

## **Change is possible**

A final report by the Foundation Culture of the Future  
Programme for the Renewal of Cultural Institutions

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Maria Fridh & Rikard Hoogland

### **INSTITUTION**

In the course of development, institutions can stagnate; formal organisation, or "institutionalisation", has sometimes entailed that symbols, career paths, positions and private interests have come to dominate an institution, to the detriment of its original objectives.

### **HOSPITALISATION**

Hospitalisation, sometimes called hospital artefact or institution syndrome, can occur in all instances when a person is taken into care, and is characterised by varying degrees of apathy, an inability to take initiatives and make plans, and an obliteration of individual features.

From the Swedish National Encyclopedia, Nationalencyklopedin

The Foundation Culture of the Future was founded by the Swedish Government in 1994, on the basis of capital from the discontinued wage-earner funds.

THE FOUNDATION  
CULTURE FOR  
THE FUTURE

The purpose of the Foundation is to provide funding for longterm and innovative cultural projects.

The Foundation has now been in existence for six years and has contributed nearly 450 million Swedish kronor towards supporting more than 950 different cultural projects during that period. For more information, please visit the Foundation's website at [www.framtidenskultur.se](http://www.framtidenskultur.se).

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RIKARD  
HOGLAND

## foreword

In 1995, the Foundation Culture of the Future embarked on its external activities by announcing the opportunity to apply for funding for cultural projects. The conditions for obtaining funding were intentionally worded in such a way that everyone, regardless of whether they were an individual or an organisation, could apply for grants according to the relatively loosely outlined rules.

The underlying idea was to thoroughly survey both the expectations on the Foundation and the imagination of those involved in cultural life and artistic pursuits. It was essential that the Foundation's work should not be based on pre-conceived notions, but that it should instead evolve in dialogue with the outside world. The applications were part of this dialogue that was also pursued in several other arenas.

And we got what we asked for – in 1995, the Foundation received 2,800 applications. A vast number of these came from established institutions which submitted project-oriented applications on behalf of what could be regarded as ongoing activities, i.e., projects that they had been engaged in for longer periods, or had wanted to engage in, but that were no longer given priority within the main organisation, alternatively, important development projects that they were unable to finance within the limits of their regular funding – partly due, to put it bluntly, to an inability to reconsider their priorities.

The Foundation rapidly faced an important watershed in this respect. How was the Foundation to contribute optimally to development within established institutions, without running the risk of being swamped by applications. There is a time limit to the Foundation's assignment, and it cannot, therefore, assume responsibility for continuous operations.

The choice stood between continuing to process applications from cultural institutions, and their underlying needs, strictly according to the rules that would gradually need to be tightened and clarified, or taking a clarifying initiative in the field. Cultural institutions comprise a large section of the Swedish cultural field and are naturally entitled to reasonable scope

within the operations of the Foundation.

After extensive discussions, it was decided that a programme should be initiated, under the clay-footed heading of “Development of existing cultural institutions”.

The task description was clearly instrumental – the Foundation wanted a study to be performed, in the form of a dialogue, through a number of open discussions. The purpose of the study was to set the course for the Foundations future activities in this field.

It proved difficult to find a few active and competent people in Swedish cultural life who dared take on the task of discussing the predicament of institutions on behalf of the Foundation. But that is another story.

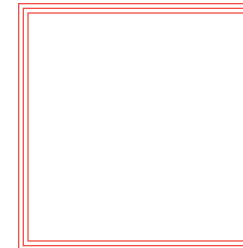
Happily, the project came to be handled by Maria Fridh and Rikard Hoogland, who succeeded in a highly competent way in initiating and completing a qualified debate on this complex and urgent issue.

A detailed summary of these seminars – open, albeit directed, discussions – is available at the Foundation’s website, [www.framtidenskultur.se](http://www.framtidenskultur.se).

Naturally, the instrumental guidelines soon became obsolete, as open discussion took over. As you will see from the report, the journey in some ways became the destination. In four carefully prepared seminars a number of issues were thematically debated. The seminars were to influence both the activities themselves and public debate.

It was agreed that a traditional, summarising report would not be produced. Instead, the managers of the survey would report in book form on a few texts discussing the problems that emerged in the study and seminars, as a form of relay baton. The material in the book will also be available on the Foundation’s website. Our hope is that the texts can serve as a starting-point for further discussions.

Jonas Anderson  
MD, The Foundation Culture of the Future



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# introduction

So, what kind of text is this? Officially, it is the final report of the **Foundation Culture of the Future's** programme **Renewal of Cultural Institutions**, but this is hardly a traditional study, nor does it express the opinions of the Foundation. The perspective on cultural institutions, and the ideas that we present, are our own perspectives and ideas, based on the experiences we made over the three years the programme has existed. Through discussions in a consultation group, at seminars and during our study tours, we have posed new questions and tested the relevance of the theses we presented.

We perceived that there was a great need to discuss issues concerning cultural policy, the internal life of institutions, ways to break the stalemate. When our project began, silence was almost complete in the field of cultural policy; even many of the artists displayed a massive lack of interest in discussing such issues. This was probably due to a feeling that the debate was never conducted on their terms, and that no one was interested in what artists had to say.

Cultural policy was one of the final great building-blocks of post-war welfare society. Great hopes were pinned on culture, not least with regard to its potential to attract larger and broader audiences. But there was also a belief in the potential of culture to contribute to the development of society. In the previous decade, this aspect – culture as a good helpmate – has been emphasised in fields where other political measures have failed: from public health to integration.

We hope that this text will inspire and generate debate. Some will most likely feel that we are treading on their toes and demand what right we have to express these views, but our background in the arts and in art distribution, within and independently of institutions, gives us reason to believe that we are capable of taking an independent, critical view of the cultural institutions. One of our basic questions has been why it is so difficult for institutions to focus on the activity, and why the principals so rarely dare have confidence in the management and operations of cultural institutions.

**THE ASSIGNMENT** The assignment formulated by the Foundation for the programme includes the following:

“The Foundation has decided to concentrate more on encouraging renewal of existing cultural institutions. By formulating programmes for pilot projects, etc, in this field, the Foundation will attempt to initiate processes that may have more of a long-term effect in that they encourage renewal and a positive attitude to change in different cultural institutions. A discussion about renewal of work forms could also be discussed in this context.”

The idea was that the Foundation would define active programmes for various pilot projects already after the programme had been in place for a year, and that a couple of pilot projects would be launched already at the start of the programme. However, the institutions themselves prevented this. Instead, our activities (in agreement with the Foundation) were to concentrate on encouraging a positive attitude to change within the cultural institutions by means of public opinion, and to create discussion forums.

We noticed early on that there was a dormant need to discuss cultural policy issues, and the programme area has therefore influenced and participated in, the development towards a questioning of the current stagnant cultural policy. Many opinions that were virtually taboo when we started, are now widely embraced.

At an early stage the programme formed a consultation group, which represented different areas<sup>1</sup>, and during the first six months (autumn 1997) we organised a seminar, *Crisis and renewal*, at which we discussed issues such as hierarchies and principals of cultural institutions, artistic quality versus cultural policy goals, ways in which our perception of the world is influenced by new virtual and geographical centres of thought. The seminar also provided opportunities for us to investigate whether others shared our opinion about which subjects needed to be discussed. Our idea was to invite a “Mini-Sweden”, representing the cultural institutions, to the seminar. We invited representatives from industrial cities undergoing change (Norrköping, Borås, Gävle), rural areas (Gotland and

1. The consultation group consisted of Peter Falthin, composer (1999–); Lena Holmstrand-Kreuger, project manager; Marita Jonsson, director of research; Gunno Klingfors, musician (1997); Anders Kreuger, curator; Björn Linnell, writer; Sven Lundström, museum director; Ragnar Lyth (1998–), director; Clara Mannheimer, writer (1998–); Barbro Smeds, dramatist; Mats Zetterquist, musician (1997–1998); and Anita Jonsson, adjourned from the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs.

Jämtland), big cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö) and northern cities (Sundsvall, Umeå, Skellefteå and Luleå). The most difficult thing was to get the principals (i.e. cultural politicians) to attend the seminar.

In spring 1998, we visited the places that had sent delegates to the seminar, to meet representatives of cultural institutions, people working in culture, boards, councils and administrations. On these visits we collected information on how they viewed their own “crises”, and discussed issues relating to the problem of regenerating cultural institutions.

We commissioned several debate papers on subjects that had been discussed by the consultation group, had come up during the seminar, or been raised during our visits. The texts were published on the Foundation’s website ([www.framtidenskultur.se/debatt.html](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/debatt.html)) and also formed the basis for the three seminars we organised in 1999. In March, we organised *Buildings* in Gothenburg, a seminar about the buildings that house cultural institutions, and architectural manifestations, the virtual buildings that can be created as an alternative, the contents of existing buildings, and the conflict between the control that principals exercise over the goals, and the activities within the building. In May, the seminar *What are artists good for?* was held in Visby. It concerned artistic training, and the debate centred on the question of whether we are creating too many artists. In September, finally, we held a seminar in Umeå, entitled *Pursuing the audience*, to discuss the relationship between cultural institutions and their audiences. In this context we also asked whether cultural funding is allocated to the right activities, or if the map needs to be redrawn, and also questioned the boundary between popular and high culture.

All the seminars were documented, and all documentation was published on the Foundation’s website ([www.framtidenskultur.se/seminar.html](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/seminar.html), summary in English at [www.framtidenskultur.se/renewal.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/renewal.pdf)). An earlier version of the final report was also subjected to a working seminar in June 2000<sup>2</sup>.

2. Participants were Professor Svante Beckman; Mari ta Jonsson, director of research; Anders Kreuger, curator; Dr Sven Nilsson; Björn Linnell, writer; Arne Ruth, writer; Tiina Rosenberg, lecturer, Stockholm University; Barbro Smeds, dramatist; Johan Öberg, writer; Sven-Olov Wallenstein, lecturer at Valand College of Art.

WHAT IS A  
CULTURAL  
INSTITUTION?

What does a local library that is open two afternoons a week have in common with a national institution such as the Royal Dramatic Theatre? Both have a principal that gives them an assignment, and both are knowledge banks at the disposal of the public. However, they are vastly different, and so, consequently, is the nature of the problems they face. This illustrates the problem of writing a text of this kind – it can never be generally applicable but should be read selectively. Our interest has focused mainly on medium-sized institutions with regional principals. The national institutions face similar problems, but their situation is even more complex.

One could also ask whether cultural institutions are worth worrying about. Should we not be abandoning that form of organisation, as a remnant of 19th century educational ambition? Much of what is regarded to be exciting and innovative now takes place in a more informal context, far from the sometimes factory-like production methods of the institution. Cultural institutions represent continuity and tradition.

Many people would claim that the building itself is the bearer of tradition, but the tradition is maintained by those working in the institution – knowledge that is passed on, the meetings that take place there. The building, however, seems to be essential to the traditions and development of the city, as a symbol of the city as a bearer of culture.

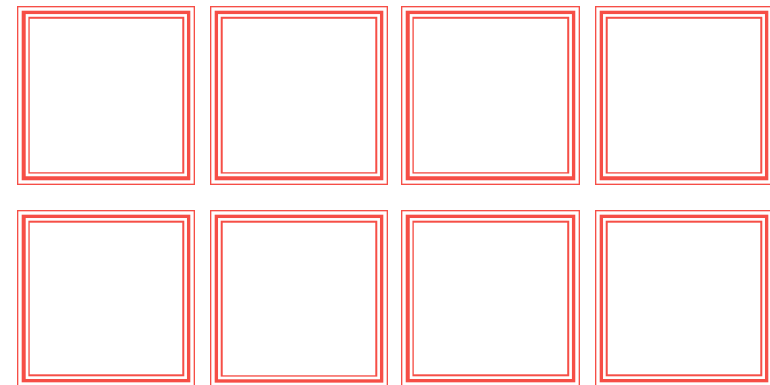
Nonetheless, we nourish a hope that institutions have slumbering resources that could be activated. There are many examples where lively cultural institutions have had positive effects on external, independent cultural activities, when there is something to relate to, to criticise, to polemise with. This can generate organised and non-organised exchange.

However, it is essential that the institutions and their buildings are scrutinised un sentimentally. Many cultural institutions are obsolete in their current form, their assignments belong to another era and activities are maintained cosmetically. Some should simply be closed down, while others need to fundamentally redefine their assignment.

However, caution is advised with regard to words such as renewal,

interdisciplinary, and innovative. These expressions soon become common place; by bandying them around we demonstrate that we are up-to-date. Nowadays, any text about cultural institutions has to contain these three buzzwords, albeit without needing to substantiate them. Renewal is all too often used as a euphemism for downsizing.

