

In the Mood

Place and Tools in the Music Industry with a Focus on Entrepreneurship

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How the moods and emotions of composers and performers of music influence their artistic entrepreneurial work is a rewarding field of study. Usually, prominent musicians are portrayed in terms of their personal biographies, career, friends, intimate life and political views, as though important answers can be found there. But to what extent is their creativity the outcome of milieu and context? Music, like other art, cannot be reduced to the representational. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* (2001), Heidegger claims that the power of art lies in its capacity to ‘open up a world’ and unveil a truth that lies beyond and is more complex than the symbolic, the linguistic or any other kind of representation. What art makes ‘appear’ is a ‘totality of equipment’. Here he is referring to our practical dealings with the world – as opposed to a theoretical, cognitive knowledge where objects are supposed to *mean* something and be *understood*. In his vocabulary, such appearance is akin to the ‘worlding’ of things or events (see Frykman, Chapter 7 in this volume).

The power of art is revealed when this opening up or ‘disclosure’ is recognised, performed or presented. Perhaps Heidegger’s most famous analysis is that of Van Gogh’s portrayal of a pair of shoes. Shoes generally appear all in everyday situations and can be scattered around in the entrance hall or aesthetically exposed in a shop window or advertisement. As the American philosopher Richard Polt (1999: 137) indicates,

what Heidegger writes about is how the artist manages to make them ‘expose the world of a peasant woman, a world oriented by work, need, childbirth and death’, which means that in the viewer’s imagination the shoes are ‘worlding’. Correspondingly, when music is performed it gives new dimensions to situations or raises questions about environments or encounters the composer has been party to – trees, wind, climate, meadows and people – or the moods they evoke. For Heidegger, this feeling often means ‘gathering’ the space into a place. ‘Place’ is given a particular meaning in his vocabulary and is never conflated with spatiality or a certain position in space, because it refers to existence and perception rather than area. It is a locale made up of humans and non-humans, norms, values, rules, potentialities, possibilities etc. His own formulations are never easy to decrypt and have given rise to different interpretations: ‘Place is always the definite “over there” and the “there” of a useful thing belonging there’ Jeff Malpas (2007) points to how ‘place’ can be seen as the beginning of something rather than the end. He uses the same German word as Heidegger – *Ort* – to clarify this: ‘the term originally indicated the point of the or edge of a weapon – the point of a spear for instance – at which all of the energy of the weapon is brought to bear’ (ibid. 29). In short, ‘place’ becomes the site or platform where people act and live their lives and where objects serve as useful tools.

In this chapter a musical entrepreneur and his relation to place and tools are explored since entrepreneurial opportunities are often born out of place. Entrepreneurial opportunities such as musical expressions are seldom (or never) the result of a one-man act, but are usually socially derived (Ridderstråle and Nordström 2004). The affective dimension is brought into the analysis by adding another of Heidegger’s terms – ‘attunement’. Attunement is all about mood; the mental and physical states through which the world is seen – predominately despair, boredom and the feeling of estrangement (Heidegger 1996: 135; see Gilje, Chapter 2 in this volume). Being attuned to a place means being affectively alert to it and to act according to how place ‘opens up’ new possibilities. This is why Heidegger claims that moods are ‘disclosive’ – they reveal the potential of a place and thus uncover what there is. Moods disclose things such as the vibes of a room, the fear produced by an encounter, the fists clenched in the pocket, or the attentiveness on seeing a beloved face. Being an entrepreneurial artist implies being

sensitive to places, people and things and being able to arrange this into words, images or music.

This chapter takes the experiences of a Norwegian black metal musician as its point of departure in order to analyse how place affects initiatives in this particular field of entrepreneurship. The text is based on comprehensive fieldwork resulting in a PhD dissertation (Hauge 2012).¹ Theoretically, inspiration is drawn from phenomenology and especially the role that affects play in relation to place and enterprise in the field of music.

Black Metal at the Mill Studio

Knut Magne Valle is an established name on the Norwegian black metal scene. Black metal is a subgenre of heavy metal music and is associated with being white, male, macho, aggressive, grotesque, satanic and misogynistic (Bossius 2003). Since 2000 an important stage and studio for this extreme subgenre of heavy metal is to be found in a poetic, rural place, namely an old watermill close to Valle's parental home, beautifully situated on a cliff beside a waterfall and surrounded by deep woods. In different ways the mill's interior embodies the mysticism of the Norwegian metal world, with its loudspeakers and high-tech recording equipment and old-fashioned handicrafts with plenty of references to Norse legends and the medieval world of magic. From here he has produced over 100 records and it is from here that Norwegian-inspired black metal has spread throughout Europe, Asia and North America.

