

CONTEXT ANALYSIS – GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

Political, economic and social background of the country\local area and general current challenges

In the past ten years, the most obvious political change is the swing from center-left to center-right. With the rise of populist party, Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna), in 2010, we have witnessed a fast growth of its popularity. Sweden had been governed two terms by the conservative coalition (Alliansen), and it has shifted Swedish politics to another direction. With Sweden Democrats' success, a new page of immigration and ethnic relations, might finally established itself in the party system. Until recently, the center-left (Socialdemokraterna) is re-elected and forms a coalition parliament. The main challenge is in Sweden as everywhere else in Europe: the appearance of populist party that is disrupting the known balance among existing parties. Sweden Democrats, an anti-immigration party, has its root in the countryside. Contrasting to the supporters of left and center-left are mostly situated in the city. While Sweden Democrats holds a 10 to 20 percent presence in the parliament, neither center-left or center-right (Moderaterna) party is able to form a majority governance. Instead, current governability is more fragile and easy to crumble. With the rising popularity of Sweden Democrats and the recently scandals of IT leaks¹, the countability of the current governance is questionable and under threat. The incorporation of influx of newly arrivals into the labor market has not been successful. There are two foreseeable paths to solve the current fragile coalition: center-left party forms a "grand coalitions" as Germany does, or the center-right party teams up with Sweden Democrats. The later has proven to be a poll disaster when the center -right tried approaching Sweden Democrats. Overall, the political challenge of Sweden is to find out a way to strengthen the coalition so that the stability of the governance is not undermined.



 $^{^{1}\} https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sweden-securityleak/swedish-pm-calls-potential-it-leak-disaster-and-risk-to-country-idUSKBN1A926F?il=0.$

As for the city Gothenburg, it situated on the west coast of Sweden. Despite having the biggest harbor in Scandinavia, the urban policy of the city has shifted from trading and shipping to, as the Gothenburg City describes itself "a city of meetings and events" on its homepage. Furthermore, shifting focus to knowledge production and high-tech development are the main developing goals of the city. There is a constant lack of residential flats and housing in the city which has prompt the council to collaborate with real esters to build more flats to accommodate the current situation. However, the process of acquiring land designated for the newly built flats has caused gentrification of the city periphery. The aftermath of gentrification has been widely spread and consequently sparks fervent public and academic discussions and critique.

The often-referred Nordic model has featured a generous universal welfare state by taxing through a comparatively high-income tax so that it is distributed across the society. Furthermore, Sweden has been referred to the world in the past as a model of integration and a model of social justice. However, one whole week of civil unrest in May 2015 in the suburb outside Stockholm has shaken most Swedes out of that complacency. Many experts have seen this as an inevitable situation even for relatively affluent, well-functioning society under the European financial crisis. What happened in Husby, a small fringe town made up of 85% of foreign background residents and more than one third of the young people are unemployed is the miniature of the model come under questions. This incident has its root in the 2008 financial crisis. The economically weaker portion of the population suffered its aftermath. The governmental reform and tax breaks went to the affluent class while the unemployment benefits and healthcare subsidies are cut for these people. Low prospect of finding works within the community led to the stagnation of development. The civil unrest was ignited by the police shooting death of a 69-year-old immigrant out of the reason of self-protection. The long brewing issue of failure interaction and discrimination have exploded with extreme violence and destruction.





Despite the humanitarian act Sweden perform² in the aid of Syrian civil war, the tension has generated and helps the populist party to gain ground and consequently become one of the major political parties by 2017.

The National Operations Department, NOA (as part of Swedish police force) defines 53 particular vulnerable areas as the areas are difficult to manage and maintain its safety: 15 of them are especially worthy of concerned. NOA has mentioned these areas have separately greatly from the mainstream Swedish society. Religious extremism and criminal gangs are often at presence. Among these areas, Gothenburg, one of the most segregated cities in Sweden, has 6 out of total 15. There are many small pockets of communities in Gothenburg's suburb are experiencing the social challenge that is brought together under the name of immigration and integration.

