

Where's it at tonight?

Discovering an urban jazz festival in Gothenburg, Sweden

Olle Stenbäck

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Preface

This report is part of the interdisciplinary, international project Cultural Heritage and Improvised Music in European Festivals (CHIME). The project is a Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) whose fundamental keywords are cultural heritage and global change.¹

CHIME's focal objective is to explore the uses and re-uses of different types of heritage through the study of jazz and improvised music festivals.² The project Marketising Heritage: Jazz in Urban Spaces at the Centre for Consumer Science, under which this report was written, analyzes the marketization of cultural heritage.



CHIME and Marketising Heritage: Jazz in Urban Spaces at Centre for Consumer Science³ would like to thank GMLSTN JAZZ's artistic director Eric Arellano, the festival committee and the festival partners for supporting the project.

¹ <http://www.jpi-culturalheritage.eu/wp-content/uploads/Projects-funded-list-JPICH1.pdf>, 2016-06-28, 14:15.

² <http://chimeproject.eu/about/>, 2016-10-11, 16:27.

³ <http://cfk.handels.gu.se/english>, 2016-10-02, 11:04.

Introduction

This report is the result of a close study of the organization behind the GMLSTN JAZZ music festival. It comes out of a participatory study of the week-long GMLSTN JAZZ festival, which was held in Gothenburg, Sweden between April 23 and April 30, 2016. The focus is directed towards the marketization (or commercialization) of cultural heritage, which I will approach by utilizing the concept of festivalization, as exemplified through the GMLSTN JAZZ music festival.

The aim of the report is twofold. On the one hand, the focus is directed towards the assemblage of the GMLSTN JAZZ festival, namely an empirical overview of the orchestration of ideas to practices. On the other hand, the focus is directed towards the two aforementioned theoretically-anchored concepts of festivalization and cultural heritage, both of which will be explained further.

By positioning GMLSTN JAZZ under what might be called a cultural heritage “looking glasWs,” the report aims to answer the following questions:

1. What form(s) of cultural heritage does GMLSTN JAZZ produce/reproduce?
2. How is cultural heritage marketed?
3. Is cultural heritage important to the festival committee?

The above questions should be understood in relation to the fact that jazz music is a UNESCO-classified world cultural heritage⁴, which means that the GMLSTN JAZZ festival is linked to a global cultural heritage discourse. GMLSTN JAZZ labels itself as a “modern” jazz festival; an initiative determined to make the local Gothenburg jazz scene and jazz music in general, viable.

Method and materials

The empirical material consists of field notes from the week-long 2016 edition of GMLSTN JAZZ, notes from the festival committee meetings, an interview with the present artistic director, a festival goer, an online query consisting of 15 respondents, and interviews with representatives from two key festival sponsors:

- Göteborg & Co, whose task is “marketing and supporting the development of Gothenburg as a city of tourism, meeting and events.”⁵ Göteborg

⁴ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/jazz-day>, 2016-06-28, 14:14.

⁵ <http://goteborgco.se/en/about-goteborgco/>, 2016-10-10, 13:17.

& Co can be described as a tourism, culture, and events cluster, with the aim of making Gothenburg competitive in Sweden and on the global map.

- Fastighetsägare i Gamlestaden (Property Owners of Gamlestaden): a partnership consisting of 40 property owners in the area of Gothenburg called Gamlestaden, where the festival (partially) takes place.⁶
- GMLSTN JAZZ's artistic director Eric Arellano, master of musical improvisation and producer at Konserthuset AB in Vara, Västra Götaland.⁷
- Festival-goer Maria: a frequent visitor at restaurant/venue Folkteatern but uninitiated to the local jazz scene.
- Responses from an online query targeted to festival goers, which was accessible during the festival week.

During the week-long festival, researcher Olle Stenbäck together with project leaders Niklas Sörum and Helene Brembeck from the Centre for Consumer Science conducted several observational studies, which resulted in field notes covering a majority of the happenings during the week. The observations followed an identical observation scheme. They incorporated questions concerning the spatial formation of the different venues, the artists and audience, interpersonal interactions, shared experiences, as well as how the festival was presented – and marketed – at each event. This last category (i.e., how the festival was presented) soon turned into a key theme. The category brings forth one of this report's key concepts, which is described in the following.

⁶ <http://helagamlestaden.se/om-fastighetsagare-i-gamlestaden/>, 2016-10-10, 13:21.

⁷ <http://www.varakonserthus.se/bohuslanbigband>, 2016-10-10, 13:37.

Key concepts

Festivalization

Due to the form of the GMLSTN JAZZ festival, i.e., the fact that it is a dispersed urban music festival that often challenges the notions of what a music festival is and can be, the (increasingly used) term “festivalization” and its applications brought useful perspectives for approaching the festival as a phenomenon. Several researchers, including the authors of the book *The Festivalization of Culture* (Bennet, Taylor & Woodward 2014), emphasized the concept of festivals is no longer:

[...] periodic, cultural, religious or historical events within communities, but rather a popular means through which citizens consume and experience culture.⁸

In addition to the above quote, the term festivalization is often used as a tool for critique. Researcher Nikolay Zherdev observed that urban planners attempts to “galvanize local cultural life” and “build a continuity of ‘happening’ and thus attract creative individuals” (2014:5). Zherdev’s writings point towards a general critique of the creative economy; in particular, how an increasing number of events are marketed as a festival of sorts, where commodities rather than artistic performances, for example, are the focus (2014:16). The concept of festivalization also connotes cultural tourism. Festivals and the phenomena of festivalization have “become an economically attractive way of packaging and selling cultural performance and generating tourism” (Bennet, Taylor & Woodward 2014:1).

I use the term as an investigative tool for the audience’s understanding of what a music festival is and can be. I also use the term to analyze how GMLSTN JAZZ markets itself, including the ways in which the festival is part of the festivalization discourse, which is embodied in the aforementioned creative economy.

Cultural heritage

As presented in the introduction, the aim of the report is to study the marketization of cultural heritage, which leads us to the second key concept, namely the theoretical field of cultural heritage. In this report, cultural heritage should be – following Heritage Studies professor Rodney Harrison – understood as:

⁸ Bennet, Taylor & Woodward 2014, abstract.

working with the tangible and intangible traces of the past to both materially and discursively remake both ourselves and the world in present, in anticipation of an outcome that will help constitute a specific (social, economic or ecological) resource in and for the future (Harrison 2015:35).

