

## Polifonia WG4

Site visit in Rock City, Namsos, Norway

November 4 to 6, 2012

Participants : Raffaele Longo, Hans Ole Rian, Helena Maffli

### 1. Background

Namsos is a municipality of ca. 13,000 inhabitants, situated 160 km to the North of Trondheim in the Norwegian county of Nord-Trøndelag. Music-making and music education have an interesting history in Namsos, one of the most important trade centres in Mid-Norway.

The port of Namsos was destroyed and the city bombarded in 1940, during WWII. Seven saw mills were working in Namsos before WWII, and a lot of young men had to leave to earn their living, mostly as sailors. They returned back home in the 1950's with recordings and guitars, introducing American music - Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard - to Namsos. The « new » music became very popular among young people and had an enormous influence in this little town. Until then, folk music was the traditional music scene, but this was radically changed after rock' n roll hit Namsos. In the crossing-point between school bands, folk music and international rock' n roll, the expression « Trønderrock » was born, indicating a genre of rock music sung in local dialect, which has become a national phenomenon in Norway and a real brand for Namsos. It is important to know that music industry and export are significant economic factors in Norway

### 2. Culture industry in Norway

It is important to know that the culture industry and export are significant economic factors in Norway. In 2009, the culture industry employed about 4% of all employees in Norway, a total of 75,000 persons and 27,000 companies. From 2000 to 2009, the number of employees in culture industry increased by 50%. The strongest growth is in the smallest companies, at 201%.

The value of the culture industry in 2009 was 42 billion NOK (about 5,7 billion €). From 2000 to 2009, the average annual growth has been about 12%.

The estimated gross product of cultural industries is over twice as high as for agriculture and forestry, and over three times as high as for fishing and aquaculture. It is higher than the food and beverage industry and almost as high as the engineering industry. The cultural industries employ more than agriculture and fishing, over five times as much as in fishing and considerably more than in food and beverage industry.

*Artistic activity* is the culture industries' dynamic core. In the period 1996-2007, this group had the largest absolute and relative growth in employment. Employment in this sector has grown by nearly 125.8%, which is significantly higher than the overall employment growth in both cultural industries and in Norway. Estimated gross product for the arts has also nearly doubled in the period 1996-2007.

However, although growth in the artistic « core » is the greatest, the individual cultural worker does not necessarily make a significant salary. It is still just as tough to make a living as an artist as it was before, and requires more skills than ever – and not only cultural ones – to survive well.

### **3. Music Education in Namsos and Trøndelag**

A regional amateur symphony orchestra was founded in Namsos after WWII, as well as a private music school which became a public music and culture school in 1985. From 85 pupils, it grew rapidly to reach 1,000 (a large number in a municipality of 13,000 inhabitants!) and has a large educational offer, with focus on non classical music (musical, rock, pop, combined with dance and theatre ; frequent scenic performances in Namsos' impressive culture centre and in the region, « Saturday School » for talented pupils). In Trøndelag, students can continue in Higher Music Education in Trondheim (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU, BA and MA in music, profiles classical, jazz and church music) and Levanger (Nord-Trøndelag University College, HiNT, BA in music, profile « rhythm »music).

### **4. Rock City Namsos**

[www.rockcity.no](http://www.rockcity.no)

Since the 1960's, many famous Norwegian rock musicians started their careers in Namsos (see interview 5.2 below).

The history of the city's musical scene contributed to the political decision to establish in Namsos a resource centre for promoting professional pop and rock music, as well as an exhibition and action centre for Trønderrock, according to the following mandate of the Norwegian Parliament (2005):

*Rock City Namsos will be a resource centre for professional music. The centre shall be planned in such a way that it can offer new educational directions based on the sector's specific needs. It is intended to be an industry centre where the development of ideas, companies and expertise flourishes and professionalism prevails. It will also be a home to rock history, including a Trønderrock Museum and educational facilities.*

Rock City opened its doors in Namsos in November 2011 and shares space with the Rica Rock City Hotel. Though Rock City has its own projects, it also collaborates with other organizations and institutions. There are already several binding agreements with Performing Arts Health Norway (NUMI), the Nord-Trøndelag University College and Mid-Norway's Competence Network for Rhythmic Music (MINK). Active co-operation is necessary to achieve the objectives laid out in the mandate.

