

Force Fields

**The Foundation for
the Culture of the Future
1994–2011**

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This is a portrait of an uncommon organization: The Foundation for the Culture of the Future

Since its inception in 1994, the Foundation for the Culture of the Future has been an independent force field in the landscape of Sweden's public policy for the arts. The Foundation has distributed some 850 million SEK in grants with the aim of stimulating innovation and development in the arts sector in Sweden. The money has, in practice, provided risk capital.

Final applications for funding were received in 2008. The Foundation for the Culture of the Future is currently running down its activities prior to ceasing operations altogether. A report on the activities of the Foundation was published in Swedish in 2009. The present, English version consists of a selection of the essays in the original report.

This publication describes the Foundation and its impact on cultural life and policies for the arts in Sweden. It also portrays the Foundation as a significant force in the development of cultural policy. The history of the Foundation for the Culture of the Future is a narrative of norms and of a preferential right of interpretation, of innovation and convulsions and of visible and invisible structures in a sector subject to constant change.

The introductory articles aim at giving a general view of the Foundation's structure and operations. These are followed by a number of essays, reflections and

interviews that together give an indication of what the activities of the Foundation have taught us. There are also descriptions of a small number of the projects that have received grants from the Foundation over the years – some 2 400 altogether.

We must stress the fact that this publication is not a scientific evaluation of the Foundation's operations. Rather, it is an attempt to describe its particular character and the circumstances connected with it that may be important in discussion of a future policy for the arts.

A scientific evaluation of the Foundation's operations was undertaken in the years 1998–2001.

The present publication was financed by the Foundation for the Culture of the Future but was produced at arm's length from the Board and the management. Editorial responsibility was in the hands of Gunilla Kindstrand assisted by Emma Stenström.

The publication was planned in consultation with economist Mikael Franzén who took part in the scientific evaluation.

Data was gathered from the Foundation's archive and annual reports as well as from newspaper archives. Some fifty persons with links to the Foundation were interviewed.

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The initial intention was to call the Foundation for the Culture of the Future “Särimner”.

According to Norse Mythology, Särimner was a boar that could be slaughtered and eaten every day. The following morning the boar was back in prime condition, ready to be eaten once again.

But there was one condition: Särimner would only come to life again if all the bones of the skeleton were collected and accounted for.

Since the Foundation started it has received some 20 000 applications for funding. 95 percent of these have been refused. Among the applications are strictly traditional ideas as well as the wildest pioneering concepts.

In many cases the grants can be seen as pure risk capital. But it is not the financial grants as such that have had most impact on cultural life in Sweden. Rather, it is the Foundation’s own initiatives that have fundamentally altered the balances.

A wild boar for Swedish culture

by *Gunilla Kindstrand*

The Foundation for the Culture of the Future was born in anguish. When the liberal-conservative government won the general election in 1991 it wanted to make an immediate decision about a policy that had been regarded as one of the social-democrats' most symbol-laden constructs: the wage-earners' investment funds. The government decided to dissolve the funds in such a manner that they could never be recreated. After a long and controversial political process the Swedish Parliament decided that some of the capital should be used in support of the corporate sector and to encourage savings but that a considerable sum should be invested in research.

Initially the sum of 10 billion (10 000 million) SEK was transferred to three, new research foundations. When a second generation of foundations was to be created, the Minister of Culture Birgit Friggebo proposed that some of the money should go to the cultural sector. One of the reasons for this was that, now that Sweden was getting increasingly close to the rest of Europe, it was all the more important to develop Swedish cultural traditions. The proposal was agreed by parliament in 1994.

The unofficial, working name of the proposed foundation was "Särimner" which is the name of the Old Norse mythical wild boar that could be killed and eaten everyday only to rise again on the next day. But several people in government circles were worried that the name "Särimner" might stimulate the wrong expectations. Late in the day, the name of the fund was changed to the more prosaic but equally self-conscious "Foundation for the Culture of the Future".

Like the other, newly created foundations, the Foundation for the Culture of the Future had the inexplicit task of challenging and irritating the existing system by creating new forms of collaboration and promoting development and innovation. The foundation was guaranteed considerable freedom of action. The government appoints the board but otherwise the foundation is an autonomous body with right to inhibit political interference and to ignore established structures.

In June 1994 the new creation was presented to the public. At that time it had funds amounting to some 529 million SEK and its brief was "for at least ten years to give financial support to long-term and innovative cultural projects". The money was also to be used to "stimulate regional cultural life in a broad sense with the aim of encouraging growth and development".

It became clear that the Foundation might well distribute more than 50 million SEK during the first year of operations. This is many times more than the largest cultural funding organization in Sweden – the Swedish Arts Council – can distribute in the form of funding for new projects not already budgeted for. A severe tremor shook the cultural sector in Sweden.

The hard years

Expectations with regard to the new funding for the arts grew rapidly. The first applications were submitted immediately following the announcement of the Foundation; addressed c/o the Ministry of Culture. A number of the country's leading institutions requested large sums to fill the holes in their budgets.

The board was appointed in the summer of 1994. Chairperson was the retiring Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Ingegerd Troedsson. All of the new foundations went through difficult times in their initial years. The government's finances were in a parlous state, unemployment was at record levels and the Swedish crown (SEK) was falling. Faced with these difficulties, the idea of using billions of crowns for research and for cultural agendas was considered controversial, if not offensive. During the 1994 general election the debate raged all the more fiercely and rapidly found itself in a blind alley of "culture or pensions?".

The Foundation had not, at this time, actually established its operations but it became one of the major, symbolic issues of cultural policy. Immediately after the election the new Social-democrat government proclaimed on the issue: Every legal possibility of dissolving the newly instigated foundations would be studied and the money was to be returned, as rapidly as possible, to the government's coffers.

The 529 million SEK of the cultural foundation were a comparatively modest sum when compared with Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (6 billion SEK) or the Knowledge Foundation (3,6 billion SEK). Also taken from the wage-earners' investment funds was a special donation to the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond [The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation] of 1,5 billion SEK which was earmarked for research in the arts field. Yet it was the money allotted to the Foundation for the Culture of the Future that was persistently a source of debate. The chair of the foundation, Ingegerd Troedsson, had constantly to stand up

and defend an operation that had not actually started operations. The critics had many different lines of attack:

- The use of foundations was provocative because it gave hitherto untried freedom to the Swedish civil service. Many people were worried that the use of foundations would prevent insight into the operations.
- The Foundation chose to let all-comers apply for grants. For the first time it would be possible for both private people and corporate entities to apply for cultural funding in the same way as institutions and “free groups”.
- The selection of board members also upset people because financiers, arts managers, artists and scholars were chosen on the basis of their personal knowledge of the arts sector and not for their organizational representativity.
- The regulations were provocative in that they required that the money should be used to stimulate regional cultural life and contribute to growth in the regions. Cultural discussion in Sweden is, traditionally, focused on Stockholm and claims were made that culture would now be expected to assist the tourist industry out in the provinces. When the atmosphere of compromise and agreement that had characterized Swedish arts policy for decades finally began to crack open, the Foundation for the Culture of the Future acted as a catalyst.

A struggle for the free funding

According to its brief, the Foundation for the Culture of the Future was to have complete freedom to determine how the foundation should be administered.

On the 1st of November 1994 Jonas Anderson was appointed Managing Director. He had worked in the Ministry of Culture as a senior administrator and was one of the people responsible for planning the Foundation.

Jonas Anderson had only been in his post for a few days when the new Minister of Culture, Margot Wallström, fired four of the five board members of the foundation. The reason given was that she wanted greater political insight into the operations. She appointed the Governor of Värmland, Ingemar Eliasson, as the new chair.

At the same time, the conflict between the old civil-service administrative structure and the new foundation became increasingly obvious. There were constant claims in the media that the government intended to force the Foundation to give 70 percent of its funds to the Swed-

ish Arts Council or to the National Heritage Board and the Swedish National Archives. An officer of the Swedish Arts Council publicly announced that the Foundation should be considered as a competitor with regard to Swedish cultural policy.

The art of monitoring quality

The Foundation established itself not in Stockholm, as many people had taken assumed, but in Uppsala; a requirement of the original brief. Suitable premises were found on Dag Hammarskjölds väg. The staff was remarkably small in number. Besides the managing director there were only three permanent staff.

They had considerable experience of cultural administration at government level and they built up an organization which differed markedly from anything previously seen in Sweden. Their operational mode was active, discursive and committed. There was a serious interest in using IT solutions. The board has avoided detailed regulation of the operations and, from the very beginning, has allowed the managing director wide-ranging responsibility and room for decision-making.

In order to gain a rapid overview of funding needs, a campaign was initiated with an invitation that was widely distributed. Both physical people and corporate bodies could apply and this meant that private people as well as businesses, organizations, societies, institutions and temporary constellations could all be considered. During the first, three-week application period in the spring of 1995, some 1 400 applications were submitted. The Foundation insisted that the applications should be regarded as a knowledge bank and as a basis for planning future operations. Right from the start, the Foundation emphasized its intention to update and adapt its relationship with the cultural sector on a continual basis. Here one can see the seed of what, in time, came to be a pervasive idea of reflexivity: that is to say, that the Foundation wanted to maintain a consciously critical attitude not only to the cultural system itself but also to its own role and its notions about the same system.

A central and symbolically charged issue was how the Foundation's view of cultural goals and intentions would, in practice, differ from those of other government bodies that disburse funding for the arts. Who is entitled to the money? What is innovative culture? How is one to judge quality?

The Foundation marked its independence by creating its own system for monitoring quality that aimed at spreading decision-making with regard to the funding. An independent jury was established, the so-called *Ad hoc* committee. The committee consists of professional

artists and other people involved in the arts sphere with various different competences. These people are paid a fee for judging applications, making use of all their personal experience in connection with the task. In the first year there was a mere handful of people. This later grew to some 20 experts representing the visual arts, theatre, dance, literature, regional development, integration, schools, etc. Each of the *Ad hoc* members has a mandate stretching over two years. Parts of the group are changed on a continual basis. Issues involving conflicting loyalties are dealt with in the accepted manner.

Parallel with this, the government bodies such as the Swedish Arts Council, National Archives, National Heritage Board or the Swedish Arts Grants Committee are invited to comment on and criticize the thousands of annual applications. The real influence of the established system in monitoring applications declined over time. During the early years the Swedish Arts Council had a considerable say in the funding decisions, something that was and is the Council's usual position with regard to public funding for the arts. In recent years the experts at the Council have only been consulted with regard to certain specific funding decisions. The influence of the Swedish National Archives and the National Heritage Board was completely phased out over time. Parallel with this, the importance of the *Ad hoc* committee has grown.

The quality system guarantees that each application submitted to the Foundation is considered by at least three people with expert knowledge. The people judging quality produce radical lists of priorities that the board can then consider and, very occasionally, alter prior to making a decision.

During the run-down period for the Foundation in 2009–2011, the *Ad hoc* committee will continue to play an important role in winding up the organization.

A state of change

Since 1995 the Foundation has received roughly 20 000 applications. About five percent of them have received funding. It is impossible to give a simple summary of the grants that have been made. The Foundation has supported projects embracing a wide field in every conceivable genre. There are strikingly traditional ideas alongside the wildest pioneering concepts. In many cases the grants can be seen as risk capital.