Sweden has oriented its economy on exported goods/services; it is open with extensive foreign trade which has been well incorporated internationally; in another word, Sweden is highly dependent on the global trade. This also means that if a global financial crisis is accompanied with an international economic downturn, Swedish economy would definitely suffer a significant impact. To illustrate how Swedish economy is highly depended on the international market, we underline that the proportion of Swedish export has increased from 20 percent to 40 percent by 2007. Plus, the market funding which is not based on the form of deposit has increased substantially over the years³. All these facts indicate that Swedish economy has inseparable ties with the outside world.

The most recent economic crisis happened in the early 90s and resulted from the economic bubble and excessive lending from the banks. Sweden, comparing with most countries, has not suffered so greatly during the financial crisis. The impact is felt less acutely at home while recession has left a lifelong imprint of the others. This is linked to its previous learnt lesson in the 90s. The financial crisis in the 90s shared a similar trait with that of the UK, Spain and Ireland. Swedish banks were over lending to irresponsible consumption, which was rather mild if compared to other nations. Still, the banking crisis was rescued by the government, and especially central banks, which took

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 $^{^2}$ In 2015, Sweden has taken in more refugees per capita than most European countries.

³ Reinhart C. M. and Rogoff, K. S. (2008). Is the 2007 U.S. Subprime Crisis So Different? An International Historical Comparison. *American Economic Review*, 98, 2, 339-344.

extreme measures to secure the stability of the nation. The banks overstretched themselves and lend

unconditionally to investment, such as Baltic economic investment. The reason why Sweden

dodged its downfall is simply because the scale of local economies and careful management of

government's debt. Plus, Sweden has stayed out of the euro zone so Swedish krona would not to be

affected directly. At the same time, politicians have come together to formulate regulations aiming

to keep the exchange rate stable. However, Sweden's economy is heavily dependent on export and

the global market. The crisis in the 90 has served as a wakeup call for politicians to form consensus

on regulations. The Swedish National Bank and the National Debt Office have taken a number of

measures to implant fiscal sustainability in order to stabilize and reduce the negative impact of the

possible future financial crisis.

However, the banking crisis in the 90s is relatively local limited for Scandinavians. On the other

hand, the 2008 financial crisis is a global one, spreading over internationally. While the 90s crisis is

linked with credits losses and the downfall of property market, the more recent one is due to

banking operation. Despite the central bank has taken aggressive measures, the economical buffer

zone created is no longer protecting Swedish economy. As Sweden has ever more connected its

economy with the world, it results harder to grow out of crisis.

Migration and refugee situation and measures taken by the government, NGOs and other

organizations

Basic facts on migration, asylum seekers and refugees

There are differences in towns and cities when it comes to relocate the arrival of the new comers.

Also, the proportion of public and private accommodation varies from place to place. Take the

municipality of Boden, located in northern Sweden for example: it received 1670 asylum applicants

relocated in 2016. Most of them are in public asylum accommodation center (1500) and some (66)

in private housing situations. Furthermore, there are unaccompanied minors who are placed in

either special housings or young people's homes or host families. On the same year, the city of

Gothenburg received 5,883 asylum applicants. Most of them (4,145) are in private housing

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arrangements, 164 of them are placed in public asylum accommodation centers, while 1,574

unaccompanied minors are placed in the young people's homes (HVB-hem) or host families

(familjehem).

On the other hand, Human Right Watch in Sweden has pointed out several points in 2016 for

further improvement. Some children had experienced sexual violence or had not received suitable

support despite Swedish health care provides arrival screening for mental and physical health needs.

Also, we underline the failure to prioritize the vulnerable unaccompanied children. The failure of

guardianship system has also delayed children's access to school and support. The guardianship and

overseeing the living arrangement are not directly directed by the national level. All the local

municipalities have to deal with it to its own measures. As a result, the relevant data/information of

each local municipalities are not available to policy makers.

On the other hand, Swedish government has used the existing shelters to accommodate the influx of

newly arrived so that they were not detained at the arrivals. With unaccompanied children in mind,

the government has appointed the Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis to evaluate the

care provided by foster families and assessment in school for every newly arrived student.