In our opinion, the most important thing is that the discussion about cultural institutions is ongoing, and that the discussion focuses on how cultural institutions can become active and flexible partners in the future. Our proposal does not suggest the final solution to every problem afflicting the institutions. Our goal has been to highlight some of the fundamental problems, some of which are often denied. We concentrate mainly on how to restore faith in those who create the contents of the institutions, and on how to provide them with new impulses.



# buildings

It emerges that the library classifications systems is part of how our epoque regards itself. Ideology, in short.

Magnus Florin  
Expressen 2 April 2000

Most of our national cultural institutions were built long before Sweden became a democracy. Who did they see as their audience, what educational or cultural approach is imbued in the walls of those buildings?

The buildings emit a didactic ambition to teach the less knowledgeable the right knowledge. The entire dramaturgy of the buildings, every museum hall, is based on this. One obvious example is the enormous staircases we have to struggle up to get into the museum, archive or library. The visitor is small, but true knowledge is great. These are not places that encourage exchange of thought, discussion or questioning.

When the denizens of regional towns built their institutions, the object was to manifest this group's self-image, and to differentiate it from the rest of the population. The buildings (often miniature copies of the national institutions) symbolise civilisation, the opposite of untamed nature.

The idea was also to construct an image of our proud tradition, and to juxtapose it with the remarkable exotic finds that explorers brought back with funding from private collectors. A great deal of national culture is a dramatisation; the idea was to unite the nation around one history and one folk tradition. Many features were copied from other European countries, including the ideals for museum buildings.

Many institutions ignore the fact that their building exudes an ideology that entirely contradicts that which they are trying to achieve with their activities. In fact, they try to hide the building from their visitors, sometimes by building exhibition rooms within the rooms, or by placing both audience and actors on the large stage and leaving the great gold-embellished auditorium empty.

The building of large cultural institutions is still highly prestigious. It is a manifestation of the city, a symbol of the city's ambition to create an identity through its institutions. The city's politicians want to build a monument over their own era, and they choose buildings that express monumentality rather than being adapted to the activity. Often they replicate the institutional dramaturgy that was behind the cultural institutions

of the 19th century. This also indicates that they have an antiquated perception of their audience<sup>3</sup>.

The result is that those who are appointed to run the activities in the newly built institutions have to apply provisional solutions to counteract the building. Some new buildings incorporate a degree of flexibility (moveable walls, partially mobile seating), but this flexibility often requires such heavy staff work that it cannot in practice be utilised.

The fact that every new building involves new responsibilities is not quite as evident to the principals. It seems easier to find money for a new building than for a new content. Usually, the buildings are built in the hope that someone else – the government, the region or the local authorities – will assume a large portion of this responsibility.

The construction of the building is usually financed through peculiar methods to keep the visible costs down. Instead, the cultural institution is hit by a massive rent. On paper, it looks like the institution has obtained a considerable increase in allocated funds for its activities, whereas up to 30 per cent of its budget is spent on paying the rent.

The result is that the expansive activities that required these new premises in the first place, have to be cut down. The impressive building with its glass facades by the riverside is often left standing empty and silent.

Since many of these buildings originate in an endeavour to profile the city rather than to fulfil the needs of the cultural institution, it is remarkable that the institution (which cannot move out) should have to foot the bill. There is a risk that the cultural institution, with its new high costs, comes into conflict with local cultural activities over cultural funding. Since this manifestation fulfils a need for the city, it ought to be paid for by local government or county council funds centrally.

A new building has strong powers of attraction and arouses curiosity. However, if the contents are not perceived to be new and of better quality this curiosity will turn to oblivion.

These new cultural palaces are often built with a view to using the pre-

3. See also the seminar report from Huset (Buildings), Gothenburg, 15-16 March, 1999 ([www.framtidenskultur.se/huset.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/huset.pdf))

mises for a wider range of activities: conferences, youth activities, dance festivals, parties and fairs. This involves compromising with the design, sometimes with the result that no one is satisfied with the building. A typical example is the chamber music hall in Gävle Concert Hall, which is neither suitable for chamber music nor for conferences.

In other cases, attempts are made to revive the ruins of industrialism. The main objective here is to preserve buildings by giving them new purposes. Cultural activities and IT companies are considered to be particularly suitable. If there is no suitable activity, then one has to be invented to fill these buildings. If there are no needs, then these have to be invented. This usually causes problems, since the buildings – gasometers, warehouses, church-like factories – are frequently on the wrong side of town, without public transport or contact with the city centre. The cultural institutions have to devote large resources – staff and money – to building an infrastructure. Part of the funding allocated to the institution's activities therefore has to be spent on financing something that should be handled by other local government sectors.

These old industrial premises are usually situated in surroundings where the cultural institution cannot build up local participation. But a successful cultural institution needs to operate both internationally/nationally and locally.

The activities that are intended to take place in these buildings are juxtaposed with conservation interests, meaning that the changes to the building have to be kept to a minimum. The belief is that cultural institutions would entail the least possible destruction to the houses, that they should be conservationist, that they share a sense of values regarding beauty and traditions. The activities get larger premises, but end up in constant conflict with the conservationists when they try to make the premises more functional.

If these premises are given to existing cultural institutions, then the city is suddenly left with new empty premises that are equally unsuitable

for other activities. The most obvious example of this is all the 19th century theatre buildings with auditoriums and balconies, full of dazzling gold and red velvet. These theatres were built to house the touring theatres of the 1800s, with no space for workshops or administration.

Another illustrative parallel is the Swedish Church. The network of churches throughout Sweden was built according to the demographic structure and religious fervour at the time. For ethical, religious and conservationist reasons, this network is maintained more or less in full working order. Are the cultural institutions heading in the same direction?

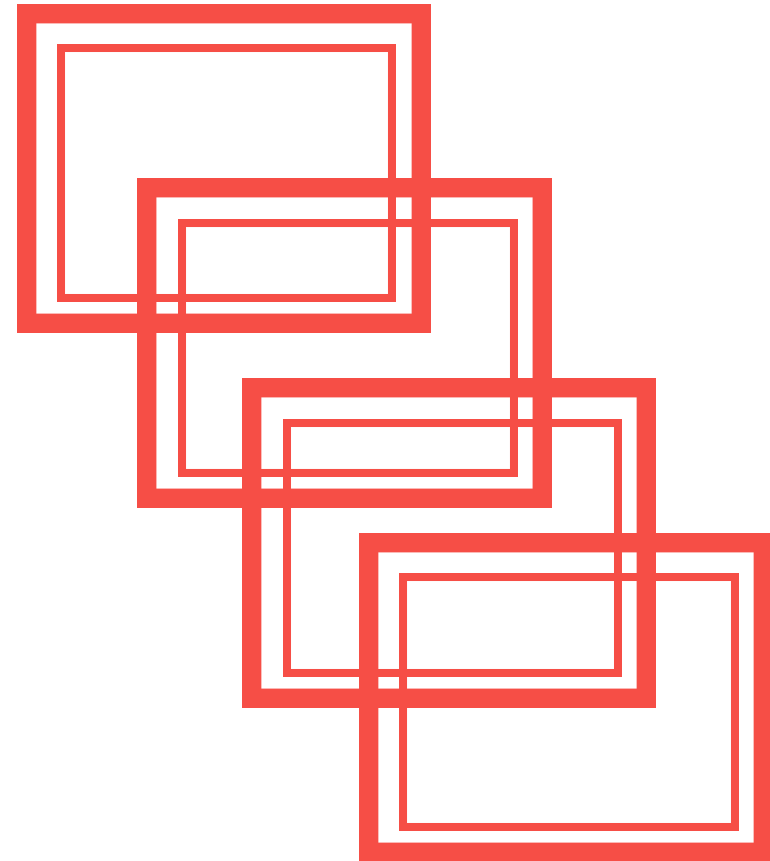
Neighbouring boroughs show very little interest in financing the institution in the new building, since it is primarily the city in which the institution is situated that gets the credit. The neighbouring borough might consider utilising the institution, but not paying for it – unless it is moved to that borough.

Museums are built primarily to exhibit collections, and new technology means that these collections could eventually be accessible everywhere. However, the new buildings that are erected do not incorporate this perspective. One instance of this is the new Moderna Museet, which has proved to be unsuitable for exhibiting contemporary art that uses new media. Yet again, we see how exhibitions have to work on getting round the limitations of the building, or placing activities in other premises.

One problem is that there is not enough knowledge about how to define a programme when commissioning a new cultural institution, a programme outline that specifies all the functions needed in the new building, and which is based on an analysis of the institution's requirements. This area would perhaps even benefit if a consultancy business were to be developed, where the consultant also oversees that the architects and builders adhere to the programme outline. How activities would be affected by proposed alterations to the building could also be analysed in the course of the building project. This could be one way of avoiding the constant compromises that so often characterise institutional building. It could be interesting here to

investigate the experiences made in the UK, where there is a strong tradition of formulating programmes.

We propose that a workshop be held with leading architects and institutions, to develop ideas on how future cultural institutions could be designed.



# the assignment

Throughout the modern era, moral philosophers have striven to reduce pluralism and disperse moral ambivalence.

Zigmunt Bauman:  
Postmodern ethics.

Today, the goals are similarly worded, but the people who are there to implement them are rarely as enthusiastic. In some cases, the meaning of the goals has changed. Many people might claim to be involved in educating the masses, although they go about it in an entirely different way to the traditional adult education organisations<sup>4</sup>.

In many cultural institutions, other goals have gained priority, such as the individuality and independence of art/culture, or an interest in the development of art and its potential to communicate. Today, a large portion of contemporary art (in different disciplines) is highly politicised, but does not fit into the paragraphs outlining the goals of the assignment, partly due to the fact that this art has a subjective basis. Its intention is to complicate, provoke and question common values, rather than to provide the “correct” answers. The fact that its forms also challenge traditional artistic concepts and values renders it even less acceptable to the principals.

The commissioners, the political powers and the administrators of cultural policy, do not consider culture in itself to be sufficient reason for them to assume financial responsibility. Culture is set against other, much more measurable areas. Thus, in order to justify spending on culture, measurability has to be invented. Attempts are made to scientifically prove the beneficial effects of culture consumption, targeted funds are allocated to cultural projects that are said to promote immigrant integration and equality, counteract bullying, etc. The cultural institutions receive new assignments, without receiving any additional funding.

The planned World Culture Museum in Gothenburg is an interesting example. A central decision is made to create a new museum, based on four existing museums. The museum is assigned a multi-cultural agenda, but the assignments of the incorporated museums do not match the new assignment. In this case, the positive side is that a current issue that needs to be dealt with culturally has been identified, while the negative aspect is that the result may be an old museum dressed up as something modern, and that the politicians lean back, in the belief that the issue has been resolved.

4. See Anders Kreuger: *Konst och nytta (Art and usefulness)* ([www.framtidenskultur.se/kreuger.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/kreuger.pdf))

It is symptomatic that discussions about the museum have largely revolved around where the museum should be situated, and the design of the exterior. When we asked what the World Culture Museum would contain, at the seminar about **Buildings** in Gothenburg, there was a compact silence<sup>5</sup>.

Another argument in favour of investing in cultural institutions is the regional development factor, but over the past few years, people have started asking if there really is an obvious link between investments in culture and regional development. The problem would rather seem to be that cultural activities have been tossed in as a final attempt to save the situation. The areas that appear to benefit the most from investment in culture are the towns with low tax rates sprinkled around the highly taxed city that has invested in culture, since businesses can establish themselves there and attract personnel using the argument that it is easy to access cultural activities. They become attractive places to live.

Naturally, we should continue to study the effects of investment in culture. The positive effects are usually indirect – more media coverage of the region, improved self-esteem, and so on. All this can, of course, also influence the development of businesses and choice of dwelling place in the longer perspective.

More and more of institutional funding has to be sought on the basis of various cultural policy goals, but these reallocated funds are primarily used to maintain the institution's regular activities, rather than to invent any new orientation. The institution's management and staff obviously have to claim that they are fulfilling the new goals, so commissioners can state that the goals are fulfilled and thus justify the investment to the electorate. On the surface things look good, but underneath is a different reality.

Moreover, many of the goals are completely impossible to fulfil, at least in consideration of the size of the allocated funds, a fact which both commissioner and institution are aware of. Together they create a "deceptive facade" to obscure the issue.

Is it hard to justify cultural activities – do the cultural institutions have

5. Huset (Buildings), Gothenburg, 15-16 March 1999 ([www.framtidenskultur.se/huset.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/huset.pdf))

such weak support from the electorate, the real commissioners? When Anton Hagwall interviewed ten young presumptive consumers of culture, even the least culturally interested among them could clearly and concisely justify the necessity of culture in society; that culture creates common values in society<sup>6</sup>. This is an argument that no politician appears to dare voice. In Denmark a study was performed concerning the status of the national theatre *Det Kongelige*. It emerged that an overwhelming majority were of the opinion that public funding of the theatre was necessary; many thought funding should be increased. (The study also related the question about funding to the interviewee's private economy.) It was interesting to find that support for the theatre was at least as strong, if not stronger, outside Copenhagen and among those who never visited the theatre. *Det Kongelige* was regarded as a necessary part of Danish society, and it was reasonable that it should cost money.