In the analysis of the empirical material, emphasis was put on if and how aspects of cultural heritage are used in marketing, organizing, and enacting the GMLSTM JAZZ festival, either explicitly or implicitly.

Aspects of cultural heritage play a potentially important role in constructing a market for music festivals, specifically one for jazz music. However, such strategies can very well be unintentional, meaning that – in the case of GMLSTN JAZZ and the festival committee members – fragments of the cultural heritage discourse may not be intentionally articulated. For example, past/present-relations and each positioning towards a “now” and “then” might merely be a matter of musical residency and choosing what’s fashion-right within their context.

Kick off

The first GMLSTN JAZZ festival was held in 2014. The initiative was the result of a lack of jazz venues (and venues welcoming jazz music) in the city of Gothenburg, Sweden. Eric Arellano, project manager, master in musical improvisation and the festival's present artistic director, learned of the difficulty in finding jazz gigs and thought it was time to change those circumstances. The first initiative was not a music festival but a jazz club. The club was located on Avenyn St, which has often been described as the number one magnificent avenue of Gothenburg. Arellano managed this club for nearly two years. Arellano eventually discovered that the city did not, as initially presumed, lack in jazz venues but rather that the existing venues and the general "jazz scene" lacked organization. At this point, the idea of forming a jazz festival came into the picture. Arellano contacted a close colleague and the two collaborated on the early phase of the project.

Arellano and his colleague thought of the festival as a way to both manage the jazz scene and promote jazz to a broader audience. The idea was to market jazz music to larger stages where they could reach both initiated jazz-goers and those who may have never attended a jazz event. At first, the focus was primarily directed towards local acts with the intention of creating exposure for all musicians and bands already present in town. The idea to bring in international acts came later. The initial goal was to "reboot" an existing, if disorganized, jazz scene.

The festival initiative also had a second goal. The jazz musicians in town, Arellano says:

... Play in touring rock bands. They've got loads of gigs, but rarely on home ground. And seldom in jazz constellations.⁹

Arellano perceived jazz to be received a musical genre that seldom reached bigger crowds in town, let alone an audience outside the jazz circles.

Previously, Gothenburg had the Gothenburg Jazz Festival (Göteborgs Jazzfestival), now partly resurrected and transformed into Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival¹⁰ (Göteborgs Classic Jazz Festival). However, the current musical focus does not align well with the aesthetical approaches of the GMLSTN JAZZ festival committee members. While the Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival can be described as a caretaker of classic jazz (i.e., trad/traditional jazz), GMLSTN JAZZ aims for a more progressive approach.

⁹ Interview with Eric Arellano, 2015-10-29.

¹⁰ <http://www.jazzfest.se/>, 2016-09-05, 14:27.

An area undergoing transformation

Choosing the festival grounds was an easy decision. A few of the committee members, including Arellano, already lived in Gamlestaden. Additionally, a couple of committee members were already included in various local projects, which might have further influenced the decision. The committee members sought to choose an area where they could participate in local development and become a natural part of the process; they thought to take advantage of a process that had already been put in motion. Gamlestaden was – and still is – an area of transformation. In an interview, Arellano stated that:

... There's a lot happening there right now. They're building new apartments, there's a cultural center. And there's diversity. We hope that the festival could be a part of the development of the area and help it to become more attractive. It was a somewhat political move [for him]. Some thought it was a great idea, some less so, but we decided to give it a go.¹¹

The committee's main concern was geographical distance, as Gamlestaden is a suburban area. The committee members were told by partners they attempted to recruit that they would have to book prominent acts if they hoped to attract audience members out to the suburbs. In addition, Gamlestaden's reputation was an important consideration. Gamlestaden is only seven minutes from the Gothenburg central station, but the area apparently had other issues than the geographical location. There's a certain feeling, Arellano continues, surrounding Gamlestaden – but soon put emphasis on that “it's safe – it's a good district – there's lots of cool things happening there”.¹²

GMLSTN JAZZ also strives for diversity, and committee members were drawn to the fact that Gamlestaden residents come from various countries around the world. “There's a mix of cultures,” Arellano said, that “could originate a valuable exchange.”¹³

The third concern for the committee members was where in Gamlestaden the festival should be housed. Although the district was full of activities, it lacked any stages that would be suitable for a music festival. To address this challenge, committee members turned to Kvibergs Kaserne, a cultural heritage site consisting of ex-military housing located close to Gamlestaden. The festival committee members searched within their networks and found a contact at a restaurant also housed at Kvibergs Kaserne. Their contact happened to be involved in both the restaurant business and worked at the Academy of Music and Drama; this contact was a jazz aficionado who had

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Interview with Eric Arellano, 2015-10-29.

previously arranged concerts there. Like many other festivals in their start-up phase, GMLSTN JAZZ used several contacts within the committee members' personal networks. As expressed in the article "Festival Stakeholder Roles" (Getz, Andersson & Larson 2007:119), using personal networks appears to be inevitable among new festival initiatives: virtually mandatory and utterly necessary.

Initially, the festival committee had grand plans. For one, they thought of building a large stage at Kvibergs Kaserner. They also began by planning for the coming five or six years; a sign of passionate outlooks. They quickly realized that, given their lack of budget and experience managing a music festival, their initial planning should use existing resources, including what was already to be found at the chosen festival grounds.

In May 2014, the first edition of GMLSTN JAZZ was held. Although the festival was initially set entirely at Kvibergs Kaserner, the 2015 and 2016 festivals proved quite a different matter.

Assembling the festival

We need to start planning earlier if we want our festival to evolve. We have a great potential to become a strong, modern Swedish jazz festival.¹⁴

GMLSTN JAZZ recently held its third anniversary; in other words, it is still a new player in the music festival field. In light of established music festivals worldwide, it is still in a start-up phase. Like most music festivals, GMLSTN JAZZ is entangled in an intricate network of associates, co-associates, as well as public and private sponsors, all with their corresponding resources and intentions. It is a non-profit association and thus highly dependent on volunteers.

