

Seminar on “The Creativity and Innovation in Cultural Cooperation Projects”

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Presentation by Lotta Lekvall on the round-table on “European policies and programs to support creativity and innovation”. A short version of what was enhanced.

1. Who I am.

My name is Lotta Lekvall; I am Director of Nätverkstan, a cultural organisation in Göteborg, Sweden, and Board member of the European network Encatc.

Thank you for inviting me! One of my favourite directors is Pedro Almodovar. I love his movies. He has the ability of putting light on the margins in society, the not mainstream, and does it with warmth, sensibility and humour. The characters in his films are allowed to be personal, individuals, human. I would like to see the creative process behind the films, what does he do to get the result he does? It's relevant to today's topic of creativity and innovation.

I am a practitioner. I am one of those that together with my colleagues struggle with the every day life of a cultural organisation. My points of views are from this experience; running projects, doing studies, doing training and education, combining critical artistic and cultural content with economic, business issues.

2. A growing field.

The cultural and creative field is growing. Reports and studies, research and overviews indicate and show with facts the same thing. This is a growing sector. It is economically more important than the car manufacturing industry. It's within the cultural and creative field where new jobs will grow!

At the same time a very recent study ordered by the Arts Grants Committee in Sweden shows that although the artists (all artistic groups) are very highly educated, they have the lowest income in comparison with the same level of education in other fields. They earn no money. An average salary of around 1400 euro per month, many have less. A study made by National Endowment for the Arts in USA last summer, show the same thing.

On one hand growing – on the other no income. It's a paradox.

3. Lack of knowledge.

There is a large lack of knowledge by businesspeople, policy- and decision makers and politicians of the conditions for artists and cultural organisations. There are specific conditions in running for example a theatre; you have to take these into account when writing policies.

Example:

In the latest decision by the Advanced Vocational Training Committee in Sweden, they completely ignored the cultural field. Out of 89 training programs that got their applications through, only one can perhaps count as the cultural field. All the other was education in economy, manufacturing of different sorts and so forth. They have apparently ignored or missed the growing cultural field, and the fact that everything points towards that this is where jobs will grow.

Manufacturing industry, economy, cars – absolutely – but there is also a need for incentives and support in the cultural field to use the potential it's showing. You need to do both.

At our training programme Kulturverkstan, our students sometimes ask what job we are training them for. But there is no job advertisement stating the job-profile for these types of jobs. And especially not when we started in 1999. The jobs didn't exist. After two years in the programme, 85% got jobs. Full- or part time jobs, project jobs and some started their own business. These are jobs that don't exist yet. They are invented along the way.

4. A sector in disguise.

It is a field difficult to recognise for the untrained eye. It's small-scale, idealistic, multi-faceted, multi-skilled, combinatorial that mix freelance, part-time work and their own business. It is an arena where values of artistic quality, not-for-profit, art for art's sake exist alongside the strictly commercial.

It's an economy that differs from the large industries of thousands of employees. Cultural sector is small businesses, few employed, but where many small businesses make an impact on economy – like the idea of many drops creating a lake.

Policies written need to take this into account: flexibility, small-scale, fast changing, on the edge, the dilemma of avant-garde...

5. Creativity and innovation.

What do we mean with creativity? It's a word not only for artists, designers, architects, actors... a plumber is also creative, or feels creative when he solves a complicated plumbing problem. Creativity

is rarely inventing something completely new, it's meeting others, combining things in ways not yet discovered...So how is it to be interpreted in the meaning of policy-making for culture?

Innovation has been and is still used in the meaning of a product idea to seek patent for. Artistic products can rarely be patented. It's not those kinds of ideas or products.

If when we use the word means problem solving, the ability of combining old ideas in new combinations to create new possibilities, products, methods...taking risks...the question is: How can this be encouraged?

If we mean finding new inventions – new things that don't yet exist: How can this be encouraged?

And what is it we are looking for? To win the Nobel Prize for a new invention doesn't happen very often...but small inventions or interventions that change how we see things, how things are development or open the eyes for new methods and possibilities happen all the time. Rosa Parks changed the world by stepping in to a bus only for white people in Southern USA in the middle of 20th century. She was not alone, but she was one of the threads in a net of activities that made a difference.

Sometimes we look too high and think, when you speak about creativity and innovation, that it is the large things and it takes the born talented people to get there. And you think, "I am not one of them". When we speak about creativity and innovation we forget that behind it is probably to most just very hard work.

Innovative art, art that has changed how we think of art, changes how we see it, a new technique...Many of those that we today say changed the technique of painting, started a new era in how art was made, were not accepted by the contemporary world. It was first after, sometimes years after their death that we look back and say "that stroke of the pencil changed the technique for coming years" and so forth. The dilemma of the avant-garde, for artists, cultural projects or organisations, is often that the contemporary society doesn't see the innovation in what is done. If we are to be more innovative and creative, how do we open our eyes to new ideas and embrace them? Who is willing to take risks, because this is about risk? It will take courage, risk taking and the ability to, and openness towards failing...

To do this EU will need different policies and programs.