Policies and actions on the national and local level

This high portion of private accommodation can be explained by reasons such as the friends and

family of the asylum seekers or private initiatives taking them in, plus the local government partial

rent subsidies to homes who are willing to accept asylum applicants into their houses and

apartments.

When the unaccompanied minors and children of asylum applicants arrive in Sweden, they should

be enrolled into local schools within one month. However, with the influx of monthly arrival of

asylum seekers, the reality of waiting time is much longer. Taking the example of the municipality

of Boden in northern Sweden, it would take up to 5 months to process the incoming of children.

There are various aspects of challenges the local government is facing, such as finding resources in

schools and recruiting extra teachers to cope with the influx. With the goal of spreading these

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children evenly to various local primary and middle schools, the local government would like to start the integration process from the beginning.

The current arrangement in Gothenburg has led to a situational difficult dilemma, since many of the asylum applicants have sought accommodation with their friends and relatives who have already lived in segregated communities where most pupils don't use Swedish as their first language. Furthermore, the unaccompanied minors between the age of 14 to 17 require further academic assistance while some of them required psychological support. This means that the local government would require rearranging resources and recruit for the help. Hence, there is agreement between different districts within Gothenburg to shuttle these children across districts to schools that have significantly less asylum applicants.

Main actors / stakeholders dealing with migration

Throughout Swedish history, other than the massive immigration in the mid of nineteenth century to North America, the nation itself had maintained rather homogeneous until recent decades. A dramatic shift has begun after World War II. From the post war era, immigrants came from neighboring countries, such as Denmark, Norway and the Baltic countries. Following the shortage of labor after war, Sweden had begun an import immigration country from Southern Europe countries. Despite Sweden stopped labor immigration, another flow of immigration of family reunification came a decade after. During the past thirty years, immigration is mostly consisted of asylum seekers from Iran, eastern Europe, middle eastern countries and some African countries. Sweden has reactivated the labour immigration in 2008 with relatively loose qualification which only requires meeting employers' requirement. Under these waves of immigration, the constellation of population has rapidly changed. More than 20% of the current population is of foreign descent⁴. This is quite an astounding fact since Sweden has never been a colonial country and its population used to be culturally homogeneous.

⁴ Swedish Institute, *This is Sweden*, Fact Sheet FS 6, May 4th, 2009.



In the autumn of 2015, Swedish authorities were not prepared for the influx of Syrian refugees. Ever since then, the international crisis has generated internal tension which has reached to a new height. In the beginning of the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, because of its urgency, all Syrian asylum seekers were granted temporary permits. According to the Swedish Migration Agency⁵, the number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden has maintained roughly the same since 2016, while the applications of asylum seeking have dropped. This is due to the EU deal with Turkey, border control with Balkans and internal ID check within the Schengen area. There are also asylum seekers coming from several African countries but due to the restricted border control and regulations, they are not the main refugees accepted in Sweden.

A contingency plan of accepting 38,000 asylum seekers is going to be carried out next year. The unaccompanied minors who arrived between 2015 and 2016 would receive decisions this year after a long delay of age assessments. The forecast of asylum seekers of 2017 and 2018 is estimated between 25,000 to 45,000. Estimated more than 30,000 people will return to their home countries because of the failure of proving their status or intentionally hide information of other existing family members who have been residing in Sweden. Swedish government has consequently proposed new measures which give the police more power to inspection workplaces in order to send illegal immigrants back to their home countries. A tougher immigration rule has been implemented: family reunification rule is temporarily tightened and only temporary three-year residency is issued instead of the previous permanent residency. Furthermore, only those who are granted three-year permits are entitled to family reunification. In practice, very few of those people are able to reunite with their family. Within the parliament, the Center Party has voted against the rule. This implement is also highly criticized by NGOs and charity groups.

Gothenburg, on the other hand, received 4.6% of newly arrivals between 2016 to 2017. It is far lower than the national average, since most of refugees are placed temporarily in the rural municipalities/ counties which have shrinking population due to lack of job opportunities. Within a few years, most of the refugees would be moving into Sweden's three major cities.



⁵ Forecast: Continued stable growth in the number of asylum seekers in Sweden. (n.d.). Retrieved January 17, 2018, from https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/News-archive/News-archive-2017/2017-08-01-Forecast-Continued-stable-growth-in-the-number-of-asylum-seekers-in-Sweden.html.