When Paul Lindblom, in connection with the study *En ny kulturpolitik* (A new cultural policy) in 1972, spoke of cultural policy as "a social environmental policy", the "cultural workers" of the time probably agreed wholeheartedly. The increase in the scope and assignment of cultural policy took place simultaneously with a substantial increase in funding. The politicians still maintain this perspective today – that culture is a little helpmate that on the surface will solve all the difficult social problems that regular politics have failed to resolve. Today, however, there are problems on three fronts:

ART POLICY/  
CULTURAL POLICY

6. See Jan Gradvall: *Vilka är framtidens kulturkonsumenter?* (Who are the future consumers of culture?) Anton Hagwall: *Tio intervjuer* (Ten interviews) ([www.framtidenskultur.se/gradvall.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/gradvall.pdf))

- New assignments usually do not involve new funding.
- The assignments are rarely based on what the artists/institutions want, but are regarded as an additional task and are performed without enthusiasm, draining resources from other activities.
- Cultural activities are increasingly becoming an experimental laboratory in which politicians try out their party agendas.

Do we, as Björn Linnell claims in a report, need to divide today's cultural policy into one cultural policy that should be integrated in all fields, and one policy for art?<sup>7</sup> A few years ago, the cultural department of Gothenburg implemented such a division with regard to allocating funds. Perhaps the time has come for an unsentimental scrutiny of the positive and negative effects of the cultural "environmental policy".

Instead, this approach to cultural policy has been re-launched at the European level. In 1997, the European Council published a report, *In from the margins*, which in turn was based on the Unesco report *Our creative diversity* (1996). *In from the margins* presented integration of cultural policy within all fields as a phoenix that would be capable of raising the financial support for culture to new unprecedented levels. The report displayed a remarkable unwillingness to deal with the complexity of the issue by, for instance, studying the positive and negative effects that this form of cultural policy has had in Sweden.

Exposing activities to competition is one method that is being tested, i.e. by letting local or regional activities be handled by entrepreneurs. Another method involves complex systems of commissioning boards and offices. The objective is that politicians should not sully themselves by involvement in activities or respond to the arguments put forth by these activities. Information is filtered and selected by committees consisting of universalists rather than experts.

This means that the political boards can neither defend nor discuss the activities of cultural institutions with a critical electorate. It also

7. Björn Linnell: *Är kulturlinjen bara historia eller är kulturlinjen historia dess framtid?* ([www.framtidenskultur.se/linnell.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/linnell.pdf))

means that they are more vulnerable to campaigns by local groups who feel wronged by a cultural institution.

The reason why the cultural sector is so suitable for political experiment is that the politicians do not value its practitioners or current content too highly; they consider them to be replaceable. Obviously, this is a failure on the part of the institutions and the artists, who have not managed to defend their integrity and demonstrate the value of the artistic content. However, it also indicates that they have not participated in the debate on cultural policy, other than as defenders of what already exists. The loudest voice from the artist camp is that of the unions and professional organisations, but they operate almost exclusively to defend the old structures. For obvious reasons, they cannot rank the artistic quality of individual members. In their perspective, everyone must be valued equally. The only criterion that remains is membership in the organisation, a guarantee for artistic quality. Only members should be entitled to exhibit, be employed, design exhibitions or take part in plays within cultural institutions.

Over the past decade, very little interest has been paid to the individual cultural practitioners' ideas regarding future cultural development. Nor, however, have they demanded a place in the arena of cultural policy, except when under immediate threat. What we have is an almost total breakdown of confidence, where the political powers perceive the artists as an impediment. It is interesting, then, to note that the otherwise well-organised business sector is now demanding such impediments as a means of injecting creativity and new forms of organisation.

**A new platform is needed, where artists and politicians can meet.** Politicians dealing with culture must monitor and participate in cultural activities, and cultural institutions and artists have to take a greater interest in dialogue and exchange of information.

# funding

The issue of cultural institution funding has been discussed throughout the ages (or at least since the early 19th century). Institutions have complained that they have insufficient funds, while financiers complained that the institutions cost too much. Since most cultural institutions were created on the initiative of government powers, these powers feel responsible for ensuring that the activities survive. However, a growing proportion of the funding allocation has to be used to cover fixed costs (staff and rents).

The rent usually goes back to the local principal who was responsible for renovation. In some cases a so-called “prime cost rent” has been charged, based on what the landlord had to pay to build or adapt the premises. The effect of this can be absurd, with rents that are 2–3 times higher than the market rate. In extreme cases, the rent accounts for 30 per cent of the institution's spending. The result is that most of the local principal's allocation goes towards paying the rent.

Moreover, the cultural institution has had very little real influence on how much is spent on preparing the premises, and it is not entitled to move into less expensive or better alternative premises. Nevertheless, the institution management gets the blame when the rent eats up the activity (see also the chapter on **Buildings**).

Incorporation is another method with which local principals attempt to handle the funding of cultural institutions. Here, the cultural institution and other local authority companies are combined into a corporation, and the idea is that any profits made by any of the local authority companies (housing, electricity, water, parking, etc.) remains within the local authority operation, instead of being paid to the government in the form of tax. Some local governments consider this method to be unethical, but there is yet another disadvantage, namely that it makes it harder to get a clear picture of the institution's costs.

Problems arise when the institution's cost figures are treated as facts in public and political debates, and demands are made for cutbacks in activity levels and size of premises, the management is asked to resign,

and so on. Political leaders sometimes have a tendency (consciously or unconsciously) to forget the background and indignantly point out that costs are too high. Another disadvantage is that it is hard to compare funding from different principals allocated to cultural institutions. **We need new comparative tools that demonstrate clearly what proportion of funding actually goes to artistic activities.**

When so large a share of regular funding goes towards maintaining the institution's infrastructure, masses of time, energy and staff have to be used to find other sources of funding. They invent projects or separate a part of the activity in order to request additional funding for it – from foundations, the EU, the Nordic Council's cultural fund or the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs. Everyone is aware of this double-dealing, and very little is done to achieve any significant change. The creative energy that is consumed in this way ought instead to be devoted to investigating new areas and approaches for the institution.

It also deserves mentioning that there are some positive examples of co-operation between institutions and organisations and government agencies that cannot see any obvious link between their own operations and cultural activities. In these instances new funding is made available for culture, and culture can present new perspectives and areas of application.

It is noticeable that some projects (operated by independent practitioners using the institution as their arena) have obtained several million kronor in funding by utilising the correct buzzwords and a large network of contacts among funding bodies. Since there are so many funding bodies, it is possible to obtain funding several times over for the same project, and it becomes impossible to get an overall view of the situation. Sometimes, these projects have a budget on a par with the costs of running a small cultural institution for a whole year, but they are hidden, for instance, by a foundation that does not allow public access to information.

In the course of the experiments with regionalisation, the funding of cultural institutions has also been highlighted. Results have varied among the respective pilot areas. One question is how the "culture-bag" – government allocations of funds to regional cultural institutions – should be determined. At present, it is calculated on the basis of the institutions that existed when regionalisation started. But what happens if the region decides to close down an institution or establish a new one? Does regionalisation mean a freezing of the prevailing institutional structure? What performance will regions demand in return when they take over the role of principal for the local cultural institutions?

Two of the new regions are larger than the former counties, which means that they are responsible for more county institutions within their respective regions. In the long term, they will probably review which institutions can be merged, change their focus or be closed down. A tendency in this direction is already discernible in Västra Götaland, even though the region is not included in the "culture-bag" system.

Regionalisation means that several institutions now formally have only one principal (even if the government is still a non-influential financier for the time being), and many people emphasise the importance of having more than one source of funding. Some of the county institutions have been created despite initial opposition from the county council and local government. It was greatly due to the structure of economic dependency between the three bodies – central government, county council and local government – that it was possible to establish these institutions.

**There is always a risk involved in streamlining cultural policy (be it at central or local level), and therefore it is essential that there is an active and independent cultural policy at all levels. There should be more than one source of funding, and these sources should be free to make their own decisions. However, that does not prevent them from joining forces to fund major projects.**

It has always been hard to get funding for unusual and experimental projects, not least because of a failure to incorporate the buzzwords of cultural policy. In these times, when cultural institutions are nervously monitoring visitor numbers and ticket sales, they are even more frightened to take on projects that are risky. At the same time, it is these very projects that could help regenerate the institutions. This can result in a downward spiral in which the institution becomes increasingly bland. We believe that our proposed system of mediators/links could complement the current system, since the mediator/link would be a person who helps connect artists/artist groups with cultural institutions, with financial support and guidance (see also the chapter on *Mediators/links*). The goal is that they should create space for unusual and exploratory projects within the institutions.

#### NATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

The government could continue to have an influence on cultural institutions even if basic funding were regionalised.

The modest attempts at national assignments that were initiated by the Report on Culture in 1995 could be extended. In that way, outstanding cultural institutions would be rewarded for a longer time-span than today, and above all, with greater financial commitment.

Today, the national assignments often entail that the institution accepts a number of tasks, and the government exerts a strong influence on goals. The government's contribution is currently very modest; the financial contribution to those institutions that are selected is only one million kronor annually for three years.

The national assignments, or rather, the awards we propose here, would instead be a matter of giving inventive institutions the means to develop in freedom; the contribution should be much higher than one million kronor annually.

#### SPONSORSHIP

Many institutions are prompted by their principals to increase other earnings and to find sponsors. Other earnings usually mean raised ticket prices – although there is also a requirement to increase the number of visitors. In order to solve this impossible equation, institutions have to present a more “commercial” exhibition programme or a repertoire that panders more to the public. Thus, their planning does not originate in a genuine interest in the contents that they want to convey to as many interested people as possible, but rather in trying to work out what would attract the largest possible audiences and what the audience would be prepared to pay a little bit more for. All too often these ventures fail because of being too careful, and the final impression is that of a bland and uninteresting institution (see also the chapter on *The audience*).

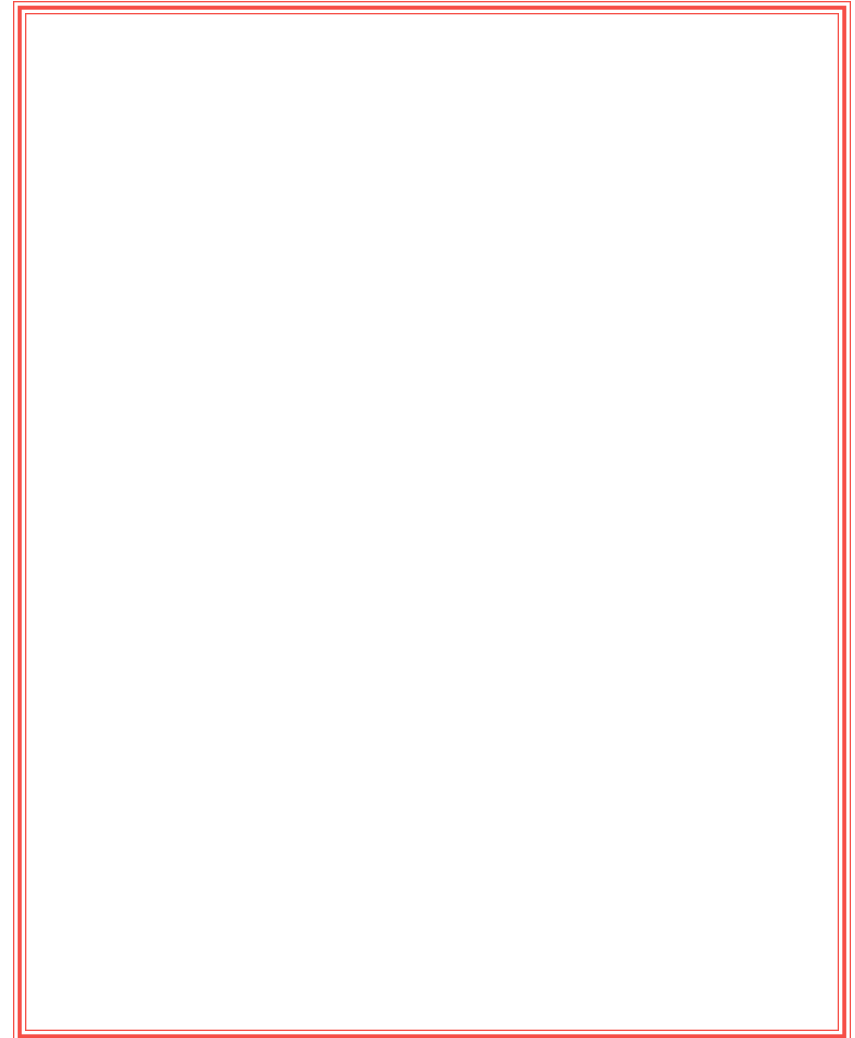
Income from sponsorship complicates the situation even more. A more generous approach to sponsorship on the part of the government is a cultural policy decision, but then the contents would be determined by the sponsoring companies. Another reason why companies are so reluctant to enter into sponsorship projects is that we have attempted to democratise culture, thereby removing its use as a caste mark that would help raise the companies' status.

