

AMASS MOOC

University of Borås, Sweden

Lesson 7.2 – Podcast Transcript*

*A note on editing performed by Merisa Martinez.

For clarity, filler words that were repeated in conversations (such as for example, 'so,' 'like,' 'um,' 'the,' 'if,' 'and,' have been removed from the transcript to improve the flow of the conversation for readers. Insertions were made in square brackets [...] to indicate missing but useful information for readers. Likewise, quotes from interviews and quotes where speakers from the podcast are referring to words and opinions of a third party are in quotes and italicized font. Finally, discussion questions posed by the speakers of the podcast are in bold font.

00:00:00

Sofia Lindström Sol: Okay, so welcome to this podcast, which is part of the AMASS MOOC from the Swedish team. We are four people here today and we will present ourselves. My name is Sofia Lindström Sol and I'm a Lecturer [in Library and Information Science] at the University of Borås. The theme of today's podcast is "When policy is turned into practice," and three of us are going to give an empirical example of when the policy of socially engaged arts, of participatory arts is turned into practice. All of these empirical examples are from Sweden, so we're going to discuss them. We also invited Merisa Martinez to discuss these things with us. And then we have my colleague, Jenny.

00:00:54

Jenny Johannisson: Hi, my name is Jenny Johannisson, and I'm Associate Professor here at the Swedish School of Library of Information Science [at the University of Borås]. But I also work as an analyst at the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis. And we also have another colleague here with us.

00:01:10

Roger Blomgren: I'm Roger Blomgren and I work as a Professor in Library and Information Science here at the University of Borås.

00:01:19

Sofia Lindström Sol: And then lastly, we have Merisa.

00:01:20

Merisa Martinez: Hi, I'm Merisa Martinez. I'm a PhD student in the Swedish School of Library and Information Science [at the University of Borås], and I'm a Research Fellow on the AMASS project, working together with Sofia, Jenny and Roger.

00:01:32

Sofia Lindström Sol: Thank you. I'm going to start with my example from my own research, and then I will end it with a question, and then I will give the floor to Jenny, and she will do the same thing. Lastly, we will discuss these questions together. So, my example comes from the research I did between 2017 and 2021. It was supposed to end in 2020, but it was sort of prolonged because of the pandemic, and it was about participation as a cultural policy goal in the Cultural Affairs Administration in Gothenburg City. I was there to explore participatory processes in the publicly funded cultural institutions in Gothenburg. Gothenburg is the second largest city in Sweden. It has approximately 500,000 inhabitants and it is nationally kind of infamous for having high degrees of inequality between migrants and Swedes. And the local government sees this as a great inequality problem. They have produced official reports on the growing problem of inequality and all the social sectors, including the social and the cultural sector in Gothenburg. They are made responsible for creating a fairer, more equitable city. These reports [about the culture sector in Gothenburg] were published in 2014 and 2017. This is part of why socially engaged arts and participatory arts become important as a cultural political [issue] in Gothenburg city. During my research project, I did interviews with more than 50 cultural workers and cultural professionals working in the Cultural Affairs Administration, which is responsible for running and supporting institutions such as museums, libraries, and other cultural sectors. They are also responsible for the public arts and culture and for supporting the free arts sector in the city. When I talked to respondents, I asked them, *'what is participation for you? What does it mean for you and what do you do when you do participation? And what is it NOT? And what would happen if we didn't have participation as a cultural and political goal - what's at stake?'* And a lot of them said the same thing. *'Yeah, participation is good,'* and this came up – that seemed to me very interesting because it spoke of some kind of boundary work – that [respondents thought that] participation *should* be done, but not in *that* way or not in *this* way. So, it should be done in certain ways. And I realized that they [the participants of my study] were, of course, protecting certain values. And the further I got into the interviews, the respondents then expressed that, well, the concept of participation is something that worries them, and they feel doubts or even fears about what it can mean. So, I wanted to understand that a little more. The [respondents] are professionals in cultural institutions. They do have the power to resist and sort of construct participation in ways that won't endanger other certain kinds of values in the institution. The values that I found them to especially protect are values about artistic autonomy and about artistic and professional quality. I tried to understand this through talking about balancing acts that the professionals in these institutions are balancing between certain values when participation becomes a very important culture policy goal. So, I found three balancing acts. Firstly, they are balancing between serving the public, serving the people of Gothenburg and also serving the art world. And these are both constructed in ways that makes them sort of opposed to each other in certain types. And [second], they are balancing between more popular common knowledge and the expertise knowledge. And lastly, they are balancing between the private and the professional role or even the private and the professional body. I'm going to explain why I think that's the case. The first balancing act, serving the public and serving the art world, these institutions, they define themselves very much as existing so that the art world, the Gothenburg art world or the national world and the international art world, so that they can. They are very important supportive infrastructure and on the other hand, they are responsible for engaging and involving citizens. And they find that these two roles then are

