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Cultural Policy in the Swedish Welfare State

Historical Background

Serious efforts to define the concept “Cultural Policy” were not made in Sweden until the 1970s. The efforts evolved in the process to create a new cultural policy, which after several years of inquiry, was decided on by the Swedish Parliament in 1974. Before that “cultural policy” as a rather vague term had now and then occurred in practice when public support of traditional artistic activities, popular education and libraries were being discussed.

When the concept “Cultural Policy” then finally was defined in the bill of 1974 it definitely was regarded as a policy area within the Swedish Welfare Model similar to the policy areas that had been developed for education, social affairs, and for housing by the Social Democrats during the four decades that they by then had been in office. Cultural policy now was defined as a policy area that was concerned with:

measures relating to cultural activities and works in written, theatrical, visual, and musical form, as well as media of communication such as the press, radio, and television. It also includes certain measures concerning popular education and associations, as well as measures for the preservation and revitalization of Sweden’s cultural heritage.¹

In practice, however, the birth of a Swedish cultural policy that encompassed every person born in Sweden had taken place almost 450 years earlier when the Swedish king Gustav I in 1536 cut off the nation’s ties with the Catholic Church and instead instigated the Church of Sweden, which adhered to the Lutheran confession. The influence on the arts, on education and social affairs that the Church of Sweden exercised during the following centuries was considerable. Swedish national cultural policy was actually long into the 20th century associated with the policy pursued in the religious and educational domains. Until 1968 the minister who had the responsibility for those three policy fields was called the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs (ecclesia is the Latin word for church). From 1968 the title was changed to Minister for Educational Affairs and it was not until 1991 that a special Department for Cultural Affairs was created.

The strong influence of the Church of Sweden in its role as a state church explains why the Swedish society long into the 20th was culturally very homogeneous. From the end of the 17th century it was for instance due to compulsory measures to understand religious texts forced through by the Church of Sweden, that illiteracy was kept at a low level even before a general education system was implemented in 1842. As regards high art forms like theatre and music performances, the Church of Sweden long into modern times also exercised its power to prohibit public art events for instance during Lent and after the death of a person belonging to the royal family.

Within the all-embracing impact on cultural matters that the Church of Sweden had, several specific motives for measures of cultural policy can be discerned before the 20th

¹ Quoted after Kleberg, Carl-Johan, Cultural Policy in Sweden. In Cummings, Milton C. Jr & Katz, Richard S. (ed.) *The Patron State. Government and the arts in Europe, North America, and Japan* (New York/Oxford, 1987), p. 174.

century. During the 17th century Sweden slowly became a great power in North Europe through wars of conquest around the Baltic Sea. New universities were founded in Dorpat (in present Estonia) in 1632, and in Lund (in Skåne, a province captured from Denmark) in 1668. A driving force for the establishment of those universities was a desire to assert national identity. This was also the motive for the setting up of a government office for the maintenance of archives and the care of cultural monuments. During this century legislation was also passed for the protection of archaeological remains.

During the following century several institutions that still have important functions in Swedish cultural life were established. Behind those ventures lay ambitions shared by the Crown and the court to make an impact both on Swedes in general and specifically on neighbouring countries. To take a few examples:

In 1735 the Royal Drawing Academy was established with the aim to educate native-born architects for the building of the new royal palace in Stockholm. When the palace was built the tasks of the academy were widened and it became the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. It was responsible for the higher education in fine arts until 1978 when the school was turned into a university college and the state assumed full responsibility for the teaching.

Other Academies were later set up by the art-loving king Gustaf III. In 1771 the Royal Swedish Academy of Music was established. During the early 19th century this academy took on the responsibility for all post-secondary music education in the country, a role that it kept until 1971 when the school was taken over by the state. King Gustaf III further created the Swedish National Academy in 1786 with the purpose to advance the Swedish language and Swedish literature. Today it still carries out this task. It is this institution that from 1901 also awards the Nobel Prize in Literature. Other institutions initiated by Gustaf III and still existing today are the National Opera and the National Dramatic Theatre.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of new ideas that evolved parallel to, and sometimes in protest against, the apparatus of central government. In many cases they were forerunners to present-day cultural policy. Breeding grounds were three important popular movements that were formed during this century. Firstly there was a movement centring on a religious revival that defied the State Church and its cultural "beliefs". Secondly, new social and cultural habits evolved among the masses that the temperance movement mobilised. Last but not least there was the profound cultural vitalization that took place within the labour movement. In all those popular movements education became a key factor. One goal was to make cultural life reachable for everybody.