A close working relationship between Rock City and the entertainment industry plays a vital role in being able to identify needs and opportunities within the music industry. Since Rock City began, they have developed and implemented college courses, created meeting venues for the industry, held a national song-writing competition and initiated an annual comprehensive national rock scholarship.

Rock City can provide expertise, experience and organizational and practical tools to get a business started. It is an industry centre for companies with creative performing and

producing operations in rock and popular music, as well as other areas of entertainment industry. Rock City helps to develop and establish training in the technical organizational and musical disciplines of rock and popular music.

## **5. Program of the Site Visit**

The visit coincided with two national events : the Namsos Rock Festival and « 3M : Midt-Norsk Musikmesse », a conference with short seminars and intensive exchange intended to professionals in music business. The working group Polifonia attended both events, visited the Trønderrock Museum, the Rock City Recording Studio and conducted several formal interviews and engaged in extensive informal exchange. The Rica Rock City Hotel, the pride of Namsos Rock City where most participants to the events were accommodated, greatly facilitated the contacts and spontaneous encounters during the days of the visit.

## **6. Summaries of Interviews and some Informal Exchanges**

### **6.1 Terje Adde, Head of the Culture Department in Namsos Municipality (Interview)**

Terje Adde (TA) occupied a central role in the philosophy and implementation of the vision « Rock City » and NUMI. Founder and former director of the music and culture school in Namsos, he believes in the central role of music education in cultural life and industry. As head of the culture department for 14 years, his vision has been to « do with the whole community what we did with the culture school ». When asked about the secret of the success of this school, he answers : « We keep telling the kids that they are allowed to be good : they SHOULD be good ! ».

The idea of a « Trønderrock Museum » was first tested by a festival in Namsos, a huge success which gave wings to the dream to « make this national ». TA was member of a working group which travelled to the USA and Germany to visit other « rock cities » and to develop a plan in 2004, which was accepted. The political system started to run it, but « jealousies arouse in Trondheim and Oslo ». Finally, the following solutions were found: Trondheim got 'Rockheim', a national Rock Museum (opened in 2010 and run almost exclusively with state funding), Oslo a national library, Mo i Rana (directly south to the Arctic Circle) the archives and Namsos its Rock City. Namsos distinguishes itself as a competence centre for music industry. According to TA, Trondheim and Namsos were working well in building their respective conceptions of the « two Rock things », the Namsos principle being to « start where there are white spots, to pioneer projects and not double up what already exists ». These projects include : college courses (30 ECTS points, 30 students), crew formation for school drop-outs (12 students per year, with success), music performance training for social cases, and psychological services for artists.

Namsos Rock City is financed for 50% by public and 50% private funding, but « there is a deficit guarantee ». The Rica hotel chain built the Rock City Hotel next to the competence centre and to the museum : 30,000 visitors attended during the first year of its existence.

Future challenges?

*« The government asks us to be in the position to develop the occupation of young people in music business. We received state money and therefore have to fulfill the national expectations and focus on national tasks: health conference, 3M, song writing competition...Rock City Namsos was a crazy idea, but we have it here now ! »*

**6.2 Eivind Berre**, bassist and founder of the group D.D.E., head of department Rock City Namsos (Informal exchange)

Eivind's band D.D.E. is 20 years old, and the aim of the band members since the beginning was to make an honest living out of their music. To start, the City of Namsos gave them a subsidy of 250'000 NOK (33.500 €) to « run a business, but with an artistic vision ». According to Eivind, « Namsos Rock City is born out of this vision ».

The albums of D.D.E. have sold until 250,000 copies and the band has become immensely popular in Norway. « We are not academically trained musicians and the critics don't praise us, but people love us, listen to us and buy our music. If it was bad, would people buy it? They don't buy bad cheese either ».

