

MIKAEL LÖFGREN

NO

EXCEPTION

ONS
VALUE CREATION IN SMALL AND MID-SIZED
GALLERIES OF CONTEMPORARY ART

KLISTER

“Anything that belongs only to the present dies along with it.”

Mikhail Bakhtin

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Foreword

What is the value of art? Is it measurable? What rhythm does art require for its potential to be perceived and realized? Mikael Löfgren, author of this report, argues that galleries of contemporary art constitute takeoff and landing strips between local and global phenomena, but also between different epochs. They are included in—and contribute to—comprehensive, overlapping ecosystems, such as the art world, local communities, education, public life and research. But they are overlooked, underused and somewhat blemished by their brusque treatment by the media and our fast-growing public bureaucracies. And all of this is taking place in the midst of the age of value measuring. The value of art is no more quantifiable than love or humor.

The members of Klister deal daily with these matters. Klister is a nationwide network of small and mid-sized Swedish institutions of contemporary art, which was started in 2011.¹ The network seeks to convey the social function of these institutions of contemporary art. Contemporary art provides an increasingly crucial free zone for experimentation and discussion. Topics like economics, democracy, the public and art's own "ecosystem" are all central here. Smaller, often underfunded art institutions often invest in young, less established artists and in new art forms. Therefore, they are an important production and distribution channel to major institutions and the art market. They are also important to coming generations of artists and art audiences across the country, acting as public forums in which all kinds of topics get aired.²

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¹ The members of Klister's are Alingsås art gallery, Bildmuseet in Umeå, the Borås Museum of Arts, Botkyrka Konsthall, Gävle Konstcentrum, Göteborgs konsthall, Kalmar konstmuseum, Konsthall C in Hökarängen, the Art Gallery at Bohuslän museum, Haninge Konsthall, Kulturens Hus in Luleå, Lund Konsthall, Malmö Art Museum, MAN, the art museum in Skellefteå, Marabouparken Art Gallery in Sundbyberg, Röda Sten Konsthall in Göteborg, Signal, Center for contemporary arts in Malmö, Skövde kulturhus, Tensta konsthall and Örebro Art Gallery.

² In 2013, Klister collaborated with the Swedish Exhibition Agency to coordinate a series of "relay conversations" under the heading "What social role does art play?" The purpose of the conversations was to emphasize the significance and value of institutions of contemporary art from democratic and financial perspectives. Conversations have been held in Skövde and Gävle, and Klister will continue to arrange them in other places in 2015. David Karlsson has facilitated the conversations, which have included local public officials and politicians.

The report will argue that galleries of contemporary art should be more included in public dialogue on art, and that this dialogue should be evaluated using methods and terminology that are capable of perceiving and articulating the true value of art. The cultural economist Pier Luigi Sacco maintains that art creates opportunities for innovation, and that deep artistic participation affects the possibilities for creating a good life financially, socially and also democratically. This applies to both individuals and local communities as a whole. This report emphasizes the crucial role that Swedish small and mid-sized institutions of contemporary art play in the complex, delicate ecosystem that Sacco illustrates.

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Introduction: Visual World/Worldview

Never before in history have humans lived in a world so filled with visual images and artifacts. From the moment we open our eyes until we close them at night we are subjected to a continuous stream of still and moving pictures. At home and at work, in the street and the town square, from computers and TV screens, smartphones and advertisements, streams of images inform, entertain and sell messages to us. We are literally bombarded with images.

And we bombard others with pictures that we email and upload to YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Digitization is dissolving the line between creators and viewers, between public and private, rendering us all potential publicists. This poses a significant challenge to our time-honored concept of copyright. The Internet creates opportunities to communicate and share information, while bringing risks of monitoring and control. Images are shared and uploaded in order to hurt or seek revenge. Images that seem harmless in an artistic context can cause feelings to boil over in a different context.

In this brave new visual world, we are fumbling around, blinking our eyes like marmots who have just surfaced from our burrow, blinded by the digital sunlight.

According to dominant discourse, we live in the best of all possible image worlds. It is up to us to orient ourselves, by ourselves. The visual arts are disappearing from schools, art criticism is being marginalized in the media and art history is on academic probation. Artists themselves are regarded as profitable investment vehicles in the best-case scenario, and annoying welfare recipients in the worst. Attitudes toward Sweden's venues for contemporary art are sometimes equally condescending. They are treated as exceptions, operations that are allowed to continue existing in some corner of a community center or museum, by sheer grace.³

This text will argue that that is an error in judgment. Galleries of contemporary art should not be allowed to fall by the wayside. They constitute, or should constitute, hubs in local and regional communities: socially, intellectually and democratically. Contemporary art and its venues have a crucial potential as it pertains to four fundamental functions:

³ While the nationally budgeted expenses for the arts increased from 9 billion in 2000 to 10.5 billion in 2011, budgeted expenses for the area of visual arts, architecture, graphics and design were cut from 113 million to 79 million, which represents a reduction from 1.2 percent of the entire budget to 0.7 percent. (See http://www.kulturanalys.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Samhallets_utgifter_for_kultur_2010-2011.pdf, p. 17.) The assistant minister of education, Maria Arnholm (Liberal Party), made a comment in *SvD* on 7 September 2013 that drew a lot of attention: "If I feel like studying art history, I shouldn't be given financial support. We have to draw the line somewhere. We shouldn't overcompensate those who study for the sake of their own interest alone." Meanwhile, a week earlier, on 31 August, noted finance magnate Robert Weil wrote in *DN* that arts and aesthetics are "completely essential to the development of industries and an absolute necessity in order to create a better world."

- language, alternative ways of perceiving and depicting the world and existence;
- image education, civic knowledge/competence;
- cutting-edge visual skill, inspiring and inspired by other basic research;
- public space—citizens should have access to spaces for critical reflection and the construction of meaning.

This report should be seen as a pilot study of the possibility/necessity of making relevant evaluations of operations such as galleries of contemporary art. The methodology has included observations and interviews on site with ten or so members of Klister, from Luleå konsthall in the north to Signal in Malmö in southernmost Sweden. We have also held conversations with people who are familiar with the art world. In addition, we have studied international literature on the various dimensions of value creation. Using the Klister network's actual operations, resources, challenges, work methods and function as a launching pad, the report develops a cohesive view on how to look at and, consequently, assess the value creation of small galleries of contemporary art. It is intended for anyone who is interested in current conditions for contemporary art and the direction in which cultural policy is heading.

The first chapter, “Art Life: Sediments and Ecosystems,” slices art life in two directions: lengthwise and widthwise. Certain commonly recurring key notions in the arts-and-culture debate will be interrogated. Following that, two cultural economists, Pier Luigi Sacco from Italy and Sarah Thelwall from England, will be presented. Both are consultants—Sacco on a macro level (the city or region) and Thelwall on a micro level (smaller arts-and-culture organizations).

The chapter “The Art Gallery: Conditions and Value Creation” systematically reviews the organization, finances, personnel, material and non-material assets, continuing education, pedagogical operations and methodologies, networks and value creation of the Klister members. Special attention is paid to the consequences of underfunding that plague many galleries of contemporary art, and how that leads to the under- utilization of their potential.

The third chapter, “Value and Values,” using the latest report on arts and culture as its basis, poses the core question: “What are you good for?” An overview is presented of the awkward hemming and hawing, as well as spiteful aggressiveness, that arts-and-culture operations, not least of contemporary art, face these days. Special critical focus is placed on neoliberal ideology and the umbrella concept of New Public Management (NPM). As an alternative, we present the work of Mark H. Moore, Harvard professor of organizations, especially his concept of public value that he has been developing since the early 1990s using empirical studies of public administrations, in diametric opposition to New Public Management. This theory of public value is based in the idea that administration in the public interest is

different from private enterprise in certain basic ways. Moore's research is one of many sources of inspiration for the multi-faceted discussion on the values of culture and arts which has been held on both sides of the Atlantic since the turn of the millennium, and which has intensified since the financial crisis of 2008–09. Some of the contributions to this rich, urgently topical discussion are presented, as is a proposition for how to operationalize Moore's concept.

In the final chapter, the intricate value creation of contemporary art galleries is exemplified by Albanian artist Adrian Paci's piece *The Column*, which was part of his exhibition "Of Lives and Tales" at Röda Sten Konsthall in Göteborg in early 2014. Special focus is directed at the dialectics between public value (democracy) and artistic value (quality).⁴

In the conclusion to this report, several proposals are made for how the potential of contemporary art and its venues can be better utilized. Contemporary art galleries should not be considered—or treated—as dependent on grants, or at best as existing exceptions.

⁴ I would like to thank the employees at the galleries of contemporary art in the Klister network for their confidence and for being so forthcoming. My colleagues at Nätverkstan Kultur in Göteborg—Karin Dalborg, David Karlsson and Lotta Lekvall—have made valuable comments throughout the work process. Stefan Jonsson has read the manuscript in its entirety and offered useful perspectives. I have had fruitful dialogues regarding this work with Mikael Franzén and Sarah Thelwall. Kulturverkstan's seminar "ex curriculum on art and quality" on 17 January 2014 provided me with fresh approaches to the challenge, for which I thank the students at KV12. For info on Nätverkstan Kultur and the international cultural project management education program, go to <http://www.natverkstan.net>.

Art Life: Sediments and Ecosystems

Much depends on perspective, and this also applies to art. What we see depends on where it is viewed from and who the viewer is. Artists see things from their perspective, temporary visitors from theirs, curators from theirs and culture department employees from theirs. We don't always clarify the various perspectives when we relate what we see and what we think about it. This contributes to the confusion and occasional aggression that pervades many discussions about the arts and culture. In such situations it is easy to simplify the many-faceted landscape of contemporary art into two stereotyped images.

On the one hand, there is the image held by the uninitiated of an activity that is difficult to comprehend, which seems to cost a lot of money, which appears pretentious and which is found either in old monumental buildings or modern showpieces, whose class affiliation is simple to detect.

On the other, there is the politicians' or civil servants' view of an area or jurisdiction that is particularly difficult to administer, which constantly wreaks havoc with plans and budgets, and provokes dissatisfied comments from the general public and the media. Reactions from politicians and civil servants can therefore lead to attempts to discipline this disturbing element through bureaucratic and legal means. This happens, for example, by limiting the time for cultural commissions and projects, by equipping them with detailed instructions and conditions and anxiously keeping track of the media and monitoring reactions from the public as conveyed through the media.⁵

Even stereotypes contain truths, but in reality, art and culture landscapes are much more multi-faceted. Therefore it is necessary to investigate the arts a little closer, so let us open up a vertical and horizontal section of this landscape.

Sediment

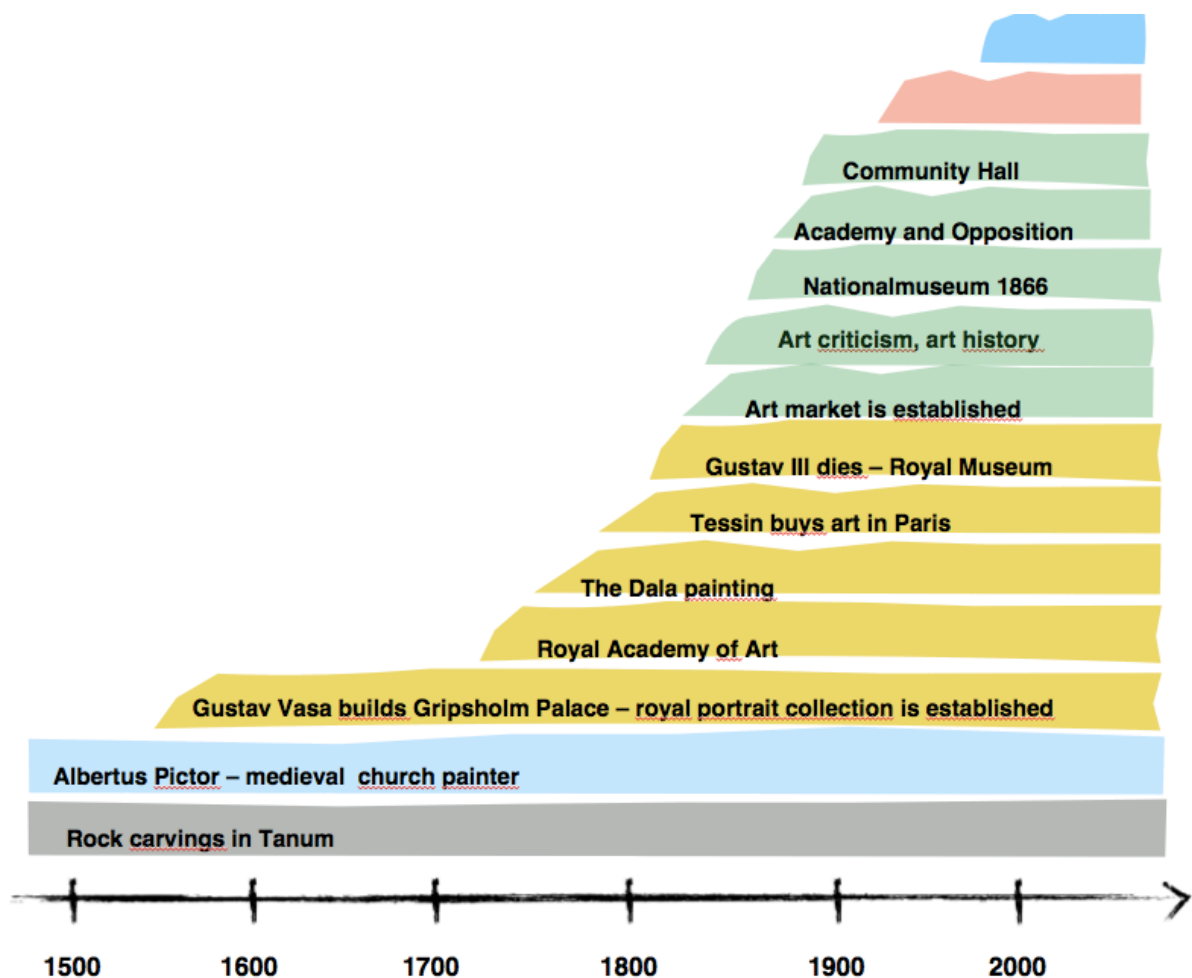
The art and cultural life of a society at any given moment consists of a vast number of actors, organizations, buildings and opinions, all having different ages and origins. Interestingly enough, certain historical periods appear more productive as regards generating institutions and customs that survive their own time (cf. illustrations on the following two pages).

In Swedish history, for example, the time of King Gustav III is presented as such a period; "a glow lay over Gustaf's days," as Esaias Tegnér wrote half a century after the "theater king's"

⁵ In a survey conducted by the Swedish Exhibition Agency in 2011, which will be published in 2015, the staff of contemporary art galleries stated how initiated into contemporary art they found their politicians and civil servants: 59 percent said "slightly," 28 percent said "not at all," 11 percent said "much," and 2 percent said "very much."

death.⁶ Gustavian institutions such as the Swedish Academy, the theater, Dramaten and the Opera continue to have a prominent role in Swedish cultural life.

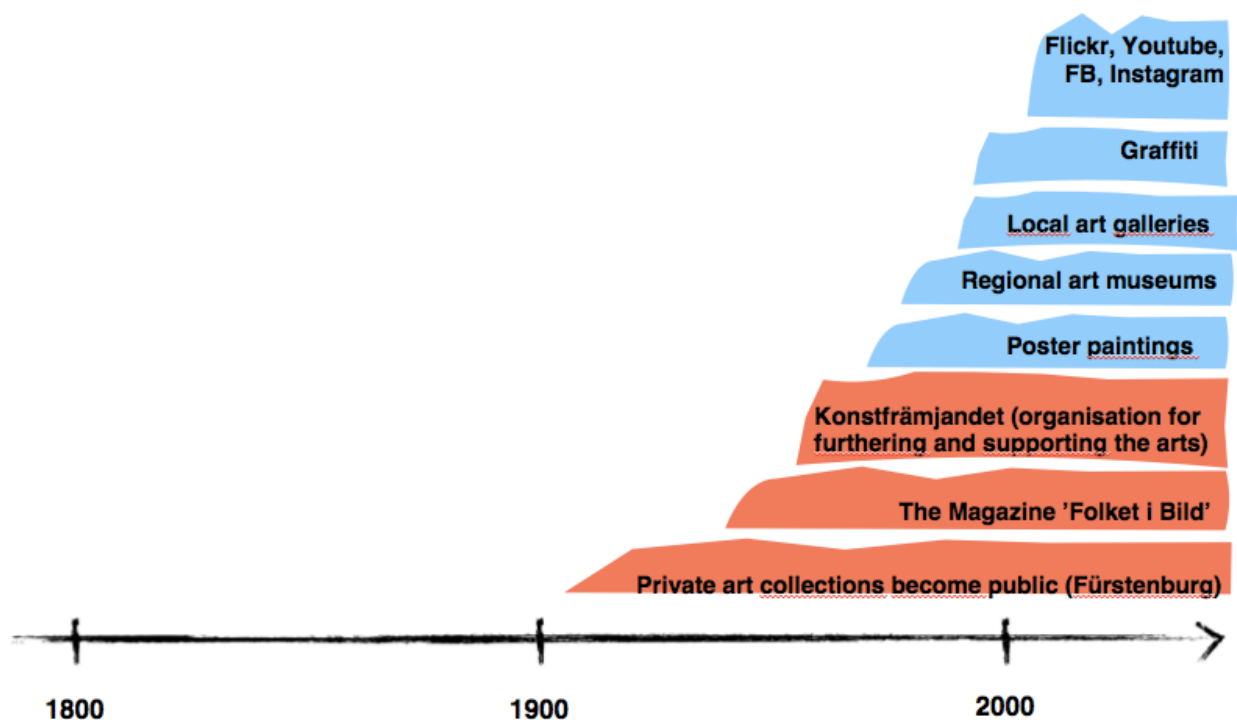
We find another such period at the end of the 1800s, in both expressions of and reactions against modernism, when the National Museum, Skansen, Nordiska Museet and a new building for Dramaten were built. At the same time, our modern daily newspapers, with special sections for art and cultural criticism, were established. The academic study of art history was institutionalized. The labor movement started up its own papers and publishing houses, meeting places, educational centers and study circles, which were gradually brought together in the national organization ABF (Workers Educational Association).