Being a new player in the music festival scene creates a fair amount of uncertainty. One source of uncertainty is the struggle to find the right funding members – and occasionally to even find enough funding to kick off the festival. The festival committee members describe this as a balancing act between necessities and keeping the festival's main aesthetic principles intact; it is the idea of doing what was planned, with the right motifs, without too many compromises.¹⁵ However, the festival must generate enough revenue to keep growing.

Given the festival is still in a start-up phase, the committee has put a good deal of effort into articulating their notions of what will happen over time, as they must convince their partners the festival is more than a one-off event or, in this case, a three-year phenomenon. The key term is longevity and the ability to demonstrate long-term strategies.

Commercial partners, who realize festivals are risky businesses, demand rewards in return for assuming this risk. Commitment from sponsors, write sociologists Edward J. Lawler and Jeongkoo Yoon, is one of the main challenges for new festivals (Lawler & Yoon 1996). GMLSTN JAZZ, alongside other smaller-scale festival initiatives, evidently shares some of the same struggles that contemporary start-up companies suffer.¹⁶ Of great concern is not the first instance of sponsorship but rather converting these first-time sponsors into continuing relationships. Furthermore, the committee must gauge the degree to which sponsors can tolerate transformation. What if the festival's focus shifts over time? What happens if key members of the committee quit or if/when the artistic director hands the task over to somebody else?

¹⁴ Report from the GMLSTN JAZZ project group.

¹⁵ Notes from committee meeting, 2016-04-11.

¹⁶ See, for example, Jordan, JF (2015): *Innovation, Commercialization, and Start-ups in Life Sciences*. Pennsylvania: CRC Press.

Backing the GMLSTN JAZZ festival is a whole range of sponsors. Apart from commercial partners – for example within the local tourist economy – the festival is also backed by state-owned partners. One example is Musikverket (Statens musikverk), whose fundamental mission is to:

... Promote a wide-ranging musical offering throughout the country, distinguished by excellence and artistic regeneration, and to preserve and bring to life theatre, dance and music heritage.¹⁷

Having such a partner raises unavoidable questions regarding jazz music and cultural heritage. Whatever genres GMLSTN JAZZ might be filed under – which musical direction they wish to take – the festival is linked to a shared heritage foundation. Setting aside a theoretical discussion of cultural heritage, both GMLSTN JAZZ and Musikverket share the belief that jazz music is important.

The partnership with the aforementioned Göteborg & Co is of a slightly different nature. Göteborg & Co merely hopes that the festival can be a propellant for the tourism economy. Fredrik Sandsten, head manager of music and events, says:

We hope that the festival can give Gothenburg a new jazz identity. We're already the indie rock town, we've got hip hop and reggae and so on... If jazz can be added to our musical map, we're eager to help.¹⁸

Sandsten also stresses that the partnership with the festival is limited. At some point, the festival will have to stand on its own two feet. Their primary focus is viability, where jazz is but one of many genres that require representation. He continues:

Well, jazz music must be represented. Especially here in Gothenburg, where people collaborate no matter what musical genre they belong to. We also have great institutions educating new musicians, so there's a constant flow of people.¹⁹

These examples show the degree to which a sponsor's intentions can vary. While Musikverket is concerned with questions regarding heritage, Göteborg & Co is interested in polishing Gothenburg's musical trademark and fueling the tourism economy. These two intentions are not necessarily contradictory, but they raise awareness of the ways in which a phenomenon – in this case a jazz festival – embodies more than what might first meet the eye.

¹⁷ <http://musikverket.se/om-musikverket/?lang=en>, 2016-08-17, 12:59.

¹⁸ Interview with Fredrik Sandsten, Göteborg & Co, 2016-03-21.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The festival committee is situated in an office belonging to one of its initial sponsors, Fastighetsägare i Gamlestaden (Property Owners of Gamlestaden), which consists of a partnership between 40 local property owners. Their goal is to transform, promote, and grow the district so that it will become an attractive city district.²⁰ Within local politics, Gamlestaden is often engaged in questions regarding redevelopment, namely how local initiatives are looking to transform the area to remove less desirable elements. Fastighetsägare i Gamlestaden's spokesperson Helena Holmberg said:

In 2001, when we were established, people fled from Gamlestaden. They felt anxious and didn't want their children to be raised here.²¹

The first part of the festival name, GMLSTN, is an innovative abbreviation of Gamlestaden which partially indicates where the festival takes place. The festival is now spread out over several stages in Gothenburg. The one constant, however, is the cultural heritage site Kvibergs Kaserner,²² which is close to Gamlestaden and which, during the 2016 installment of the festival, housed some of the festival's headlining acts. However, Gamlestaden is still the current, symbolic epicenter of the festival. Staying in the area long-term is not a requirement for committee members. In the middle of May 2016, during the aftermath of the festival, the committee stated that they were willing to look for alternatives.²³

Naturally, Property Owners of Gamlestaden want the festival to remain in the area and make it a cornerstone of the district's development, as was Eric Arellano and the rest of the committee's initial idea. In an interview, spokesperson Helena Holmberg expressed a wish for the festival not only to remain (for the two nights at Kvibergs Kaserner), but to expand in the area – all with Gamlestaden in mind.²⁴ Holmberg's wish was to move the festival even closer to Gamlestaden's core district, which would be the same as leaving Kvibergs Kaserner.

Apart from the two nights at Kvibergs Kaserner, the 2016 installment of GMLSTN JAZZ took place on no less than 17 stages. The venues included a suburban church, a theater, a cultural center, and several jazz clubs and night clubs. In other words, the festival was dispersed around town. Kvibergs Kaserner is close to Gamlestaden and is but one piece of a much larger festival jigsaw puzzle.

²⁰ <http://helagamlestaden.se/om-fastighetsagare-i-gamlestaden/>, 2016-08-04, 15:10.

²¹ <http://direktpress.se/goteborg/Nordost/Nyheter/Upprustningen-av-Gamlestaden--intebara-positivt/>, 2016-08-16, 12:45.

²² https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kvibergs_kaserner, 2016-08-09, 14:15.