difficult to sort of integrate into the same institution, into the same organisations. For example, I was asked by my respondents, well, *'will certain types of artistic expression be premiered when participation is an important goal, or is it just a trend? Will we talk about something else in year? Is then art losing its character by giving it a social mission that it cannot perform? And do we risk dumbing down the contents of our institution to an audience that doesn't know art?'* I argue that this goal of the cultural institutions then is to provide the art world and professional artists with possibilities to exhibit their work. [The respondents conceived of] participants as people without sufficient knowledge to then bring this institution any kind of legitimacy or any kind of relevance, because that is provided by the art world, not the actual people of Gothenburg. So, the level of trust in participation is very low. It is not seen as bringing anything of value, which was interesting to see. And in the other balancing act between popular knowledge and more expertise knowledge. It could be, of course, these institutions, they are populated by professionals that have expert knowledge. And this is very legitimate and very valued in our societies. But then also participation, when it is constructed as something that should allow citizens to sort of influence the institutions, not decisions like be invited into decision making and influence the contents of the institution, then it's very difficult [for the participants of my study] to know *'what does it mean for my knowledge as an expert, how should these two kinds of knowledges meet and intermingle in one in the same project?'* I [also] noticed that to protect this expertise, knowledge, and this professionally agreed upon concept of quality, you could construct participation in ways that are sort of controlled participation. [The institutions in my study] had these cultural professionals. They had control over how [participation] was supposed to be done, when and how much and so on. An example was in 2018 when the City Museum in Gothenburg, they planned an exhibition called "Gothenberg's Wardrobe." It was about clothes and the way that fashion and clothing play an important part in the history of the city. And then they took the help of a group of citizens that they found mainly through social media, and they wanted also to target then the kind of demographics that normally don't go to these kinds of museums. So especially young people from socially and economically vulnerable parts of the city. But firstly, the professionals [working in the City Museum], they decided upon the theme and the time of the exhibitions, and then they encouraged participants to influence the designs or subthemes or texts. So, they would, for example, give the participants (and I was part of this group) for instance images or pictures. [And they would ask] *'Which one of these should be used?'* So, it was a very controlled form of participation. Participants were offered an influence in a very top down, controlled fashion, where influence was then constructed as giving opinions about something predefined by the professionals. And I believe that this is then based on a problem of decision, that [participation] could go too far to threaten their expertise [and] knowledge. And this expert knowledge about how to make a good exhibition was needed because this exhibition was supposed to sell tickets. It was commercial. If public institutions can be commercial, they need to derive some of their income from ticket sales. So, there was very low trust that participation will sort of then add to this professionally agreed upon concept of quality. And finally, this balancing act between the professional and the private body rests on this idea that knowledge production and knowledge dissemination is something very not physical. It's something that belongs to sort of a neutral, almost inhuman, non-corporeal entity or something. But participation, the participatory turn [in art] has problematized, for example, the lack of minorities in these cultural institutions. They are very white and the respondents would joke about, *'Yeah, I'm so white, I'm so middle class and I live in Majorna,'* (which is an

area in Gothenburg which is [populated by] very [white] middle class culture). So these new ideas of participation made the private body very visible to them and they started to realize that *'maybe I'm the problem,'* that they were of course hoping to attract the demography that wasn't there. And this was usually not people who look like them. So, their bodies served as symbols of the problems of representation. [Another way that] the private and professional was blurred was [described in] how participatory projects could be very time consuming and very emotionally draining. It was often very much about creating relationships [with] people, and it was very difficult to determine where those relationships ended. Like, *'okay, so now this exhibition that we did with this minority group, it's over. So, do we just not talk to each other anymore?'* Or sometimes a witness said, *'Yeah, I took this person that was in that group. We went to fika together,'* (which in Sweden means to drinking coffee and having like a cinnamon bun). And so that was difficult for them to sort of differentiate between the private and the professional role because of these relationships that were built. And they also expressed that, *'Oh, I'm going to need some time off after these kinds of project because it was so emotionally draining.'* One museum worker, for example, said, quote, *'I feel like I went in it with myself as a part of the exhibition'* end quote, and I think especially female respondents expressed that they needed that recovery after participation work because of the emotional effort. They asked me often, *'how do we finish this project?'* To conclude, when participation becomes a cultural policy goal, it can become a dilemma. If it's perceived to clash with other values such as expertise and professionally agreed upon notions of quality, and also because it exposes or blurs boundaries between the private and the professional body. I believe that all of these values and participation, quality and expertise, they are equally important in official cultural policy goals. So that's why it's very difficult for cultural workers to know how to integrate them in their work, [to know] what to give more importance to and [to know] how to how to reconcile them in the same project, which was very interesting. So, I guess my question for discussion is these kinds of organizations like the Cultural Affairs, they set cultural policy goals where they say, for example, that participation is very important for and in our cultural goals for this city. **Should they demand that all of the institutions under the administration integrate this as a value equally, or should some do it differently? And how and why should some do it more?** There are different ways of doing participation which may threaten or not threaten the core idea of what this institution should be, according to the people who work there. **Or should there be a little bit more top-down demands that *'this is what we mean by participation. This is how we should do it in this city.'***

