

Please disturb – renegotiation in process

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The ambition with this text is to think through changing perspectives and positions within contemporary art production – more specifically dance and choreography – as well as art's relation to the bordering fields of cultural politics, economy and organization. With the starting point as contemporary dance's changing forms of production and a parallel expansion of the concept of choreography, I aim to discuss how several concepts are currently being re-appropriated, in particular autonomy and "artistic freedom".

I wish to problematize in the forthcoming text how influential practitioners use these concepts in today's cultural debates. Many still speak about art and cultural politics as if nothing has changed since the 1970's and base their arguments on conceptions that are no longer useful. I claim that art practitioners at present have an opportunity to dive into a stream of change and redefine art's contemporary relevance and social consequences, rather than marginalize themselves in a quest for "freedom" and linger sentimentally in a time long gone.

This text is a collage of filtered thoughts borrowed from friends, thinkers and people around me. I will refer to thoughts advocated in the contemporary Swedish cultural debate, to thoughts that are not heard loud enough, and to my own experiences as a dancer and cultural producer in the past ten years. In order to situate these ideas, I begin by giving a brief outline of how I understand the conditions and development of the dance field's modern history.

DANCE AND CHOREOGRAPHY: ROLE-PLAY AND PLAYING FIELD

Traditionally, within western stage based dance art there is a conceptual division between "doer" (the dancer) and the "maker/instructor" (the choreographer). The dancer is regarded as the "material", "tool" and "interpreter" for the choreographer, who in turn has been dubbed the Artist.

Within the dance field, just as in society at large, we are currently undergoing an overwhelming individualization process, which in a positive reading is about empowerment of the individual that leads to more participation and responsibility in decision-making processes. This has within dance, for instance, been manifested in an increase in the number of practitioner-run collectives and networks. These are often cross-disciplinary and consist in loose constellations where terms like dancer and choreographer lose their meaning. This stance could be described according to a DIYT attitude (Do it Yourself Together) influenced by direct democracy movements, queer feminism, postmodern theory and popular culture. In the new millennium these cooperative working methods take new forms and gain new meaning in comparison to the collectivist efforts and "independent groups"¹ that formed in the 60s and 70s.

¹ In Swedish, independent or non-institutional groups are called "free groups" (fria grupper)

In broad strokes, one could say that western, stage-based dance art has developed from institutional models with large companies, ballet maestros and artistic directors to an emergence of independent groups. These independent groups often had the ambition to renegotiate power structures and relations in ways that were explicitly socialist and critical of institutional models².

Concerning forms of production and organization of independent dance artists in relation to emerging Swedish cultural politics, some dance historians have pointed out the significance of the formation of "independent groups" in the theatre field (most often in the form of non-profit associations). This way of organizing around artistic aims or economic resources were then imported by, or perhaps rather "forced upon" dance groups by way of obliging certain types of legal formation due to cultural political frames. However, this was not always in accordance with the specific aims, contexts, working methods or ambitions of dance artists. In 2010 most independent choreographers remain organized as non-profit, member-based associations, despite the actual incompatibility of such an organizational structure with the practice.

A parallel concern with the organization of dance has to do with it being an artistic and professional field dominated by women. The field's relative lack of resources as well as its looser and more changeable and dynamic structural configuration, in comparison to theatre, could have some connection to its particular gender order. The feminist research group Fosfor has shown how women have somewhat better opportunities to establish themselves and gain influence in network based organizational models than in traditional "masculine" hierarchical forms³, which in turn could be one of many explanations as to why dance more often than theatre co-produces, builds networks rather than institutions, shares spaces and operates in a more international market.

Since the 80s and 90s the dominant form of production within non-institutional dance has been individual choreographers engaging dancers on a project basis. The way I see it, the independent groups both within dance and theater have, since their establishment, taken on the form of mini-institutions, with clear hierarchies and factory-like modes of production. The business is clearly influenced both by cultural political frames and market economic discourses.

Professional dance educations, for their part, have continued the tradition of feeding the existing – though minimal – labor market, resulting in a few dominant aesthetic expressions and production ideologies that have been prioritized and thereby reproduced. The field has not educated dance artists who have the relevant tools to create their own labor market, take on different types of roles and broaden the understanding of what dance and choreography could be in the future.

IT MOVES, OF COURSE

Change occurs, naturally, even within the fields of dance, choreography and artistic education. Dancers today no longer aim, in as high degree, to find jobs within the existing market but rather want to "do their own thing", according to for example the director of the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm, Efva Lilja.

From the more or less adolescent and anti-authoritarian upheaval against the choreographer as "dictator", that I myself was a part of in the end of the 1990s, I experience that newly educated dancers today move more seamlessly between different forms of production developing their own strategies to realize their

² See, for example, Danscentrum's statutes from 1974. Danscentrum is a member-based organization for independent players in the Swedish dance field, organizing daily dance practice, workshops, distribution of works and more.

