

**GOVERNMENT AS GUARANTOR OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM?
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE OF THE ARTS IN SWEDEN**

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Abstract

The chapter describes and discusses the Nordic welfare state approach to governance of the arts using data from Sweden. It enquires into how the Swedish system for public governance of the arts works, in particular with focus on answering the question of whether public governance of the arts does secure artistic freedom, and if so how. In other words, is Swedish public governance of the arts a benefit or a threat to artistic freedom? In order to answer this question, the concepts of governance and policy are defined and described. Furthermore, three dominant public governance modes in use in advanced democracies will be described and used as a theoretical framework for an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the specific governance arrangements used in Sweden in the field of the arts. The chapter shows that there is reason for concern as regards artistic freedom in Sweden, partly because of the lack of formal arm's length distance between political and administrative decisionmakers at subnational level, and partly due to ambiguities in government agency information collection related to application procedures.

Keywords: cultural policy, governance, artistic freedom, arm's length, Sweden

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Appendix. Examples of policy goals and policy support tools at national and subnational level in Sweden

Box 1. Sweden's national cultural policy goals. Source: Kulturrådet (n.d.a).

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

To achieve the objectives, Swedish cultural policy is to promote:

- *Opportunities for everyone to experience culture, education and develop their creative abilities*
- *Quality and artistic renewal*
- *A dynamic cultural heritage that is preserved, used and developed*
- *International and intercultural exchange and cooperation in the cultural sphere*
- *Equal access to arts and culture for children and youth*

Box 2. Areas for grants distributed by the Swedish Arts council and some examples of grant types, in alphabetical order. Source: Kulturrådet (n.d.b), translated by the author.

Children and young people

- Support to public initiatives for language and reading development of young children
- Grants for arts experiences in schools

Civil society

- Activity support to cultural intermediaries

Creative Europe

- Grants for European networks within defined EU policy programmes
- Mobility and distribution grants within EU

Cultural magazines

- Grants for distribution of cultural magazines of high quality

International

- Support to refugee artist networks
- Project grants for internationalisation of Swedish culture

Libraries

- Acquisitions support for public and school libraries
- Grants for strengthening library accessibility

Literature and reading

- Grants for translation of Swedish literature
- Literature publication support

Music

- Music publication (phonogram support)
- Support for composer collaboration

National minorities

- support for the development, promotion and strengthening of the culture and cultural heritage of national minorities

Performing arts

- Project grants
- Activity support to independent organisations

Regional development

- Grants for regional cultural activities

Visual arts, craft and form

- Activity support for organisations
- Project grants

Box 3. Regional cultural policy goals for Skåne as stated in the regional culture plan 2021–2024.

Source: Region Skåne (2020a), translated by the author.

All of Skåne shall develop and have access to a rich and dynamic cultural life of high quality with breadth as well as edge that more shall have conditions to participate in and access on equal terms.

Region Skåne shall facilitate a larger supply of art and culture of high quality and contribute to culture being accessible in all of Skåne. This requires sustainable funding, a well functioning cultural infrastructure and an increasing cooperation within the cultural field and with other areas of society.

More children, young people and adults shall, regardless of individual and geographical conditions have access to a broad and varied supply and a diversity of narratives. More shall have possibility to create and express themselves through culture.

Principles on which the cultural policy goals are based (translated by the author):

- *the intrinsic value of culture,*
- *the democratic foundation of culture, and*
- *the force of culture in the building of society.*

Box 4. The overarching purpose of the culture committee of the city of Malmö (Malmö stad 2022a, p. 6), translated by the author.

To represent and have overarching responsibility for the cultural activities of the city, to stimulate coordination and development within the cultural area, and contribute to cultural exchange and cooperation (samverkan) at regional level.

Box 5. Goals stipulated by the culture committee of the city of Malmö. Source: Malmö stad (2023), translated by the author.