Looking at the applications in retrospect gives one a socio-cultural journey in time. The Foundation has welcomed all forms of art practitioners: private individuals, institutions, individual companies, foundations, etc. In spite of this, it was the traditional players in the arts

sector, especially institutions, that occupied a large place in the early years. By the mid 1990s, the budgets of cultural institutions had been seriously eaten away and there was a desperate lack of money for special projects. There was an often vain hope that the Foundation would help by filling holes in budgets. The Gothenburg Opera, for example, announced in 1995 that new productions on the secondary stage would cease because "a grant from the Foundation for the Culture of the Future had been refused".

In the middle of the 1990s, the Internet was still a new element in the arts sector and there were numerous applications from people who wanted to introduce new programmes and techniques or to digitalize their archives. In 1997 and 1998 there was a government initiative called "Culture in the whole of Sweden". The provincial theme made itself apparent in the flow of applications. At about the same time, cultural brokers or agents appeared on the scene, people and projects that wanted to link up the corporate sector and the arts. A few years later ideas from the experience industry were dominant.

Over the years the profile of applicants changed. Initially heads of institutions were very prominent. Later independent people from the cultural sector and so-called "free groups" became more visible. Early in the new millennium the arts sector heeded the political signals and businessmen and cultural entrepreneurs became increasingly visible among the applicants. The final years were a sort of hybrid period. New ways of combining funding with initiatives from institutions, the corporate sector and other organizations.

Applicants for grants from the Foundation for the Culture of the Future have their budgets monitored and the sums that are granted are frequently smaller than the amounts applied for. In certain cases the applicants have been granted more money than they expected. In such cases the Foundation's quality evaluators and the board have decided that the application is for an interesting idea but that the budget is unrealistic. The greater part of the grant (85 percent) is paid immediately a decision has been made while the remainder is paid out after the project has been accounted.

Some 500 projects are active within the system at any one time. Retaining 15 percent of the grant has been a way of ensuring that the projects are properly accounted. The Foundation has a relatively large proportion of properly accounted projects. Initially it was the established institutions that were worst at submitting accounts.

Support from the Foundation has been financially decisive in the case of some of the more notable cultural projects in Sweden, for example the House of Culinary

Art in Grythyttan, the Nordic Watercolour Museum in Skärhamn, the Hälsingland Wooden Theatre in Järvsö, Dalhalla open-air theatre, Hultsfred Music Festival, the Art Route in Västerbotten, the Barn Theatre in Västanås, Vadstena Academy, the Alma Löv Museum in Östra Ämtervik, Södra Teatern in Stockholm, Per Jonsson's dance ensemble Stockholm, Handicrafts Circus, the Barents Region's Cultural Collaboration and many more. It should be noted that many of these started out as innovative projects but, over the years, have become established institutions.

That the Foundation should take its own initiatives and create model organizations that can then become part of the country's normal cultural activities was one of the stipulations in the government bill that established the Foundation (1993/94:177).

Winners: Stockholm – and Skärhamn

All cultural policy is based on a common understanding of all-embracing rhetoric and, after a number of years, the Foundation's signals began to make themselves felt. Successively the applicants began to include the desired subtexts in their ideas for projects: innovative, multi-cultural, pioneering, hybrid, gender, etc. A number of applicants have received a succession of grants over the years, despite the fact that both the membership of the *Ad hoc* committee and the board have changed. The largest grant has gone to the Nordic Watercolour Museum in Skärhamn. For eleven different projects at the Nordic Watercolour Museum, the Foundation has made grants in excess of 16 million SEK. This can serve as an example as to how certain constellations have quickly succeeded in creating a close and profitable relationship with the Foundation. The substantial support of the Nordic Watercolour Museum illustrates a tacit function of the Foundation's activities: using its own funding to instigate grants from local and regional bodies. Local and regional political forums are often very cautious with regard to spectacular projects. Grants from the Foundation have frequently given legitimacy to projects which have then been able to gain further risk capital and, in the best instance, to promote cultural development in the region.

Right from the start there was a desire that the Foundation should choose to give substantial grants to quality projects with a view to changing the cultural scene. After a few years a praxis had developed effectively creating a limit of 4 million SEK for any specific application. This is, with regard to major cultural projects, a significant sum though the figure is not strikingly high.

A remarkably large proportion of the total funding has gone to the metropolitan areas, as was noted in the

evaluation published in 2002. Part of the explanation for this is that numerous applicants have their headquarters in Stockholm even where the actual activities take place in a different region. This state of affairs also reflects the difficulty of creating, in sparsely populated parts of the country, the quality-assured artistic and financial contexts that are essential for running major arts projects. The situation is, naturally, also an indication of just how difficult it is to break down established structures in which Stockholm has traditionally been closer to public arts funding thanks to formal and informal networks and thanks to implied interpretations of the slippery notion of "quality".

A discreet partner

The Foundation's financial contributions to Swedish culture have, relatively speaking, been massive. One question that has constantly been raised by the Foundation is how the reception of such forceful means can be made more effective. Many co-financiers have found it difficult to live up to their obligations and structures have been lacking for administering grants in a long-term and sustainable manner.

Generally speaking, the Foundation has maintained an open approach to the administrative freedom of projects. Projects that have clearly strayed from their original written aims but that have been able to motivate how experience has been taken on board, have been approved without comment. This policy differs considerably from that pertaining to EU grants which show an attitude towards artistic and intellectual processes that is characterized by an industrial model.

In cases where projects receiving grants have found themselves at crisis point, the Foundation has requested situation reports and partial accounting. One of the more publicized cases was a theatre project "The cock crowed" in Haninge outside Stockholm which has received some 2,5 million SEK from the Foundation since 1996. When the project collapsed because of internal strife, the Foundation requested a serious evaluation that was undertaken by the University of Gothenburg with a view to a better understanding of the process and closer monitoring of the Foundation's own role in the events.

One unusual characteristic is the low profile that the Foundation maintains once the grant has been paid out. A corresponding grant from the EU demands serious window-dressing on the part of the recipient. True, the Foundation recommends that grant recipients should indicate where their funding comes from but it takes no measures if this is not done. The result is that the Foundation has, in many cases, been a highly discreet, often invisible, collaborator.

Acting rather than reacting

In the evaluation carried out in 1998–2001, half of the people interviewed claimed that their project would not have got started if it had not been for the Foundation's grant. Almost 60 percent noted that there was no alternative funding available for their project. Yet it is not the approved applications that have had the greatest influence on the arts sector. Rather, it is the Foundation's own initiatives, the so-called pro-active operations that have fundamentally changed Swedish culture's system and balances.

These pro-active operations have been prompted by a certain impatience. The proud aims of the Foundation to provide the country with innovative, pioneering projects of high artistic quality were, initially, not matched at all well by the ideas that found expression in the applications. Putting it bluntly, one may claim that the cultural life of Sweden has mentally retained its old formulas and thought processes while the Foundation has waited, with a sense of frustration, for suitable opportunities to support innovative ideas and to stimulate new approaches in the same cultural life. In the annual report for 1998, Jonas Anderson, the managing director, writes despairingly that he still retains "some small hope that he will be struck by surprise on a few more occasions when reading the applications".

During the first years, the funding profile lay very close to the established ideas as to what is good, solid, familiar culture. The Foundation's money served rather to strengthen than to challenge the structures of the arts sector. The operations were seen by many people as lacking in identity. The economic capital was large but the symbolic content was small.

In order to speed up the rate of change, the Foundation sharpened its application requirements and increasingly relied on its own initiatives. Using the rapidly growing network of contacts, interesting projects were traced and were offered various forms of support. Often this was a matter of a smaller sum of money granted at a critical moment; for example at the stage where an idea is about to be transformed into a practical activity or when a project needs to take an important step forward in order to be noticed. Frequently it is ideas that have the character of models or processes that can reintroduce knowledge to the Foundation or the rest of the arts sector. The Foundation's own initiatives are laid before the board for approval in the same way as external applications.

There was an important affirmation in 1999 when a series of seminars about the dilemma facing institutions was started. The series was a three-part, systemic

analysis under the headings "The Building", "The Artist" and "The Public". With the seminars the Foundation indicated for the first time that it intended to make the structures that are taken for granted truly visible and thus make it possible to discuss them.

After that there was a spiral development which exposed the inflow of knowledge that the *Ad hoc* committees, think tanks and seminars generate. Each year the Foundation's own initiatives have consumed a greater share of the resources. This may be a matter of reforming or renewing an organization, of internal or public discussions of strategy and dramaturgy, of discussion seminars coupled to concrete problems, for example the rapid turnover of senior management in the arts sector, the difficulty of combining serious artistic reflection with a tourist-type profile or the conserving elements of our cultural heritage. Among the Foundation's own initiatives there was also a succession of international seminars in which the arts sector in Sweden was confronted by international examples.

Applause and anxiety

The established forms of operations in the cultural-policy field are usually divided into four main categories: those of Helper, Protector, Architect and Engineer. After a number of years the Foundation succeeded in fulfilling all of these roles by sometimes acting as an old-fashioned patron, sometimes making demands itself, sometimes concerning itself with the instrumental aspects and sometimes building new structures.

The development changed both the Foundation's self-image and its public profile. By the beginning of the 21st century the Foundation had at its disposal a very large and constantly updated knowledge bank that could not be matched by any government body or institution in Sweden. With the new initiatives the Foundation built new, organic patterns in the cultural sphere. Individuals and groups were directly linked that would, in other circumstances, have been obliged to defend their own interests. New surfaces and new subcultures were cultivated at the same time that the old ones were being deconstructed. The Foundation appeared as both a risk-taker and a player.

In 2004 yet another strategic decision was made that strengthened the Foundation's own agenda. Members of the *Ad hoc* committee were offered the opportunity of proposing support for projects where no application for funding had been made in the normal way.

In 2007 the Foundation disbursed the sum of 42 million SEK. About half of the money went to some 200 projects on the Foundation's own initiative. The other

half provided grants for 36 projects that had submitted traditional applications. Thus, at the same time that the Foundation is actively engaged in questioning and eroding old centres of power it is also building up a sphere of its own in which managing director Jonas Anderson is the obvious centre. This is applauded by some people while it makes others anxious.

Fields of power are difficult to measure but the Foundation probably has an inner circle of about 50 people and an active network of about 1 000. It should be noted that the majority of the people in the network are not part of Sweden's central cultural administration. Thus they deliver a somewhat different picture of Sweden than that projected by the national cultural bodies.

During its final three years, besides evaluating its operations, the Foundation will work exclusively with its own initiatives. Quality will be assured through the *Ad hoc* committee.

The presence of death

All actions are changed in the presence of death. An important free zone has been created by the fact that the Foundation has constantly reminded people of its own, imminent demise. Public debate about the decision-making with regard to applications was sporadic in the early years and then disappeared altogether. Nor was the Foundation's increasing emphasis on backing its own initiatives discussed in public.

The temporary nature of the Foundation's being also helped to make a flexible and, sometimes, highly unusual approach possible. Where the Swedish Arts Council, for example, in accordance with good bureaucratic tradition, is expected to continue to follow up its grants, the Foundation has been able to make a one-off contribution and then take its leave.

The arts policy review of 1996 proposed that the Foundation should be given permanent status though this was never contemplated by the board. Making the Foundation permanent would, of course, have reduced the annual grants very considerably since, in that eventuality, the Foundation would only have been able to disburse the surpluses generated from investments. Further, the Foundation would have taken on the character of a government institution. Since the investments that had been made had increased the capital from 529 million to close to one billion SEK the board has continually discussed prolonging operations. In 2007 the board agreed that 2011 would be a suitable year in which to cease operating. The Foundation will then discontinue all of its activities and will deposit its documentation in the National Archives.

