of talking, whereas the second is the formal role of the youth club leader. It can be regarded as a paradox that this is seen as a division. Susan as well as Sven frequently state that a deep contact with the visitors depends on themselves and how they "are as persons", as they put it. This implies a view that the basis of the contacts is the informal style and not so much the upbringer role. Still, as I see it, the formal role seems to prevail as the one to be considered proper work. At least in the sense that when talking about her role, Susan sometimes gives the impression that she herself thinks it a failure that she does not have "serious" conversations. But it is perhaps not that simple. Susan alternates between the formal and the informal and sometimes does not identify at all with the youth club leader role:

K.E: -what kind of contact do you get, then, more personal or ...
Susan: -well, you can, but it has a lot to do with yourself very much ... an’ then you ... there’s those seeking contact an’ you have to take that on ... you take it if you can stand it but you can’t be sure, it depends on what it’s about ... sometimes you have to be almost like a staff member maybe ... not like ...

1The notion of guidance as a tool for modern youth policy has been discussed by Petersson (1990), for example, p. 172-173. He notes that guidance is a central metaphor through which both a holistic and all encompassing view of youth can be retained as well as a specific way of working with young people.
So, she is not really a member of the staff, or, rather, she sees everyday life at the club as being more informal and the staff role as something that you have to take on when somebody is "seeking contact". In a sense, this would be more in line with everyday life at the club, dealing with problems when they arise instead of seeking them out. But everyday conversations at the club are more in line with her earlier descriptions of the jargon as in the sex-talk example. The young boy or girl in trouble and seeking help is actually a rare event and more of a myth.

The crucial idea here is that in order to help somebody, there has to be a problem and, what is more, the person in question has to ask for help. These notions are inherent in the formal definition of the leader role, and, of course, in the youth club leaders' conceptions of the young people they work with\(^1\). In a sense, both the formal and the informal are two important aspects of a work role that can be defined as somewhere in between a teacher and a friend. The formal aspect is more in line with a notion that the youth club is assigned a task, whether clearly formulated or not, by municipal authorities or by society. It might perhaps be formulated as a kind of expectation that youth club leaders can sense. Perhaps of a pedagogical strategy or way of work that should not be haphazard. If this is true, there exists a kind of dilemma for the staff which can be subtle, as the example of Susan implies in her description of the talks and her attempts at putting the lads straight on the sexual issue. At first, she does not seem to consider this way of talking as formal work and even defines herself as not really belonging to the staff, adhering to the informal role. Still, immediately after, she can take the formal perspective:

Susan: ... the poster here in the reception-room ... well, we made it ... thought about it ... first we described the education ... 'cos they can't understand that you need an education to do this job ... and then we've written down what a youth club leader really is or work ... that it's like therapists, psychologists, surrogate parents ... well activity fixers and whatever we are ... it was a long list we made ...

And a little later in the conversation:

K.E: -so who are you then, the youth club leaders ...

Susan: - what we are ... well, how should I explain that...well there's some of us who are there for the young people ... in all areas and in every way ... an' also if you feel

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\(^1\) Compare Gusfield (1989) as cited in chapter 1. His notion of the "troubled persons professions" is the claim of "ownership" over social problems, something that entails a need to define people as being in need of the help offered.
that there’s something wrong with somebody...some teenager ... well, it’s our task to get him back on the right track ... maybe through the social worker or whatever ... well, to see to it that people are feeling well ...

The view of the youth club leader as a therapist and psychologist is, of course, a specific definition of the upbringer role coupled with the view that young people are in need of therapeutic assistance. This surfaces particularly when she states that this is what the youth club leader ”really is”. And, in addition, she also wants to be friends. Of course, if the staff view therapeutic help as something the lads are in real need of and thus should be grateful for, this is no contradiction. It is a proper act of friendship to help those who have problems but seem to not quite have the ability to solve them.

The need to be needed

If the staff’s view of their task can be described as upholding the friend/parent role of guide and therapist, based on the notion that the young people they meet might need this help, there is also an additional interpretation. Of course, following Gusfield’s argument, a work role that entails caretaking also contains a view of the subjects of that care but on top of this it can also be said that the fervor with which the staff try to implement this role suggests their own need for recognition. They want to feel that they are needed, that there exists a demand and that there is a job to be done. For them, it is their professional position and respectability that is at stake.

It is this need to be needed that is expressed by the staff when they talk about the need to have a deeper contact with the young people at the club and, furthermore, the latter should really be able to recognize this. But, as described in Chapter 4, as some of the everyday encounters at the club lead to conflicts with the lads, the feeling that the friend/parent role is problematic and difficult to implement gives rise to frustration amongst the staff. Thus, for them, it is a double problem and when reflecting on their role, as Sven below, a certain sadness can be detected:

1Thus, in the relation to Petersson’s (1990) and Gusfield’s (1989) notions, the "troubled person’s profession" is the "guide" with therapeutic ability.
Sven: -when I’m in my work role, I want to be both buddy an’ I want to be the one they can turn to an’, hopefully get good advice from ... though I’ll still be a buddy ... not the one who sits an’ mutters an’ says it’s like this an’like that ... no you should have the confidence of both the buddy an’ ... to ask for advice ... I don’t want to be the guard like ... going around nagging ... like here ... /

... that’s what we’re here for ... people they can ask ... now that’s become worse these last few years it has ... it was like that some years ago but now I think my function in my work role today is more of a guard and a café-servant, do this do that do this ... an’ not the one to sit an’ talk to as it was a couple of years ago ... maybe it has to do with me, maybe attitudes are changing ... maybe I’ve got older an’ they see me like that, I don’t know ... /

... you’re somebody who should always be there ... if I’m busy or working with the computer, for example, they don’t care ... ”come to the kiosk, damn it” instead of asking like ”would you come to the kiosk when you’re finished” ... that’s a bad attitude I think ...

Instead of being the friend he wants to be, Sven feels he has become the guard who has to nag about everything. In addition, he feels he is treated as service personnel by the young people. This view is also expressed by Ann, although with more anger in her words:

Ann: -we’re some kind of fuckin’ servicemen like ... that’s what it’s come to ... we’ve run around an’ served them ... stood in the kiosk an’ we clean up after them an’ I mean ... if a kid drops a piece of paper on the floor an’ I say ”what are you doing” he says ”it’s your job, pick it up” ... It’s like this strange thing ... they see us as ground service in this place ... mum runs the service at home an’ the youth club leaders run the service here ...

The feeling of being only servants is, of course, frustrating for the staff. It represents a degradation not only in the sense that the lads, firstly, do not want their confidence. In addition, they are put to serve the very people they consider they should be guiding through the difficulties of life. The work in a sense turns out to be the reverse of the ideal and the ideology the staff expressed before as theirs. This frustration is added to that described in Chapter 4, where the staff battled against the breaking of equipment and the lack of respect for property. Now they feel there is no respect for them as persons or professionals either:

Ann: -an’ then I’ve got like that through the years that you get a little tired of some kids like ... it’s like they destroy ... it’s those you remember when you go home at night ... an’ then I’ve become like ... if the kids treat me good I treat them good an’ if they’re treating me bad I’m treating them bad ... so it’s become kind of a vicious circle I’ve got into an’ it’s not good but I think it is like that some times ... if they do it to me I do it to them ... it sounds really childish but it’s the way I feel ... I think I’m a nice person and easy to get contact with but then I want to be treated nice in return ... an’ you’re not always ... an’ then ...
Ann’s response here is somewhat of the philosophy of an "eye for an eye", if she is treated badly she will give them the same treatment in return. At this time, she has also decided to leave her job. Sven, who had made a calculation, found out that of 78 youth leaders he had known three years ago, more than fifty had left by now. Some had gone to the private sector as leisure-time organizers at big companies or they had left to do something completely different.

Many of those who stay on have a rather pessimistic view of their work situation. When asked how he feels about the job, Sven responds:

Sven: -sometimes it’s fun an’ sometimes less fun ... rather a thankless occupation ...
K.E: -how ...
Sven: -it’s not appreciated ... you get a lot of shit ... an’ you can’t measure a job like this ... if you work at Volvo you get some finished material as your result an’ you never get that here ... maybe in ten years time there won’t be so much vandalizing here ... but it’s nothing you see like ... it’s this ... working with people, like in health care ... there, you can get a patient well ... we’re supposed to work preventively ... but most of the time it’s fun ...

Sven implies that a reason for the difficulties of the job is that it is long term-work the staff is engaged in. This is an expression of the formal, institutional goal of the youth clubs. The analogies Sven makes with health-care implies a view of the club as part of the care-taking oriented, municipality-governed public sector. The work is seen as preventive and its result will be seen in the future when the figures in the crime statistics drop. At present, though, the efforts of the youth club leader are not visible and do not get the recognition they deserve. This feeling is shared amongst the staff, and a comment often given on this issue is “let’s close all the youth clubs in Sweden and then they would see”, a statement less directed at the young people than at school personnel and municipal officials, who, they feel, do not always recognise the significance of the work the staff do either.

The meaningful leisure time

The official policy of the Elmridge club is related to a notion of creating an alternative to “the streets”. Sven, as shown in Chapter 4, had fought for longer opening hours using the argument of trying to keep the lads away
from the city centre on Saturday nights. To "keep them off the streets" is a formulation which returns again and again. The street is considered no place to be for the lads as they will only get into trouble. "The street" is the social space where the lads are beyond social control and where anything can happen. Inherent in this is, of course, also the notion that vandalism will decrease if people are kept under control at the club instead. For the staff, this is a more immediate reason for the club's existence and in order to implement it, the alternative, the meaningful leisure time the club should represent, must be created.

The way the work is to be organized is under constant discussion. It is debated at staff meetings and there are definite ideas as to how activities should be shaped. The notion that dominates the discussions is, again, how the more formal aspects organizing the youth club activities should be implemented. The starting-point is that the organization of the club life should provide a guide for the visitors. The key word is participation:

Richard: -now we've started to talk about this ... youth club democracy an' we'll try to develop that ...
K.E: -what's that, then ...
Richard: -well, we see ourselves somewhat as fixers ... activity fixers like ... an' it's not always we that ought to like ... decide an' govern like ... it should come from the kids themselves ... but then maybe you can influence it a little, just enough like ... I mean democracy ... if they get the idea of having a bar here that's not really feasible but like ... if they want to have rock concerts every Friday, well, there's going to be rock concerts every Friday ... or, well, that they're participating more in the things that happen ... then it's more meaningful ...

The expressed idea is to implement a democratic system with the suggestions coming from below. This is Ann’s description:

Ann: -well, I think they ... if they got to feel more participation and responsibility for the clubs activities an' the things we do like ... so they would feel more that it's their club like ... an' that is what we want ... / ... it's a whole new way of thinking that you yourself won't have the power but the kids have it instead so it's like a reversed relationship like ... we'll have to adhere to their terms instead ...

There is literature on this issue published, for example, by the Stockholm Recreation Board (fritidsförvaltningen i Stockholm, Verksamhetsavdelningen) but I have no information as to whether this is used by the Elmridge staff. Examples of these books are Carlsson & Ericson (1979), Dahlgren & Persson (1975), Mathiasson (1987), Norén (1978), Pettersson (1989) and Prawitz (1988).
Through participation, young people will feel more responsible and they will have the power. Sven, in his description, gives an example of how this could be organized, but he also bluntly points out a problem:

Sven: -well, when you start this ... well, for example the music club ... we call it that instead of workshop ... that I teach them like ... how to prepare a budget ... how a board of directors works ... things like that ... I won't have the right to vote, I don't think I should have that ... like when you have to vote ... but I should have a say ... false democracy ...

K.E: -haha!

Sven: -turn off the tape! haha ... well, it's a little like that actually ... you have to fool them

K.E: -well that's the dilemma, eh?

Sven: -exactly! but that's the way it is in the world too ... there's no democracy really ... it's false democracy in some areas ...

The idea of organizing an activity on democratic grounds comes up against the insight that this is problematic as the power relations within the club cannot really be changed. Sven recognizes that what he will be doing represents an idea of imposing democracy from above. He also somewhat jokingly mentions the larger issue of implementing changes in society as a whole. His view borders on the role of the staff as agents in young people's socialization into the grown-up world. It is more of a comment he makes, though, and not a problem for him that he will implement a false democracy, especially seeing as this is the way of the world.

Ann: - ... it's a whole new way of thinking that you yourself won't have the power but the kids have it instead so it's like a reversed relationship like ... we'll have to adhere to their terms instead ...

K.E: -in what way ... how could it be like ...

Ann: -well, you can't say to the kids like ... 'now you can decide exactly what you want to do' ... the kids are not mature enough to do that here ... instead, I think you have to take out a small group and go out on a camp an' then like ... school them like ... not brainwash them, that is, but teach them about democracy and common sense ... this you do an' this you don't do ... certain things you can't do an' certain things you don't have the right judgement for when you're a teenager

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1 Compare Willis (1977), p. 67 and 69, who states that "teachers exert social control through an educational...paradigm” that is "bound up by larger structures”, and, for example, notions of democracy. The "aim becomes to teach the 'basic' moral values, politeness, respect".
In Ann’s view, democracy is about teaching the visitors what you can and what you cannot do. The role of making good citizens is seen as an important part of the upbringer role.

The whole project of making young people participate in the club’s activities and thus feel responsibility is further developed. The model is again the classic form of the Swedish popular movements, where the activity should be organized by a board, and decisions should be taken by way of voting. Furthermore, the idea of teaching democracy implies that the people you want to teach have no idea, or have a distorted idea, of the issue at hand. This is, of course, not so strange in this context where it has to do with the staff’s view of themselves as upbringers. Still, there is another aspect of the problem, as it also presupposes that the staff have a complete and uncontroversial notion of democracy themselves. From the excerpts, the conclusion can also be drawn that the democracy project is coupled to yet another idea, namely, that the young people through participation in decision-making should feel responsible, and thus stop destroying the club’s property that, in fact, as the staff often pointed out, was in effect the young people’s own property. So the democracy project can be said to have a very basic starting-point. The staff find the young people irresponsible, because they break things and do not pay fees on time and thus they have to be taught to be good citizens. The project becomes a solution not so much to the young people’s problems, as perceived by them, but to the staff’s frustration at not getting respect:

Susan: -sometimes you’re down like ... as I was last autumn when I thought that ‘I got to do something, find a totally different job’ ... but then when we started talking about this ... to change our direction, Sven an’ me an’ decided that we should close the club in the mornings maybe for a month or a week an’ see what we would decide ... an’ sat down an’ talked to each other about what to do ... the direction of the club ... that you can start something ... then it felt much better all of a sudden ... but not so much came out of it, though, but it’s a step maybe towards this democratic way of working in the club ... that we’re on the way like ... so you feel that there’s something there that may come to something.. you’re moving somewhere ...

1In Petersson’s (1990) terminology this is part of a process of normalization, infused with generalized notions of youth and of preventive guidance. The way social workers, for instance, talk about the job or their clients in his study, resembles the ways of the Elmridge staff (see, for example, p. 126-127 on the formal/informal notion). The notion of guidance seems to be an inherent feature of Swedish social care as well as the pedagogical institutions and as the youth club leader is part of both, it can become particularly strong.
For Susan, the discussions about the democracy project were important. She refrained from quitting her job and now she felt that something was "happening". Still, she also notes that the project does not result in any major changes. It represents a change in the way the staff think about their work, but is again difficult to implement. No projects with the young people are started, but the new ideas are tried out at one point by Sven. He sees to it that one wall in the sports-room is painted with a grafitti-style mural:

Sven: -then there's those works of art in there ... there was also a lot of resistance but they're there now on the wall ... it's the kids who decide ... it's them we work for ... not that we should decide ...

K.E: -were they part of it ... painting it or deciding the motif or something ...

Sven: -from the beginning to the end ...

K.E: -or the idea ...

Sven: -well the idea is mine from the beginning but then I let it go ... I went with them to buy the paint ... then I let them paint ...

K.E: -yes...who did that ... was it people who come here ...

Sven: -yes, not now they quit ... it's those lads ... they used to be visitors here an' now they're 17 or 18 ... they're more downtown an' they got jobs too, I suppose ... it was the first time they did a mural ... it was fun ...

Sven is happy with the result of the wall-painting project. He feels he has implemented an activity that had worked according to the principles of the democracy project. He does not view his instigating the project or his buying the paint as directing or leading acts. Neither does he see the fact that the artists are only former club visitors and not some of the current ones as a problem. Personally, he feels satisfied. He has implemented a meaningful leisure-time activity.

He considers the project a great success and feels it is something he has fought for on behalf of the young people. The mural is something "youthful" with its grafitti style. It is not a painting which belongs to the art world and this makes Sven feel he has worked on the visitors' decision. Among the regular visitors, though, the mural is hardly mentioned and when it is, they say they had wanted something else instead of the pattern of grafitti letters that is the motif now. Grubbe jokingly said that they should have painted a nude woman on the wall instead.