00:15:37

Jenny Johannisson: And now it's Jenny speaking, and I would like to bring up another Swedish example of a cultural policy initiative that explicitly identified increased democratic participation as a social impact of the arts in residential areas with low voter turnout. It is not only an interesting example of an assumed causal effect of the arts on social behavior, but also of how complex it can be to evaluate and assess this assumed link. This initiative called Äga Rum in Swedish, which could perhaps be translated into 'taking place' in English, was instigated and funded by the Swedish government between 2016 and 2018. The purpose of the initiative as a whole was to create good conditions for increased influence and participation in cultural life and to expand the availability of art and culture in the selected residential areas. The initiative was aimed at all age groups and, as I've already said, was also launched with the explicit purpose of increasing democratic participation.

Therefore, areas with low voter turnout were specifically targeted. The initiative was allocated a total budget of approximately €13 million distributed by two national government agencies, the main part of which was distributed by the Swedish Arts Council and a minor part by the public art agency of Sweden. Distribution of funds was based on applications from agents living in or active in the selected residential areas. In addition, the two funding agencies agreed that funded activities should be based in the specific potential of included areas, and that people living there should be actively involved as project members, as artists and as audiences. Also, activities should be open to experimental methods of working and take an open and learning perspective. Beyond these common criteria, the activities funded by the two government agencies were quite different, while activities funded by the Swedish Arts Council primarily aimed at enabling cultural participation amongst residents in selected areas, activities funded by the public art Agency of Sweden, primarily aimed at increasing permanent artistic design in selected areas. That is public art created by professional artists, but with representatives of local civil society in selected areas, were involved in the process of commissioning specific pieces of artistic work in different ways. The Swedish Arts Council and the Public Art Agency of Sweden have conducted extensive follow ups of taking place. The Public Art Agency has also involved academic researchers in critical scrutiny of the initiative, and the Swedish government also commissioned the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, where I work, to evaluate the initiative from the point of view of the instigator – that is, the Swedish government. The government wanted to know whether the aim of the initiative had been achieved, which is understandable, since in the formal democratic system, politicians are responsible for letting citizens know how joint financial resources have been spent and to what end. In 2019, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis published the evaluation of ‘Taking Place’ based on analysis of documents produced both at the funding agencies, but also by the funded projects, as well as interviews with civil servants at the funding agencies and project managers and partners involved in funded projects. The evaluation thus involved four relevant perspectives on the initiative: those of the Swedish government, the funding agencies, the project managers and the project partners. However, the evaluation excluded one very important perspective, namely that of residents living in the selected areas. The reasoning for this exclusion was that it is very time consuming and also very difficult in terms of selection criteria to study not only explicitly active but also potentially active residents. But of course, this limitation also makes it quite impossible to make a complete assessment of whether the initiative accomplished its aim or not. Lack of time is often a problem in in, in evaluation. And as the evaluation showed, the restricted time limit of three years set for the initiative also obstructed the implementation of the initiative itself in terms of continued evaluation due to the lack of representation of the perspective of residents. The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis recommended that the Swedish government should instigate an additional evaluation after five years, and that this evaluation should also include the perspective of the residents. The agency also recommended that any future initiatives aimed at wider involvement, participation, and local influence should employ a long term approach, not primarily at a visionary level, but above all in the actual conditions for the initiatives by, for example, allowing the initiatives to expand gradually over longer periods and by enabling more long term support for participating parties. As for the assumed link between cultural participation and democratic participation, the evaluation by the agency concluded that this link, this presumed impact of the arts on democratic participation was inadequately defined by the instigator of the project – that is, the Swedish government. For

example, no research exists that would prove that any causal relation between increased cultural participation and increased voting behavior exists. In addition, there is research, for example, by the Norwegian political scientists about the question of whether voting behavior is an adequate criteria of democratic participation. This link or impact is simply stated and taken for granted, but not explained, which makes it difficult to pinpoint the aim that evaluation is measured against. Lack of clarity also made implementation more difficult for the funding agencies, as well as for project managers and project partners in selected residential areas. So, do these results show the government should not initiate or fund initiatives such as taking place? Not necessarily, since the evaluation also showed that the majority of the agents involved identified several positive effects. But the results do show how important it is that the aim of publicly funded initiatives is clear to everyone involved, and perhaps most importantly, that the aim of such initiatives should avoid making assumptions about the impact of the arts that are not justified and that often creates erroneous expectations that are unnecessary. It should be okay to have a hypothesis about the aim of a project and what it should achieve and be wrong, or to find that different or additional aims were in fact achieved. So, this was my example. And my question, I guess, would be **how could we as researchers and analysts, better explain to politicians why and how to clarify and set the aims for funding for culture at a more adequate level and more reasonable expectations?** And with this, I give the floor to Roger.

