

## **The Interaction between culture and entrepreneurship**

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### **Intro (image 1-2)**

Thank you for the introduction! I am very glad to be here and listen to the interesting discussion on libraries and entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is a very used word these days, and the question is – what does it mean? I am not sure. In the Encyclopaedia an entrepreneur is said to be someone that in action create new business areas, for example commercialisation or creating a new market. But this sounds a bit old... Yesterday Daniel Hjorth told us that it is the force that makes opportunities of moments...focus on initiative in his definition.

Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, the Swedish professor at Business Economy at Stockholm University, has written in his books on the aesthetics of business, and that the business world has things to learn from art, not the other way around. It's the artist that is the entrepreneur.

I will try to put light on how the interaction on culture and business can work. And as I understand the question it's mainly about – very simplified – can you run a business and work with public goods and activities at the same time? Can libraries be more entrepreneurial without losing their main goals of democracy and freedom of speech? How could this be done?

To give an idea of this, I will talk about something else, not a library but a cultural organisation run by the objectives of the same kind, wanting to produce public goods: Nätverkstan. By using the work we do, I will give you an example of the interaction between work in cultural field and entrepreneurship.

I will try to within around 30 min circle around three things: 1) a short description of Nätverkstan, 2) examples of projects and 3) some ideas of how we are thinking.

**(Image 3)**

Nätverkstan is placed in the centre of Göteborg in Lagerhuset. The house is in the centre, but was for a long time invisible for people. They didn't know where it was and hadn't seen it. Since 1999 cultural organisations have worked there and slowly helped branding the house to more of a centre for cultural production in Göteborg.

We have large plans of this house and hope to convince the landlord and politicians of Göteborg to open it up for more projects and activities within culture. In the ground floor we hope to have café, bookshop, seminars, a stage and other things open for a public audience.

**(Image 4)**

Nätverkstan is...describing bullets points in the picture.

We are both a business – and not-for-profit. Our shareholders are the owners, which are cultural journals. The main objective – as you will see – is not to making money, but to produce activities within the cultural and civil society fields. Democracy, critical publicity, artistically challenging projects, those are the objectives we work for.

**(Image 5)**

A quick look at our objectives gives a few clues...We are not (again) run by profit, Our idea is to provide services and tools for the small-scale cultural field with the aim to allow for a wide variety of activities within the artistic, cultural and civil society field.

We want to help small-scale cultural (theatre, dance, music, editing and other) organisations to survive, provide tools so these activities have a chance to develop and survive. We want the cultural field and civil society to consist of a multitude of activities. It's important in a democratic society to have a multitude of activities and voices.

**(Image 6)**

Nätverkstan is a meeting place, production centre and resource centre within culture and civil society. The people we work for are very much the small-scale cultural and civil activities run by artists, cultural practitioners, cultural entrepreneurs, civil society activists and so forth.

Our areas of work are education, bookkeeping and distribution, and media lab. We distribute 108 journals to bookshops around Sweden.

And we run small and large projects within a wide range of areas that can be development projects like a leadership study of the cultural field, organisational overviews, strategically work, international work and so forth.

Our customers are, if you use this term, the small-scale cultural life, the part of the cultural sector that don't have a lot of money. In that sense we are not so much market driven, but rather driven by ideas and development we see as necessary for the field. Since we work in the field ourselves, we also face the same challenges as the ones we work with.

**(Image 7)**

So, our goal and content is social and cultural work. Our organisational form is a business.

We were very reluctant for a long while to call ourselves cultural entrepreneurs. But now we do more and more...

We are as I said, idea driven, organically grown...we had no business plan when we started...we have our main objectives, that are more wide than specific...for being in business, this is a bit unusual.

**(Image 8)**

Just to give an idea of the variety of our work – this is what we do. The mind map is a mixture of projects we do and organisations we cooperate with to do it. It's a mixture of small and large projects. The international programme we ran for three years was a huge project. 35 students from all over the world gathered in Göteborg for a 1,5 year education in project management within civil society. It was a great challenge, no one believed in the beginning we could to it, but it was possible.

**(Image 9)**

To give one example of a project, we have just started The Long Tail.

Chris Anderson, editor of Wired, wrote the book on new economy and the effect of the long tail. He described that bookshop economy in a global society can be built on having not only bestsellers, but a wide variety of smaller titles, but in the long run will sell if they are made accessible for customers. The idea is based on the global market. In Sweden, which is a small market of only 9 million people, and Swedish language is a small language; it will be interesting to test this idea.

What we will do is to try to find solutions for helping small-scale publishing houses to stock and distribute small and narrow titles that usually have a difficulty finding the market. Attempts have been done to solve this, but it has been difficult to find the sustainable economic base of running because of the small market. It is a challenge!

So, how do we think? How do we interact between business and culture? We have very specific goals that suggest that content is important, we want to run activities within culture and society that benefits society...