So, to the extent that meaningful leisure time has to do with learning about democracy and the workings of society, the way this is implemented by the staff is through projects of this kind. The forming of boards and
voting procedures is the model that is taken from the life of public organizations and the popular movements. The issue is, of course, if this can so easily be translated to a youth club. It can be said that some of the staff have definite ideas about the club as a mirror of society. Sometimes the conclusions are, in a sense, opposite to the idea of control and the objective is to give people freedom. This is Ann’s view:

Ann: - it’s a lot like this that they come here an’ say “it’s so fuckin’ borin’ here, there’s not a shit to do” ... activate me like ... an’ that’s the way it is sometimes ... an’ I mean ... an’ it’s not really what we’re here for ... we shouldn’t be some kindergarten staff who fix an’ play ... but I mean ... you’re supposed to ... well, when you’re grown up nobody tells you that you should do this an’ do that but you have to fix your own leisure time like ... an’ it’s important that you learn beforehand ... I mean your imagination they rob you of at school ... I mean it’s like ... I think that long ago you did your own stuff much more ... you played football at home in the yard like ... I mean already at the kindergarten it’s so pedagogical when you’re supposed to play an’ activate them too ... I mean, the activating in our society works like that ... now they’re activating pensioners too ... I mean, people have to take responsibility for their own lives an’ you got to think ... think for yourself ... that’s what you have to do ... get the kids to think ...

The democracy project is conceived of to make people ”think for themselves”. But in reality it does not result in so many changes. Only the staff’s way of viewing the job becomes somewhat different. The paradox in Ann’s statement is that her idea of people thinking for themselves and ”fixing” their own leisure time seems to imply that this should come about precisely through organization and guidance from others. Also, her criticism of the organization and activation of people can be directed against the very activity she herself is engaged in. This insight is never formulated by the staff and is, of course, only a paradox viewed from the outside.

The idea of teaching people freedom and democracy can be problematic. In a sense, it contains the view that people are unable to find things out for themselves and, furthermore, that their already existing views and strategies are underdeveloped, and thus, do not count as viable. It is the staff’s presupposition, albeit not directly expressed, that the young people are irresponsible. Generally, this is, of course, a view that can be inherent in many adult – youth relations. Here, though, the staff find it corroborated through the way they see the young people acting. The broken equipment, the stolen sweets, the open windows and all the other things that have been a source of frustration to them are evidence enough. The democracy project is a way for the staff to rectify all this and set their
own minds at peace, and at the same time supposedly teach the young people the moral activities through which they can become good citizens.

For the staff, the democracy project is a way of implementing meaningful leisure time, but it has also to do with the definition of their work role. Through this project, a meaningful job would be created for them, a functioning role where they could feel they had the respect of the visitors and their understanding of the youth club’s ideals.

For the lads, though, it had to do with their free time. The time when they wanted to choose what to do and where to do it.

The democracy project revisited

Grubbe: -they took away the hamburgers, they did ... disappeared at once like ... you could make ’em yerself ... go in an fry ’em up ... that was real fun ...

Karlson: -they took it away directly, they did ...

Grubbe: -that was fun ...

Karlson: -”can’t have that, can we” ...

Grubbe: -”Grubbe thought it was fun to make hamburgers ... we’ll take it away directly”

Sven: (entering the room) aha, are you sittin’ here ... can’t you go into the sitting-room instead ...

K.E.: (to Grubbe and Karlson) can we do that ...

Karlson: -yea ...

Grubbe: -Sven ...

Sven: -yeah ...

Grubbe: -we were just discussing the club ...

Sven: -yeah ...

Karlson: -’an’ that we wanna decide some things like ...

Sven: -that’s what we want too ... that you should be ...

Karlson: -oh really!

Grubbe: -ha ha REALLY!

Sven: -well, I’ve been nagging about that for a hundred years now ...

Grubbe: -well, we always had a lot of things like ... for example ... we ’ave a great ... great idea we ’ave ... on Sundays ... but maybe nobody wants to work then or what ...

Karlson: -we’ve got nothing to do on Sundays ...

Sven: -we think it’s real fun when suggestions come up an’ we’re doing the best we can to make ’em come about ...

Grubbe: -oh yea ...

Sven: -like the ... that thing with a music video film ... I find very interesting ...
Karlson: -oh yeah, Lars Keso might be doin’ a music video ... Sven was going to help ...
K.E: -are you doin’ one ...
Grubbe: -as a joke then..if we are ...

Grubbe and Karlson, in this discussion, take the opportunity to confront Sven with something they feel confident he cannot answer. Grubbe’s remark, made in an insinuating tone of voice, that the staff would not want to work on Sundays also seems to imply bad intent on Sven’s part. He, in turn, answers that the staff try to do their best to comply with suggestions. The lads’ challenge this as they do Sven’s first statement that the staff really want the lads to decide things at the club.

When talking about the club, the lads most often express the view as at the beginning of the excerpt. Everything they think is fun is prohibited by the staff, and Grubbe suggests that this is done out of spite1. He feels that the hamburgers were abolished just because he thought they were fun to make and the staff do not want him to have fun. The reasons the staff give are seen as only pretexts and from the lads’ point of view, they are not logical2. The lads’ general statement about the club, though, is that it is boring3, and that there is nothing to do there. About the staff, they say that they do not listen to the views and opinions of the young people. This is Paul giving his view:

Paul: -we’re not supposed to get any enjoyment we are ... it should be as boring as possible ... oh shit ... there’s really nothing to do ... /
K.E: /... so you don’t feel they listen to anything you come up with then ...
Paul: -well, now, there’s not much on our side to encourage them to do anything ... we’re not saying like ... there’s many here at the club likes to go fishin’ like ... an’ I think they could do that a lot better ...
K.E: -through the club like ...
Paul: -yeah ... to go to a nearby lake with club buses ... /... but then they don’t have the time or it’s booked ... the bus is booked or something ... that’s something we encourage ‘em to ... or say ourselves that we’d wanna do ... but then it never happens ... well, we’ve got concerts ... but then most of the time it doesn’t happen ... it doesn’t reach em’ ... but I mean they don’t come an’ ask us either if we’d

1 Compare Willis (1977), p. 72, where the lads saw teachers as ”prison guards” that, out of pure malice, tried to put an end to all fun.
2 In this case, the staff’s idea was that the visitors should eat proper food at home instead, at least this is the official reason. Here, an additional reason is that they had grown tired of the lads running around in the kitchen frying hamburgers all the time.
3 The notion of boredom as a way to express relational aspects of the club has also been touched upon by Wulff (1988) p. 130-132, although in a different context.
wanna go to that concert ... could be tiresome for 'em of course, but still ... no shit, I don’t think anything happens here in this club ...

The view is that the staff see to it that nothing that is "fun" happens at the club. When he talks about the example of the fishing trips, Paul relates what he sees as the staff’s pretexts for avoiding the use of the club mini bus. The idea that some things can be "tiresome" for the staff is interesting. Together with Grubbe’s claim that they would not want to work on Sundays, it gives a picture of the staff, not as organizers of activities the lads like and may have suggested themselves, but rather as people who do not take any particular pains to engage in activities that would be inconvenient. They are not hard working and they are not doing a real job. The idea of the staff as service personnel does not come up until they launch the democracy project. It is then that the "coffee-serving incident" occurs, and then the lads understand that the staff see themselves as working "for" young people, "on their terms" and so on. The staff are then seen almost as spiteful, inhibiting everything that is fun, and their talk about participation is hypocritical. This can be further expressed like this:

Paul: -well, they (the staff) have been talking about makin’ us work a little more like ... well ... more in the company like ... stand in the kiosk an’ things like that ... see how tiresome it is ... they think ...

Analogous with the earlier view of the lads that the staff only tried to make money on them, Paul here makes a comparison of the club with a company. The participation proposed by the staff is only a vehicle for making the lads feel the hardships of the job, and, in a sense, take the staff’s side. This idea is, of course, seen as one of oppression from above and when this is felt, the lads do not concur. Instead, they see the roles as being even more clearly divided and incidents like the one related earlier occur. This is the "coffee-serving incident" as told by Paul:

Paul: -well, they closed the kiosk durin’ school-hours ‘cos some kid said "hey you, lazy bugger, don’t just sit there, come an’ serve me instead" somebody did an’ then ... well, it was closed for a while ... an’ me comin’ off the job early comin’ for a soft-drink an’ all ... oh no ... it’s a lot like that ...

This episode resulted in more than the closing of the kiosk for a week. For the staff, it worked as a pivot to get the democracy project off the ground
but for the lads it only meant new disturbances. Paul found himself in a special situation:

Paul: well, I mean they think you ... that they don’t get respected like ... an’ we don’t, do we ... nobody around here respects any of the staff maybe except Richard, then ... some ’ave respect for ’im like ...

K.E: -how do you mean ...

Paul: -well, they get to hear that he threw someone out an’ grabbed somebody an’ that ... then you respect ’im like ... but Janet for example ... nobody has any respect for her ... like ...

K.E: -what do you mean, respect ...

Paul: -well, I mean if you respect somebody you don’t say ”come on you bugger an’ serve me” like ... If you have respect you say like ”could you please come” ... I mean that’s what they’re naggin’ about ... they were questioning me, they did, an’ I know it all don’t I ... I threw in a lot of my comments then ...

K.E: -yees ...

Paul: -well, I couldn’t explain an’ then they started askin’me like ... they had views on everything I said an’ turned it around like I was to stand for every fuckin’ kid or girl or shit ... boy or woman or whatever ... here in the club like ... I thought that was hell ...

K.E: -how do you mean ... what did they ask ...

Paul: -well they sat like this an’ asked ... ”why don’t you think we’re respected” ... Sven came an’ said like ... so I gave ’em my views an’ then he turned it around like ... with some trick question or whatever it was ... ”if a football player dribbles like this why do you dribble like that” an’ I was supposed to explain like ... so I talked to everybody ... / ... there’s so much they’ve said an’ then no fuckin’shit ever comes out of it ... that’s what I think ...

One key word here is respect. Paul’s definition is different from that of the staff. He talks about respecting somebody who has shown his strength, not somebody who tries to talk about the problems. Getting caught up in endless discussions does not amount to anything for him. He again comments on the ”coffee-serving incident”, though, and accounts for his bad feelings about having been seen as a representative of all the young people in the club. The staff made him a general example against his will and they were not interested in him as an individual. ”Trick questions” and the twisting of everything he said was what he felt the conversations contained.

1This can be seen in relation to Petersson’s (1990) p. 172-176, notion of the generalizing practices of youth work. It would be convenient for staff to get their views corroborated by the lads themselves but for the lads this is almost like an insult, something that Paul here can be said to express through his anger at having been asked ”trick questions”.

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The democracy project is rejected too. Nothing usually "comes out" of all the things the staff say, and their objective is seen only as restoring the respect they feel they have lost. For the lads, this respect is only there for those who can show strength and not for those who try to solve every problem through talking.

For Paul, in the excerpts above, it is no objective that the staff and the lads should necessarily have the same views or opinions about the club. The lads do not see themselves as the objects with which the staff work. Nor do they adhere to the view that they need working on. The division is clear and, as described in chapter 4, is partially upheld by the lads’ jargon. The staff’s idea behind the democracy project is never seen as sincere by the lads, who instead find the explanation in the staff’s desire for recognition. This more confrontational notion of the division is nothing strange for Paul, it is the way of the world. His explanation of the whole issue is simple and down to earth:

Paul: -well, I mean ... there’s a fuckin’ difference between ... us at the club an’ the youth club leader I think ... ‘cos I mean ... I can say ... if you were Grubbe, for example, like "hey you fuckin’ fatso come ‘ere" an’ he won’t mind ... but they do ... but it’s our way of talking it is ...

The jargon is the notion he uses to explain why the staff react so strongly, and in his opinion they are really over-reacting. It is not the lads objective to bring the two groups closer together. As described in Chapter 4, they were quite satisfied with the differentiation that seems to exist, and they actually do see the staff as service personnel who are there to fix things, but who seemingly do not want to. At least not the things the lads want.

The music-contest revisited

Another instance where the staff’s and the lad’s differing views of their roles and the objective of the club can be seen, relates to music. Different music activities, which were focused on in Chapters 2 and 3 can be used to describe how music-playing is organized as a youth club activity drawing on the pedagogical notions described above and seen as a part of a youth club practice, through the relations at the club. As this chapter has so far

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1See also Willis 1977 p. 72.
dealt with the staff’s way of working and the lad’s way of relating to this in turn, this focus can serve as a background to further the understanding of the description of music-playing given in Chapters 2 and 3. At first, the rock-band contest, the ”rock ’n’ roll roundabout”, which was described earlier, will be re-examined to give a picture of how the staff conceive of its organization and how the lads react. This focus will also give a picture of the changing role of music-playing for the lads and develop the understanding of the role of the youth club relations as regards this change.

The music contest is a kind of youth club activity. As such, it can be seen as analogous to other activities such as those described above. And, the staff’s ways of reasoning when it comes to it are similar to how they reason around, for example, the democracy project. The contest has a strict organization where the objective seems to be to create equal opportunities to play for all bands and to create a ”just” way of selecting a winner through an elaborate voting procedure.

A condensed description of the contest organization gives a picture of an activity where every detail seems to have been thought about:

Organizationally, the contest involves five or six youth clubs and the independent organization that runs the Factory. One of the adult education associations is also involved. Meetings are held with a committee that has members from from the staff of each club, and where a scheme for the concerts and other questions are discussed. The concerts are held on Fridays and Saturdays with a group of five or six bands playing at one club on the Friday and at another on the Saturday. The bands get about 20 minutes playing time at each concert. The bands rotate and so play on most of the stages and most bands play at every club. At the Elmridge concerts, there is an entrance fee of 10 kronor for the audience. From the clubs, the staff then select 10 young people from the regular visitors to act as a jury where both sexes are equally represented. Their task is to watch the bands and fill in a form were some features of the performance are to be judged. This is what the form looks like:
JUROR'S FORM - THE ROCK 'N' ROLL ROUNDABOUT

Welcome as juror of the rock 'n' roll roundabout in 1990
You will give each rock group points in the 4 different categories on a scale of 1-5 according to the following:

1 = BAD – does not appeal to me at all
2 = LESS GOOD – appeals to me to a lesser degree
3 = GOOD – appeals to me rather much
4 = VERY GOOD – appeals to me to a large degree
5 = FANTASTIC – appeals to me very much

The four categories are:
- CHOICE OF SONGS (lyrics, melody, rhythm)
- STAGE-APPEARANCE (tempo, audience-contact)
- EMOTIONAL EXECUTION (pleasure in playing)
- TECHNICAL EXECUTION (playing well together)

1. THE BAND'S NAME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOICE OF SONGS</th>
<th>STAGE APPEARANCE</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL EXECUTION</th>
<th>TECHNICAL EXECUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total score

Sign the form with: the name of the club, the date, your name and your phone number. Don’t forget to leave your votes with the club staff.

CLUB/DATE __ __ NAME __ __ PHONE __

The voting is cast after each band has played and the results are put together with those from the other concerts. The best bands, usually around twenty, will then play in the finals, the organization of which differs from year to year. One year, the finals is a two-day concert held in the auditorium of a school, and with new voting procedures which involve the whole audience. Another year, it is an 24-hour concert held in the auditorium of the former "People’s House" (Folkets hus).

The way the contest is talked about by the staff gives a picture of the problems involved. The year when Lars Keso and Jonson with his new
band participate, the prize to be awarded is debated and the meetings of the
organizing committee are reported on and discussed at a staff-meeting at
the Elmridge club:

Richard (reporting on the organizing committee-meeting): - an' then we discussed the
roundabout ... an' then it’s like ... the prize that’s been planned ... is not very
popular ... an' then Tony (from the rock-organization and one who was
involved in starting the contest) has written a letter ... an' well it’d take too long
to read but ...

Sven: - popular ... what’s not popular ... we haven’t even discussed this in our staff group
... so I think it’s wrong to say that it’s not popular ... without knowing if it is or
not ... the directors say it’s not popular but we never discussed it in our staff group

Richard: - well, not what the consequences might be ... but we talked about that the prize

Sven: - but you said it wasn’t popular ...

Richard: - no it’s not popular ... but they wrote again to the meeting ... an’ the idea is to
have a roundabout just as usual an’ then to have a kind of enticement to make it
popular to enter the contest ... already there I have some views ... it’s not the
prize that should decide if you enter but it’s the opportunity to play a concert
’cos that’s the basic idea of the roundabout ... but that’s what I think ... so then
there would be some kind of tour ... that they’d go over to, for example, Estonia
or Latvia or something ... an’ then there’s this peace festival on Bornholm an’
that’s every other year an’ now it’s the Danes arranging it ... with plays an’
performances an’ music an’ meetings about a nuclear-free zone an’ so on ... an’
then the band that gets the most votes could take part and play ... but then we
have some background from last year in Murmansk ... well ... the rock kids
behaved quite OK but then there were others like ... they traded jeans for vodka
an’ were out an’ played at other places than the festival ... an’ then there was
beer an’, well, stronger things too ... so it’s this environment that apparently is
created in a place like this that is not very popular to say the least ... / ... there’s
tents like ... where there’s beer an’ then ... the directors say that to invite a
group to go to that environment like ... is not popular ... even if they don’t drink
... it ... it’s not good ...