²³ Committee meeting, 2016-05-16.

²⁴ Interview with Helena Holmberg, Property owners of Gamlestaden, 2016-04-05.

The jigsaw puzzle that constitutes the GMLSTN JAZZ festival involves not only economical partners (i.e., sponsorships) but also non-economic collaborations (i.e., the festival committee served as bookers and/or promoting agents, without (immediately) generating revenue for the festival). One such example is the festival's collaboration with the cultural center Oceanen.²⁵ Individuals within the committee's extended network work at Oceanen, and no less than three events took place at Oceanen in 2016. This collaboration illustrates that festivals in their start-up phase also use their personal networks for non-economic associations, as they require partnerships that go beyond economic partnerships. One might regard it as a form of prolonged marketing, a kind of collaboration culture with expectations of future developments of the festival, or simply as a one-off friendly gesture.

The festival program

Aside from where the festival takes place (or where the committee members believe it will end up), a key component of the work is putting together the festival program. Although the initial idea was to involve local acts (i.e., tying the Gothenburg jazz scene together), the committee also wanted to create their own niche. The aforementioned propellant, namely the idea of bringing modern jazz to light, came almost simultaneously. Focusing on modern jazz, regardless of the musical genres it borders, felt like a necessity, as it was musical content that were either rare or non-existing at local clubs.

One might say that the GMLSTN JAZZ festival, in this particular regard, is bisectional. On the one hand, the festival might be perceived as a promotor. On the other hand, it cannot only be seen as a promotor. It needs its own content to be able to differentiate itself and thus to be regarded as a festival.

For the committee members, modern jazz equals jazz music with far-ranging influences such as pop, hip-hop, and even punk music. Jazz music, Eric Arellano says:

... Is always influenced by other musical genres. But we tend to forget that. Some say that's jazz, others say no way, that is not jazz. One could argue about it in time without end.²⁶

The committee members all appear to agree on this point: they are not interested in discussing what jazz is or is not. Instead, as a modern jazz festival, they strive to extend the borders of the genre. The emphasis is on keeping a jazzy vibe, even when mixed with other musical genres and sounds, which –

²⁵ <http://oceanen.com/>, 2016-09-12, 13:43.

²⁶ Interview with Eric Arellano, 2015-10-29.

for the less initialized – might not be fully self-explanatory. Apparently, jazz requires its share of know-how.

The 2016 festival program included several bands and names tied to different genres within the borders of jazz. One example is the subgenre free jazz²⁷, which was presented at an event that was a collaboration with the well-renowned jazz club Brötz. Another example is an event at the prominent jazz venue Nefertiti that featured vocal jazz. A third example is an event at the Gothenburg municipal theater featuring a future soul²⁸ quartet. At the cultural center Oceanen, the range of events included a folk music trio performing modal music, a band playing jazzy pop, and a refined indie-rock act. The unifying factor in the program is not necessarily the musical content performed, but rather the artists and their individual connections to jazz music and to the festival committee.

During the week of fieldwork it became clear that some acts were likely in the program because of their connections to committee members, regardless of whether or not they had an obvious connection with the jazz scene. Among jazz aficionados, some eyebrows must have been raised.

Discovering the festival

Due to the fact that the 2016 festival took place on 17 stages, following GMLSTN JAZZ was not an easy task. This section provides a presentation of a selection of events that took place during the week-long festival.

The 2016 kick-off took place at a second-hand shop called Lokalen GBG. This event was a collaboration between the owners of the shop and the festival committee, who knew each other from before. The shop owners had just moved to new facilities and the premises was relatively empty, thus making it ideal for such an event. Some items were present, including an old Tandberg reel-to-reel recorder, musical instruments, records, and other decorations connoting music.

The kick-off was a semi-secret opening ceremony. It attracted approximately 150 visitors, a group consisting primarily of people in their mid-to-late twenties and early thirties. The stage was located in one of the corners of the main room (see image on page 19). The small PA system and the carpets marked the borders of the stage. The band consisted of artistic director Eric Arellano, Johan Hjalmarsson, and Martin Olsson, and it played three sets while people fetched free beers from festival sponsor Brooklyn Brewery Sweden.

The festival decoration, henceforth referred to as “props”, consisted of the festival banner and green festival programs. These props were a low-key way of showing that the festival now had begun.

²⁷ In some cases merged with the genre avant-garde

²⁸ https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Future_Soul, 2016-09-08, 16:44.



Trio for the night. Eric Arellano with committee member Johan Hjalmansson and musician Martin Olsson. Photo: the author.

The festival banner, the programs, and the description of the event on the Facebook page²⁹ were the only signs that the event was a part of the festival. Nothing was announced over the PA system and the festival program remained anonymous for those who did not care to pick one up. Being there, it was difficult to tell whether or not the guests were jazz aficionados or merely interested in the social aspects of the event. Guests were offered a couple of free beers and the event was labeled a form of after-work entertainment that had a guest list.



Beer and festival programs provided a low-key announcement for the festival. Photo: Brooklyn Brewery Sweden.

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/events/1602001830118372/>, 2016-09-01, 11:09.

The official festival kick-off was set for the 23rd of April, with a concert put on by the Swedish quintet Oddjob at a venue called Folkteatern. The group performed several tracks from their latest album “Folk” (released on Caprice records in 2015), an album commissioned by the aforementioned Statens Musikverk.³⁰ The album consisted of tracks influenced by Nordic siren calls and herding music, which were collected from Statens Musikverk’s division Svenskt Visarkiv³¹, and could be interpreted as a way of merging traditional Swedish folk music with improvised jazz. The album, given its intimate link to Svenskt Visarkiv (an archive consisting of both field recordings and sheet music), could be seen as a way of revitalizing cultural heritage. The record is described as a homage to Swedish jazz musician Jan Johansson who was commissioned to arrange Swedish folk music for a radio broadcast in 1965.³²

The festival kept its anonymity within the premises, apart from a poster outside and its green programs. Folkteatern is a well-established venue, hosting both live musical acts and theatrical performances. However, little was done to mark that the event was part of the festival program. Even the subtle festival banner, as seen in the picture from Lokalen GBG, was absent. The event could easily have been a regular event at Folkteatern.