Culture and cultural policy in the emerging welfare state – 1900 to 1974

The transformation of the Swedish society that took place at the turn of the century, especially the industrial revolution and the full emergence of a representative democracy, strongly influenced how the ideological and political space for a cultural policy later was defined and shaped. Decisive forces in this process were also the popular movements just mentioned.

Three classes could clearly be discerned in the Swedish society around 1900: the bourgeoisie, the working class, and the farmers. The bourgeoisie had, with the support

of the farmers both the political and the economic power but was challenged by the workers. After 1921, when both men and women had acquired full democratic rights, this power balance was changed. From 1920 and onwards the workers gained more and more political influence and their social and cultural statuses were continually strengthened. The Social Democratic Party had a majority position from 1932 and ruled the country with a few short breaks (1976–1982 and 1991–94) until 2006.

The cultural debates that took place during this period mostly emanated from a traditional view of a culture that encompassed the fine arts, literature, theatre, classical music, dance and a vaguely defined “cultural heritage”. One of them took place just before World War I and during the war. It concerned a proposition first raised by the Royal Academy of Music, to establish symphony orchestras that could play “good music” at concerts that were affordable to workers through cheap ticket prices. The aim was to establish professional symphony orchestras in 15 towns spread all over the country. Liberal forces in the Parliament supported the proposition and just before the war they managed to pass a law that allowed the establishment of small symphony orchestras (with 25 musicians) in three towns with a high percentage of workers. However, when the question was taken up again after the war, the suspicion and doubtfulness that the Social democrats expressed on the benefits of a patriarchal project like this, meant that the plan never was realized.²

Instead, during the 1920s a new proposition regarding orchestras was launched that better fitted views on culture that were articulated by social democrats and the labour movement. A law was passed in 1928, which allowed the state to give support to symphony orchestras that were established by amateur musicians in cooperation with professional musicians (mostly military band musicians and music teachers) in small towns and municipalities. About 70 orchestras applied for financial support within this program and many new orchestras were formed during the following decades with the help of governmental means allocated to this field. They organized themselves from the start in a national federation, which today is called Sveriges orkesterförbund (*The Association of Swedish Orchestras*) and consists of 330 orchestras. Big jazz bands and brass bands nowadays also belong to the association.

Adult liberal education motive for cultural policy decisions

The new symphony orchestra project of the 1920s fitted well in to the ideas on adult liberal education and culture that had been developed within the labour movement from the beginning of the 20th century. In 1912 the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA – in Swedish *ABF*) was started. It still exists and can this year (2012) look back on one hundred very successful years. It is a politically independent organisation, but share the values of the labour movement. Culture was from the start of the organization a self-evident part of the educational programs that were carried through. A leading thought was inclusion and participation. The bourgeois culture in fields like music, fine arts and literature should be conquered by learning how to play an instrument, how to draw and

² The three People’s concert orchestras that had been set up were given continued state and municipal funding and have successively grown to the size of about 80 musicians. They stopped giving special People’s concerts around 1940. Local initiatives during the second part of the 20th century led to the establishment of new professional symphony orchestras in several towns. Together with the orchestras in Sweden’s largest cities – Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmoe – which received funding from the city councils from the start (1905–1920), they now make live classical music available for almost everybody in Sweden. Today the funding of those around 20 professional symphony orchestras are shared between the state and local governments so the initiative taken in 1910 has actually been realized.

paint, and how to tell and write stories. An effective means for this learning was the *study circle* in which the participants organized the studying almost on their own.