How long is an arm?

A central principle of Scandinavian cultural policy is that decisions should be made at "arm's length". Briefly, this means that there should be a clear division between the legislative power and the executive organ. The image of an "arm's length" sums up the idea that the government should not direct art and science but leave them free from political interference. The concept is symbol-laden in Swedish cultural policy and is considered to apply equally to the Foundation, to the Swedish Arts Council and to regional and local institutions.

One of the few people who have shown an interest in the concept's actual relation to reality is Professor Geir Vestheim of the Centre for Arts Policy Research in Borås. In 2005 he undertook a study in which he compared the scope for making independent decisions of the Foundation and the Swedish Arts Council.

His study concluded that the Foundation had greater room for manoeuvring than the Swedish Arts Council. The latter is a government authority that works with fulfilling a policy brief and, in this sense, is an integral part of the Swedish government. In the case of the Foundation, the notion of "arm's length" has a more concrete meaning in Vestheim's opinion.

But there are numerous examples of how the political sphere has tried to influence decisions regarding funding. Faced with the underfinanced project "Culture in the whole of Sweden" the Minister of Culture tried to pressure the Foundation to provide funding. The government has also busily exercised its right to change the composition of the board. During one turbulent period, the board was changed three times in the space of four years. At times the director of the Swedish Arts Council has been placed on the board with a view to creating a joint vision between these two major players in the arts sector.

Paradoxically the political pressure seems rather to have led to the political sphere losing influence. The Foundation is a complex organization, in a constant state of motion and with a large flow of information. New board members need time to adjust and to get to know the operations. During the turbulent periods the influence of the operative management has, rather, increased.

The Foundation has studiously avoided all types of confrontation with the political sphere regardless of party. Praxis has been adaptability and patience. Naturally there has also been an implicit and powerful psychological tool in the form of the Foundation's own capital.

Free or useful?

One of the most sensitive issues of cultural policy is whether art and culture can be seen as an autonomous sphere or whether they ought to be useful to society. The Foundation's brief places it right at the centre of this field of tension since the Foundation's rules require that grants should promote high artistic quality at the same time that they must strengthen growth and development.

Soon after the turn of the millennium the current arts policy was embellished with notions about entrepreneurship and the creative sector. This caused both the applicants' and the quality-monitors' thinking about the roles of culture in society to change.

A strong signal with new incitements for a more instrumental view turned up in 2006 when a report from the EU commission "The Economy of Culture in Europe" showed in rhetorically piercing figures that the cultural sector has a higher rate of growth than the economy as a whole and serves as a creative engine for Europe's total economy. The report had a profound impact on the arts sector. The Foundation's rules about "strengthening growth and development" gained a stronger relevance among many of the players.

It is no secret that, over the years, the board has had animated discussions about artistic freedom and its usefulness. A survey of the grants awarded indicates that the Foundation's policy has shifted over time. During the first years, a traditional, humanist view of culture is evident in the grants and there is a stress on the autonomy and educative value of art. After a number of years the policy became more instrumental. From 2004 onwards the demands for artistic quality and innovation have been stressed.

The experience of the Foundation shows that the view of artistic and cultural autonomy as opposed to instrumentality differs as between Stockholm and the rest of the country. In the Swedish capital, the major institutions located there are seen as guarantors of a high level of artistic quality that should apply to the rest of the country. Public support of the arts has, in a self-evident manner, been used to maintain an autonomous sphere centred on what is generally seen as high culture.

Outside Stockholm, where it has often been difficult for people to defend and maintain their institutions, there is a more pragmatic approach to the value of art and culture. Regional and local politicians are more welcoming with regard to collaboration with the corporate sector. Regional politicians responsible for cultural matters and artists in the provinces increasingly steer clear of the capital and link up directly with Europe. This tendency is most apparent in the trial regions of Skåne and Västra Götaland, that is in the south and west of Sweden.

An attempt to summarize the Foundation's attitude to the independence of the cultural sector and of its usefulness might be as follows: The value of art is not threatened by its capacity for being instrumental. But the capacity of art to be instrumental is not responsible for its value.

The future of the culture of the future

The goals of Swedish cultural policy were established in 1974. The policy overhaul undertaken in the mid 1990s led only to very minor revisions of the current policy. That policy for the arts was primarily concerned with recognized institutions and operational areas was still seen as self-evident in 1996.

Since that time, cultural policy has been challenged by the rapid changes in society. More and more Swedes live in the major cities, the average age of the population is increasing and the tension between the provinces and the capital continues to grow. Migration undermines the fixed view of a national culture and identity. The nation state is gradually losing its status and the European Union stands for the dominant structure. The media flood is accelerating. Cultural consumption is radically broadened. Notions about artistic quality and historical truth that were self-evident until very recently give way as postcolonial and postmodern theories permeate concrete cultural activities.

Many new players, often from popular culture, take their places in the cultural sphere. Cultural consumption is increasingly financed from other sources than the public purse, notably by the consumers themselves. Agreement as to what should be considered as "high culture" or quality culture no longer holds and the cultural sector increasingly appears as a motley landscape of subcultures that are all competing for funding and for attention. The resilience perspective is beginning to pressure the discussion as to the role that the arts can and should play in a future society that is struggling to deal with the global climate challenge.

In an attempt to keep in step with the times, the government's arts policy has added further institutions and organizations (e.g. Museum of World Culture and Forum for Living History) to the existing structure. The Foundation for the Culture of the Future has chosen a different way of relating to contemporary processes and has stressed flexibility, the continual collection of knowledge, dialogue and reflexivity.

In a subtle way the Foundation, using grants and other measures promoting change, has challenged the steering mechanisms that are seldom visible yet are seriously powerful and that permeate the cultural sector via the govern-

ment bodies. The arts policy of 1974 relied on governance, a steering system that does not use prohibitions and punishments but that, via its system, have a powerful influence on values and norms. This modern governance seldom states what the players in the cultural sphere should not do but, all the more often, intimates what they are expected to do. Artists in general are expected to internalize a comprehensive idea about what artists, in the broadest sense, should be doing. The Foundation has made an important contribution here in giving visibility both to the system and the instruments of control. Discussing the fact that we are all prisoners of the system has become less problematic.

The Foundation's activities have also obliged the cultural sector to relate more consciously to the concept of renewal. In 2008, the Swedish National Audit Office

reported on the attitudes of the government arts bodies and on how interested they were in artistic renewal. The National Audit Office noted that the Swedish Arts Council and the Arts Grants Committee were finding it increasingly difficult to achieve the aims of the government's policy for the arts. Far too much of their funding is locked up by institutions that have received grants for many years and that have built up their self-image on these grants. In this respect, the Foundation's points of departure and its experiences are in sharp relief. Yet the discussion of cultural policy has so far been little influenced by the accumulated expertise of the Foundation.

The freedom and independence that is so fundamental to the Foundation for the Culture of the Future seems to repel those at the political level. ■ ■

The Bones of the Foundation

An organization like the Foundation for the Culture of the Future fits neither with the logic of the state nor with that of the market. Though it is often in precisely this type of mental interspace that new ideas are worked out whether this is a matter of artistic creativity, research or policy for the arts.

Our aim has been to act as a “good bureaucracy” with structure, control system and an open attitude without losing out on qualitative values. And without abandoning the temporary, nomadic and networking character, of which the latter is sometimes seen as problematic.

The Bones of the Foundation

by Emma Stenström

What sort of an organization is the Foundation for the Culture of the Future? What is the result of viewing its operations in the light of a theoretical organizational model? Can one catch its particularities; the bones of the Foundation for the Culture of the Future. Can one, perhaps, even learn something about the Foundation as an organization?

These are the sorts of questions that we have kept in mind while preparing this portrait of the organization. Like all portraits, this one could well have been painted differently. We have tried to point to some of the numerous dimensions that are specific to the Foundation and that seem significant both from the point of view of cultural policy and organizational theory.

That the organization is an independent foundation, for example, and that it is both a product and a producer of some sort of alternative approach. Fundamental to this is the possession of sufficient capital to be able to act independently. At the same time, this freedom requires that there is a formal monitoring and controlling system, a transparent approach as well as informal qualities like morals and trust.

In the case of the Foundation it is evident that there are a great many both/ands; that, on the one hand, the Foundation stresses soft values like quality and complex knowledge and, on the other hand, chooses to follow a succession of good bureaucratic principles. The organization also demonstrates the necessity for, but also the difficulties that arise from organizing operations in network form. It illustrates the importance of keeping up with developments over time and what this may mean to an organization that is nomadic, organic and temporary in character.

Independence is central

We inherited nothing, we were able to begin from the beginning, we were independent, we had our own money, no one could give us orders, people underestimated us and dismissed us right from the start and no one took us really seriously – and that gave us freedom of action.

Managing Director Jonas Anderson

Like all foundations, the Foundation for the Culture of the Future is self-governing. While state authorities are answerable to the people and corporations to their owners, foundations are only responsible to themselves and their charters. It is important to remember this.

Independence of action is one of the reasons that

foundations have been controversial in Sweden. Foundations are seen as undependable institutions, a species of “political giraffe”, as political scientists Helmut Anheier and Siobhan Daly put it, which really ought not to exist. Foundations are criticized from the right for not adhering to and promoting the logic of the market and, from the left, for their lack of transparency and democratic control.

Foundations do not fit in very well with our dichotomous way of thinking; they are suited neither to the public sector nor to the private sector, neither to the logic of government or of the market. This is not always easy to understand. In Swedish cultural policy one can sometimes gain the impression that there are only two, possible positions: public or private. Foundations are considered to belong to the so-called “third sector” – that of civil society – and are often forgotten. When civil society makes itself felt, it is generally in the form of societies and popular movements; seldom in the form of foundations.

One reason for this may be that there is no tradition of this type of arts foundation which although these are common and important sources of funding for the arts in many countries. This is the result of the arts not being considered a “qualified purpose” with regard to taxation in Sweden. In this respect, too, the Foundation for the Culture of the Future is an exception. And it becomes even more of an anomaly when one considers that it relies wholly on public, wage earners’ investment funds.

What is unique to a foundation of this type is that it is both non-governmental and non-commercial. Since the Foundation has a large capital sum at its disposal it can stand up against the vagaries of both politicians and market forces. This is the very fundament of its independence which is seen as vital, though controversial, in the context of arts policy.

In this respect the Foundation differs from the Swedish Arts Council, which has to rely on votes of parliament, detailed briefs from the government and suchlike and whose funds are largely tied up in advance. The Foundation has the freedom to spend its money as it wishes as long as this accords with its charter.

One might argue that the foundation model is especially suited to the arts sector. For there is a general sense here that art is best created in some form of freedom and that artistic processes are not at all well suited to detailed as well as long-term control. For this reason there is a

need for sources of funding that can act with great freedom and that can create space for creativity without having to pay due regard to changes in the political mood or the market's demands for short-term profitability.

The Foundation for the Culture of the Future is, of course, not wholly independent since the government appoints the board members. This might be seen as a restriction but the staff of the Foundation claim that the system has worked very well in practice. It has also contributed to generating legitimacy in the form of democratic control; something which foundations can otherwise be accused of lacking.