Valle's career took off in 1996 when he was invited to join the up-and-coming, but not yet fully established, band Arcturus. The band was actually founded by other key people in the metal scene in 1987 Mortem. When the band released its second album, *La Masquerade Infernale*, in 1997, Valle was the lead guitarist and sound producer. The album represented a stylistic break with the black metal genre in that it introduced a clear voice and straightforward verse–refrain songs and led to the band's breakthrough. Most of the changes were a direct result of Valle taking over as the band's songwriter and producer. As he told me in an interview in my research:

For me, Arcturus' breakthrough was also the time when my activities as a producer also started to take off ... I was the band's

producer and when I got very good reviews and feedback, new production possibilities opened up. Suddenly I found myself in a position where I could produce for other bands. I was at the beginning of my career as a producer. I started out producing hard-core extreme metal music and have ended up with a broad CV of albums covering most genres of rock music.

Self-realisation

Norway's musical scene in general seems to be neglected when income from industry is counted nationally. Oil, the processing industry, fishing and tourism are traditionally associated with the country. As entrepreneurs, metal musicians display characteristics that are different from other groups, be they technologists, computer scientists, communicators, or service providers such as plumbers, hotel and restaurant workers (Hauge 2012). One of the traits that makes them different is that profit is rarely a motivating factor. Rather, inspiration comes from the musicians' purposeful desire to realise themselves (*ibid.*). Authenticity through music is the basic prerequisite for this self-realisation and is inextricably related to its originator.

Although the project sounds like a reflective and self-absorbed cultural construction, it is at the same time deeply rooted in place and environment. 'Atmosphere' is a key concept and, for Valle, the milieu is both carefully chosen and gives rise to new artistic opportunities. Processes of this kind are of course reciprocal, in that the musician affects the context and at the same time searches for unique expression. For musical entrepreneurs such as Valle, this amounts to a lifestyle that is paradoxically place-bound and deeply individualistic, in that it expresses a state that can never be finalised.

The idea of atmosphere and the possibilities of 'tuning in' to a place are recurrent themes in Valle's entrepreneurship. It is generally known that nascent entrepreneurs do not search for the optimal place in which to establish and develop their enterprise (Stam and Bosma 2014), but, like Valle, establish their firms in the area to which they belong; the place where they were born or where they are among family and friends. This is yet another of the many paradoxes connected to black metal, namely that authenticity and self-realisation in a music genre that is to all intents

and purposes hostile to mainstream culture rely on a strong attachment to the familiar and sedentary.

Nevertheless, it would seem that in such places a passion for engaging in entrepreneurial acts is born and fostered. For many musical entrepreneurs, new projects and business ideas have been connected to place through economic transactions in worldwide markets. The way it is described in phenomenology: the home is a potential site filled with tacit knowledge that is of crucial importance for the entrepreneur. It seems to evolve, take shape and become creatively and economically viable through the interaction with the founder. This way of performing entrepreneurship is a developing process, where the entrepreneur merges affective self-realisation through the place and at the same time changes it. Or, to formulate it in more general terms, the actors choose how to act from a horizon of future possibilities where projecting onto an imaginable future is based on what is meaningful to the musicians and their past experiences (Weick 2004, 2006).

In the mood, identifying opportunities

The literature on opportunity recognition is vast, although it mostly focuses on the perception, cognitive capacity and behaviour of the entrepreneur – plus the infrastructure that facilitates entrepreneurial work (cf. Gaglio and Katz 2001). By looking at the influence of such factors, one usually finds the answer to how ideas could be developed into more commercially oriented concepts. The art of leading a future-oriented way of life is all about the disposition of becoming. To a certain extent this is also true for Knut Magne Valle who, based on his past experiences and future possibilities, is able to recognise which new realities can be actualised. In this process he moves from ‘what is’ to highlight ‘what is possible’ (Ardichvili et al. 2003). However, recognising new entrepreneurial opportunities does not just involve plans and consciousness, but also includes the affective impulses from objects and places that make up a lifeworld.

Every musician has to be in the *mood* for writing and composing, but also for recognising and acting on entrepreneurial opportunities. Producing new songs, albums, giving concerts and so on means tuning into the environment. Being able to provoke specific musical moods also gives the musician access to the worldwide music market. The suc-

cess of cultural entrepreneurship is therefore on the one hand a process that is dependent on the musician's creative power, energy and desire to express new sounds and on the other hand a question of how the audience becomes attuned to the musician's world of art.