The ideas of adult liberal education like that started by WEA soon spread to other organizations such as the farmers organisation, the temperance movement, the salaried employees' movement and they set up their own *adult liberal education associations*. Today there are ten large organizations of this kind in Sweden. They run around 300 000 study circles per year and reach more than two million persons. The most popular subjects are, in that order, music, fine arts, media, humanities, social studies and behavioural sciences. In 2007 the number of study hours in music, fine arts and media amounted to 61 % of all study circle activities. This is a clear increase compared to earlier figures. One reason for this is the fact that the municipalities and the state have taken greater responsibility for adult education through local adult education-schools and the expansion and growth of university colleges.

Ideas on the importance of adult liberal education were actually lively debated already during the 19th century, especially among representatives for the farmers. The Danish pastor, philosopher and educator N. F. S. Grundtvig initiated during the 1840s special *folk high schools* in Denmark and this educational form soon spread to the other Nordic countries. In 1868 two such schools were set up in Sweden and many more schools located all over Sweden were started during the following decades. The role they played in a cultural renewal of the countryside from the end of the 19th century cannot be neglected. During the 20th century other organizations, for instance the labour movement, the temperance movement, the sports movement, religious associations among others also started folk high schools. There are today 150 folk high schools in Sweden, and about one hundred of them are connected with associations, foundations, popular movements or non-profit organizations. County or region councils run the rest of them.

Public libraries – another important cultural force – was also set in motion by the interest in adult liberal education in late 19th and early 20th century. Small parish libraries were created already at the start of general education in 1842 but their growth in importance as cultural resources increased especially from 1912 when much more favourable conditions for state grants to local libraries were initiated. Today you can find a public library in every urban and rural district. The local authorities administer them but receive state funding according to a law passed in 1996.

A Swedish Broadcasting Company was founded in 1925. Sveriges Radio AB (SR) – *Swedish Radio Ltd* – is Sweden's national publicly funded radio broadcaster. The Swedish public-broadcasting system was at the start in many respects modelled after the BBC in the United Kingdom, and Sveriges Radio shares many characteristics with its British counterpart. The ambitions of the latter to engage in adult liberal education became a leading principle also for SR during the first 30–40 years, and it fitted well with the cultural policy aims that were developed in Sweden at this time. SR is today a public limited company, owned by an independent foundation, and funded through a licensing fee determined by the Swedish Parliament. No advertising is permitted. SR's status could be described as that of a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization. It broadcasts news and current affairs in Swedish and a number of minority and immigrant languages and also covers: popular and classical music; social debate; children's programming; culture; sport; drama; entertainment; public information; traffic reports and the weather. There are four nationwide domestic FM

channels; 25 local channels; a Finnish language channel (Swedish Radio Sisuradio) and an external service, Radio Sweden.³

The ideas of adult liberal education also affected how theatre performances early became widely available all over the country. In 1933 a national federation for theatres – *Riksteatern* – was established. It is still today in 2012 a thriving voluntary organisation made up of 236 theatre clubs spread all over the country. The federation also owns one theatre (in Stockholm) and runs a national touring theatre. Its aim is to arrange theatre performances and promote dramatic art. *Riksteatern* reaches every year an audience of slightly more than 1.2 million. It has widespread international contacts and gives guest performances abroad on a regular basis. From 1977 it also runs a special “Silent theatre” that gives performances in sign language.⁴

Support for children's culture

A policy that affected the culture for children and young adults had its origins in initiatives on a local level. From around 1940 small music schools were started in many municipalities. They usually were separated from the primary and secondary schools but gradually cooperation with those has come about. The music schools are run and funded by the municipalities. They were initially often set up with the aim to teach young people how to appreciate more valuable music (i.e. classical) than the popular music of the entertainment industry, which at this time [1940s and 50s] was gaining ground. In the 1970s this goal could no longer be justified as the youngsters more urgently showed that they wanted to learn the music they most liked. So the teaching of popular music on an individual basis (lessons on how to play the guitar, piano/keyboard, base etc.) as well as in an ensemble took over more and more ground in the schools. Today the genre of popular music definitely dominates in those schools.

