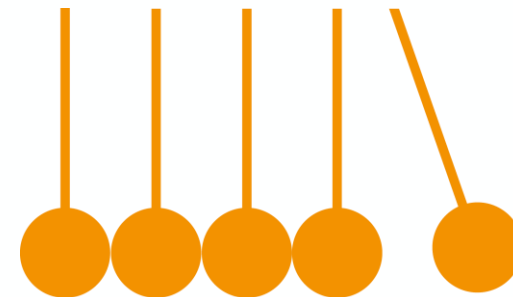


Is a crisis required for cross-policy collaboration?

Perspectives from some Swedish municipalities

2026-06-11



Nilsson &
Månsson

Erica Månsson

- Founder of the Swedish network for cultural planning.
- Chairperson of the NGO Cultural planning Sweden
- Co-author of the handbook *Att fånga platsens själ* (Capturing the Spirit of Place).
- Managing Director, Nilsson & Månsson
- Leading positions in regions and municipalities.



Kultursamverkans- utredningen

- Policy Analyst, Swedish Government Inquiry on Cultural Policy
- The distribution of state cultural funding to regions and municipalities, known as the Cultural Cooperation Model.
- The important role of municipalities, and the need for asymmetrical, place-based solutions.

Statens offentliga utredningar från [Kulturdepartementet](#)

Kultursamhället

– utvecklad samverkan mellan stat, region och kommun

SOU 2023:58

Publicerad 27 september 2023



Kultursamverkansutredningen, har överlämnat sitt betänkande Kultursamhället – utvecklad samverkan mellan stat, region och kommun till regeringen.

• • •

Lagstiftningskedjan

- ☒ Kommittédirektiv (1 st) +
- ☐ Departementsserien
- ☒ Statens offentliga utredningar (1 st) +
- ☒ Remiss +
- ☐ Lagrådsremiss
- ☐ Proposition

Genväg

> [Pressmeddelande: Kultursamverkansutredningens](#)

Why is it so hard?

Obstacles

In a time of declining cultural resources and significant state budget cuts, the focus naturally shifts towards the arts. If there is no core of arts and culture, it cannot contribute to other sectors either.



Obstacles

- The concept of culture has relatively **low status**; culture and leisure administrations also tend to have limited status and resources at municipal level.
- **Culture is often narrowly defined as the arts**, with limited understanding of its strategic role, except in relation to cultural heritage and environment.
- Different municipal policy areas operate with **different planning horizons**, where long-term urban planning can make it difficult to integrate cultural perspectives.
- The principle of arm's length distance has led to **political reluctance to engage**, although there are now signs of increasing political involvement in content and programming.



Obstacles

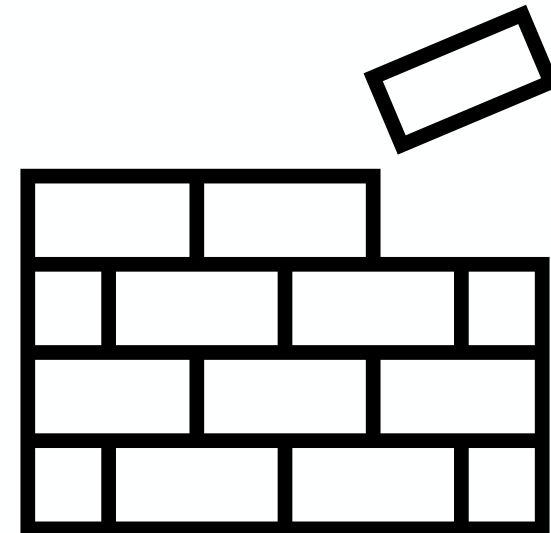
- **Challenging for both officials and politicians,** as it requires engagement beyond administrative settings and closer contact with citizens, demanding new skills and professional approaches.
- Participatory processes can be difficult for politicians due to **reduced control** and limited visibility of direct political outcomes.
- Some initiatives have become **stuck in the mapping phase** without leading to tangible improvements for citizens.