During the long rule of the Social Democrats, democratic cultural ambitions were expressed in the creation of touring organizations like Riksteatern and, in due course, Rikskonserter and

⁶ Esaias Tegnér, Sång, 5 April 1836, at the 50th memorial ceremony of the Swedish Academy. See <http://runeberg.org/tegnersam/8/0009.html>.

Riksställningar, which in the beginning toured all over the country, showing “masterpieces” from the National Museum’s collections.⁷



In the 1970s and '80s, partly as a consequence of new cultural policies, a number of libraries, regional theaters, museums, music activities and art galleries were started in various parts of the country. Parallel to this, as an expression of the alternative cultural movements associated with 1968, lively newspapers, publishers, theaters and music groups arose, such as the so-called Center Associations and Folkets Bio (The People's Cinema). People began to distinguish between institutional culture and “free” or “liberated” culture.

The history of Klister member organizations may also be archeologically excavated from these sediments. Kalmar konstmuseum, as an association, goes back to 1917, and as a museum, to 1942. It opened at its current premises as recently as 2008. Gothenburg's konsthall was inaugurated in 1923 and will soon celebrate its centenary, while Lund's konsthall, opened in 1957, has passed its

⁷ Helen Broms & Anders Göransson, *Kultur i rörelse—en historia om Riksställningar och kulturpolitiken* [Culture in transit: A history of the Swedish Exhibition Agency and cultural policy], Atlas, 2012, p. 20ff.

50th anniversary. Most Klister member organizations, however, are offspring of the 1980s and '90s—for instance, Bildmuseet in Umeå, the Art Gallery at the Bohuslän museum, Botkyrka Konsthall, Konstcentrum in Gävle, Luleå konsthall, Museum Anna Nordlander in Skellefteå, Röda Sten Konsthall in Gothenburg, Signal in Malmö and Tensta konsthall. It seems as if the establishment of contemporary art venues in Sweden during the last 20–30 years was an expression of the same cultural democracy and decentralizing impulse that in the so-called cooperation model acquired the form of a political and administrative measure.

Thus the artistic and cultural life of a society consists of parts with many different origins, ages, ideologies and ways of working. “Cultural heritage” is a much too unambiguous and general term for this complex system, which, among other things, involves the coexistence of different temporalities. One of the characteristics of culture, which it is quite often ridiculed for, is its lack of modernity. In fact, its anachronisms, its being out of step with the times, is one of the most significant contributions of culture to social life. Culture is both ahead and behind its time.

For art galleries oriented towards contemporary art, this has particular relevance. Venues for contemporary art define themselves in contrast to places that collect and show art that is no longer contemporary: museums. Modern museums in this respect are contradictions. One interesting question is whether contemporary art galleries can continue to be themselves, maintaining their position indefinitely. Some claim that artistic activities worth the name attract a special constellation of people united by a strong common vision—during a limited period of time, after which artistic petrification sets in. Then contemporary art venues become transformed into museums of themselves—relics without a meaning-generating context.

For several small artistic enterprises, however, the most palpable challenge is the opposite: how to survive and generate continuity, depth and a long-term vision in a situation where cultural policy is increasingly defined by project funding, shortsightedness and instrumental demands?

Infrastructure, ecosystem, cluster

Many of the concepts used in cultural contexts originate in the military: “project” is one example, “infrastructure” is another. According to the dictionary, infrastructure is a “summary term for a large regional defense system’s rear fixed installations such as radar stations, air fields, oil pipelines and depots.”

Transferred to an economic context, the term “infrastructure” refers to communications (among people, goods and information) and service functions, which are a prerequisite for a functioning commercial sector, business and industry. Libraries, cultural activities and education may be seen as “regional defense system’s rear fixed installations”:

*Like radar stations, artists are receptive to and capable of interpreting contemporary coded signals; like at airports, we can view vital cultural institutions as being simultaneously a host for unfamiliar impulses and springboards out into the world; like oil pipelines, educational systems—from preschool to university—ensure that the system keeps going; and depots are like well-run and relevant libraries and museums.*⁸

It has recently become popular to compare the arts and culture to an “ecosystem,” a term that recalls the original meaning of culture as “cultivation.” It is symptomatic that we understand these systems and their way of working as more complex than what is captured by the concept of infrastructure, which, after all, is quite mechanical. An ecosystem embraces all living things and their living environment within a particular area. “System” refers to material as well as energy content. Like nature, culture contains little in the way of totally closed systems: ecosystems are thus open to the surrounding world and receive and emit both energy and material.

“Cluster” is a related concept: in economic theory, it describes a geographical concentration of interlinked companies and institutions within a particular sector.⁹

Sacco

Italian cultural economist Pier Luigi Sacco’s work demonstrates the potential of metaphors like “ecosystems” and “clusters.” He has developed a model for analysis of, but also suggested measures for, regional development that he calls “system-wide cultural districts.” Inspired by researchers such as Richard Florida (how to attract resources and talent), Michael Porter (competition-driven restructuring) and Amartya Sen’s thoughts on capacity building, Sacco has developed a model for analysis which seeks a balance of from-above and from-below initiatives, and seeks the connection between planned and self-organized components.¹⁰

The role of art, Sacco argues, is no longer solely to adorn and legitimize power, in order to, in return, curry favor with patrons of the arts. Nor are the arts, as they were in the early stages of the welfare state, just a meaningful hobby. The chief economic significance of the arts doesn’t even lie in those cultural and creative industries that have become increasingly important items on political

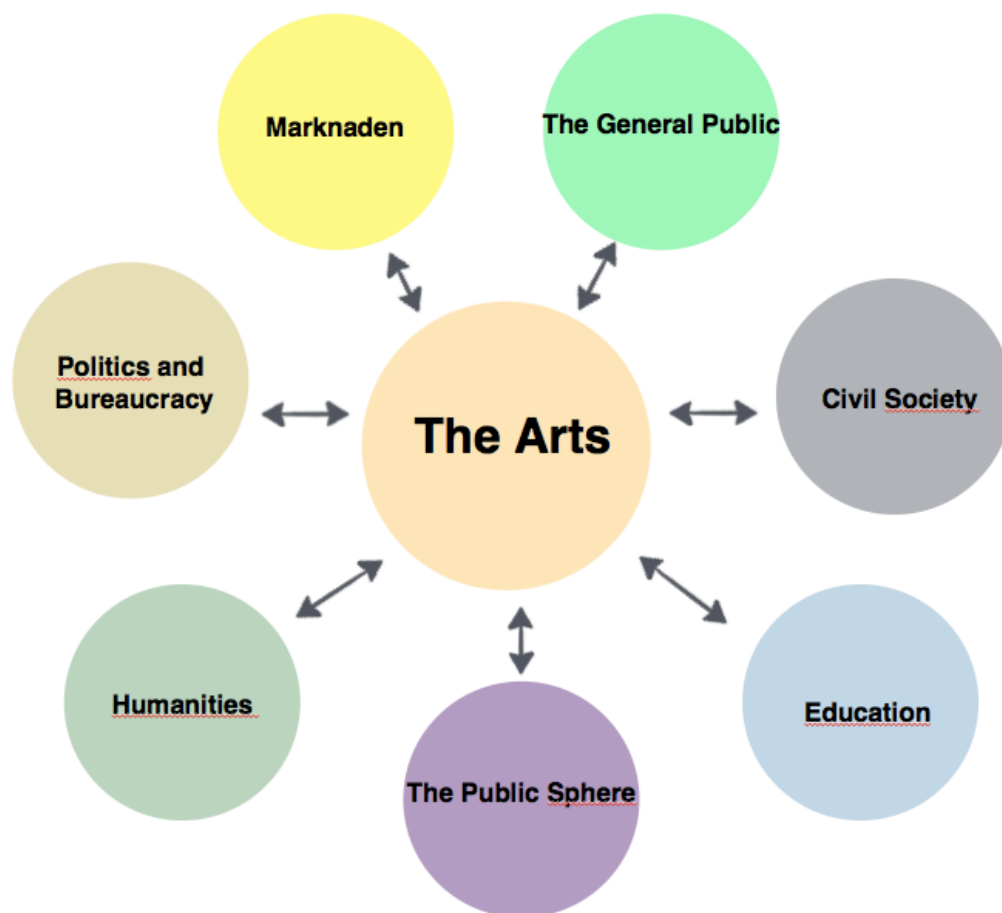
⁸ Mikael Löfgren, *Svenska tönteriets betydelse och andra samtidsdiagnoser* [The importance of Swedish squareness and other contemporary diagnoses], Falun: Bonnier Alba, 1994, p. 106.

⁹ Michael E. Porter, “Clusters and the New Economics of Competition,” *Harvard Business Review*, Nov.–Dec. 1998, p. 78.

¹⁰ Pier Luigi Sacco, Guido Ferilli, Giorgio Tavano Blessi, and Massimiliano Nuccio, “Culture as an Engine of Local Development Processes: System-Wide Cultural Districts,” April 2008. See http://hitta.arkivihalland.se/public/kontigo/KultSem_2010-11-16_Sacco/KultSem_2010-11-16_02A_Sacco_Papper_Hel_Text.pdf. The essay has been continually updated since it was first published in 2008, and is therefore available in several different versions online.

agendas. Sacco maintains that the meaning of the arts is far more universal than to just constitute a growing economic sector.

The significance of the arts is now system-wide; it permeates all of social and economic life in cities and regions. Art isn't just a specific business sector in itself. It affects other sectors and systems at their bases. Arts and culture constitute the substance of that platform that enables change and effective, innovation-based communication. Arts are both catalysts and engines for local development processes. They both ignite and drive social development.



*The significance of culture today is that it is system-wide.
The system of "the arts" interact with other societal systems.*

Sacco brings a message of hope. Economic and social regression is stoppable. Global competition need not be viewed with a tremor. Local communities can succeed if politics, industry and civil society work together—and if they realize the strategic significance of the arts for economic activity

and social cohesion. Sacco identifies twelve central factors in the system-wide potential of the arts. Among them are: the capacity to build networks, to involve local community, to attract external investors and labor, and to develop local talent and entrepreneurs. The three first factors point to the importance of effective local leadership, good schools and research, and, primarily, the “quality of cultural supply,” which he describes as follows:

The existence of a cultural milieu of organizations and institutions that represent and organize the local creativity base while at the same time providing challenging cultural standards, making the local cultural supply palatable to wider though specific global audiences.¹¹

The quote is a reasonably exact description of how galleries of contemporary art define their mission.

What is truly compelling about Sacco’s approach, however, isn’t his theory. Rather, it is that he uses extensive empirical data and data processing to test it—and that they prove strikingly accurate. His model explains why certain cities succeed while others fail: it hinges not only on “investing in the arts,” but *how* you invest in it.

In a compilation that has gained much attention, Sacco conveys the innovative power and cultural participation in a number of European countries. The tables show an astonishing degree of similarity: the highest levels of civic participation in artistic activity, as it pertains to innovative capacity, characterize the countries with the best results. Happily and instructively, Sweden rates number one in both tables.

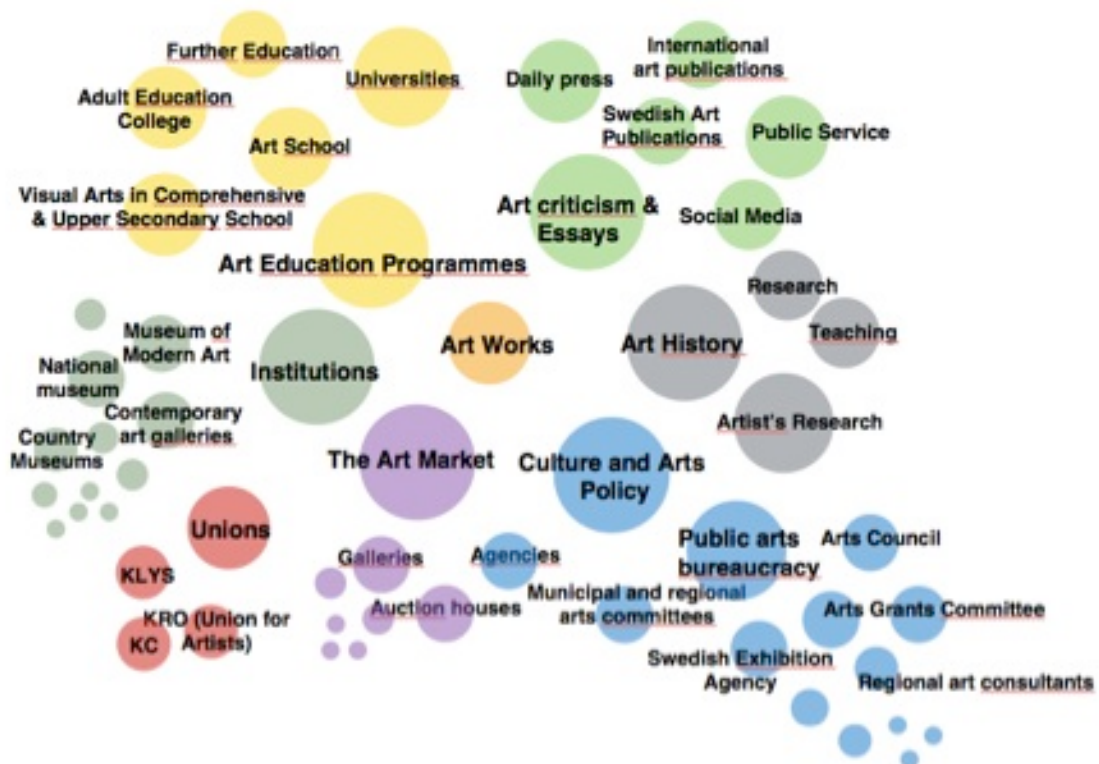
The hypothesis that Sacco and his colleagues examine might be expressed as follows: the arts create conditions for innovation; broad, deep community participation in the arts (not just as an audience, but as practitioners too) increases the chances of creating a good life—economically, socially and democratically—for individuals and local communities.

Galleries of contemporary art play a crucial role within this intricate, delicate ecosystem. Or they can, if allowed to serve their purpose.

¹¹ Sacco et al., p 79.

Thelwall

In 2011, British cultural economist and consultant Sarah Thelwall published a noted report called *Size Matters*.¹² Thelwall had been commissioned by Common Practice, a London-based network similar to Klister. Using careful, detailed analysis, she showed what a crucial impact smaller art organizations play in that complex ecosystem that is today's art world. But she also successfully demonstrated how disadvantaged small art galleries are in the current cultural-political system.



Smaller art organisations play a crucial role in that complex ecosystem that is today's art world.

For example, small organizations rarely obtain any income from their facilities, since they don't own them. Nor from shops or cafés, since the operation of them is often outsourced. But even more importantly, with such limited means they can seldom afford the marketing that could generate greater

¹² Sarah Thelwall, *Size Matters: Notes towards a Better Understanding of the Value, Operation and Potential of Small Visual Arts Organisations*, Common Practice, July 2011. See http://turningpointnetwork.squarespace.com/storage/project-files/summit-2012/debate-1/Common-Practice-London_Size-Matters.pdf. Thelwall is a consultant who has developed a so-called benchmarking system, Culture Benchmark, in which arts-and-culture organizations can input their data and, in return, receive good examples of how others manage their limited resources in the best possible way. See <https://mycake.org/culture-benchmark>.

audiences. Due to their lack of time and money, they can offer neither continuing education their employees, nor their special competencies to potential clients. This lack of resources also prevents art organizations from sharing (earning income from) the often innovative curatorial work methods and pedagogical procedures that they develop. This is detrimental to the entire ecosystem of contemporary art, and probably to a much broader social extent.

The concept of Thelwall's that has generated the most attention is "deferred value," which Thelwall uses to describe a dimension of time that is seldom included in current, shortsighted cultural-political systems and calculations. Using a number of examples, Thelwall shows how important artists and works of art that were initially curated and presented by smaller art galleries eventually gained recognition and became famous much later on, perhaps 15–20 years later. However, Thelwall points out that neither the monetary nor symbolic value of that success comes back to those who made that eventual success possible in the first place.¹³

British lessons

The relevance of the concept of "deferred value" lies in its stress on the importance of viewing art and culture in a significantly longer time perspective than that which prevails in quarterly capitalism.¹⁴ Artistic value develops in a time dimension different from that of many other human activities.¹⁵

Thelwall's attitude to the art world is grimly sobering. From a British perspective, the Swedish situation in 2014 seems like an idyllic exception, which nevertheless will soon be invaded by market realities. Thelwall is not impressed by dulcet words and humanistic rhetoric. She doesn't want to see wishful calculations or invitations to castles in the air. She admonishes the small actors in the art world to see reality as it is and make the best of their situation, claiming that only then can they improve their possibilities to devote themselves to what they feel passionate about.

According to the realistic position that Thelwall recommends, no one should rely exclusively on support from the state and municipal governments. She contends that income should derive from

¹³ This is in contrast to the system in the world of football under which the initial club that fosters a successful player receives a certain percentage of earnings from future sales of that player.

¹⁴ "Quarterly capitalism" is a derogatory term for the market-determined shortsightedness that seems to have guided many companies in recent years. Interestingly enough, on several occasions during the present century, quarterly capitalism has been declared moribund or in the process of becoming so. On 26 March 2012, the magazine *Veckans Affärer* described a report written for Svensk Näringsliv (the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises) by Sophie Nachmeson Ekwall from Handelshögskolan (the Stockholm School of Economics) in which she observed that shortsighted behavior seems to have spread to pension funds and ordinary mutual funds: "All of a sudden, it seems that value-producing corporate governance, with its need for balance between short-term and long-term thinking, has been put to pasture."

¹⁵ The very concept of "development" is dubious in aesthetic contexts. One can argue that Einstein's view of the world is more cogent than Newton's, but it is meaningless to claim that Picasso is a better painter than Rembrandt.

many directions and sources, not least from the “market.” From a Swedish viewpoint, her position can seem like cultural and political resignation. However, it should be recalled that the financial crisis that hit much of Europe with such force, but that was scarcely felt in Sweden, has had devastating consequences for Great Britain’s cultural life. Cuts of up to 40 percent were made in the culture sector; several of the organizations included in Thelwall’s investigation were forced to close. The belief in the future and the optimism dominating the beginning of the twenty-first century, not least in the creative and cultural sectors, are today almost invisible in the British Isles. Considering what the current political situation looks like, there seems little chance that this trend will change, or that public support for culture in Great Britain will significantly increase again.