The success of any opportunity recognition depends on the actors' persuasion and communication skills in order to procure the necessary resources and stimulate buyers' interest (Gaglio and Katz 2001). Holt (2008) claims that opportunities are socially embedded constructs that need to be recognised by others. For a musician like Valle, it is not simply a matter of identifying a market niche, possessing a patent, or designing a new business model, but being able to engage with and persuade others to become attuned to the elements that constitute this particular life project. Becoming attuned means that the audience discerns what the musician's artworks disclose – something that resonates with them.

Musicians make entrepreneurial history by attempts to trigger people to respond to and obtain the practice or product that they create and present into music markets; they make it when they invite listeners into their world and involve them in their art. The dialogue between musician and audience engenders meaning and new understanding. This differs from the entrepreneurial processes of engineers or those in the tourist sector, who offer a time-limited commodity or service. Such history-making or meaning-production is seldom the result of one person's intentionality. Instead, it comes out of the subject's actual engagement with the world in all its complexity.

When making music Valle interacts physically with his place of birth and belonging. The Mill Studio located by a waterfall, the surrounding forest and the carefully scythed fields are all objects that put him 'in the mood', make him feel that there is 'something in the air' and inspire his compositions and performances. The atmosphere that the Mill Studio contributes to also affects other musicians, producers, record managers, volunteers and audiences who gather in Valle's home village and that contributes to an effective attunement to the world of metal music. However, concentrating his inspiration in only this one location would be a mistake. The exchange of musical and entrepreneurial experiences between Valle and his partners is also a movement that connects different locations. Together with Valle, the Mill Studio identity is constantly renewed and developed.

A man of many places

Born in 1974, Knut Magne Valle is the youngest of a family of five, which includes his mother, father, brother and sister, all of whom live in the small municipality of Gjerstad. Everyone in the family is interested in music, and from an early age Knut Magne was fascinated by the possibilities of changing sounds. He tested how different configurations of wires and loudspeakers produced new sounds and soon became familiar with the creative potential of guitars, amplifiers and mixing boards. In an interview he describes himself as a turbulent pupil, where episodes of mischief often resulted in letters to his parents. He was not a slow learner, but simply disliked most of the theoretical subjects. Valle also admits having been in need of a mentor who could show him the right path; a person who was open to the ideas and possibilities of pupils interested in subjects other than mathematics, grammar and languages. Therefore, for him school was a place that he was forced to attend, but where his potential was not tapped. Full of energy, breaks were more attractive to him than the lessons. As Valle notes: 'During the 1980s the formula for primary and lower secondary education was very theoretically oriented'.

In his free time Valle took part in the development of the local extreme metal scene. His parents allowed him and his friends to practise in an old sawmill attached to the farm. He and his friends reorganised and remodelled the sawmill and turned it into a rock club. The place became a meeting area for practising, concerts and where young people could hang out. His concerts attracted a network of metal lovers from all over southern Norway and the club became a central place for the growing Norwegian underground of extreme metal music. In interviews Valle nostalgically remembers how the activities at the club were not always legal. Like other teenagers it was important to dig music, have a good time with friends, down a few beers and 'live life at its best' (see Spinoza et al. 1997). Registering their small business activities with the local council and paying taxes on entrance fees were not on their agenda. Nevertheless, the youngsters learned to take care of the mill, arrange and host concerts, carry and repair equipment and engage in other practical tasks. 'The rock club was the start of something', as Valle explains:

At the beginning the sawmill was in many ways just an empty shell. We arranged concerts with our band Saga Rockers to earn

money to insulate the house. Afterwards we built a stage and the club became a very nice place to hang out in and visit. When we arranged concerts a lot of other bands, and also local metal lovers and those from the eastern part of Norway kept coming back. And when other bands performed I was the sound technician, because I had learned and experienced a lot about rigging sound. This was actually the beginning of my career as a sound technician.

Valle moved to Oslo after completing a year-long sound technology course at a college in northern Norway. Here he became a hard core member of the capital's extreme metal underground. In addition to playing in a few bands, he also established himself as a music producer. Although the equipment he had invested in was good for producing demos, it was not professional enough for albums. Life in Oslo was quite expensive, but he found suitable premises in a dilapidated building in the city centre where he could both live and make music. Three rooms were rented out to three heavy metal colleagues. For the four this location turned out to be important for their musical careers. In addition to having their own bedrooms and sharing a bathroom, kitchen and living room, they also had access to a large space for playing music that included studio facilities. The accommodation was located in an old block of flats where about 50 to 100 other metal fans and musicians also hung out. In their individual ways they were all part of the black metal scene that turned out to be a hothouse for future entrepreneurial projects. The milieu also became a kind of melting pot for musicians entering and exiting band projects. According to Valle, this block of flats became the playground for what was to become the famous Norwegian black metal genre, where sounds were experimented with, techniques were polished, competence was acquired and band members were tested and exchanged.