It is hard to persuade companies to invest in the still un-famous, the exploratory, the disuniting or the commonplace. They are only prepared to assist that which is already recognised as high culture by broad groups. The sponsored activities should preferably be located centrally, ideally in Stockholm – according to a Temo poll on sponsorship in 1999, the Stockholm region accounted for 53 per cent – and it helps if the company gets a share of royal splendour.

Sponsorship involves exchange of services; the question is who actually benefits from it. Unfortunately, sponsorship can mean that representatives of the real financiers are excluded from parts of the activity. It can be a case of exclusively booked performances, private views, etc. Many people have pointed out that the institutions, the Royal Opera being the

prime example, are selling themselves too cheaply, for instance by repaying sponsors in state-financed tickets, or by letting actors train sales staff. The problem is further complicated by the risk that the institution might plan a programme on the basis of what would appeal to potential sponsors. However, one must bear in mind that a similar distortion takes place when institutions attempt to adjust activities to the buzzwords of cultural policy, or try to make their programme fit into one of the current campaigns with the sole purpose of accessing funds for the activity. It is also noticeable that several large sponsors are "companies" that are public bodies, for instance the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Vattenfall in the case of the Opera.

One area where sponsorship could possibly be increased is within cultural heritage; it could be attractive to companies to participate in preserving Swedish history. It could also help bridge geographic inequalities in funding, since there could conceivably be an interest in uncovering and preserving local history around the company.



## the contents

Since many people don't understand or know anything about contemporary culture, they are content to let descriptions of it stop at a veritable demonisation. In this context, "popular culture" serves as "the other" a construed counter-image that is needed to create one's own identity.

Daniel Sandström,  
Sydsvenskan,  
9 May 2000

In common with 99 per cent of museums, most cultural institutions are retrospective. Giving access to contemporary and future culture requires swiftness, intuition and, not least, major risk-taking. To view contemporary phenomena from different angles, to evaluate and perhaps be ironic about tendencies, requires great courage. Moreover, one needs to legitimise a project to get a space where the phenomena are allowed to be visible.

The problem is that our cultural institutions usually exude an air of truth, objectivity and of being perpetrators of good taste and quality. We still build our institutions on the same foundations as institution-builders in the 1800s. When we increase complexity and accept theses that have not been approved, this is seen as a provocation. What is normally presented is frequently honed down to the point where it becomes uninteresting. The ambition is to engage the audience, but when a discussion is generated, there is fear that the "wrong" opinions will be expressed.

We have to dare to demonstrate complexity, to show that there is more than one way to tell a story, that the story has many different endings and interpretations, and that the cultural institution is not the final destination of the story but only part of the process.

Cultural institutions frequently appear to believe that audiences can be attracted by attempts to copy the world outside – that the accelerating pace should also feature within the walls of the institution. But the institution could also be a place for concentration and contemplation, where visitors could be assisted in focusing on the issues at hand.

Cultural institutions should be meeting-places rather than consumption sites. What role could they play in our secularised society? Could they fulfil the purpose of churches and monasteries in earlier societies? Could they be forums for ethical discussion?

Many institutions are striving in the opposite direction. It is important to attract as many people as possible to the building, quantity is paramount to quality. They try to incorporate other activities – conferences, film clubs, programme evenings with popular artists – preferably under

the auspices of others, who can be included in the visitor numbers. At the heart of this is a dream: if only we can attract visitors to the building, then perhaps we can arouse their curiosity about the traditional activities in the building.

Meanwhile, activities are being watered down and adapted to what is perceived as popular. The exploratory and searching activities are left without resources, as all energy has to be devoted to whatever is deemed to appeal to large audiences. The museum or theatre starts competing on a commercial market, where parts of the activity could just as well be carried out profitably by private entrepreneurs.

Cultural institutions run the risk of erasing their identity by choosing this road of least resistance and largest audiences. Their justification ceases at that moment, for why should the government fund something that could just as well be provided by the private sector?

This development resembles that which the public service company Sveriges Television underwent, when viewer ratings became more important than the content, and the competitive weapons were copied from the commercial channels that were perceived as competitors. The new management of SvT has now declared that its goal is no longer to attract 50 per cent of viewers. Instead, they are once again talking about quality objectives. A similar development is taking place within the BBC. And that is their only chance of survival as the mass media racket grows louder and the choice becomes enormous.

This does not imply that cultural institutions should concentrate entirely on research, development and experiment, but that they should attract audiences by virtue of their content. The core activity should not be obscured. Instead, the institution must find a comprehensive perspective on its operations.

Nor, however, does it mean that activities deemed as popular culture should automatically be phased out. Throughout the 1900s, labelling something as popular culture was synonymous with saying it was of less

value. And yet, much that was formerly regarded as popular culture, for instance jazz, has now achieved the status of high culture. The effect is comical when we look at these evaluations from a global cultural perspective – artists who are regarded as commercial singers in their home countries are analysed according to the “norms of high culture” when they perform in certain arenas in Sweden. This is one example of how institutions can raise the status of a work from that of popular to that of elite culture by giving it their stamp of approval. Design is another area in which the boundaries are difficult to define. Design is often commercial and mass produced, but is positioned in the sphere of high culture. The boundaries between high and low, mass or elite culture, are no longer self-evident.

Large parts of youth sub-cultures revolve around what is not commercially viable, but it is still deemed as commercial mass culture. Undeniably, some of these sub-cultures are picked up by the commercial entertainment industry and re-shaped into mass culture. The institutions are rarely receptive to these sub-cultures, they do not see themselves as suitable arenas for this sort of thing. There are a few exceptions, but even then the sub-cultures have not been allowed to influence the other activities within the institution.

Obviously, there is also resistance within these sub-cultures against becoming established, or undergoing a process of legitimisation. However, this should not prevent institutions from daring to expose themselves to the energy inherent in these sub-cultures<sup>8</sup>.

What should cultural institutions do to become places where we encounter contemporary phenomena? How should they interact with these and be perceived as centres of development instead of being in the periphery? Some contemporary art actually dares get involved, and other art forms should take after. **A first step would be to organise a seminar on the meeting between contemporary life and culture.**

8. See also *Jakten på publiken* (Pursuing the audience) ([www.framtidenskultur.se/umea1.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/umea1.pdf) and [/umea2.pdf](http://umea2.pdf))

# collection

We have woken up from the dream of organising and collecting everything and presenting it to visitors who are hungry for knowledge. Over the 20th century, the belief that it was possible to comprehend and see how all things relate to each other has gradually faded. The development of IT simply increased the flow of information, rather than making it easier to structure. All the same, IT has meant, and will continue to mean, that it is easier for us to find out the contents of collections, to make information more accessible and to display the material. The museum will become interesting as a presentation of a selection, not as a place where the entire collection can be seen.

Increasingly, people are finding that collecting cannot be pursued as before. Digitalisation of collections has led to a better overview, revealing the often random nature and large geographical or chronological gaps in the collections.

The origins of these collections vary widely. They comprise the national laws on handing over finds, “interesting” objects collected by explorers, remains from trade relations, local private museums, local society collections, etc. The collected objects usually reflect subjectivity with regard to interests or taste. They also reflect what was considered worth preserving at a certain time, but which later generations might have thought differently of.

One interesting example is the museums that are incorporated in the World Culture Museum. On reviewing the collections, it was found that a marginal proportion came from Islamic countries. The original purpose of the collections was to visualise the foreign world, to make our own world more discernible by comparison to the other. However, the multicultural assignment states the purpose to be to encourage understanding for cultural differences, not to stamp anything as being “the other”.

Many collections at the central, government museums have been placed there more or less forcibly, to protect them against neglect and deterioration. However, the collections grew so large that they were in effect

both neglected and deteriorated; they had probably fared better under more primitive but more loving attention. Moreover, local collections would have greater potential to attract private funding.

Digitalisation also means that documentation of the collections remains. Within the next ten years, digitalisation will probably have developed to the point where we can record other values, such as structure, three-dimensional shapes, etc. Collections could be relocated to open storage, given away to schools, returned to local interested parties and, to some extent, sold off. This will eventually lead to a slight downsizing of central collections. The staff will then begin to regard technology as a natural feature and will participate more actively in its development.

The enormous collections of pictures in Sweden's museums and archives are a commercial asset. Much more could be sold for publishing purposes than today, but this would require new systems that make orders and overviews accessible, preferably through collaboration between several institutions and commercial image libraries.

The museums need to find new ways to design their exhibitions. In what way could exhibitions be produced based on the digitalised collections? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What technical developments are required in the exhibition spaces?

Exhibiting and collecting contemporary art involves many such problems. How many exhibition spaces have we not seen with flickering TV monitors because no one is responsible for ensuring that the video works? But even greater difficulties are due to the fact that a great deal of contemporary art intentionally uses destructive materials, or consists of installations that involve actors. This poses new problems for collecting, and it is also an art form that is (sometimes intentionally) hard to make commercially viable. The matter of telling the original from the copy is also becoming more and more complicated.

Naturally, we make mistakes when documenting our time, similar to those that collectors made a hundred years ago. One example of this is that several of the Swedish neo-nazi magazines are not submitted to the Royal Library according to the rules, since they are printed abroad. Moreover, video films are edited in order to stay under the numerical limit for what is deemed as general distribution. In some twenty years, we must yet again resort to private collectors if we want to document this period.

This also poses questions with regard to how accessible some of these collections should be. Today, some libraries are under great pressure to buy in neo-nazi magazines, in the name of freedom of speech. However, collecting for posterity does not necessarily mean that everything should be accessible in the name of ultra-liberalism. **The right of libraries and museums to make subjective selections must be emphasised.**

## democracy and the production of culture

Cultural policy in the 1970s centred on democracy and equality, and this influenced not only distribution, i.e. everyone's right to culture regardless of where in Sweden they were living, but also the content and production methods. These democratic ambitions were most pronounced in the fringe groups, whose many productions, at least on paper, were created collectively by the "group". This approach spread to the institutions, where a few group productions were generated. "Cultural worker" was launched as a concept, replacing "artist".

This was one step towards de-demonising the production of culture. Another was to bridge the gap between amateur and professional culture. This cultural ambition is sometimes scornfully summarised with the phrase "anyone can sing". The problem with this stance is that it prevented any discussion about quality. The fundamental principle of our society, that everyone is of equal worth, was merged with the idea that individual knowledge and quality should not be subjected to evaluation. Undeniably, this was a period (the 1960s and '70s) when art on the whole was politicised, not to say party-politicised, and consequently, many discussions focused on whether the political tendencies were communicated with sufficient clarity and correctness.

It should, however, be remembered that this was culturally a very explorative and experimental period, both aesthetically and formally. However, it also deserves mentioning that much of what was said was pure rhetoric. Obviously, there were clear aesthetic values – not least when defining oneself in relation to others, such as the rigid institutions. Another legacy from this period is a reluctance to motivate cultural funding in aesthetic terms, claims that no qualitative evaluation is made but that the purpose is to fulfil cultural policy aims.