Three alternative interpretations

The British example can be interpreted in three different ways. The first entails that we see developments in Britain as a “peculiarity of the English,” despite the fact that similar processes are observable all over Europe. The second interprets the British example as an ill-fated harbinger of what is to come here in Sweden also, regardless of what we do. Such defeatism is not especially wise.

Therefore I recommend a third interpretation: seeing what we can learn from the British situation and from analyses and proposals like those of Thelwall. Most important is not to imagine that the present situation will last forever and that shares of the government’s cake will remain as large and as secure as they are now. We must also realize that a dependence on the state, region and municipality is also a dependence, which can circumscribe our scope for both thinking and acting. In addition, this interpretation further requires that all involved take a responsibility for exerting an influence: to argue cultural politics in all conceivable contexts and at all accessible arenas. This is not only to avoid the English misery.

Our cultural political struggle in 2015 is not only about the conditions for contemporary art in a narrow sense. In a Sweden and Europe, where divisions between social classes and parts of the country are widening and where xenophobia and right-wing extremism are once again on our streets, cultural politics becomes a matter of how we view humanity and human rights.

Differences in the cultural political situation between Great Britain and Sweden are one reason why the analysis in *Size Matters* has only limited application for the present study.¹⁶ Another reason is the difference between the Common Practice group and the member organizations of Klister. The former is composed of organizations working in Greater London, a world metropolis and one of the most important nodules in the global art market. Their relation to the thousands of artists working in

¹⁶ Which is not to say that Klister members and other cultural organizations would not benefit from using Thelwall’s methods and benchmarking system.

London, to the city's millions of inhabitants and tourists, and to all the huge institutions related to art that exist there, can simply not be compared to the Klister network, which consists of some 20 member organizations, ranging from Luleå in the north to Malmö in the south. More than half of Klister's member organizations are municipal entities, under the aegis of their respective municipal Culture and Leisure committees, and in many cases they are entirely financed by public funds.

The member organizations of Klister are also very different from each other; some are part of a municipality and are obliged to fulfill municipal commissions, while others are small voluntary associations with close and intensive contacts with the international art scene. Several Klister art galleries are content with showing good established or unestablished contemporary art and with stimulating interest in it amongst local inhabitants. The Klister network's relationship with large institutions is therefore different from the Common Practice group's. Klister is a sparse, attenuated archipelago spreading over a large country with half of Greater London's population. With the exception of Moderna Museet, Sweden has no really large institutions for small enterprises to position themselves in relation to. Klister member organizations that consciously relate themselves to large institutions—and several do—find these institutions outside of Sweden, in London amongst other places.

Art's ecosystem thus looks different in Sweden compared to Greater London. This does not mean that Klister's member organizations lack things to do and roles to play, only that they are different from the Common Practice group and therefore must be analyzed with, in part, other methods than those used in *Size Matters*.

A reservation and a covert apology regarding "the Great Period"

Even if "sediment" and "ecosystem" serve the purpose of restoring "place" and function to the arts and culture in a more nuanced way, these notions, like the related notions of "cultural landscape" and "art life," have their limitations. The same must also be said about the analytical models of Sacco and Thelwall. They are both cultural economists and focus primarily on art and culture's economic and social creation of value. Nevertheless—and this is important to underline—the point of departure for both models is, like David Throsby's famous "dart board," the aesthetic value of art.¹⁷

The danger lurking in spatial metaphors like "sediment" and "ecosystem" is that they direct our thoughts towards external conditions. They don't tell us much about the how the arts and culture operate over time and in space, other than that their effects are long-term and complex. To

¹⁷ In an oft-quoted but also frequently misunderstood illustration, the cultural economist David Throsby has depicted the economic significance of art in terms of concentric circles departing from a center consisting of the art work itself, outside of which cultural enterprises, creative enterprises and other economic enterprises group themselves. Misunderstandings come about when seeing the illustration as an image of the general value of art. See David Throsby, *Economics and Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

understand how the arts and culture work, and thereby to understand the indirect value of contemporary art and its venues, we need to broaden our perspective.

In a radio presentation, the artist Jörgen Svensson made a proposal.¹⁸ He described how he, as a four-year-old, stood on a stump and watched some swans swim past. When he was about to tell his parents about his experience, words failed him. He began to stammer, a handicap that continued throughout his childhood. Spoken language became a monster, an enemy that had to be vanquished every hour of every day, through the power of thought and great physical effort. Drawing—the possibility to articulate his thoughts and feelings in another language—was his salvation. To express himself in images, and to be understood and appreciated for it, laid the foundations for feelings of self-confidence that opened up paths to follow and carried him through life.

Like other forms of art and culture, visual art is a language.

The philosopher Ronald Dworkin has, in a famous and much-discussed article, provided another perspective on the same theme.¹⁹ He poses the question of how a liberal state can support the arts without abandoning its value neutrality in questions of taste. After a survey of various arguments, Dworkin arrives at the conclusion that the social value of art and culture lies in culture—like spoken language—offering a structure for every individual to work with and use:

Though we cannot imagine our culture losing any of the basic vocabulary of art entirely—we can scarcely imagine losing the power to distinguish fiction from lie—we can all too easily imagine less dramatic adverse change. For example, we now have the conceptual equipment to find aesthetic value in historical and cultural continuity. We can, and do, find various forms of quotation from the history of our culture exciting; we find value in the idea that contemporary art reworks themes or styles of other ages or is rich in allusion to them, that the past is with us, reworked, in the present. But this complex idea is as much dependent on a shared practice as is the idea of narrative fiction. It can be sustained only so long as that practice continues in a lively form, only so long as the past is kept alive among us, in the larger culture that radiates out from the museum and university into concentric circles embracing the experience of a much larger community. The very possibility of finding aesthetic value in continuity depends on our continuing to achieve success and interest in continuity; and this in turn may well require a rich stock of illustrative and comparative

¹⁸ Jörgen Svensson's radio talk, "Art must be vague and complicated," was given on the Swedish Radio program OBS, 23 April 2014. See <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=503&artikel=5843738>.

¹⁹ Dworkin's article, originally published in 1985, is translated into Swedish under the title "Kan en liberal stat stödja konst?" in *En fråga om jämlikhet. Rättsfilosofiska uppsatser*, ed. Johannes Lindvall, trans. Tore Winqvist, Uddevalla: Daidalos, 2000.

*collections that can only or best be maintained in museums and explored in universities and other academies. If it is right that the community as a whole, and not just those who use these institutions directly, shares and employs the structural possibilities of continuity and reference, something like the public-good argument for state support of such institutions is rehabilitated.*²⁰

Like spoken language, art and culture are linguistic structures that are already in place and invoked by infants when they enter the world, and will be there when they leave the world. This does not mean that art and culture are complete—on the contrary, they are constantly changing and in constant contact with what has been and what will be. All creativity issues through artistic languages in contact with each other.²¹

This insight—or perhaps intuition—is nowhere more beautifully expressed than by the Russian literature scholar Mikhail Bakhtin. He writes about the ability of significant art to transcend the limitations of its own time. He calls this the ability to enter “the great time.” Work that isn’t itself imbued with something of past epochs will not live on in the future: “Everything that only belongs to the present dies with it.”²²

Bakhtin illuminates his thoughts with the help of Shakespeare:

The phenomenon of meaning can exist in a hidden form, potentially, and can first see the light of day in a later period’s cultural contexts that are favorable to it. The treasures of meaning that Shakespeare placed in his work were created and collected through centuries, even over thousands of years. They were concealed in language, not only in the literary but also in the layers of popular speech which prior to Shakespeare were not found in literature: in the multifarious genres and forms of linguistic intercourse, in the powerful forms of popular culture (especially that of the carnival) which were formed over thousands of years, in the theater and acting genres (mysteries, farces, etc.), in theater and dance companies whose roots reach deep down into prehistory, and finally, in forms of thought. Like every artist, Shakespeare created his works not from dead elements, not from bricks, but with

²⁰ Dworkin, p. 109f.

²¹ Dworkin’s ideas are akin to the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s distinction between “*langue*” (language as a system) and “*parole*” (the concrete act of speaking a language).

²² Michail Bachtin [Mikhail Bakhtin], *Det dialogiska ordet* [The Dialogic Word], trans. Johan Öberg. Uddevalla: Anthropos, 1988, p. 10.

*forms already heavy with content. Actually, even bricks have a particular spatial form and therefore can express something in the hands of builders.*²³

“The arts,” “sediment” and “ecosystem” can also be described this way. Contemporary art also springs from and harks back to other times and spaces than those that see its birth. Contemporary art venues are the takeoff and landing strips for intensive inter-epochal traffic.

²³ Bachtin., p. 10f.

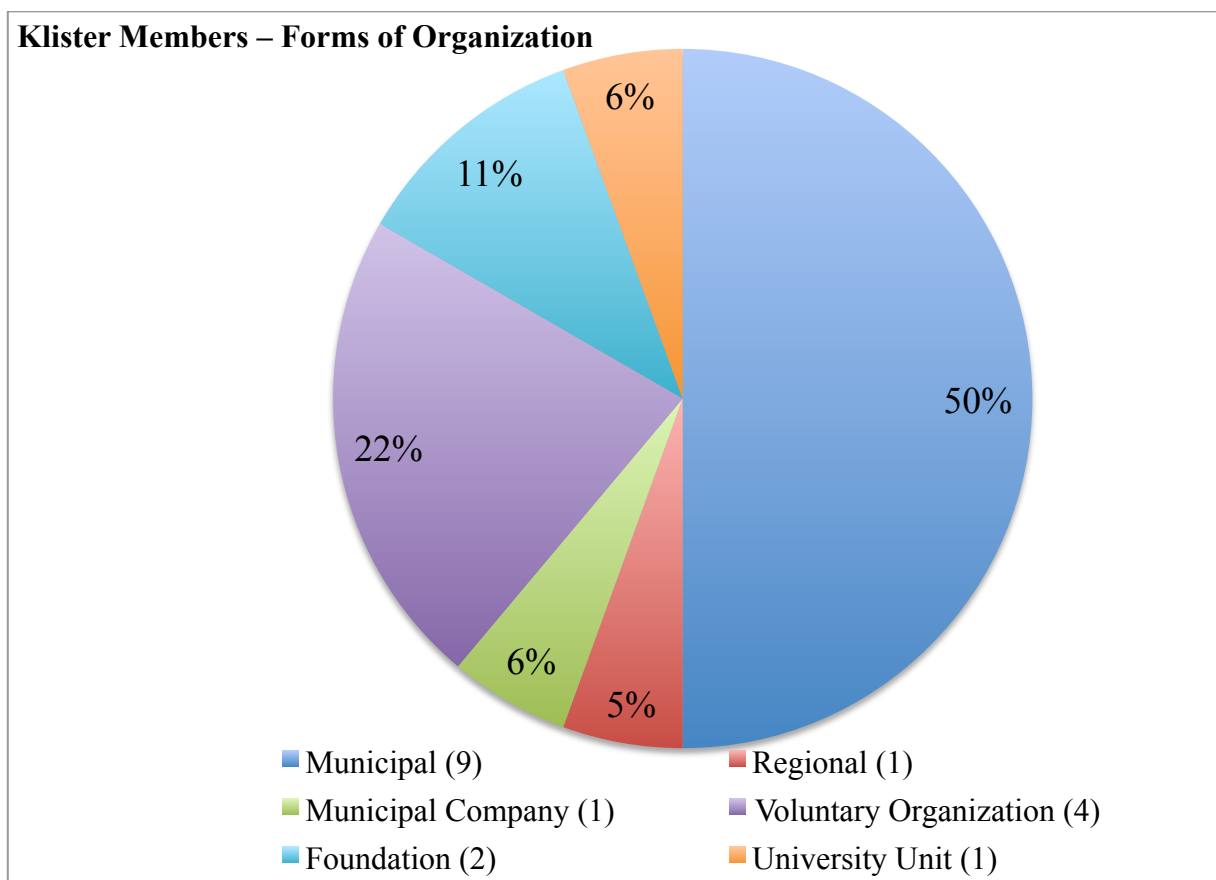
The Art Gallery: Conditions and Value Creation

The Klister network consists of twenty galleries of contemporary art. They are located throughout all of Sweden, and they vary greatly in some ways while there are many similarities in terms of organization, resources, work methods and value creation. However, they all have two things in common: the way they curate and network and their pedagogies are relatively unknown outside a fairly tight circle; and the values that they provide to the art, cultural and social world are also unknown.

In other words: How are the galleries of the Klister network organized? How do they work and what are they good at? (The question of what they are good *for* will be addressed in the next chapter.)

Organization

About half of all Klister galleries fall under the authority of their respective municipalities, subordinated to the local Culture and Leisure committee. This is the case in, for instance, Luleå, Gävle, Botkyrka, Alingsås, Skövde, Borås, Lund and Gothenburg's konsthall.



One gallery, the Museum Anna Nordlander in Skellefteå, is run as a municipal company (which also includes Skellefteå Museum). Kalmar konstmuseum is managed by a nonprofit association. In addition to the museum, the association is responsible for the Design Archive in Pukeberg and Konstkonsumenten in Kalmar County, and all activities are regulated by a four-year agreement or contract with the Regional Council. The Bohuslän museum Art Gallery in Uddevalla is a regional art venue.

Röda Sten in Gothenburg, Signal in Malmö and Konsthall C in Farsta, Stockholm are run by nonprofit associations, each of which has its own specific history and organization. Two of Klister's art galleries, Tensta and Marabou Park in Sundbyberg, are managed by foundations. One member gallery, Bildmuseet in Umeå, is part of Umeå University's Arts Campus, together with the Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Institute of Design and HUMlab X.

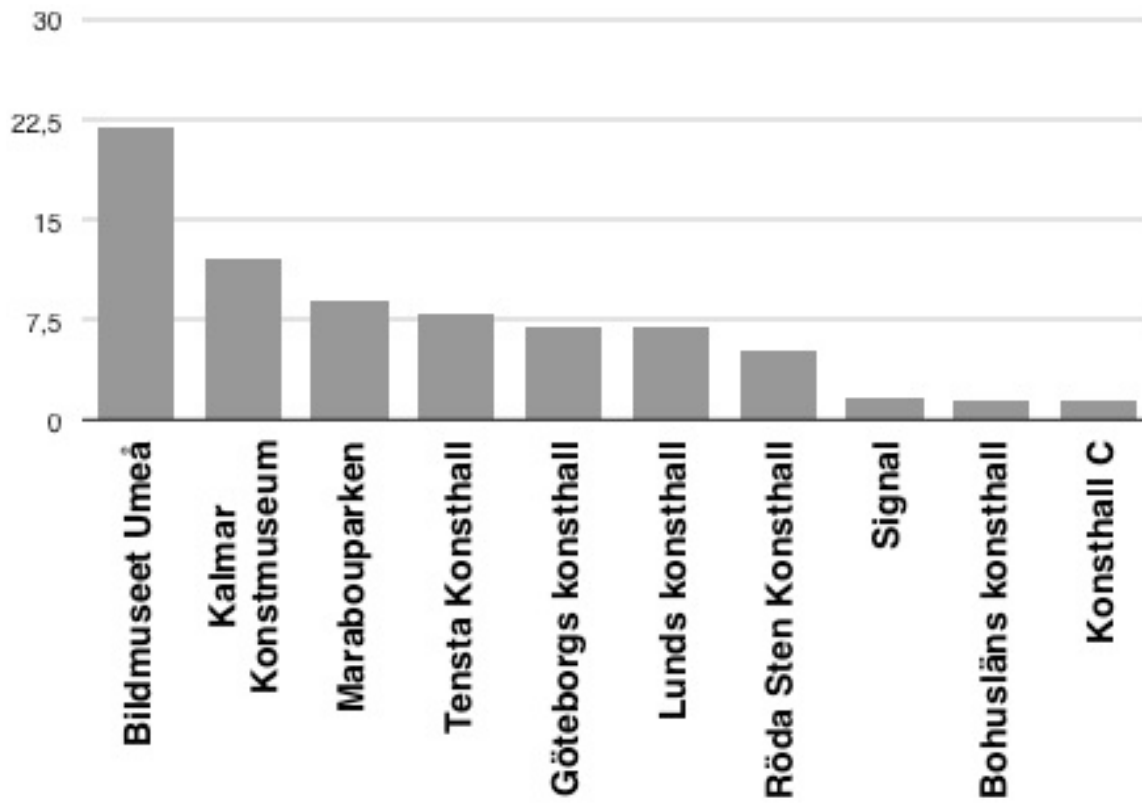
Each gallery's form of organization of course influences commissions, self-image and function.

Economy and number of employees

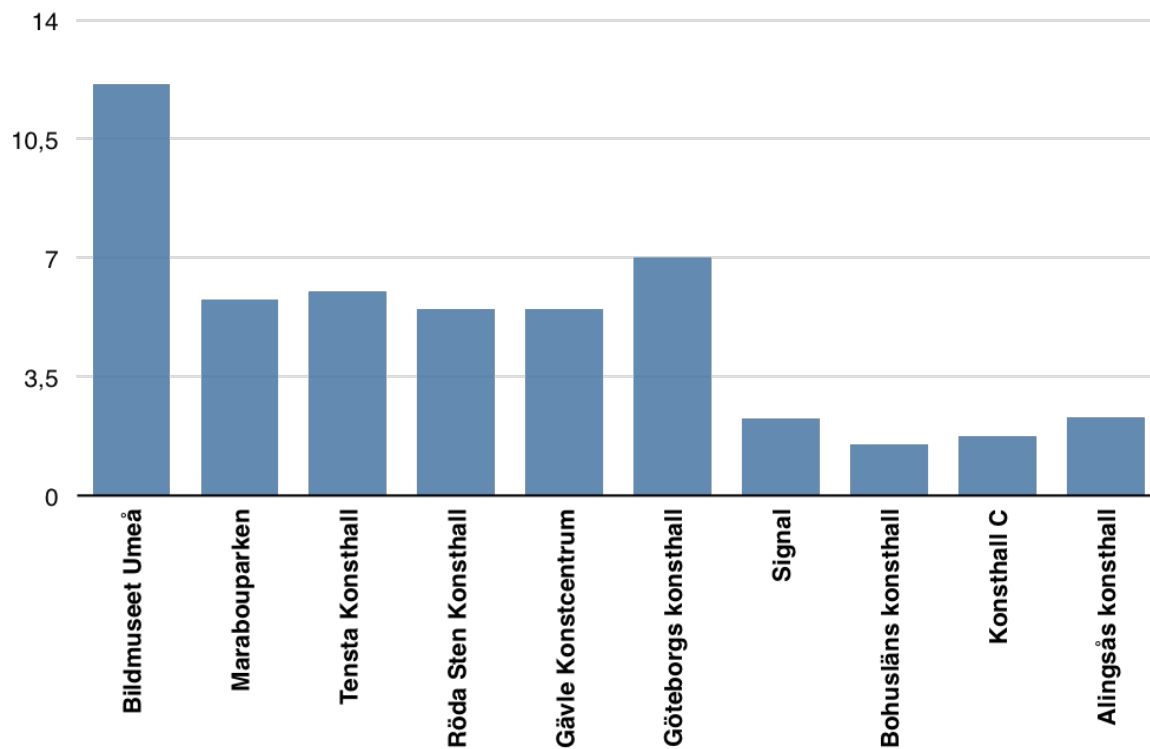
Economic resources and the number of employees vary a great deal amongst Klister galleries. Whereas Bildmuseet in Umeå had a turnover of more than 22 million kronor in 2012, and had 12.1 full-time employees, a nonprofit association like Konsthall C in Farsta, in the same year, had a turnover of scarcely 1.5 million kronor and four employees who divided 1.75 posts. Several of the municipal art galleries are more or less integrated into the municipal management structure. For some, this has entailed that, in conjunction with reorganization, resources have been transferred from the art gallery to other entities. This has happened in Bohusläns Art Gallery, which since 2007 has been under the auspices of Bohuslän's museum, and in 2012 had a turnover of 1.4 million kronor and 2.5 posts.