Unfortunately, in 1994 the young musicians were given notice to leave the premises due to the impending demolition of the block of flats. This meant that they had to find alternative premises, and dispersed. Although the past is a closed chapter and cannot be changed, Valle says that on several occasions he could not help wondering what might have happened if people had stayed put. If they had, the entrepreneurial story would have been quite different. He explains that,

the milieu became a breeding ground for all the best bands in Norway. Enslaved, Gorgoroth, Empirior, Mayhem and Arcturus – they all played here. Even Satyricon was allowed to practise here. It was an environment that had a head start, and some of the processes of synergy and dynamics resembled those of Silicon Valley.

For Valle this turned out to be a decisive place where, together with other people, he was practically and emotionally absorbed; ‘gathered together with other persons and things’ he opened up to the world and invited the world to him (Malpas 2006: 221). Impressions from here were carried into another flat in the city centre, where he established an amateur studio, updated its profile and called it Jester Studio. One of his colleagues from Arcturus established Jester Records in the same premises. This co-localisation enabled them to make use of each other’s competence and share the rent. It was here that Arcturus’ breakthrough album *La Masquerade Infernale* (2012) was recorded and produced.

It became clear that the sound studio generated money, while the record company was in the red. This led the two friends to end their business partnership. Valle began to call his studio Møllar’n Studio (The Mill Sound Studio) and moved to a set of studios in Oslo where he joined forces with Turbonegro (one of Norway’s most popular and successful death punk bands) and Kåre and the Cavemen (a Norwegian rock band). This new partnership constellation continued until the owners decided to sell the studio premises and equipment in 2002.

Getting attuned

Over the years Valle has played at numerous concerts and done many tours. He eventually concluded that returning home to Gjerstad was a possible but also necessary step in his artistic development. The Mill Project moved physically from the old sawmill to the beautifully located watermill described at the beginning of the chapter. After 12–14 years of development, the studio is now famous throughout the heavy metal world. Attracting metal musicians from far and wide, the Mill also provides accommodation for long-distance travelers. Today, the Mill Sound Studio, in its rural setting, is not only imbued with the spirit of mystical metal identity, but also with a sense of opportunities materialised.

The studio is filled with the right tools; the equipment that Valle needs to engage in music production. This equipment is constantly used in new ways and the existing tools have to be replaced and upgraded as the world of sound creation moves on and evolves. In parallel while Valle develops his music productions, his toolkit also expands to create new music of constantly improved quality. In this sense music and sound production are neverending, but rather work as openings for new sounds, albums, festivals, new technological equipment and so on.

Without the early links to the metal scene Valle would probably never have incorporated the specific tools needed to produce the distinct sound. For example, when he reflects on his years in Oslo he says that: 'I think the Mill project would have been stillborn without my time in Oslo. Of course I might have produced some small local bands'.

The merging of place and equipment can be studied in the arrangement of the Water Mill Festival, which has been arranged in August each year since 2003 and is determinedly anti-commercial: 'We will not advertise, since the radical motive of the festival is not to earn money, but to spread metal music to people. Any profits made from the events are used to fund future festivals'. Here, lesser-known bands are given a chance to perform live. Valle's strategy has been to recruit for the music trade whilst simultaneously giving the audience a varied musical experience in picturesque surroundings. The festival is totally dependent on volunteers, such as festival crew and musicians, who are given free tickets. The musicians who perform have an inspiring backstage area in the shape of Valle's sound studio universe. Due to the sound studio the festival attracts metal-loving musicians, bands, their fans, people from sound studios, record companies and the music press. According to Valle the festival serves as a meeting place and synthesis for metal music lovers, where ideas are born and evolve. The Water Mill Festival also acts as a hotbed for new business deals, although no deals are formally made there.

As there are no barriers around the stage the concert area is quite intimate. In an attempt to integrate nature, the grass around the mill is scythed. As environment-friendly mushroom soup, moose burgers, moose casserole and organically grown vegetables from the family farm are all on the menu. Come nightfall torches are lit and illuminate the festival area and stage. When the last concert of the day is over, the party moves to the festival camp at Valle's farm. The camp has two zones: one

for people who want to party and a quiet family camp with swings and slides for children. How Valle is constantly striving to improve the quality of his festival is a good illustration of recognising and actualising a well-known and at the same time diffuse atmosphere of ‘something in the air’. This ambiguous something is composed of the physical place with musicians, producers, record managers, volunteers and audiences all contributing to an affective attunement to the world of metal music.