Sven: - the difference this year is also that no youth club leaders will go with them ... so
they will be sent without leaders ...

Richard: - the alternative, then, is to stop in Kristianstad, then ... an’ do something there
for teenagers ... of course, some people will get to the island anyway but the
idea is that the thing organized by the youth clubs should be ... well to stay on
the Swedish mainland ... to not go over to Bornholm where all those things are
that I’ve tried to relate ... but then we could still go to Estonia or Latvia ... it’s
that last thing ... the festival that we’ve said we do not want to have ... an’ then
Tony hasn’t accepted this but wanted a new discussion an’ that’s why I’m
bringing it up but personally I still say no ... an’ then you can say what you
think ...

Sven: - well, I think like you do but I just want us to discuss it in the staff-group ... / ...

Richard: - well, I don’t see only the beer but unfortunately also other things that come over
from Christiania an’ so ... an’ if I got the right information they are going to
finance the whole thing with selling beer ... just like that ... an’ then I feel it’s
not right ... it’s like holding up sweets an’ saying here you are but you’re not
allowed to eat it ... / ... an’ if there has to be such a big thing then you can start
to wonder if there should be a roundabout at all ... the basic idea was that the
kids should get opportunities to play ... the ones messing about in there in the
workshop ... to have some more organized concerts ... that’s the original idea
... well, of course, you can do anything an’ in the end we’ll be going to Hawaii...
the kids would really like that ...

Sven: -yeah, but we’ve come to the point where we have to have an enticement ... this
year only 16 bands have signed up ... so far ...

Richard: -well, then, maybe the roundabout ...

Susan: -is out of date ...

Richard: -is out of place ... / ... then of course the idea behind all this with the roundabout ...
to cooperate with the peace organization ... an’ it’s valuable that there is
something else for those in there banging away on the guitars and drums ... that
they get to experience this ... so they may get some other interests too ... but
maybe this is achievable anyway ... if you go to Estonia or Latvia an’ all this ...

perestrojka an’ whatever ...

Susan: -the question is which bands ...

Sven: -none of the more attractive bands have applied ...

Richard: -what if Grubbe an’ those were to win the roundabout ... I mean, it doesn’t sit ...
it doesn’t sit well with me ... ‘cos that’s the group the roundabout is meant for
really ... somehow ... that’s what I feel inside ...

Sven: -sounds like it’s become too professional like ... has to be so much ... an’ like ...
the idea with the roundabout is that there should be both new bands and more
established so you can learn from each other and exchange experiences ... / ...

Richard: -well, so we’re more like ... not to agree with that ... going to Bornholm thing ...
have I got it right?

Sven: -yes ...

Susan: -yes ...

The major issue in the excerpt is, of course, the idea of going to the
Danish island of Bornholm and playing at the peace festival. Along the
lines of the staff’s earlier discussions, they seem to view the lads as not to
be trusted. The festival is considered a dangerous "environment" where
not only beer will be present but also, as is the implication, drugs will
flourish. And the lads will most certainly succumb to temptation. Even if
Richard sees the peace festival as a valuable experience where the lads,
who are now "banging away" on the instruments, can get a chance to
develop other interests, the negative aspect and the potential dangers
strongly dominate. The discussion also leads the staff to question the whole
idea of the rock ’n’ roll roundabout, which is seen as having become a too
big an apparatus, thus having somewhat surpassed its original ideas of

1 The prize eventually becomes a contract for a single and participation in a four-day music
festival in a large Swedish town, where the winner will play at a concert with other bands
from the adult education association arranging the festival. Finally, 39 bands enrolled and
they were divided into eight groups which tour the youth clubs.
being a forum for less known local bands and an exchange of experiences. In order to resolve the small moral dilemma of there being a "good" element in the idea just rejected, the argument seems to devolve into a view that the suggested prize would mean giving away things to people who would not deserve them. The idea of Grubbe winning the contest and running loose on Bornholm (or Hawaii) does not appeal to Richard at all. The reason he gives, though, is that the contest was originally created in order to give new bands opportunities to play.

Again, the staff is reasoning by way of a generalization. The suggested prize is not good for the lads on moral grounds. But there is only one winner and it is always one of the more established bands with older members who win. There is never any real possibility that Lars Keso will win, and, indeed, for them the contest really does represent the chance to come out and play:

K.E: -what about the roundabout ...
Grubbe: -that's fun if you come to a place where there's a lot of people ... who get involved an' clap their hands an' ... jump an' kick like ...
Karlson: -so that there's some action ... then it's the most fun to play ...

But Lars Keso do win the local roundabout concert at the Elmridge club. From the jurors they get a total score of 143, three ahead of the second band. A quick look at the scores reveals that the voting is remarkably alike for all the bands both among the boys and the girls in the jury. The difference with Lars Keso is that all the girls have given higher scores. With the boys, the band is only fourth. The boys give Grubbe lower scores almost as a joke, saying to each other that:
"well, you can't let him win, now can you".

In reality, the jurors vote for or against their friends or those they know something about. The jurors are given a task that is unprecedented in their experience, outside school that is. The form resembles a school task but it is, of course, the jurors' interpretation of, for example, the category "emotional execution" that is expressed in the voting. The idea of evaluating music is never discussed within the staff group and the form is the same every year. It is a mixture of a very technical and a commonsensical evaluation. The jurors are supposed to judge music with their own minds and preferences, but through categories that for them are not so strongly connected with how they usually listen to a concert. The boys respond by joking about it and jointly talking about their votes. The girls
can often be heard discussing the categories, wondering what is meant by emotional execution.

As has been described earlier, the contest does not bring about any change of style or attitude for Lars Keso. They continue to play their same songs and to refrain from tuning their guitars properly or making lengthy soundchecks. The bands that enter do so seriously and Lars Keso's approach of having fun stands out. At one club, they only play four songs and then angrily leave when they do not get the audience participation they want. So for Lars Keso, the contest has its moments of triumph even if they are few, but also its moments of failure. They have entered and acted throughout with a style that does not really fit the contest's organization which is more professional.

For the staff, the contest is a "serious" activity organized by way of meetings and with moral implications. For them, the feeling is that they are offering the lads opportunities. The idea is, again, to involve them in the activity. If the contest is seen as an organized and thus "serious" activity by the lads, their taking part in it can be problematic. Their style is not adapted to this type of organizing and the contest demanded another type of approach, of complying with its rules and with the idea of contesting in music. Lars Keso's show was not serious enough to be successful at the same time as they had participated and followed the rules of the contest. And as seriousness is a concept Lars Keso is battling and something they have now found themselves participating in, this, of course, can be a problem for them. Their way of talking about the contest becomes more detached.

Back in the workshop

Grubbe starts playing a riff on the guitar. It is actually the beginning of one of the Angel tunes and he plays it faster and more inexacty than Jonson does. He has turned the distortion to maximum on the amplifier and the sound is harsh and with a raw character. Already after the first two bars, Karlson falls in on the drums, playing a punk-style accompaniment. They are playing the intro of the tune consisting of the twice-repeated riff and then four bars of broken chords. Grubbe makes an addition to the last bar of the intro by playing a simple scale from a high note downwards and back up again. He then plays the riff again for one bar, but in a more
sloppy way this time, as if to signal to Karlson that he does not want to continue. They end simultaneously:

K.E: -how did the concerts go ... at the other clubs ...
Grubbe: -here, it was a fuckin' success ... in Elmridge ... an’ then we played in Stonebridge ... an’ it was a fuckin’ success there too ... an’ now we’re playin’ at the Factory ... but Karlson’s workin’ that day ...
Karlson(while hitting a cymbal): -that’ll be fun ...
Grubbe(starting to pick a chord): -there’s going to be a guitar course at the club ... teach us to play country and blues ... / ... the bugger ... real good he is ... goin’ like this with his fingers (runs his fingers quickly along the neck) ... he’s here on Tuesdays an’ takes care of a girlie band ... he played the base notes with his thumb like ... fuckin’ good ...
K.E: -so now you’ll have to let your nails grow then ...
Karlson: -he’s been bitin’ them off since he was a kid ...

When I bring up the issue of the contest, Grubbe and Karlson talk about it but, it seems to me, without much interest. They talk about some of the concerts as having been successful, but with a less enthusiastic reaction and only after being asked, and then they suddenly change the subject. Grubbe interrupts this conversation by starting to play a scale up and down the guitar-neck. It is the classically inspired Yngwie Malmsten tune they often play. He changes to a lower key and Karlson falls in on the drums. Grubbe immediately stops and Karlson continues with a heavier beat on the tom-toms. Grubbe resumes the tune in a faster, rockier style and they play for about ten seconds and then stop as Sven enters the workshop. He has with him the result of the voting at the concert at Elmridge which was a part of the rock ’n’ roll roundabout. It was held at the club the previous weekend.

Sven: -Lars Keso got the most votes ...
K.E: -oh that’s good ...
Grubbe (chuckles): hehehe ...
Karlson (sighs exaggeratedly): oahh ...

Sven leaves and the contest is not mentioned again. It seems they are not so interested and instead Grubbe starts playing a note, first quietly and then louder and louder. Karlson starts playing a 4-beat and after a few seconds Grubbe falls in and plays a new tune. It is the beginning of “The Third Eye” which they play rather clumsily for only a few seconds and then suddenly end. Grubbe starts tearing at the guitar-cable which is bent and
does not connect properly. When he finishes adjusting the cable he tries out the connection with a few chords and immediately begins with a new tune. Karlson falls in with the 4-beat and they play the whole song through. It is the "Ebba Grön" tune "Staten och kapitalet" which is played with a punkish sound and attack. During all this time they hardly look at each other but communicate by means of small nuances, both in music and verbally, as well as non-verbally. For example, in the way a chord is played a little bit too loud or with an abrupt end accompanied by a look at each other. Only once do they make a mistake when Grubbe starts on a chorus while Karlson continues on the verse. They look at each other:

Grubbe: -change?
Karlson: -no
Grubbe(emphatically): -change ...
Karlson: -no!
(They start on a new tune.)

The session continues in this way for another hour and several short tunes are played through. Grubbe and Karlson hardly talk to each other but seem to know exactly which tune to play. At times, one of them starts a new song and then again the other takes over the initiative. Nobody brings up the subject of the contest again and I get the impression that Karlson’s exaggerated sigh when Sven announced the result of the voting almost meant "who cares". It is as if it was a way of showing that it was an uninteresting topic of discussion.

The rock band contest seems in these excerpts to have lost importance for the lads. Their reaction is in a sense a redefinition of what is important in music-playing, from participating in the contest, playing in public, to emphasizing the more intimate relationship in the workshop. Grubbe’s and Karlson’s music-playing becomes a kind of dialogue where they each develop their part in conjunction with the other. They communicate by way of playing, and do not need words to any large extent. Grubbe mostly looks down at the guitar as if following his hands with his eyes while Karlson is more attentive and watches Grubbe most of the time. It is as if he can sense what his friend is going to do, when he will change chords or key and so will be prepared or even one step ahead.

If this style of playing is compared to a dialogue, it closely resembles the actual way of talking that Grubbe and Karlson use in their everyday
discourse. They often fall in with each other, interrupt or start a new theme, and develop it together. As close friends, they have developed their relationship to involve both a style of talking and of playing music that is highly communicative and participative. They know and complement each other very well both in music and in the youth club jargon. In a sense, they seek out the more personal way of communicating as the public one had seemed to fail.

Their styles in jargon and playing music are interrelated, and also in a way highly related to the youth club. As described in Chapter 3, Lars Keso’s music has in a sense been caught up in the youth-club relations. It has itself become a part of the local jargon to a higher degree than the Angel songs and worked better there than in the contest.

For Grubbe and Karlson, music is also connected to some particular ideals. As was described in Chapter 3, some of these reflect an anti-commercial stance. Music is not something to make money out of, and it should not be approached with too much "seriousness", as they say. This, too, has been their critique against Jonson and Angel. Rather, theirs was an ideal comprising a kind of "genuineness", something which entertained the notion of "having fun" and not the notion of "going for it":

Grubbe: - I mean if we were to get a record contract or somethin’ ... it wouldn’t bother us a bit ... we wouldn’t change style or anythin’ ... we wouldn’t rehearse more like
Karlson: - we’re not goin’ for it ...
K.E: - well, what’s the difference ...
Grubbe: - it’s more fun to play live ... than on a demo-tape ...
Karlson: - to play for others like ... come out an’ show yourself ...

Music-playing, thus, has a quality of directness about it without which Grubbe and Karlson are not satisfied. As a result, their dependence on the youth club and their friends-as-audience is heavy and their style is, of course, influenced. The lyrics are part of the jargon and their content is laden with references to the youth club context and also to everyday-life situations. This also pays off:

Hanson: - Grubbe an’ them are good ... I think that’s what’s successful ... the lyrics ... definitely ... simple lyrics ... fast beat ... I saw them at Stonebridge ... an’ at

1See also Berkaak & Ruud (1992) p. 64-65, who note how two of the members in the band they studied were close friends and had a special form of communication with each other that could be difficult for others to participate in.
first it was empty an' then when they started playin' everybody came in an' watched ... an' then you know em' personally like ... but their tunes are the best ... they're good the lyrics ... daring ... I mean I'd never dare go up there an' play with those lyrics myself ... 

So, music as direct communication in a sense confines the band to this particular setting and audience. And as has also been described in Chapter 3, their excursions out into the larger music scene fail with the music contest concert at the Factory as the prime example. The notion of genuineness, meaning not being commercial, not tuning your instruments properly, and to have fun as your main concern is, of course, a style in itself. Paradoxically, it represents an institutionalization of sorts, as it relates strongly to the club and works well only there.

The staff's manner of organizing the youth club activities and their view of how the work is to be done are also a way of institutionalizing music-playing. Within the framework of the democracy project, Sven's idea of how to organize the music workshop¹ is by way of a "music club" with a board and voting procedures and his own role as a kind of counsellor. Even if this is never implemented, the rules already in existence concerning the workshop are considered a nuisance by the lads. Thus, music-playing for them is also to a large extent associated with complying with, or opposing, rules and regulations that others have laid down. From the very beginning, this was an inherent feature of the organized youth club activity of playing in the workshop.

Meeting with the lads

The description above can give a picture of how the activity of music-playing changes and how it is entangled in the relations, and forms of organization, at the youth club. But this institutionalization of music is a process in which both the lads and the staff participate. It is one aspect of a description of the lad's music-playing. Other aspects, which have been hinted at above, are notions of what the club's function for the lads could be, and notions of work that become important as the lads finish school and take up jobs. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to describing

¹See p. 168.

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how notions of the club’s place in the lads’ lives, of work and of the future change the conceptions of music-playing and of the youth club for them.

There is a certain ambiguity in the lads’ notions of being satisfied with the differentiation from the staff on the one hand, and claiming that the staff does not do anything for them on the other. Even if the lads obviously reject the idea of being objects for the staff to work on, they comply with the idea that the club is there to provide them with opportunities, for example, playing music. But that would mean recognizing that they would be dependent on the staff. The solution to this paradox is to turn against the staff. If the emphasis is placed on the staff’s alleged malice, the lads have a reason for not agreeing with their views or complying with their rules. The issue is not to question the basic assumptions underlying the staff’s way of working, but to fight what the lads see as intrusions into their own territory. Seen in context, the frustration they feel is construed from a notion that the staff by definition would oppose anything the lads see as fun. If the staff are seen as only a hindrance to the lads, this brings to the forefront the important notion of them, instead of being hindered and controlled, being left alone and undisturbed. And, the most frequent reason that the lads give for coming to the club is to meet with other lads. This is given almost as a pretext, as for example here by Paul:

K.E: -how do you feel about the club ...
Paul: -bad ...
K.E: -bad?
Paul: -well, I think they’ve got fuckin’ nothing for us to do here ... oh shit, we only come here ’cos all the lads come here like ... I mean you can’t take home every fuckin’ mate to your place now can you ... you come here an’ then you sit an’ talk about what happened last weekend an’ then like ... on Wednesday you start talkin’ about what’s gonna happen next weekend instead ...

So, the club is not a place where you can have fun but you have to go there in order to meet with your friends. Of course, most of the lads live with their parents and during my fieldwork period only Hanson had acquired his own flat. But the lads seem to prefer to meet outside the home and if the home is a place the lads, if not shun, at least do not prefer, the club by contrast is the place to be in. But this is not to say that the club is a second home. It is a meeting place among others and it has certain advantages. The frustration the lads feel about the club is largely due to what they might consider as the staff’s attempts to establish similar kinds of rules and
modes of conduct they encounter and dislike at home or at school. The negative stories about the club, and the positive stories about other places, also suggest that the club is not considered the alternative "home" or "their" place as those others can be.

Consequently, Paul says that his feelings about the club are "bad". This, of course, deepens the differentiation and enlarges the problem of understanding between the two groups.