Each of the municipally run galleries in Gothenburg and Lund had a turnover of around seven million kronor in 2012; Gothenburg had five full-time employees, four part-time, six employees paid by the hour and one trainee, while Lund had three full-time and four part-time employees (at 75, 50, 35 and 30 percent). Of the foundations, Tensta's turnover was just under eight million kronor, with six full-time jobs (distributed as five full-time and two half-time), while Marabouparken had a turnover of about nine million kronor and 5.75 full-time posts (distributed as two full-time, one at 90 percent, three at 75 percent and one at 60 percent).

Klister members - Economic Turnover. Mkr.



Klister members - Number of Employees

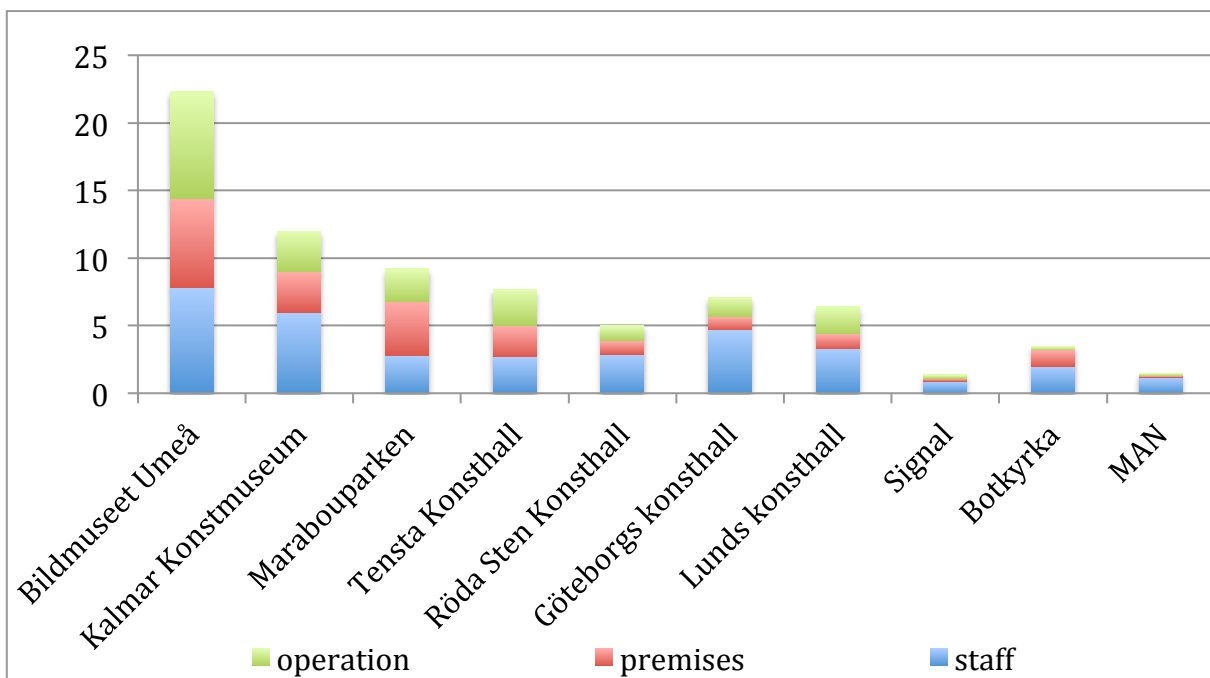


Costs

Staff and premises account for the largest costs. The only Klister gallery that owns its own premises is Marabouparken, whose annual costs for these premises is four million kronor, including interest, depreciation and operational costs. In 2012 Marabouparken's staff costs amounted to 2.7 million kronor and its premises, 4.4 million kronor, leaving 1.8 million for production. Municipal housing companies are often the galleries' landlords. In some places, galleries are integrated into cultural centers, which may also house libraries, concert halls or theaters. This is the case in Luleå, Alingsås, Skövde and Borås. The art gallery in Luleå pays no rent. Of Kalmar Art Museum's budget of twelve million kronor, six million went to staff costs, three million to pay for premises and 1.5 million for operating costs, leaving about 1.5 million for museum activities. In 2012 Bildmuseet spent 7.8 million kronor on staff salaries, 6.5 million kronor on premises and 7.9 million on operating costs in total (including production, staff education and marketing). In Lund the corresponding figures were 3.3 million kronor (staff), 1.1 million kronor (premises) and 1.983 million kronor (production, excluding staff education and marketing). For Tensta konsthall the figures were 2.7 million kronor (staff), 2.3 million kronor (premises and operating costs) and 2.7 (production).

It is noteworthy that Klister galleries have a very small—if any—budget for marketing. In 2012, Museum Anna Nordlander spent 162,000 kronor on marketing, while the nonprofit association, Signal, in Malmö, with a turnover of 1.6 million kronor, spent about 80,000 kronor—i.e., about 5 percent on marketing, which is about the same percentage as Lund's Konsthall, with a turnover of just over seven million kronor (400,000 kronor for marketing).

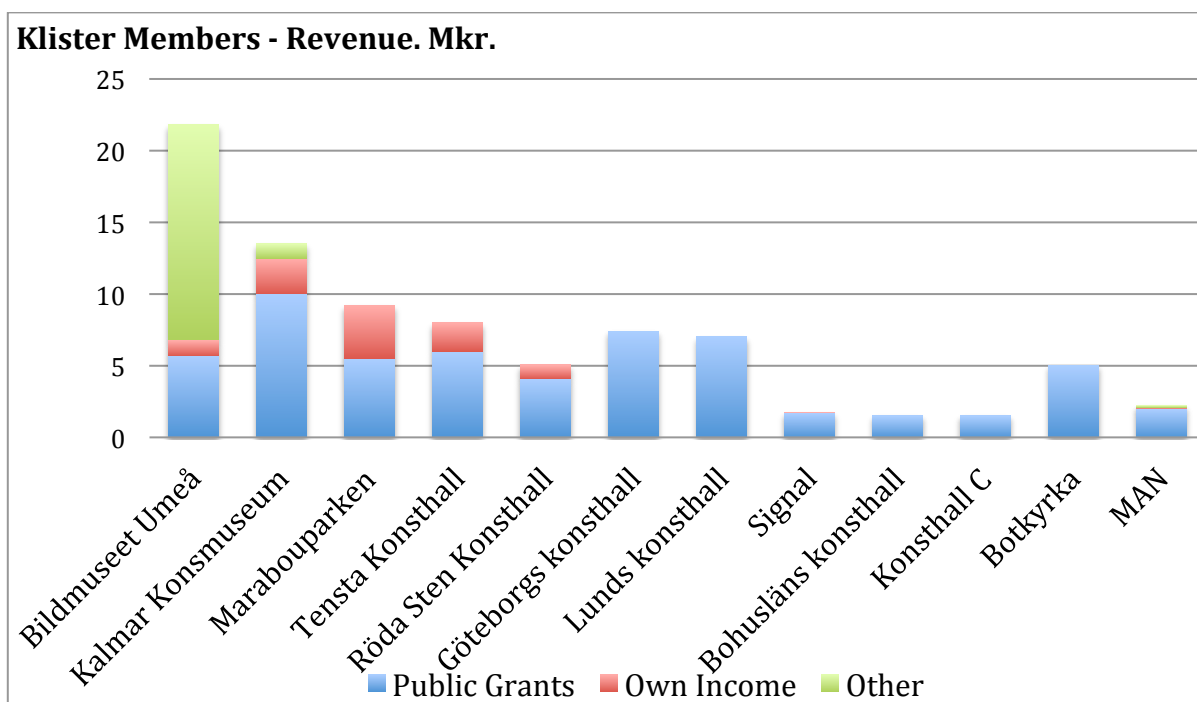
Klister members - Costs. Mkr.



Revenues

As regards the income of Klister galleries, the picture is largely the same as for expenses; that is, Klister network members show great differences in size of income, but also significant parity regarding their dependence on public financing and their relative lack of alternative sources of revenue.

Of the approximately 22 million kronor that Bildmuseet had in revenues in 2012, 15 million came from the university, 0.7 million from the national Arts Department, five million from the municipality, and 1.1 million, which was part of a university donation, from the private real estate company Balticgruppen Design AB. The municipally run art galleries are often wholly financed by local public grants, and in certain cases also from the regional council and the state. By means of an EU project, collaborations and external commissions involving lectures and curatorial work, Tensta konsthall has reduced its public funding to 50–60 percent. Sponsoring is conspicuous by its absence, as is, in most cases, income from entry fees and sales from gallery shops or cafés. One exception to this rule is Marabouparken, which has a cooperative agreement that brings in 1.4 million kronor per year. Entry fees, guided tours and commissions combine to bring in 800,000 kronor, and renting out premises bring in 1.2 million kronor. Kalmar Konstmuseum in 2012 raked in one million kronor from entry fees, the renting out of premises, membership fees and shop sales. Twenty percent of the revenue in Röda Sten Konsthall's budget comes from renting out its restaurant, as well as other renting and entry and membership fees. The same year, Museum Anna Nordlander received a donation of 100,000 kronor and in 2010 had a sales income of 4000 kronor. Signal sold books for 1150 kronor in 2012. Both Luleå and Alingsås take a commission on sales of art from their exhibitions.



Material assets

Marabouparken is the only Klister gallery that owns its own premises. Like Röda Sten, Marabouparken rents out to a restaurant. Some galleries have a small shop. Several galleries (Luleå, Gävle, Lund and Borås) are responsible for the maintenance of their municipal art collection, which of course requires resources. Archives exist to a limited extent at some Klister galleries, for example, Signal, Konsthall C and Luleå.

Immaterial assets

Klister member galleries themselves confirm the competence of their staff as their primary immaterial asset, but also mention the network and its branding .

Because staff are few in number in relation to the workload, gallery employees are compelled to develop enormously varied areas of competence. In some cases, staff members are also practicing artists; in other cases, they are curators with commissions from other art organizations, both within and outside of Sweden. Of particular importance are art education and mediation—contact with the public, children, young people and adults. Other tasks lie within administration, accounting, marketing, and exhibition technology. The formal education of gallery staff members varies, from having university degrees to being more or less self-taught. Klister members emphasize that contemporary art galleries are workplaces combining both broad and narrow competences, and are therefore exceptionally educational. The staff's proximity to and close contact with the local community, the international art scene, higher education and research institutions, and technologically advances businesses and industries help develop staff competences in several ways. This is palpable in, for instance, the high turnover of employees who are in demand by other employers—and not only in the sphere of art and culture.

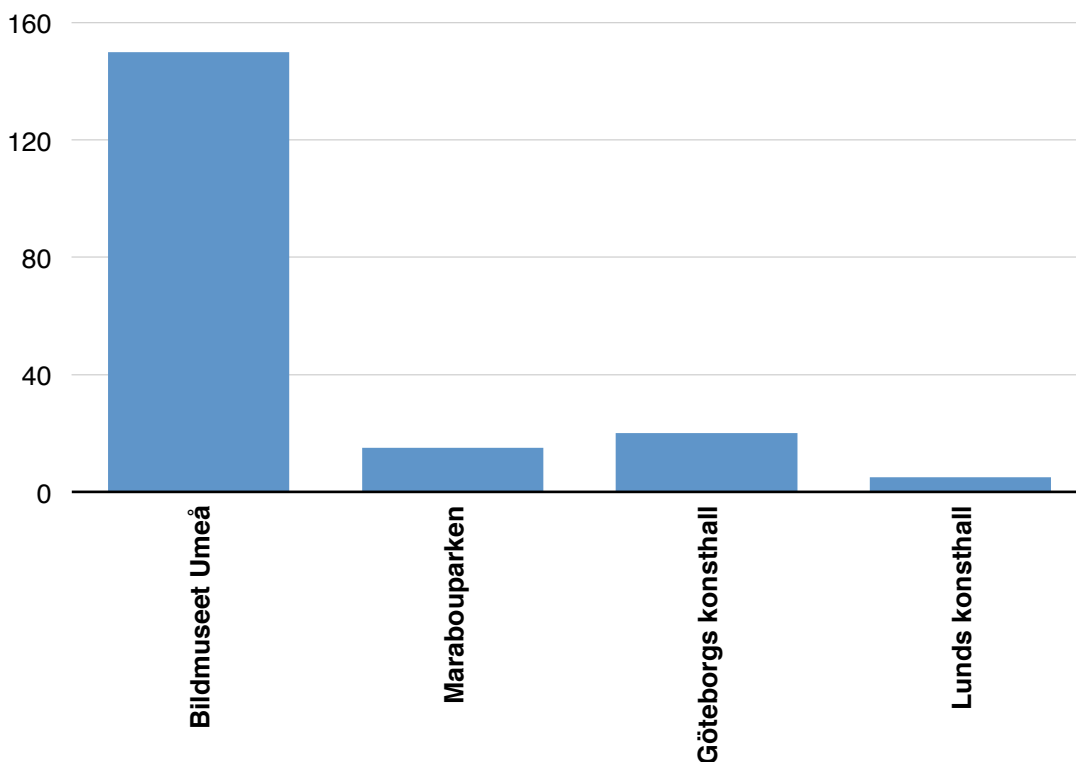
Further education

Even if the contemporary art gallery is a learning organization, employees' opportunities for advancing their knowledge in general are very circumscribed. The budgets of the galleries usually do not accommodate such activities. Yet without a continual flow of new knowledge, both staff and gallery activities risk losing their edge and treading the same old paths. Klister galleries try to compensate for their modest economic possibilities with great inventiveness. Attending seminars and conferences is a prioritized form of further education, as are study trips to other galleries. In some cases, distance education is undertaken, or technicians are sent to Moderna Museet for advanced training. Personal networks and collaborative partners are utilized, for example, by locating staff meetings at other venues. International networks such as Cluster and Trans Europe Halles are also used for continuing education. A certain amount of further training is organized by

local authorities and regional councils. Competence is also developed and advanced by engaging staff in research and book projects.

Last but not least, important further education happens when staff members themselves educate others, such as teachers and other public employees (see below).

Klister members - Costs of further education of staff



Art education

Several contemporary art galleries have earmarked posts for art pedagogy. Politicians across the board believe that art education, especially that aimed at children and young people, is the most important part of galleries' brief. Contemporary art venues work hard to develop methods for mediating contemporary art. This mediation can take the form of cultural preschools or open studios where children can try creating art themselves, helped by a teacher or a practicing artist. Galleries often organize their annual schedule around the school year and provide special activities during school breaks, sometimes also during weekends. Some arrange art day camps. Marabouparken hosts

activities for adults studying Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) and for job-seekers registered at the Employment Bureau. Art galleries also collaborate with local organizations and activities, for example, the library or women's groups. The Museum Anna Nordlander has developed a discussion forum based on themes in their exhibitions. The art educators at Röda Sten Konsthall in Gothenburg, in close collaboration with field workers and social workers, have developed a method based on contemporary art strategies, and the gallery functions as a mediator between local public departments, which may be hindered from collaborating directly. Röda Sten has also constructed methods for conveying information about all the various aspects of producing exhibitions to students of photography at the Valand Academy. Tensta konsthall prefers to talk about "mediating" rather than pedagogy and sees its café as the most important vehicle for mediation among many others, which together serve to "identify, create and debate commonly shared concerns."

Klister member galleries stress the differences between educating children, young people and adults about contemporary art. Arts education is something that begins even before visitors enter the gallery, through how the image of contemporary art is perceived. Once inside the gallery, it's about looking after the visitor from the first encounter at the reception desk, to guided tours and texts and program material. All the galleries underline the importance of personal encounters.

Ways of working and target groups

Upon closer examination, we are especially struck by two observations concerning contemporary art galleries. One is that they work in so many different ways; another is that they are oriented towards and collaborate with so many different target groups and partners.

Galleries under municipal supervision in mid-sized cities generally focus on their local population, including younger people. Bildmuseet in Umeå and Kalmar konstmuseum adapt their annual program to school terms (autumn), university terms (spring) and tourism (summer). Galleries in or near metropolitan regions can be more specialized. The Art Gallery in Alingsås targets young adults, whom they try to reach by "involving them in projects and participatory processes." Konsthall C strives to reflect its international local community by reaching out to people of "different ages, classes, genders, pigments." Gothenburg's konsthall has developed measurement methods and public relations through the project "A cultural institution that matters," and sometimes sends its educators out to local schools, being aware that they themselves must nurture their future public.

Guided tours can be done in many different ways and at different times—on weekends and school breaks, at lunchtime and during the evening. There are special tours for children and families, just as there are special viewings for invited educators. Lund’s gallery offers tours and discussions over a beer on the last Thursday of each exhibition period.