³ *Det ordnar sig - teorier om organisation och kön*, Fosfor: S. Linghag, P. Höök, A. Wahl, C. Holgersson, Studentlitteratur, 2001, page 90-91

ambitions and move more comfortably in the global market. Many would rather take other types of jobs in order to make a living than take on artistic work that does not coincide with how they wish to work. As a brief summary, one could say that the "independent group" is no longer the dance field's smallest (cultural political) unit. Rather it is individuals that co-produce and seek new forms of organization, community building and types of relations. I am convinced that these changes in models of production are closely connected to the complaint from older dance practitioners and critics of a "lack of regeneration" of choreographers; they simply can no longer be recognized as choreographers.

These new forms of production are to a high degree influenced by new communication technologies, user-based "peer-to-peer"⁴ ideology and "people-powered" production. The ideology of *Open Source* has quickly become a tool for the expansion of the concept of choreography and its applications⁵. The University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm now describe Choreography as follows:

Choreography is a proactive, artistic dimension of society. The subject choreography offers and researches tools for movement production, for processes and analysis of opportunities for artistic and culture creation in different contexts.

Choreography makes visible different forms, expressions and spatial as well as conceptual rooms in dialogue with contemporaneity as well as tradition. The concept of choreography is an open as well as an inclusive order that comprises a broad field of production. It operates multi-medially and multi-lingually; inter-disciplinary, dialectically and discursively; it changes, nurtures and transforms. Choreographic practices therefore function as movement in the word's original meaning⁶.

This description gives a good picture of the seemingly radical change that we are currently part of. That development, which I try to describe above, where the dancer – as a professional category and symbol – makes greater demands to be seen as an artist and social agent through cooperative action, runs parallel to a fundamental re-conceptualization of choreography as a concept. Or rather, a multiplication of the concept's many meanings. The formal or classic meaning that is sometimes used as a political metaphor, is that of a choreographer/leader who decides or manipulates how a group of dancers/workers/bodies should move, primarily in unison. For example, think about the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008⁷ and how impressed we often are by the "power" of many bodies in simultaneous movement.

A change from this formal understanding happened, amongst many other things, thanks to the post-modern dance of the 1960s, where the aesthetic conventions were challenged when everyday movement and stillness were claimed as dance. This is in turn connected to a discussion as to the difference between dance and *movement* – and in turn to a discussion as to what extent that choreography can be understood as a tool for producing, organizing and making movement possible (and that need not necessarily result in something that we recognize as dance). When the concept movement, with its point of departure in dance,

⁴ "Peer-to-peer (P2P) computing or networking is a distributed application architecture that partitions tasks or work loads between peers. Peers are equally privileged, equipotent participants in the application. They are said to form a peer-to-peer network of nodes. Peers are both suppliers and consumers of resources, in contrast to the traditional client-server model where only servers supply, and clients consume." Wikipedia

⁵ See, for example, the web platform Everybodys Toolbox (www.everybodystoolbox.net), that works towards articulation and Open Source within performing arts. At Everybodys anyone can upload tools and choreographic scores to be used and developed by others.

⁶ www.doch.se, April 2010

⁷ Search "Opening Ceremony Beijing 2008" on YouTube

is used as something generally applicable, that is to say, in its physical as well as its social and political sense, it also increases the possible applications of choreographic practice.

We can see a parallel development in how the use of the concept "performance" has developed since the 1990s. That is, it "functions both as a metaphor and an analytical tool and thus provides a perspective for framing and analyzing social and cultural phenomena"⁸. The connection to today's discussions of Open Source and (file) sharing has led us to a situation where we can talk about choreography not merely as means to create dance art, but also as a tool to produce and analyze movement of many types. Contemporary choreographic practices are more about producing possibilities of *difference* and *potential for multiple directions* rather than unified movement and harmony.

I see these parallel narratives – new forms of collective action together with the expansion of concepts – as clear examples of the impossibility to separate art from the way in which it is produced, and also that working methods and forms of cooperation are not only definitive of the aesthetics "on stage", but also in themselves create arenas for active ideological production and movement. This "insight" and development is of course not particular to dance as a field, but rather a generally prevalent social change. Most consumers today know that having a cup of coffee at the local café has an effect on people on the other side of the world. As an extension of this we today hear more and more art practitioners concerned with what art *does*, *how it is produced* as well as *for whom* rather than its *expression* or what it says. I believe, without exaggeration that these factors together, could be called a paradigm shift in how we look at and practice art, and even how we perceive our work, sense of social belonging, economy and politics. We can clearly see and feel how a number of dichotomies that we habitually base our reasoning on are dissolving or taking new forms.

FREEDOM, AUTONOMY, AND INTEGRITY

Cultural practitioners often claim art as a place where one is allowed to think and act freely, that is without demands of conforming to market, politics or correctness, and that the artist is essentially free. In contrast to this standpoint I find it very problematic to try to localize "free thought" in a particular field, in this case the cultural sector and the "types of people" that work there, that is the artists. If we draw the argument to its natural extension, it is being claimed that people in other areas are less free, imprisoned, and incapable of thinking for themselves. It tends towards a romantic view of art that ignores the fact that art has been prescribed – and prescribes itself – as a powerfully *dependent* sector in the type of social structure we have today, not only economically but also in terms of recognition from the political and artistic establishment insofar as fitting into aesthetic conventions. I have, for example, spoken to people that have worked within The Swedish Arts Council's expert groups who suggest whom should receive funding, and they are often surprised by artists' lack of integrity in relation to cultural political guidelines and buzzwords, market economic discourse and temporary aesthetic trends. It seems as if most artists turn themselves inside out in order to get their projects to fit into the publicly formulated mold. The most important is simply to get your hands on the money to later practice your "freedom" on stage. I understand the thinking behind the public cultural political goals, but I seek greater problematizing, articulation, risk-taking and integrity on the part of artists.