"Meeting with the lads" is a concept of paramount importance. No particular reason is needed or given for getting together, it is just the natural thing to do for the lads. For them, it is an activity which cannot be governed by outside rules decided on by others and meeting with the lads is the normal, or natural, way of life. The way of talking about it is rather in the style of the more mythological stories of the grove or the river presented at the end of Chapter 4. In contrast, talking about the club is mostly in the style of the negative and frustrated opinions described above.

Hanson: It's real bad ... when you were a kid like, you didn't notice but now you really do ...
K.E.: -like ... what ...
Hanson: -well when you start arguing with the club leaders ... about a rule or something ... they just like ... "that's the way it is" an' then they can't justify it ...
K.E.: -what do they say like ...
Hanson: -an' then they've got different rules, like yesterday Susan came an' shouted about me not havin' a fuckin' membership card ... an' I've had that for the last ten years I have ... "so now we're gonna check" an' thought she was somethin' ... an' then I had one so she got really mad ... senseless things like ...
K.E.: -well what's good about comin' here then ...
Hanson: -that everybody else is here ...

Hanson expresses a feeling of not accepting rules, as he had done when he was "a kid", as he has discovered they are unfair and only there to control him. And, he sees Susan as spitefully wanting to catch him without a card. It is typical that he uses the more general or unspecified concepts of "club leader" or "membership card" instead of "youth club card" which is the

1This notion can be related to the concept of "doing nothing", Corrigan (1979). This is seen by Petersson (1990) as "a space of possibilities to experience moments 'where something can happen' and possibilities to acquire a feeling of having 'a good time'. At the same time, 'doing nothing' means that you, on your own terms, can try out norms for what is, and what is not, considered allowed to do". P 18 (my translation).
Again, the notion of being supervised by unjust and incomprehensible rules is brought to the fore. The ban on wearing coats and jackets inside the club is a heartfelt issue with the lads. They like to keep them on indoors and consider the rule an insult. Also, the notion of having fun is present in Grubbe’s idea that you have to make fun yourself in order to have it. As an example of having fun at the club, he mentions throwing pillows to annoy the staff.

Having fun at the club has to do with making something happen that involves relations with the staff. All the stories concerning the club have, as described before, in their content a strong emphasis on the feeling of

1Compare Willis’ (1977) p. 29, notion of “having a laff”, which also was a way to make fun and at the same time defining relationships.
being controlled or supervised by the staff. They often contain a strong portion of frustration and relate a feeling of hitting from below, as when Hanson talks about Susan’s anger when she failed to catch him without a card. In contrast, meeting with the lads and having fun give rise to stories about activities decided on and organized by the lads without interference from others. Such stories, often very elaborated, have more to do with activities that have occurred outside the club, as for example the card-game described at the end of Chapter 4.

**Making money**

Paul: -Hey, when does the shop close ...
K.E: -don’t know ...

Paul: -I was thinkin’ about Oddset¹ ... we’re doin’ the Oddset a bit ... an’ Johnny like ... he put one-to-nothin’ for Malmö in the last game an’ the woman makes a mistake an’ gives him one-to-nothin’ for Norrköping instead, OHoh ...

K.E: -what ...

Paul: -he was sittin there all mad like when the game started ... ’oh shit, fuckin’ bitch, an’ now it’s too late’ he said ... an’ then a penalty for Malmö ... oh what the fuck oh oh he puts it there! an’ I almost kill him ... I mean he put a tenner an’ wins 142 ... well that’s not bad ...

K.E: -no ... did you like the game ...
Paul: -didn’t dare watch it ...
K.E: -what, why ...

Paul: -I too had one-to-nothin’ on Norrköping ... Johnny was with Malmö an’ I was with Norrköping an’ his brother ... he too had one-to-nothin’ for Norrköping ... so on us three they lost 426 kronor ... if you do it every week like ... take four results 0-0, 1-0, 0-1, 1-1 ... for a year like ... you win, it’s certain ... it’s almost all the time that games end 0-0 or 1-1 or 1-0 or 0-1 ... I mean 40 kronor ... an’ to get that one in, it’s not that bad ...

K.E: -er ... what did you say you ... how much did you get ...
Paul: -426 ...
K.E: -what were the odds ...

Paul: -14 to 20 ... an’ put a tenner y’know ... 142 ... shit I had 58 on the odds y’know ... 2-1 on Sweden against Finland ... an’ Sweden made 1-1 an’ there was eleven minutes left or nine minutes left ... had they scored one more I’d have won 580 on a tenner ... I was really mad an’ Johnny had wanted to put 1-1 ...

K.E: -that would have been even more money ...
Paul: -don’t know ... an’ it’s only up to a certain hour you can do it an’ then it was too late ... I’ll take 1-1 Johnny says an’ he had filled it in, the coupon ... an’ then you’re

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¹A special football betting game.

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supposed to put it in the machine an’ it comes out after a while ... an’ was he mad ...

Here, again, a story unfolds where the subject of money plays a part. In this excerpt, as well as with the card-game, Paul reveals his expertise in the mathematics of betting. He has the odds figured out and is able to conduct calculations he professed to never having managed at school.

Paul’s narrative style is dramatic. He makes me ask the questions he wants by not giving away the whole story at once, and thus making me curious. The story has an element of surprise and chance as in the case of the mistake made by the woman in the store suddenly turning into unexpected victory. This illustrates a feeling of not quite being the master of the situations, of having to rely on unexpected events that you cannot influence, or to be waiting for others to decide. Maybe it would be taking the analogy too far to compare gambling with the lads’ general situation, but the fact is that this element is there in many of the stories. With Grubbe and Karlson, there was always a third party involved who was in the role of the adult or the one on top. The stories then ended with the lads somehow reversing the situation and coming out winners.

If the element of “beating the adult” is important, it also has a double meaning. In the first stories, they do things that are clearly part of what it means to be one of the lads, escaping from the police with a crate of beer was an example. In the later stories, the element of money becomes important. It represents a step into the adult world where you have money to gamble with, and as the lads grow older they start working and earn their own ”real” money. In this context, the story of the coffee-serving incident described earlier, also becomes interesting. In a sense, it represents a sudden recognition of the realities of adult life and the roles of the two groups at the club. It is as if to say that now that I too have a job and earn my own money, I expect you to do your job which is to serve me coffee and not to talk about responsibility or respect. As an expression of a more equal relationship, this insight has profound importance and, as has been described, the incident stirs up strong feelings at the club. It is retold by many of the lads and contributes to the mythology. And for the staff, it creates so much frustration that it becomes the pivot of the democracy project.

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1See also Willis (1977) p. 26, where the aim for the lads is to master the system (of jargon), play with it and win symbolic space.
Growing away from the club

The notion of money is important to the lads. As they all leave school at seventeen or eighteen and start working, thus earning their own money, they are not so susceptible to the pedagogy of the youth club. As Hanson had pointed out, he could no longer accept some things he had not even noticed when he was a "kid". When the lads had started coming to the club at fourteen, they had seen things differently. It is, of course, obvious that you change between the age of fourteen and eighteen, but by starting to work the lads had made a serious move towards adult life. Some of their frustration at the conduct of the staff can be said to concern the feeling that this transition is not being recognized by those who say it is their business to help with its realization.

Stories about work become more important with the lads as time passes and they start working. Almost everybody has something to narrate about instances at work. These often take on the same vivid character as the earlier stories. The most elaborate is again Paul who in his story presents a new feeling:

Paul: -I really made a fool of myself at work, I did ...
K.E: -what did you do ...
Paul: -well, first of all I was late ... 45 minutes but that doesn’t matter much ... an’ then something’s wrong with the machine ... it’s like a long machine ... like a procedure like ... it’s a wire runnin’ on two wheels like ... an oven where the wire is melted together like ... it is ... an’ there’s this thing spraying on some anti-rust treatment, a box like ... an’ that broke down ... an’ there’s this bloke fixin’ it, the technician like ... an’ I had nothin’ to do so I swept the floor like ... didn’t dare look the gaffers in the eye y’know ... felt stupid, comin’ late an all ... an’ then I was supposed to run a wire through then an’ it comes out all junk ... 8,000 meters of junk ‘cos there was something wrong with the wire like ... an’ so I sit down there at that control-thing like an’ I sit on a chair an’ I was so tired so I fell asleep ...
K.E: -ha ha ...
Paul: -an’ the technician’s doin’ this rust-proofing thing an’ then all three bosses come an’ start talkin’ to him ... an’ they’re watchin’ me like ... an’ I ZZZZZZ ... they didn’t hear me snorin’ ‘cos the machine was runnin’ but the technician did ... came an’ woke me up afterwards he did ... the bugger doesn’t wake me up then ... an’ there’s the highest fuckin’ boss an’ he never comes to the workshop that we’re in ... an’ now he comes with two foreigners like ... they’re going to buy new machines ‘cos these are so fuckin’ old they are ... an Italian and a Finn ... an’ the highest boss like ... he sees me sleepin’ an’ I stand up an’ go there ... alright then there’s these big rolls of wire in different sizes like ... 8,000 metres ... an’ there was this junk in between ... real junk like so the wire becomes three stumps coming apart an’ gone to hell ... an’ then they come to my machine, the three bosses like ... so I look at them an’ don’t see all this junk in front ... ‘cos you have to stop an’ take it off an’ put a new wheel in an’ solder it together so it’s runnin’ clear ... an’ I didn’t see it an’ then BANG it just went y’know an’ I pushed the stop y’know ...
an’ it all went through the oven an all ... worst fuckin’ place oh shit ... an’ then he comes up an says “we had a small rupture here eh” ... OH Shit ... an’ then I pulled it through, two hours I was at it ... it’s three meters an’ for two hours I pulled this little part through the oven ... you can imagine how it gets stuck ... with three wires like ... nothin’ much can happen you think ...

K.E: -no ...

Paul: -oh oh oh shit everything ... it was just fuckin’ ... oh oh ... we use to ... count the meters ... how much you produce everyday like ... I mean I usually have 25,000 metres y’know ... an’ I mean I got 3,000 metres of usable wire today ... oh shit was I really mad ... Ahh an’ that was that ... it’s a fuckin’ nice job it is ...

After this long and elaborate account of the incident, Paul ends with a sincere statement about how “nice” the job is. His place in the story is ambivalent. On the one hand, he is still the one to be in the position of being controlled. He does not dare to look the foremen in the eye and he is ashamed as the company directors find him sleeping. His feeling about this, though, seems to be that this is as it should be. He has got a job and he has to comply with its rules. On the other hand, his whole story has to do with the elaborate details he has learnt and the big machine he has been entrusted with. His whole attitude is one of feeling the responsibility he has got. And, this is very different from the responsibility of the democracy project. For Paul, this is working and that means a totally different feeling of acceptance of, for example, the hierarchies of the workplace in contrast to those at the club which he saw merely as oppression. And now the club to him has become a place to go to afterwards and relax. And to talk about what happened at work¹.

Starting to work greatly influences the lads’ relationship with the youth club. They continue to come and to play music at the workshop but other elements have also become important to them. Talking about work also means starting to compare it with the youth club, with school and also with family life. In this excerpt, Grubbe and Karlson talk about these issues when asked about them in a general manner:

Karlson: -I like the job a lot ... has to do with the mates of course ... that’s 99 per cent that is ... your mates like ...

Grubbe: -if you’ve got good mates to work with the job gets easier too ...

Karlson: -it so fuckin’ organized like ...

¹See Willis (1977) p. 39 who makes an important point of manual labour assessment being a strong positive value leading to notions that work is much better, and “real life”, than school.
K.E: -what, school is?
Karlson: -yes ... but at work there's always something fun happening ...
Grubbe: -the gaffers get mad at somebody ...
Karlson: -no, well ... you have to take more responsibility when you're workin' like ... in school there's always someone tellin' you ... ''now we're doin' this an' now we're doin' that'' ... an' then you make money ...
Grubbe: -yeah, that's important ...
Karlson: -without money you don't get ...
Grubbe: -a hard on ...
Karlson: -anythin' ... shh ... /
Grubbe: -school is just insane like ... that's the way it is ... an' work ... well, I get to work out in the open a lot ... so I'm real satisfied ... run around on the roofs an' have a look around ... an' there's always the risk of fallin' like ... that adds to the excitement ... suppose I will some day ...
Karlson: -the club is more for meetin' your mates ... an' talking about what's happened ...
Grubbe: -you can't really put an age-limit for leavin' the club like ... well, like over twenty maybe ... shit ... what'll we do then when we're twenty-five ...
Karlson: -feedin' the kids ...
Grubbe: -what the fuck can you do ... there's nothin' ... sit in the café ... / ... an' then maybe ... it's probable ... you might get into a family-ingredient like ... an' get an animal ...
Karlson: -tough luck ...
K.E: -an animal?
Grubbe: -a kid like ... so if you get caught with a kid or something then life is over ... then it's stopped ... it's finished an' you have to take care of that bugger till he's fifteen or something ... then he can take care of himself ... / ... an' then you have to bring him up like ... can't sit an' drink beer all the time ... 'cos you don't want him to have glasses an' go to Sunday-school like ...
Karlson: -but that's up to you to see to it that he doesn't do that ...
Grubbe: -but what if the wife is religious like an' wants ...
Karlson: -well, she won't be ... / ... what you can decide about you try to decide for yourself like ... won't let others run your life for you ... that's no fun ...
K.E: -what can you decide ...
Karlson: -well ... if I want to come here that's my decision ... nobody'll do that for me ...
K.E: -an' at work ...
Grubbe: -well, you're there to make money like ...
Karlson: -well, you decide things there too ... you do have people above you like ... an' some things have to be done, an' those you have to do ... obvious things ... you have to do 'em ...

In this conversation, themes and opinions are generated, sometimes resembling clichés about life. Still, these in a sense represent the past, present and future of the lads. School is the place they have just left and it
is characterized as "insane". The club is again endowed with the quality of being the present meeting place. Working, though, is the most important theme in this instance. This is where they make most new important experiences. And as for family life, there is mere speculation.

When talking about work, the concept of responsibility appears again, now coupled to the feeling of freedom, for example, of being out in the open and not constrained to indoor life. There is an implication present of the superiority of manual labor\(^1\). The lads belong to a working-class culture where the ideals are opposed to those of white-collar work, which in turn is coupled to school culture. The ideal of having a "free" job out in the open is not unproblematic, though. When the problem is introduced of having control, the constraint of having to accept certain things at work is readily understood. "Certain things just have to be done" becomes a valid metaphor for the acceptance of the realities of work and of adult life. This notion of acceptance is never viable for the youth club, which, instead, is exactly what the name implies, a "fritids-gård", a leisure-time club. A place where you want to get away from the other responsibilities and not be presented with new ones. When it comes to the family, the adult role of upbringing means seeing to it that the son becomes like the father and not wearing glasses, i.e. being intellectual, or becoming religious. Daughters are not discussed at all and the whole issue is one of speculation rather than experience. Grubbe seems to see the son-to-be as a reflection of what he himself relates to at this moment and it can be noted that he states that the son would have to be cared for until he was fifteen, an age he himself has passed.

The issue of controlling your own life and making your own decisions is, of course, important, and can be seen as something that also means taking responsibility for your own life. Karlson's statement about deciding for yourself is made with emphasis and with a simultaneous recognition of the reality that there are things you cannot decide yourself. It has the same conviction as Grubbe's earlier statement claiming that you have fun if you really want to, that is, if you put your mind to it. Also, as a profound and obvious reason for working, Grubbe and Karlson state that it has to do with money. Earning your own money opens up a whole new arena of

\(^1\)Compare Willis (1977), p. 39. One of his main points is how the positive assessment of manual labour has come about as a result of opposing school. This notion, though, concerns more freedom from school than freedom to work and Willis argues that the lads are, in a sense, tricked into see working as freedom.
possibilities that was partly closed before. The lads' resources were limited and the renting of guitar cables and the paying of fees did cost them, even if the sums involved are considered symbolic by the staff.

As I showed earlier, Grubbe’s and Karlson’s ways of making music, composing, developing and playing, represent a more direct form of communication. It deals with issues that have a concrete relationship to everyday life, for example, in the lyrics:

Karlson: -I think they don’t like us here ... well, not like the other band at least ... we’ve made some nasty songs about the club like ...
Grubbe: -there’s one of the staff we didn’t like ... an’ wrote a nasty text ... ”pervert” ...
Karlson: they didn’t like it ... they left ... in the middle of the first tune they did ... all those working here ...

This is also a way of confirming the differentiation from the staff, a division the lads are also quite happy with.

The staff’s negative reactions to Lars Keso, of course, contribute to the band being confrontational, particularly in their lyrics. The notion of having fun means having fun at the expense of someone. In its oppositional stance, it implies being in opposition to staff, teachers or the foremen at work. Those who are considered to be on top or to have the power to decide things affecting the lads are, so to speak, looked down upon from below. This element is also present in many of the mythical stories described in the previous chapter, and it is a way for the lads to turn the situation or the power relations around, as for example in the story of the police hunt where the lads managed to get away with their beer crates intact. For Grubbe, though, music-playing becomes less important as the direct relations at the youth club are replaced by relations at work. He has, by now, started work as a roof-layer and not even for him, does music-playing become an alternative way of making a living.