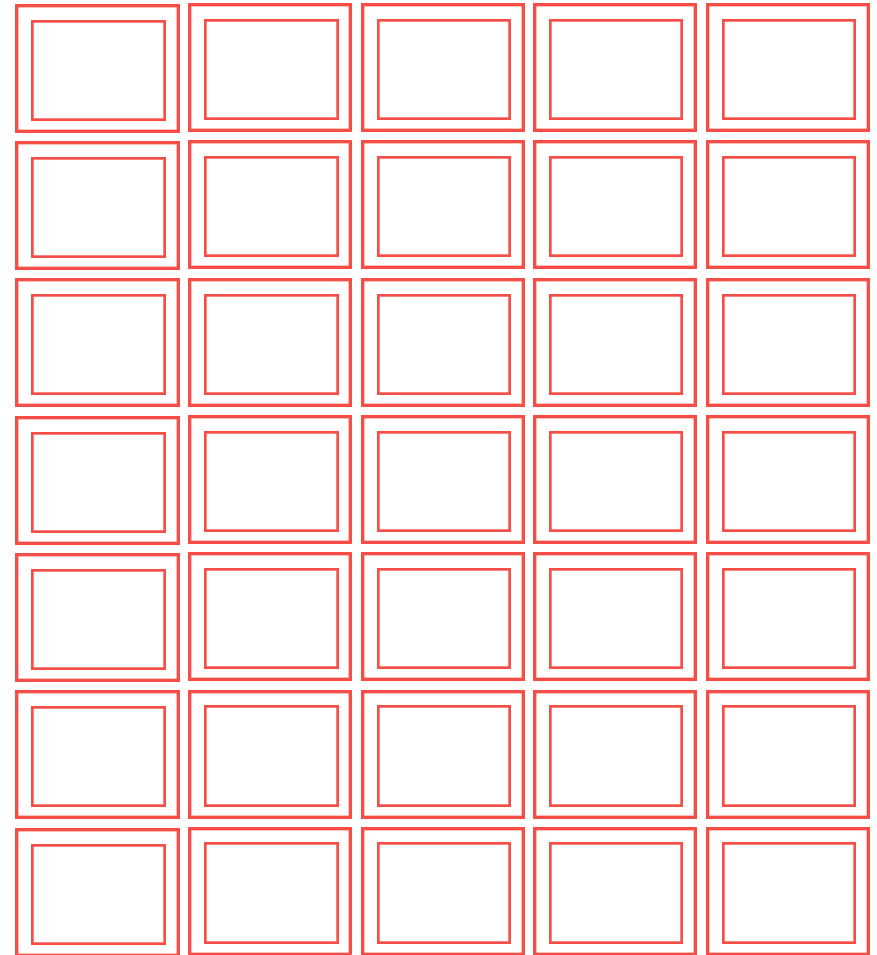
So how does this affect cultural institutions today? Many of the views that characterised the groups have been transposed to the institutions. Many county institutions were originally small and displayed considerable similarities with the fringe constellations that were created in protest

against the cultural institutions. They also employed these groups to produce exhibitions and performances that were critical of established society. This was true also of national institutions such as Riksställningar Swedish Travelling Exhibitions, the Swedish National Touring Theatre and the Royal Dramatic Theatre – where collaboration often caused disputes and disagreement. However, although these group projects were usually disrupted, the approach to production remained, and the institutions were characterised by a willingness to play a part in social development and social change.

The ambition to abolish institutional hierarchies led to problems relating to the size and structure of the institutions. If everyone is to participate in all decisions, and preferably achieve consensus, then the way in which staff are employed becomes relevant. Are they there as participants in a joint project, or have they applied for a particular job? Artistic creation is associated with risk-taking, a readiness to test new approaches. It also involves breaking with old conventions, trying out things on a subjective basis. To attain consensus around the artistic content is impossible. The problem is that everyone demands democratic participation, but not everyone is prepared to take personal risks.

The result is that both staff and management collude to maintain a form of sham democracy. Democracy is used to denote the fact that management holds meetings to inform the staff about the decisions that have been made, possibly inviting comments that are later disregarded. The meeting procedures that the institutions themselves have instituted are extended to include the procedures stipulated in the Act on Co-Determination. When this sham democracy is eventually revealed, the staff become rebellious and frustrated (see also the chapter on Staff).

The staff claim that the director is their representative, even though s/he has been appointed by the owners. When the director initiates a restructuring process that involves major reorganisation that affects personnel, this causes great disappointment and the staff gather for a vote of no confidence to emphasise that the director has let the staff down.



# flexibility

A business as large as a national theatre is a tool that should be shared.

Stanislas Nordey,  
director of the TGP theatre  
in the Paris suburb St Denis,  
interview published in Teatertidningen  
2/2000.

The cultural institutions of today often suffer from an oversized skeleton. The body becomes emaciated while the skeleton continues to grow.

Part of this skeleton consists of routines and meeting procedures, where every conceivable problem leads to a new meeting. These meetings are intended as a safety valve for the staff, an opportunity to control the institution management. The institution starts to lead its own life, where the fixed routines more than suffice to keep the staff busy. They do not need any impulses from outside, do not need visitors, and eventually they have evolved merely into an agency for the protection of institutional culture.

Is there a cure for this institution-disease? How do we inject new blood? To take the body metaphor one step further – how can we perform a transplant in a way that prevents the new, healthy body parts from being rejected or contaminated with institution-disease?

For it is a fact that many attempts to introduce a promising curator, or a group constellation with an idea for a performance or exhibition are perceived by the skeleton as a threat. The most immediate way for the institution to counteract the project is for all permanent staff to refuse to co-operate, by referring to the fixed routines. They can ensure that the regular activities collide with the project, and use up all the resources that have been allocated to the project. The project may still be completed, but in a downsized version and entirely on the terms laid down by the regular activities. Moreover, the project is depreciated in marketing and by the staff who encounter the audience.

The alternative approach to the project would be to ensure that it is given space, can be completed and helps to embellish the institution. This helps to reinforce the project so that there is scope for negotiating for reasonable working conditions, and, of course, that there is money to employ external competence. The institution buys a complete package and provides the space. Under these circumstances, the project does not have any direct impact on the regular activities, but naturally such a project can still cause unease if it proves possible to achieve a much

better result with less money and in less time. However, the regular staff can always explain this with the fact that the project does not need to take responsibility for the day-to-day, necessary activities.

The problem grows as the skeleton consists increasingly of administrative and technical staff. These groups get to define the contents and counteract any attempt at "invasion" from outside. Temporary staff engaged to produce the cultural content of the institution are often required to adapt and not be a nuisance – otherwise they risk never being allowed back.

There is not much interest in changing. A new approach to the producers of culture is needed here.

One positive step is the experiment in the field of theatre, where employees have contracts for periods of up to five years without becoming permanent employees. This experiment should be extended to encompass the entire artistic field. However, the new set of rules is currently too restrictive. It will be difficult (as yet) to build up new ensembles on the basis of the new agreement. A new operative manager joining an institution should be entitled to bring along his/her own ensemble and/or artistic management who, in terms of employment, are tied to the manager<sup>9</sup>.

The question is how you cut down on the actual skeleton. It is popular to claim that the building has a unique knowledge bank, for instance traditional craftsmanship that is only preserved thanks to the cultural institutions. This is of course a modified truth, since many of the activities could just as well take place outside the building. A system of grants for further training in handicrafts could, for instance, be introduced.

Moreover, different productions compete for space in the workshops, so that stage sets and exhibition rooms have to be built long before the content of the production/exhibition has started to take shape. This is further aggravated when the institution's workshops venture onto the commercial market. In-house productions get lower priority and have to

9. For a proposal on how this ensemble system could be implemented in theatres, see Ragnar Lyth: Teatern en ensemblekonst. Ett förslag till förnyelse av svenska institutionsteatrar (Theatre, an ensemble art) ([www.framtidenskultur.se/lyth.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/lyth.pdf))

be built even more in advance. The artists producing plays or exhibitions have a very weak bargaining position in relation to the workshops. This applies especially to artists who have not previously been working for the institution. They can be faced with the same problem with regard to marketing and presentation of the production.

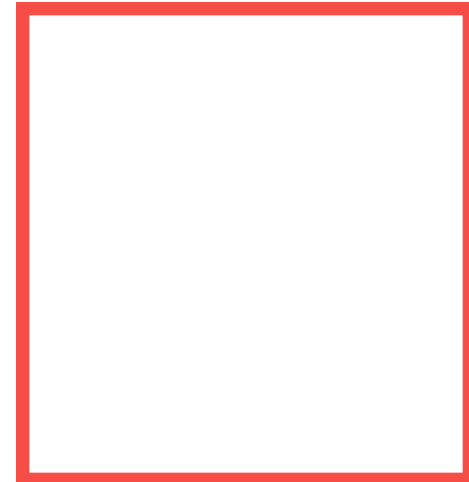
Institutions have to become more flexible and serve as a platform rather than being an end in themselves. The idea of the culture house was declared dead before it had been fully tried, but it could have been a place where different art forms and perspectives could explore the same issues. "Interdisciplinary" is the flavour of the month, and yet new specialised museums are constantly being inaugurated in grand new buildings. In the existing culture houses, the different departments work without collaborating and joint projects are few and far between. This is a remarkable development in view of the fact that more and more people are realising that the traditional separation into disciplines is obsolete.

We are so accustomed to associating cultural institutions with their buildings. Although the cultural policy statement of 1974 meant that several regional cultural institutions stopped seeing the central building as the important thing but instead focused on ambulating activities, several of these institutions reverted in the 1990s, and activities were again concentrated to buildings in the centre of the region.

An institution could instead have a small base that could expand to other, temporary premises. The institution could also have a flexible budget that allowed it to reserve allocations; or funding could vary from one year to the next, depending on whether a major venture was planned for that year. Some operations are perhaps only active for part of the year, and the premises could be shared with other operations. The attitude to opening hours should also be more flexible – the institution should be open when the public has time to visit.

Collaboration between institutions, or between institutions and other parties (organisations, education, etc.) is usually based on the erroneous assumption that it should lead to financial gain. The problem is that all the parties involved believe they should be making a profit, and are immensely disappointed after completing the project, which cost at least as much as if they had done it on their own. The conclusion is frequently a decision to avoid collaborations in the future and retire to their own building.

Collaborations should instead focus on attaining new perspectives, and they should lead to unexpected encounters. They are about artistic gain – not financial gain.



## mediators/links

As mentioned earlier, the cultural institutions need to be more clearly subjective; they need to demonstrate that what they present is an expression of personal taste and personal opinion – in combination with knowledge and an overview of the subject. However, less is said about the covert subjectivity that cultural policy suffers from.

Since decisions are based on comparisons with cultural policy objectives, it is hard to generate discussion about priorities. The Swedish National Council for Culture operates according to a system of reference and work groups that participate in preparing decision-making, but these groups are naturally governed by the proposals put forth by the civil servants. New groups and initiatives find it hard to compete with the old structures that are often considered to be obvious recipients of funding.

Why not complement (and in part replace) the system with a new funding procedure that is based on the right to select subjectively? A number of “links” could be appointed, each having a three-year mandate before being replaced. The task of these links is to find a number of artists/producers of culture and put them in touch with a specific cultural institution.

The model is inspired by the system of mediators in the project *Art & Société* in France, which was presented by Xavier Douroux at the seminar *Pursuing the audience* in Umeå (20-21 October, 1999)<sup>10</sup>. Obviously, the model does not have to be limited to the institutional field; the film sector has already started working in a similar way, by appointing film consultants with a three-year mandate.

The links should not be appointed as a reward for long and faithful service in the cultural sector, but they need to have a broad network and great knowledge in several cultural fields. They could, for instance, be taking a few years' sabbatical from their own cultural pursuits in order to concentrate their creativity on generating new encounters and contexts.

A link should be appointed for a limited period, for instance three years,

10. *Jakten på publiken (Pursuing the audience)*  
([www.framtidenskultur.se/umea2.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/umea2.pdf))

to prevent the work from becoming routine. Another crucial advantage of a time-limited mandate period is that it would make it easier for those whose ideas were not appreciated to apply again. There should not be any set application dates. Instead, the link should be free to make a rapid decision on the basis of an annual budget.

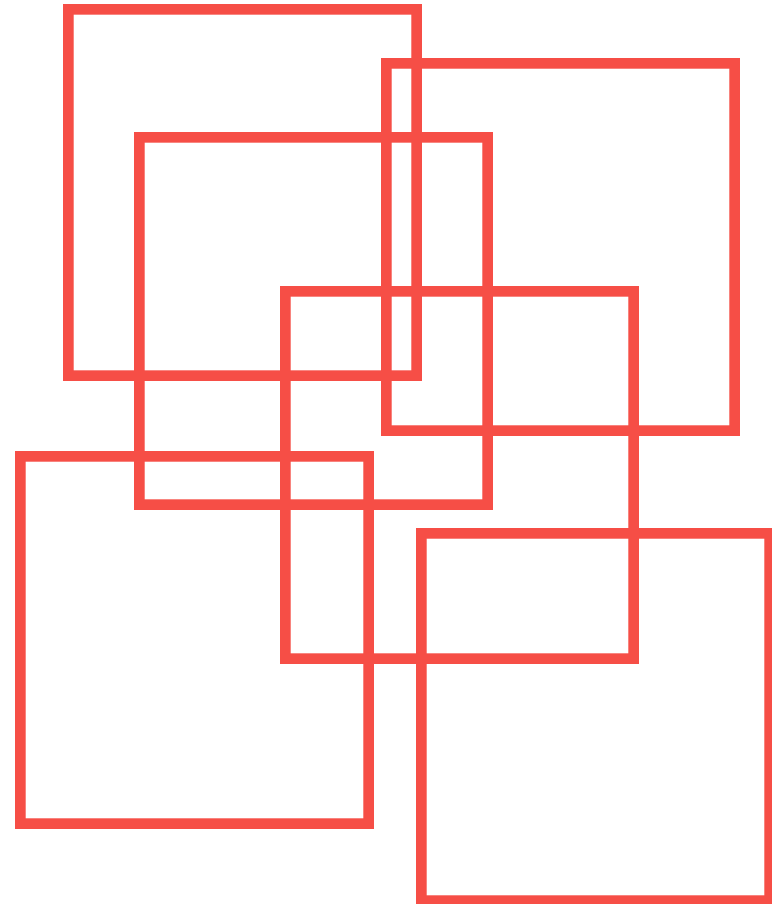
If a decision on funding leads to collaboration between an artist or artist group and a cultural institution, it is essential that the funding does not automatically go to the institution. Instead, it should be linked to the leader of the project. The link would also be responsible for monitoring the project and supporting the funded candidate in any disputes with the institution.