00:23:17

Roger Blomgren: Thank you, Jenny. My name was Roger Blomgren. I will talk about a study I did for a couple of years ago called *The Good, The Bad, and the Useful*. And it was inspired from a film called *'The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly.'* Here I call it the *'useful,'* and I want to problematize cultural policy and more specifically, film policy in Sweden as an example of successful reform for the individual partners point of view. But first, a little history of Swedish film policy. The first political decision regarding film as a cultural expression in Sweden was the introduction of state censorship in 1911. At this time, films were perceived by the State as having no artistic value at all. Rather, they were a threat to the health of Swedish citizens. Influential groups in society such as teachers, doctors, and representatives from this church argued that feature films were dangerous. The Church's point of view pointed out that films encourage profanity. The content in movies was perceived foremost as harmful, especially for working class children who needed to be protected from such films, and as a result, state censorship of film was introduced in Sweden in 1911 and [only] abolished in 2010, and that was a little about the film as a bad thing. Now I would like to talk about film as a good thing. It took nearly 50 years from the first political decision to introduce film censorship to the first decision to support film as an art form. It was not until 1963, with the formation of the so-called Swedish Film Institute, that the State considered film as an art form worth supporting on a more comprehensive level. Films whose content had been deemed as *'quality'* received the most support. A distinction was made between quality and non-quality films, and film experts made the decision. There was a distinct suspicion within the field of cultural policy towards the film industry. This was because the film industry was primarily characterized as having an interest in profit over quality, and thus [the] production of films [was] for the masses, rather than a film for connoisseurs of the established fine art. But this was what's going to change. And now I would like to talk about film as something useful in the society. In the mid 1990s, a new approach towards film as a phenomenon arose in Sweden, [when it] became a member of the European Union. The background could be identified in the

emergence of regional film production centres in Sweden. The company Film in West in particular had ambitions in the early 1990s to produce feature films. Still, they failed to get [financial] support from the Swedish Film Institute. Film in West highlighted that [the] film industry could create growth and employment at the regional level. From their perspective, the content of film was a minor issue. Instead, the film was seen as an instrument to create other, more critical social impacts, such as growing the economy more and creat[ing] more labour opportunities in the region. When Sweden became a member of the EU, film production centres were classified as an area eligible for economic support from regional towns in the EU. Together with a regional and local support for this industry today, regional film production [plays] a dominant role in Sweden and in the Nordic film policy, and this can explain the success for regional film production. [Its success rested on] chang[ing] the policy area from cultural policy to regional policy and industrial policy. And that I think is very interesting. **Can cultural policy projects be [more successful] if we [strategically] move them from cultural policy to other policy areas?**

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Sofia Lindström Sol: Thank you. Very interesting.

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Jenny Johannisson: Indeed.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: So now we have three questions and maybe we should repeat them and maybe take them in order. So, my question was, should organizations like the Cultural Affairs Administration be more top down in their governance towards cultural institutions when it comes to these kind of fuzzy concepts like participation in order for them to better know actually what to do when it comes to how do we increase participation or what does it really mean? Should we decide upon that inside this institution, or should we have some kind of clue from the managerial order or even maybe the politicians?

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Jenny Johannisson: Well, I was thinking that there's a lot of research on, for example, audience development, which is a specific strand, of course, on how to study participation, but also, I think other pieces of research that shows that if we really want to change the pattern of participation in a particular cultural activity, it's very important that those working with that specific activity are in charge. So, I guess my answer to your question would be that I think it's good that in the Swedish context, the overall objectives are quite wide and general and it is the professionals who make them more specific and will be able to develop [the question of] *'How should we work with participation in this particular activity or project?'* So that would be my reflection to your question.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: Thank you. There are two reasons why I ask this question, and the first one is that it was actually something that was demanded from the cultural workers, [they said] *'we need more clear governance or steering.'* As we say in Sweden, *'we need the people who construct these kinds of goals with these very unclear concepts to be much more clear about what it is that we're supposed to do. What is that they want us to do?'* And the second [reason that I asked this question is because] I notice that when they [the participants to my

study] do control the meaning of these concepts, they may say that they're doing it, but they're not doing it.

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Merisa Martinez: You mean the museum workers are saying that they're doing it, but they're not?