Yet, the activities of galleries entail much more than guided tours of exhibitions. Galleries often organize various programs in conjunction with exhibitions: lectures, seminars, films and performance, and activities that inspire individual creativity. What characterizes Klistar galleries’ collaboration with local organizations and their relationship with visitors is active and personal contact between staff and public. As at Gävle’s Konstcentrum, it permeates their whole attitude, from a welcoming in reception to writing exhibition texts. Equally active and collaborative is their relationship with the artists who are invited to exhibit their work; the gallery itself usually takes the initiative.

Frequently, as with Marabouparken Lab, galleries participate in long-term collaborative projects with local interests. Tensta konsthall has a motto, “the generous spearhead,” which stipulates three lines to follow: 1) articulation, or how something is formed; 2) art and money; and 3) the working conditions of cultural producers, including artists. It is no secret that Tensta konsthall aims to go from being a project to being an “institution.”

Networks

Something else that marks the activities of contemporary art galleries perhaps more than anything is networking: locally, regionally, nationally, in Europe and globally. They can legitimately be called “glocal” nodes—contact points between the local and the global. However, networking doesn’t just link points geographically; it also forges bridges between the public and culture, between schools and research, between the social and the aesthetic, between the personal and the political, between the familiar and the foreign, between the present and the possible.

Both Museum Anna Nordlander (MAN) and Luleå konsthall have developed good contacts with partners in the Barents region and northern Norway, Finland and Russia. Kalmar konstmuseum prioritizes its immediate surroundings in the southern Baltic, and was invited in 2012 to participate in the Berlin Biennale. Lund’s Konsthall has a finely meshed contact network involving both southern Swedish cultural organizations and the international art scene. By having arranged Gothenburg’s International Art Biennale (GIBCA) since 2006, Röda Sten Konsthall has maintained contacts with global art practice.

Ecosystem and the creation of value

As mentioned above, the contemporary art galleries in the Klister network have a two-pronged ambition: to be at once locally anchored and artistically avant-garde. This ambition may be expressed in different ways depending on the gallery's organization, resources and geographical location. Common to all of them, however, is a focus on the continuing development of competence, innovative methods of mediation and intensive networking in several dimensions. This task is described somewhat variously as:

“democratic public life within the public sector” (Lund's konsthall);

“public space for a critical dialogue between artists, researchers and the general public” (Bildmuseet in Umeå);

“being an open and welcoming place in the everyday lives of the local population” (Botkyrka Konsthall);

“a gathering place for different groups when, for political reasons, society is increasingly closing down the commons” (Konsthall C);

“a place for reflection, criticism and new ways of thinking” (Gävle Konstcentrum).

By providing people in even small and mid-sized cities with contemporary art of high quality, these galleries contribute to increasing the attractiveness of their respective cities and are thereby a significant factor in the development of local business and industry. Not to be overlooked is the value of an arena that offers alternatives to mainstream culture and that can be a supportive free zone for whoever falls outside the norm, for whatever reason.

Summary

Klister's galleries of contemporary art are not cut from the same cloth. On the contrary, they display a wide variety of origin stories, organization, resources and methods. Several of them face the same challenges: high rents, small staffs, nagging politicians, projectification and bureaucratization, ignorant officials, insufficient on-the-job training and marketing, uninterested teachers and sensationalistic reporters.

One consideration that is paramount, however, is how financially unsound it is to underfund these galleries. It not only prevents an operation from attaining its full potential. It also constitutes a wasteful squandering of the means that are already being invested. One probable reason for this misuse is uncertainty among politicians, officials and other decision-makers regarding the functions that galleries of contemporary art fulfill and the value they create.

Meanwhile, the networks and collaborative formations that Klister's members are part of and develop—local groups, schools and universities, the national and global art world, public administrations and sometimes the workplace as well—are astounding. In addition, it is clear that

these small and mid-sized galleries have developed methods that benefit people and organizations other than themselves.

They are no exceptions; rather, they play important, central roles in their local contexts: Signal and the Art Gallery at Bohuslän Museum are of well-known importance to the art world in Malmö and Bohuslän; Museum Anna Nordlander (MAN) in Skellefteå and Röda Sten Konsthall both contribute, and in different ways, to changes in municipal administrations and operations; Marabouparken advises the city of Sundbyberg on its public image and participates in city planning in Hallonbergen and Ör; through its location inside a shopping center in a residential area in Fittja, Botkyrka Konsthall is an obvious part of daily life; Tensta Konsthall is a hub for local organizations in the western Stockholm suburbs—meanwhile, the gallery provides important energy and ideas through its local, national and global networks. Tensta Director Maria Lind emphasizes the viability of being locally embedded while also being relevant to the global art scene; the fact is that one probably necessitates the other.

Working with children and youth is a political priority. These galleries of contemporary art do this extensively, through multiple channels, e.g., art camps and art workshops, which are often tied to current exhibitions. There is also a multitude of opportunities for art teachers and other teachers to receive training. Partnering with publicly funded and administered art programs works differently, and differently well, around the country. In Gävle, all school children in fourth and seventh grade are offered a visit to Gävle Konstcentrum as part of a broader municipal art program in elementary schools. Sometimes, educators from Göteborgs konsthall visit schools to connect with their young audiences. Director Mikael Nanfeldt identifies the insight that the initiative is based on: “We simply must create our future audience.”

Art education—or “agency,” as Tensta Konsthall prefers to call its work—isn’t only directed at children and youth. There is an acute awareness that art education encompasses all forms of communication with gallery patrons, from the greeting at the reception desk, to exhibitions and the texts in catalogues and exhibitions. Personal greetings are emphasized. Visitors to galleries of contemporary art are individuals and they should be treated as such. As Anna Livion-Ingvarsson, director of Gävle art gallery, puts it: “We’re showing art that no one has seen before, so we have a huge responsibility for our audiences’ first encounter.”

Art galleries’ relations with the media are part of their external communication. That relation is sometimes harmonious, while at other times it is characterized by sensationalistic debate. Established genres include previews and reviews, as well as letters to the editor and opinion pieces. They are not well suited for developing language that can articulate the distinctive character and value of contemporary art. It doesn’t help matters that established art criticism is becoming increasingly obscure in major newspapers and in Sweden’s few art periodicals. These shortfalls in discourse

probably collaborate in an unfortunate way to contribute to a polarization of our art dialogue.²⁴

Self-images and views of one's own function are varied. In Luleå, where the art gallery is well integrated into general cultural activity, they want to be an art gallery "in the service of the public," comparable to public-service Radio and TV. Signal in Malmö emphasizes its role as a meeting point for local art and as a connection to the international art world. The gallery argues against the ingrained pattern of investing money in buildings but not in artistic content and upholds the curator's role within arts and culture: to strengthen the curator's role is to strengthen content! Kalmar konstmuseum and, to a certain extent, Gävle konstcentrum see themselves in a local, political context characterized by contrasts: on one hand, there is "brain drain," faltering industry and mainstream culture, and on the other there are universities, innovative businesses and cutting-edge arts and culture.

Several galleries of contemporary art emphasize their public qualities: Lund Konsthall wants to be democratically public within the framework of the public sector; Bildmuseet in Umeå offers itself as a public space for critical dialogue; Alingsås art gallery aims to be an autonomous space, Botkyrka Konsthall an open and welcoming place, and Gävle Konstcentrum a space for reflection, critique and fresh approaches; Konsthall C wants to be "a gathering spot for different groups as society is closing down everything public more and more, for political reasons." Marabouparken's project PARK PLAYGROUND has evolved from being a seminar on public artistic display to becoming a collaborative project on city planning.

The ubiquity of expressions like "public service," "general public," "community," "public good," etc., in contemporary art galleries is no coincidence. The reason this language is so pervasive isn't chiefly because several of Klister's members are part of the public sector. This "public" language partially refer to an idea about the function of art and partially to an idea of a citizen as someone beyond a consumer and voter. In the next chapter, we will take a look at the connection between galleries of contemporary art and the "public" characteristics of the values they create.

Regarding value creation, several contemporary art galleries, e.g. in Alingsås, Kalmar and Uddevalla, point to the roles they play for local youth by demonstrating alternative means of expressing and being. Anders Jansson at Museum Anna Nordlander in Skellefteå makes the contemplative comment that the fact that the museum had no facilities of its own for thirteen years forced it to learn how to let its operations shape the organization, rather than the other way around. Röda Sten Konsthall calls itself a career stepping-stone: several employees have moved on to attractive jobs in the art world. Many Klister members can point to the impact they have had on individual artists, although few of them prefer to talk about it in terms of creating "future stars." Rather

²⁴ The region of Västra Götaland's cultural committee decided in the fall of 2014 to instate a specific allotment to support qualified cultural journalism and essays. See David Karlsson's report, "En intellektuell tillväxt av sällan skådat slag" (forthcoming).

than creating stars, Tensta's Maria Lind argues that Sarah Thelwall's concept of "deferred value" expresses an interest in that "which is being formulated in the present moment." Thanks to their relatively modest size, contemporary art galleries can afford to be more exploratory and experimental, which, in time, fertilizes other areas of the art world.

Value and Values

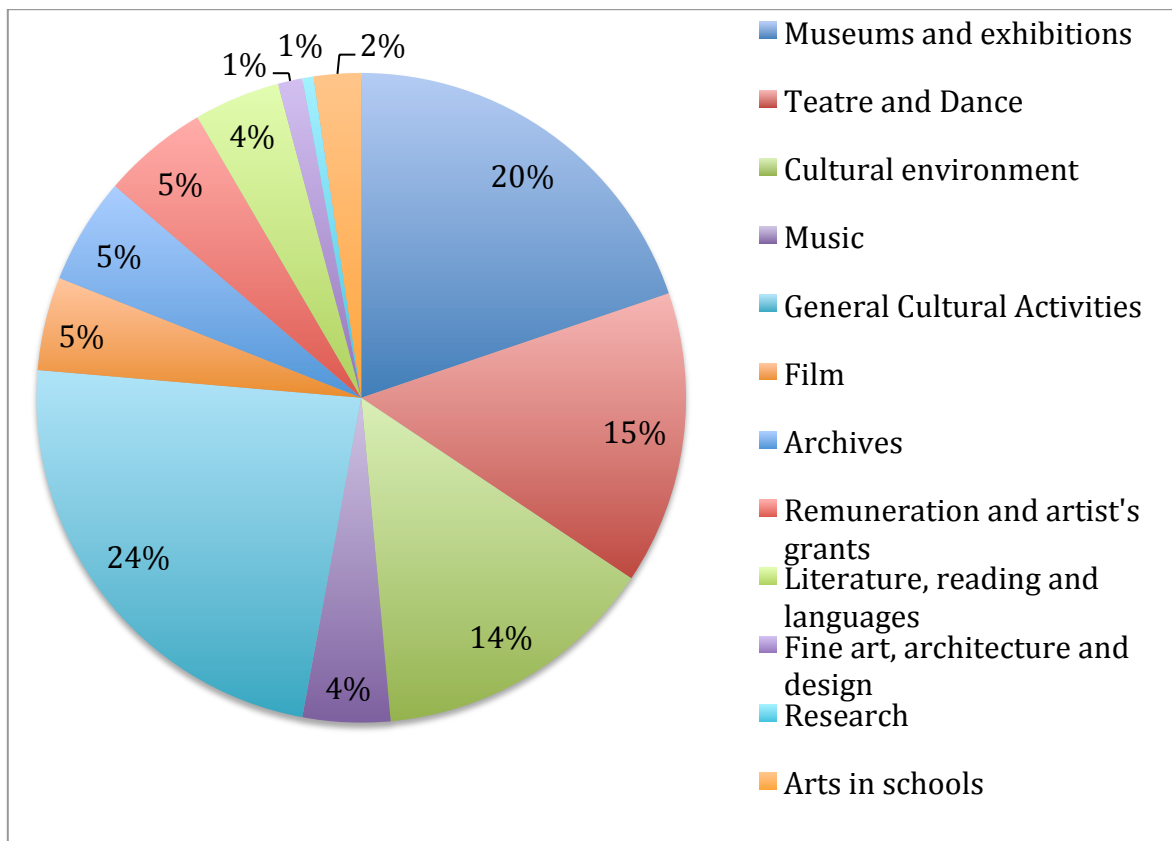
The visual arts' share of the national "cake" is small and uncertain.

The funding that a specific entity is awarded in the state budget is a concrete expression of the political priorities made in that society. So what value does the state put on the visual arts?

Sweden's official outlays for culture increased from 19.2 billion kronor in 2000 to 23.77 billion in 2011, an increase of almost 25 percent. According to available statistics, however, this increase came to a halt after 2007. Among all public expenditures, the state represents 45 percent, municipalities 40 percent and regional units/counties 15 percent.²⁵

While the state's expenditures on culture rose from 9.037 billion in 2000 to 10.585 billion in 2011, the state expenditure on "the visual arts, architecture, graphics and design" dropped from 113 million kronor in 2000 to 79 million kronor in 2011, a reduction from 1.2 percent of the budget to 0.7 percent.

State expenditure for culture by primary and sub area, 2011. Mkr.



Source: Myndigheten för kulturanalys, *Samhällets utgifter för kultur 2010-2011*, Kulturfakta 2012:1, Tabell 4, s 17.

²⁵ "Culture" also includes certain educational entities and the media. Households represent 61 percent of Swedish society's total outlays for culture, while the state represent 17 percent, municipalities 15 percent, and regions 6 percent. Business and industry represent 1 percent. Source: Administration for Cultural Analysis, *Society's Expenditure on Culture 2010-2011*, p. 17.

Whereas theaters, for example, received more funding from 2000 onwards, funding for the visual arts has more or less been halved and at present comprises less than 1 percent of the state cultural budget. The visual arts and design are also the smallest unit in the regions'/counties' expenditure on culture, receiving about 3 percent of their total expenditure. That said, the visual arts and design had the greatest increase in 2007–11, from 72 to 112 million kronor, an increase of 55 percent. This, however, has not affected the arts' portion of the total regional budget, which remains around 3 percent. Reckoned in kronor per inhabitant, the regions/counties in the Västra Götaland region (569 kr), Jämtland (532 kr) and Skåne (529 kr) spend most on culture. At the bottom of the list are Stockholm (184 kr), Östergötland (208 kr), Uppsala (244 kr) and Jönköping (251 kr). The average amount spent per inhabitant for the whole country in 2011 was 376 kronor. Of the top regions/counties, it is noteworthy that the large region of Västra Götaland committed 53 million kronor, or about 6 percent of its total culture budget, to visual arts and design in 2011, while the small county of Jämtland devoted almost the same portion of its cultural budget to visual arts and design—6.5 million kronor, or just over 5 percent. Of the regions or counties that fund culture more generously, Skåne deviates by devoting about 10 million kronor, or only 1.5 percent, of its cultural budget to visual arts and design.²⁶

Art and capitalism

The latest official enquiry into culture, which published its findings in 2009, proposed that two goals that had thus far guided Sweden's national cultural policy should be eliminated. One was the goal of "artistic quality," which should be removed because its content "has up to now not been able to be precisely defined."²⁷ The other was the goal of "counteracting the negative effects of commercialism," with the motivation that "both the public sphere [*sic*] and the market are needed for a functioning society."²⁸ In the next breath, the enquiry admitted that cultural policy can mitigate the shortcomings of the market. If the market on its own managed to finance all the culture that society considers worthwhile, there would be no need for public contributions.

Reactions from several reference bodies and debaters to the proposal to eliminate the goal of quality were very strong, with the result that the government felt compelled to reinstate a goal supporting the "furthering of artistic quality and renewal."²⁹ However, the government agreed with

²⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁷ *Cultural Enquiry Report: Renewal Program, SOU 2009:16*, Stockholm 2009, p. 46.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁹ "Time for Culture: Government proposition, 2009–10:3." See <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/21/04/a7e858d4.pdf>, p. 26.

the authors of its official enquiry that the goal of counteracting the negative effects of commercialism should be eliminated:

On the other hand, we believe that it is hardly relevant to single out the cultural activities that are conducted on commercial bases as primarily deleterious or negative and something that therefore needs to be counteracted. There is no inherent opposition between commercial capacity and artistic quality or freedom. To comment on and discuss all types of social phenomena and power structures, including the commercial, is self-evident for maintaining free culture. Therefore, we agree with the Culture Enquiry that it does not need to be a stated goal.³⁰

Nothing whatsoever, not least the cultural policy goal that the government abolished, suggests that all cultural activities conducted on commercial bases are “deleterious or negative,” or that there is an “inherent opposition” between commercialism and quality. The formulation “counteract the negative effects of commercialism” refers to the fact that we live in a class society in a cultural sense as well, and that a commercial culture without any alternatives will have consequences for diversity, freedom of expression and class divisions.³¹

The two controversial goals for Sweden’s national cultural policy are related. They both concern value: artistic value and commercial value, and the possibility of translating one into the other. Making exact and reliable evaluations and thereby with scientific certainty ascertaining that the implemented policy has or has not had the desired effect would be an ideal scenario for all decision-makers. The assertion, which hovers between the lines in both the cultural enquiry and the government proposition, is that there is no conflict or contradiction between commercialism and artistic quality—that is, between capitalism and art.

There’s no accounting for taste

Discussions about values relating to art and culture are amongst the trickiest we can be drawn into, especially if you are a politician or bureaucrat and as such are sworn to impartiality. Hemming and hawing has therefore become *de rigueur* with reference to personal taste on the one hand, and to the condition of things on the other—that is, the survival of still influential conventions.

In the first instance, the individual determines what is good and not good. No one’s judgment is worth more than anyone else’s, which easily—much too easily—can lead to the conclusion that if many people think something is good, then therefore it is good. According to this position, Melody

³⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

³¹ Rather than being deleted, the goal of counteracting commercialism’s negative effects should be complemented with the goal of also counteracting the negative effects of bureaucracy.

Festival winners and best-selling authors are good because many people like them. Judgment may be said to be bolstered by quantification.

In the second instance, position in the class-cultural system is said to determine quality. Opera and Nobel Prize winners are, according to this assessment, good by definition. Judgment here is supported by established convention.

And any public discussion of the distinctive character of culture, art and values ceases or disappears.