Initiatives and requests for projects could be submitted by institutions or producers, but one of the link's major tasks would be to search for and discuss possible projects personally. Discussions should take place both with individual artists, artist groups and cultural institutions.

The link would have to counteract the fact that institutions prefer projects that resemble their current activities, or projects that copy other successful projects. Otherwise, there is a risk that, rather than achieving change, institutions would continue to repeat the same old concept. Institutions should be offered collaborations and projects they would never have deemed possible. The projects would serve as a creative disruption of the cultural institutions – for instance, what might be generated by a collaboration between the library and a choreographer? This probably also means that many of the projects embarked on would never be carried out, but at least they will have forced the institutions to consider new possibilities within their operations.

If, moreover, one succeeds in generating the operative and flexible institutions that were outlined in the chapter on **Flexibility**, these would make excellent partners in this link project: to form an identity for themselves that extends beyond the bland basic level, they would need to participate in this type of project.

We believe that an experiment with links should be tried out. The Foundation Culture of the Future could play an important part in this venture.



# amateurism/ professionalism

It would appear that as decisions about cultural ventures are moved downward, for instance to the local councils, the money available for culture and the quality of knowledge tend to diminish. On the basis of cost, but also depending on personal taste, the choice may fall on amateur culture. This choice involves art that is less problematic and believed to be easier for the target audience to identify with. Above all, it is a means of making the money go further. This argument is often used with regard to children's culture. It is an irresponsible approach that demonstrates how little some people value artistic quality.

The trade unions maintain that union membership is synonymous with being professional. Another criterion is education. Both these instruments are equally blunt. Trade unions are a mixture of guilds, lobby groups and unions, and art education is no guarantee that a person is an artist, nor should it be the only way of becoming one.

Attempts are frequently made to systemise the criteria, in order to give incomparable entities the same value – in the name of fairness. We will discuss higher art education in the chapter on **Art education**, where we argue that there should be other roads to becoming a professional artist, and that artists should be able to choose to work in other disciplines than the one they were trained in.

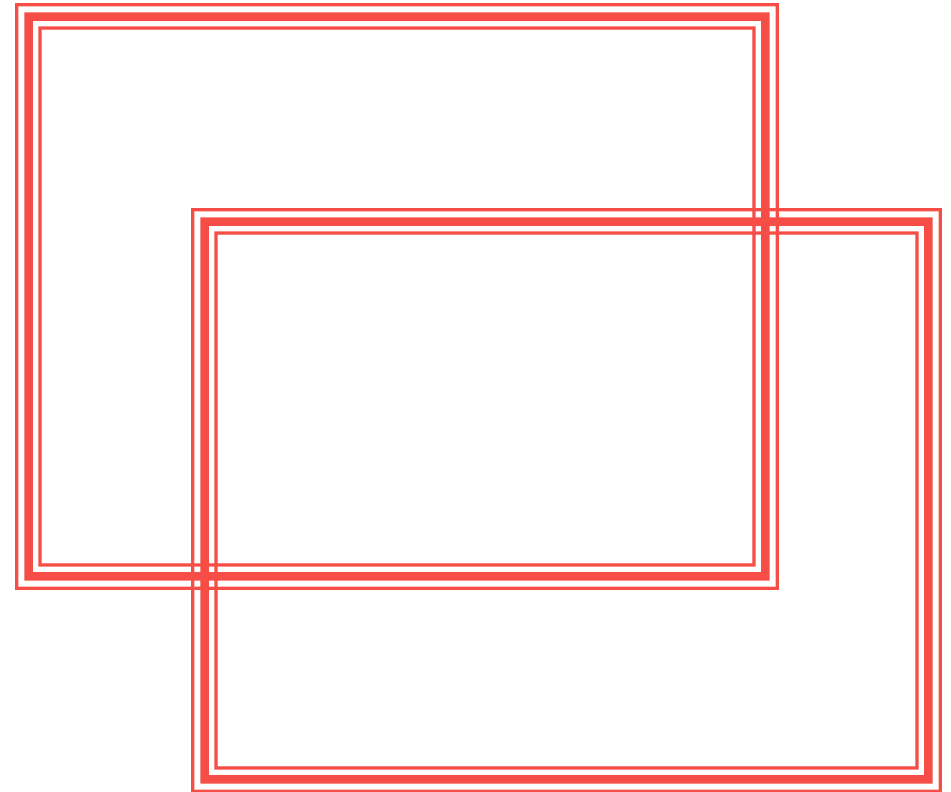
Local councils must ensure that they have knowledge about artistic quality when buying culture. That this is not the case today is due to the low status of culture. If the local councils insist on delegating the decisions on culture to the local boroughs, then the local councils must provide experts centrally that local borough officers/politicians can consult.

An interesting question is how institutions could co-operate with amateur culture without lowering their standards.

The institution could make demands on amateur culture based on knowledge about quality. This could generate a crucial discussion about artistic quality.

Many people feel confused when art searches for new expressions and revert to the old, familiar values and ideals of beauty that are reproduced by amateurs rather than in professional culture. Professional artistic production often involves risk-taking, and these risks are absent within amateur culture.

Apart from the matter of quality, there is also the consideration that some members of the audience want to be visible, they want to perform and interact with art. *These two topics could well be suitable research subjects that a few cultural institutions could investigate.* (See also the chapter on Staff).



## the audience

We, "The (International) Noise Conspiracy", are a political punk rock band that serves as an adult education project.

Inge Johansson, bass player, interviewed at the Hultsfred Festival in Studio 1, 16 June, 2000.

Is the audience our reward? Are large audiences the best way of measuring the success of a cultural institution? The answer is no. There are institutions that have a clear concept of their audience goals, that calculate audience size based on the target group and potential of each respective production/exhibition. But it is possible to choose to do a certain production because it is important as an artistic development project, being perfectly aware that it will not attract huge audiences.

The problem lies in convincing the principals to embrace this aim, not least when the press "discloses" the supposedly low audience ratings (the ratings the institution had budgeted for). The principals demand that something be done – the exhibition programme has to be altered, productions replaced with lighter material and activities broadened, often leading to higher costs. Audiences interested in a specialised programme are discouraged, and the broader audiences that are targeted are equally hard to reach at this point.

The institution risks entering a downward spiral, for who wants to visit an institution that has the reputation of being in crisis (i.e. audience crisis)? Above all, no one wants to be alone in a theatre auditorium. Fear of ending up in the shade prompts the institution to take fewer initiatives, in favour of copying "safe bets", and institutions from north to south become interchangeable. Few institutions allow themselves to have their own style or their own concept.

Many institutions are afflicted by fewer spontaneous visitors – visits to institutions have to be incorporated in an experience package. The institution's content becomes a cultural bonbon in a larger package tailor-made for a workplace. One might ask if this is a further development of the hospitalisation that starts in school, where pupils are taken to museums, theatres or libraries, are told to keep quiet and, if they're lucky, get the situation explained to them. However, they often remain unenlightened about the ritual that a visit involves, the ritual that habitual consumers of culture take for granted. **Schools must demonstrate more active-**

ly how pupils can visit an institution independently, and make the actual quest more interesting.

But we also have to scrutinise how necessary these rituals are. The purpose of rituals is to give the initiated a sense of belonging, while excluding those who are not part of the circle. The rituals were formed when the ideal audience was different, as part of a civilisation process. The fundamental problem, however, is that the activities offered by many institutions are not experienced to be sufficiently interesting – otherwise more people would break through the barriers. There are cases when an institution has focused on a subject that is interesting to a sub-group, thereby suddenly obtaining a new, knowledgeable and interested audience<sup>11</sup>. The challenge is not to lose 99 per cent of that audience when the next exhibition opens.

In this context, the institution needs to demonstrate interaction between exhibitors, to increase its educational commitment.

It is a matter of increasing quality rather than quantity. Working with audiences in this way will, at best, also change the content of the institution and add to its knowledge.

We also have to consider whom the visitors encounter. Not enough importance has been given to training and maintaining the competence of the staff who deal with visitors. Competent museum staff have been replaced with leased guards who are not interested in making sure the exhibitions work. Cloakrooms, ticket sales and catering are outsourced and suddenly start communicating something utterly different from what the institution wants to represent. What is the effect if everyone the visitor encounters radiates a lack of interest, not to say scorn, for what is exhibited?

Some marketing departments in cultural institutions have parasitic tendencies, living their own life and gradually usurping the activities. The institution's artistic management does not have any power over marke-

11. See, for instance, Jan Gradvall Vilka är framtidens kulturkonsumenter? (Who are the future consumers of culture?) ([www.framtidenskultur.se/gradvall.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/gradvall.pdf))

ting, which means that the institution's content and the content of marketing do not coincide. The marketing department builds up expectations, but these expectations do not always match what the visitor encounters.

Marketing departments devote great efforts to targeting the audiences that would come anyway. The possible benefit is that they choose one's own institution rather than that of the "competitors". They are usually given misleading information that is perceived as infantile. If they are to be given information, the assumption should be that they are initiated and not, for instance, interested in knowing which soap operas the actors have been in.

This group also often receives free tickets, since they are considered to be key visitors who will help make others interested in the event. However, these people socialise mainly with people in the same "VIP-group"; and so the expected effect is absent. They are also better equipped to find out for themselves which events are taking place, and are sufficiently interested to pay for their visits. However, any change in the system of distributing free tickets would, of course, cause an outcry, as a breach of the ritual's unwritten laws.

## staff

Is the staff the cultural institution's asset or its major problem? There is no obvious answer, since the cultural institution is not, and should not be, a harmonious workplace. For the institution crisis is a natural state, work must involve personal risk-taking. The problem is that many people were employed in the belief that it was a friendly, creative and free workplace. Many employees are altogether uninterested in the activities, or may even find them distasteful. The institution could be called a staff-intensive idea-company, but one of the problems this poses is that the institution incorporates sections and employees who do not consider the products these ideas generate to be their central concern.

Some of the institution's activities are located outside the central building – in warehouses, workshops or the administration – where activities go on as though the central activities did not exist. They do not visit the institution's exhibitions or productions, they are not part of the intense work pulse that goes on at the heart of the institution.

It is frustrating to be so far from the centre and from influence. Everyone has to create their own kingdom, a specialisation where each person makes him/herself into an indispensable part of the work chain. This chain becomes vulnerable when a peripheral person (from the centre perspective) has the power to overturn an entire production. It is not even certain that the person realises the effects of not completing his or her duties in time, especially if this person is not interested in the institution's activities.

Intermediary managers are employed to handle the "flat" organisation, leading to further meetings at different levels. At these meetings, the actual core problems are rarely discussed – they have to be solved outside the conference room. Pointless meetings cause frustration, which may well be discussed at further meetings.

Another, hopefully more successful, method is to start working in production teams, but that requires an abolishment of territorial thinking, among both artistic and technical staff.

It is essential to stop defining specialisation through professional categories in connection with employing new staff. Instead, everyone should work towards a common goal – the completed production or exhibition. This also involves a more flexible approach to working hours, and that productions are allowed a life of their own. Moreover, some of the workshop work could be outsourced; that would create a market for exhibition and theatre technology. Some institutions are like industrial communities – everything that the production could conceivably require has to be created in-house and, to be on the safe side, even those functions that are no longer needed are also retained.

There are strong forces that oppose this development, since they do not want to lose the power that specialisation gives them. However, the survival of the institutions requires that these methods are reviewed, or they will perish or change in response to external pressure.

There are other staff categories that many cultural institutions neglect or outsource. As mentioned earlier, these are usually activities that form the institution's interface with the public – marketing, guards, ticket offices, shops, catering and cloakrooms.

It is worrying to note that the institutions are remorselessly selling out this audience contact, while considering it virtually impossible to outsource parts of the workshops.

It is not unusual that those who first encounter the audience dissuade them from visiting, stand so they obscure the exhibits, or don't care if parts of the exhibition are out of order. Those who operate the outsourced activities usually convey a different message from that of the institution. They are required to increase turnover and might make up their own rules or carry a product range that is not in line with the institution. But to visitors they are part of the institution, and the reception they get can sometimes be decisive.