Freedom is a complicated concept; some would claim that the entire idea is a myth. Of course it is important to strive toward the greatest possible "self-rule", but my point remains: free thinking individuals

⁸ "Performative turn" article on Wikipedia

and milieus (whatever that may be) exist everywhere, in every field, in the same way as engaged, tired or rigid persons and milieus exist everywhere. And according to my line of thinking, "the free" are not more prevalent in the arts than anywhere else, maybe even less so. The ceiling is not particularly high within Swedish cultural life when one talks about equality or cultural pluralism, questions the use of artistic quality, cultural heritage and canonized concepts, utilizes theoretically complicated arguments or for that matter has ideas that cannot be classified as conventional mainstream leftism. The trust in the "level above us" and the kind, strong state is palpable within the cultural sector, and when The Swedish Committee of Inquiry on Cultural Policy⁹ presented their report in 2009, many art practitioners called out in strong opposition to practically every suggestion of change. The past suddenly looked so appealing! With a certain sharpness of tongue, one could say that many artists, with an inherited belief of themselves as society's "first battalion", are in fact the systems most uncritical defenders. This I believe, in part, has to do with the dominant artistic and cultural political discourse that still rests safely in modernist conceptions of society and how art functions therein, that in many ways are in disharmony with what society actually looks like today. Amongst some of the strongest ideas from the modernist tradition stands, alongside that of the avant-garde, the idea of art's autonomy, for example in the shape of "artistic freedom."

A clear example that has made the rounds in recent years with regard to the striving for "artistic freedom" – the idea that artists need to be subversive of "power" and in totally misguided ways claim their "freedom" – concerns equality. The question of gender equality in relation to artistic expression and "artistic freedom" has become a cornerstone for the equality debate within the Swedish art world. Some mean that demands for equality limit artistic means of expression and that they basically function as a form of censorship that, with equality guidelines, attempt to influence how an artistic project is managed. Others claim that to speak of "artistic freedom" mainly has to do with a male creation myth and male privilege, and that one, precisely through equality work, can broaden the freedom concept to include groups that are currently being discriminated against. Many big players within performing art seem to think it honorable to counteract demands of equality with the motivation that an artist should revolt against that which is prescribed from "above". Therefore it may be useful to remind oneself that the struggle for equality for much of history has, in actuality, been driven from below by activists with minimal political influence – that it now, rather late, has reached a publicly sanctioned level implies that it is not automatically subversive to want to do the opposite. However, it does seem, as the journalist and gender specialist Vanja Hermele has effectively argued, not to be overly problematic for institution directors to, in line with state guidelines, "maintain" a (male-dominated, Western middle and upper-class coded) cultural heritage, and at the same time render others invisible through active non-choices.

AUTONOMY AND MARGINALIZATION

According to the literary scholar Andrew Hewitt, in his book *Social Choreography*, art in the 18th century was offered a certain amount of autonomy in exchange for a more limited direct political influence:

As the bourgeoisie sought ideological and political liberty from the tutelage of absolutist states in the eighteenth century, art was guaranteed a degree of freedom at the cost of its disempowerment as a social force. Within limits one could reason freely in art because it was agreed that art was without direct social consequence. Obvi-

⁹ Kulturtredningen, a governmental investigation with the task to revise Swedish culture politics, that has been more or less the same since 1974.

ously, the emerging class utilized this freedom to rehearse ideas that would only subsequently be set free into a truly political bourgeois public realm.¹⁰

It is of course open to discussion what we mean with "political influence" as concerns art, depending on what way we want to use "political". But Hewitt's argument around art's autonomy – freedom at the expense of influence and art as a place to "rehearse" ideas – is productive as a model of thought when we try to understand those changes that are now occurring. From the period that Hewitt describes, via the time leap to 1974 when Sweden articulated its first cultural policy, to 2010's cultural political rhetoric, much has of course happened. Many economists and cultural theorists today speak about culture's economization and economy's aestheticization. David Karlsson, resigned secretary of 2009's Committee of Inquiry on Cultural Policy, describes in his book *A cultural policy investigation – money, art and politics* how a previously marginalized cultural politics is closing in on the center of politics (economy), not least since the "discovery" of free, non-instrumentalized art as a fundamental core to the growing economic system referred to as cultural economy, experience economy, or cultural and creative industries. Karlsson argues, which even The Committee of Inquiry on Cultural Policy did in their report, that art of course has both an "intrinsic value" and a fundamental economic exchange value. Without wanting to lose myself in a Swedish cultural political discussion around the ongoing processes of "aspect politics" and regionalization, I would like to suggest that the time which is now implies an extremely interesting possibility for art's players and agents to take charge of these discussions, formulate its problems, and suggest possible solutions. Far too many influential cultural players today express "a deep concern" for all types of change, in a manner that mostly produces sentimental passivity and hopelessness.