Angel, though, or at least Jonson, does not relate his music-making so much to the internal relations of the youth club. For him, with his concept of ”going for it” and taking it seriously, it means, rather, to take his music-playing out of the club altogether. This is done in the same sense as with other important, or fun activities that were taken out of the club. Or as Hanson once says:

"Well, you do have a private life too"

as if implying that things that you consider important cannot be private at the club.
In addition, Jonson is trained as an auto-mechanic and has now started to work at a garage.

The beginning of the transition into the adult world and the realities of work also place emphasis on the division of time and space. Working-hours are fixed and are not tampered with as the school hours had been. Some of the lads work shifts and thus cannot come to the club as regularly as they used to. The earlier way of viewing time, which for the lads has meant entertaining a notion of freedom to come and go when they wanted, defying every time-schedule, has, with the acceptance of the realities of work, also changed. As the division of time into working-hours and leisure time becomes a reality, the notions of free time, of deciding for yourself what to do the whole day, is abandoned. This also means that music-playing comes to belong to the official, or youth club, definition of "leisure time" and not to free time, thus making it more of a hobby activity than an alternative way of life.

As new notions of working and responsibility that reflect the growing awareness of adulthood become more and more important, the lads begin to consider the club as only a place for relaxation. A place they can spend their free time in. As has been described in the above, this represents a totally different ideal to the one the club stands for. When working gets considered more "real" life than the club, things that were previously important are downgraded. Thus, in a sense, music-playing, as it is conceived of, as part of the jargon and conflicts with the staff, does not become a serious alternative in its own right. And it is not an alternative to working. As it has become defined through its use at the club, it does not really belong to "real" life in the same sense that working does¹.

There seems to be no alternative to manual labor in the lads' statements. Is this, then, the end of this story of how a group of young people get together at the youth club and start playing music? What has this music-playing meant to them and how should this be viewed in relation to the youth club as a social institution? The question can also be asked about how the music-playing described in Chapters 2 and 3 relates to issues such as these. I will now, in the final chapter, further discuss such questions raised by this description.

¹This argument is similar to Willis (1977), way of viewing the lads in connection to working and school.
6 Being aware and becoming controlled

In this last chapter, I will further analyse music-playing and institutionalization, and the situation of the lads at the youth club will be placed in a broader framework. The two main themes of this book, music and music-playing focused on in Chapters 2 and 3 on the one hand, and the relationship of those activities to the youth club and institutionalization in Chapters 4 and 5 on the other, will be further analysed and synthesised. The chapter will serve both as a recapitulation of the preceding chapters as well as a condensation and a further scrutiny of the central themes I have presented in the description.

Music as communication

Music-playing seen as human communication grounded in a context implies a view of the lads’ actions as a social interaction and the events at the club as a complex system of relationships between people coordinated in time and space, in a microculture\(^1\). So far, I have illustrated this in a description based on a chronology and on some themes in this chronology. The description in Chapters 2 and 3 focuses on the lads’ ways of playing music. I have emphasized how they acquire not only musical knowledge but also what I have called a musical awareness, an awareness of what playing music can mean and what it implies in terms of relations to people, idols, audiences, the staff at the club, etc. Seen in relation to the context studied here, the youth club, one way of interpreting the lads’ music-playing is to see it as an answer to events taking place there. Music-playing as communication means dealing with relations to other people and finding a function for music as an expression of a certain position in those relations.

\(^{1}\text{Wulff (1988), p. 22-23.}\)
The lads learn to play their instruments, often by watching others and trying for themselves, a pattern which is common in rock socialization. They learn to play a chord on the guitars reduced to its two lowest notes, using two fingers instead of four. They move this grip along the neck and get more chords. The sound is influenced by this as it almost excludes the playing of broken chords where all the strings are used, and the result is a lower, "darker", sound. In addition, the style of playing with the right hand, the fast "beating" on only those two strings, also gives a repetitive and "harsh" or "raw" quality to the sound. Also, the reducing of the chord gives way, in musical terms, to tonal openness. The interval of the chord is a fifth, and the guitarists employ the playing of parallel fifths, thus making the tunes non-conspicuous in key.

The notion of musical awareness can be said to relate to a notion of socialization into a way of living, and thinking, like a "producer" of music, of making a transition from listener to creator. The production of your own material is an important step also in another sense. It highlights the fact that the music you make as a band can become more "public", and that it becomes subject to evaluation by others. It is an expression, and maybe part of a discourse. In this sense, what is described, is a process of learning which is specific in that it is public but with, so to speak, the same audience, the youth club.

Becoming in a sense a public figure, or at least a producer of musical material, further enhances the impression that what you are doing is something quite serious. It thus becomes important that the music has the "right" expression, that you get the "image" that you want. The first instance when this comes to light is the playing of the "secret tune", the

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1See Fornäs et al (1988), p. 39, 85-86, 113. The three bands they studied displayed, more or less, similar ways of learning music as the lads. See also Öhlund (1988), p. 50-52 for a description of how a band makes music.

2This notion does not imply a view of the listener as a passive recipient. Rather, the use of a cultural medium like rock music (of which listening, buying records, recording tapes, talking about music, etc. is a part) also comprises the playing and making of music. This view sees use as a continuum and not as dichotomies between different kinds of activities. The view that the study of music use also should comprise many activities and not only the actual playing is also shared by Grandin (1989) and Wallis & Malm (1992) p. 22-23, who, for example, talk about some activities as "performing" and others as "non-performing", but both being music activities.

3Fornäs et al (1988), p. 241, who use Ziehes (1986) notion of processes of learning, see those as "different" in youth culture as they are informal and voluntary in contrast to, for example, school. This is seen as a general trait in youth culture.
yodeling song\textsuperscript{1}, which was originally a joke tune and practicing piece. Playing it for others revealed the lad’s own differences of opinions as to what kind of musical style they should adopt.

Both the musical environment, the music played in the suburb and in the club, and the way the lads learn to play, influence their sound and style. The predominant style at the youth club, and in the suburb of Elmridge, is heavy metal, with its roots in classic guitar-based rock in four-beat\textsuperscript{2}. What they learn is not only to play the instruments, but also to play this specific style of music. At the club, they learn by watching and they quickly develop a style of playing like the one described above with the reduced chord. Compared to the more ”instrumental” way of learning music, for example, when taking lessons which implies that you play a lot of material only for the purpose of practising, learning to play at the youth club is different. When Grubbe, as the only instance of this kind, was being shown by a friend in the café how notes should be read, he immediately changed the format to become a visual resemblance with the guitar neck instead of the notation system\textsuperscript{3}. There are also other, more experienced, bands playing at the workshop, who share their knowledge with the lads, not only by merely allowing themselves to be watched, but also by showing more concretely how to, for example, keep a particular beat on the drums. The way of teaching, and learning, is built more on non-verbal than verbal behaviour and certainly not on learning notes or on the academic musical language. This way of learning is more ”open” and informal\textsuperscript{4} than school-like.

To develop this argument further, these ways of learning music also resemble the difference between learning in, for example, the vocational versus the theoretical courses in the Swedish upper secondary school. All the lads, except Karlson, are taking vocational courses and they all express an aversion towards school-like learning, valuing practical knowledge instead. This way of learning music they adopt is sufficient for the kind of music the lads want to play and eventually the approach of not playing too

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\textsuperscript{1}See p. 30.


\textsuperscript{3}See p. 27-28.

complicated music becomes an element, and an important stance, in the style of having fun that Lars Keso develop. For them, this is a suitable level of expression, one that also becomes successful at the club and is finally made into a kind of ideology for the band.

Jonson, in turn, builds his music-making around short musical phrases, riffs, that mostly consist of the notes of the chords he uses in the particular song. This becomes an instance of learning and simultaneously producing your own learning material. Acquiring musical skill and musical taste is interrelated, and gradually the musical awareness develops further. Important elements in this are the sound and the way this sound is created. How to play, for example, with the "beating" style of right hand guitar-playing or the typical fast drum-beat, become determinants of what music to make.

Most of the lads mention an idol as giving musical inspiration but they seem to use idols more as a way of confirming their own stance towards music and not necessarily to copy their sound. Only Mats has a clear idea of trying to sound like an idol band, Helloween, but he lacks the skill to play at that level. He also leaves the band and eventually quits playing altogether. The way musical influences are talked about becomes intertwined with notions of what the lads' own music should be like. Idols are seen as having taken a certain stance towards music and life. It seems that idols have a place as a legitimation and they become in a sense redefined to suit the lads' own notions of what music-playing should mean. Thus, the somewhat unorthodox coupling that Grubbe and Karlson make, of Metallica and Björn Afzelius with Ebba Grön in between, is congruent with the their views as they are all seen as artists displaying a certain genuineness, a sense of having fun and not being too serious. This way of using idols is seen by Berkaak & Ruud as a way to let tradition become "redefined and reinterpreted to give meaning and basis for own current projects".

The tonal openness displayed in learning to play in the way the lads do with the reduced chord also gives them the opportunity to develop different musical styles from the same starting point. Thus, musical awareness means defining a sense of belonging to a specific genre. In musical terms, the differentiation in style that emerges, represented by Angel on the one hand and Lars Keso on the other, is one of mainstream heavy

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1Berkaak & Ruud (1992), p. 60, (my translation). See also p. 59-60, where they discuss Hendrix' place as an idol for the young band they study.
metal versus punk. The punk style being even easier to learn and imitate than the heavy metal style. This division, leading to the forming of the two bands, has to do both with different ideas of how the music should sound, and what this sounding should "mean". The sound of Lars Keso becomes in a sense "ideological" when it is coupled to the idea that "having fun" should be heard in the music, that through music you can put forward views and ideas of your own. And, these ideas can become a way of distinguishing between styles and genres and a way of defining your own style in relation, and in contrast, to others.

For Grubbe and Karlson, it is important to convey a feeling, and for them this feeling represents both fun and directness, power and critique. For them, it is important that contact with an audience is established. Angel, instead, are more focused on rehearsing and playing the music over and over, thus developing their technical skills.

The growing musical awareness thus develops into different attitudes and approaches to music-playing. Jonson’s interest in developing his musical skill leads to the style of working hard to get results, and to the approach of "going for it". Grubbe’s reaction to this and his idea of playing simpler, more "raw" music with a critical slant, give rise to the style of "having fun" and not taking it too seriously. These two approaches become diametrically opposed and are developed as markers of identity of the two bands, and for some of the individual band members.

Fornäs et al see the making of an identity in adolescence as an individuation and search for own values. They see the rock band as a "medium of transition where future-oriented liberation work and experiments with identity can take place, but where you also can take refuge from pressing demands from parents, school and culture industry." In this sense music-playing becomes a refuge, or rather, perhaps, a starting point from which different notions can be tried out.

For Grubbe and Karlson, the idea is to have a good time and have fun. But, they also want to make a mark in the sense of becoming "notorious" and this develops into a personal project for Grubbe. Playing music is to make a show of yourself and thus show yourself, and, most importantly, not to be mainstream. Jonson instead wants to show personal musicianship and to display his personal qualities and make music in which he can excel.

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1 See Brolinson & Larsen (1990a), specifically on heavy metal and punk p. 321-330.
He is drawn more towards the classic style of the guitar hero who expresses himself through his guitar, whereas Grubbe is more verbally active, extrovert and interested in upsetting people with his music.1

In my description, Grubbe and Jonson are focussed on and contrasted as the foremost proponents of these two different styles or strategies. They represent two ways of relating to music-playing, and also, in a sense, of dealing with the situation at hand, from the same sets of opportunities. It can be pointed out that Grubbe is certainly "working out" his approach and that it is a serious work in the same sense as Jonson is working out his style. It is not necessarily the fact that music-playing gives rise to lifestyles or world views that are new to the lads, or that the ideas of having fun or of going for it have emerged only through the lads’ membership in the bands. Equally important is the situation already present at the youth club and in the peer group. But, there can be attitudes to life that are accentuated and given a specific form through music-playing. As such, notions of having fun or of going for it can also exceed the immediate realm of the workshop and have bearing on situations outside it.

When having fun becomes an approach to life it also means taking a communicative stance towards the immediate context. Not tuning or soundchecking is not only a comment on the musical situation, it is also a stance against the orderliness of the youth club and the way it organizes its activities. This can be seen maybe not so much as a conscious protest, but more as a comment on the larger context and the situation at the youth club. And, also as an attempt at establishing a kind of free zone2 at the club that is worked out through engagement in communication; in a kind of "dialogue". This is perhaps a stronger way to engage in contacts, or conflicts, using cultural artistic expression rather than the staff’s preferred strategies, for example, of talking about problems. The particular "product" is accentuated because it remains in time, as songs and becomes, in a sense, distributive3. Thus, it also becomes strong as an utterance and cannot be explained away, as the example with the songs on drugs and pollution shows.

1Similar notions seem to be present in all studies of young rock bands. See, for example, Fornäs et al (1988), Berkaak & Ruud (1992) and Öhlund (1988).

2Pettersson (1990), quoting Roos (1986), sees the free zone as a "room where sanctioned and non-sanctioned norms become visible, and where the differences between them can be erased." p. 18 (my translation).

3See p. 10, where I discussed Hannerz (1992) notion of the distributive aspect of culture.
Willis, through the notions of "symbolic work" and "grounded aesthetics", sees, for example music making, as "essential to the ways in which young people make sense of the social world and their place within it. Music, in short, is not just something young people like and do. It is in many ways the model for their involvement in a common culture which provides the resources to see beyond the immediate requirements and contradictions of work, family and the dole".

What the lads do is to choose the scene for a dialogue as they both initiate it and define the language it will be conducted in. Creating a free zone means finding a way of one's own to deal with the situation you live in. It gives a position in relation to the people the lads come in contact with. In this case, this has comprised a stance taken both towards possible approaches to music and towards the consequences this stance can have with respect to the relations to peers and staff. It can be said to represent a kind of reflexivity, an active dealing with relations to others, and a way to master communication. The point here, though, is not to extract one or a few specific elements that could be considered conspicuous or determinant of a lifestyle. Rather, it is to show how different elements, or new experiences, people continuously make, become enmeshed and used in the process of dealing with relations in life, changing this process and being changed themselves as they are put to use.

**Escaping to the free zone**

This dealing with a situation as laid out in the last paragraph, can be further elucidated and analysed in a complementary way by studying the lyrics of the band's songs. Before the split into two bands, they made the song "The Escape" (described in Chapter 2).

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1Willis (1990), p. 9-10. The notions of symbolic creativity and symbolic work, are, in his terminology "the application of human capacities to and through, on and with symbolic resources and raw materials (collections of signs and symbols - for instance, the language as we inherit it as well as texts, songs, films, images and artefacts of all kinds) to produce meanings".

2Willis (1990), p. 82.

3See also p. 11, where this approach was developed.

4See p. 32.
Even if the song can be said to contain a notion of suicide ("It is my last year in this damned life, I shed a tear when I leave my time, I'll go away, escape somewhere, far far away to no-man's land"), I will, rather, emphasize another notion. The feeling of "peace and quiet" and to "be able to take it easy", and coupled to that the line, "believe that (in) the future (I'll) have it good as hell". These lines convey the notion of being left undisturbed, of not being controlled and a feeling of expectation of the future. The escape is to get away from control.

The escape theme can be said to connect to a view of adolescence as a marginal period as it depicts the feeling of no control and of not being taken seriously. But this is also a part of a kind of myth of youth, enhanced here by the fact that it is reproduced in a song. It is interesting that given an opportunity to express himself, the songwriter employs an expression of being in an inferior position. The theme of escape does not have to do with outright escape from some danger but is more of a picture of being marginalized and constantly watched over.

The Escape can be seen as a theme typical of the style of the band and their interpretation of the genre. Elements of songs are put together with a kind of bricklaying technique out of the pool of themes that are ready-made in the genre and here they have chosen the escape theme, one that is seemingly important as it returns in many later songs. The lyrics and the themes within them can be said to depict more general "feelings" that can say something about the author or the band. As a more general description of the "youth situation" and as an instance of the result of an opportunity to, so to speak, tell your story. Thus it is also a kind of statement directed at others, adults or, for example, the researcher, and a way of making a public statement or definition of a situation.

With the division into two bands, themes get treated in two different ways. More directly, as in Lars Keso's songs with their provocative lyrics, or more generally, as in Angel's music with their lyrics in English. The songs can be seen as parts of a local discourse where their content can have various meanings. For Lars Keso these are more active and extrovert, and

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1A notion of escape is also noted by Fornäs et al (1988) p. 215. They see the bands they studied, in a sense, as free zones, and note how the most important function of having an own place to play in is that "they are left alone there".

2Holmberg (1988), p. 208, has, among others, discussed the position of youth as marginalized and excluded from social responsibility.