Another side that frequently causes friction is when institutions start introducing voluntary helpers. Conflicts can arise between employees and volunteers. The main problem lies in the institution's approach to volunteers, and what demands are made on them. The institution may be reluctant to make demands on someone who is not paid, but if the person's behaviour has negative consequences for the institution, then certain restrictions have to be made. The institution has to say no to people who are not suited for the activities, training has to be given, and the way in which co-operation with volunteers should be carried out has to be discussed with the regular staff. This is an area that still needs to be developed, not least in view of the shrinking budget for cultural institutions. Moreover, volunteers, as representatives of the general public, could help institutions find new approaches to the audience. A project could gather inspiration from the festival culture, for instance, the Gothenburg Film Festival and the Hultsfred Festival.

We would welcome a few pilot projects aimed at introducing volunteers into the operations, to determine:

- the set-up of a training programme for volunteers;
- how volunteers should be selected and what demands can be made on them;
- how to get regular staff to accept volunteers and co-operate with them;
- how volunteers could be allowed to influence activities, through interaction with regular staff.

# management

Organisational change, often initiated by consultants, has been the way in which institutions have tried to solve their crises, regardless of whether the crises were artistic or financial. The most extreme example is Malmö City Theatre and its successor, who, over the past eight years, have tried every conceivable form of management or co-operation between different activities.

Today, many institutions opt to be limited companies; on paper it looks like they are enhancing their independence. However, the wording of the Limited Companies Act concerning the board's responsibility to act in the interest of the company, often seems to give the board members the impression that they must ensure that the institution does not exceed the financial limits, and that the board should not, on any account, confront the principals with demands for more funding to enable the completion of a project that the principals have assigned to the institution. Should this occur, the board must step down and a new, more obedient, board be appointed – a board that can be pacified, if need be, by being reminded of the board members' personal liability. **But the question is if this personal liability should not also apply with regard to the contents.**

Board members are often on so many boards that it is impossible for them to be fully briefed about the operations, but they obviously know how to read an annual report. The result can be that individual board members criticise the institution for not including activities that they believe could help to solve the financial problems, activities that it turns out the institution is already involved in or has already tried and rejected. The board member chooses to dictate rather than find out what activities are being pursued. This description fits many of the regional institutions, whereas many of the national institutions do not have politically appointed boards. Looking at the various institutional crises over the past decade, no obvious organisation form presents itself as being the best. Sometimes, co-operation between several principals runs smoothly, whereas in other cases (for instance the Norrbotten Theatre) it leads to contradictory directives<sup>12</sup>.

12. See Johan Sanne: Kulturinstitutionen, styrelsen och huvudmännen. En upptäcktsresa till åtta världar (The cultural institution and its principals) ([www.framtidenskultur.se/sanne.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/sanne.pdf))

Having only one principal may work very well as long as the institution management and the principal have confidence in each other. If not, the result can be catastrophic. With more than one principal, a clever institution management can play them off against each other. Some institutions have great freedom, despite being governed by a political council, while a formally independent limited company might be governed in minute detail by its principals (see above).

The ideal institution board is knowledgeable and interested in the activities, has confidence in the institution management while having such strong authority that the principals listen to its arguments.

Nowadays, the boards often have influence over the principals, but only see themselves as representing the principals and believe they should monitor that the management does not embark on any risky business.

There is a deeply rooted belief that people with artistic assignments don't know arithmetic, and that the management has to be divided in two – a managing director and an artistic director. A divided leadership can work, but it requires that they both have confidence in one another, that they have chosen one another. They should serve as one another's sparring-partners; the MD tries to achieve financial scope for the artistic director's visions. However, if the artistic leader decides under financial duress to carry out his/her plans regardless of cost, it is up to the MD to slam on the brakes and discuss priorities with the artistic director.

If neither has chosen the other, there is a risk that they will end up in a conflict situation, in which the MD uses all possible means to stop or obstruct the artistic director's development plans – a strategy that will lead to major financial and artistic crises. In that situation of warfare, the artistic director had better be good at arithmetic – under the critical eye of the staff, principals and board members. In this war, economics always have the last word and the activities carry no weight. In a trusting part-

nership, the participants can co-operate to set priorities and define what is necessary for the artistic profile.

Principals often appoint the MD on the strength of his/her administrative skills – the ability to understand and take an interest in the activity is secondary. The principals have found a person who can handle numbers and write employment contracts. Consequently, they believe that the forecasts delivered by the MD are viable, and that s/he can implement rationalisations. But it is, of course, difficult for this person to determine exactly what constitutes the institution's real capital, and to be fully aware of how easily it is squandered.

In the crises that arise, especially those where the principals claim that the institution has exceeded the financial framework, a consultant is appointed. The consultant comes from the business sector, because there is a belief that the organisational models found in businesses are applicable to cultural institutions. There is little faith in artists, who are regarded as corrupt, false, slippery and manipulative. Instead a through-and-through consultant is preferred. (Incidentally, many innovative companies are looking to inject the very disturbance that is caused by intellectuals and artists.)

The artistic director rarely gets to participate in the appointment of a consultant; at the most, s/he may be allowed to choose between a few alternatives, all of whom have a similar background and approach to reality.

An institution management is often unable to appoint a counter-investigation when the principals have appointed a consultant to implement their model. The director of the institution has to argue his/her points based on his/her knowledge, points that the principals have probably already stopped listening to once the crisis has been reached. The counter-investigations that are made usually take the perspective of the regular staff, who want the activities to change as little as possible, particularly with regard to staffing.

It would be interesting to test a rapid support service, whereby the institution could apply for funding for an alternative investigation. This support service could also incorporate an advisory function, a discussion about how to find the right investigator with regard to the features of the principals' criticism/plan, assistance in analysing what is most obviously missing in the principals' version, what kind of arguments/facts they would be most likely to listen to. This form of support has been called for, especially among small institutions.

As Barbro Smeds relates in her report *Institutionsteater som "konstföretag"* (Institutional theatre as an "art company")<sup>13</sup>, the consultant has to devote all his/her time to trying to understand how cultural production works. The result of the investigation is usually that a few more decision-making levels are added at intermediary management level, and that more meetings are held. The organisation usually grows less flexible, and although some staff may initially feel that they have gained influence, they will eventually notice that this is not the case. The director or directors get less and less power to influence the organisation, because all their time is spent in different meetings.

That this is a hollow ultra-democracy emerges when the time pressure increases prior to opening a new exhibition or a first night, because it is suddenly no problem to skip meetings, since that is not where the decisions are made.

Often, new structures gradually revert to the old ways, even if the new meeting procedures are maintained as long as possible, albeit with a diminishing content.

We would welcome a study of a few extensive reorganisations in the institutional world, to find out what remains and what positive and negative effects the reorganisation has had. Moreover, a study should be made of what form of network organisation could be implemented in a cultural institution.

13. [www.framtidenskultur.se/barbro.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/barbro.pdf)

The consultancy fees are usually astronomical (in cultural terms) but in a crisis this money is taken from some central account at the principals', so that the cost does not directly affect the cultural institution. There are instances where the costs have exceeded the amount that is to be saved, but this has been justified with the argument that it will lead to long-term structural change that will pay off eventually.

Sometimes a form of moralising is involved – change is supposed to be painful, and the sinners in the management should be humiliated. The consultant and the principals step in and make decisions about the artistic activities. They close down productions just before the first night, or stop exhibitions for which all staff and all contracts have been finalised. The money that might be saved is negligible, compared to the amount that has already been invested in the project. The loss of good will that this action causes the institution is extensive and hard to recuperate. What the consultant and the principals succeed in doing is to demonstrate who is in power, and they also signal that they are capable of taking forceful actions to cut costs.

Another measure that principals can resort to in the event of a crisis in a cultural institution is to dismiss the director/directors. Usually, it is the artistic director who has to go, usually just as s/he has embarked on implementing the programme that the principals perceived to be interesting when they recruited the artistic director. When the programme involves major changes and less security for the staff, a rebellious atmosphere arises. The principals have not analysed what difficulties may arise from the implementation of the artistic director's programme, since they were only interested in attaining the goal. They are not interested in supporting the artistic director against the attacks, but quickly change sides.

The cost of sacking an artistic director is not high enough – either financially or in terms of good will. The artistic director is considered to be interchangeable and entirely instrumental. The programme of change and development that the artistic director has been appointed to implement

single-handedly is rarely discussed from the operative perspective. The ideal vision of the future has been clear, but the difficulties that the implementation will cause have not been taken into account.

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The board should sign a contract with the artistic directorship, entitling him/her to a substantial golden handshake if the board or principals interrupt the renewal process by dismissing the artistic director.

One problem is that the artistic director has already promised too much and made too small claims in order to get the job. Promising the same activities at a lower cost is often foolish, but that is what many people do at the interview stage. The board, MD and artistic director should have a joint contract formulating each person's responsibilities and goals.

The board, which ought to serve as a support for the institution and its management during the renewal process, is often, on the contrary, frightened by public opinion expressed within and outside the institution<sup>14</sup>. The audience that the institution has won may be worried by the changes (in exhibition programmes, repertoire, target groups) while still being critical of the current contents. There is always a fear of the unknown, of losing the familiar. Within the institution there is the fear of losing one's job security, but also of changes that will make new demands and alter the familiar pattern. It is the artistic director, and possibly the MD, who have to allay these fears and inspire enthusiasm, as well as contrasting the traditions with a favourable picture of the change.

In order to succeed in implementing change, additional funding is needed for activities that will make staff feel motivated to participate in the renewal process, or to pay severance fees to those who are entirely opposed to the developments.

Naturally, it all depends on what demands for support the artistic director makes on the principals. But the board rarely gets the blame for a failed renewal process. The artistic director needs to have the full backing

14. One example of public outrage in connection with change occurred in connection with the merger of the university library and the municipal library in Visby. See Arne Brodin and Rebecka Tarschys Bibliotekscentrum (Library Centre) [www.framtidenskultur.se/visby.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/visby.pdf).

of the board for the development plan, an MD who agrees with and supports the plan.

In addition, a mentor would be an excellent means of support. This mentor could, for instance, be a former director, an artistic advisor.

The artistic director should not be recruited on his/her own, but could be accompanied by a group that is employed entirely by the artistic director, and is completely initiated in the impending renewal process.

This is obviously an issue that challenges the labour laws, but the question is whether job security and artistic activities are compatible. The laws need to be modified in the arts, for instance with regard to the contracts spanning several years that have been introduced for workers in theatre.

One of the fundamental problems is that thoughts of renewal are often born on the chopping-block, when the principals are not intending to pay the price of the current activities. The fact that renewal could involve higher costs is not a popular point of departure. However, an institution that has hit the bottom, where deficits and downsizing have been going on for years, are usually not particularly interested in changing – on the contrary, they are in the process of dying.

One could ask, however, if staff who are constantly told that they are a burden that incurs losses for the institution, are in a position to contribute towards improving the content of the institution. However, it appears utopian to assume that the principals would dare to even think of finding completely new forms for cultural activities and allowing the old structures to die.

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From the principals' perspective, renewal is not primarily about improving quality, but about lowering costs, or possibly increasing the quantifiable results, e.g. audience numbers.



## art education

When we organised the seminar *Vad ska vi ha konstnärer till?* (What are artists good for?) in Visby on 17–18 May, 1999<sup>15</sup>, it caused agitated comments. It was not permissible to discuss the role of the artist in society, or to voice the controversial claim that we are educating too many artists in Sweden. One of the misunderstandings we encountered was that the word artist was synonymous with visual artist. We had chosen intentionally not to use the expression cultural worker, a remnant from the 70s, when everyone was supposed to be equal, in favour of reviving the wider definition of the artist, the practitioner of art. What we meant was artists from the entire cultural field, including actors, composers, choreographers, exhibition curators, and so on. However, two questions arise here:

- What is an artist?
- How does one become an artist?

Completed artistic training at university level has increasingly become the only acknowledged route to becoming an artist. The trade unions, not least, have contributed to this process, even though many central trade union officials have not themselves graduated from any such education. The autodidacts who stake out their own educational road and find their own expression are becoming extinct. They might possibly be replaced with those who have studied abroad, but even these artists encounter scepticism unless they have also taken part in certain well-defined, well-known (in Sweden) educations. The truth is, of course, that these educations do not necessarily turn people into out-and-out artists – some choose not to continue as artists, while others persevere but fail, and the rest will be able to earn a living as artists.

There is, of course, a demagogic point to be made here – educations that are as expensive as these (since they are so teacher-intensive) are not justifiable if they fail to produce batch upon batch of fully-fledged and sought-after artists. Others point out the absurdity of educating more

15. *Vad ska vi ha konstnärer till?* (What are artists good for?) ([www.framtidenskultur.se/visby.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/visby.pdf))

artists than the cultural market needs. Yet others focus on the large numbers who apply to these courses, and ask if perhaps the wrong students have been selected, since so many students are allowed to fail.