Right from the beginning, the Foundation voluntarily chose to act like a government body with respect to openness, public access to documentation and transparency. Operating in this manner has also contributed to preserving the Foundation's independence.

Independence and freedom are also found in the way the operations are carried out. When the Foundation for the Culture of the Future started in 1994 there were no predecessors or patterns to follow – which gave the foundation an almost unique freedom to create its own operational model tailored to suit its brief. The fact that the Foundation operated in a borderland and was neither government-run nor a commercial undertaking also helped. For it is often precisely in this type of mental interspace that new thinking takes place, whether this pertains to art, research or policy for the arts.

Many people also regard foundations as a free zone in society for alternative ideologies, methods and models. This is precisely the role which the Foundation for the Culture of the Future has undertaken right from the start – and which the foundational model has made possible, both formally and mentally.

Cognitive diversity

Thus there are many advantages with foundations and the existence of a civil sector along side the public and private sectors. According to political scientists like Bob Jessop, all systems are doomed, in the end, to fail whether these are concerned with markets, government or the third force, the civil society or whatever one wishes to call it.

A classic way of dealing with such failures has been to oscillate between different forms. If the market does not work the state steps in – and the other way round. We have seen a great deal of this in recent times. The addition of a third alternative increases the repertoire and creates greater diversity; not least in a cognitive sense.

Advocates of foundations like to point to their important contribution to pluralism which is very evident in the arts-policy field where the Foundation for the

Culture of the Future has acted as an alternative source of funding for numerous activities. A species of cultural “venture capital” as the Foundation puts it where modest but rapid sums of money are invested where they are most needed.

It is interesting to note that there has been some interaction between the Foundation for the Culture of the Future and, not least, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond [The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation]. As an outsider one can ask whether this type of collaboration between foundations is a way of creating a more visible civil sector. Is there a type of “foundation ideology” that, both singly and jointly, the foundations reproduce – or is it merely by chance that they happen to work together?

Product and producer of ideology

There is a traditional idea that an organization's ideals and ideology are what gives it its legitimacy in the political field. But it is questionable whether this applies to the Foundation for the Culture of the Future; whether there actually is an ideology, regardless of whether this is a foundation ideology or something else.

One must, first and foremost, remember that the Foundation was created by a liberal/conservative government from money generated by wage earners' investment funds. According to the staff, the organization has always been viewed as being more or less aligned with the non-socialist bloc in Swedish politics. There are numerous tales about how there is – and especially how there was in the past – a fear of any sort of contact with the Foundation. Staff member Birgitta Persson recalls, for example: “There is a fear of infection, we are slightly scary.”

However, we have not noticed much of this aspect during the course of our interviews and many people seem not to be aware that the money comes from the former wage earners' investment funds. No one whom we spoke to seems to have refrained from applying for funding for that particular reason and it sounds slightly comic when someone even goes so far as to designate the Foundation as “a leftist alternative”.

At the same time this is a good mark for the Foundation as it indicates success in being non-ideological in a party-political sense. Managing Director Jonas Anderson explains: “We regard ourselves as non-ideological by definition, if anything that is not ideological actually exists, but we have no party allegiances and we operate above or to the side of these.”

If the organization is ideological, this is in some other way than in a party-political sense. The Foundation is midway between the state and the market and it can

collaborate with both public and private sectors without having to believe blindly in one or the other.

In practice this finds expression in the fact that the organization does not believe in short-term instrumentality. Instead, the Foundation seeks to create possibilities for that which already exists, for what transcends boundaries and chooses directions that are not preconceived. This is a different approach and it is reminiscent of the foundations of civil society that build on common ideals and trust. This can be seen as an ideology but it is not a party-political ideology. Or can perhaps be seen as an “approach”, as someone has suggested.

This approach can be described in various ways. One possibility is to see it as an interdisciplinary, pragmatic approach rather than a straightforward, dogmatic one. This is seen, for example, in the fact that the Foundation finds inspiration in and collaborates with all three sectors of society: public, private and civil.

The organization describes itself as being governed by a respect for those it funds in the first instance. The staff refrain from trying to tell clients how to run their projects or which aims they should seek to fulfil. Instead, a contract is drawn up and clients are then free to proceed as they wish. If something needs to be changed, which is often the case, a dialogue ensues and the contract is revised. In this way the process is allowed to follow a different path than the one originally conceived, something which is often necessary in artistic contexts.

When talking about ideology one often asks about what can be communicated symbolically. The fact that the Foundation's offices are sited somewhat anonymously and peripherally in the university town of Uppsala, rather than centrally in Stockholm, signals a good deal. Not to mention the fact that a staff of only four people has processed grants in the amount of about 850 million SEK at the time of writing. This communicates the fact that it is the bodies being funded that are central to the operation and not the Foundation itself.

Also important is the fact that the staff attempt to answer all mail and phone calls on the grounds that the Foundation has the obligations of a government body and that the staff are willing to undertake visits. This also signals respect for those for whom the operations are intended.

Choice of linguistic usage

The choices with regard to linguistic usage, images and concepts are also important in such contexts. One concept that immediately attracts attention is that of the “lottery”, a term that has been used to describe the large-scale application operation in which only about

5 percent of the applicants were successful. On the one hand, the term “lottery” might be construed as being a sensible choice in that it helps to keep people's expectations at a realistic level. It can, on the other hand, seem a rather strange term to make use of in a system of public grants. One wonders whether it would really be suitable for use by a government authority.

Another, related concept – that of “risk capital” also turns up from time to time in connection with our operations. The staff of the Foundation see themselves as assisting the arts with risk capital, though there is no thought of making a profit from the investments; merely that a grant can mean a great deal to a particular organization and that further investment can follow. Beside the positive aspect of regarding the contribution precisely as an investment, there is also the fact that the marginal utility of the grants is extremely high for the independent arts sector.

Another frequently used term is “soil”. The Foundation does much of its work at precisely this level which has many different aspects. One is the movement from the power centre outwards; another is the loan of a metaphor from horticulture. Yet another is looking for something that is sprouting that one then provides with nourishment, not least by aligning it with other activities. Perhaps one might claim to be working at ground-root level rather than at the top of the vegetation.

The notion of “think tank” – a popular working methodology today – is also more concerned with a process than with finished results. The think tank also signals – probably unintentionally in this case – that one is engaged in some form of ideology production or of moulding public opinion.

With regard to the Foundation one can note a shift towards informal and knowledge-based modes, not least in the proactive aspects of the operations. There is an emphasis on face-to-face contacts and exchanges of knowledge, and on the role of the Foundation as a sounding board, coach, meeting place or, simply, a think tank.

One interpretation is that the ideology which may be generated would be closer to some form of *Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft* to make use of Ferdinand Tönnies's 19th century concept. Closer to the common ideals and trust of the civil sector than to the calculating rationality of business and public administration that we discussed earlier. Closer to the qualitative and “soft” than the quantitative and “hard”, to make use of historian Sven-Eric Liedman's terminology:

All areas of human endeavour have hard and soft elements; only the proportions vary. The soft elements clearly have to do with ideals while the hard ones are concerned with carefully calculated and tested techniques. [...] Efficiency can always be calculated and quantified while the other elements remain qualitative.

The fact that the Foundation has always set a high value on quality is apparent and can be seen, not least, in the way that the *Ad hoc* committee functions. There are similarities, too, in the way that operations are coordinated which are more reminiscent of “governance” than of the more authoritarian control of former times. At the same time, the working methodology of the Foundation with constant travel, creating meeting places and networks and emphasizing complex knowledge, can be interpreted as fitting into the same qualitative tradition – which, at base, rests on faith in people and their judgement.

This, too, can be regarded as “alternative” in today’s society which is generally classified as being a society of measurements and evaluations. Here again the Foundation breaks with the development that is characteristic of both public administration and the corporate world in which there is increasing use of quantification, measurement, evaluation and evidence-based strategies.

Here, too, the Foundation can be seen as an alternative. One is both a product of – as being a foundation – and a producer of this partially alternative ideology. This is an ideology beyond the confines of party politics, close to the civil society that is based on such notions as community, ideals, values, trust and quality.

As with every ideology, there is of course a downside; in this case it is spelt arbitrariness. And so, in a public arena, this has to be balanced with some system of regulations, with control and transparency; indeed with some form of bureaucracy.

A good bureaucracy?

The current operational methodology in the arts sector in Sweden is that of a bureaucracy with responsibilities carefully apportioned, with formal rules and routines and with a clear separation of decision-making from execution. What is interesting is that this model is often used as a contrasting concept to the Foundation. As though the Foundation had none of the attributes of a bureaucracy.

Perhaps this is because of what we have already noted, that the Foundation values some form of qualitative, complex knowledge that is partially dependent on a specific person. This may seem to fit in badly with the impersonal, foundational principles of the bureaucracy.

Yet things are more complex than this. It is not just in everyday language that bureaucracy has a bad reputation. Bureaucracy is regarded as the old-fashioned and unlikeable alternative in so-called “New Public Management” which lauds and applies modern management methods from the business world.

Critics of bureaucracy come from many directions: neo-liberal management theorists, left wingers who are in love with the idea of popular movements and people who are obsessed with contemporary technology. They are all agreed that bureaucracy is both unnecessary and regrettable. It is argued that the fashionable notions of the day, like creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation, are all strangled by bureaucracy and that they need a different type of organization.

Once again the Foundation takes up a different position and seeks, instead, to be what it terms a “constructive bureaucracy”.

The structure of the organization is clearly delineated and follows the basic principles of bureaucracy. Higher levels prescribe over lower ones and the board is responsible for the decisions, or for delegating powers. The people responsible for judging quality (quality monitors) are separate from those making the decisions (the board), as are those who make the decisions (the board) from those who execute decisions (the staff). Everything is transparent and in the public domain and this is a key factor. All applications are registered in what is known as the application system which is searchable and open to the public. All grants are followed up by retaining 15 percent of the sum awarded until a report of the project has been submitted. This report has to be signed by a certified accountant to ensure that the money has been properly spent.

Jonas Anderson explains why the Foundation chose to work in this way right from the start in spite of the fact that there was no initial requirement for such a mode of operation:

We could have kept everything under wraps. We were not actually obliged to account for anything publicly. But what would that have gained us? People would have been suspicious of us ... Transparency and legitimacy were two key factors.

Accepting fundamental bureaucratic principles right from the beginning gave them long-term freedom of operation. Birgitta Persson, who is responsible for following up projects, explains:

I am in favour of structure. I am in favour of a well-defined structure. Transparent contracts and regulations, for example. The structure provides me with support because it enables us to work in the way we do and to enjoy a large measure of independence.

At the same time she is careful to point out that she is well aware of the limitations of bureaucracy. In an essay on working as a cultural bureaucrat she writes:

I have made an agreement with myself that, if the day comes when I hide myself behind the regulations in communicating with applicants I shall look for a new job. We already have quite enough uncommitted bureaucrats without me joining them. In order not to become a bureaucrat who makes decisions purely on the basis of the regulations I make use of discussion as an alternative tool. My goal is to listen, to ask questions, to guide people on their way and, by means of discussion, to help people to discover what they need to look into or to continue to develop.

A sort of bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is, thus, the basic model for the operation but it is not an end in itself. It can be interpreted as though the Foundation operates, from a structural point of view, as a sort of bureaucracy though not culturally. There has been a conscious effort to create a system of rules but also an effort to avoid being impeded by the rules.