3See also Fornäs et al (1988), p. 139, where a similar way of making music is described.
for Angel more introvert. Seen in relation to the context studied here, the youth club, a way of interpreting the lads’ music and the escape theme is to see it as an answer to events taking place there. As an attempt to find a function for music as an expression of a certain position, expressed, for example, through the approaches of having fun or of going for it.

In the case of Angels’ lyrics, the theme of escape is treated metaphorically, and is more descriptive of a general feeling, rather than being lived out explicitly. Jonson, in a sense, uses his music-playing as an escape. He avoids direct confrontation both in his music and in his life at the youth club with his peers and with the staff. Instead, he hopes for musical success through hard work and technical skill.

Grubbe and Karlson, though, take a more confrontational stance. The escape theme is not present in their music where they instead try to be provocative and abusive. But, interestingly enough, it is prevalent in the stories or mythologies they create around other situations from life. Their adventures in Chapter 4 strongly relate the feeling of being chased and being watched over. In the case of the police hunt, this was also what actually did happen; and in the case of the bathing incident they made it an important element in the story, that it all took place under the watching eyes of the adults on the boat. But here the important feature is the role of the lads as they are presented in the stories. They become the heroes who manage to turn the situation to their own advantage and have the last laugh. This is a different way of dealing with the feeling of being controlled and one that makes themselves come out on top. Even if the actual feelings in the situation might have been those of fear and anguish, for instance at being chased by the police, Grubbe and Karlson make themselves out as having been able to handle the situation, often through humor or a surprising turn of events. This becomes an additional theme which is the model of almost all the stories; to come out on top. It has to do with defining a role within the relationships to others, to adults and to the world. It defines the role as one where situations are mastered and where hierarchical relations can be turned around. As Petersson argues, it becomes a way to define relations by “acting them out” symbolically, as style, through the “groups informal interaction and private rhetorics”.

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1 See p. 151-152.
In the same way, they have found a strategy to fend off critique and possible threats of expulsion from the music workshop when they claim to have made songs on drugs and pollution instead of the old songs with the filthy lyrics. In reality they continue to write the old type of lyrics with only one song on drugs as the exception.

For Lars Keso, music is used in this more outwardly interactive way. The stressing of the show and the importance of the audience contact is paramount. The theme of sexuality or filthiness in the lyrics contains an element of ambiguity. If seen as directed towards the staff, abusiveness is the important feature. It is part of the fun to bully the staff and at the same time it is an outlet of the frustration the lads feel at what they see as the staff’s ways of exercising undue control. In this sense, filthiness is used as a provocative marker and description of the lads relationship with the staff. The music is used to define this relationship as one of differentiation from the staff. In Petersson’s words, practices of disobedience and relations to authority are "a socially and culturally formed testing of the own position in the authoritative relationship".

As regards the other young people at the club, the music also serves to define a relationship. Grubbe succeeds somewhat in becoming "notorious" and the band gets an image and builds up expectations around their show; something exciting will always happen when they play. This has to do with what is seen as the daring displayed in singing this type of lyrics. Their friends, Hanson for example, see them in this manner, and they become proponents of a kind of opposition to the staff or the grown-up world. It is through making music and mediating this type of themes as a musical content that they are making a public statement.

Music-playing has thus become what could perhaps be called a relational free zone. My point is not to see young people as seeking free zones where they can isolate themselves, either symbolically or physically, from adults or other groups. It is, rather, that they can deal with relations they might be forced to live within in a viable way and create a kind of free zone consisting of a place or position right there in their midst. Petersson argues that the "informal culture has a specific function as it seeks the middle course between two 'opposed needs', between 'two worlds', and thus proposes, if not real, then at least illusionary freedom. Not from either parent culture, nor authority, but with a concept of

\[1\]Ibid., p. 83. (My translation).
freedom that gets unpremeditated inspiration from the group's own cultural form and that becomes informally put into practice".

The concept of free zone has mostly been used in relation to clearly defined subcultures, whereas this study examines people who do not stand in any avant garde or exclusive group. In the former, the notion of free zone can often acquire this bias towards exclusion or isolation as a consequence of studying specific subcultures and of not considering more subtle and relational issues. Thus, they run a risk of confirming a view of youth as constant outsiders. The notion of free zone, as I use it, does not emphasize the physical space but rather a position, or a positioning, a kind of creation of a starting point. A place in this sense is a position within the relationships you have and a position in which you so to speak "know where you are" and where you can be strong or "on top". It is a viable, or a working and functioning place.

Petersson connects the notion of free zone with Corrigans concept of "doing nothing", where collective experiences can be practiced outside of the demands of authority, making doing nothing mean experiencing something. My point is to see how an activity can become a viable experience for the lads in a setting where conflicts might not be so seclusive as, for example, if the issue had been criminality. I will return to the notion of free zones further on in this chapter in relation to the lads' relationship with the staff.

The two approaches to music-playing, and in a sense lifestyles of the two bands, can also for the sake of clarity be boiled down to a contrastive figure.

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1Ibid., p. 95. (My translation).
## Two approaches to music-playing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lars Keso</th>
<th>Angel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grubbe</td>
<td>Jonson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having fun</td>
<td>Going for it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- punk-influenced style
- make a show
- want audience contact
- an image important, getting notorious
- not tuning properly
- or making soundchecks
- write Swedish lyrics
- write "filthy" lyrics
- tell a "life" story
- a raw, simple and powerful sound
- a confrontational style
- is extrovert
- success at the club, failure outside
- find a place at the club
- music is part of the club jargon

- mainstream heavy metal
- working hard
- practise in the workshop
- is non-public
- displays instrumental equilibrism
- take pains to tune
- write English lyrics
- use existing themes from the genre
- use more general themes
- an elaborate sound with synths
- a complacent style
- is introvert
- fail
- has a limited place at the club
- the band splits up

Together, the two bands express a way of presenting and dealing with common problems. The one seeking confrontation, the other more complacent, but still expressive. Even if Angel’s music does not play the same extrovert part as Lars Keso’s and does not become part of the youth club discourse in the same strong sense, it still reflects the themes inherent in the heavy metal genre and uses the escape as the most prevalent notion in their lyrics.

As music-playing develops into both a comment on the immediate situation as well as into a comment on the specific musical genre, it represents both taking a stance with respect to music and to life. In this sense, it is not just another pastime, or leisure time activity. Rather, playing rock has made it possible to develop a lifestyle, or world view, through which the lads are able to deal with relationships to others in the immediate context. And this has been made possible through an exploration of the opportunity for expression, of presenting yourself and
thereby adding to what can be called the ongoing formation of an identity. The two ways of viewing leisure referred to in chapter 1, of leisure as pastime or as self-fulfilment, can be discussed in relation to this notion of expressivity. The depth of involvement in the activity of playing music that the lads display here leads to an evaluation of rock music-playing as important and self-fulfilling for the young people taking part. Fornäs et al, for example, see music-playing as an important part of identity forming and as a symbolic praxis. A search for a "genuine" expression, a kind of intimacy to balance the "cold anonymity of the system world".

The lads have developed a musicianship in their genre much above the beginners level, writing their own material, developing technical skill and a musical awareness of some elaboration. Then, as the argument is that music has been important, in a deep and elaborate way, to the formation of identity, it can also be surmised that it would continue to be so. The question is important also because it places the lads in their context and examines the role of music-playing in their lives. The argument so far has been that music is used as a way to deal with relationships in an immediate way. I will now discuss these relations in more detail.

The youth club practice and the complexity of power

In order to take the analysis further and examine questions about the role of music-playing in life and at the youth club, my interest in Chapters 4 and 5 was focussed on the relationships within the club. On the staff's pedagogical ambitions and view on work, and the lads' views on related issues and to the relations to the (adult) world. In the form of analysis that I employ here, inspired by the approach of everyday-life sociology, a description has already been given of how music-playing is used as a part of the interaction and the relationships within the youth club, as a part of its social life. In this sense, though, it is also only a part of this life and needs further examination in relation to the youth club as an institution.

1 See p. 8.
3 Fornäs et al (1988), p. 218. (My translation). They, and indeed many other Swedish researchers, have developed an approach inspired by the psychoanalytical theories of Thomas Ziehe.
Life at the youth club can be seen as a practice, an ongoing, structuring\(^1\), process of events and relationships between people. Important elements in understanding this practice, and understanding the events one sees through participant observation, are the diverse ways of managing and organizing the youth club and its activities. Also important are the ideas and attitudes towards this, displayed by the young people and the staff alike. It can be claimed that the organization of the club, so to speak, only exists as a practice in so far as it is used, and reacted to. Thus, the youth club practice should not be seen as a pre-given entity or as the result of an organizing principle. According to this view, the practice is never an object but a process. Following Giddens’ notion of seeing action and structure as something created and recreated in, and as, an ongoing social process, the practice should not be seen as a pre-existing structure but rather as "structuration"\(^2\). It only exists in and through the actions of the participants and also, so to speak, in description, after the event. Thus, the description in Chapters 4 and 5 centre on the events at the youth club that highlight the relationships within it and the views and notions of the people there that have a bearing on these relationships.

In order to further condense and develop the picture, a figure can be drawn. A figure that should be seen as a more tentative configuration of the events at the club and the way I have chosen to highlight and interpret them. A way to read it is from the middle and out where the central category depicts important events and communicative features highlighted in the description. The practice, as was said before, can be seen as a process of ongoing interaction between the visitors and the staff, and, of course, within the groups. These partners in interaction employ various communicative resources, opportunities, etc. Some of the notions and events in the figure have already been discussed in this chapter and others will be in the following.

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1See Giddens (1984), p. 374, on the concept of "duality of structure".
### The youth club practice

#### The lads

- develop styles of playing music
- develop a musical ability and a musical awareness
- approaches to music-playing, having fun and going for it
- comment on the youth club situation through music
- a way of one's own to deal with relations
- ideas about working, "real", or adult life
- notions of responsibility
- the boringness of the youth club
- reversing hierarchies, coming out on top
- feel they are being controlled

#### Communicative events

- youth club jargon with double meanings and "serious" talks
- music & lyrics of the bands
- Lars Keso's "filthy" lyrics and provocative style
- hiding/renting guitar cables
- keys, locking doors, opening windows, "coming back" at night
- the lads' "mythological" stories
- the coffee serving incident
- differentiation is felt between the lads and the staff; fights and nagging
- frustration of both groups at each other's conduct

#### The staff

- ideas & values as developed and articulated in interaction
- develop a pedagogical ideology of working with people
- want to be extra buddies and parents and guides into adult values
- create a meaningful leisure time
- mix between a formal and an informal work role
- develop notions of responsibility, participation, and democracy
- a notion of talking as problem-solving
- the need to be needed
- feel they are seen as service personnel
- to control or being unable to control
In this figure, the emphasis is thus on the different elements viewed as parts in the process and not as stable or unchanging entities. The categories do not depict inevitable, or internal, properties of the staff’s work role or of the lads’ role as youth club visitors. They are, rather, the outcomes of this particular process, and, obviously, the outcome of my analysis. The category of "communicative events" centres on the events of, and in a way results of, the interaction that the lads and the staff engage in at the club. Those events are in a sense interactional outcomes with the emphasis on their part in the process of the youth club practice.

The figure above ended in questions about power and control. The staff exercise a kind of control over the lads but feel frustrated at not succeeding in making them see the "right" goals and functions of the club. The lads in turn manage to turn the control around, at least up to a point, but they too feel frustrated. The power relations at the club are complex and can be described by way of the concept of the "dialectic of control". In Giddens’ vocabulary, this concept is explained thus: "the two-way character of the distributive aspect of power (power as control); how the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relations". The point is that both parties in a relationship can employ intricate ways of influencing each other. The concept of the dialectic of control contains a notion of a relationship where parties play on the same ground even if they seemingly do not have the same interpretation of the rules.

In one sense, though, the youth club can be seen as an instrument for the exercising of control over the young. The club works with a hidden agenda designed to keep the lads under surveillance, even if it claims to create activities for the visitors on their own terms. Thus, it requires their cooperation and participation thereby entangling them in the ways of the club. This somewhat conspiratory argument might be too simplistic when it comes to fully understanding the youth club practice, but it has an interesting slant. According to, for example, one of the theoreticians of the Frankfurt school, Herbert Marcuse, there is no place for an opposition that does not accept the same fundamentals as that which it opposes. It has become absorbed in the "one-dimensionality" of modern industrial and

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2Marcuse (1964).
technological society that has succeeded in unifying and converging opposites through its rationality and through its language. It creates a "happy consciousness"\(^1\), a belief in rationality and in the system. The unification of opposites such as, for example, industry and labor, makes the system "immune against the expression of protest and refusal" as this, logically, becomes seen as irrational\(^2\).

The notions behind, for example, a youth club’s pedagogical strategies are in a sense political and in themselves certainly ideological. The idea that youths need guidance in becoming "good citizens", which is inherent in the youth club pedagogy, would have to present definitions of what this "good" must contain. But at the Elmridge club this is not focussed on. It is hidden behind, with Marcuse’s words, an "operational definition"\(^3\) presented as generalized concepts that cannot be questioned and are hardly even discussed. So, concepts like democracy, participation and respect, which are present in this description, are taken for granted and their content is put to use by way of methods of pedagogy which attempts to operationalize them in a concrete context. Thus, also the staff of the youth club must, and do, believe that they are doing good when implementing programmes and activities derived under the auspices of pedagogy. And, the young people subjected to those programmes cannot really put words to their protest (if there is one) as they have implicitly agreed on their need\(^4\). Concepts like respect for values and property, being a good citizen and participating in activities, become ideological but also irrefutable. Viewing the youth club in Marcusean terms, at this level of abstraction, they cannot be opposed as there is nothing fundamental to oppose and no place for protest within the system.

If the youth club is seen as a vehicle of society’s control, and, in Petersson’s terms, the notion of guidance and the all-encompassing policy of youth are the tools which enacts this control\(^5\), there seems, still, to be constant clashes and conflicts between the staff and the lads. If the youth club, as Marcuse would claim, has succeeded in blocking opposition by integrating it, this does not mean that power relations are not felt or

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 84.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 90.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 94.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 114. In Marcuse’s words, this is the "ambivalent rationality of progress, which is satisfying in its repressive power, and repressive in its satisfactions."
opposed. It could mean, though, that the protests might be confused or off target in the sense that it is not the ideology behind, for example, the pedagogy that is questioned. It is, instead, the actual and concrete experiences and interpretations that are focussed on and the lads, as it were, feel frustrated at what they only see as the staff's attempts at spoiling the fun.

But what the lads have done through, for example, Grubbe's offensive approach, is to, in a sense, question the legitimacy of the staff's authority. This has been done with the help of music, a "system" in its own right and with its own rules that the staff are unable to master and have authority over.

But to question is not the same as to overturn authority. In his inspired work on authority, Richard Sennett, like Giddens, emphasizes relational aspects as well as how people conceive of hierarchical relations. Sennett employs the concept of "disobedient dependence" to depict the situation where the seemingly weaker part in a relationship "...reacts explosively against his superior, but in the process becomes more and more dependent." The reaction can take the form of a "negation" of the superior who needs to be brought down, not because he is alien but because he is familiar: "If the master is bad, weak, then an image appears of what is good. To print this positive, it is often necessary to exaggerate the defect of the actual superior, to give the superior a kind of 'negative potency'". Thus, people can "be dependent without being vulnerable". As a result of such a process, and something which casts some light on the relations at the youth club, the lads’ music becomes the tool to enact this shift. But it thus, as I have argued, becomes entangled in this relationship and also, paradoxically, becomes a tool for the youth club’s control: "In modern society we have become adept at building bonds of rejection with authorities. These bonds permit us to depend on those whom we fear, or to use the real to imagine the ideal. The trouble is that these bonds also permit the authorities to use us: they can exercise control of a very basic

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1Sennett (1980).
2Ibid., p. 97.
3Ibid., p. 38.
4Ibid., p. 46.
sort over those who seem on the surface to be rebelling". In this sense, it is not the fact that the lads make offensive music that is interesting, but the fact that they continue to play at the club, under "surveillance".

But the music of Lars Keso is a kind of protest. It represents a way of marking the fact that hierarchical relations are felt by the lads and an attempt at turning them around, or, at least, at making a comment directed at the staff. Thus it becomes a kind of public reaction. The Italian sociologist and psychologist Alberto Melucci, concerns himself with "new" forms of collective action seen as answers to new conflicts in society. Both conflicts, and the subsequent actions, are temporary and change form and scope when other problems become contingent. If Marcuse's more philosophical analysis is pessimistic, the opposite is true of Melucci. He sees people as responsible and knowledgeable social actors able to act freely, even if the system sets limits. He thus speaks about possibilities and constraints. On one level, an explanation of Lars Keso's success is that it has found a form able to voice a kind of protest viable for the band members and for their audience. In this sense, it is a kind of collective action and a public statement. In Melucci's terms, it is a possibility which has been acted upon, expressing a protest, but which has also met with constraints.