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Sofia Lindström Sol: Actually doing it? Yeah. Or they're doing it in ways that are just very controlled. So that influence is actually not [really] influence or it doesn't happen. But they can say [in a report] that '*yeah, we used a group to influence the contents of this exhibition,*' but then the influence was so controlled and so limited that I wouldn't say that influence actually took place.

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Merisa Martinez: I mean, what's the cultural makeup of the people who give this mandate to the cultural workers? What are they like? What would you describe them as? Are they like middle class white people?

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Sofia Lindström Sol: Oh, definitely, yeah.

00:31:11

Merisa Martinez: So, it's middle class white people [working in Cultural Affairs] telling other middle class white people who work in museums how to how to do participation.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: No, on the contrary, they tell them that '*Okay, so we all need to take this cultural policy goal very seriously, and the way that you do it is up to you.*' So it's very unclear what they're supposed to do. And some of these [respondents to my study] took it extremely seriously. All of them took it very seriously. But some of them would add comment and protect other kinds of values. And so, there was this range of very much integrating, for example, young people into the organization, letting them take part in decision making and so on. And at the other end, just making small pilot projects that would even happen in different rooms, for example, then the core exhibitions or core kind of content of this institution. [And some respondents had] a lot of distrust and even open contempt towards if and how common people could actually bring anything of value. So that's why I ask these questions.

00:32:24

Jenny Johannisson: Yeah.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: I know there's a word [for saying you are doing something but not doing it] in English.

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Merisa Martinez: The museum workers though. How would you describe them?

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Sofia Lindström Sol: Very white middle class.

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Merisa Martinez: Yeah.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: That became a problem to themselves because they would like to reflect the demography of the city a bit more. But I guess they also feel like *'But my position here, I got it because of meritocracy, because I'm very good at what I do and I have this expert knowledge.'* So, it's very difficult for them to realize that, *'okay, so maybe one of the reasons I was actually hired is because I look like everyone else here,'* which was very difficult.

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Jenny Johannisson: So, what you're saying is basically that - and I think you said that just before - that the museum workers were basically skeptical towards the visitors being able to change their behavior in any way. They would just not.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: No, they were more skeptical to changing anything of their own behavior, I would say. Even a museum educator, she said that *'I have this feeling that, so, we want to attract different audiences, right, than the middle class white audience that we have every day? But I also have this feeling that we want the other audiences, the non-goers or non-visitors to change into the audiences that we normally have and not change anything ourselves.'* And she spoke about the difficulty of democratizing arts when the contents of her institution is just so non-democratic. For example, it mirrors the experiences and values of people like her. So, if she would take, let's say, students from schools in areas in Gothenburg with high immigrant presence or children who are born to people who are immigrants. I mean, she felt like, *'what can I say? You're not here'* [referring to marginalized groups in Gothenburg society]. *Or if you are here, you are being oppressed in these artworks. So how do I make that content interesting for them when it's a place made for a certain people?'* And yeah, that was very interesting to listen to her. She was very insightful about these things.

00:35:03

Roger Blomgren: But isn't this an example of traditional Swedish cultural policy since the 1930s when the state was conceded to you? You should give the people the opportunity [to experience] high art culture. But the people didn't like high art culture, like they don't like what is called a high art culture. So, is that a democratic cultural policy when people are arriving to the high art culture, or should we listen to the people and ask them, *'What do you like for culture here? Or what should we do with that?'* And did you [Sofia] discuss it with the participants [of your study], those who were the 'victims' for this project? [laughter]

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Sofia Lindström Sol: No, I didn't. But they did [a lot of studies] themselves. They try to understand why certain people wouldn't come, and they did reach a few of them through social media and this humorous campaign where they said, *quote, 'Help us become less boring,' end quote.* So, they did attract a few. These people were always very happy, very humbled about being invited. I almost wanted to scream to them. *'But of course, of course! you're a citizen! Of course your opinions, of course your influence matters!'* But they were

always very grateful, even when [their] influence was very limited. So maybe Swedish people aren't - they're not very spoiled. But being asked, you know, *'what kind of cultural content would you see as interesting?'* because they are so used to being given the best or which is then decided upon by professionals. You know, *'this is the best knowledge. This is the best kind of art. Please come in here and be enlightened.'*

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Jenny Johannisson: And I was thinking also about the museum workers. You explained then that they looked for more guidance as to what kind of participation they were going to actually promote, and who did they look for guidance from? Was it senior administrators more at the managerial level in the city or politicians? Or, because the problem of representation that you describe that goes all the way up to the top? Right. Yeah. So where did they want this guidance to come from?

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Sofia Lindström Sol: Well, from other professionals in other institutions. So, they looked at what other institutions had done, especially in the UK, for example, where they have a lot of innovation as to how to deal with issues of representation and so on. But one of the institutions that was very successful, when they employed new people, a new professional working there, they had to speak a third language besides English and Swedish. And that increased diversity a lot. Yeah. So that was just one concrete example of how you can do it.