Oddjob playing on stage at Folkteatern (in short “Folk”) on opening night.
Photo: the author.

³⁰ <http://musikverket.se/artikel/oddjob-gor-jazz-av-folkmusik/>, 2016-08-25, 14:14.

³¹ <http://musikverket.se/svensktvisarkiv/?lang=en>, 2016-08-24, 13:01.

³² <http://www.oddjob.cd/>, 2016-10-11, 20:39.

At nearly the same time, a VIP-only event was held at Stadsteatern, the municipal theater of Gothenburg, which was followed by performances from the bands Juniper Tree and Hiatus Kaiyote. PM Jönsson, reporter at the local paper Göteborgs-Posten (GP), commented that the performances on the 23rd were great but that they all lacked a festival atmosphere. In the review Jönsson writes:

Gathering everything under the same roof creates a special atmosphere, with different styles and genres and an audience that attends several concerts. That's not the case with 17 different venues, tickets sold separately, and concerts colliding with each other. Sure, it's good to exercise, but I miss the festival sensation.³³

PM Jönsson's impression was evidently shared with other members of the audience. After the event at Folk, a short interview was conducted with audience member Maria (33). She attended the concert by coincidence, but was very impressed with the performance. However, she did not realize that the event at Folkteatern was part of a continuous jazz festival. Maria soon started to chat about her experience with music festivals and the type of atmosphere she expected. There is something about connectivity, she said, that is more than the artists and bands – even within the same genre – being linked in a festival program. Maria says:

On the one hand, it's a good thing that jazz enters all kinds of stages... It might be gainful for the genre. Still, for me, it would have been more exciting going somewhere specific, to a festival zone. Typically there's a distinguished festival area. A location. That might be it, really. Then there's this thing about Gothenburg. Is Gothenburg really a jazz city? Hm. Stockholm is, but...³⁴

On several occasions during the field work, questions were raised regarding what makes a festival. Theoretically, this is not an easy question to answer, but it is an interesting one, given that audience members of GMLSTN JAZZ – expressed a lack of a certain festival atmosphere. Swedish ethnomusicologist Owe Ronström writes:

There is no generally accepted typology of festivals (Getz 2010:2, Mackley & Crump 2012:16f). From a North European perspective, there are several easily distinguishable types of musical events that are labelled festivals. One, especially common in the field of rock and pop, presents many acts on a few large stages over a rather short period of

³³ <http://www.gp.se/1.199657>, 2016-08-14, 10:23. Excerpts translated from Swedish to English.

³⁴ Interview with Maria at Folkteatern, 2016-04-23.

time (often a weekend) and in a limited, often fenced, space (Ronström).

A limited, fenced space was not present during the major part of the GM-LSTN JAZZ festival. The event that comes closest to what Maria and reporter PM Jönsson seek is the event at Kvibergs Kaserner. For two nights, the festival resembles something they both are trying to seize, namely a festival typology “especially common in the field of rock and pop” (ibid).

At cultural center Oceanen, located at Stigbergstorget on the opposite side of town from Gamlestaden, three events took place during the week-long festival. The first featured local jazz-pop group Judiths, followed by a panel discussion with jazz singer Britt Ling, composer Malin Wättring, and musician Thilini Guldbrand. The panel members discussed what drives them as (jazz) musicians, as well as intentions behind their musicianship (specifically, what makes it jazz). The event was announced as a night of equality, a theme that also summed up the discussion. The intention was to raise awareness of equality-on-stage and how women in music are often marginalized, including in jazz.

As with other events, the link to the festival was largely absent, apart from a few flyers and festival programs spread out on the tables and at the bar. At this event, the one exception was the occasion during the panel discussion when the festival was mentioned on the PA system. When attending this particular event and the events before, I began to feel that absence of a festival sensation expressed by reporter PM Jönsson and interviewee Maria. What would perchance have passed unnoticed was now obvious due to the lack of an attempt to, either visually or aurally, tie the festival together.



Panel discussion at the cultural center Oceanen. From left to right: Amanda Larsson, Malin Wättring, Thilini Guldbrand, and Britt Ling. Photo: the author.

The second event at Oceanen featured independent artist Vera Vinter from Stockholm. The premises looked identical to the night before. The third event featured three bands, all of which could be placed within the folk music scene. The event was a collaboration between GMLSTN JAZZ and the music magazine Lira,³⁵ who had previously been associated with the Falun Folkmusik Festival (Falun Folk Music Festival). The magazine, its readers, and its listeners played a bigger role than the festival during the course of the event. Even the aesthetical props were more prominently displayed.



Trio Samara playing at the cultural center Oceanen. Photo: the author.

Trio Samara, portrayed in the above picture, held a detailed résumé of the history of so-called modal music. The link between modal music, GMLSTN JAZZ, and jazz music in general required prior knowledge about the ways in which modal music influenced American jazz giants Miles Davis and John Coltrane³⁶ in the 1950's and 1960's. The event was not presented as a cultivating event, but could indeed be seen as such.

It is evident that, especially since the 1990s, festivals have become a major form for cultural production over the Western world. Scholars from many disciplines now increasingly refer to this development as “festivalization”, a term pertaining not only to music but to society at large, including food, sports, tourism, city development (Ronström 2016:72).

³⁵ <http://www.lira.se/>, 2016-10-12, 09:53.

³⁶ Whose recordings/albums from said years are often filed under the category *modal jazz*.

The above quote by ethnologist Owe Ronström suggests that – even when not explicitly tied together – individuals behind a festival initiative will try to emphasize that their event is more than an everyday event; it is something to differentiate the visitors’ experience of what is taking place. One such mechanism could be a festival pass, which was missing at GMLSTN JAZZ. What about a backstage pass and press accreditation?

Perhaps one has to, as in the case of the GMLSTN JAZZ festival, disregard such festival symbols and rethink the concept of what makes and accentuates a (modern) festival. The term festivalization, in the above quote, clearly points away from fixed meanings and symbols. Even though the examples listed above involve areas other than music, which points to a festivalization of all kinds of communal areas, it may be more fruitful to regard GMLSTN JAZZ as a remodeled festival. Under this way of thinking, GMLSTN JAZZ can be viewed as a series of events gathered under the same umbrella. Regardless, in terms of marketing, announcing the festival (the series of events as a festival) during each event demands very little effort and could potentially tone down the focus on what the festival “lacks.”