Housing has always been an issue in Gothenburg. Under the Act of Swedish Resettlement Program, the local municipalities are obliged to find access for those refugees who have been granted residency to stay. Around 3300 refugees are estimated to be settled into housing system, according to Gothenburg city annual report⁶, while unaccompanied children are leveled out to regional schools and SFI, Swedish language learning program for foreigners.

According to a government report⁷ published in 2015 saying that the early information could be analysed and understood according to the scale of arrivals, the government could have been more prepared. Furthermore, the documentation of the arrivals was not fully investigated, especially for refugee children not accompanied by their parents.

The development of Swedish immigration, overall, was more recent and more rapid than countries that have a long immigration history, such as UK and France. Furthermore, the vast majority of newcomers did not share any culture common ground with Swedish culture. So, the need for integration and narratives of belonging is needed. Speaking of a shared cultural cohabitation is in high demand in order to achieve social cohesiveness. Sweden, despite without a prior history of immigration, has developed integration policies since the 70s. From the early assimilation to multiculturalism, the policy is intended to grant immigrants' rights based on equality, freedom of choice and cooperation. In the beginning, these three qualities were understood as having the same rights and obligation as Swedish citizens and free to embody their own cultures. Later on, the focus has shifted to Swedish language training and vocational job accruing for the immigrants to adapt to their new host country. The result has pointed to a conclusion that Harald Runblom referred as "the established attitude was that immigrants should become Swedes."

In the recent decade, Ministry for Integration and Gender Diversity has created has contributed to build policies into another dimension. By then, the concept of diversity has become the norm which infiltrated in all aspects of governance. Integration policy has taken on another challenge which is identifying daily/ workplace discrimination and racism. With the riots and civil unrests in 2007 and

 $864 ea 834894 dad 1c/City_of_Gothenburg_annual_report_2016.pdf? MOD=AJPERES.$

⁷ http://www.regeringen.se/493a12/contentassets/e8c195d35dea4c05a1c952f9b0b45f38/att-ta-emot-manniskor-pa-flykt-sou-201712-hela.



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⁶ https://goteborg.se/wps/wcm/connect/3bca7447-c3f0-497a-

2008, many have believed that multiculturalism has failed in Sweden. Furthermore, the concept of

culture diversity is most about difference in ethnicity. And the diversity in culture is significantly

higher simply because before the influx of immigration, Sweden was a homogenous nation both in

the sense of ethnicity and culture.

In Swedish Integration Policy for the 21st Century⁸, Swedish government has pointed out that

integration should happen when the equality and opportunity are available to all with the mutual

respect to difference in cultures and under the condition of not violating basic democratic values.

However, the disparity between Swedish born and immigrant is wide. There are several measures

being proposed "better introductions to the new arrivals", "putting immigrants' qualification and

skills to labor market", "a greater integration perspective within the educational system", a positive

development in segregated housing areas", "increased influence and participation", "culture for

everyone and a dialogue with religious communities", "focus on public health work", and

"continued intensive efforts to counter ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism".

Sweden, like many other European countries, is facing the issue of reformulating its national

identity under a global context. Traditional nationalistic values and egalitarianism have not helped

the social cohesion for the nation. At the same time, we all need to recognize the ever-changing

nature of our status-hood and find ways to pave tolerance and to co-exist.

Attitudes and behaviours towards migrants and refugees

There is no doubt that the migrants and refugees situation have generated tension and discussion in

Sweden. The attitudes toward immigrants have become harsher. However, general positive feelings

about giving social rights to immigrants are still there, says a report⁹ done by Gävle College in

2016.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/swedish-integration-policy-for-the-21st-century.

https://www.hig.se/download/18.62385c32157b0d73e1d2578e/1476908317545/H%C3%B6gskolan+i+G%C3%A4vle

_M%C3%A5ngfaldsbarometern+2016.pdf.