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Merisa Martinez: Well, we talked about this before, but I know it was off mic. So, I think it's good if you can describe, when you go to a museum, what is your experience like?

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Sofia Lindström Sol: I believe that I am the ideal visitor. Not only am I a white, middle-class woman, but when I go there, I feel this. Like, for example, this last week I visited the art museum in Antwerp, and I feel this kind of serenity. I feel that this is 'me' time. I walk around and I'm surrounded by this beautiful artwork, by this beauty. And we talked about *'why am I the ideal visitor?'* It's because I feel safe there. It's because these places have made me feel safe. I'm never stalked by, for example, a museum worker telling me not to touch things or looking over my shoulder in the museum shop so that I won't steal anything. I'm just made felt very safe. And this is not the experience for everyone. Yeah, but it's very difficult for me to realize that. Or not difficult, but I don't see that because most of the people also that I socialize with are also academic, middle-class people.

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Merisa Martinez: Well, I ask because I think one of the things when we're talking about getting advice for how to design participatory art projects or bring in more people and you talked a lot in your presentation about professionally agreed upon ideas of quality. And I think we need to take into account that the profession is made up of a very particular type of person. I mean, there's more diversity than there was. Certainly, if we're talking about long established ideas about what is considered to be 'quality art,' those decisions were often made by people who had a particular social class [and level of education] and a particular experience of what Sweden was. And so I think we need to, when we're thinking about museum workers who want to create participatory art, we also have to widen our

understanding of what the cultures of participatory participation are, because you obviously have subcultures now of people who are, like I was saying to you before, people who are just 'extremely online,' people who experience art and culture solely through online exhibits or solely through social media and things like that. And so, keeping that in mind in terms of not just thinking about the space of a museum where people might- certain groups might not always feel like those spaces were designed for them. As you said, there are exhibits, but they're maybe in a separate room. There was some very obvious disdain for having to do this kind of thing, and people pick up on that. [As a visitor or participant], you can feel the tension if something seems like an afterthought. **So how do we really confront this, like thinking about different cultures of participation?** From my perspective, it seems that one of the things that [speaking to Sofia] one of your respondents said was really interesting about, you know '*as a museum educator, I'm either teaching people, "Oh, look at this wonderful art. That's a representation of your culture, you Swedish, white, middle class woman." Or I'm saying, "Oh, look at all this white Swedish art. It's oppressing you"*' to someone else.' And it's okay to actually openly acknowledge that. I've been to quite a few really interesting museum exhibits where there on the wall, there's usually some descriptive metadata that explains what the exhibit is about. And it's perfectly acceptable to say, '*and this is representing a very particular niche group of people in our society or the overwhelming group in our society and doesn't represent other groups. We'd like to fix that. Please get in contact with us. Here's a QR code. We want to hear your thoughts*' or something like that. I mean, there are ways to do it. And I understand wanting guidance, but if the people you're getting guidance from look and experience the world much like you do, yeah, that can actually reinforce some colonial ideas about how to actually bring in participants.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: And, no, what you said. I'm just very curious because I also follow these projects. *Äga Rum:* Where did they get this idea from that engaging in arts will increase voter turnout?

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Roger Blomgren: That was my question.

00:42:46

Jenny Johannisson: Yeah. I think that us sitting around this table can recognize that this is a very old idea in several ways, and we shouldn't be surprised that Swedish politicians use it today because this way back to the Greek thinkers in antiquity, there's been this idea that culture has an extreme, you know, forceful effect on people and society. And the Greeks, of course, disagreed whether that could be a positive or negative effect. But what prevailed, of course, and we heard about the belief also that culture can have negative effects and that people should be protected, for example, from certain movies. But I mean, the really dominant idea of Swedish cultural policy is that the culture has extreme positive effects. And sometimes this- I think it's because cultural politicians - they don't feel secure with just referring to inherent qualities of artistic or cultural practices. They always have to find some kind of argument that would seem more solid. And of course, to increase people's voting behavior to change that so that more people vote. That would be such a more specific and explicit effect. That really would be something to show in Swedish government that, look, we've increased the number of voters also in areas where the number has been low previously. So, it's kind of like a logical mistake made on that basis. And I also find it

understandable, but also I think it can have very bad consequences, both for people working in the fields of art and culture, but also for those inhabitants that are the reported victims to misguided political actions. So, my question, **how could we help politicians to, you know, phrase more specific and more reasonable aims?** is for me, I think, very important to inform politicians increasingly of the knowledge that already exists. I mean, both produced by researchers but also by professionals that you spoke about, Sofia, because there is a lot of knowledge around. And even though, as Merisa pointed out, it certainly is always biased also in some way, we have to bring all these kinds of different knowledge together because a lot of politicians, I think they are not aware that this knowledge exists. So that would be perhaps my main reason it happened because the politicians, we didn't let them know that this is not a good idea.