Almost every municipality in Sweden has started a music school. They are nowadays often part of a municipal educational institution for art, dance and music that offer training in the fine arts to children from pre-school age up to their late teenage. In 1999, according to a report on Swedish music export,⁵ 370 000 children were provided with training on instruments, in song, in ensemble-playing, composition and from the late 1990s also in the mixing and recording of music. The report estimated that around 30% of those who had passed through elementary schools since the 1970s had the chance to take the first step to becoming a pop star, thanks to those music schools. It is a well-known fact that many of the Swedish artists who became successful on the international pop music arena had their first musical training – and inspiration from those music schools. You might have heard of groups/artists like The Cardigans, Robyn, Ace of Base, Sahara Hotnights and the Hives that became popular from the 1990s. Some of you might even remember a number of Swedish groups which back in the 1970s and 1980s gathered fans all over the world: ABBA, Europe and Roxette.

³ Cf <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=2438> for a comprehensive presentation of SR in English.

⁴ Information about The “Silent theatre” is available in English at: <http://tystteater-english.riksteatern.se/about-tyst-teater>

⁵ Forss, Kim (1999). *Att ta sig ton – om svensk musikexport 1974–1999*. Rapport till ESO – Expertgruppen för studier i offentlig ekonomi. Ds 1999:28. [*To set the tone – Swedish music export 1974–1999*. Report to ESO – The expert group for studies in public economy. Stockholm, 1999. Summary in English pp. 145–153] (<http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c4/38/79/170080fb.pdf>)

Media and cultural policy

The official start for television in Sweden took place in September 1956. It was the culmination of several years' trial programme transmissions under the reign of the public service radio (SR). In 1969 a second national channel was added. From 1978 the Sveriges Television AB (SVT), *Sweden's Television*, is independent from SR. The corporate structure is a limited company owned by a foundation. It is financed by a compulsory licence fee for possession of a TV-set, which also finances SR and the Swedish educational broadcasting company (UR). SVT's board and chairman are appointed by the Swedish government. It maintained a monopoly in domestic terrestrial broadcasting from the start in 1956 until the privately held TV4 started broadcasting terrestrially in 1992. It is barred from accepting advertisements except in the case of sponsors for major sporting events.

SVT is still the biggest TV network in Sweden, with an audience share of 36.4%. Today SVT operates eight channels - seven national, SVT1, SVT2, SVT24, SVT B (a childrens' channel) and together with UR, Kunskapskanalen [The Educational Channel]. There is also one international channel, SVT World, which offers SVT productions in Swedish in real time to viewers all over the world. SVT programming is subject to the provisions of the Radio Act, to terms set out in the charter between SVT and the state as well as internal programming guidelines. The charter guarantees SVT's independency of all pressure groups, political, commercial or otherwise. One of the most important points is "to scrutinize authorities, organizations and private firms which exert influence over policy affecting the public, and cover the activities of these and other bodies".⁶

Press support is also regarded as belonging to the field of cultural policy. The first investigations on the question were carried out in the early 1960s after the occurrence of a first wave of closing-down of newspapers. The Parliament voted in 1965 in favour of a press support that was distributed to the political parties, which then passed it on to "their" newspapers. In 1976 the system was reworked and more firm rules were initiated. A new governmental authority – The Press Support Board [Presstödsnämnden] – with the purpose to distribute the support, was established.

Cultural policy as part of a national welfare policy

The more decisive changes as regards public radio and television as well as press support took place within the aims of the new cultural policy that was established in 1974. The policy was from the start seen as part of the national welfare policy. In the proposition presented by the Social Democratic Government to the Parliament in 1974 this was formulated as: "Cultural policy [...] should be regarded as one of several instruments to create a society which is characterized by equality and gives people opportunities for a better [richer] life." (Proposition [Government bill] 1974:28, p. 293)

The official report that prepared the Proposition 1974:28 was done during a period when the public debate was comparatively radical. The report discusses all the branches of art (music, fine arts, literature, dance etc.), the cultural heritage, media and also those parts of the adult liberal education that was seen as cultural activities. The latter category was essential because the proposals in the report had a background in the cultural debate that had taken place in the 1960s and which to a great extent had been moulded by social democrats with experiences from the adult liberal education

⁶ cf <http://www.svt.se/aboutsvt>.

movement. From their angle a cultural policy should have as its goal to cultivate the people and lift the workers to a level that made them capable to take part in the ruling of the country.