THE EARLIER THE BETTER

I sometimes hear nostalgic stories of the 1970s, when art was still completely free and non-instrumental, when art was for its own sake but still had the possibility to be included in the building of the "people's home"¹¹ and in the ideals of availability for everyone, as well as being a weapon against commercialism's stupefying effects on the public. That was a time when the principle of political "arms length's distance" still meant something and when there were still direct channels of communication to the Ministry of Culture. At this time there were no political demands for Business Intelligence or an analysis of the world at large, internationalization, entrepreneurship, increase in own revenues, equality, diversity, or accessibility for people with disabilities, but the art that was being produced was still in some magical way more a part of the social debate. And at this time there was also more room in art's arena – there weren't as many taking part.

In this manner of thinking crowding, narrow competition and opportunism rule today. Egoism and cutback mentality reigns supreme. Uneducated enthusiasts can freely download "cracked" programs and production tools and via internet become appreciated artists overnight. A long higher education is not a guarantee for an occupation and artistic quality is struggling for air. Contemporary art has become entirely instrumentalized and is understood as navel gazing, commercialized postmodern ramblings that have lost both their integral value and social relevance. The contemporary artist occupies herself with questions around economy and organization in such a way that can only mean that art has become totally econo-

¹⁰ *Social choreography*, A. Hewitt, Duke University Press, 2005, page 16.

¹¹ "The Swedish "people's home" (folkhemmet) is a fundamental concept in the history of social democracy, referring to the Swedish social democratic politics of a national vision of the welfare state, especially in the mid-1900s." Wikipedia article on "Folkhemmet"

mized, entered the neo-liberal trap of "widened job markets and broad financing" and in this way "lost the battle".

This undoubtedly sounds like a sorry development; but for myself born in the 1980s, a true homo-zappien, it is a bit difficult to relate to this lost paradise era. This probably makes me sound like a cynical, non-idealist pragmatic within the narrow "cultural debate". But if we can suggest that the functions of concepts such as autonomy and freedom are undergoing a transformation – and at the same time believe in art's different and multiple functions – what values and strategies do we then practice contemporaneously? Are "old values" like autonomy, quality, responsibility and solidarity dead? Have we become *valueless*?

"POST-AUTONOMOUS" PRACTICE AND MUTUAL DEPENDENCE

I have recently been playing around with the invented concept of "post-autonomous". The concept did, in fact, exist for a short while as a Wikipedia article, but was recently taken away due to the lack of references and relevance. But anyhow, what could a "post-autonomous" practice mean?

In its traditional definition autonomy, has for me, connotations of a conscious choice of being "outside" – outside the system, society, institution, market, capitalism, and outside rigid thought-structures. Today, when these borders are almost impossible to detect, when it is no longer surprising at all that the state and the capital find themselves together in the same boat, when the key to commercial success lies in thinking "outside the box", we must, most probably, reformulate our strategies. One conclusion would be that we leave models of thought that are based on an inside and outside, either or. We have to leave models of thought that suggest that self-realization and mutual dependency are in direct opposition. Somewhere here perhaps a "post-autonomous" practice could emerge – in a situation where we, convinced about possibilities of change, and with integrity march forth straight to the centre of politics; organization, policy production, lobbyism, economy and administration – the everyday "backstage" of ideology. In other (anti-quoted?) words; striving for freedom and space for action "within the system", in a continuous process where we constantly re-evaluate our contemporary relevance as art practitioners in a dynamic society.

In this process the artist, civil servant, minister, producer, economist, programmer, researcher, student, audience member, amateur, semi-professional and professional build more and new types of relations to each other; as colleagues, friends, advisors and consultants, ideological opponents and critics. Here arises the possibility for new forms of cooperation, knowledge production, influence, and productive conflicts. New alliances, temporary groups of affiliation and loose networks are formed, that are no longer necessarily based on field legitimacy, art form, academic status or geography but rather on shared values and the cooperation's activist potential.

I am convinced that it is here, interwoven by a multiplicity of relations that do not care for power structures in terms of political status or artistic and academic prestige, that we can foster freedom toward action. Here we can afford integrity, conflicts and "mobile loyalty"¹². Here we can own our own questions and act towards change through new alliances. But in order to reach this point we have to take the risk to question and reformulate the dichotomies upon which we build our world view.

¹² With "mobile loyalty", I mean that there is today a tendency to identify and be loyal towards specific and dynamic issues, factual and changeable circumstances, shared values and interests rather than statistical opinion-poll-packages, political parties, nation states etc.