During the week-long festival, the aforementioned Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival was included in the program. One event was held at the S/S Marieholm, a steamboat, where the Classic Jazz Festival members arrange several events on a monthly basis.³⁷ A handful of ubiquitous green programs for the GMLSTN JAZZ festival were present at the event. However, besides these programs, there was little to indicate that the event was held in collaboration with the festival.



Swing Brothers playing at the S/S Marieholm. Photo: GMLSTN JAZZ (Instagram).

³⁷ For more information on the Gothenburg Classic Jazz, see Merja Liimatainen’s report “Town by the Riverside.” <http://gup.ub.gu.se/publication/234871>, 2016-09-13, 15:14.

In contrast to all of the other events held during the week-long festival, the two nights at Kvibergs Kaserner (which could be considered the highlight) presented the festival in an entirely different manner. The festival, with all its uniform green props, was visible throughout.

The event was held in two buildings at Kvibergs Kaserner: the Cantina (Kantinen) and the Artillery Hall (Pjäshallen). Kicking off the first night was Pol Belardi's Force, with an introduction by artistic director Eric Arellano, followed by the headlining act Chris Potter and others.

Arriving at Kvibergs Kaserner, it soon became clear that this was the main event where the committee could do their own thing and on their own terms. The letters GMLSTN JAZZ, cut out in foam, were present on the stage of the Cantina. Returning to the question of a festival sensation, I soon assumed that the decorations combined with the fact that the event was held in a limited area (albeit not one that was fenced off), answered many other festival-goers' expectations of what a festival looks and feels like.

The event included all the components that I perceived to constitute a festival. Being there, I involuntarily returned to the initial question regarding music festival chimeras.

“Even if the large festivals today are commercialized, standardized, globally formatted, they still carry a memory of having been alternative to the establish order, which explains some of the extraordinary social behavior that have developed in and around many festivals” (Ronström 2011:5).

Perhaps it is, as ethnologist Owe Ronström writes in the above quote, the term and its connotations that cause one to constantly criticize a festival in terms of what it is and what it lacks. The term “festival” carries memories, especially when it comes to music festivals.



Pol Belardi's Force conducting sound checks at the Kviberg Kaserner Cantina. Photo: the author.

Sitting on a chair in the Cantina at Kvibergs Kaserne, I couldn't help but wonder what it would look and feel like if GMLSTN JAZZ were held here entirely – not necessary for a whole week, but for more than two nights. Would people come? Would the name circulate as much as it is purported to do, due to all the collaborations within the city center? As stated earlier, the festival committee was told from the start that Gamlestaden and Kviberg Kaserne are problematic locations for getting people to come out. Although it is a matter of speculation, the collaborations might be just the propellant the festival needs, serving as promotional events that pull visitors towards Kvibergs Kaserne and the two final nights. I also felt compelled to reflect upon the term festivalization: were the other events in the city core that also served as a way of subtlety marketing and promoting the two nights out here?

Regardless, there remains the question of whom the festival attracts: the already initiated or the ones that like jazz but merely happened to be within the premises (as interviewee Maria commented after Oddjob's performance at Folkteatern). This is a question the festival committee must address, as they want to promote jazz to a broader audience yet must attract a certain number of visitors to break even.

In that sense, the GMLSTN JAZZ festival is not just in its start-up phase, but is also in a trial-and error-phase. They are still seeking to identify their audience, what attracts them, and which venues they would consider. Furthermore, they are still searching for what could be described as a core fundamental ambition: a question of what course the festival should take and, equally important, what is achievable.

Festival goers

During my fieldwork, I had the chance to talk to a couple of festival goers. The project also had an online survey available. Unfortunately, the survey received far fewer respondents than expected. However, the few survey respondents that took their time to answer helped us to further reflect upon how the festival was received.

In all these types of festivals the performances are loosely connected in time and space, by a common festival area, a theme, or simply by a common organization and PR (Ronström 2011:4).

The fact that the week-long festival was held on 17 different stages raised the question of festival chimeras. Chimeras might be explained both as an actual bodily experience of a festival, as well as perceptual and emotional symbols of this experience. Interviewee Maria, who did not even realize that the event at Folkteatern was part of the festival, said:

I'm not sure if I would even want to attend another concert after tonight's performance. I feel stuffed. It was intense, in a good way.³⁸

In other words, Maria would not have wanted to experience more live music that night. From that point of view, GMLSTN JAZZ appears to have made a wise decision in spreading the events out over the course of a week, and on different stages. Survey respondent number 4 agreed with Maria, but emphasized the loss of the sensation of a festival:

It's not like when you attend a festival held at the same place. At the same time, it engages different parts of the city and the festival program might be extended.³⁹

Survey respondent number 5 expressed similar sentiments:

I think it's good. You get the chance to really experience the city and how jazz music is spread throughout town.⁴⁰

Survey respondent number 1 preferred a more uniform festival with a limited festival area. Still, the respondent was not referring to the large stages. Jazz is synonymous with small-scale intimacy:

The premises cannot be too big. It's important to be close to the musicians. More often than not, jazz groups tend to disappear in larger settings.⁴¹

A dispersed festival has pros and cons, but since a majority of the informants described jazz as both intense and intimate, it is hard to see any advantages to bringing the 2016 acts to larger stages, which likely would be an effect of keeping the festival on limited grounds.

Accessibility was also a theme. Interviewee Maria described how jazz music in general is "unreachable" but much easier to reach at an event such as Oddjob at Folkteatern. Maria says:

For me, jazz is somewhat unreachable. For starters, instrumental jazz can be really dull. I'm always waiting for the lyrics. For the vocals. Secondly, it's a musical genre that's literally full of men, middle-aged, rather homogenous... A little elitist, too. I often think that the audience is full of musicians... Musicians playing for other musicians. It's almost

³⁸ Interview with Maria at Folkteatern, 2016-04-23.