One of the responsible actors of the resource centre, Eivind states that the co-operation with the University College in Levanger « has been a long battle ». On the edges of the M3 event, meetings took place on 4-5 November to develop future courses and meetings between Rock City and the Nord-Trøndelag University College.

*« Our entrepreneurship training is not conceptual but pragmatic ».*

**6.3 Terje Tranås**, manager of NUMI, Performing Arts Health Norway (Interview)

Terje Tranås (TT), dentist and musician, is a former keyboard player of Åge, « Norway's Bruce Springsteen », and former manager of Rock City. He introduced NUMI in 2008 as a pioneer (« people laughed !»), alerted by missing data and experience in the field of artists' health in Norway, as compared with sports (« Olympiatoppen », publicly funded and huge media coverage : [www.olympiatoppen.no](http://www.olympiatoppen.no)). « Why should a famous musician not have the same services as a famous football player ? »

TT suggests it was easier to introduce NUMI in Namsos than it would have been in Oslo, because proof already existed there that the arts, and music in particular, can lead to a successful and lifelong career. Norway has a vehicle to support companies, and D.D.E. was the first band to receive this state support. They fought prejudices (« You are not a company, you are a band ! »), used right arguments and proved that their business produces a return on investment to the state.

According to TT, 75,000 persons work in the cultural industries in Norway, but there are few figures on related medical services, contrary to eight other industrial branches. However, the University of Trondheim's Psychology Department has recently introduced a 3rd cycle in « Artisthelse », and a first PhD degree is expected in 2015.

NUMI is a private company situated in a wooden house at the port of Namsos, a medical centre owned by local doctors. A Norwegian foundation supports NUMI's scientific activities. Other activities are : health checks, counselling services for Norwegian artists (also by e-mail, for free), political advocacy on behalf of « NUMI becoming a part of the Norwegian health system », co-operation with the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo (training for school teachers and principals) and the music and culture schools (« teach the teachers »). TT is ambitious : « This is starting in Namsos, but should go into the

national education system. We want to be a part of the curricula in music education. This is possible in Norway, but we want to go international ».

A first national NUMI conference with 100 participants took place in Namsos on 1-2 November 2012 and was a success, according to TT. MFO, the Norwegian Musicians' Union, as well as 5-6 other organizations, supported this first event.

*« Industry needs water and electricity, but what does the music industry need ? The answer lies in Rock City : bands are like boats, Rock City a pier. The vision should be to develop the whole community through **my** company (=band). We have to create a new picture of the creative industry ».*

#### **6.4 Åsmund Prytz, manager of Rock City (Interview)**

What are future's plans and challenges for Rock City ?

ÅP : The governments' assignment is two-fold : create a competence centre for the music industry in Norway and run the Trønderrock Museum. The second task has dominated.

We have to look beyond this building and be more national, there is a lot of marketing to be done. *Adressavisen*, Norway's oldest daily paper, wrote : « Namsos is the right place for this » which means a lot, like a stamp saying « you guys are good ».

Namsos is a brand, but we need to be more national and less self-satisfied, because we need other people to push this. We have to be constructive, stop fighting and start working.

Pop is starting to be a part of cultural history (museums!). Some 30 years ago, these guys were only « making noise ». Now they are totally mainstream, although many of them have a hard time accepting this. Åge is the « Bruce Springsteen of Norway », but not necessarily a top musician. There are a lot of very good young instrumentalists, though they lack strong personalities or good song-writing skills.

There is real potential in music education to develop 1) song-writing (cf. Scandinavian crime literature !), 2) all technical aspects like backline, stage, fronthouse, sound and lightning (boys, also high-school drop-outs in Sweden and Norway) and 3) courses in event planning. We already co-operate with university colleges and provide facilities in Rock City for these courses.

When a WG member suggests the importance of informal and life-long learning in such training, ÅP responded "It is not easy to institutionalize informal learning, but we might try."