Granted, I am still convinced that as people we need to produce definitions, divisions, contrasts and a certain amount of antagonism in order that we in the long run produce engagement and the possibility of mapping and action. I do not mean that everything should be a big soup of *whatever*.¹³

Another model of thought around autonomy has been brought forward by Frederic Jameson in his essay *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, namely that arts "semi-autonomous" position hasn't disappeared, but rather "exploded" in and with society's aesthetization and massification of cultural images. The autonomous space potentially exists everywhere, in ways that we are perhaps not yet capable of articulating:

What we must now ask ourselves is whether it is not precisely this semi autonomy of the cultural sphere which has been destroyed by the logic of late capitalism. Yet to argue that culture is today no longer endowed with the relative autonomy it once enjoyed as one level among others in earlier moments of capitalism (let alone in pre-capitalized societies) is not necessarily to imply its disappearance or extinction. Quite the contrary; we must go on to affirm that the dissolution of an autonomous sphere of culture is rather to be imagined in terms of an explosion: a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life - from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself - can be said to have become "cultural" in some original and yet untheorized sense.¹⁴

Jameson is also, with reference to Marx, exploring the idea of the necessity of a "and-with" way of thinking. Something that can be linked to the question of art and economy:

In a well-known passage Marx powerfully urges us to do the impossible, namely, to think this development positively and negatively all at once; to achieve, in other words, a type of thinking that would be capable of grasping the demonstrably baleful features of capitalism along with its extraordinary and liberating dynamism simultaneously within a single thought, and without attenuating any of the force of either judgment. We are somehow to lift our minds to a point at which it is possible to understand that capitalism is at one and the same time the best thing that has ever happened to the human race, and the worst. The lapse from this austere dialectical imperative into the more comfortable stance of the taking of moral positions is inveterate and all too human: still, the urgency of the subject demands that we make at least some effort to think the cultural evolution of late capitalism dialectically, as catastrophe and progress all together.¹⁵

Precisely this, to gain the capacity to think development, change, and in this case society's economization as the best and the worst at the same time, is undoubtedly both an exciting and difficult thought experiment.

¹³ As political theorist Chantal Mouffe effectively argues in her book *On the Political*, society must appropriate mechanisms for legitimate political opposition with shared rules, formulated out of collective identities. She means that politics must be built on the thought of a political "agonist", in order not to end up in a supposedly "neutral" and often moralistically defined struggle against antagonists or "enemies". She claims that today's consensus and discursive driven politics makes this an impossibility and that it gradually undermines democracy through underestimating the need for collective identities and that leaves the playing field open for populist forces that utilize politics affective dimensions and make claims to represent the "people", with enemies like, for example, "the establishment", "immigrants", etc. The challenge, I mean, lies in finding a way to deepened democracy that can both work with fundamental processes of change and at the same time insist on presenting clear ideological alternatives.

¹⁴ *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, F. Jameson, Duke University Press, 1991, page 48. Originally published in *New Left Review*, issue 146, 1984.

¹⁵ *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, F. Jameson, Duke University Press, 1991, page 47. Originally published in *New Left Review*, issue 146, 1984.

ABOUT THE RELATIONS BETWEEN ART, ORGANIZATION AND POLITICS

In line with those arguments that I have hereto proposed, it is impossible to draw clear borders between artistic expression and the ways in which arts production is organized. I also wish to suggest that administration, economy and organizational structures are fundamental for those movements which are generated, for example on a ideological level, parallel and in harmony with the artistic process and the (art) work itself. When does choreography begin and when does it end?

Artistic intentions and their expression often oppose their own production processes and thereby weaken their political potential through many aspects of their production process not being made conscious or accessible. Economic and political positioning in everyday organization could thereby be said to stand in direct relation with artists' capacity to intervene in society. In the dominant discourse around art and culture there is however the tendency, on the part of many art practitioners and in their defense of arts integral value, to separate art from the social context.

The clear and often simplified separation between different social and productive areas, which we most often use to build our world view on, are transforming. A closely related discussion that pinpoints the problem, here within the frame of public administration, is put forth in the political anthology *Politik som organisation (Politics as Organization)*:

In the modern welfare state politics largely becomes a question of organization. The administration's organizational form plays an important role. It is an old myth that there is a difference between politics and organization. Rather most often the borders between political and administrative decisions cannot be separated.¹⁶

So how do we organize artistic life today? How are administration and economy dealt with? What long-term ideological consequences do our organizational practices have? Is organization treated as the mobilizing force it could be, or is it mostly a necessary evil for artists that would rather think about other things than administration?

I think that an important starting point is to encourage art practitioners, to a greater degree, to utilize the organization's potential. Most dance artists start their organizations in order to seek production resources and do not really take the time to think about which organizational or administrative choices would be most suitable in line with the specific goals of their production. The choice of organizational form is most often the result of "common sense myths" or an organizational culture than it is active choice. The board's composition is mostly a result of the rules of the current social benefit system rather than a clear professional vision. Most are more or less messy; few have an understanding for rule structures and accounting. Organization is for the most part a burden that is being towed around – hateful administration.

Put simply, investments are needed in order to recognize that organization can empower individuals, not least economically, through increased knowledge, re-allocation of time and cooperative solutions. We also need to acknowledge new forms of organization, where contemporary, often informal and rhizomatic, network structures provide new forms of political, economic and cultural cooperation rather than traditional strategies with clear, strong organizational hierarchies, brand focus and so forth. We need both theoretical and political efforts in order to achieve expedient, enabling and transformative structures and strategies.

To bring forth an exciting and, I believe, rather unusual example of conscious organizational attitudes and "structurally strategic" art production, I would shortly like to provide an example of an "artist cluster"

¹⁶ *Politik som organisation - Förvaltningspolitikens grundproblem*, Editor B. Rothstein (1991), SNS Förlag, 2008.

named Inpex (International Performance Exchange). During the years 2006 – 2009 Inpex has had as its mission from the Swedish Arts Grants Committee to work towards dance and performance internationalization:

Inpex grew out of a need to rethink established internationalization strategies and sales tactics (such as fairs, showcases, national lobby organizations and sales agents) as these in the 90s tended to have saturated the market and thereby lost its generative potential. With this in mind a strategy was chosen to build networks based on particular shared interests and engagements rather than a national or professional alignments.