In the governmental bill on culture that was passed by the Parliament in 1974 eight goals were formulated. Thus cultural policy should:

- protect freedom of expression and create real opportunities for all to use it,
- give people opportunities to engage in creative activities and promote contacts between people,
- counteract the negative effects of commercialism in the cultural sector,
- promote a decentralization of enterprises and decision-making in the cultural sector
- see to it that the cultural policy was increasingly worked out to meet the experiences and needs of neglected groups
- make possible artistic and cultural renewal
- guarantee that the cultural heritage from older times was preserved and came alive
- promote an exchange of experiences and ideas within the cultural field across linguistic and national borders

Most institutions that now came under the domain of the national cultural policy had a long history of their own. They were royal academies, state or private foundations, associations, joint-stock companies, and some authorities. However, it was the arts – and not least, the artists – that were seen as the core of the cultural policy. The contributions of the state to the arts had preponderance for high culture and artists that produced works that were considered of high quality. The existence of high quality art was taken for granted. This kind of art was never defined. Instead it was the artists themselves who decided what quality meant in the arts through participation in different committees and juries in which important decisions were taken on subsidies to institutions like theatres, symphony orchestras, opera houses etc. as well as on the distribution of grants among artists. Thus, quality in the arts was defined in a corporative context.

Cultural policy during late 1970s and the 1980s

The Swedish Arts Council was established during this period as a government authority whose principal task was to implement national cultural policy determined by the Parliament. Archives, the preservation of the cultural heritage and film were policy areas that initially lay outside the Arts Council's realm. So were matters concerning media, higher education in the arts, grants to artists, and adult liberal education, which all continued to be handled by the Ministry of education or within other authorities.

The goal that the cultural policy should “counteract the negative effects of commercialism in the cultural sector”, meant that it in many ways it was high quality art/high culture that was supported. A cornerstone in the cultural policy during the 1970s and 1980s was that high culture should be financed by public funding and in many cases also free of charges for those who wanted to take part of it. The latter meant for instance no entrance fees to museums, and free concerts and theatre performances for school children and young persons

The most important effect of the new cultural policy in a long-term perspective was the establishment of institutions like county-theatres, county-libraries, and departments for distribution of live music [Regionmusiken/Länsmusiken] in all regions of Sweden. Many of those institutions had already been established through local initiatives earlier

during the century but an organization of them that covered the whole country was now carried through. The responsibility for such institutions lay on the regional authorities (landstingen – The County Councils).

Eventually the county administrative boards [länsstyrelserna] also became engaged in the implementation of the cultural policy. First they became responsible for the preservation of the cultural heritage. Later on they also received national funds that they were to distribute as support to cultural events.

In the municipalities special cultural services (kulturförvaltningar) were established during the 1970s and 1980s, often with the public library as a base. Important local agents were also the municipal music schools, which had been set up from the 1940s, first in the towns but later also in many of the municipalities in the countryside. As already noted those music schools, which from the 1990s often were widened to “cultural schools, have played a very important role in promoting culture for children and young people.

Revision of the cultural policy in the 1990s

The cultural policy of 1974 was at first a clear success. Allowances for cultural activities were increased at state, county and municipal levels. Things happened, new institutions were created, free theatre and music groups that challenged traditional forms were formed, and official reports suggested new grants in many new areas. However, taking a long view, most important was the prominence of a regional development of cultural institutions, the creation of resources that could support an alternative or “free” cultural life, and the strong emphasis on children and young persons as the most central group to encompass.

The state grants that were allowed to the regional cultural institutions were designed as a percentage of the costs for salaries in those institutions. The subsidies thus functioned as matching grants – if the regions wanted to extend the activities the state met some of the costs.

Around 1990 it stood clear that a renewal of the cultural policy was needed. The cultural policy of the 1970s was a policy for a society experiencing strong economic expansion. This expansion had ceased around 1990. When the net of new cultural institutions finely was put in place, it stood clear that they were subjected to the same dilemma as many other institutions within the field. Productivity fell and it became more and more expensive to manage an unchanged activity. Theatres or symphony orchestras cannot so easily cut costs for personnel without seriously impairing the quality of their work.