00:45:48

Sofia Lindström Sol: But this made me realize actually that I've had a lot of seminars, presentations, lectures with professionals, with culture professionals, but only once have I met politicians, which is super interesting. Maybe there needs to be better links between research and politicians, or ways for us to meet and talk to each other. And I guess your agency can be one of those links.

00:46:16

Roger Blomgren: But I think that's a very interesting idea from the beginning that people who are engaged in some art events should vote more. I think it's how this is ground. In the 1990s when they did some studies about people who don't go to art exhibitions or things like that and that was people who didn't care about the society at all. They were [described as] low. They were not interesting in engaging at all. I think if you can engage them in all that they could, they would like to go and vote in the higher degree. But I don't think the causal links between [those exist]. But you have to go out before you do this kind of project. You see on the personal level due to vote before elections and then measure it afterwards [by asking] 'Did you not vote, or did you vote, and was it because you were involved in this art experiment [or] were you voting [for another reason]?' But I think it is a very strange project from the beginning. And why can't we explain for the politicians [that] maybe it's good enough to give an opportunity for the people to engage in arts, to see theater? I don't think it should [have to happen] that [afterward] they [have to] get happier or healthier or more democratic or things like that. Because then you have a very strange way in cultural policy to measure that, I think.

00:47:51

Jenny Johannisson: But I think it also connects to the question that the organization asked before, because to my mind at least to change voting behavior of the inhabitants in Sweden, arts and culture, it might be important, but I don't think there's reason to believe that it would be the most decisive factor. Rather, it would be more like socioeconomic factors, that that is not the stone included in the mandate of cultural policy, but rather social policy, for example, and employee policy and resident policy. So, there's also an issue of making politicians aware to solve issues with the right policy area. I think your question was also about that, Roger. **Which questions and which issues should be discussed within the cultural policy remit and which issues should be dealt with in other policy realm?**

00:48:47

Sofia Lindström Sol: Yeah, there's an interesting example in the Äga Rum project, an area in Gothenburg where the residents, they explicitly said that *'what we lack are resources, not art.'* For example, they had trouble because the streetlights were always broken, so people felt very unsafe going out during the night. So, artists did a light installation and it was very popular. And it was also very successful in the way that a lot of people were engaged in not only planning this exhibition with lights and but also actually participating in doing it. And what happened was that it gained a lot of media traction. And finally, the local government actually also made sure that the streetlights would then be turned on afterwards. So, I guess the social effect would be first, the media attention, and then the political attention that actually gave them resources. So, in that way, maybe it was exactly the right thing to do. But of course, it leaves us with the question *why couldn't they just get the streetlights?*

00:50:10

Jenny Johannisson: From the-

00:50:11

Sofia Lindström Sol: -beginning, functioning from the beginning? Why did it have to take these kind of actions?

00:50:17

Merisa Martinez: [Regarding] social policy and cultural policy in Sweden, would you say that these are intentionally siloed from each other or that that is just a product of the way that they have grown up and built through policy documents that they're handled in different ways? And so, there's crossover, but there's not necessarily intentional or thought-through crossover? Or would you say there's particular projects where social policy and cultural policy come together? Because from an outside perspective, not being Swedish, it's really interesting to me how siloed different policy areas are in Sweden. It's really very bizarre. But I'm interested to know if that's intentional or if that's a product of the way that social policy and cultural policy have developed in the last 70 or 80 years.

00:51:09

Roger Blomgren: But I think that that's an interesting observation you did from outside because I think it's maybe the field of cultural policy, those involved in cultural policy that feel that they're under threat from cut downs and to have to show *'we are important here, we can change the world by introducing this art project in the suburbs and then the people will get to go vote more.'* And that that's the big thing that that you can create that in a social policy. It's more expensive, I think, to change the social structure in some areas in Sweden. And that's a big, enormously huge cost for a couple of years. But this is more yeah, and I think this is these two examples here is that Swedish cultural policy are often driven by projects instead of fixing the long term investment in cultural policy, but it's more so called *'sexy'* or something [to say] that *'now we introduce these two projects, we can do things here. It's happening now.'* So, but I don't know, maybe you have a better answer.

00:52:22

Sofia Lindström Sol: I would say that cultural policy, it depends on how you look at it. But yes, it's been protected from other policy areas because of the fear that other policy areas would instrumentalize or maybe use cultural institutions, cultural workers, and art in undue ways in,

for example, ways that you would use the arts and culture in totalitarian regimes such as the Communist and the Nazi regimes. So, it's been very, very much protected. But I would also say that right now there is a very strong policy trend of trying to bridge different policy areas to reach solutions to difficult social issues first and foremost. And this even has a name, a concept. It's new public governance, right where. Swedish words, some work to work together to reach solutions to political problems.