This diffidence regarding questions of artistic value in Sweden contrasts greatly with the discussion that has been carried on internationally for a couple of decades, which is now beginning to seep in even here.³²

Discussions about the relationship of art to economics is not new, far from it. Writers such as Arnold Hauser and, more recently, Giep Hagoort have pointed out that Shakespeare and Rembrandt were entrepreneurs of a kind.³³ And at least since the Enlightenment, when aesthetics have been recognized in their own right, the question of the connections between aesthetic and economic value has been closely scrutinized.

From the culture industry to creative industries

During the final year of the Second World War, two Jewish critics in exile in the US, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, observed with disgust the development of western culture, permeated on the one hand by Nazism and on the other by a growing culture industry.³⁴ Their presentation of the dialectic of enlightenment inspired many of the generation that emerged at the end of the 1960s

³² There is now a great deal of literature, both academic and popular, discussing questions of value and evaluation within art and the humanities. For example, see John Armbricht, *The Value of Cultural Institutions: Measurements and Description*, Källered: Bokförlaget BAS, 2012; Karolina Modig and Erik Modg, *Värdet av konst för människa, näringsliv och samhälle* [The value of art for people, business and society], Stockholm: Theologica Publ., 2013; *Litteraturens värden* [The value of literature], ed. Anders Mortensen, Brustus Östlings bokförlag Symposium, Stockholm/Stehag 2009; *Att utveckla indikatorer för utvärdering av kulturpolitik. Redovisning av ett regeringsuppdrag* [Developing indicators for evaluating cultural policy: Report from a government commission], Mydigheten för kulturanalys 2012, see <http://www.kulturanalys.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Att-utveckla-indikatorer-for-utvardering-av-kulturpolitik.pdf>; Linnea Lindschöld, *Betydelsen av kvalitet. En studie av diskursen om statens stöd till ny, svensk skönlitteratur 1975–2009* [The importance of quality: A study of the discourse on state support for new Swedish literature 1975–2009], Dissertation, Valfrid, Bohus 2013; Lena Lindgren, *Utvärderingsmonstret. Kvalitets- och resultatmätning i den offentliga sektorn* [The pattern of evaluation: Quality and result measurements in the public sector], Studentlitteratur, Lund 2008; *Staten och granskningssamhället. Samtidshistoriska frågor 26* [The state and social scrutiny: Contemporary historical questions 26], ed. Anders Ivarsson Westerberg and Bengt Jacobsson, Stockholm 2013, see <http://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:641809/FULLTEXT01.pdf>; *Till vilken nytta?* [For what use?], ed. Tomas Forser and Thomas Karsohn, Göteborg: Daidalos, 2013.

³³ Arnold Hauser, *Konstarternas sociala historia 1–2* [The social history of art, 1–2], trans. Ulrika Waldenström, PAN/Norstedts, 1972; and Giep Hagoort, *Konst och entreprenörskap* [Art and the entrepreneurial], Åmål: Nätverkstan skriftserie 003, 2013.

³⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Upplysningens dialektik* [The Dialectic of Enlightenment], trans. Lars Bjurman and Carl-Henning Wijkmark, Daidalos, 2012.

who wanted to create alternatives to both the established art culture and commercial popular culture. The Swedish parliament responded to these challenges by drafting a new national cultural policy, which was established in 1974. The view of art and the utility of culture for our social environment conveyed by this policy statement did not lack instrumental elements.³⁵

The 1980s ushered in a neoliberal settling of accounts with the Keynesian welfare state. According to the new political message sent by the US and Great Britain, the public sector should be heavily reduced and its expenditures on art and culture should be cut. Public activities should learn from private enterprise. The new watchwords were “privatization,” “deregulation,” “competition,” “conversion into independent companies”—all of which greatly affected the art market.³⁶ Parallel with this, conservative criticism was leveled against what was seen as the watering down or vulgarization of education and learning, and against the threat of multiculturalism. In the US, this offensive led to veritable culture wars at universities. In Sweden, as in other places in Europe, the significance of culture as a factor in the localization of business and industry was noted. Offering a vital cultural life became important for regional policy for cities that wanted to keep ahead in the ever-increasing competition over employment opportunities and tax revenues

At the end of the 1990s, the Blair government in Great Britain launched a policy covering what in Sweden somewhat later would be termed “cultural and creative industries.” This initiative was based on the observation that on the one hand, culture occupied an ever-expanding place in people’s lives, and on the other, cultural activities and forms of expression took up an increasing segment of the economy. In other words, the “economization” of culture went hand in hand with the “culturalization” of the economy.³⁷

Expectations for culture as a branch of industry were great and growing after the turn of the twenty-first century, not just in the British Isles and Europe but also elsewhere in the world. These expectations seemed to be confirmed by various investigations, which prompted governments to invest both money and prestige on projects that were as much economic as cultural. The art of living on one’s art appeared an attractive and necessary skill for more and more involved in the arts and culture. The entrepreneur became a practicable model even for artists. The old conflict between

³⁵ Paul Lindblom, the National Arts Council’s first chairman, called cultural policy “social environmental policy.” *Arbetet*, 27 October 1972.

³⁶ Chin-Tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s*, London: Verso, 2002.

³⁷ David Karlsson develops this argument in his book *En kulturutredning: pengar, konst och politik* [A cultural enquiry: Money, art and politics], Karlshamn: Glänta Harcore, 2012, p. 43ff.

culture and economy—art and capitalism—seemed dissolved, an opinion that influenced the Swedish Cultural Enquiry’s report and the Swedish government’s proposition.³⁸

Then the crisis hit. In one fell swoop, much of the public support for culture disappeared, and not only in the countries hardest hit—Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal—but also in countries like Holland and Great Britain.

And then, an old question arose, now expressed with critical bite: What really is the relationship between the value of art and the value of money?³⁹

New Public Management

Closely associated with the discussion of the value of the arts and culture is the view of evaluation—and not only evaluation of the arts and culture.

Evaluations are nothing new; they are part and parcel of modernity’s tradition of ever-increasing rationalization, the phenomenon that sociologist Max Weber called “the disenchantment of the world.” In the 1950s and ’60s, evaluations were central elements in the art of social engineering that built “the people’s home.” Scientific central planning was highly esteemed.⁴⁰ During the 1970s and ’80s, trust in rational planning was undermined for both empirical and ideological reasons. Many welfare states were tottering and when the Soviet Union finally collapsed, it was interpreted as a breakdown not only of Communism but also of political central planning in general. In the flush of victory for democracy and capitalism, the two became intertwined, regarded as synonymous. Hegel-inspired American state department bureaucrats declared that, as a narrative of conflicting classes and interests, history was now at an end.⁴¹ One single path led towards the future and it enjoined comprehensive neoliberal market solutions, including in the public sector, which propaganda depicted as a financial drain.

³⁸ This position is thoroughly expressed in Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth and Per Schlingmann’s “Så kan Sverige bli ett kreativt föregångsland” [Sweden can also be a creative model for the future], *Göteborgs Posten*, 10 March 2010.

³⁹ The British economist John Kay has problematized the relationship between art and the economy. He makes comparisons with the health service. About 10 percent of the economy of Great Britain goes towards fighting illness; the more illness, the greater the funding. No one, however, would consider encouraging the government to spread illness in order to create more jobs—but that’s an argument put forth with reference to art and culture. Studies consistently point to how many jobs are created to facilitate culture and the arts. However, Kay contends that what is measured is basically the costs for the real value of experiencing the arts. It is the artistic outcome which constitutes the real economic revenue! John Kay, “A good economist knows the true value of the arts,” *Financial Times*, 11 August 2010.

⁴⁰ A typical, and in his time very influential, representative of this position was Lennart Holm, a [Swedish] architect and city planner who from 1969 to 1987 was the director of the state Planning Commission. Holm was a central figure in the cultural policy debates of the 1960s and was the chairman of the 1965 enquiry into museums.

⁴¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, 1992.

In the beginning of the 1990s, the English political scientist Christopher Hood coined the term “New Public Management” (NPM) to describe these new tendencies.⁴² A phrase was needed that could depict the general shift that occurred in the 1980s in the view of how public activities should be conducted, a shared term that could replace national concepts like the French “Projet de service,” the British “Next Steps,” or the Canadian “Public Service 2000.”

NPM appeared as a reaction against what in the English-speaking world is called “Progressive Public Administration” (PPA), which in the beginning of the twentieth century was a response to a situation that was considered untenable: corrupt politicians and private enterprise that delivered bad quality at high prices because of corruption or organized crime. PPA therefore placed great weight on two principles. One was to make a strict distinction between private and public activities, the latter to be run by irreproachable civil servants and public officials with impeccable morals. The other principle concerned introducing protections against political and other controls using rules for procedures that would counteract nepotism and corruption and ensure the maintenance of arms-length distance between politicians and those entrusted with public commissions.

NPM involved a reversal as regards both these principles. NPM reduced or removed the differences between the public and private sector and saw to it that accountability was shifted from process to result. Further, NPM was characterized by great trust in the market and private business methods (which were no longer associated with organized crime), and correspondingly low confidence in public servants who were no longer considered “ascetic Jesuits,” but instead “budget-maximizing bureaucrats”⁴³ whose work therefore had to be subjected to scrutiny and be evaluated with the latest evaluating methods. NPM ideas were articulated in a language of “economic rationalism” and were advocated by a new generation of “econocrats” and “accountocrats.”

Hood distinguishes seven characteristics of NPM:

- 1) breaking up public organizations into corporatized units organized according to product
- 2) more contract-based competitive activities, with internal debiting and term contracts
- 3) a management style modeled on the private corporate sector
- 4) greater emphasis on discipline and restraint in the use of resources
- 5) greater weight given to direct hands-on management
- 6) explicit formal and measurable standards for measuring performance and progress
- 7) greater stress on control of results.

⁴² Christopher Hood, “The ‘New Public Management’ in the 1980s: Variations on a Theme,” 1995. See <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.464.4899&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

⁴³ The epithet is Hood’s, p. 4.

Hood examines the relevance of four ordinary explanations for the appearance of NPM: 1) the “English awfulness” (that is, the influence of Reagan/Thatcher), 2) right-wing politics, 3) reaction to tax stresses and a too-large public sector, and 4) a poor macro-economy. He finds that the applicability of these explanations is a little hit and miss. Sweden seems to be an exception, as it was neither English-speaking nor right-wing during the 1980s. Instead, Hood examines another hypothesis—namely, how and to what extent various countries were motivated and had the opportunity to implement NPM. He finds (see illustration) that, more than any other country, Sweden, with its high degree of centralism and large public sector, had both the motive and opportunity to adopt NPM. Sweden had both a large public sector and growing dissatisfaction with high taxes and, thanks to centralized governance, also a possibility to change the situation.

Starting point and requirement for the public sectors shift to NPM

		Extent	
		Little	Great
Central Control	Great	Japan Motivation: <u>little</u> Opportunity: <u>great</u>	Sweden Motivation: <u>great</u> Opportunity: <u>great</u>
	Little	USA Motivation: <u>little</u> Opportunity: <u>little</u>	Germany Motivation: <u>great</u> Opportunity: <u>little</u>

Source: After Christopher Hood, *The "New Public Management" in the 1980's* (1995), p. 105.

According to Evert Vedung, a Swedish expert in the area, NPM signaled a turn of the tide. What previously legitimized the public sector in citizens' eyes was not primarily the results that were delivered, but that it was democratically run, had attractive goals and functioned according to the rule of law.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Vedung, *Utvärderingsböljans former och drivkrafter* [The forms and driving forces of the evaluation wave], Finnish Evaluation Unit for Social Services, Helsinki 2004, p. 2. See www2.ibf.uu.se/PERSON/evert/projekt/former.pdf.

Development researcher Jens Stilhoff Sørensen is even more severe in his judgment. In a radio essay, he calls this turn of the tide a “the silent revolution.”⁴⁵ Previously, the public sector and the state public administration were based on professionalism and professional and civil service ethics, democratic control and insight, and on neutral and a factually assessed public service that was the same for all citizens. According to Stilhoff Sørensen, over the last 20 years we have instead gradually slipped into a “management”-inspired model, which is founded on an entirely different governing philosophy, whose main characteristic is that the public sector should be run like a company:

Operations should be self-supporting, that is, profitable and profit-making. They should compete with each other and internally be pervaded with an entrepreneurial spirit. The key words are privatization and corporatism, management thinking and measurability through evaluations.

Stillhoff Sørensen thinks that NPM has led to a “devastation of the public sector”:

It corrupts all other values by transforming them into economic ones. Since everything should be measured and evaluated, all operations, everybody’s behavior, everything is turned into quantitative packages and units that are given a numerical and thereby economic value. A police alarm, an appendix operation, a student tutorial—everything should be able to be measured in numbers.

NPM as pseudo quantification

The historian of ideas Sven-Eric Liedman has closely examined the ability of evaluations inspired by NPM to quantify and, in the end, recalculate all value into ready money—hard cash.⁴⁶ He introduces the concept of “pseudo-quantity,” which he defines as a quantity that actually isn’t one—as opposed to a genuine quantity, such as the number of inhabitants in New York City in 2010, or how fast light travels in a vacuum. The fact that existence is full of genuine quantities can deceive one into the false conclusion that everything can be quantified.

In fact, says Liedman, it is precisely this mistake that NPM makes and is based on. He quotes the neoliberal Chicago school’s motto, which reminds us that the purpose of NPM evaluations is to delegate responsibility, but not power, downwards in organizations: “What we cannot measure we cannot control.” At the same time, claims Liedman, everyone knows from their own experience that not everything can be quantified: friendship, for example, or Beethoven’s late string quartets. Nevertheless, NPM has managed to establish itself as an instrument for evaluating extremely complex human activities such as education, health care and culture.

⁴⁵ Stilhoff Sørensen, “Den tysta revolution” [The silent revolution], radio essay on OBS, 13 October 2008. See <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=503&artikel=5668583>.

⁴⁶ Liedman, “Pseudo-quantities: New Public Management and Human Judgement,” in *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*, Vol. 1, 2013.

How did this happen?

According to Liedman, pseudo-quantity is a quality that is better described in words. He differentiates between simple and complex pseudo-quantities. The former can be, for instance, the stars or similar symbols that sometimes accompany music or film reviews in newspapers. Examples of the latter include university rankings and grades in school.

NPM erases the differences between activities that aim at generating profits and those that aim at satisfying people's needs—for example, health care, education and culture. The transparency that is sometimes put forth as an argument for NPM results frequently in increased control from above—and consequently, a de-professionalization of those running the organization (health care personnel, teachers, art gallery staff). NPM involves a delegation of responsibility but not power. Liedman's examples of pseudo-quantities pinpoint the core problem with NPM: the fictive transformation of qualities into quantities is a transformation of language into numbers.

This operation has a special bearing on democratic cultural policy. Democracy has to do with preferred, popularly chosen quantities: the person getting most votes wins the election. Art is a communicative act whose quality can never be determined by votes. Art and democracy can, in this sense, seem to stand in opposition to each other. But art can take on the democratic challenges of reaching out and being understood by more than the already initiated, and we can pose crucial questions about quality to democracy—a reminder that democracy can and should be more than a way to govern.

Pseudo-quantification threatens both the arts and democracy. What is required is a re-qualification of democratic and artistic discourse. Neither democracy nor culture can be reduced to numbers; in order to develop and become richer, they require a nuanced language, an informed discourse and a public formation of meaning.⁴⁷

Public value

In 1995, Harvard professor Mark Moore published *Creating Public Value*, a book that, based on comprehensive empirical data, energetically argued against the main thesis of NPM: that there is no principle difference between running a company in the private sector and leading organizations in the public sector. To counter this principle, Moore coined the concept “public value.”⁴⁸

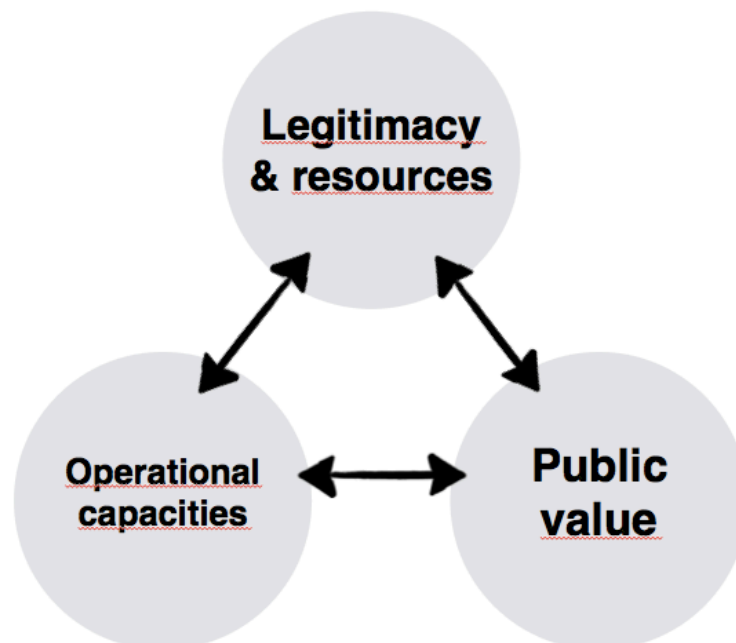
⁴⁷ The 2014 budget proposed by Sweden's new government, which was rejected by parliament, recommended the investigation of a new model “beyond New Public Management” for the control of the public sector, a model that would place more weight on professional knowledge and professional ethics.

⁴⁸ “Public value” is related to “public service,” “public sphere” and to the economic—and equally difficult to translate—concept of “public good,” which refers to resources that are neither competing nor mutually exclusive—e.g., fresh air, clean water, culture. In Mark Moore's own words: “We argued that just as the goal of private managers was to create private (economic) value, the goal of government agencies was to ‘create public (social) value.’” Mark Moore and Sanjeev Khagram, “On Creating Public Value: What Business Might Learn from Government about strategic

Moore's research began when he sent to Harvard Business School to find out everything about private enterprise in order to apply it to public management. In the early 1980s, it was taken for granted—and not only at Harvard—that the private sector had much to teach the public sector about management. During the next decade, Moore worked together with public employees, who shared their experiences. Gradually, he arrived at a few strategic conclusions that ran counter to the then dominant NPM. His point of departure was a simple observation: while the goal for private enterprise is to create “private,” i.e. economic, value, the goal for public agencies or organizations is to create “public,” i.e. social, value.