Max Weber, the “father of bureaucracy”, warned of the risk of people incarcerating themselves in an iron cage of bureaucracy; in a totally regulated situation in which the rules are seen as superior to all human considerations. Our interpretation is that this is a condition which the Foundation should avoid – and that this is characteristic of constructive bureaucracy.

One adopts a number of basic principles, structures, rules and, not least, transparency, but one also tries to find room for human considerations. At the same time, if one is to look at the matter critically, it is evident that we have moved away from the bureaucratic stance over time. The number of proactive actions has increased and there has been increasing use of seminars, coaching and think tanks. The Foundation itself emphasizes the fact that there is a great need for this type of activity, that the effects are far-reaching and that it is, thus, important to promote them.

A generous interpretation would be that bureaucracy is not well adapted to every working methodology. Something that is still vulnerable, a thought that has not been thoroughly investigated, can disintegrate if it is brought into the light too early. Confidence and trust can dissolve; items that do not fit readily into the scheme of things can be lost. Certain aspects may require one to dare to depart from bureaucratic requirements and to relax the demands for insight and documentation, as in the case of think tanks. And so it is not surprising that this type of operation can give rise to suspicion, whether there are grounds for this or not.

Managing Director’s own allocation under discussion

Another matter that gives rise to suspicion and that is often brought up in discussion, is the fact of there being a so-called “Managing Director’s own allocation” that the managing director can use as he sees fit. This allocation has grown from a million or so SEK at the end of the 1990s to about 8 million SEK annually in 2008. At the moment the managing director is personally allowed to decide grants up to 200 000 SEK while amounts larger than this have to be agreed with the chair of the board.

However, every decision with regard to the Managing Director’s allocation is reported to the board and is treated like a standard application with all the usual procedures and evaluations. So that information regarding grants from the Managing Director’s allocation is available in the same way as that pertaining to all other applications and anyone is at liberty to inspect them. Thus there is also a bureaucratic element in this part of the system too. The chair of the board, Eva Redhe Riddestad, has pointed to the importance of this element:

Thanks to what I perceive as a highly functional “duality” and control, my trust is sufficient for me not to feel the need to question every decision of the managing director. This would not benefit the aims of the Foundation. But central to this type of operation is the fact that there is a functioning regulatory system.

Just as in the case of seminars and think tanks, one may conclude that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The system may give rise to suspicion but as long as there is a functioning regulatory system in place one might conclude that this is a type of programme that the arts sector requires. After all, the Foundation’s strength lies in being able to be speedy and flexible and to push money in the required direction precisely when it is needed – and not when this is already too late! Everyone we have spoken to testifies to the importance of this; and it is made possible partly by the non-bureaucratic approach.

Otherwise, the most important aspect of bureaucracy is that everyone should be dealt with in the same way. It can be difficult to argue that this is the case given that 95 percent of applicants to the major applications, the so-called “lottery”, receive no funding whatsoever.

But here it is a question as to whether the numerous small grants, not least those of the Managing Director’s allocation, play an important role. A contact in the network maintains that these small grants help to keep the system happy:

This is a unique system. Everyone wins. It is water-tight and a real hit... OK, I did not get the two million SEK but at least I was able to try out my idea for 50 000 SEK. There is a dynamic in the system that is very smart.

If this is the case, then the method is interesting. For the less bureaucratic and much quicker elements also fulfil the function of “oiling the works” and creating legitimacy for the more bureaucratic and much slower application processes. At the same time there has been a dynamic in the opposite direction so that the bureaucratic approach, with its regulations, structure and transparency, has made it legitimately possible over time to work in a more proactive and flexible manner. If this is a correct interpretation then the system is extremely clever in that the more bureaucratic approach has made the less bureaucratic one possible – and *vice versa*.

Knowing where the limits are is probably what characterizes a constructive bureaucracy; maintaining the positive, fundamental principles of bureaucracy but not letting bureaucracy get the upper hand as well as recognizing when the bureaucratic approach can help or can upset things.

Necessary and suspect networks

An institution like the Foundation resists power; it represents a strong counterweight. Such institutions have large sums of money that avoid passing through the existing, self-appointed centres. They break down the solid structures and this is necessary. Although this gives rise to a good deal of anger since the Foundation threatens their credibility.

Former Ad hoc committee member

Scholars have a tendency to find problems everywhere and networks are no exception. Many of them are critical of the rapidly growing network society since this is presumed to be creating new, more informal and less transparent hierarchies. In spite of the fact that networks are often described as an egalitarian, open and organic alternative.

It is not entirely easy to understand what the network centred on the Foundation really looks like. One’s first impression is that the same names turn up again and again which might suggest that the network is rather limited in extent. An alternative explanation that is often heard is that the problem lies in the fact of the arts sector in Sweden being something of a duck pond where everyone knows everyone else. The network is nothing new but is the natural operational mode in the cultural sphere.

This creates problems when awarding grants. The Foundation’s strategy for dealing with this dilemma has been not to let anyone participate in the *Ad hoc* com-

mittee for more than two years. In this way one hopes to lessen the risk of disqualification through personal ties or favouritism when making qualitative judgments.

Similarly, the board has been regularly changed, though for different reasons. This may also have been beneficial. For it is probably the case that, in such a small entity as the Swedish arts sector, no one dealing with grants and how they are allocated should stay too long in the post; or occupy too many posts at the same time.

On the other hand, the constant changes of personnel – both those responsible for artistic quality and those making up the board, may have helped to increase the power of the permanent staff since it is the staff who have represented continuity and who have had an overall knowledge of the operations.

It may also be the case – and this is claimed – that people who no longer have formal positions in the organization remain part of the network. And one can ask whether they may influence things as much, or more, from an informal position. For if we take all the discussion of networks and informal coordination seriously, it is not sufficient merely to look at the formal decision-making routines. For the informal networks are of equal, if not of even greater interest.

Nor does the Foundation want merely to be a passive donor. The ambition is to be a participant and co-creator. This distinguishes the Foundation from other bodies that award grants that often choose to emphasize a sense of distance in their relationships. We would maintain that it is this factor that lies behind claims that we are overly sticky and tacky.

Sometimes traces of naivety are apparent in the Foundation as when they seem almost surprised that there is any criticism whatsoever. We don’t find criticism very surprising; indeed we have encountered a good deal of criticism from various directions.

Apart from people who have criticized individual projects as lacking in quality, much of the criticism has been focused on the networks. There has been criticism that our networks are secretive and exclusive and that it is sometimes not clear who is invited to join and why. That people who have received grants are members of the *Ad hoc* committee or, even worse, the reverse. That certain people seem to be able to twist the Foundation round their little fingers and that conflicts of interests occur. Or that, on occasions, ties with the Ministry of Culture or the Swedish Arts Council are too close. Some people criticize the Foundation for not being sufficiently visible while others claim that, on the contrary, it receives too much attention considering the limited extent of its funding.

Determining whether there is any justification for the criticism is problematical and it is also difficult to make use of the criticism in that most of the people who criticize the Foundation have asked to remain anonymous. While all the people who have something positive to say about the Foundation want to be cited under their own names. This is also indicative of the fact that the networks focused on the Foundation are not necessarily of equal weight.

Conspiratorial criticism

At times criticism can seem almost conspiratorial in character. One example is a project that is cited by many people that we talk to as being an example of a project that has received “masses of money purely on the basis of friendship”. Managing director Jonas Anderson is naturally upset that anyone could conceive of his giving favours to his friends:

This is something that I have always been very concerned about. Let us suppose that I were to benefit my friends? How would I deal with this in a longer perspective? What would I not risk with such a policy?

The whole matter would be seriously messy and I should risk dragging the Foundation's operations and good name through the mud. Who would benefit from that? This is something that is entirely foreign to me.

We have found no evidence to support the claim that the Foundation has favoured friends of the staff but can understand that such suspicions arise, not least because of the Foundation's special way of operating. Or, as historian Eva Österberg puts it:

Personal loyalties in public life are often a complicating factor [...] In such cases one needs to unite the need for trust, mutuality and equality with uncompromising integrity, to combine the exclusivity of one's personal network with universal solidarity and the close friend with the citizen at a distance.

Even if personal loyalties are not the controlling factor, it is easy to grasp why people on the outside can believe this to be the case. The fact that the Foundation, on occasions, appears to be naïve and not always able to understand that suspicions are natural occurrences can also be given a positive interpretation. Naivety is often a sign of honesty. Also, it is difficult to avoid problems of this nature given the fact of the Swedish duck pond in the arts sector. Or, as managing director Jonas Anderson expresses it:

It would be interesting to learn from those who are critical what they think we might do to avoid the problem. What is the alternative? This is something that we constantly struggle with in this very small country with its intimate circles ... One has to learn to see the structures.

An issue that is constantly topical in network circles is how one can see structures while being part of them. Can one be close and yet remain at a distance? On the other hand, is it at all possible to see the structures without getting up close?

To a degree the Foundation has consciously chosen, as concomitant with its assignment, if not to tear down then at least not to support established structures. Or at very least, the narrative has been formulated in this way; that the organization started from an outsider position and chose a different path. That neither the managing director nor the other members of the staff were members of Sweden's cultural establishment is often regarded as a factor that has contributed to the Foundation's success. Even though the organization has since developed an expert knowledge of the Swedish cultural landscape.

People who do not belong

As always, one can reflect on the narrative itself in which “the others”, those who do not belong in the Foundation – who may be defined, for example, as people with institutional loyalties, people from Stockholm or people who wear black – are seen as being excluded. This can be seen as exclusion even if the people involved are normally seen as those with power and influence. Seeking to move away from the centre of power is, of course, a way of reducing the negative effects of network-construction and of retaining the positive aspects.

Because even though one can criticize networks and understands that they can give rise to suspicion, one has to recognize that they are essential to the Foundation. If one wants to access complex, qualitative knowledge one has to dare to get up close and to collaborate with other people. If one wants to work with a very small staff then one has to make use of networking. And if one wants the grants to accelerate one has to collaborate. Networking is part of the character – as well as one of the strengths – of the operation.

The Foundation values networks very highly. It is no accident that it supported *Kulturnät Sverige* [Cultural Network Sweden] at an early stage or that it has sought to spread information about the European network called Lab for Culture in Sweden. Indeed, the networks are considered when judging applications for explaining why a specific group was granted initial funding. Managing director Jonas Anderson explains:

I sat down with them and discussed and looked at where they were based, what neighbours they had, what were their strengths, which networks they were part of and concluded that this was a project which we ought to be supporting.

Thus one may conclude that “network” is a keyword if one wants to understand the Foundation. The organization works in networks. It evaluates projects based on their networks. It offers networks to others. It creates networks. Networks are both a precondition for the Foundation’s operations and a result of its labours. And even though networks may be criticized, one must ask if they are not, in fact, essential. For what genuine alternative is there?

Goals, morals and musicality

In the future we may, perhaps, see a form of leadership which can shift between manager and staff member depending on the character of the matter in hand.

Administrator Birgitta Persson

In everyday circumstances we often talk about leadership as though it is the preserve of a single individual, a manager, a leader – in the context of the Foundation, a “Jonas Anderson”. Management research, on the other hand, sees leadership as something complex; something that is dependent on circumstances and that has many dimensions. Focus is not solely on the individual but on the entire system and scholars therefore speak of a “post-heroic” attitude to leadership.