00:53:27

Jenny Johannisson: And I would just like to add also that I think the actual structure and organizational culture policy varies dependent on which level of government we're talking about. I think it is, even though I think it's important, of course, that at the national state level, we have a tripartite system in Sweden with the national state level, the regional level and municipal level, which all have their self-governing elected parliaments. And I think at the national level why I think it's very important that there is an ambition to discuss arts and culture in relation to, for example, social issues. And as Sofia points out, it's also an important trend right now to improve cooperation between cultural policy and industrial policy at the government level. But to me, I think it's I think it is more difficult at the national level to actually achieve these kinds of interconnections because it's at the national quite abstract level. But I think that a regional and in particular the municipal level where it's perhaps more easy to really try to explore how each resident – *'what's their living conditions for each particular resident living in this municipality?'* And then of course, it would be relevant to look at everything from, you know, very material socioeconomic conditions for existence, but also *'what possibilities are there where this resident is living, to enjoy the arts and culture, to enjoy whatever else that is decided in the Swedish system that we should contribute to together?'* So I think there's a difference at different levels. I think it's difficult also at the municipal level, but at least I think it's easier to really have a more holistic approach because that's what you're suggesting, right, as opposed to this kind of silo model?

00:55:22

Merisa Martinez: Yeah, I mean, I think it depends on the project, but holistic can work and siloed can work. It depends on the project and the collections in particular that you're in, or the groups that you're interested in reaching. Right? Because I think we're talking about trying to bring in marginalized groups to cultural places, and that involves some aspect of social policy because those people are more likely to need social help and social protection, and they will have a lot of interaction with groups that fall under social policy in terms of things like the Swedish Migration Board, they will have a lot of more admin contacts, I would say, and then there are more avenues to specifically reach those people. So in that sense, a holistic approach is useful because you can particularly target those groups by thinking about what their daily experience of life is and that it touches both the cultural and the social policy worlds. So, in that case, yes, I think very much so a holistic approach is best, but it doesn't always have to be that way. I think it depends on the audiences that you want to bring in.

00:56:29

Roger Blomgren: What will happen after the project, the two examples you discussed here, both Sofia and Jenny, now that the project is over? What has happened?

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Sofia Lindström Sol: [Referring to the Gothenburg project] Absolutely nothing.

00:56:40

Jenny Johannisson: [Referring to the Äga Rum project] We're actually doing a small follow up, not involving residents yet, but we're doing a small follow up after the turn of the year where we try to explore what traces have these initiatives left in selected residential areas? And I still agree with the recommendation that with these kinds of projects that get a lot of media attention and are very much emphasized by politicians, I think they are good examples to really follow over time. And as I try to say also, it didn't get the intended effects or it didn't reach the intended aim, but that doesn't mean that it couldn't have produced other very positive [effects]. And what do I know, negative also? I don't think so, but other positive effects that are relevant to follow and that could be a source of learning. Also, I'm thinking about what you talked about Sofia and professionals looking for guidance from other professionals and other activities. So, let's hope that it will, at least.

00:57:49

Merisa Martinez: I just find it absolutely fascinating that there was a project that was paid for out of public funds to try and get more people interested not only in art, but also in participating in the democratic process, because I'm American. And so [I am from] a country where right now people are being actively discouraged from voting because the larger government structure – well, one portion of the larger government structure – is very afraid of what that will mean for them if marginalized groups are actually allowed to participate in the democratic process. And so, it's interesting that a goal that Sweden is actively trying to work towards is enfranchisement of more people, rather than less, in order to get a particular result. I mean, we could say a lot about the recent Swedish election, but that's still amazing to me that that was a particular project that someone wanted to fund. 'We want people to vote more.' I mean, it sounds totally normal, unless you're from America, probably, where we have to fight and fight and fight and fight to be able to vote. And [it is also strange] because I just moved here from Belgium where you are required to vote, it's not an option. They have a constitutional monarchy, and they have a lot of parties, the same as Sweden, lots of coalitions of different parties. But you don't have a choice. I mean, you can write in whatever you want, but you have to vote, or you'll be fined. So, it's a different model. But hoping for the same effect essentially, [which] is getting everyone involved with the process of participating in democracy.

00:59:28

Jenny Johannisson: Yeah.

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Sofia Lindström Sol: I think those might be our last words. This has been a very nice talk. Thank you, everyone. And we hope that it was also fruitful for everyone listening.

00:59:41

Merisa Martinez: It was really interesting to hear your perspectives. I'm grateful that I got to learn a bit more about Swedish cultural policy because it's so particular and it's really fascinating to hear about from the outside. So, thank you.

00:59:58

Sofia Lindström Sol: Thank you for coming.