There are several differences between the public sector and the private sector. The public sector is financed by collectively gathered tax money, not from individual consumer's own choice; control of the funds generated by taxation is spread out rather than concentrated; what is worth committing taxes to can be controversial and extremely difficult to measure; people often have a different relationship to workers in the public sector (for example, policemen and social workers) than to workers in the private sector, and this relationship is often regulated by law. Consumers of public services do not see themselves as “customers” but as “citizens,” for whom the extent to which common resources are used to further a just and good society is crucial.

Moore's strategic triangle



But what characterizes “public value”? To find out, Moore and his colleagues developed a strategy for the public sector that they illustrated using a triangle. This illustration calls attention to three complex questions that managers of public agencies and organizations must address when they take any action: 1) what is the public value that their organization is trying to create?; 2) how can the organization acquire legitimacy and the necessary resources to create that value?; and 3) what operational capacities (including new investments and innovations) are required or must be developed in order to attain the desired results?

In *Creating Public Value* (1995), which consists of a number of exemplary real cases, Moore relates a story about a librarian who was confronted with a dilemma.⁴⁹ Every day at 3 p.m., the library was invaded by a large number of “latch-key kids”—children with keys around their necks who had finished school before their parents finished work. Instead of going home to their empty houses, the children chose to visit the library. They were noticed. For a few hours the library was transformed from a calm and quiet oasis into a playground for rowdy children, who freely rifled through the shelves, forcing the staff to spend overtime reorganizing the books later. At 5 p.m. the children started to leave, and by 6 p.m. they were all gone—home again.

These regular invasions made the librarian think: How should she handle the situation? Should she write a letter to the editor of the local paper and remind the parents of their responsibility? Or should she ask the municipality for more staff, which would be necessary to maintain order in the library? Should she ask the parents to pay for childcare? Or was that a task for volunteers looking for employment experience? The librarian hesitated.

In the end she began to think along other lines: could the solution to the problem lie within her own organization? Imagine if, instead of viewing the invading latch-key kids as nuisances and problems, she and her colleagues could see their presence in the library as an opportunity to help them familiarize themselves with the world of books? The more she thought about this alternative, the better it seemed. Imagine if this situation offered possibilities to make some children readers for life!

Moreover, didn’t children have just as much of a right to the library as everyone else who used it in various ways—high school students who met up there in the evening to do their homework and gossip; pensioners who came there to read the newspapers; DIY enthusiasts who came looking for manuals to learn how to finish projects they had started but abandoned.

⁴⁹ Mark H. Moore, *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

When the librarian began to ponder how the library could meet the demands of the latch-key kids, she began to see her own organization in a new light. It was no longer simply a place where one stored and gave access to books; the library was a place that was open for all, that fulfilled multifarious needs. Through meeting people halfway and prudently managing the public resources that were entrusted to her, the librarian and her colleagues became creators of public value.

What can we learn from this?

How can this story about an American librarian and Mark Moore's reasoning around public value be applied to the situation of contemporary art galleries in Sweden? There are differences. Klister galleries are not all fully publicly financed and their relationships with their local populations vary. Some Klister members have venues in the cultural centers of mid-sized cities, and their primary target groups are the local population of the city—such is the case with Luleå, Gävle, Lund, Borås and Skövde. Others are more specifically based in their immediately local community, for example, Botkyrka konsthall, Konsthall C., Marabouparken, Tensta konsthall. In contrast to libraries, contemporary art galleries continually show new exhibitions. Does this mean that “the circumstances for negotiation” between the gallery's staff and the gallery's local visitors are different from those of the local library? Yes, most likely they are. In the library, the person borrowing books can ask to have his or her wishes satisfied, but that is not possible for visitors to an art gallery, both because of limited resources and differences in competence. The question is whether something can and should be done about this imbalance in expertise and its potentially negative consequences for reciprocity and legitimacy?

Another difference may lie in the fact that contemporary art galleries, to a greater degree than libraries, involve artistic activities more than social activities. Even though the shelves of libraries are full of literature, libraries themselves are also used as work and meeting places for visitors of all ages. This is true also of contemporary art galleries, but to a more limited extent, since exhibitions take priority. Thus it also becomes necessary to distinguish more specific cultural and artistic values from the public values Moore focuses on. The value of the arts and culture is only to a limited extent public and social; it also encompasses other qualities, which we can see in the following survey of an important discussion carried out on both sides of the Atlantic over last few decades.

The value of culture

In 2004, the RAND Corporation, a conservative and influential American think tank, published a report with the telling title *The Gifts of the Muse*.⁵⁰ The background for the report was the fact that the American discussion on the value of the arts and culture had reached an impasse, a dead end, partly through its one-sided emphasis on instrumental values, and partly through being bound by the opposition between instrumental and intrinsic value.

In an interesting historical sketch, the report's authors located the root of this evil in the years around 1990, when the so-called "culture wars" broke out in the public sphere and especially in American universities.⁵¹ According to the authors, up to the 1980s notions about the value of culture and the arts had been uncontroversial, and no special argumentation was needed to justify public support for the arts.

However, the situation changed in the early 1990s. One reason for this was shrinking public finances—the state quite simply had less money to work with. Another reason was that appropriations for the arts and culture began to be questioned on aesthetic, moral and economic grounds. Should American taxpayers really be compelled to pay for works of art that upset many people, not least people from the religious Right?

The reaction from art and cultural circles was to demonstrate the utility of the arts and culture for society. Arts and culture, they said, are not only good in themselves but also contribute to greater learning, increased quality of life, improved health, etc. The defenders of culture duped themselves by falling into an instrumental argument.

At the same time, several economists began to be interested in the possibility of calculating the economic value of the arts and culture. According to the RAND authors, this led to a position that entailed three major problems: 1) too much confidence in instrumental arguments, 2) disregard for the intrinsic value of the arts, and 3) a focus on the economic needs of the non-commercial arts sector.

The RAND report indicated three main reasons for its skepticism about viewing the arts in exclusively instrumental terms. First, empirical studies were often methodologically and analytically weak and thus not very reliable. Secondly, they also lacked detailed descriptions of how the referred-to goals could be achieved—how they relate to various artistic experiences and under

⁵⁰ *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*, ed. Kevin F. McCarthy, Laura Zacaras, Elisabeth H. Ondaatje, and Arthur Brooks, RAND Corporation, 2004. See http://www.rand.org/conent/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG218.pdf.

⁵¹ See Stefan Jonsson, *De andra. Amerikanska kulturkrig och europeisk rasism* [The other: American cultural wars and European racism], Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993.

what conditions they are most likely to appear. Finally, the RAND authors asserted that instrumental studies tend to disregard the fact that the good the arts can achieve can often be produced in other ways. For example, learning or education can be improved by better teaching, while economic goals can be reached more effectively through other types of social investments. An argument in favor of the arts that is exclusively based on instrumental effects can be easily dismissed if it demonstrates that other means are better at achieving the same result.

In conclusion, the RAND authors offered a number of proposals for how the art world could make a stronger case for itself. The most important RAND suggestion—other than improving research, creating preconditions for positive arts experiences and ensuring that children come into contact with the arts and culture at an early age—was to develop a language that can articulate the intrinsic value of the arts.⁵² The greatest challenge, according to the authors, lies in getting politicians to begin to talk about the intrinsic value of the arts. This can only happen by looking beyond quantifying results and by taking qualitative questions seriously. All the talk about value concurs well with the politicians' arms-length distance from decisions about the arts. Discussions about artistic value cannot be allowed to disappear from public debate—that would be to ignore a discussion of quality, which in the long run can have consequences for democracy.

“The value of culture is not seen in audience figures”

Around the turn of the present century, discussions concerning the value of the arts and culture cropped up on our side of the Atlantic as well. In June 2003, the British think tank Demos organized a conference on the theme “Valuing Culture.” The following year, John Holden, the head of culture at Demos at the time, published a contentious pamphlet entitled *Capturing Cultural Value*, admittedly inspired by Moore's theory of “public value.” The text's motto was: “The value of culture cannot be expressed only with the help of statistics. Audience numbers give a very poor picture of how culture enriches us.”⁵³

The central argument in Holden's pamphlet calls for a whole new understanding of the public financing of culture. “We need a language,” writes Holm, “capable of reflecting, recognizing and capturing the full range of values expressed through culture.”⁵⁴ Instead of telling what they do, cultural agencies must account for how they contribute to integration, crime prevention, education. The predominant instrumental language forces culture into the role of a supplicant. Holden also

⁵² *Gifts of the Muse*, p. 72.

⁵³ John Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value: How Culture Has Become a Tool of Government Policy*, London: Demos, 2004. See <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/CapturingCulturalValue.pdf>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

points out that cultural institutions, like national defense, are financed by taxes, but only culture is described as dependent on grants. Considering the values created by culture, “investment” would be a more correct description.

In his text Holden lists all the values he claims culture creates. It is a long list, with references to several disciplines. Anthropology gives us the recognition and formulation of non-economic values as well as a language permitting discussion of historical, social, symbolic, aesthetic and spiritual values. Environmental discourse gives us ideas about sustainability, equity between generations, the need for diversity, precautionary principles and conditions for creativity. “Public value” discussions provided Holden with the conviction that the purpose of organizations should be self-determined and not formulated by others.

According to Holden, it is necessary to abandon the top-down, target-driven model of NPM and replace it with an agreement between funders and the funded in the arts and culture, which would favor a creation of value that would serve the public rather than the delivery of utilities defined by administrators.⁵⁵ If we understand how crucial legitimacy, trust, equality and justice are to “public value,” we will understand that the way an organization works is as important as what it strives to achieve. A well-functioning organization that serves the public recognizes the value of professional judgment and the ability to make distinctions.

Teachers, nurses and art gallery employees know what they’re talking about, and their competence, and hence freedom of action, should be recognized by their respective public agencies and political committees. This is not, however, to say that they do the same things. On the contrary, it is important to examine the differences between public value, cultural value and artistic value. The point is not to establish water-tight boundaries between them, but rather to clarify the perquisites for succeeding in the double-ambition of creating many open links with the local community, and being an authoritative voice in the international discourse on contemporary art. It is only by clarifying the differences between the social, cultural and artistic creation of value that synergies between them can come about. Otherwise, local embedding risks looking like a cynical social legitimization of elite aesthetic activities that are sufficient unto themselves.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 47.

Summary

The difficulties that current cultural policy has with the goal of “artistic quality” and “commercialism’s negative effects” are symptoms of a more general problem in late-capitalist welfare society: how to comprehend, articulate and handle values that cannot be immediately expressed in monetary terms. Is this one of the reasons behind the step-motherly treatment of the visual arts in the national budget? Conditions vary: on the one hand, the work of the superstars of contemporary art fetches seven-figure sums on the global art market; on the other, a growing artist underclass barely survives on incomes under the poverty line.

The dictate of neoliberalism and NPM to let the market evaluate all human activity is in its end game. Mark Moore’s solid, empirically based theory on “public value” constitutes a crucial corrective. The “public value” approach not only defends but also demands publicly financed activities. Rather than being predetermined, public value is the result of an open back-and-forth with the users of the organization in question. Any organization that claims to create public value should be clear about: its goals; how it might create legitimacy and confidence in its operation; and the way in which the operation is conducted, which is just as important as the goals it is working toward.

Art organizations such as contemporary art galleries can take talking points and inspiration from Moore’s model, but these must then be supplemented by discourse that is specifically adapted for art operations. Artistic value can be seen as “public value,” but it is also something else beyond that. In a similar way, artistic values might spring from cultural or social activities, but they cannot be reduced to their original contexts or to stipulated tasks or functions.

All around the world, there is a battle over how to define these values. Government authorities, universities and civil society are involved in attempts to develop language and methods in order to better describe the values of culture. The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis was established in 2011 to develop methods and analyses in order to better inform government decisions on the matter. In 2010, the European Commission appointed a panel of experts, the European Expert Network on Culture (EENC), tasking John Holden and Jordi Baltà with compiling a collection of literature on the topic under the heading “The Public Value of Culture.”⁵⁶ The University of Warwick in the UK initiated an international panel of experts in 2014 to investigate “the future of cultural value.” The commission, which will organize a number of public seminars, will grapple with the following three questions, among other things:

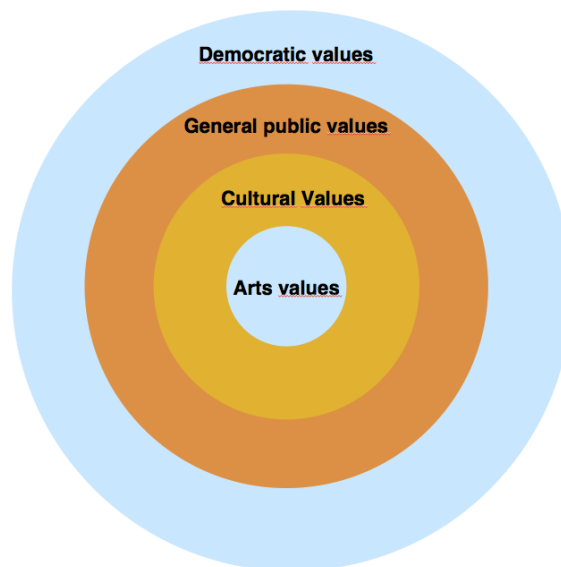
⁵⁶ John Holden and Jordi Baltà, “The Public Value of Culture: A Literature Review,” European Expert Network on Culture, January 2012. See <http://www.eenc.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/JHolden-JBaltà-public-value-literature-review-final.pdf>

1) is it possible to put a value on culture, and if so, how?; 2) can the value of culture be measured monetarily?; and 3) what are the limitations of current economic models for evaluating culture?⁵⁷

Think tanks from the Right (RAND in the US) to the Left (Demos in the UK) find the current situation precarious and are seeking methods for grasping and describing the values that cultural and artistic operations create.⁵⁸ They agree that the dichotomy of instrumental vs. intrinsic value, which has framed the discussion up to now, is both unfortunate and illegitimate. The value of culture cannot be expressed in such an either/or way. Most well-informed people seem to agree that, with the pseudo-quantification of public dialogue in our world today, what is most important is to develop terminology that is capable of articulating the many dimensions and functions of arts and culture.⁵⁹

Cultural economist David Throsby has created a widespread—and, unfortunately, often misunderstood—illustration of the economic potential of art. The thesis in Throsby's book has broadened the perspective on the value creation that takes place in contemporary art galleries like those in the Klistar cluster. Pier Luigi Sacco and Sarah Thelwall have shown the significance of appreciating artistic value creation from a broader perspective (cultural areas that are system-overlapping) and from an extended temporal perspective (deferred value). Using Mark Moore's research on "public value," we might sketch something corresponding to Throsby's cultural-economic "dashboard," which reflects the social value that the arts create:

Art's production of social value



⁵⁷ Warwick Commission on the future of Cultural Value:
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/> (read 140411)

⁵⁸ See *Gifts of the Muse* and *Capturing Cultural Value*.

⁵⁹ See Sven-Eric Liedman, "Pseudo-Quantities: New Public Management and Human Judgement," in *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*, Vol. 1, 2013.

From a social perspective, publicly supported art and cultural institutions, such as contemporary art galleries, are an essential part of efforts to create conditions for good lives and a good society. The goal of these efforts might be characterized as “democratic values,” or “public goods,” and they might be exemplified by health, education, a clean environment, work and culture. Mark Moore’s research has demonstrated the importance of evaluating activities with an eye toward the common good, using methods that are capable of reflecting social value in all of its complexity, rather than reducing citizens to satisfied or dissatisfied consumers.⁶⁰

The ambition of the Klister galleries—to be both community-based and on the cutting edge of contemporary art—is supported by the research of both Sacco and Moore. Both underscore the significance of the interaction between (artistic, cultural, social) quality, and (democratic) participation. From a social perspective, art’s value creation takes place somewhere in between artistic work and democratic participation. At the same time, the value of art is a specific form of public value. The rich, varied literature from the past decade underscores the importance of viewing art as its own language, as an alternative way of understanding and illustrating human beingness in the world. When viewed this way, art’s sociability lies in its differentness, its radical unsociability—in the strangeness of contemporary art. As the overview of the Klister network has demonstrated, collaboration with schools and higher education, with civil society and work life, plays a central role in the operations of small and mid-sized contemporary art galleries. Equally central is their ambition to function as public meeting spaces for local communities.

A credible assessment of contemporary art galleries requires an understanding of the interaction between their activities, contemporary art and the surrounding community. Five dimensions are worth pointing out: artistic quality, democratic openness, social relevance, financial potential and regional profiling.⁶¹ Any evaluation must take into account the effects on all these areas. In addition, the

⁶⁰ In an interview, Moore offers an enlightening anecdote from his own career. As a young researcher, he was tasked with evaluating a publicly funded drug-treatment program. If he had limited himself to just asking the users whether or not they liked the program—in accordance with customer satisfaction surveys often used in the private sector—his conclusions would have been gravely misleading. The evaluation would have failed to tell him anything about the social consequences that the program was intended to address: Had the users stopped taking drugs? Had stopped committing crimes in order to pay for their drugs? Had they obtained a job in order to support their families? In order to get a good look at the public value of the program, he needed to take a broader, more structured perspective that didn’t just reduce the users to x number of satisfied vs. dissatisfied individuals. See <http://www.management-issues.com/interviews/4606/mark-h-moore-on-public-value/>

⁶¹ Region Västra Götaland has developed cultural policy arguments regarding these dimensions in its strategy document “A Meeting Place in the World: Cultural Strategy for Västra Götaland 2012”: “Any democratic cultural policy hovers within the tension between democracy and art. Democracy means people power and represents quantity. Whoever gets the most votes wins an election. Art is a communicative act whose quality could never be determined by a vote. Viewed that way, art and democracy may seem to contradict each other. But art might face democratic challenges regarding reaching and being understood by others than those who are already initiated. And democracy can be questioned from the perspective of quality, which reminds us that democracy can be more than just a form of government. In relation to the principles of democratic openness and artistic quality, the other principles—social relevance, economic potential and regional profiling—are secondary. But at closer glance, these principles also celebrate the ideals of participation and quality.” See [here](#).

evaluator must bear in mind, as Sarah Thelwall has reminded us, that the most significant effects of organizations such as contemporary art galleries can seldom be detected a few days after the end of the fiscal year; they show up much later.

In other words, value creation in small and mid-sized contemporary art galleries is complex. This doesn't warrant the resigned conclusion of the latest arts and culture investigation—namely, that the matter should be taken off the cultural policy agenda. Nor should we blithely assume that we can define this value creation through some customer satisfaction survey, as the eager neoliberals and NPM advocates assume. Rather, we should, with the help of the now extensive empirical research on the topic, participate in that critical dialogue whose purpose it is to identify the values in life that cannot be measured in money and numbers alone.