However, it is impossible to get away from the fact that managing director Jonas Anderson has played a major part in developing the culture of the Foundation for the Culture of the Future. While he was employed by the Swedish Ministry of Culture he worked on the proposal that resulted in the Foundation. He has led the organization throughout its life and he may well be the only person who has a complete picture of the Foundation’s activities.

Ignoring his influence is difficult, if not impossible even though he has, of course, by no means been the only influential person. As we know, there is a board at the top of the organization, an extensive network surrounding it and, not least, three women on the staff: Birgitta Persson, Lena Pählman and Sinikka Tenho who have all been there more or less since the Foundation’s inception.

The limited size of the staff has been a key factor. The fact that the money has gone to cultural activities and not been spent on administration has contributed strongly to legitimizing the Foundation. Also, the tightly-knit little group has led to a supple, rapid and flexible way of working as “independently responsible people communicating on the move”. At the same time, the small staff has made the administration vulnerable and has required an attitude free from prestige.

On Mondays the staff generally sit down together at the office in Uppsala, jointly opening the post and updating each other on what is happening. The rest of the time they are on the move. In the case of the managing director this means driving about 70 or 80 thousand kilometres each year:

This enables me to visit much of Sweden, to meet an awful lot of people, talk to an awful lot of people and have a lot of time in which to reflect and preparation as well as having time to talk a great deal on the phone.

Travelling generates information

Constant travelling distinguishes the Foundation from other organizations providing grants for the arts sector whose staff generally stay at home waiting for applications and visits. From the Foundation’s perspective there is a belief that travelling generates information. In an everyday setting one has the opportunity to see what is actually being created, the art itself. And, with one’s own eyes, one can see how different parties interact and how well established they are. One can talk to people who are close to them and one can even turn up unexpectedly. This gives one a more complete picture – and, once again, it is a matter of seeking out what we term more complex and qualitative information.

This is also popular among the people that receive grants. Many of those we have spoken to have stressed the value of these meetings with the Foundation even though some of them claim that the prospect of a visit from the Foundation can be “a bit scary”.

A former board member maintains that the travelling symbolizes the leadership style of the Foundation:

It is a question of courage. Jonas has the courage to travel around, the courage not to be elitist, the courage to be curious and not to know where he will end up.

Being such a flexible organization requires staff who are able to take responsibility and a director who can trust his staff. As Birgitta Persson puts it:

I could never work with a conventional boss; I am much too independent. I am happiest with people who are unafraid and unconventional, people who dare to try out new things but who also stand up for their opinions. I can then complement such people and support them with the “conventionality” that I can provide.

Birgitta Persson has been at the Foundation since the start and is a fine example of the fact that every manager needs a dedicated staff. She calls Jonas Anderson the “torpedo” and regards herself as his “back up” – and her boss agrees:

She is the reliable fundament that I can always leave to its own devices because she is so experienced and has such good judgement.

Together they make a good “combo”, as somebody has described them. One of them keeps everything in order, gathering things together and following them up, structuring and organizing; the other acts in an extravert fashion with strategy and tactics. And both parts are, of course, essential.

Greater freedom and greater power

It seems as though the Foundation had an image of its ultimate goal right from the start and has been patiently and stubbornly navigating towards it ever since: from the turbulent beginnings, via resistance and adaptation to the needs of the world around for a safe anchorage – and on to the ultimate goal. On the one hand, the Foundation has always known what it has to do; that it is to fulfil its mission and then dissolve itself. On the other hand it has adapted itself to the needs of the world around, for example by constantly asking itself where the needs actually lie and how the organization can best fulfil its brief. It is this that is generally termed “leadership musicality”; knowing when to act and how and keeping in time with the world around.

The open, inquisitive approach has almost certainly been an asset in this regard. By not remaining in the office but, instead, travelling round the country, seeing and experiencing, meeting and talking to masses of people, the Foundation has gathered a unique fund of information and has been able to calibrate its own views against the world around.

Over the years the managing director has been given ever greater freedom – and influence. This situation, as we have noted, posits the existence of a system of formal controls. It also requires that the Foundation is operated in a transparent and public manner and that there is trust and, not least, an inherent moral compass. For a body such as the Foundation, that was suspect from the start and that has operated in an unconventional manner, high moral standards are essential. The smallest mistake would merely fuel suspicion.

At the office the staff underline the fact that matters are carefully compartmentalized. Birgitta Persson explains, for example, how she separates the Foundation’s business from her private life. She has two telephones, for example, and always pays for courses she attends out of her own pocket:

I never want to hear that I have exploited, to my personal advantage, an organization that I have worked for. This is what makes me feel that I have a backbone. There is a moral dimension in this.

Several people we have talked to have commented on Jonas Anderson’s understanding of where the boundaries lie; that he does not maintain a personal agenda but is always loyal to the Foundation’s brief. As someone remarked, he is not madly ambitious, has a strong sense of duty and ensures that he does what he has promised to do. This is naturally important to his leadership and, by extension, to the legitimacy of the Foundation.

Jonas Anderson explains his sense of duty by the fact of his growing up on a farm where nobody could avoid the work:

I have a terribly strong sense of duty which is a burden ... If I have promised to do something or to supply something I do it. This is a burden to the people around me because I make demands on them too.

However important structures and systems may seem, one has to admit that people and their values are highly important and that the operations depend on people. Who occupies which post is important, whether they are members of the staff, the board or of networks. Had a different person occupied Sinikka Tenho’s post they might have created a much more inward-looking organization. Different board members, with less financial acumen, might have seriously reduced, rather than increasing the Foundation’s capital as is now the case and this would have had a serious impact on the arts sector in Sweden. And a different managing director, with the same brief, influence and freedom as Jonas Anderson but with a lesser moral sense, more personal ambition and a larger ego might have caused a catastrophe.

In step with the times

There are other factors, too, that make the Foundation unique. One such is the time limitation. Ever since its birth, the Foundation’s demise has been ordained. The organization is a temporary body, a “real project”, a non-institution by definition. And the Foundation has not sought to change the conditions.

The Foundation is also an organization with a limitation on its resources. True, it has its own capital to manage but it has chosen not to seek further funding. Neither by selling itself on the market nor by applying for more funding from politicians. Both the limitations on time and resources are uncommon elements in the arts-policy sector.

One positive effect is that the Foundation has been able to concentrate on its core activities and has not needed, like so many other institutions – to devote time to working for survival or lobbying to get more resources. This, in itself, has created a form of freedom and makes it possible to act independently. And we are also

aware of what a deadline can do in increasing productivity, creativity and focus.

Perhaps the time limitation has helped to create a form of meaning and direction. The organization has been aware of its meaning and direction. One knows where one is going and can allow oneself to develop over time in that one knows that, one day, one will disappear. In the case of the Foundation, how it develops over time and in step with the times is clearly apparent.

The very first phase was inward looking. The staff devoted themselves to developing methodologies and systems and dealt with whatever applications happened to turn up. Concentrating on routines at the beginning created opportunities for development later on. Birgitta Persson explained:

If one makes a toolbox that is simple and well defined, one has time to think instead of having to deal with crises on a day-to-day basis.

Development is a concept that is characteristic of the Foundation throughout its existence. During its lifetime it has developed from an organization disseminating monetary grants to a knowledge organization. In the first years the Foundation acted on the applications that were submitted and suffered from disappointments. After that the organization started more of its own events and became increasingly proactive. For instance the Foundation made it possible for the *Ad hoc* group to submit initiatives and the managing director's own allocation increased. At the same time activities such as think tanks, coaching and other forms of knowledge or information also increased.

One reason for this can be found in the world at large. It is when one can see the need for this type of information and exchanges of expertise that the proactive, knowledge-based aspects of the operations grow. At the same time, development is conscious and driven from within. If one wants one can regard this as an indication of an increasing maturity, of becoming established and offering its information and its network to other people.

But unlike many organizations, resources are not expended on cosmetics. The Foundation has not changed its graphic profile unnecessarily; its website is simple; there have been no increases in staff who still work from the same office in Uppsala. All this contributes to legitimizing the organization.

Initially the situation was far from easy. The organization was faced with a strong headwind. Managing director Jonas Anderson explains:

For the first three years things were pretty hellish. I expected to be executed every day. Those years were like a never-ending marathon on an uphill course or like going over rapids.

As we have repeatedly noted, the chosen operational method was smart. During this period the independent monitoring groups, the *Ad hoc* groups, were formed, as a sort of peer review and such measures are also important in legitimizing an institution working in fields such as art and science. The Foundation also ensured that other bodies in this field were involved in judging applications which brought a certain legitimacy via established parties even though there was also criticism of not being a sufficiently independent alternative.

Legitimacy has also been generated from the fact of being more generally in the right place at the right time. Right from the start the Foundation was asked to support growth and development and, at an early stage, the organization was concerned about collaborating with different sectors and with cultural entrepreneurship; ideas that have become increasingly topical.

In similar fashion we can see a shift in the cultural life that the Foundation has supported: from large, centralized organizations to smaller, atomized units which – partially assisted by the Foundation – join together in voluntary networks and work across boundaries. To quote from the 2007 annual report:

New cultural activities frequently look for alternative types of organization and funding. They do not adapt to existing support structures which are often badly suited to their needs. Hybrid forms grow up, with a limited operational grant as a base but with most of their budget relying on temporary, outside sources of funding. These are often small, flexible units that can operate in several spheres at the same time and that can mediate between the interests of different areas of society. They operate in a borderland with new roles and directions that it can be difficult for society in general to understand. The foundation monitors and supports such processes.

This type of operation is attracting more and more attention in the field of organizational theory. Once again its base is in some form of civil logic and it is largely dependent on networking. There is seldom a rigid organizational structure and often no formal leader. Activities are nomadic, temporary and organic. They often change form and extend across boundaries whether these boundaries pertain to art, nations or sectors.

This can partially be seen as a reaction to individualization; as a way of reducing the individual's vulnerability and creating a new form of community. At the same time that this type of operation concerns itself with the people who form part of it, it also seeks to retain its freedom and independence.

That the Foundation supports it and draws attention to it is interesting – and significant. For, at a fundamen-

tal level, there are, of course, similarities between this type of organization and the Foundation's own working methodology. The Foundation is and has been an alternative: primarily for the arts sector but also in its form and its operational mode. Being a foundation with its own capital is central. This fact creates the conditions for the organization's independence and for the possibility of working without regard to the whims of politicians or of the market. In the fact of being a foundation there is a sort of mental space for alternative ways of working.

Perhaps the Foundation can regard itself as both a product and a producer of some form of ideology; a body that emphasizes community, collaboration, quality, values and trust. Those, at least, form a constant theme. The structures have been established, the controls are in place, the goals are clearly defined but there is room for people too. This is seen most clearly in the organization's faith in qualitative, complex knowledge which contradicts the pattern of society in general which is generally going in the other direction.

The Foundation is not the alternative, or anarchistic, *Alternative*. The soft values are balanced by a measure of bureaucracy, by systems and order, regulation and control. And even if the Foundation is neither a government organ nor a commercial enterprise, it is happy to collaborate with both public and private sectors and, of course, the civil society. Fundamentally, there is less of dogmatism in the Foundation for the Culture of the Future and more of pragmatism.