1. *All children and young people in Malmö shall both during school hours as in their leisure time have good and equal opportunities to influence, participate in, and themselves create cultural experiences.*
2. *By allowing art and culture to be present in public space, the culture committee shall contribute to the creation of an attractive living environment that gives an increased feeling of belonging (sammanhang) and safety (trygghet) for inhabitants in Malmö.*
3. *All inhabitants shall be given equal opportunities to participate, influence and co-create the cultural life of the city.*
4. *The culture committee shall through a rich cultural life with relevance, topicality, edge and boldness contribute to Malmö as a creative and attractive city of culture.*
5. *Malmö shall be an active and attractive city of culture where the independent cultural actors of the city are given good conditions to establish themselves, act and develop.*

6. *The culture committee shall promote a living and topical cultural heritage which is preserved, made accessible and is developed.*

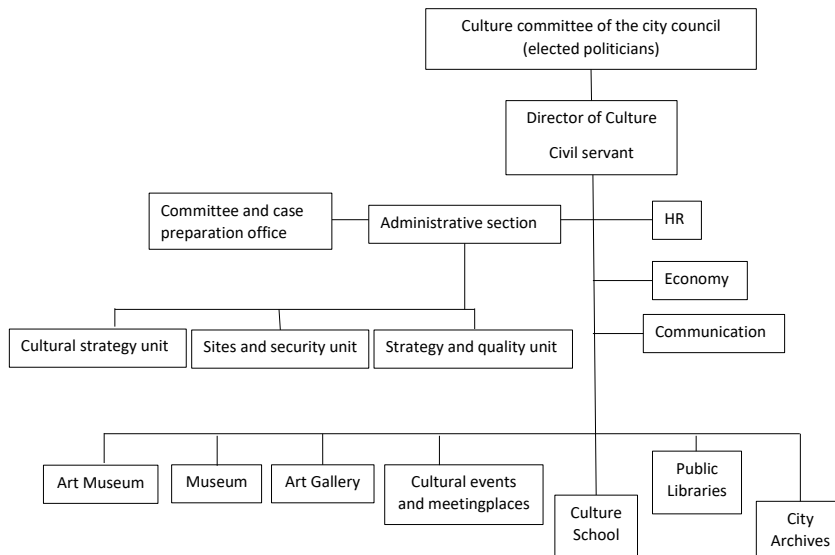


Figure 1. Organisational structure of the culture department of the city of Malmö. Source: Malmö city culture department website (accessed 1 March 2023).

Box 6. Instruction for Malmö konsthall, the municipal art gallery, stipulated by the culture department. Source: Malmö stad (2022b, 4), translated by the author.

Show and convey topical and reflective state of the art contemporary art and thereby contribute to Malmö as attractive art city, broaden the concept of art, stimulate the interest for contemporary art and work for equal access to art and art experiences for inhabitants in Malmö.

Through art education and conveying activities [the gallery] shall create enriching experiences of contemporary art and stimulate individual creative activities.

[The gallery] shall affirm the prerequisites of Malmö as international and multiculturally stamped city, have a strong anchoring in the local art live and highlight the diversity of identities related both to artistry and audience groups.

[The gallery] shall secure and cater for the rights of Malmö inhabitants as formulated in laws relating to children's rights and discrimination. Furthermore, [the gallery] shall be accessible and have the needs of the inhabitants of Malmö at the basis for activities. The work method is to be characterised by inclusion, user influence and cooperation with actors relevant for activities and enable innovative activities based in the instruction for the gallery.

[The gallery] is to:

- *Produce exhibitions and show topical contemporary visual art.*

- *Make the exhibitions and contemporary art accessible through art education activities which contain both guided presentations and individual opportunities for individual creative activities.*
- *Act as knowledge support within the field of visual art, both within the culture department and in relation to other departments/ committees in the City of Malmö.*

Box 7. Extract from the annual plan of Malmö konsthall. Source: Malmö stad 2022b, 6–7), translated by the author.

- *The culture department will during 2022 secure children's and young people's participation in and influence on questions concerning them, through coordinated, systematic and structured activities.*
 - *Child consequence analysis and survey [evaluation and development work of educational and outreach programme]*
- *The culture department will during 2022 secure the right of public access to culture for all children and young people in Malmö through a coordinated, resource efficient and rights based supply of cultural activities during as well as after school hours.*
 - *Training of staff in schools*
 - *Ceija Stojka [Roma artist] [school programme related to the exhibition]*
 - *Evenings and days at the gallery square [activities related partly to planned exhibition]*

The box contains a list of activities under goal no. 1 of the culture committee (in column 3). The goal is broken down into more concrete goals (black bullet points), in turn operationalised in specific activities (white bullet points).

Box 8. Goals for municipal support to independent arts in the city of Malmö through activity grants (verksamhetsstöd) for cultural organisations (Malmö Stad 2023b, 2), translated by the author.

The support to culture of the city of Malmö is to give good conditions for independent cultural actors and thereby make Malmö a sustainable and attractive city for inhabitants, cultural actors and visitors. The support to culture is to stimulate a dynamic and diverse cultural life that enriches and develops the whole city.