What the lads at the youth club do is not to instigate a protest designed to overthrow the system, for example, by way of abusing the staff in order to fight them. Neither do they seem to "work from within" and they reject all notions of participation. They do not have an objective of changing the club but try, as I have argued, to find a way of their own, a functioning free zone at the club and within the relationship they "have to" have with the staff. In consequence, the staff is seen as a hindrance to this and their attempts at actually doing the same thing themselves, finding a "working" place, is seen by the lads as imposing undue control.

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1 Ibid., p. 28. Sennett even calls this the "dilemma of authority in our time, the peculiar fear it inspires, is that we feel attracted to strong figures we do not believe to be legitimate", and: "What is peculiar to our times is that the formally legitimate powers in the dominant institutions inspire a strong sense of illegitimacy among those subject to them", p. 26.

2 Melucci (1989). For him, it is people's way of talking, thinking about and acting that constitutes collective action and not only the organisational forms this action can take. This also borders on a more processual view of human action and of society as in everyday life sociology and with Giddens. See also Bartholomew & Meyer (1992), for an evaluation of Melucci's contribution.
The difference, though, is that the staff try to define the relationship with the lads on the basis of an idea, albeit sometimes tacit, of pedagogy. There is always a purpose, derived from a kind of social care ideology, behind every notion of having a relationship. The lads, in turn, seek a relationship, sometimes confrontational, with the staff. They actually make the staff into "deputy parents" – as the parent, or adult, to oppose and free oneself from. This can be seen as the classic image in Western society of growing up. Still, in this case there is also an issue which Marcuse's initial argument relates to. The staff and the youth club are not only representatives of "the adult world", they are also proponents of society. The pedagogical notions of the club fit well with what can be called mainstream Swedish middle-class values; for example, the notion that problems can, and should, be solved through talk. The lads studied here, and most in the suburb of Elmridge, adhere to different notions. For them, talking is a mastery of jargon that defines your place in a hierarchy and you have to be able to confuse your opponent in order to come out on top.

The way the notion of guidance with the purpose of control, seen with Petersson as a socio-political tool, is acted out is not unambiguous. In following Foucault, he develops the notion of how discursive practices (as the youth club's way of working could be seen) become all-encompassing, making young people "involved in the profylactic strategies" through which all aspects of life could be controlled. Giddens, in criticizing Foucault, however, introduces another concept to understand how discourse reorders social life. That process, Giddens claims, is seen by Foucault "as a fixed and one-way intrusion of 'power-knowledge' into social organisation. Without denying its connectedness to power, we should see the phenomenon rather as one of institutional reflexivity and as constantly in motion. It is institutional, because it is a basic structuring element of social activity in modern settings. It is reflexive in the sense that terms introduced to describe social life routinely enter and transform it – not as a mechanical process, nor necessarily in a controlled way, but because they become part of the frames of action which individuals or groups adopt".

2Ibid., p. 185. (My translation).
It can be claimed that what the lads, and Lars Keso in particular, succeed in doing at the youth club is to move the system just a little. They have reflexively monitored\(^1\) the youth club life and made the staff react on issues the lads themselves choose, for example, filthy lyrics and windows left open at night. In Giddens’ concept of “dialectic of control”, the second part of the definition was: “how the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relations”\(^2\). And, of course, the outcome of this is that these power relations in a sense are overturned. The lads find a place within the club where they are able to somehow feel on top, or to have the staff in their control. Still though, this might be effective in the youth club discourse, but does not change the situation much; the club is still a youth club and the lads are still the lads and there are still conflicts. And, the lads are still at the youth club.

The staff’s dilemma

The objective of the staff is to create meaningful leisure time. This concept has been present in the political debate about youth in Sweden since the turn of the century and is also present in the staff’s way of talking about the Elmridge club\(^3\). It can also be seen as a metaphor for a kind of ideological stance. They see themselves as working with people, as having to take care of problems, and as educators. The club should become an alternative to the weekends on the town which are seen as bad and potentially leading to social problems for the lads. As a consequence, though, this idea adheres to a view that the lads should be staying at the club where they can be, so to speak, looked after. This moral attitude becomes part of a pedagogy having to do with a school- or social care view that, in a sense, inheres a democratic dilemma: controlling the time that is free.

The different rules and regulations at the club are also viewed with this moral attitude in mind. To solicit a fee for entrance to the music work-

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\(^1\)See Giddens (1984), p. 376, on the notion of reflexive monitoring of action.


\(^3\)Olsson (1992). See also Chapter 1, p. 4.
shop, or for renting equipment is seen as a way of making young people participate in the activity in a more developed sense. They are supposed to feel responsibility or to be more fully committed. But, this also represents a way of making them take the organization’s perspective; to participate in the activity and to do it the ”right” way. So, something that is originally only a pre-requisite of a youth club activity becomes part of a moral or pedagogical consideration. Through having to pay for the cables, the lads should learn to be more careful and in the long run understand and show respect for property.

But, confrontations with the lads on different issues, the guitar cables, the open windows, the jukebox, are common. This leads to a sense of frustration, often felt by the staff, that is not only the result of mere rule violations. Rather, it comes to stand for a reaction to what is seen as an attitude on the part of the visitors. It is felt that they do not have respect for the staff and that their acts of opposition are designed only to annoy. The staff, though, find an outlet for these frustrations at the staff meetings where the individual staff members can relate what has caused their irritation. Furthermore, they can suggest a remedy, often by way of sanctions. As these sanctions, though, often take the form of too harsh measures and can almost take on a character of hitting back, the rest of the staff see to it that they are not implemented. There seems to be a tacit understanding that the staff meeting can function as an outlet of frustration in order for a staff member to regain his/her balance after a confrontation with the visitors.

Frustration is also caused by what is seen as the visitors’ lack of understanding of the goals and functions of the staff or the club. The staff’s wish is that their ideas of the importance of working with people should be acknowledged by the visitors. The feeling is that as the club is there ”for” the visitors and organized for their convenience, any opposition is only a battle against the visitors’ own interests.

The most conspicuous feature of this double attitude, or work view, is the staff’s notion of their work role. They see themselves ideally as extra buddies or deputy parents. The relationship they want to have is one of friendship and trust where they really can be in the confidence of the visitors. They are seeking a deep relationship where they would function as guides into adult life and society. This ”friendly” role of the staff, though, sometimes works in contrast to a more formal work role. They are de facto the practical organizers and uphelders of the club’s activities where orderliness, the keeping of times and the renting of equipment are
features that give their role a more formal character. They also see these features as important since they provide an opportunity to make a moral point; of showing how to lead a more organized, "adult" life. There can be said to be a kind of double bind between the ideal of being friends, working informally, and the need, seemingly felt, to teach the "right" moral values.

Petersson notes a similar way of working when it comes to social workers. A strong element for them was to take advantage of the informal role with the result that the exertion of power was hidden and more effective\(^1\). The problem for the staff, though, is that they keep to the notions of being friend or extra parent. They want to have a deep involvement in the lads and not one that signals officiality.

In a sense, the staff want to understand the visitors as being in a state of "being young" and see their own role as one of changing this state towards "becoming adult". In order to lead a well-organized life, the lads need personal guidance from "friendly" leaders. But the underlying presupposition is, then, the definition of a special group of young people as problematic, something that thus also would legitimize the staff's work at the youth club. For the staff, this is a way of taking the moral responsibility for what the lads are supposed to learn there, about life in general. In this sense, the staff, after all, see themselves as part of the educational and the social welfare system. This can be said to be a description of what Gusfield has called "the troubled persons professions"\(^2\), and their notions of work, for example, claiming "ownership over social problems".

Thus, there is a strong belief that problems can be solved by talking, and that the visitors are in need of someone to talk to. Furthermore, they are seen as actually lacking this type of relationship in their life outside the youth club. In this sense, the staff also add to the guiding role an element of therapy, where they would be able to help analyse the visitors' alleged problems. It is also interesting that the staff seem to believe that these kinds of talks are much more common than they actually are. Instead, it is, in effect, the staff that feels a need to be needed by the visitors. It would satisfy their work role if they could really have this type of friendly

\(^1\) Petersson (1990), p. 131. (see also p. 125-146 where this is extensively discussed in his book).

\(^2\) Gusfield (1989), p. 431-432. See also Chapter 1, p. 5. where I discussed this notion in more detail.
relationship with the young people. It would become a kind of legitimization of the job.

Furthermore, there is also an addition to this. If the friendly role was a reality, the staff and the visitors would be more equal and in the staff’s rhetoric this is something sought for as an ideal. The staff’s view of the club is that it is a place made for the visitors, and that it should function according to their wishes and desires. The staff thus take on a role of being a kind of instigators of democracy. But, this would also mean that the visitors would have to take the staff’s perspective and see their pedagogical aims as viable for themselves.

The staff’s way of reasoning on how to organize activities is, then, modeled by way of a traditional pedagogical device of Swedish adult educational associations, the study group. This should have a minimum of five members and, as is the ideal with the staff, be complemented by a board and chair persons. The ideal organization of the music workshop is thought of as a "music club", where the lads would make up a board and where the staff would only function as advisors who could, as they themselves say, “lead” the lads to good decisions. The pedagogical idea becomes the teaching of democracy with concepts such as participation and responsibility as guiding stars. The democracy project, as I have called it, is conceptualized along these lines and it relates to a view of leisure as important, meaningful and as self-fulfilment, but it gets entangled in the "double" way of viewing the job. It should be built on a kind of friendship and unhierarchical relations but implemented from above and controlled.

Even if the staff would have wished to have the more equal, friendly role, they themselves keep up a differentiation in their view on the lads. Their way of dealing with what they see as constant opposition gives way to a more generalizing view on the lads that sometimes also contains an incrimination of the visitors as a group. When problems arise around some specific event, the individual responsible is not sought out but rather talked about as "youths" or "the lads". A prime example of this is the case of Hanson who gets transformed from a "problem" into being "charming", something that becomes an element in the club’s local discourse.

But, this is also a strategy of avoiding problems that has, in one sense, to do with the feeling that the lads should not have to get into trouble and that the staff thus feel for "their" lads. The staff seems to feel that the visitors are not the most problematic youths and so, paradoxically, find themselves in a working situation where they have to define the lads as problems as a legitimization for working with them, then redefine them as
not so problematic in order to avoid having to bring in the social authorities which they actually feel would be unjustified.

Petersson, following Foucault, points at how the generalizing and individualizing strategies for dealing with "problematic" persons can work to point out the individual and control the collective. At the youth club they seem to be reversed in the way described above and it is important to point out that in an institution that does not deal with deviancy the pattern can be different. In a sense, the notion of youths as problems is both a legitimation and a burden for the staff. Their position becomes problematic, placed, in a sense, inbetween social policy and concrete action.

The boring club

For the lads, and in particular for Grubbe, the feeling is that too much organizing spoils the fun. When the staff talk about participation in organized activities, Paul, for example, uses the argument that they only want the lads to "feel how tiresome it is" to work at the club. Other arguments along the same lines have to do with economic issues, where the lads express the view that the staff is trying to make a profit out of them. Practices like hiding cables can be seen as a reaction against this, but also, as stated above, as part of the attempts at creating a free zone just as the case was with the lads music. If this concept, as used in the context of youth research, depicts the creation of places and activities where adults seemingly are not present, this could also imply that adults would be unable to grasp the intrinsic meanings of the particular free zone. As I use it, the free zone does not, however, imply an exclusion of relationships with adults or other groups. On the contrary, here it works as a base where the lads feel confident and from which they can work out relationships with the staff.

The workshop does work as a free zone where the lads can act out a supremacy of jargon over the staff who, in a sense, in the workshop are reduced to a kind of visitors themselves. The workshop is used to produce cultural meanings that are used in interaction; the workshop, or for that

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1 Petersson (1990) p. 131-133.
2 See also p. 113, 115-116.
matter playing music, works in highly relational and communicative ways. The jargon is almost formalized into a kind of “fooling the staff” strategy where all that is said takes on ambiguous meanings, as, for example, being overfriendly. This type of language play with its double meanings can be said to represent a way for the lads to, in a sense, reverse the inequality of the youth club hierarchy. It creates a way of being superior to the staff, and without their knowledge.

One of the main reasons for the lads’ feelings of being controlled are the notions they uphold concerning time and space. As the youth club is a place they choose to visit, they do not want it to be endowed with school-like rules and schedules and they oppose what they take to be such rules. The practice of “coming back” at nights, after having left a window open, is a way of ruling over the club, being alone there, and thus also taking charge of time and space for a short while\(^1\). According to Petersson such practices can be seen as “the articulation of the need for own space” and young people “physically make themselves known by conquering certain locations\(^2\).

The arguments that take place at the club concerning opening hours and nightly visits have to do with the boundaries of the club. As symbolic boundaries, notions of time and place become part of a definition of the club as a pedagogical institution where activities should be organized and tied to a schedule as would be the staff’s position. Or, should be more free as a place where the visitors can come and go at will. To develop the argument further, it can be claimed that staff and the lads have different notions of time and space. For the staff, time would be linear, emphasising, for example, opening hours, and space defined according to certain functions of the rooms. For the lads in contrast, time is not so linear and space is constantly redefined. That is, activities do not have a definite beginning or end in the same sense as they do for the staff\(^3\).

In the lads’ stories, though, the club has but a minor place and, in fact, the longest and most elaborate stories are about the poker game, meeting places like the river and the grove, or about work. The themes of the

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\(^1\) According to Roos (1986), p. 108, acts of vandalism has less to do with destruction itself but can be a way to create a state of prestige, power and independency.

\(^2\) Petersson (1990), p. 17. (My translation).

\(^3\) See, for example, p. 153-155, where the story of an activity, the card game, is presented as one congruent event whereas it actually has been going on for a long time and on different occasions.
stories have been described above; for example, the one I have called the "escape theme" and it can be added that they are also mostly in line with the content of the music. The stories function both in the way of defining oneself within the relationships one lives in, and as a way of creating a history. The point of calling these stories "mythologies" is to put emphasis on this double function where "logos", the word or, rather, the spoken word, is a notion that places the stories in interaction with as well as within the process of life. Just as playing music creates a chance to express oneself, so the mytho-logy is also a form of expression. Often, the stories are used within the group, but through their relationship with me the lads choose to use the stories also in a more extrovert manner. This expressiveness, then, is a part of the definition of self through acting out relationships. The making public of one's stories, or for that matter one's music, places oneself in the relations to others, and also tells about one's feelings.

Just as the image was important as far as music is concerned, a kind of image is also created from what the lads choose to make into mytho-logy. The stories, too, most often end with the same inversion of control and with the lads coming out on top. This seems to be a kind of end point where the important element is to show how the inversion of control is mastered.

In the later stories, though, and the ones that concern working and the workaday life, there are a other types of elements. For example, in Paul's long and elaborate story about falling asleep on the job where the issue is responsibility. He expresses the necessities of working and, in a sense, of adult life where the feeling of being controlled is taken as something quite natural; it is as it should be, in contrast to how it is viewed when it concerns the youth club. The way of talking about work also suggests a feeling of "real life" as opposed to the youth club life with its type of "undue" control. This can be coupled to the incident where the staff was seen as service personnel. The coffee serving incident where a visitor asked a staff member to serve him coffee because this was her job can be seen as an revaluation of the roles and of the relationship between the

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1This notion is inspired by the Greek/French philosopher Kostas Axelos who, in an interview in Greek Television, suggested the emphasis on the element of story-telling inherent in mythology. This notion has here been extended to comprise the synchronic creation and contextual use of new stories. Using the vocabulary of ethnography of communication, it is story-telling as speech act.

2See p. 192-193.
groups. In a sense, the visitor involved suddenly used a different set of cultural rules than the usual, or preferred, at the club, one of a customer entitled to service rather than a youth club visitor (interestingly enough, the term visitor which the staff use actually also implies such a role). This, then, became insulting to the staff as they, of course, did not agree with this role.

As the lads start working, the youth club becomes a place of recreation and rest and playing music seems to become less important. The club becomes a place to go in order to meet with the lads, and the club, in relation to the activities it offers, is now only talked about as being boring. It is boring as it tries to uphold another kind of existence, a more official and school-like mode. This feeling of recreation is, in turn, a contrast to the realities of working life where the lads are aware of, and prepared to take, the responsibilities demanded of them. In a sense, the club thus has to be boring. If the lads were to go along with the staff’s pedagogy, their life at the club would become school-like or work-like.

Instead, the club is a place where the feeling of leisure should be kept. A feeling of not having to take responsibility and a place of non-adult life. It is used as a place to regress, not in any negative sense, at the same time as it constitutes development, especially in the sense of forming an identity through expressivity, both in music and through the developing of relationships, with both peers and adults. This argument can also be expressed slightly differently as being true to the notion of being young; it is not at the youth club that the transition into adult life should take place. In fact, this transition has already started for the lads as they start working and the youth club now becomes for them more of a place to relax after work.