But what is failure? Is it a failure to change one's artistic genre? For a make-up artist to mainly direct films, or for a mime artist to convert to the visual arts? On looking at the great, renowned artists throughout the ages, we find that many of them explored different artistic expressions – some alternating art forms, while others changed their focus entirely.

Perhaps it would be permissible to say that artistic training helps to breed qualities that can be used in different ways apart from purely artistic creation. The labour market is said to be looking for people who can think creatively, especially in companies typical of the "new economy". Interactive narration requires new artistic qualities. The cultural sector needs producers who have a grasp of the artistic process, cultural institutions need administrators who can support the orientation, they need educationalists who can work with audiences, and so on. Today, people with artistic training are looked down upon if they have not succeeded after a few years. They are advised to change profession entirely, and their training is considered to be useless. They should be de-programmed from their previous artistic focus.

Does artistic training need to be regeneration?

One proposal is to introduce a foundation year that is the same for several different artistic educations. After completing this foundation year, the colleges discuss with some students whether they should reconsider their educational path. This discussion should be continuous. Other shared features could also be identified, leading to joint projects between students in different artistic disciplines. Throughout their studies, students should have opportunities to meet and work with professional artists from other disciplines.

The various colleges in the artistic fields should profile themselves more, so that they could compete more on the basis of what they offer. This would perhaps encourage students to apply more actively for a specific educational path.

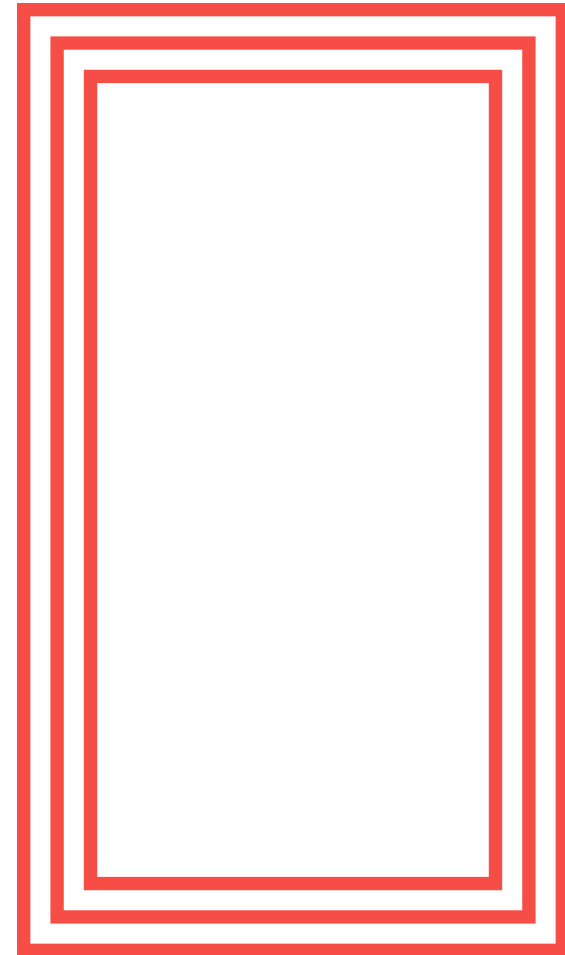
Is it justified that artistic training takes up to five years to complete, when students have gone through preparatory training beforehand?

Wouldn't it be more natural to return to college for further education, rather than spend five to ten years studying at the very beginning of one's artist career? Some of these further training courses could also be available to artists from other disciplines.

One of the major problems of artistic training lies in the recruitment of teachers. In many other countries it is regarded as an honour to be asked to teach the next generation of artists. In Sweden the role of teacher in the arts has low status. Many of those drawn to teaching the arts are in search of the security that employment entails, and they are hardly the best suited to encourage students to become risk-taking, boundary-breaking artists.

The change that is taking place today within artistic training mainly concerns the approach to traditional vocational skills, learning to work with the basic styles of expression. It is often argued that the modern artistic expressions instead require entirely different skills, entirely different expressions, and awareness of a theoretical, philosophical context. It appears that an oscillation between these two extremes is in process, rather than any true development. The effect is almost comical when the most successful experimental artists advocate a return to the old educational ideals. The truth is perhaps that one needs to have knowledge about an artistic tradition before one can deconstruct it. Education should provide a solid base for multi-skilled artists who are capable of trying out different means of expression and are not restricted by tradition.

How can higher education correspond better with the metamorphosis that the arts are going through, in which the traditional genre distinctions are being questioned? Most schools are entirely focused on producing specialists in each respective field. Artists who want to work across the boundaries, who want to try different forms of expression to convey the same content, get little support from the schools. The proposal made in the above, for a common foundation year and shared courses, could be a step on the way. Opportunities for students to meet and work with professional artists in other disciplines could be another. However, entirely new educations, or a change of focus within existing educational institutions, will probably also be needed. New disciplines are likely to emerge in the longer perspective, but few of the educational institutions are sufficiently flexible to incorporate them.



## is it possible some concluding remarks

We have attempted to outline the situation of cultural institutions today – in an era when the expansive cultural policy of the 1970s is criticised, both for economic reasons and on account of the goals it defined. Cultural policy was able to generate such large funding for reforms because culture was enlisted in the service of the development of society; it was an expression of the ambition to organise society in minute detail. Today, the world looks different and cultural institutions have to be more flexible in order to deal with it.

One goal that has been criticised is the democratic ambition of equality, accessibility and participation – why has culture not succeeded in reaching a noticeably broader audience? There are those who claim that a few prominent, central institutions would suffice, instead of the network we have today. However, we believe that it is important to retain the democratic ambitions, although the missionary ambition to convince everyone that culture is great could be toned down. But it is still important that everyone should have the opportunity to visit the cultural institutions at a reasonable price.

Cultural institutions need to adopt a more open approach to visitors. They have to dare enter into dialogue with contemporary society. However, we see the opposite happening, a tendency to smudge out individuality in the attempt to attain goals, and consequently running the risk of putting the institution in an anonymous grey zone that fails to attract audiences and eventually could lead to closure.

It is essential that cultural policy stand firmly on three legs:

- Strong roots among the population and dialogue
- Accessibility and participation
- Scope for innovation

The fact that many people are involved in amateur cultural activities such as choirs, amateur dramatics and role-playing, provides a wide base, and

Sweden is unique in this way. However, cultural institutions must dare participate in a dialogue, instead of presenting old truths. The traditional concept of culture is also challenged by youth sub-groups that create their own culture, sometimes borrowing from what is considered to be commercial – read bad – culture. These sub-cultures are often narrow and commercially uninteresting, but they sometimes incorporate innovative and interdisciplinary expressions. Many of tomorrow's stars are probably found in these sub-cultures.

It goes without saying that culture, and cultural institutions not least, should be accessible. But this is not merely a geographical issue, it also relates to how visitors are received. The institution should be a place where everyone can participate and interact. All too often, visitors encounter anonymity, and they are not assisted in finding the meetings that could take place in the cultural institution. This is not a question of trivialising the content or underestimating the visitor, but of providing visitors with the right tools.

The third leg, scope for innovation, often seems to be sacrificed in the name of saving. Without experiments, the right to fail, cultural creativity would cease. Parts of what is now generally regarded to be incomprehensible, difficult, ugly, disgusting, will in a few decades be incorporated in popularly accepted culture. To lean, as many cultural institutions do today, against the already accepted, leads straight to anonymity.

**BLEAK PROSPECTS?** The reason why we have painted this bleak, or, as some will have it, acerbic picture, is that we want to highlight the problems, which are frequently of a structural nature. Our perspective is that of the active artist and the institution management. The principals of the cultural institutions, the owner representatives, would probably have another version. However, their version is beginning to appear increasingly heartless – the cultural institution is not acknowledged as having potential, as something to be proud of, but as a phenomenon that accumulates debt in the books of the

regional or local authorities.

There are, of course, exceptions, and we could have opted to highlight the positive tendencies, but we have seen our task to be to focus on how the cultural capital is being squandered in many areas, we want to put the searchlight on the hidden cultural policy agenda. We have reacted strongly against the utilitarian cultural policy. The fact that culture has favourable side effects is heartening, but the cause is lost if these effects are regarded as the primary justification for investment in culture. Institutions that are created on those premises are living precariously. Any queries concerning whether they have achieved the expected result could lead to closure of the institution.

The cultural landscape is an essential part of what makes us into human beings, develops our consciousness and shapes our society. However, the politicians appear to find motives such as these hard to embrace as a justification for funding.

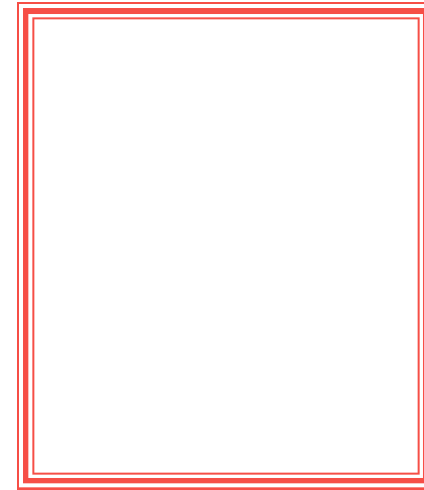
One of the more fundamental criticisms we have levelled at the institutions concerns their lack of flexibility. Structures eventually grow more important than the activities. We propose a few major and minor measures as a remedy. Some of the measures require changes in legislation, and that trade unions and employers realise that cultural production cannot be achieved on the same conditions as other production. One sign that change is on the way is the new agreements in the theatrical field, where institutions can form ensembles with contracts for several years without having to employ actors permanently. Another example is the move away from guild-thinking, in favour of more team-work.

We will not reiterate all the proposals presented in this report, but will highlight a few:

- New national awards. Institutions characterised by high artistic development could be awarded substantially increased development funding over a few years.

- A new, subjective and active way of allocating funds – links who would identify artists and link them with cultural institutions where their projects could be realised. Projects could lead to unexpected developments in the institutions and encounters between different artistic disciplines. The links would serve as mentors throughout the project.
- A number of pilot projects focusing on how cultural institutions could co-operate with volunteers, and also on how institutions could interact creatively and critically with amateur culture.
- A foundation year for artistic education that is the same for several disciplines. After the foundation year, the college could discuss with students the possibility of reconsidering their educational path.
- An investigation service for smaller cultural institutions, to enable them to commission a report in connection with proposals for changes.
- A study on whether cultural heritage institutions could get more sponsorship funding.
- A workshop with architects, planners and cultural institutions, about institution buildings of the future, also discussing how institutions should formulate their requirements when ordering a new building.
- A seminar on how cultural institutions could discuss contemporary life and the future.

In addition to these and other proposals in this report, it is essential to pursue the debate and maintain a questioning approach. We need to constantly create new forums for the encounter between artists, cultural institutions and cultural politicians.



## Reports published by the programme

A summary of all reports and seminar documentation is available in English at [www.framtidenskultur.se/renewal.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/renewal.pdf).

Björn Linnell: Är kulturpolitiken bara historia – eller är kulturpolitikens historia dess framtid? (Is cultural policy merely history – or is the history of cultural policy its future?) [www.framtidenskultur.se/linnell.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/linnell.pdf)

Anders Kreuger: Konst och nytta (Art and usefulness)  
[www.framtidenskultur.se/kreuger.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/kreuger.pdf)

Johan Sanne: Kulturinstitutionen, styrelsen och huvudmännen. En upptäcktsresa till åtta världar. (The cultural institution, its management and principals. An exploration of eight worlds) [www.framtidenskultur.se/sanne.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/sanne.pdf)

Barbro Smeds: Institutionsteatern som "konstföretag". Vad händer egentligen innanför murarna? (Institutional theatre as an "art company". What happens inside the walls?) [www.framtidenskultur.se/barbro.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/barbro.pdf)

Ragnar Lyth: Teater en ensemblekonst. Ett förslag till förnyelse av svenska institutionsteatrar. (Theatre, an ensemble art. A proposal for renewal of Swedish institutional theatre) [www.framtidenskultur.se/lyth.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/lyth.pdf)

Arne Brodin & Rebecka Tarschys: Bibliotekscentrum: Opinionsbildningen kring förslaget att slå ihop folkbiblioteket och högskolebiblioteket i Visby. (Library Centre: Campaigning around the proposal to merge the municipal and university libraries in Visby) [www.framtidenskultur.se/visby.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/visby.pdf)

Anton Hagwall: Tio intervjuer (Ten interviews) and Jan Gradvall: Vilka är framtidens kulturkonsumenter? (Who are the future consumers of culture?) [www.framtidenskultur.se/gradvall.pdf](http://www.framtidenskultur.se/gradvall.pdf)

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