Times had also changed. Cultural concepts got new meanings. The dividing up of high and low culture was in many ways questioned. The clash of interests between commercial and non-commercial enterprises was decreasing and the opposition between the good/beautiful and the bad/ugly that long had been lively debated became less relevant. Cooperation between public and private ventures was no longer tabooed.

A new governmental report on cultural policy was put forward in 1995 and suggestions in it were decided on in the Parliament the following year. Some goals were now adapted to changes that had occurred since 1974. Thus, cultural policy should now according to the new program (changes in relation to the policy of 1974 in italics):

- protect freedom of expression and create real opportunities for all to use it,
- *give everybody opportunities to participate in cultural life and to cultural experiences* and also to engage in creative activities

- *promote a multiplicity of culture [kulturell mångfald], artistic renewal and quality and thereby counteract the negative effects of commercialism in the cultural sector,*
- *give the culture the prerequisites to be a dynamic, challenging and unbound force in society*
- *to protect the cultural heritage and see to it that it can be cultivated*
- *promote adult liberal education [bildningssträvanden]*
- *promote international exchange of culture and encounters between different cultures within the country*

Most prominent is that the goal of the 1974 cultural policy program to support neglected or marginal groups with cultural “goods” disappeared. Instead the goal that *everybody* had the right to participate in the cultural life, to experience cultural events, and to create culture was added. In the new program focus was much more put on the individual and her/his freedom of choice.

Another important shift in focus can be noted for the cultural heritage. It was now also seen as something through which our age can be understood and also acted upon. The cultural heritage should be used to uphold civil values (e.g. democracy and tolerance).

The civil society and cultural policy

The 1974 cultural policy program underlined the importance of *popular movements* and *club activities* for a broader cultural life. Many of the goals presupposed that the popular movements should engage in cultural activities.

This policy failed because the balance between the producers of culture (the professionals) and the consumers became askew. It was the producers who decided the content of cultural activities. The goal “freedom of speech” became in practice a matter of artistic freedom, which soon also came to mean artistic autonomy. This caused alienation between creative artists and groups that the cultural policy wanted to mobilize. This became evident in some of the projects that were initiated by the Swedish Arts Council such as “Culture in working life” or “Culture in housing environment”. A “project culture” of this kind was criticised as being dictated from above.

The concept “culture” was never analysed in the report that prepared the 1974 new cultural program, nor was it defined in the bill that the parliament voted on. The culture that now was brought to the neglected groups was in practice defined by a élite that was well acquainted with cultural expressions, by the professionals in the cultural institutions and in the free cultural life. Culture that was produced on a commercial market was shut off because of the goal that the culture policy should counteract the negative effects of commercialism. Thus there was a clash of interests between the aim to reach the new and formerly neglected groups and the populism that characterized the commercial cultural sector.

The uniform concept of culture that was found at the bottom of the cultural policy program also meant that the professional institutions became strong agents and got the preferential right to interpret what good culture was. The organisations (i.e. popular movements and clubs) never became the strong agents that the cultural policy program had wanted them to be. In the 1990s a new governmental report presented statistics that showed that cultural habits in the population were very stable and relatively unaffected by the efforts of the cultural policy.

The goals that were stated in the 1974 cultural policy program regarding the division of responsibilities between the state, regional administration and local administration were largely reached during the 1980s. When this was achieved the state became more passive in matters that dealt with cultural policy. The focus of the Arts Council more and more became to decide on grants of different kinds.

From the late 1980s the activities of regions and local governments were intensified as regards cultural policy matters. Awareness started to come in existence that the cultural sector also could play an important role in local and regional development plans. Local and regional politicians also now started to realize that investments in culture could promote long-term development in the countryside.

Cultural policy and the regional and local governments from the end of the 1990s

From the late 1990s deliberate efforts were made to displace power and responsibility within several policy fields, among these not the least the field of cultural policy, to local levels of authority. In a governmental report from 2007 a more lucid division of power and responsibilities between the state and the local levels of authority (county councils, municipalities and rural districts) was proposed.⁷ It meant inter alia that the tasks of the state that were carried out by its regional administrative boards concentrated on supervision and inspection while planning and development became the responsibilities of the local authorities.