³⁹ Online query, respondent no. 4.

⁴⁰ Online query, respondent no. 5.

⁴¹ Online query, respondent no. 1.

like one can tell just by looking at how they're listening. Everyone's so into it, absorbed by their own experience, introspective.⁴²

In this regard, dispersing the festival locations around the town of Gothenburg might provide a sensation of inclusion: the absence of a fenced, limited area might make goers feel more at ease. At least this is the case for Maria.

Marketing GMLSTN JAZZ

How does one market a jazz festival with emphasis on the 'modern'? What strategies are used to market a music festival with a touch of cool and hip? One approach is to initiate a collaboration with arts and communications agency Linderoths⁴³ to create a graphical trademark for the festival. While "jazz green" is not an established name in the scale of colors, it soon became an important part of aesthetic profile for GMLSTN JAZZ's programs and flyers.

In addition to the green programs and flyers, the committee and Linderoths developed the idea of using green pianos as a part of the festival's advertising. Each piano carried a sticker with a QR-code⁴⁴, through which people could obtain information about the festival. They could also play the piano. Also present on each piano was the dates for the festival. The first piano was placed in Gamlestaden, where the festival partially resides.



A green GMLSTN JAZZ piano at Drottningtorget in Gothenburg.
© Linderoths, www.linderoths.se

⁴² Interview with Maria at Folkteatern, 2016-04-23.

⁴³ <http://www.linderoths.se>, 2016-10-16, 15:20.

⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code, 2016-10-16, 15:42.

Apart from the collaboration with Linderoths, the committee members and their extended network possess a marketing attitude that can be described as slightly bohemian. The attitude might be considered the result of trying to bridge the gap between “artistic work and the economic need for self-management” (Eikhof & Haunschild 2006:1). Generally speaking, the committee maintains an easygoing attitude, which clearly affects how the festival is marketed.



A GMLSTN JAZZ festival poster behind casks of beer. Photo: the author.

On several occasions during the course of field work, that is before the festival started, the committee members stressed the need for distinct timeframes and advance planning. One surmises this is something they have yet still to achieve. As the quote on page six from the project group member illustrates, some still stress the need for advance planning. When asking about planning, I constantly received the answer that things could have been done earlier. I began to wonder if advanced planning is indeed desirable, or if it is merely a phrase. Without further follow-up, for example with the committees planning the 2017 festival, it is impossible to say whether this is about to change.

The present analysis is, in contrast, that there's two sets of reason behind the bohemian attitude. These might be described as twofold, thus analyzed on such terms. On the one hand, some cautions are clearly taken when it comes to marketing and promoting the festival.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the cautious strategies can be seen in the light of this bohemian marketing strategy, where there is a general notion that all matters concerning the festival, economic or

⁴⁵ This connects to the discussion of jazz diplomacy on page 22.

otherwise, will eventually solve themselves. There no doubt that putting on a festival requires hard work, and planning and putting things in motion surely requires a fair share of the committee member's time and energy. Nonetheless, a laidback aura surrounds the festival.

“The picture on page 29 illustrates a GMLSTN JAZZ festival poster behind casks of beer at the pub Holy Moly on Andra Långgatan. This kind of non-marketing was a common sight during the 2016 festival. However, it should not be seen as a “lazy” form of marketing, but one that was dependent on the conditions of each collaboration.”

Eventually, though, queries regarding the committee's marketing strategies lead back to a question of where: what part of GMLSTN JAZZ are we looking at? Is the focus directed towards any of the collaborative events, where the festival sometimes appears to be completely absent? Or is it directed towards the two nights at Kvibergs Kaserne, where the presence of festival is unmistakably apparent?

Still, one cannot escape the impression that things could have been done in a different manner. Presumably, some kind of temporary dominion present at the collaborative events could have provided a moderate and uniform way of showing that each event was part of the week-long festival.

When asked about GMLSTN JAZZ's visibility and marketing, interviewee Maria said:

I've not seen a thing, like posters on the tram, on social media... nothing. I barely knew the festival even existed.⁴⁶

In addition to the aforementioned sets of reasons, one has to remember what kind of festival GMLSTN JAZZ is. The festival is a non-profit initiative, a project the committee members run in their spare time. To sum it up, if GMLSTN JAZZ was a commercial profit-seeking festival, things would likely have looked different. Thus, the decision to keep the festival low-key is a strategic matter.

Observing the scales – jazz diplomacy

As a result of being a new player on the festival scene in general and the Gothenburg jazz scene in particular, the festival committee members expressed some attentiveness to avoiding territorial conflicts with any established local jazz clubs and venues. Arellano notes that Gothenburg has several jazz institutions where some communicational wariness is necessary. In some cases this seems to be a matter of the form of the collaborations – how recognition is made and promotion done - within the borders of the festival. During

⁴⁶ Interview with Maria at Folkteatern, 2016-04-23.

our week of fieldwork, an example of such was brought to light. One of the old clubs expressed that they did not want to risk being presented in a less significant manner than the festival itself; they wanted to play the leading part.

The idea of the GMLSTN JAZZ festival often seems to function as a promoter: the committee's own events happen at Kvibergs Kaserner, while the rest of the concerts (in both 2015 and 2016) are the result of collaborations. On the one hand, the festival is exactly what it advertises itself to be: a modern jazz festival. On the other hand, it can be perceived as an advertisement for the Gothenburg jazz scene as a whole, and is thus more correctly described as a joint network for the already-established clubs, players, and jazz aficionados.

Any musical association is, to some extent, defensive, as club members do not want to be run over by new initiatives, which leaves less for themselves. Therefore, questions of observing the scales, a form of jazz peacekeeping, are continuously present among committee members.

During interviews with the committee members, many described this as a matter of keeping an eye on scene balance: one would not want to make one of the scales too heavy. What happens if the festival unexpectedly – but within the borders of collaboration – becomes too dominant? This is, yet again, a matter connected to the fundamental idea of the GMLSTN JAZZ festival: what kind of festival is it? What does it want to be?