In that the Swedish Arts Grants Committee was the owner of the initiative, it appeared as obvious to provide a vague organization that could act as a springboard for the individual's interests¹⁷. In other words each individual member forms the organization rather than the organization its members. Inpex was inspired by contemporary organizational models, which support the individual's mobility within a dynamic organization, which reacts to changeable trends and interests.

Besides extensive international work, Inpex has functioned as a forum for discussion and strategic development as well as contributed to knowledge production as regards new perspectives on choreography and dance. Inpex is no castle, but as a "tent" it has given artists significant support and provided a place for development. Inpex's organization and practice, allows it not to be prescriptive, which in turn means that every individual member uses the organization's activities according to their specific needs.¹⁸

The organization is necessarily a political arena. One could say that Inpex provides a rather typical example of an anarchic network structure¹⁹, where free negotiations between individuals create the basis for cooperation. That which most captures my interest in the organizational description above is the word *vague*. The point in this description is the opposite of what most organizations express, that is the wish to build a "strong and clear" organizational identity and easily communicable brand. My interpretation is that Inpex has as its goal to be fuzzy to such a degree that it becomes clear that it is about a free heterogeneous collection of individuals in collaboration. As a result, completely new possibilities, challenges and problems arise both internally and externally. This fuzziness means that the function of Inpex is rather difficult to understand, but most probably this is also the point, a part of the strategy towards a space to act. However, that which is unclear is often confused with something that is not thought through. This can lead to discursive, internal and structural complications, which of course can also be seen as the point, since we need complications and confrontation in order to be able to articulate ourselves. On a purely organizational level the relation to The Swedish Arts Grants Committee has not been very easy, primarily because The Arts Grants Committee is not supposed to fund organizations but only individuals. So what does one do with a "cluster of individuals"? Even the Committee of Inquiry on Cultural Policy, in its section on civil society's players, concludes that the cultural political systems are not developed enough to handle the new ways in

¹⁷ The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden) only supports individual artists.

¹⁸ Excerpt from Inpex's project description, 2009

¹⁹ "A network is an arena for collaboration and negotiation. It is an anarchic form of organization that - unlike an association - does not make binding decisions, only voluntary agreements. The fundamental value is freedom: no one is obliged to participate in joint actions or projects against their will. A network is not a legal entity; it is not in a position to make binding contracts, represent anyone apart from the collaborators or make statements on behalf of others. Neither can a network be held accountable for its collaborators' actions." From www.democracy.se. (However one should point out that Inpex, out of cultural political "necessity" is a legal person in the form of a non-profit association.)

which people are cooperating. Bureaucratic forms thereby make organizational transformations difficult and in turn, artistic pluralism²⁰.

CULTURAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES?

The organization researcher Rosabeth Moss Kanter introduced the concept "opportunity structure" in the late 70s. Kanter speaks of opportunity structures in relation to gender equality, where men in corporations know that they have greater opportunities than women and therefore act as if they have greater opportunities. This behavior leads to self-confidence and engaged behavior through positive recognition and of course – leads to real opportunities. In direct relation, a negative spiral functions in the same way for those who are or understand themselves as discriminated against.²¹ I think that these models of thought around spiral mechanisms could be useful to apply also to areas outside gender equality and discrimination. What happens if we discuss the opportunity structures within the cultural field?

Maybe the connection feels rather forced, but I believe that many art practitioners understand themselves, sometimes justifiably but most often not, as marginalized within society. Regardless, if it is real or not, this feeling of being unable to enter into the cultural political financial system, as well as the homogeneous and exclusive world of art as such, contributes to "hopeless" behavior by many artists that may be young, dealing with non-European artistic expression, are missing the right contacts, the right education or are simply too knowledgeable and too well-articulated to be understood in Sweden's rather anti-intellectual cultural milieu. This hopeless behavior is a much larger concern for social and democratic consideration than that concerning whether or not an artist is an entrepreneur or not. So how do we create positive opportunity structures?

I would here like to combine the concepts of "culture", "organization", and "entrepreneurship". In my understanding an opportunity structure is not primarily a structure, but a question about culture. We must continually nurture a culture within the artistic field. I sometimes experience that our art world has a very poor culture. Luckily there is much happening on this front; increasingly people are talking about empowerment, conversational cultures, critical solidarity and political engagement. Networks and collectives like WISP, ÖFA and Plural, whose primary aims are empowerment, coaching, possibility creating and "pats on the back", are making great investments. The conversation "around" art finally seems to become a central part of art.