The narrative consists of many more parts. Everything from networks that are a precondition of the operations but that are also suspect, to the importance of goals, morals and musicality and of adapting to the times and developing over time. Perhaps it is in this way that the Foundation balances, for example, between more or less bureaucratic aspects, between formal systems and informal qualities. It is claimed that balance is most easily achieved while moving. There is, undeniably, a savour of the contemporary – and perhaps of the future – in the Foundation for the Culture of the Future as an organization. ■ ■

**The
political system
cannot cope
with our
independence**

Jonas Anderson

Jonas Anderson has been the managing director of the Foundation for the Culture of the Future since its formation in 1994.

This publication seeks to describe the Foundation as a player in cultural politics at the policy-making level. What characterizes the Foundation's moves in this sphere?

Our great, and perhaps only strength is our independence: We have had money in the bank that no outside body has been able to order us to use in a specific manner.

Almost everyone has seen me as wandering about with a large bag of money on my head – and this has influenced their behaviour. Everyone approaching the Foundation has, in a sense, been very conscious of the money. Some of the consequences of this are really quite ironical. The major theatrical institutions sniffed around in the early days to see whether any funds were available. At the time there was no funding available from the Foundation and it ceased to interest them entirely. In this way the institutions lost the possibility of funding in the future. This is a reflection from the field.

What has your background contributed to the working methodology of the Foundation?

I do not hail from the centre. I did not grow up with an artistic, cultural canon from the fashionable parts of Stockholm. I come from rural Sweden. My father was a farmer and so I do not have the natural links that so very many other people in this field have. Naturally my background has consequences. In the best instance it will have given me a certain independence. And in the worst instance it may have caused me to act unprofessionally, at least initially. The natural thing would probably have been for me to create a network of managers around me. This was on offer but I chose a different strategy.

When you look back at fourteen years of operations, can you see anything that ought to have been done differently?

I should have travelled the country even more in the early years. And I should have listened even less to the authorities on the scene at the time. But the fact of the matter is that we had to invent the wheel immediately.

There was no model and no readymade technical systems. The political sphere was decidedly negative in its attitude to us and the greater part of the cultural sector, notably in Stockholm, was unresponsive. There were no safe paths to follow, no ways in or public relations people. We had to get to work and we learnt very much by trial and error.

Initially we were far too reliant on Stockholm when we needed to gather information. It took us a few years to liberate ourselves from this. Some of our boards have been interested in moving out into the real world which caused us to make innumerable visits and to talk to a vast number of people active in the cultural sphere. These trips required very careful preparation on the part of the office. This has taught us very clearly that working with the arts presents very complex problems, and not just in the major cities. This insight has been a decisive influence on our work.

One can relate both to the obstacles and to the lion-pits of the cultural sphere. One needs to be aware of them so that one does not risk falling into them. At the same time, one must remain aware of one's own blind spots and of the fact that, though one avoids the first tripwire, one may succumb to the next one... One way of coping with this has been to work in many arenas and many different contexts and numerous different places at the same time.

Have you maintained a consciously anti-elitist and non-centralized approach? Can one regard this as some sort of ideology?

No, for me it is more a matter of honesty. Our actions have been pragmatic and aimed at getting results, not at pursuing an ideology. We have been concerned with far too many different fields for it to be possible to place us in a particular ideological trend.

I worked for fifteen years in the civil service and this taught me how difficult it is to bring about change. After that I entered another bureaucracy, that of the policy-making government departments, and there I learnt how time-taking and meaningless a system is that invites collaboration on the basis of formal weight without producing any concrete results. The brief for the Foundation,

which I worked on myself, is primarily concerned with the organization's independence and that we should be working in our own way and establishing our own working methodology. When I was then handed responsibility for the operation I naturally had to defend these principles.

Why has the political sphere found it so difficult to make use of your experiences? So far your activities seem not to have made an impression on current arts policy.

Our independence means that the political sphere has difficulty in relating to us. Sadly, that is the way things work. For politicians we have been a non-factor. Dialogue with the Ministry of Culture has been practically non-existent. And dialogue with the Swedish Arts Council has been very limited seen over time. Our contact with the Swedish Arts Council has largely been restricted to our seeking their views on applications.

How does a new organization acquire legitimacy in the field?

Legitimacy is something that has to be gained and then constantly re-gained. Our first step was deciding to be totally transparent and to apply the principal of public access to records across the board. This meant that our experts were obliged to stand up for their views in public. This was something unusual, though nowadays increasing numbers of people in the arts are demanding this openness from the grant-giving government bodies.

Do you think that everyone in the cultural sphere in Sweden is aware of your existence?

When the Foundation was inaugurated, there was unanimous, negative publicity surrounding the whole issue of employee-owned investment funds. A lot of people wanted to have nothing to do with the various foundations. But when we actually got under way the media were suddenly silent. We tried various methods for letting people know of our existence in order to stimulate more applications but this was a difficult task. Local newspapers showed little interest. We wrote to all the municipal authorities in Sweden and offered to visit them to talk about our operations. And then we started travelling. Members of the *Ad hoc* committees have played a very important role as ambassadors, thus helping to make the organization known.

What bodies have you not been able to establish contact with?

The cultural institutions. We have had a dialogue with individuals but not with the institutions as such.

You immediately introduced a system of independent quality monitors. What makes a good quality monitor?

Courage, expertise and respect in your field. The colleagues whom you are going to judge need to have faith in you.

How common are these qualities?

They are very rare. In some areas like regional development, for example, it has been difficult to find people who are both familiar with the cultural situation and who combine this with an understanding of the region. It was extremely difficult to recruit people during the early years. There were many people who did not want to be associated with the employee-owned investment funds. After four or five years, when our legitimacy had grown, it was much easier to find people. But this is a task that demands courage on the part of the person undertaking it. They have to be prepared to pick out a handful of applications from a pile of perhaps one hundred, most of which come from colleagues or other well-known figures in their sphere.

We do not influence the quality monitors. They say precisely what they think. We can discuss their work on the level of principles but we never influence their judgement. We need to be able to rely on their knowledge and their integrity.

Are there quality monitors who have misused your trust?

Yes. And in those cases no grants have been paid. There are several instances of people not daring fully to embrace their task, not really able to make a choice but proposing far too many projects. In such cases they have automatically devalued their judgements.

And there have been quality monitors who have had an agenda of their own and have not kept to our rules but have made up their own! Such behaviour quickly becomes apparent. Their opinions are simply not very convincing.

What about your own influence?

That is an interesting question. One of my major interests is in literature. This is the field which we are worst at supporting.

How do you manage these situations so that the applicants do not suffer?

As a rule there are at least three quality monitors who look at the applications, sometimes even more. If we think that something is going astray we call in extra monitors or ask for help from last year's experts. Expertise has built up over the years. Initially there were seven or eight quality monitors active at one time. Nowadays the *Ad hoc* committee consists of some 20 to 25 people each year. We have increased the size of the group to match the increasing need for expertise.

The government's influence on applications for grants has been phased out over the years. This is an unusual development in the cultural sphere in Sweden where the Swedish Arts Council almost always has a say in what is done with government funding for the arts. Is this the first occasion on which a public player in the cultural sphere has withdrawn from the supervision of the Swedish Arts Council?

Without a doubt. I would maintain that the Swedish Arts Council's influence on us was limited right from the start. But we always respect their opinions *Ad hoc* even though it has transpired that the committee's members have found it easier to recognize what is new and non-institutional in the arts. The *Ad hoc* committee often has a higher level of originality but its opinions are frequently in line with what the staff at the Swedish Arts Council recommend. There have been periods when the Director General of the Swedish Arts Council has been a member of the board of the Foundation for the Culture of the Future. I have the greatest respect for how these people have managed to separate out their various undertakings even though, as a matter of principle, I consider that this was an unfortunate course of action.

Your proactive undertakings have increased, i.e., you have increasingly chosen to offer support without having an actual application. Is this not a risky policy that increases your power and influence at the expense of people active in the arts?

This has been one way of making use of the expertise that we have gathered over the years. My view is that it is legitimate for us to be proactive and the board has been made fully aware of this development. During the early years from 1994 to 1996 I had innumerable discussions with people from the cultural sphere, from the sciences, from international operations, small businesses and so on. An awful lot of them thought that we should give funding for programme control, that is, we at the top should identify those who should be given a chance. But when we looked into the consequences of this line of reasoning it did not feel at all comfortable. Though when we started being proactive and taking our own initiatives I was conscious of their argument. Initially the sum used for our own initiatives was limited to one million SEK per year, but this sum has increased throughout the period.

The year 2007 was an extreme case with a majority of the grants and the total funding being awarded to our own initiatives rather than to normal applications. But the picture is a complex one because, in reality, we often extract particularly interesting applications from the pile and propose some form of grant for planning or developing an idea if we think that they need this. Such moves are then credited to the list of our 'own initiatives'. This is a working methodology that we have developed ourselves. Last year there were 40–50 applications that were treated in a way different from the standard applications because we judged this to be a more efficient method.

If one compares the names in the Ad hoc committees with those that receive funding, one can see that the same people turn up over and over again. Is there a special 'gravity train' for quality monitors?

A number of people from the *Ad hoc* committees have also been among the applicants and have received grants though, most usually, they have been recruited at some time after they have received funding from the Foundation. The marketing director of the Nordic Watercolour Museum is an example of how the different roles can overlap. She was a quality monitor at the same time that the Watercolour Museum was receiving funding. But it was naturally other people on the *Ad hoc* committee who dealt

with the museum's application. One also needs to be aware of the fact that the name or title of an applicant can actually cover several different sorts of projects. The Nordic Watercolour Museum, for example, has run programmes for school collaboration for example.

We have spoken to some fifty people in connection with this report. Some of them claim that the grant profile is influenced by your desire to avoid conflicts, rather giving a smallish grant than facing up to a conflict.

This is true up to a point and in certain specific cases. There have been four or five cases where the Foundation has chosen to cover funding that the Swedish Arts Council or the Ministry was not able to finance. This applies, for example in the case of the Sörmland and Jämtland county theatres and the three latest regional film pools. These cost us a total of 10–12 million SEK. This seemed the simplest way of dealing with a problem that needed solving.

I prefer to be distinct if I say no rather than being evasive. It is really more a matter of not wishing to generate conflicts than actually being frightened of them.

What is the function of the money that you are able to apportion yourself in your capacity as managing director; grants of between 50 000 and 200 000 SEK?

Without money that can be made available immediately there would be no rapid results and we should not be able to act when a situation requires immediate action. The situation is partly a consequence of our organization being so small. I have never had to fight for this mandate. The board has always seen its value. When the main list of applications is considered, a substantial sum of money is usually reserved to meet needs revealed in subsequent dialogue between me and the ongoing project.

A very great deal of my time is spent in acting as a sparring partner for different types of initiatives. This has been the case for the last six or seven years and the dialogue continues throughout Sweden. This is a discreet but very interesting role which contributes a great deal to the successful operation of the Foundation.

Why have the grants generally been quite modest, often not more than a few million SEK?

I also imagined that we would, in due course, receive large-scale and elaborate applications; but this is not the case. It is possible that things would have developed dif-

ferently if we had started with our proactive strategy at an earlier date; i.e., if we had actively supported developmental projects earlier on.

What has been your greatest failure?

