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Record Companies in Sweden

- 100 years of music business institutionalisation

This thesis is about the development of Record Companies in Sweden over more than hundred years. The Aim is to understand the role of the record company in the change of the music industry by narrating and interpreting its development. The Record Companies did dominate the music industry in Sweden from their arrival 1903 until after year 2000, when new forms of music business were born. Despite this the remaining record companies still have similarities with the first gramophone company from 1903.

The empirical story is based on some 20 interviews with central actors in the music industry together with a mapping of the independent music producers, published 2004 and material from other studies on the music business. The story is in itself an important contribution to research since it appears to be the first one done in this way.

The conception of the record company as the dominant actor in the organisational field, the music industry, very soon became an institution. This institution has been created and developed in an institutional process that here is analysed in four themes: delimitations, dominant logics, and organising and ownership structure/actors. During the process the limitations for the record company and the organisational field is changing. The logic is being pushed towards either art or commercialism during different periods, different forms of organising are created and developed and actors come and go.

A main conclusion is that the cognitive processes highlight the institutionalisation but also the normative and the regulative processes helps to explain. At the same time this must, as in the model developed in the thesis, be connected to the four themes in order to create the holistic understanding of the institutionalization of the music business in Sweden being demanded in the aim of the thesis. In the model the actors, the institutional entrepreneurs are being emphasized as most important in the creation, remaining, developing, changing and at the end also liquidation of the institutional conception of the record company as the dominant form of music business. Partly this could be explained by and in itself explain the lack of a strong common organization in the music business together with the rather limited impact from attempts of regulations. These institutional entrepreneurs are now creating the new music industry, forcing the record companies to step aside from their dominant role in the same way as the music publishers once did. They might even give the dominance back to the publishers, or maybe there will not be yet another institution in the music industry. Maybe it will change into something completely different? The model developed and used in this thesis is proposed for use in other longitudinal studies especially in other art businesses and similar organizational fields.

Key words: institution, institutional entrepreneurs, institutional intrapreneurs, organizational fields, institutional process, music business, record companies, art companies.

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