### **(Image 10)**

In traditional market theory you are supposed to put up a one-liner to describe your organisation. Something easy to remember when you leave this room of what we do. We haven't been able to squeeze ourselves into a one-liner. Instead we use this model.

Our vision, or sphere of ideas we find the area we work in complex and we don't want to narrow the areas too much. For us it's important with the openness of you mind. When we work together at Nätverkstan, at staff meetings and such, we often look at this image and discuss from it. It's from this image we try to place what we do, but also describe what we would like to do in the future.

Example:

When we had the project Culture chock, a project to market small-scale cultural journals we tried the traditional marketing tools. We understood very quickly that this did not work. Instead we had to challenge ourselves to find new forums for marketing the journals – blogs, TV, radio, festivals....

So, this is how we describe where we want to take initiatives (vision) and does take initiatives (action).

**(Image 11)**

For us the drive is not mainly money, it's producing an interesting content. But it needs to balance. Without economic resources we can't do anything, and without an interesting content nothing of interest will be done and it will self die.

So it's like a scale, which needs to balance. Or even perhaps lean a little bit, just a tiny bit, towards content rather than money. But it's hardly visible.

If we in the staff only talk of money it doesn't work. It doesn't envision, or challenge us. The discussion needs to start with content – what do we want to achieve and why. After that we can talk about how to achieve what we want to do.

**(Image 12)**

So how do we do? Describe bullet points in image.

We take risks, the same risks as the people we work with. In that sense you also build trust. CIDS in Manchester put the “risk and trust” forward, something we used a lot. You need to balance on one hand taking risks, on the other minimalizing risks. The business field, at least the economic side of it, is about minimalizing risks. At the same time you need to take risks to achieve something. The Long Tail project is a great risk. We don't know if it will work and we have to create it as we go.

We have as you can see huge ideas, like Globalverkstan the international programme, but when it comes to budget we are very careful. We work with worst-case scenarios. If we don't have funding for a project, we don't put figures in the budget. Sometimes it's a bit overly careful, but it has been a good way of working so far.

**(Image 13)**

It has also to do with how we are organized. We have a classical organisation for a business with a board, director, head of units, and a more flexible project structure. It could really be the structure for any institution or organisation

**(Image 14)**

These need to on one hand be long term and sustainable, on the other flexible, project based and short term.

On one hand you want to eliminate risk – on the other hand you need to take risks! The challenge is to find ways so these can co-exist.

The context we work in change rapidly and all the time. One year we made four different budgets, since the context and our possibilities to run projects change radically during a short period of time.

**(Image 15)**

For us it's a lot about taking initiatives and opportunities. How can you do this? One example is from IDEO in San Fransisco, We visited them on a study trip to San Francisco this year and listened to them describing what they thought of innovation. IDEO is a well-known, very successful design firm that has done both product development and process of change for companies.

They describe the areas where new things happen, as one of the connection of three areas: humanities, technique and business – that's where innovation happens.

At Nätverkstan we try to work cross-over sectors, listen to different experiences within different areas, learn of how other do, and see if we can apply it to what we do. We don't want to be so easy to pinpoint, we work with culture, but we find ideas and inspiration over sector borders.

**(Image 16)**

Interaction between culture and business is possible without having to give up to only market forces. It takes hard work and drive, of wanting to achieve something, having wise people in the board, competent people to work with and not being scared of trying new things.

But entrepreneurship is not the answer, of course, to every problem in society.

Perhaps "entrepreneurship", as it is used today, the meaning is beyond business-skills or being creative. Perhaps it's used in another term, to try to grasp something else in society? In lack of a vocabulary that can help us putting words of the needs and changes we see, we use entrepreneurship as the term that is needed to deal with this?

Society is changing, economy is changing, and digitalisation has meant whole new range of communication that no one over the age of 20 has met before. Even a 14 year old, know more than a 20 year old. We are still in the beginning of digitalisation, of the Internet. No one knows what this will mean to society, how we will communicate in the future and what this will mean for work, running this and so forth. Globalization. It's new structures. Demographics are changing, people move around. In Sweden we have around 20% of the inhabitants coming from other religions, cultures experiences...Sweden is no longer one religion – it's several, not only one homogenic schooling of children – but several.

Example: India – society of complexity, contradictions, society of 300 local languages. To work in India you need to think in new ways, be flexible, take risks, and deal with contradictions...

Europe is changing, with new inhabitants, new habits of media; a growing field of new media...how well are the structures we work in prepared to deal with this? How do we reach goals of democracy and freedom of speech in the 21-century? Maybe there is a need for another way of thinking to run institutions that include and prepare for a new audience? New organisational forms and a willingness to try other concepts than the traditional to reach new audiences?

And maybe this is why entrepreneurship has grown so big, and instead of thinking of it as a threat, perhaps focus on: How well prepared are our institutions to meet the society of the 21st century? How do we keep values like democracy and freedom of speech and lift these issues in a new context? What changes in attitude and structures are necessary?

Thank You!