The deliberate efforts to displace power from the state level to regional and local levels were seen as a threat by many in the cultural sector. Many professionals (artists and cultural administrators) thought that it would lead to artistic equalizing and restrictions on the artistic freedom. Those apprehensions have not been fulfilled. What has happened instead during the last ten years is that more public funds have been spent on culture. Art forms that before were rather neglected on a state level, such as film and dance, are now thriving because of the support they get from local authorities.

The economic crisis during the 1990s led to insights that the old welfare policy that meant that the county councils, municipalities and rural districts accounted for all service as regards primary and secondary schools, general healthcare and care of the elderly – all paid for by taxes that the local governments have the right to decide to take out – could not be continued. A period of trial and error as regards those services – services in the cultural sector included – followed and we are still in a middle of it. Many local governments started to hand over parts of the service to private entrepreneurs, and, especially in the cultural sector, to organisations or co-operative societies. New forms of partnership between the local government and organizations or local private entrepreneurs have been developed. There are examples of how large structures like sports centres or concert and congress halls have been erected and are run through partnerships of this kind. You can also find many examples of partnership on a smaller scale, as when a local government and local manufacturers and businessmen together finance the repair and embellishment (decoration) of district/town centres or housing areas.

⁷ Swedish governmental reports are published in a series called Statens offentliga utredningar (SOU), which nowadays always are available on the web. Unfortunately they seldom have summaries in English. The report that is referred to here is *SOU 2007:10 Hållbar samhällsorganisation med utvecklingskraft*.

New signals on cultural policy from a new government

Government Bill on Culture 2009

In 2006 an alliance of conservative and liberal parties formed a new government. It did not take long before the Minister of Culture commissioned a revision of the goals of the cultural policy. A governmental committee submitted a report in 2009 and after the circulation of this among relevant institutions, and organisations etc. during a period that was unusually short, the Parliament established the proposed cultural policy objectives in the same year. On the web site of the Arts Council the goals for this new policy are described thus:

“The Culture is to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on the freedom of expression. Everyone is to have the opportunity to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity and artistic quality are to be integral parts of society’s development.

To achieve the objectives, cultural policy is to:

- promote opportunities for everyone to experience culture, participate in educational programmes and develop their creative abilities;
- promote quality and artistic renewal;
- promote a dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, used and developed;
- promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation in the cultural sphere; and
- pay particular attention to the rights of children and young people to culture.”⁸

A new goal – to pay particular attention to the rights of children and young people to culture – has been added to the list of objectives. A mandate to carry this through has expressly been given to the Arts council.⁹

The formulation “Everyone is to have the opportunity to participate in cultural life”, which is found in the introduction of the new cultural policy, embrace particularly disabled persons, as can be seen in the tasks that have been given the Arts council. Cultural institutions all over Sweden now receive support through the Arts council in their efforts to produce plans to improve the opportunities for people with disabilities to access various buildings and to take as much part actively in cultural life as able-bodied persons.

As to the new cultural objectives that the government will pursue from 2009 it can also be noted that the formulation “counteract the negative effects of commercialism in the cultural sector”, which was found both in the 1974 and the 1995 cultural policy proposition, now is missing. This marks an important shift in attitudes towards cultural policy that has taken place from the 1990s and on among broad layers of the population. Now the approach that there is no given antagonism between commercial ambitions and artistic quality or freedom has gained more and more ground. As already noted above this line has actually been practiced in many municipalities and counties from the 1990s.

The Government bill on culture that was enacted in 2009 also announced reforms that needed further consideration. One of them concerned the creation of a new agency responsible for analysis and evaluation of cultural policy measures. This new agency

⁸ <http://www.kulturradet.se/en/In-English/Cultural-policy-objectives/> – collected 2012-08-19

⁹ The policy is explained in a *Strategy on culture for children and young people* (pdf) available at <http://www.kulturradet.se/en/in-english/>.

was implemented in 2011 as Myndigheten för kulturanalys [*Agency for the analysis of culture*]. The report *Facts on culture 2012:1* contain data on Government, Regional, County Council and Municipal expenditure on culture.¹⁰ It shows that the combined public expenditure on culture has increased with almost 25 percent during the period 2000–2011. During this decade Regions and County Councils have increased their share of the total public expenditure on culture from 10 percent to 15 percent, while the Government and Municipalities have decreased their shares.