Regarding today's discourse around entrepreneurialism, I wish that we would sometimes exchange the word "business-minded" with "organizational". Of course most art producing organizations are to be seen as businesses. Of course many small-scale art practitioners need to become better at managing their economy and legal issues in a correct and efficient manner. Of course many artists could become better at creating greater demand and broadening financial backing, whilst keeping their integrity intact. But I would also like to propose that knowledge about organization is more urgent. Actually, perhaps, it is just another word for a similar process, but it rings very differently and is more ambitious. For me it is far more inspirational to ask questions from another direction: How can we strengthen a multitude of small-scale artistic endeavors in such a way that it makes it possible for these to expand and handle more resources and po-

²⁰ Here, for example, cultural politics could be inspired by other sector's applications of temporary co-productive constellations, such as the business form "partnership" (enkla bolag) that is often used in Government Procurement. It would be exciting to contemplate similar forms of temporary legal constructions on the cultural organizational level, to which individuals and small groups could belong and where the allocation of responsibility is still clear and democratically legitimate without risking any individual's private economy.

²¹ *Men and women of the corporation*, R. Moss Kanter (1977), BasicBooks, 1993, page 158-161

political responsibility? How can the economy be reorganized in order that even a small dance company can be a co-producer within a large EU cooperation, without needing "protection" or a borrowed legitimacy from a larger organization? How can our organizational practices produce a more inclusive and sound political accountability and foster greater cultural pluralism?

I have heard examples of smaller groups that have received offers to enter into collaboration or projects with much larger economies than they are usually responsible for, but have been forced to decline due to underdeveloped administrative and economic routines within the organization. Many interpret this as an economic lack of resources, but I believe, more often than not, that this is about an organizational lack of resources. These organizational lacks can of course be referred back to a general lack of resources but maybe more to a lack of competence and engagement in administrative questions. Many groups and artists could become much better at managing their economies cleverly, for example through outsourcing, and maybe thus also, as part of the package, become more trustworthy in the eyes of funding bodies and authorities. I truly understand that as a funding body one does not wish to give large amounts of money to someone who collects their receipts in a shoebox and pays their "employees" through the exchange of clothes receipts. I am convinced that most artists do their very best to keep correct bookkeeping and salary management – and I do not mean that there would be more cheating in the cultural sector than anywhere else – but I don't think it is such a type of shortsighted "overlook freedom" we should fight for politically. To the contrary, I believe that we should take the current political climate in hand and formulate the types of investments that can best strengthen the field and its cluster of players in such a way that can create opportunities in the long run and, not least, create cultural opportunity structures.

ATTEMPTS AT RE-THINKING/RE-DOING

Recently, I have come across two different directions of thought that I think postulate the most attractive, ambitious and radical suggestions of structural change with contemporary relevance; organizational neutrality and crowd funding. The first comes from David Karlsson in the previously mentioned book *En Kulturutredning: pengar, konst och politik*. Karlsson suggests that the entire, or extensive parts of the cultural political field, should be structured like the support scheme for Swedish literature:

There is one aspect of The Support Scheme for Swedish Literature that is often ignored. Today Sweden has a vibrant book market with many small and young publishers. These play an increasingly important role for the distribution of quality literature. Two factors have been decisive for these companies emergence. One is digital technology, that from the 1980s DeskTop Publishing revolution drastically reduced production costs of books. The other factor is The Support Scheme for Swedish Literature. It has made it possible for small actors to compete on equal terms with larger actors for cultural funding. Few other examples exist within cultural politics. Imagine if the independent Theater Bhopa had been allowed to compete with The Royal Dramatic Theater purely on grounds of quality. If no consideration had been taken to the organization's age, reputation, need for renovations, over head costs, pension schemes, but purely on what was produced on stage; would the difference in funds be so great then? The Support Scheme for Swedish Literature functions just in such a way. The result has been that new players have had decent means to emerge and establish themselves. All of us are winners who have received a more dynamic publishing sphere and access to high quality literature.

One problem with many of today's cultural political orders is that they tend to conserve existing structures. Renewal is minimal. The Support Scheme for Swedish Literature is an example of a type of support that stimulates change and development. It is an example of what Nicholas Garnham and others in the Greater London Council

described in the beginning of the 1980s as a cultural politics that functions through the market rather than against it.

This leads Karlsson to the quite radical and elegant statement:

It doesn't matter from the state or the populace's perspective if it is Bonniers or Anthropos that publishes the poetry collection. A cultural political principal of organizational neutrality should be called upon²².

The suggestions of organizational neutrality would, if realized, necessarily create turbulence to begin with. Probably the principle is not as applicable in all areas of art and their different organizational cultures, but to my ears this seemingly simple suggestion is perhaps the most interesting, inspiring and well-formulated cultural political idea I have heard throughout recent debates.

Three other current examples are worth mentioning in terms of financing and its organization; *Flattr*, *Crowd Culture* and *Fundme*. All three are currently being developed and all are private initiatives that in different ways have taken on the assignment of finding new forms of member-run micro financing.

Flattr is a word play of the words "flatter" and "flat rate". Every user pays a fixed fee every month. Cultural producers with material available online can add a "Flattr button" on their site. The member fees are distributed to the producers in direct relation to how many have clicked their button.