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A report written by NGO European Network against Racism (ENAR) refers to incidents of attack on immigrants, anti-immigration sentiments and the rise of far-right groups as the changing tide from the previous progressive image of Sweden. The media discourse has shifted from beginning of welcoming immigrants/ refugees to another image of migrants described as a social problem. Within the year of 2015, there were 43 reported¹⁰ arson attacks on the asylum relocation/ accommodation centers and the number of arsonal attacks has remained the same during the last three years. As a result, most of the asylum seekers' accommodation nowadays are concealed from the public. While cases such as people who have a "foreign" look that are assaulted, starting to appear on media. It is difficult to link directly with incidents as such with hate discourses; nevertheless, anti- immigrants discourse legitimate or encourage hate sentiments. What is even more significant is that the report has pointed that in recent years these far-right groups have been successfully setting tone on the immigration issues on the media. And narrowing the definition of immigrants as Muslim and the issues about immigration is about extremism. Other open display narratives on anti-immigration sentiments are carried out by the populist party Sweden Democrats, advertising in Stockholm metro about the anti Roma adverts in 2015, in which it has demonstrated the tone setting of singling out specific group and normalizing racism against them. The incident aroused strong response but it is hard to specify the proportion of Swedish population sentiment.

Specifically, the reception of refugees in Gothenburg is mixed. There are various grass-root groups/volunteers groups/civil society (such as Welcome2 Sweden by Red Cross) that welcome refugees to their local networks. While there are some reported conflicts between certain immigrants and minority groups. Although the high number of volunteers has fallen since 2015, there is a continuous string of volunteers coming into the support system. They offer support such as language learning and homework support for the youth or pupils.



 $^{^{10}\} https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/support-far-right-groups-setting-tone-migration-debate-euparliament-told.$



Role of cultural organizations and Ngos in the context of migration

Being the second largest city in Sweden, Gothenburg is quite dense when it comes to cultural organizations and institutions. Cultural organizations can be divided into three different segments: A, B and C.

Segment A

Segment A are the public owned institutions which have the city of Gothenburg, the region of Västra Götaland or the Swedish State as owner. These institutions are: Göteborgs Stadsteater AB (which Backa Teater is an independent offshoot of, but in organisational terms we are the same city owned company under a common CEO) and Göteborgsoperans dance company - The opera is owned by the region of Västra Götaland and produce opera and musicals. The dance company was formerly the ballet but are now a contemporary dance company which gathers dancers from all over the world and are one of the leading contemporary dance companies in Northern Europe. Another example is Göteborgssymfonikerna AB. The symphonic orchestra is a company owned by the region of Västra Götaland and aims to develop the classical music repertoire as well as contemporary art music. They also run a children and youth program according to the principles of El Sistema (see E). Göteborgs Konsthall AB is a segment a cultural organization, too. It is an art gallery owned by the City of Gothenburg that both exhibits existing contemporary pieces of art, commission new exhibitions and are co-producing new exhibits and pieces. Important to say is that they are not limited to the exhibition of artifacts but also produce and do performances, happenings and work with relational aesthetics. Another example is Angereds Teater, which is a theatre in the underprivileged suburb of Angered. Until 1996 it was part of the City Theatre, but it is now an independent theatre owned by the city. Angered is a suburb inhabited by migrants and non-ethnic Swedes. Angereds Teater produces a lot of community-based theatre and cooperates with the upper elementary school that has a theatre programme. Other examples are the Röda Sten (an exhibit space owned by the city that exhibits contemporary art and sometimes exhibits live performance art), Stora Teatern (the old theatre in the middle of the city, owned and run by the city of Gothenburg; it is a venue for national and international guest performances, ranging from classical theatre to performance to contemporary circus), Frilagret (a venue housed in an old warehouse and

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owned and run by the city for young people (ages 13 - 30) where they can come with their own suggestions of what to be arranged, Radar 72, Fängelset, Arena 29, 1200 kvadrat, Kulturaton (different regional youth centres around the city that work with cultural activities, young people and strengthening democracy and civil society), Gothenburg Dance and Theatre Festival (a bi-annual international dance-, theatre- and performance festival), the Art academy Valand (part of the university of Gothenburg and a master education in free arts) and, finally, the Academy for music and drama at Gothenburg University (the bachelor and master educations for performing arts).