Another announced reform concerned the redistribution of government grants to the regions. This reform, now known as the Model for Cultural Cooperation, was tested in five case regions during 2011. It was found appropriate and thus the model will furnish a new structure for the relationship between state and the regional authorities in cultural policy in the future. It gives the County Councils and other regional authorities increased autonomy in their use of state funds.

A third reform that was proclaimed in the bill concerned a relatively comprehensive reorganisation of national cultural policy agencies. So far this has resulted in the merging of several cultural institutions under *Statens musikverk* [Music Development and Heritage Sweden]. This is the government institution for the music scene in Sweden coordinating and supporting collaborative projects of national interest. The institution is also responsible for preserving, promoting and making accessible our cultural heritage within theatre, dance and music.¹¹

Culture of the future

In the Swedish cultural policy of today the public funding is mainly allocated to traditional art forms and conventional cultural activities. Public money that is spent on renewal and development in the cultural sector are scarce and cultural forms that are not supported by public funds are seldom noticed in the cultural policy. We have in reality two parallel cultural systems: one system in which the society is dominant as a financier and in setting the direction. This system preserves and shields certain cultural forms and habits; and another system, which is financed by the participants and consumers and which is far more open to new impulses, new forms of expression and new techniques.

During the period 1994–2011 a special state authority – The Foundation for the Culture of the Future – existed. Its purpose was to financially support long-term and innovative cultural projects, thus stimulating regional culture in a wide sense. One of the underlying aims was to encourage economic growth and development in the regions. The foundation came to an end when the money that had been allocated to it from the wage earners' investment funds run out. The foundation highlighted two objectives: firstly, to contribute to the regeneration and development of cultural institutions; and secondly, to intensify contacts between the cultural sector and schools.

The present government has appointed a committee that will continue from the point where the Foundation for the Culture of the Future stopped. This committee is preparing a proposal on new forms to encourage renewal and development in the cultural sector. The committee, called the “The Cultural Bridge” [Kulturbryggan], will during the period

¹⁰ *Samhällets utgifter för kultur 2010–2011. Kulturfakta 2012:1* [Societal expenditure on culture 2010–2011. Cultural facts 2012:1]. Available at <http://www.kulturanalys.se/publikationer/>.

¹¹ <http://www.statensmusikverk.se/about-us/>. For more information in English on present cultural policy debate in Sweden see Harding, Tobias, Current issues in cultural policy development and debate in Sweden, in *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*, 13th edition (Council of Europe/ERICarts, 2012 – <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/sweden.php?aid=41&curln=103>).

2011–2012 examine new and alternative ways to finance cultural projects that are innovative and experimental. It is expected to give recommendations on what kind of support that is well adapted to a long-term subsidy system and at the same time an alternative to the subsidy systems that exist today. The committee should especially consider how the objectives of the new cultural policy could be realized. During its mandate period the committee also distribute grants along the same principles that The Foundation for the Culture of the Future used to practice. The total sum that the Cultural Bridge can use for grants is comparatively small (25 million SEK per year).

A clear trend in the innovative culture policy that The Cultural Bridge has started to depict is the belief that it is the individual or small groups of individuals who have the greatest power to renew cultural life. This is a clear break with ideas that prevailed during most of the 20th century but probably much in line with the political ideas that prevail in Sweden today among a considerable part of the electorate.

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Other web-sites

Arbetarnas bildningsförbund (ABF) [Workers' Educational Association (WEA)]: <http://www.abf.se/Om-ABF/About-ABF-in-different-languages/In-English>

“Silent theatre” at Riksteatern: <http://tystteater-english.riksteatern.se/about-tyst-teater>

Sveriges Radio [Swedish Radio]:

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/default.aspx?programid=2438> (a comprehensive presentation of SR in English)

Sveriges television [Swedish Television]: <http://www.svt.se/aboutsvt>