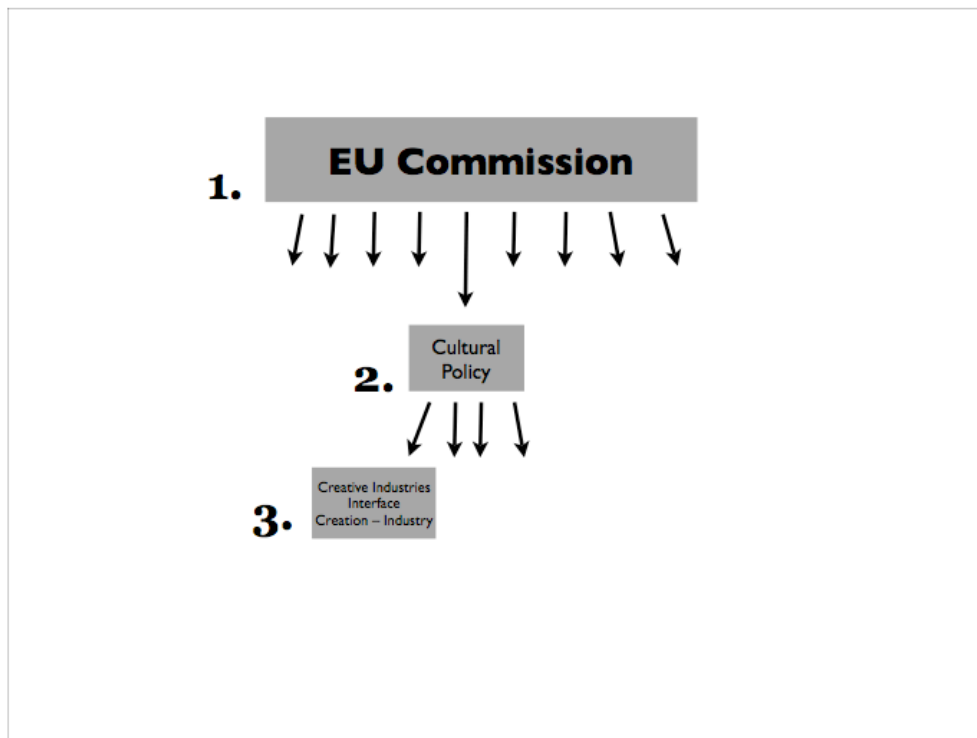
6. Policymaking on different levels.

Policymaking has to, I believe, be written on different levels and balance between the difficult line of being written in such a way that it opens for and embraces initiatives, without being meaningless. In a non-beauraucratic way. Today it's hopeless to fill in EU applications. Everyone who has done this agree. It's as if the system don't want ideas and projects.

Policy and programs are needed both to support the artists and their situation, together with incentives to start-up businesses. It's not a conflict between on one hand a strong public funded cultural policy, and on the other support to small-scale cultural entrepreneurs and businesses. It's the other way around. They support each other. Both are needed to catalyse the potential in the field.

Incentives need to be several and on different levels. Each artistic form has its own specific conditions. The situation for poets differs from the situation for musicians, dancers from visual artists...

Different levels could be for example an overall policy framework of the role of art and culture within EU countries, a cultural policy on another level. This should include many aspects of artistic and cultural field. Interface between artist and industry or how to ignite innovation and creativity is only one aspect.



When the industrialised society grew, the state was fast in building the infrastructure needed to support this. What infrastructure is needed to support the era we are in now?

7. Multicultural society.

Europe consists of many religious groups, ethnical backgrounds, nationalities...an innovative society is an inclusive one. We need to stop segregate our minority groups; stop treating people on the margins as outside the society. Sweden needs to become better at this. People from other cultures have still difficulties getting into society. The potential of a multi-competency society is not being used.

8. Over-expectations.

In a time where the financial crises is very present, the car manufacturing industry is having problems – something very real in West Sweden at the moment where thousands of people are loosing their jobs – hopes are set to new sectors. Creative industries are one of them. This field can never be the only solution. The role of art as being important for other values than economic is at risk. The double role of the field should be recognised. Unrealistic prognosis has been base for many misjudgements in investment.

The threat of the creative industry becoming a new way to explore the rest of the world, as the industrialisation once did. To find larger markets, European companies needed to explore and use the world outside of its boarders. Cooperate and learn from each other, rather than exploration.

The question to discuss in policy and programs for this field is:

What are the incentives that will catalyse the potential in the field?

How are we to view a cultural sector that is to be both economically viable and retain its artistic integrity?

9. Programs.

Many different programs are needed. Most important is that they are discussed out of the specific local conditions where it is suppose to have activities.

Examples could be:

Build competence on the underlying tension within the cultural field

Create **meeting-places** to exchange ideas and knowledge between different fields

Think tanks and **laboratories** where research meets practice, where artists meet technicians.

Green house for artists where ideas can grow. For other sectors this is a common way to support innovative ideas, the artists usually don't fit in this system. Good British examples exists.

Experiment with new pedagogical ideas, methods, creative processes...how can this be used in education?

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