The Values of the Artwork: *The Column*

The plot is simple. A boulder is broken loose from a mountain, transported to a port and loaded onto a cargo ship. During the voyage, stonemasons turn the boulder into an antique-style column. When the work is finished, the cargo space is covered up and the ship continues its voyage. All that is heard is the rhythmic, monotonous whirring of the engines. Nothing more.

The video piece *The Column* (2013) was part of Albanian artist Adrian Paci's exhibition "Of Lives and Tales," which was shown at Röda Sten Konstell in Göteborg at the beginning of 2014.⁶² The exhibition was curated by Paci's fellow countryman Edi Muka. In interviews, the artist has said that he got the idea from a friend who was restoring a dilapidated Italian castle whose owner had recently ordered a copy of a column that had once been part of the castle.⁶³ Viewers might get the impression that the video piece depicts that particular order, but Paci himself ordered and paid for the piece in *The Column*. In both cases, the supplier was Hebei Quyang TOB Stone Co., Ltd., a Chinese stone company founded in 1998. The company sells a wide range of stone products both domestically and globally; their products are often based on antique predecessors—statues, balustrades, urns, fountains and columns.⁶⁴

Adrian Paci isn't unknown to Swedish art audiences, but "Of Lives and Tales" was his first major retrospective exhibition in Sweden.⁶⁵ Edi Muka—until recently a curator at Röda Sten Konsthall—has been friends with Paci since their school days in Albania, and Muka has curated several exhibitions of Paci's work. Muka takes credit for having gotten Paci interested in video as a medium of artistic expression.⁶⁶

Adrian Paci has lived in exile in Italy since 1997. The theme of exile characterized his exhibition at Röda Sten Konsthall:

⁶² Parts of the video piece can be viewed on YouTube. See, for example, this clip, which also includes an interview with the artist: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArveyqySIBc>

⁶³ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBTn9B-nQ3o>

⁶⁴ TOB Stone sells mostly to its domestic market (70 percent), followed by North America (18 percent), Western Europe (7 percent) and Oceania (5 percent). See http://tobstone.en.alibaba.com/company_profile.html

⁶⁵ Paci has had exhibitions at Bildmuseet in Umeå in 2001, the Baltic Art Center in Visby 2003, Moderna Museet in 2005 and Bonniers Konsthall in 2008.

⁶⁶ Email from Edi Muka to author on 27 June 2014.

*Departing from his own experience and that of his family—having to escape violent riots in Albania in 1997 and migrating to Italy—he explores issues of political transformation, waiting, loss, nostalgia, displacement, and above all, the energetic and forceful searching of a cultural identity that transcends the physical movement of humans from one territory to another.*⁶⁷

Röda Sten Konsthall was one of nine coproducers of *The Column*.⁶⁸ In 2013 and 2014, the work was exhibited in several places around the world: Milan, Montreal, Paris and Trondheim. The piece gained attention and favorable reviews in both North America and Europe. At Jeu de Paume in Paris, the physical column, positioned vertically, was shown along with the video.⁶⁹ Since it had been damaged in transit, professionals were called in from the Louvre to restore the copy to its original condition.⁷⁰

Röda Sten Konsthall constituted an unusually felicitous space in which to show *The Column*. The building used to be a boiler facility, functioning as a coal- and woodchip-fired heating center for factories nearby at the entrance to Göteborg harbor. The replica of the East India vessel Götheborg is berthed at Eriksberg, the former shipyard across the river. On 21 September 1745, the original ship, filled with valuable goods from China after a two-and-a-half-year voyage, sank at the entrance to the harbor. The Swedish East India Company, founded in Göteborg in 1731, generated enormous profits until it met its demise in 1813. The company's main office has been home to the Museum of Gothenburg since 1861. Contrary to its Chinese counterpart, the Bohuslän stone industry has seen better days; it peaked in 1929. At this stage, the stonemason era of Bohuslän and Sweden is generally a matter for history museums, although it occasionally attracts artistic interest.⁷¹

Just under 30 minutes long, Paci's video tells a terse narrative. The eye of the camera seems to register what it sees objectively. No narrator's voice is heard, just a few verbal exchanges in Chinese in the background. During a break, the workers glance into the camera, sometimes smoking; but often all you see is their working hands and bodies. The film varies from close-ups to overhead views, from light to dark, stillness to roaring. White stone dust covers the workers, who all wear the same shirts

⁶⁷ Quoted from Edi Muka's text in the program sheet for the exhibition.

⁶⁸ Additional co-producers were Jeu de Paume in Paris, Trondheim kunstmuseum, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea in Milano, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, NCTM e Arte in Milano, Unicredit Bank in Milano, TICA in Tirana and Vulcano in Venice.

⁶⁹ In interviews, Paci has underscored the significance of the column remaining vertical. Horizontally, it symbolizes power and virility; the artist wants to play with these connotations. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArveyqySIBc>

⁷⁰ Source: Mia Christersdotter Norman, director of Röda Sten Konsthall.

⁷¹ The quarry in Häggult, on the border of Skåne, Blekinge and Småland, is one example; its diabase (black granite) has attracted artists from all over the world since the 1970s. See <http://www.svartabergen.se/konst>

with their company name on the back. Throughout the video, including during the closing credits, the roaring of the ship's engines can be heard like a deep, slowly wavering tone. The boulder and its transformation into an art piece is the focus of the course of events: how it is broken away from the mountain, hauled out by an excavator, lowered into the cargo space by gigantic cranes; where it is cut and polished into its predestined form.

Footage of the work alternates with other clips recorded in an around the ship: footage of the sea, of the vessel forging ahead, of a moment of relaxed TV watching by crew members, of the ship's cook preparing a meal. At one point, an older worker contemplates his finished piece, then looks into the camera and cracks a smile. In the next moment, the doors of the cargo space close and the white marble column rests in darkness. One might easily think of it as something living—a captured, sleeping prehistoric animal.

It's easy to engage with *The Column* as a viewer. The contrast between the sparse format and its paradoxical content opens the piece in all kinds of directions. The story of how an antique-style column, the very symbol of Western culture, is now manufactured by Chinese workers under grueling conditions on a ship heading from China to Italy opens itself up to multiple interpretations, just like a Chinese box: inside each interpretation lies another one. *The Column* might be seen as a story about the extraordinary powers of globalization; a poetic tale of human voracity, creativity and abandonment; or a fantasy about the Odyssean predicament of civilization. The piece seems to transpose space (China/Italy) and time (present/antique), work and art, original and copy, fact and fiction, poetic prose and realistic documentary—value and value!

The viewer might think of slave ships of the past, shuttling between Africa, America and Europe; or of today's factories, outsourced to low-wage countries and called “swallows” by Guatemalans for their tendency to appear suddenly, only to fly away just as swiftly when profits wane⁷²; or of outer space epics like Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (1956) or Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In the latter, there is a cousin of *The Column*: a black monolith, associated with a different civilization in outer space.

The giant boulder pried loose from a mountain and reshaped according to human desires evokes monumental construction projects such as the pyramids, Baalbek and the Great Wall of China, but also the dread humans feel when faced with the mightiness of mountains, which can only be compared to that of the sea or the heavens. The mountain: a dwelling space for dragons and trolls, giants and bandits. The fear of losing oneself in the magic mountain: *Zauberberg*. The lust for enrichment: the stone quarry.

⁷² Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, Knopf Canada, 2000, p. 206.

And what kind of work is taking place on board the ship? Has the cargo space been turned into a sweatshop, or into a stonemason's studio? Is art being made there, and if so, what kind? The real thing, or cheap paraphernalia "Made in China"? The workers are definitely skilled craftsmen, but are they artists? If not, why not? If they are, then why are they working (and living) in such crude conditions? The workers are Chinese—how does this affect the interpretation of the piece when the audience (as well as the artist and his coproducers) are Westerners? How would *The Column* be perceived if it were shown in China? How would Chinese people feel about the fact that the piece is being shown here, in the West?

The Column exemplifies how intricate the value creation of contemporary art can be.

Its structuring dichotomies are China/Europe and Company/Artist. From the viewpoint of TOB Stone, *The Column* is a story about its business operations—the making and delivery of a commodity, a product. From Adrian Paci's perspective, the making of the column becomes fodder for other stories. Through cultural differences and the artist's implementation of his professional tools, the activities of the TOB stone workers are written into other stories that explore and shape the metaphoric/symbolic potential of the column's production. Just as the Chinese workers transform the block of marble into a work of art in classical Greco-Roman style, the artist transforms their work into a piece of contemporary video art.

The work of art that is *The Column* is the final result of a project that required significant investment to be carried out. TOB Stone and its employees needed to be paid for the production and delivery. Adrian Paci and his video production team needed to be paid. Travel, transportation and technology were other expenses in the project budget.

Accomplishing a piece like *The Column* requires that the artist is more than an artist; he also needs to be a competent project manager and skilled fund-raiser. Paci managed to involve nine coproducers in the project: art organizations in Albania, Italy, France, Canada, Norway and Sweden; and an Italian bank. All parties took calculated risks in participating; TOB Stone's was probably the slightest, since it required payment in advance. The workers risked hurting themselves while working on the column. Are they insured? And what would happen if they accidentally broke the marble block so that it could no longer be made into a column? Paci's video production team also took risks, since they only got "paid" once the work was done and shown, and even then, some only earned symbolic currency in the form of recognition and prestige. For Adrian Paci, every new work of art involves not only a financial risk, but also a symbolic one: declining shares on the global art market.

A systematic overview of the different actors in this creation of value might look like this:

- 1) According to TOB Stone's website, the price of a column like the one in *The Column* runs between five and fifty thousand US dollars. An unconfirmed story has it that Adrian Paci had to pay extra for the right to film the production process, and for the fact that it was to become a work of art. For the company, there is value in both the sale of its "Marble Roman Column" product and in the potential promotional value of *The Column*.⁷³
- 2) The value for the TOB Stone employees lies in being employed, paid and possibly recognized for their craftsmanship.
- 3) Addressing its ordinary customers, the company has compiled an assessment of the decorative value of replicas of antique columns: "Small and delicate stone columns will create an artistic atmosphere for your accommodation and reveal the luxury and elegant qualities belong to the owner. In the opposite, tall and tough stone columns make the building looks more spectacular and give people a passionate and modest feeling. TOB Stone committed to make a perfect combination of classic art and modern architecture by properly used natural stone columns" [*sic*].⁷⁴
- 4) To the business customer Adrian Paci, the value of the replica of the antique column doesn't lie in the "artistic" or luxurious atmosphere it creates for his home. However, the company's stated objective of creating decorative/aesthetic value is indeed a necessary condition for the artistic value that Paci himself wants to realize. The difference between the Chinese stone company's intention and the European artist's intention is crucial to the significance and function of the piece. Unlike, for example, an investigative journalist, Paci isn't looking to expose the company's operations (as exploitative, environmentally unsound, etc.), but rather to use the company's operation as material for other stories. Thus, to Adrian Paci, the value of the project/piece lies in: the expressive artistic potential he senses in the material; the project funding that—once it's secured—gives him the opportunity to work and get paid for a while; and in the symbolic capital, i.e. recognition, the piece might bring him.
- 5) For Edi Muka, who curated "Of Lives and Tales" for Röda Sten Konsthall, the exhibition constitutes an opportunity to co-create artistic value, a salary and potential recognition.

⁷³ On the company website, the column is called "Roman." It is a composite design, i.e., a column that merges Ionic and Corinthian elements.

⁷⁴ Verbatim quote from <http://173.254.46.234>

- 6) For Röda Sten Konsthall, the piece/exhibition signifies an opportunity—one not without risk—to coproduce artistic value, potential income from entrance fees, possible grants from foundations and sponsors, public recognition, media recognition and potential recognition from the rest of the art world. The gallery's employees also gain work, wages and potential recognition.
- 7) To Röda Sten visitors (locals and out-of-towners, the well-initiated and novices), the exhibition provides an opportunity to experience artistic value and to get a potential boost to one's cultural capital (as someone who understands contemporary art).⁷⁵
- 8) To professional art critics, *The Column* (and the entire exhibition) provides work, pay, an opportunity to articulate one's perception of artistic value and an opportunity to increase one's symbolic capital. Art criticism is part of a public creation of meaning whose democratic value lies in its being a continuously ongoing public dialogue that argues, evaluates and revises—not in its pointing out masterpieces vs. pretentious “kitsch.”
- 9) To Göteborg and Region Västra Götaland, the piece and exhibition signify: employment opportunities; a contribution to the creation of a cultural life that is perceived as meaningful and stimulating by its own citizens; and an opportunity to be profiled as a cultural city or region, which could boost tourism and business.
- 10) To art itself, the value of *The Column* is yet to be determined. The art-historical significance of any specific piece takes a long time to disclose itself.

Thus, value creation is a process that: starts long before the presentation of the finished piece; includes significantly more actors and aspects than the artist, the work of art and the viewers; and doesn't end when the exhibition ends.⁷⁶ Of the ten aspects above, only three (7–9) deal with the reception of the work. Points 1–6 deal chiefly with production, while point 10 is about the long-term effects of the piece. But feedback in the form of recognition is an important aspect for all points.

It's also worth noting that, in the case of *The Column*, financial value creation—funding, expenses and income—isn't only a prerequisite or result of the piece, but also an integral part of the aesthetic dimension of the piece. The contrast of China/Europe, Company/Artist, or if you will, Capital/Art, provides a structure for *The Column*. Similar to how the Company exploits the mountain, the Artist extracts artistic value from the company's operations. Whether that means that both, one or none of

⁷⁵ Some experts in cultural economics have recently discussed the so-called “option value” that people who seldom or never visit art institutions nonetheless place on them. See John Ambrecht, *The Value of Cultural institutions*. See also John Kay, “A good economist knows the true value of the arts.”

⁷⁶ Observations substantiated in research findings presented by Sacco and Thelwall.

them is exploiting the workers is an open question.⁷⁷ But it's worth noting that Paci's video piece doesn't just portray our current economic system; it takes on its realities, using them as storytelling material for his multi-voiced narrative.

A piece like *The Column* poetically, and thus strikingly, portrays current hot topics. Note: it's thanks to the "poetry"—i.e., Paci's conscious use of artistic means of expression—that themes like globalization and exile, East and West, work and art, original and copy, appear "striking." Thus, the artistic value of the piece is a prerequisite for its "public value," to use Mark Moore's words.

Despite the inventive promotional efforts of contemporary art galleries, and their tenacious networking with local communities and organizations, they often seem like a resource that individuals and society fail to take advantage of. The only school groups I see visiting Röda Sten Konsthall come from first through sixth grade. I see no university students who are in international economics classes or global studies; nor are there any sociology or humanities students.

This is a sad indication of our predominant system of labor division. Imagine if more college professors and students dared to have faith in contemporary art's—and their own—ability to generate interest in, and dialogue about, topics and issues that are crucial for their own scholarship.

To be forced to migrate in order to survive or find work, to live undocumented and at the mercy of negligent employers—these are experiences that many people in Göteborg share. An exhibition like "Of Lives and Tales" and a piece like *The Column* can provide a starting point and a basis for dialogue about experiences that are too often concealed from the general public.

The fact that it doesn't happen is a tragic reflection of Göteborg's status as one of Sweden's most segregated cities, which is blatantly obvious when you see who visits the city's art institutions. Just imagine if more citizens and organizations used contemporary art as a springboard to richly informed dialogues about their experiences and interests.

The ability of contemporary art galleries to create public value, i.e., to operate in the service of the public, is a prerequisite for the realization of contemporary art's artistic value.

⁷⁷ Although Adrian Paci himself answered this question affirmatively in an interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArveyqySIBc>

Conclusions and Proposals

The ecosystem and value creation

- Contemporary art galleries are part of and contribute to complex and overlapping ecosystems: the art world, local society, the education system, the public sphere and research.
- Thanks to their relatively small size, arenas for contemporary art such as Klistar galleries dare to be experimental, to develop innovative ways of working and new pedagogical methods, which benefit all the arts.
- Contemporary art galleries constitute important collaborative partners for schools and universities in their development of education and opportunities to be creative.
- Contemporary art galleries are public spaces—operations in the service of the public—which gives them a special relationship to the public and to their employers.

Economy and use of resources

- The funding of contemporary art galleries should not be regarded as money-wasting grants that support elitist activities, but as socially useful investments.
- Support for small contemporary art galleries is an effective way to at once support professional visual artists (MU contract), and to achieve the cultural and political goal of disseminating good art.
- Support for organizations like contemporary art galleries is an effective way to support qualitative content in culture and the arts.
- The underfunding of contemporary art galleries is economically unsound, since it means that we don't get value for the money that is allocated anyway.
- Bureaucratization and the imposing of more and more conditions for cultural grants is economically unsound, since it diverts time and resources from the actual enterprise.
- It would be economically advantageous for schools, adult education institutions, and civil society to better utilize the competence of the staff at contemporary art galleries.
- Contemporary art galleries lack the resources to ensure the continuing education of their staff, and this is also economical unsound.
- It is economically unsound that contemporary art galleries cannot afford effective marketing.
- Contemporary art galleries are often compelled to pay market-rate rent to housing companies (often municipally owned). In these situations, the rental costs consume an unreasonably large part of the budget, to the detriment of the gallery's activities.

Discourse and pride

- The discourse on the arts should be complemented by genres other than those presently dominating the press: preview reportage, reviews and debate articles. The arts essay is a genre that should receive particular support. As public service agencies, Swedish Television and Swedish Radio have a responsibility to foster public discussions about the arts.⁷⁸
- The staff of contemporary art galleries can be affected by the exceptional situation they are compelled to work in. Underfunding, bureaucracy and the sometimes parsimonious or overly cautious attitude of politicians can erode self-confidence and promote self-censure. Considering the work they do and the values they help to create, the staff of contemporary art galleries have abundant reasons to hold their heads high.
- Contemporary art galleries should be regularly evaluated, but with methods and a language capable of understanding and articulating their real value creation.

⁷⁸ The broadcasting permit for both includes the same sentence: they “should offer a varied selection of high quality culture programming” and “monitor, reflect and critically scrutinize events in all areas of the cultural sphere.” See [here](#) and [here](#).

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