A classic work of youth research, which has been frequently referred to here, Paul Willis’ “Learning to labour”, has its starting point in a related argument. The working-class, counter-school culture he studies strongly defines itself through traditional working-class values and uses them to oppose middle-class school values. This leads them to assess their own tradition and thus, paradoxically, to reproduce the system they oppose. Willis puts it thus: ”the lads’ culture is part of a larger working class culture of compromise and settlement but they are manly and confident in a period where major decisions are settled to their disadvantage”, and he

\[1\text{Willis (1977), p. 107.}\]
notes as a paradox that "the damnation to the shopfloor is experienced as true learning and resistance"1.

Now, the parallel between a British industrial city of the mid '70s and a Swedish suburb of the late '80s is not self-evident. Most importantly the lads here are part of Swedish modern culture and may not be adequately described through a specific British experience. There seems, though, at first glance to be some similarities. The Elmridge lads also assess the values of manual labour and they eventually end up on the shopfloor. In music, Grubbe and Karlson, at least, see too much elaboration as a threat to spontaneity and directness. This can also be a reason for the fact that music does not become an alternative to work in the end: it would then have to be associated with values that the lads oppose. Music would have to be work. In their stories about work, the lads stress the same values of spontaneity and freedom as in playing music but not the idea that working in itself gives such self-fulfilment. Rather, it is acknowledged as something unavoidable, and as a means of having an income.

Many theories of modern Western society place emphasis on its historical development from an agrarian to an industrialized society; and for the last decade, the key term has been "modern" or "post-modern" society. This denotes the changes from the classical industrialized era into a modern era where the main divisions can no longer be described along the lines of class differences or economic means. Thomas Ziehe, drawing mainly on Habermas, uses this terminology2. His psychoanalytically informed theory has its starting-point in the "cultural detachment", or "release" he sees as contingent upon today's Western societies. Old and traditional norms and values have gradually been broken down in this century. This has created a situation where people are free to choose lifestyles and not feel repressed by old customs. This, though, does not only liberate but also creates anxiety as there are no certainties or models to draw upon3.

This, in a sense, holds true for the lads who develop a specific identity through playing music. But they do it through a traditional working-class

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1Ibid., p. 113.

2Ziehe (1986). The Swedish proponent of this perspective, Johan Fornäs instead uses the concept "late-modernity" to describe the present situation.

3Ziehe (1986) deals with youth in modernity and develops his theory into a view of young people as "narcissistic" mainly due to the anxiety of cultural release and to the fact that mothers who find their role within modern society problematic bind children closer to themselves and contribute to feelings of insecurity.
opposition to authority, somewhat like the school counterculture Willis describes. For example, through the notion of mastering the system and playing with it; "to win symbolic and physical space against teachers’ aims". As stated before, music became a tool in this game of mastering the youth club situation. A specific one in contemporary Swedish society that has to do with the relationship to an institution that claims authority over people’s free time.

Still, retaining the notion of cultural release, it can be argued that the identity the lads “make” is modern, exactly because of the fact that it is made. It is developed in interaction with, and mostly in conflict with, people who have the ambiguous role of simultaneously controlling and liberating them, but still with a traditional outcome where they take the place in society that was always there for them.

So, the institutionalization of playing music, in a sense, is the fact that even though the lads do get very much involved in a form of cultural expression, playing rock music, which has an important place both in youth culture and in society, and offers an alternative future, they themselves use this music-playing as a pawn in the relational game that serves to put them in their place. It has functioned as the leisure-time activity designed to control, and much better than the staff could have wished for, and has done so in a paradoxical way, almost negating itself.

Institutionalization of leisure

A question this discussion can lead to is whether society could, or should, impose on its citizens what their leisure, or free, time should consist of. In one sense, this question is meaningless as every society by definition is pedagogic. There is always a notion, and a system, of reproduction that goes beyond the work/leisure distinction and this study has in part been a study of the socialization of young people into modern Swedish society. The youth club displays a pedagogy of leisure, and a notion of educating its visitors to be the democratic, knowledgeable takers of responsibilities which has been the ideal of the staff. But, in another sense, the prerequisite

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1Ibid., p. 26.
for the lads, and their understanding, is that it really has to do with their free, self-governed, time.

The lads have chosen to live under the auspices of the youth club, something that would involve taking on social life within a modern Swedish institution, participating and coming to grips with notions like those above. Erwing Goffman, in writing about institutions, within mainly mental care, puts the emphasis on the complexity of the notion of participation: "...when an institution officially offers external incentives and openly admits to having a limited claim on the loyalty, the time, and the spirit of the participant, then the participant who accepts this – whatever he does with his reward and wherever he suggests his heart really lies – is tacitly accepting a view of what will motivate him, and hence a view of his identity." Goffman speaks mainly of closed or total institutions, whereas this work deals with an "open" institution. But, the point is that this difference cannot only simply be assessed by looking at the fact that people can come and go whenever they like and that they themselves choose to come to the youth club. As the quote above indicates, being a youth club regular, comprises a certain relationship with the institution that could be described as a pressure to accept the tacit interpretation and role of "the youth club visitor". And, of the fact that you will then be under constant surveillance. But, those who are watching you are not the police, they are youth leaders claiming to work in your interest, as your friend inviting you to participate.

Goffman's interest is in how an institution constitutes a definition not only of its goals and ideology, but also a defining of the people who come there. He is "interested in the fact that expected activity in the organization implies a conception of the actor and that an organization can therefore be

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1Goffman (1968), p. 165.

2On another level, the same goes for the concept of youth itself. The whole idea of calling certain generations (of a nation) by a generalizing name that furthermore implies specific characteristics and, of course, certain problems that have only to do with age, is common enough in modern society.

3Petersson (1990), p. 114-117, has discussed, in relation to Foucault (1987), how the "panopticon", Bentham's metaphor (and technique) for surveillance, has, in a sense, become internalized by young people. They live with the notion that "you can be watched anywhere, and anytime", p. 116. (My translation).

4Cohen (1985), p. 68, argues that the forms of social control in modern society, through "a form of boundary blurring", shift "from coercive to deceptive".
viewed as a place for generating assumptions about identity”1. And, he goes on to examine the position of the participant, or as in this case the youth club visitor, who engages in the activities of the organization, thus also accepting to be ”a particular kind of person who dwells in a particular kind of world”2.

But this participation also constitutes the individual dealing with the ”assumptions about identity” that the institution contains. The whole spectrum between total acceptance and, as I have shown, protest is inherent in an institution like the youth club and a way to relate is also to do things differently from the ways prescribed by the institution. But then, according to Goffman, this would be ”to withdraw from the official self and the world officially available to it. To prescribe activity is to prescribe a world; to dodge a prescription can be to dodge an identity”3. The lads at Elmridge, as in Willis’ study, do dodge the opportunity to learn something about the workings of middle-class society, or, rather, to participate according to its rules and so confirm their future place in the reproduction of this society4. And the paradox is that it is through their own way of opposing participation that they have participated.

It may not be so clear at first sight as to what kind of activity, or world, or identity, the youth club prescribes. It is, in a sense, hidden behind the double identity of the youth club ideology. On the one hand, the notions of meaningful leisure time designed for the visitors, and on the other, the notion of control and keeping people off the streets. Still, the youth club can be said to adhere to notions predominant in and based on middle-class values. When the notion of youth as problems first evolved in Sweden around the turn of the century, the actors involved in creating the pedagogy of what would eventually become the youth club of today, adhered to a social-liberal welfare ideology. As Olsson claims, they were grounded in values of the middle class and the Swedish liberal and Christian organizations, and in the ’30s and ’40s, the youth problem

1 Goffman (1968), p. 169. This is also comparable to Gusfield’s notion of how the ”troubled persons professions” work.
2 Ibid., p. 170.
3 Ibid., p. 170.
4 It can also be said that the youth club has a kind of internal recruitment. A few of the visitors become ”helpers” to the staff, some of the older visitors get trusted with looking after the younger visitors or borrowing the keys, some even with standing at the cash register for a short while. There are cases where visitors eventually enter school to become youth club leaders though there was no such case during my stay.
became a question for municipalities and popular movements but much the same values were retained. In this study, I have also shown how these linger on in the everyday language and in the staff’s thinking about the club’s aims. And, also, in the lads’ ways of dealing with the situation. From their standpoint, accepting the role of visitor as prescribed by the club, would, in a sense, be to accept their role as problems.

If, as Goffman describes it, “every organization also involves a discipline of being – an obligation to be of a given character and to dwell in a given world,” the ways people deal with this obligation, whether complying or protesting, is the next concern. How participants create an alternative world within the organization, what he calls the “underlife” of the institution. He introduces the concepts of primary and secondary adjustment, where the latter “represent ways in which the individual stands apart from the role and the self that were taken for granted for him by the institution.” This is one way to view the lads’ creation of a free zone, an “own” place “within” the club.

People’s ways of acting within the institution, whether they are in accord with, overtaken by, or in opposition to it, have the purpose of creating a world, of making the actor feel “he has some selfhood and personal autonomy beyond the grasp of the organization.” The function of protesting, or secondary adjustments, seems to be to “place a barrier between the individual and the social unit in which he is supposed to be participating.” It becomes an instance of “self-preservation” and a way of rejecting those whom the participant sees as having placed limits and set up unnecessary rules. The practices employed to keep some distance or to uphold a certain differentiation, thus “reserving something of oneself from the clutch of an institution,” are seen by Goffman not as an “incidental mechanism of defense but rather an essential constituent of the self.”

His definition of the individual in an institution then becomes a “stance-taking entity, a something that takes up a position somewhere between

2Goffman (1968), p. 171.
3Ibid., p. 172.
4Ibid., p. 276.
5Ibid., p. 276.
6Ibid., p. 279.
7Ibid., p. 279.
identification with an organization and opposition to it, and is ready at the slightest pressure to regain its balance by shifting its involvement in either direction. It is thus against something that the self can emerge.”1. This definition is not simply conflictive in a mechanistic sense but, rather, places the emphasis on the dynamics and the process of the life, and the underlife, of the institution and of its participants. And this is what has been studied in this book.

The lads have, in a sense, dealt with the prescribed identity. They have succeeded in opposing the staff in a certain manner. But if this upholding of a differentiation, in Goffman’s words, is an essential constituent of the self, it is not directed at anything else than the institution itself. If music becomes a successful part of the underlife, the notion of a career in music outside the club does not seem to be an alternative. In his thesis on a youth culture based on middle-class values, what he calls ”computer captivated youth”, Jørgen Nissen2 shows how this group of adolescent boys creates a culture of ”hacking”. This is not so much, as the stereotype of hacking would lead us to believe, a deviant experience, but actually rather a conformist experience in a certain sense. The hackers can be seen as creating not only their own school, their own summer jobs, but also their actual future jobs as well as the definition of their work role, and all of this outside the institutions. For them, in contrast to the Elmridge lads, an important leisure time activity really becomes a career. And it does so because the middle-class boys employ middle-class strategies in leisure time, or youth activities, and have modelled this largely on ”adult” behaviour.

For the youth club lads, these strategies are not there. Instead, they adhere to working-class values, and thus have similarities with Willis’s lads, but also to values inherent in rock music which can be said to be non-conformist. Their protest is effective at the club, but it is the staff, in a sense as a kind of society’s go-between, that is the target. It is the staff who are frustrated and confused at the same time as they have actually succeeded in keeping the lads at their place, at the youth club. If the staff are a go-between, they are in a sense sacrificed as the ones to become the target, and thus focus, order and limit protest. This is a more effective control as it leaves the protesters with a feeling of indeed having protested. The lads

1Ibid., p. 280.
have done so, but their protest, like their music, is confined to the youth club and it is only the staff who suffer from it.

Concluding remarks; Real life and the life of leisure

In this study, I have viewed the lads’ music-playing as social interaction. Within the groups, and in a personal sense, it is also a direct communication. Between Grubbe and Karlson, for example, playing is also dialogue, it is part of discourse and a way for them to act within their relationship. Between them, it is a part of their friendship, and outwardly it is part of their relationship with their peers and with the staff. They use music-playing actively to live out and influence those different relationships, for example, when they were threatened with expulsion because of their lyrics and they answered by claiming to have written songs about pollution or drugs. But this also means that their music-playing is entangled within those relationships and becomes bound to the club. They grow dependent on it not only because the youth club happens to be the place they have chosen to spend time in, they also seek out these relationships and so, in a sense, work actively towards their own dependence. At the same time, the lads view the club as a place where they are controlled and oppressed; again, partly because of their own way of seeking and upholding the differentiation with the staff. The efforts to find a place and define the relationship, and doing this to their advantage, means upholding a negative definition of the staff and the club. Playing music is then caught up in this definition and the way in which it is bound to the context makes it very much a "youth club activity" for the lads. But it is also an activity with a definite place in the lads’ formation of an identity and with an assessment of the possibility of expressing themselves and of coming out on top. Still, though, music does not become an alternative career in the sense that it is continued as a, however temporary, life project. Rather, as it has been connected with the club relationships for so long that it has become part of institutional life, and of leisure. When working starts to be a real alternative, as the lads grow up, there is never a question of choice.

1 A conclusion along the same lines as those of Sennet, Goffman and Willis.
Still, the question of leisure and free time in a sense remains. Goodale & Godbey\(^1\), who have made a philosophical and historical analysis of the concept of leisure, examine the content of the thinking about leisure from antiquity onwards. One point they make is that leisure with the Greeks was a question of working towards freeing and educating oneself. It was the opposite of idleness or pastime. Thus, they break up the notion of leisure as free time, or as opposed to work, and replace it with a notion of self-fulfilment. The leisure offered by the youth club is supposed to be in accordance with this view. This is what is contained in the pedagogical notions of the staff. But only partially. There is also the notion of control, and this is how the lads regard the club. For them, this notion of self-fulfilment, for example, through playing music, is there from the beginning but gets lost and transformed into the opposite notion of leisure as a pastime and rest from work. This has come about through their own views on working and "real life" but also through the youth club’s failure to become the alternative it sometimes claims, and wishes, to be\(^2\).

What the lads have learnt is that there should be a division between work and leisure. And that this division is the way of the world. Thus, playing music, which really was a lifestyle for some of them at one point in time, really cannot be "serious". You have to leave it when you grow up. And you have to grow up.

And the youth club in a sense establishes leisure time as "non-serious", as a time and place to pass during the time of waiting, and also "to be passed" in the hands of authority. A definition of leisure as a controlled pastime. Of course, the point is not that the club should educate people for alternative careers, but the paradox is that inherent in its pedagogical ideology is also the notion of self development and self-fulfilment, and of getting people to participate and influence their own situation in society. It illustrates the complex problem of creating meaningful leisure time and democratic, responsible participators in society and at the same time keeping people under control and off the streets. In a sense this notion of freedom is a charade and maybe the only way of learning in a truly democratic society, as was the exact notion of Socrates in his persuasive

\(^1\)Goodale & Godbey (1988).

\(^2\)How official policies concerning youth in Sweden has developed into "alternative" youth work is studied by Öhlund (forthcoming). His notion is that "radical" youth work, seemingly breaking with what is seen as authoritative, traditional work, are, too, as strong proponents of similar values it claims to break with, albeit in disguise. See also Cohen (1985), p. 68.
way of teaching; make the pupils themselves draw the conclusions you want them to.

But, it can be claimed that the lads have done exactly that: participated and influenced their situation, at the club, and not least through playing music. But with the result that music-playing has become deeply entangled with the club relationships. It has in itself become institutionalized in the sense that, for the lads and by their own doing, its use has been mainly defined within this context as a tool for dealing with only these relationships. And it has been so good a tool, it has enabled them to find a viable place and come out on top, that this use has been the most important.

If the youth club practice, seen here as a product of the activation of the relationships within it, has established the lads' music-playing as belonging to leisure as a pastime, or non-serious, this means a reduction in its role as a lifestyle, and as a "serious" activity for the lads as it in fact was in the beginning and through a large part of this description. Having fun is, in fact, a very "serious" concept giving to music-playing a quality of "genuineness" and having an important place in the lads' life. At one point, they were really Lars Keso the band, and also Angel - the band. But as work took its place as the serious, or "real" life alternative, music-playing for them became just a pastime and a youth club activity in the sense described above. And to be serious, you cannot play.

The approach of having fun, however, comprised a notion of non-seriousness. In a sense, this can be seen as a kind of defining the place of youth as a place of one's own, or free zone, seen as developed within interactions and relationships with others. As a way to also be left in peace to search for and create for yourself an image (or lifestyle, or place, or identity). Of course, nobody lives in a vacuum and the point is not to see youth as a period in isolation or a period which could or should be free. Rather, the opposite: to see how people live through the complex problem of compulsory growing up, of inevitable change, and how they deal with the relations they live within. The lifestyle of having fun took some of the lads through an important part of their life, it created a place for them where they were somebody, and most often came out on top. Playing rock music was one type of expressive action they used in this process. The result was, in a sense, that they lost an opportunity to perhaps make an alternative career out of it. But still, they have made a strong comment of their own and, in the process, have formed a lifestyle and a world view on many things, musical and personal differences, and hierarchical relations.
in the club and in society. And a way to deal with these and make a place for themselves in a period of life when people are hardly noticed at all except as problems.
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