Segment B

Segment B are the independent, professional and semi-professional groups and organisations of the city. These include, for example, independent performance groups - Masthuggsteatern, Teater UNO, Göteborgs Dramatiska Teater, Teater Tamauer, Teater Kurage, Die Bühne, Teater Sesam, Teater SMUTS, Konstkollektivet SNÖ, Skogen, SU-EN butoh company, Spinn dance company, Twisted Feet dance company, Iraqi Bodies performance company, Folkteatern (which is independent but is strongly associated with the labour movement – but also the organisations for popular education that organize self-studies and help develop independent groups. They are often connected to a political or religious movement, like ABF (associated with the labour movement), Medborgarskolan (associated with the liberal parties), Folkuniversitetet (unassociated) and SENSUS (associated with the Lutheran churches). There are two venues/platforms for guest performance and co-curation of performance art: Atalante and Skogen. Atalante focuses mostly on presenting Nordic performance pieces on guest performance while Skogen has a European program offering European performance artist residency programs at their venue. In this category we can find festivals, too. Most importantly the Clandestino Festival – an international music festival focusing on non-western music and an accompanying lecture and workshop program. Clandestino is curated by philosopher Aleksander Motturi. Other important festivals are the Gothenburg Film Festival, an annual festival for film from all over the world and Hammarkullefestivalen and an area festival in the suburb of Hammarkullen. This is a form of carnival pivoting around an annual samba-parade, but it is not only a latin american event but an international event.



Segment C

Segment C are the non-professional groups and activities in the city. They include amateur theatre

and dance groups, ethical culture organisations where people with common ethnic background

gather and local self-study groups.

Good practices

There are numerous projects in Gothenburg, that have been aiming at creating mutual understanding

and dialogue between residents in Gothenburg across ethnic borders. Many of these projects are

good examples in themselves but have the problem of being time limited. The good practices

presented have a permanent nature, as continuity in itself is a good practice.

• El Sistema is a pedagogy method and platform of introducing the classical musical

repertoire to young people and have them discover the joy of playing musical instruments

together in an orchestra. The El Sistema methodology was launched in Venezuela 1975 and

was introduced in Gothenburg 2010 by former artistic leader and conductor of the

Gothenburg Symphonic Orchestra, Gustavo Dudamel. El Sistema is a method focusing on

joy, collaboration and self-discipline. Having a view that the skills you need and develop

when playing in an orchestra are skills used in creating a life. The El Sistema pedagogy is

integrated into the municipal culture school in Gothenburg and have an extra focus on the

underprivileged suburbs of Gothenburg (for instance they have a programme where people

can donate old instruments, so that children without financial means can have an

instrument). In Gothenburg El Sistema is a collaboration between the El Sistema foundation,

the municipal culture school, The Gothenburg Symphonic Orchestra and The Academy for

Music and Drama.

Hammarkullefestivalen. The above mentioned Hammarkullefestivalen started in 1974

when youths and adults together made a "spring-carnival" in the suburb of Hammarkullen,

which is home to 8000 people with roots from all over the world. Since 1974 the carnival

has been organized yearly and has grown in size, receiving public and private funding.

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The signum of the carnival are the elaborate samba costumes created by the latin-american culture organisations, but the festival and the carnival are part of a collaboration between all the local ethical culture organisations in Angered. By doing so, the parade isn't a strict samba-train, but a display of folk dresses, folk dances, music and food from all over the world.

• Backa Teater. A part of Gothenburg City Theatre with the primary assignment to produce and perform performative arts for children and youths of school age in Gothenburg. As the majority of Backa Theaters audience come via the schools, it means that Backa Teater plays for a cross-segment of Gothenburg's population. It also means that Backa Teater has to adapt a different stance in all artistic choices. These choices include taking care about having people of different origin to be able to represent the experiences found in the audience and choosing a repertoire that represents different experiences and stories than the "classical" European canon. It also means working for developing visual and musical communication so that the audience shouldn't be excluded. Backa Teater has over the years worked a lot with amateurs and young people, giving them the opportunity to tell their own stories on stage and giving them professional backup from directors, dramaturge, set and costume design, makeup, light and sound and music.