One also wonders if subtlety is a result of the festival committees' notion of being a modern jazz festival and how this statement therefore impacts the musical content. Perhaps there exists a fear of a clash between those venues who maintain a narrow or even conservative view on what "jazz is" and the festival as a platform for modernization – where jazz is combined with hip-hop, folk music, contemporary RNB, etc.⁴⁷ Soon it becomes, to denote Rodney Harrison's writings on cultural heritage, a matter of "connectivity ontologies" (Harrison 2015:27), which implies how different crowds seek to create different understandings of the past and present – and which pieces that are possible (or impossible) to combine.

⁴⁷ See Merja Liimatainen's report on the Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival, where opposing ideas of jazz are present. <http://gup.ub.gu.se/publication/234871-town-by-the-riverside-jazz-som-kulturarv-i-goteborg>, 2016-09-06, 15:00.

Expressing cultural heritage

Returning to the opening question of what form(s) of cultural heritage GMLSTN JAZZ (re)produces, one might initially give the response “not much at all.” However, by sorting out words of value (i.e., words with symbolic meaning continuously repeated within the festival network), a few interesting leads emerge. The word “modern,” which I’ve emphasized several times in the report, is an important lead. In relation to the cultural heritage discourse, it is obvious that the festival – through the word modern and its connotations – stresses their own contemporary position. In contrast to the Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival, for example, GMLSTN JAZZ is broadening the concept of jazz and what it can be.

Jazz music is unavoidably linked to UNESCO’s world heritage program, whether or not the attribution is accepted. GMLSTN JAZZ is, if only per association, linked to aspects of cultural heritage – to both a past and a future. However, apart from using the word modern and underscoring that jazz is somewhat marginalized in today’s musical landscape, the festival’s dialogue with cultural heritage is but implicitly expressed.

Returning to the second question, namely the ways in which cultural heritage is marketed within the borders of the festival, the answer is, yet again, somewhat indefinite. Lacking a historical precursor like the Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival (a past which is also embedded in the name), GMLSTN JAZZ operates without an explicit musical past.

Heritage is understood here as a series of diplomatic properties that emerge in the dialogue of heterogeneous human and non-human actors who are engaged in practices of caring for and attending to the past in the present (Harrison 2015:24).

However, if one accepts the above quote, one might say that GMLSTN JAZZ is not interested in the same kind of past that interests the Gothenburg Classic Jazz Festival. GMLSTN JAZZ is looking for rejuvenation rather than preservation to make jazz viable. In this regard, the term modern is in a close relationship with notions of the future: it is all about today and tomorrow.

The festival also shares a few attributes with the Stockholm Jazz Festival, among others. The Stockholm Jazz committee describes the ways in which a blend of genres is “an effort to put focus and add vitality to the genre.”⁴⁸ Stockholm Jazz features acts that jazz aficionados are likely reluctant to grant space within genre conventions. Still, there is some uniformity present both at GMLSTN JAZZ and the Stockholm Jazz Festival, which could be described

⁴⁸ <http://www.kultur.stockholm.se/default.asp?column=sokande&value=Stockholm+Jazz+Festival&id=19803&ptid=1956>, 2016-08-16, 14:43.

as tradition in the sense that featured acts keep at least one foot within one of the (sub)genres filed under the superior, but often vaguely defined, category “jazz.”

Returning to the third question, i.e., if cultural heritage is important to the festival committee, the answer is yes, and unavoidably so. By positioning itself against what is understood to be obsolete, the festival aims to create a contemporary understanding of what jazz can be.

By entering venues previously not linked to the jazz music scene, the festival tentatively creates and activates new understandings of the musical genre. Even though the strategies is subtle, perhaps even unintentional, the festival must be said to engage in productions of “different pasts and equally different futures” (Harrison 2015:28).

Concluding remarks

The GMLSTN JAZZ festival initiative can be interpreted on multiple levels. First and foremost, the initiative is, to paraphrase artistic director Eric Arellano, a way of gathering the Gothenburg jazz scene and its players and creating new opportunities to play. Secondly, by broadening the concept of jazz, the festival attempts to revitalize the genre. In this regard, GMLSTN JAZZ is also assembling the future: by emphasizing modern jazz yet remaining respectful towards the components of the past (while seldom declaring them), the festival is trying to market not only what jazz is, but what it can be, to a wider audience.

Thirdly, GMLSTN JAZZ is challenging cultural chimeras of what music festivals are and what they can be. By adopting a dispersed form, by leaving the fenced and limited areas, the festival is part of the broader transformation of festivals that ethnologist Owe Ronström has observed:

On the other hand festivals have become diversified. Today all kinds of calendar events, markets, meetings, feasts, religious and secular rituals, are more often than not called festivals (Ronström 2011:2).

GMLSTN JAZZ is not an easy festival to follow, nor is it an easy one to attend. However, that statement partly depends on one's expectations. GMLSTN JAZZ evidently shares several attributes with other kinds of festivals outside music and with the phenomena of festivalization in general. Keeping in mind the well-known death of music festivals⁴⁹, some type of transformation might ultimately be necessary for GMLSTN JAZZ's continued existence.

⁴⁹ See, for example, https://noisy.vice.com/en_us/article/the-golden-age-of-music-festivals-is-over, 2016-09-21, 13:09.

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Non-printed resources

- Interview with Eric Arellano, 2015-10-29.
- Interview with Fredrik Sandsten, Gothenburg & Co, 2016-03-21.
- Interview with Helena Holmberg, Property Owners of Gamlestaden, 2016-04-05.
- Interview with festival goer Maria at Folkteatern, Gothenburg, 2016-04-23.
- Chime's GMLSTN JAZZ online survey, 2016-04/05.

Field notes

2016-04-22, Mingle & kickoff at Lokalen GBG

2016-04-23, Oddjob at Folkteatern, Juniper Tree and Hiatus Kaiyote at Stadsteatern

2016-04-25, Panel discussion + Judiths (with guests) at Oceanen

2016-04-27, Lira Live – Modalt at Oceanen, Magda Mayas at Konstepidemin

2016-04-28, Bäckbrothers (Jazztivolì) at Holy Moly, Vera Vinter at Oceanen

2016-04-28, Gentlemen and gangsters at Speakeasy 2Lång

2016-04-29, Pol Belardi's Force, Kvibergs Kaserner

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