Crowd Culture and FundMe, on the other hand, function according to crowd funding or micro-patronage, which, for example, is used in citizen's journalism. In such cases, it is about a journalist being able to say that she wishes to write a certain story and that it costs X amount of money to produce. Readers can then "chip in" with money and when the amount is reached, the story is considered to be commissioned by the readers and through solidarity they have shared the responsibility of paying the journalist's fee. The more people who support a story, the less each individual has to pay. Crowd Culture is built on the same principle, but focuses on the funding of cultural projects. The idea is that members, who can be individuals such as producers or audience members, organizations, institutions, and companies, can suggest and support projects. If dance group X needs SEK 50,000 to develop a new concept, money will be transferred to X when the Crowd Culture members have collectively invested that amount. The principle is similar to Flattr but operates on an investment where the member subscription is dependent on time rather than number of clicks. A monthly subscription becomes, say, a 1/1000 of a Swedish krona per minute. As a user you direct the economic flow through prioritizing those projects that you wish to realize. The aim is that Crowd Culture will eventually be connected to Stockholm city's cultural funding system and function as a complementary source of support.

In certain ways one can argue that there is nothing new in either of these financial models. Aren't Flattr, FundMe, and Crowd Culture simulations of the commercial market? The more people that like you, the more money you get? Maybe, but in their new context, I believe these initiatives mean something radically different.

The combination of market thinking, DIYT, decentralization and individualized user-directive and solidarity – a type of social engagement that works through capitalism rather than against it – in further combination with the technology that makes this possible, is, to say the least, exciting and will undoubtedly play a large role in how the cultural political field will play out in the near future. These initiatives, just as David

^{22 22} *En kulturutredning: pengar, konst och politik*, D. Karlsson, Glänta, 2010, pages 134-135.

Karlsson's suggestion of organizational neutrality, will hopefully also have healthy effects on the discussion of artistic quality and the serious lack of a *multiplicity of qualities* that dominates Swedish cultural life today.

CONCLUSION

We have probably, in all historical times, presumed ourselves to be in the most radical of transformative processes. Without making claims about which of contemporary society's transformations, dispersals, movements and shifts would be historically the greatest, they are all, in any case, specific and necessary to consider. Many of them depend on information and communication technology's effects on our life and behavior, others on discursive development that to an increasing degree undermine traditional dichotomies and categories in favor of more complex, dialogical, mutable, interactive, "and-with" models of thought.

Art finds itself in the middle of this process and thereto also cultural politics and arts organization. It is my absolute conviction that players in the arts arena, during this overwhelmingly exciting and transformative process, must actively participate in social development both generally and specifically in terms of culture. This may sound obvious, but to my ears these cultural players are schooled foremost in *re-acting* to change rather than being *pro-active*. If it now is so that culture, as a field, is moving closer to the centre of politics, it would be fun if cultural practitioners came along, took themselves seriously and took responsibility for formulating problems and solutions. I dare suggest that this work needs to be done with a much higher level of ambition and contribution than most would like to take or make; political work in the future should not primarily concern itself with defending structures, job opportunities and economies that have been accumulated over time, but with finding democratic, open and equitable mechanisms for distribution, production and organization. The big picture is not even about art or culture, but about striving for means that can create a fair and democratic global society. It is about the necessity of relinquishing one's privileges and a re-allocation of such privileges, and to make influence and opportunities more accessible – and basically re-articulate our very needs and desires. In order to achieve this, it is necessary that we take a critical view of ourselves, our self-image and world view, our environment and society's movements, that is to say questions that are "bigger" than our own field of production and our artistic needs.

Perhaps art no longer has mandate or even cause to act *avant-garde* or pretend to be autonomous in its traditional sense, but we who act within and close to the art field should never lose the ambition to be a field that tests the not-yet-thought, where we pose crazily difficult and ambitious questions, where we insist on not understanding – where we think, experiment, articulate, propose, reject, act, allow in, and share in one and the same practice. I don't think we need – which is now done to a great extent within business economics – to search after formulations of the way in which "arts essence" differs from other social/knowledge/political/business areas, as these attempts often result in the fastening of old, romantic, categorical, generalizing, narrowing and exclusive manifestations; rigid images, that contrary to their ambitions, make it more difficult to maintain open-minded perspectives and practices. The manifestation of the connection between art and creativity is just one such example²³.

²³ Another idea that has recently been brought forward in the Swedish cultural debate is the idea of art as *gift*. This is just another example that refers to identifying an aspect of Art's essence that no longer fills any function. Art is constituted by a boundless multitude of paradigms and practices that fill completely different type of functions. Most of these function, more or less, as commodified products in some market or other and cultural policy is – for good or bad – principally labor market politics. Other artistic practices function like different discursive processes, so called immaterial performance and doings that in the immediate now don't have any other receiver than a desired future. The gift thought is also based on a romantic notion of the unique artist, creator and ownership, and on the idea that culture, in some magical way, exists outside the capitalistic system.

Art is, like any other practice and paradigm, unique and at the same time completely impossible to unify. As with other practices and paradigms, it is also true here that we have more likenesses than differences, in the same way as the differences within one gender are greater than between genders as biological categories. The differences between dance and theatre can, so to say, be bigger than between dance and agriculture, not to speak of the cultural, ideological, aesthetic and economic differences between dance and dance.

During this process of renegotiation it will be unfortunate if we, within the art field, once again claim exclusive and self-marginalizing forms of pseudo-autonomy, get defensive with our resources applying arguments that have lost their relevance and legitimacy. It will be a shame if we deny critical voices that make our lives complicated.

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