Creating the perfect sound is a crucial part of Valle’s life work and a treasure that he wants to pass on to metal lovers and festival participants. A problem in the early history of the Water Mill Festival was that the soundconditions were not optimal on the outdoor stage. In order to address this, Valle contacted a former student, Rune Skramstad, who just had completed his Bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and product design. Could a loudspeaker be built, based on a horn principle, to produce the required sound? Rune found the challenge exciting and spent three days simulating the bass horn. He and Valle then built a seven-metre subwoofer under the stage at the Mill, which worked perfectly.

The story of Valle’s lifeworld proves that the world of sound is not only something that is heard. People, sound, place and objects become entangled into a significant whole – a context that comes alive during the Mill Festival. As the manager of this happening, Valle tries to make visitors part of the environment that has come alive for him. His affinity with the Mill is never confined to one particular location, but to the music that takes shape through the place. When circulating between the different platforms, for example the studio in Oslo, on tour and at concerts, it would seem his lived experience matures and turns into embodied knowledge. Here it is clear how he as an entrepreneur stands apart from other inventors. He makes the visitors/customers members of the place by inviting them to share the mood of the Mill with its studio and music, and the family farm with its game, plants and ambience. The outcome is more of a shared subculture than a producer–client relationship.

Conclusion

Heidegger is very explicit about ‘how moods give emotional depth to our experience’, which resembles how Spinoza saw affects as lessening or heightening our potential. They both agree that thinking and know-

ledge production cannot be separated from the emotions of our body (see Gilje, Chapter 2 in this volume). For Valle, place in the shape of the Mill is first and foremost something that is embodied and *felt*. For him it sums up what he has learned throughout his career. As a musician *and* an entrepreneur he has explored the different potentials of things.

Heidegger (1996) writes that tools help us to see – feel – the world. The tools used by the musician Valle, together with places in which he operates, have shaped his identity. They are tangible and filled with content and include guitars, basses, drums, loudspeakers and amplifiers. For the professional musician in his entrepreneurial career, tools like these are necessary but not sufficient. Professionalisation requires their adoption and internalisation to the extent that they almost become invisible and are extensions of the body. The extreme black metal sound is created by musicians playing their instruments with an abandon that confers their hard-won self-realisation and authenticity. However, this is a process and not a state. In order to be successful in a changing world an engaged actor needs to be constantly on the move. As tools are acquired and skills grow, sounds become more sophisticated, more knowable and more distinct. Valle's motivation is to play the guitar faster, heavier, darker, slower, backwards or in response to whatever challenge or innovation arises. Place and tools are pathways to the world in which he lives and acts. In his case the process of becoming an accomplished musician and entrepreneur starts at home. In his early career Valle had access to a limited set of tools. As new tools have been included in the working processes, old tools have been replaced, thus allowing for renewed learning. In the process of using and learning how to handle the equipment, the band expanded its repertoire and in practice discovered and created a wider world of music.

This step-by-step disclosure of a wider musical world is a decisive effect of becoming an entrepreneur *and* a skilful musician. Training brings change, as well as a change of direction. As Valle explains it; 'Even if your goal is not necessarily your goal all the time, you have to work in that direction. Still, you have no guarantee that you will succeed'. Becoming entrepreneurial was not an apparent intention when Valle went into business. The intention was rather a passion for music. Footprints, presented as events, are left behind in the entrepreneurial process; new interpretations, understandings and visions are made and pave the way for new beginnings.

In this chapter Valle's story has been presented in a narrative form. But the real story lies in the skill of the body and sleight of the hand, the music wrought from the guitars, the perfection of the sound system and everything gathered in the place. Entrepreneurs in other business sectors may follow similar guidelines. Inherent in the experience of Valle is his successful involvement with black metal music, which mirrors a world of which he is part. The concluding remark on the production of music is, in this chapter, that it is released through the entrepreneur's moods and attunement, which in turn brings the place and tools alive. All this is articulated in a way that others can appreciate, because it resonates with something they too have perceived.

Notes

- 1 For the uses of a Heideggerian approach to phenomenology and an analysis of how concepts such as place, tools, potentiality, the actual and projecting are used in relation to entrepreneurship, see Hauge 2012.

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SENSITIVE OBJECTS

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