*Kulturnät Sverige** [Cultural Network Sweden]. The project received one of our largest grants – more than 6 million SEK – and was our greatest failure. The idea behind *Kulturnät Sverige* was to gather the entire cultural life of Sweden into a single network to improve access and to promote knowledge of the international situation in the arts. The project was based on an excellent study by Bi Puranen and there was solid financial backing. We put vast amounts of time and resources into the project together with *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond* [The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation] and the KK Foundation. But the project sank when Margot Wallström resigned as Minister for Culture and was succeeded by Marita Ulvskog. In due course, all the official backing was removed. This was a monumental waste of resources. Similar projects are currently being developed in several other European countries, but Sweden was first. The Ministry for Culture has not concerned itself with the development of digital media for many years.

What other lessons would you convey to a future organization?

Independence. Independence. Independence!

This is actually a complex question. Everything comes with its own specific situation and conditions. If the Foundation were to be replaced today I would propose a national foundation. In the future it may come to seem more natural to have more regional foundations. But I believe that these need to have a time-limit. Circumstances in the cultural sphere change very rapidly.

Do you think that the Foundation for the Culture of the Future will come to be considered as something unique in Swedish cultural policy?

Indeed. I fear that it will be. ■ ■

* *Kulturnät Sverige* was intended to promote access to Swedish culture via the Internet. The project resulted from a government study which started in 1995 and which became a government project in 1997.

During the years 2000–2004 *Kulturnät Sverige* was a government commission for which the Swedish Arts Council was given responsibility. But on 8 December 2004 Parliament approved the government's proposal that government responsibility for *Kulturnät Sverige* should cease.

http://www.kultur.nu/index_db.asp?action=om_kulturnatet

Many politicians have difficulty in defending the necessity of artistic creation and thus do not give serious priority to this field.

Project managers lay some of the responsibility for this institutional crisis on the artists themselves who, to an ever increasing degree, see themselves as promoters and defenders of old structures rather than acting as reflective participants in the public discussion of cultural policy.

Four policy programmes

Over the years the Foundation has focused on a number of areas of policy. These have constituted separate policy programmes by means of which the Foundation, on its own initiative, has applied its resources to studying and giving support to processes of change.

1 Regional culture

The policy programme “Development of regional culture” was operative from 2004 to 2007. Initially the project was intended as a sort of educational programme for politicians with the express ambition of increasing understanding of the situation facing the arts as well as their value. A strong impetus in this regard was David Karlsson’s doctoral dissertation “En chimär av endräkt” [A chimera of unity] presented in 2003 which discussed the ideological dimensions of local policies for the arts. The study clearly shows how competence in the cultural sphere declines the farther down the chain of decision-making one gets.

In reality the “Development of regional culture” became more a series of conversational dialogues that looked at trends and tendencies which might influence regional arts policies and the cultural life of the regions in the future.

Responsible for the programme was Philip Johnsson, a political journalist and a member of the county council in Värmland and formerly a political adviser to Minister for Culture Margot Wallström. Together with the project secretary Rebecka Nolmark he was working in a field subject to rapid change. At the same time, discussion of regional policy for the arts continued to be based on traditional self-images.

Some of the trends that the programme worked with were:

► The increasing numbers of professionally trained artists

When the policy for the arts agreed by Parliament in 1974 was being put into effect, most of the government funding given to the regions was intended for building institutions. These institutions provided work for the increasing numbers of trained professional artists of all sorts. In the mid 1990s this expansion ceased but the various educational establishments continued to train artists. In order to survive, increasing numbers of trained artists sought alternative employment.

► Sweden’s membership of the EU

Membership gave Sweden access to the EU’s regional and social fund. Initially it was the most northerly provinces that could apply for substantial sums for the arts which, in accordance with the EU’s rules have the same status as other activities. In due course the whole of Sweden became part of the target group. So far Sweden has found it rather difficult to gain grants from the EU. There is a lack of expertise and overview.

► Changes in regional administration

In the last decade many local authorities, including county councils and regional bodies, have discontinued their arts committees and shifted the decisions up to their executives. Politicians who have specialized in arts policy issues are less common today. There has also been a silent, ideological shift regarding the reasons for supporting the arts. The proposal to establish new and extended regions and the formation of regional authorities has strengthened this trend.

► Increased focus on an instrumental role for the arts

While the government continues to motivate its grants under the arts budget in accordance with the policy goals obtaining, which are based on a humanist understanding of culture, local decision-makers increasingly regard the arts as a path to new jobs, a more attractive region or a more competitive tourist goal.

The “Development of regional culture” project held some ten seminars in 2004–2007. The venues were determined on the basis of regional dilemmas and challenges.

Politicians and administrators were brought together with representatives of the business sector and with working artists for joint discussion of the role of the arts in the region’s development. The idea was to create a new constellation in which various types of decision-makers, opinion formers and creators could meet in dialogue without feeling the need for safeguards or for maintaining strict roles.

2 Renewal of cultural institutions

Between 1997 and 2000 the Foundation ran what turned out to be its most celebrated programme area devoted to “Renewal of cultural institutions”. Led by project manager Maria Fridh and secretary Rikard Hoogland, the programme looked into the situation of large and medium-sized institutions, principally by means of a series of open

seminars. The final report from the programme “Renewal is possible” (2000) has been widely circulated and is in use as a sort of handbook in several renewal processes.

During the 1970s cultural policy managed to attract major funding for reform by placing the arts in the service of improving society. The situation today is totally different and cultural institutions have to be much more flexible in their communications with the world around them in the opinion of those responsible for the project. Cultural institutions need to have a more open attitude to visitors. They must dare to enter into a dialogue with their own time rather than, as so often, erasing their unique qualities in the hope of reaching a wider public.

The authors also describe how many politicians have difficulty in defending the need for artistic creation and therefore do not give high priority to this field. They lay some of the responsibility for this institutional crisis on the artists themselves who, to an ever increasing degree, see themselves as promoters and defenders of old structures rather than acting as reflective participants in the public discussion of cultural policy.

The project managers’ provocative conclusion is that Sweden’s cultural institutions risk not only erasing their identity but even their right to exist.

(Fridh/Hoogland: *Förnyelse är möjligt*, 2000 or www.framtidenskultur.se/insti.htm)

3 Culture and the schools

The start of the policy programme “Culture and the schools” is an example of the Foundation’s self-analytical efforts. Right from the start there was an ambition that the Foundation should give priority to culture for young people. But the meeting between youthful initiatives and funding simply did not take place: the exciting, pioneering applications were totally absent. With a view to creating a greater understanding of youth culture a new policy programme was started in 1989 under the heading “Situation of young people”. The project concluded that what young people primarily need are opportunities for applying for funding locally with rapid processing of applications. The centralized system put in place by the Foundation with a lengthy process for dealing with them was not compatible with the networking and heterogeneous energy that supports youth culture. The result was that the Foundation decided to work primarily through the school system.

“Culture and the schools” has made use of the Foundation’s applications archive – both successful applications and those that have not resulted in funding – with a view to finding active groups and ideas that can be developed. The conferences have focused on the sore spots in the

school system; for example how unconventional school-work can be made compatible with the schools’ grading system and how the cultural sphere and the schools can free themselves from their fixed notions about professional identities and can make their resources available to each other in new ways.

The effect of these efforts can be seen in the fact that the number of applications concerning children and young people in school increased tenfold. Of the total number of projects funded by the Foundation over the years, about one tenth have been concerned with youth culture.

4 Local culture

The “Local culture” policy programme started in 2000 to coincide with a growing need for training, discussion of ideas and exchange of experience in the locally rooted cultural sector. “Local” refers here both to the relation between people and where they live. “Local culture” does not primarily address people living in the country but also applies to city neighbourhoods and local towns, i.e., what can be considered a person’s closest geographical unit and social preserve.

Coordinator for the programme was Lasse Ernst who is a producer and filmmaker based at Vickleby on the Baltic island of Öland. “Local culture” made use of experiences from various national countryside initiatives from the 1990s but it developed a new and more stringent focus on the role of the arts in developing a district. One real eye-opener was the paucity of interest in the arts on the part of official development programmes and their lack of knowledge in this field.

The regional development agreements were signed at the end of the 1990s and were intended to promote regional strategies for long-term, sustainable economic development. Representatives of the public sector as well as private individuals and the voluntary sector took part in formulating the agreements. In many regions the cultural sector had the greatest difficulty in being reckoned as a force for development at all.

“Local culture” has made use of a broad definition of the notion of culture, seeing it rather as a network of meanings that are created by people through their social practices. The programme has highlighted and legitimized practical, often silent, knowledge of the situation facing professionals in the cultural sphere which is particularly vital outside the major cities.

Central to “Local culture” is the series of seminars, held on some 20 occasions, addressing such issues as heritage-based tourism, entrepreneurial ideas, cultural economics, etc. The seminars often deal with concrete

cases that lead to a theoretical superstructure through academic expertise. Most of the seminars are attended by local, regional, and central administrators with a view to bridging distances and creating new contact opportunities. Specific to “Local culture” has been the fact that there is always a joker in the pack, someone who can look at the arts sector and its problems from an unexpected direction, for example from the perspective of a psychologist, farmer, or therapist.

Characteristic of the seminars is that there is plenty of room for dialogue and for meeting other people and organizations. Questions of affiliation/identity/multiculturalism have enjoyed a prominent place in

the activities, though not seen in isolation. They have been tested against a reality that can be hard to capture. During the period of the project, “Local culture” has built up an extensive network of people and expertise in Sweden with about 1 300 primary contacts. The policy programme’s working methodology undermines, in an indirect fashion, the “downpipe” model that likes to place culture in one file and the environment, tourism and infrastructure, for example, in another. In 2007 and 2008 a number of seminars were conducted which viewed the Swedish experience in terms of an international fund. The “Local culture” programme is due to continue throughout 2010. ■ ■

Capital management

The Foundation for the Culture of the Future was originally granted a capital sum of 529 million SEK in 1994, but calculates that it will have disbursed about 850 million SEK when it finally ceases to exist in 2011. Thus the capital sum has almost doubled to the advantage of the purposes for which the Foundation was set up and the arts in Sweden in general.

A contributory factor to the successful management of the capital is the fact that the Foundation has had access to financial expertise and has shown courage as well as enjoying a measure of good fortune. Among the experts who have sat on the board of the Foundation are such noted figures from the world of finance as Gustaf Douglas, Robert Weil and Lennart Låftman. The current chair of the Foundation's board is Eva Redhe Ridderstad who also has roots in the financial sphere. She explains how successful the financial management has been and how well the finances have been managed by the various boards as well as by Sweden's Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency – known as Kammarkollegiet*.

“The Agency is excellent. They manage the Foundation's capital and they also take responsibility for administering the grants – which they do at a competitive

price. When I took over as chair in January 2007, the Foundation's capital was divided between interest-bearing securities, shares and a number of hedge funds. The major decision that the board faced was concerned with the proportions to be invested in the various types of assets. As we were approaching a running-down period and wanted to have a clear picture of our financial situation and control over the capital, we decided to successively sell off the shares. This was finally accomplished on 17 October 2007. The timing could not have been better because the share market began to fall drastically after that date. In the spring of 2008 we liquidated our hedge-fund investments and now have only interest-bearing investments left. This is a secure placement in a volatile financial situation and feels right.

In sum one can claim that the Foundation has managed its original capital very well. Thanks to active management, the half a billion SEK originally available turned into total assets of almost one billion SEK.”

* Kammarkollegiet – The Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency – was set up by King Gustav Vasa in 1539, though it was then known as the Counting Office. In 1639 the name was changed to Kungliga Kammarkollegium. The present name dates from 1921 and the agency's tasks include managing capital belonging to the government.