



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Kulturdepartementet

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Stockholm Philanthropy Symposium den 30 maj på
Fotografiska museet – *"Concluding remarks – the way ahead for
philanthropy in Sweden"*

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Thank you very much for inviting me to address this symposium on philanthropy. I have been asked to talk on a very grand topic: "the way ahead for philanthropy in Sweden". I'm not sure how much I'll be able to enlighten you sufficiently on that topic. However, I hope that I will be able to throw a bit of light on some of the things the government is doing within the realm of cultural policy. And, in this context, convey a few thoughts on the complementary role of philanthropy within society in general and in the cultural field in particular.

Prior to recently taking up my current position as State Secretary for culture (which by the way also includes sports and the media) I had the same position in the field of development cooperation. So I have some experience from areas where the received wisdom in Sweden for a long time has been that any progress is a function of the ambitions of government policy and the volume of government funding.

Looking ahead, and assuming that the Swedish government finances will weather the global economic downturn (and this is a big assumption to make) I foresee that government funding will remain very substantial in these areas, and in some ways it will remain dominant. In this context, why would we need philanthropy? I will return to that question.

But first, some words on Swedish government policy in the cultural field. After coming into power, the Swedish government made an extensive enquiry into cultural life in Sweden and presented, in September 2009, a government bill, "Time for Culture". In this bill a number of priorities for the future cultural

policy were formulated. These include the strengthening of the role of culture in society. Everybody's access to culture. And also the need to broaden the financial base for cultural activities by welcoming external, non-public, financial means.

The proposals of the bill reflect the cultural priorities of the government. Those priorities are: Providing culture for children and young people, improving the conditions for creators of culture and developing the cultural heritage.

Public cultural policy in Sweden is a shared responsibility based on three levels: the state, the regions and the municipalities. Parallel to national cultural policy measures, the regions and municipalities have developed their own cultural programs. All of these have played a role in making Sweden a country with a rich and varied cultural life, in which many people, participate, old and young. In fact, as international surveys show, in no other country is participation in cultural activities more widespread among its citizens than in Sweden.

Of course, the richness of Swedish cultural life is also due to the deep engagement of the non-profit sector, with all its individual and organized voluntary work being absolutely crucial for a vivid cultural life. And, of course, it is also due to the for-profit sector, which always looks for ways to provide cultural experiences in commercially viable ways.

In line with the government bill “Time for Culture” we are promoting closer cooperation between civil society, public authorities and central government. And we have also seen the need to provide good conditions for cultural and creative businesses.

The Government also wants to contribute to a deeper understanding of the conditions of the civil society in the field of culture. We know that many Swedes want to take part in cultural life and cultural development by voluntary contributions. We believe there is a lot of energy out there waiting to be released.

That is one of the reasons why the government decided, in 2011, to strengthen the regional influence on the distribution of central government funds to

regional cultural activities. In introducing a new model for governance, we aimed to bring culture closer to citizens, in allowing for greater regional influence and responsibility. And we have stressed the importance of including the civil society in this decision-making, thereby giving it a more prominent role in Swedish cultural policy.

In sketching this background of recent political developments I have tried to give you an idea of why we consider that civil society and also, as I speak here today, philanthropy, are important actors in a thriving cultural life in our society.

In many other countries philanthropy towards the arts and heritage, has been an important contribution and a natural task for its citizens. In Sweden this has been less evident. We hope this situation will change.

On the European Union level all support systems are built on conditions of co-financing. Examples of support programmes in the field of culture are the Media programme, the Culture programme and the cohesion- and structural funds. Those include public

financing but also funds from other parties involved as for instance cultural operators, organizations, institutions etc. From that perspective one could say that EU encourages private actors to take initiatives for the development of the cultural sector, especially border-crossing, both for the intrinsic value of culture and the more commercial activities connected to the cultural and creative industries. I would say that today there is an understanding in the EU of the cultural and creative sector as an attractive field for private operators to be involved in, both for economic values and benefits but also for other added values for the society as a whole.

As a result of the economic crisis, state funding for culture has declined in many countries in Europe, sometimes very substantially. Many governments have been forced to reduce public support to culture. In this regard, Sweden is a rare exception. Against the trend, the Swedish government has been able to continue increasing the state budget for cultural policy measures. But in these uncertain days, it is

unlikely that Sweden will be entirely spared from hardships.

Last year the Minister of Culture hosted a seminar on sponsorship within the cultural field. At this seminar good examples were presented and methods discussed on how to stimulate a positive development. One of many conclusions was the mutual need among sponsors and cultural players for more knowledge about each other. There is an old prejudice that Swedish tax rules are disadvantageous to the sponsoring of culture, compared to the sponsoring of sports. In fact the rules are actually the same.

And the latest statistics now show that sponsoring of cultural activities has increased more than sponsoring in other fields. We are, of course, very happy about this development.

And this brings me back to the question of the role of philanthropy in a country where government funding and government involvement are so pervasive. And maybe that is exactly why

philanthropy has such an important complementary role to play. In my view, pluralism is a prerequisite for a democratic and inclusive society. And strong philanthropy does provide alternative, independent sources of funding that contribute to a diffusion of power. Some politicians don't like such dilution of political control. I do.

Philanthropy can be a driver of innovation, new thoughts and ideas – and therefore as an important condition for the development of society. To some extent today's society is the result of philanthropy of earlier generations.

Philanthropy today comes in many shapes and sizes. A new and interesting way of meeting the desire to contribute to the arts and the heritage is crowd funding, a collective cooperation by people who network and pool their money, to support efforts initiated by other people or organizations, usually via the Internet.

A very prominent example of philanthropists is Bernard and Barbro Osher. They have for a long time

been among the most important private benefactors of the arts and heritage in our country. The list of important cultural initiatives and projects that have been realized, both here in Sweden and elsewhere, thanks to generous donations from their foundations is impressive. In recognition of this, the Swedish government last year conferred on Bernard Osher, the dignity of Commander of the Swedish Order of the North Star – Nordstjärneorden.

The Osher foundation does wonderful work. I have heard Barbara Osher very forcefully make the point that she has a concern that philanthropy could be expected to substitute for government and take over responsibilities that government should shoulder. But that is not my view of what *should* happen. As I have mentioned, strong philanthropy has a complementary role to play as society develops. It is often very entrepreneurial in character, vision-driven, provides leadership, and with a great potential to promote artistic freedom and excellence, attack social ills, promote health and education initiatives, and in general be innovative and flexible in areas where philanthropy-minded actors identify

government shortcomings, and where they feel they can make a contribution.

It is my view, being State secretary in the Ministry of Culture, that the government and the public sector have a fundamental role to play in financing and supporting culture in our country. But it is the conviction of this government that we need to see more actors in society taking part in funding and promoting the cultural sector. I therefore warmly welcome the thrust of today's symposium.