Some Swedish examples

Tillsammansbyggeri: Collaborative Urban Development, Västra Götaland

- **Circular Urban Development:** Shifting from resource-heavy linear processes to sustainable, value-driven circular models
- **Labor Replaces Capital:** Addressing the housing crisis through organized self-building groups to create affordable homes
- **Mapping to Making:** Combining Cultural Mapping with "building brigades" to turn shared visions into physical prototypes
- **Scaling Innovation:** Applying successful rural self-build models (e.g., Egnahemsfabriken) to urban Gothenburg
- **Local Agency:** Redefining who builds the city by fostering long-term community ownership and resilience



Östersund – The "Crisis of Growth"

The Crisis: A demographic and competence supply challenge. To reach the goal of 75,000 inhabitants by 2040, the city must move beyond its "sports-only" image to attract a diverse workforce

Assignment:

To develop a strategic roadmap lifting Östersund as a "Cultural City" and strengthening its profile as a "Creative City"

To identify how culture can act as a key driver for sustainable growth and long-term attractiveness

Funded by the innovation fund.



Östersund – Method

- Utilized Cultural Mapping with a "bottom-up" perspective to ensure unheard groups were included
- Conducted 50+ interviews, site visits, and 4 specialized workshops with artists, youth, and politicians
- Focused on uncovering "unknown" resources, such as underutilized venues and ethnic associations, to build social resilience



Östersund – Results

- Proposed 7 priority areas, including strengthening the "**Sami node**" to integrate **indigenous heritage into the city's identity**
- A concrete **action plan for infrastructure** (e.g., concert hall and art hall) to bridge the "trust gap" between the city and cultural actors
- The establishment of a **cultural collaboration** group (modeled after elite sports teams) to stabilize the professional arts ecosystem
- Increased budget



Norrköping

The Crisis: Some years ago, political leadership questioned the value of the "cultural elite and a reorganization to a Growth and Development Office. Well established cultural institutions, symphony orchestra, several museums.

Need of masterplan.

Assignment:

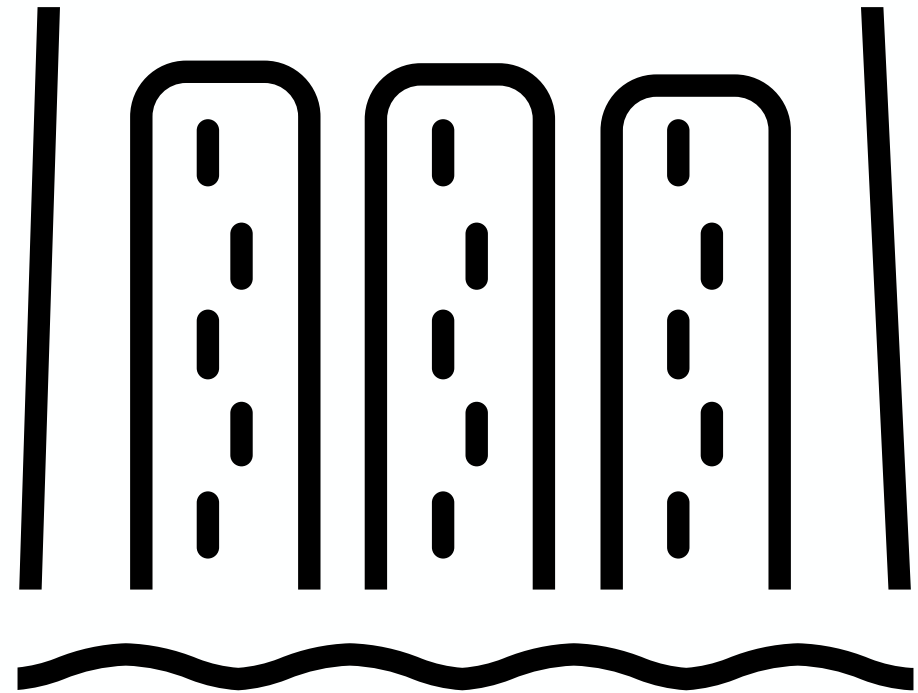
To lead the process of creating a 10-year Strategic Direction Document for culture

To define necessary priorities and a shared vision for the cultural ecosystem



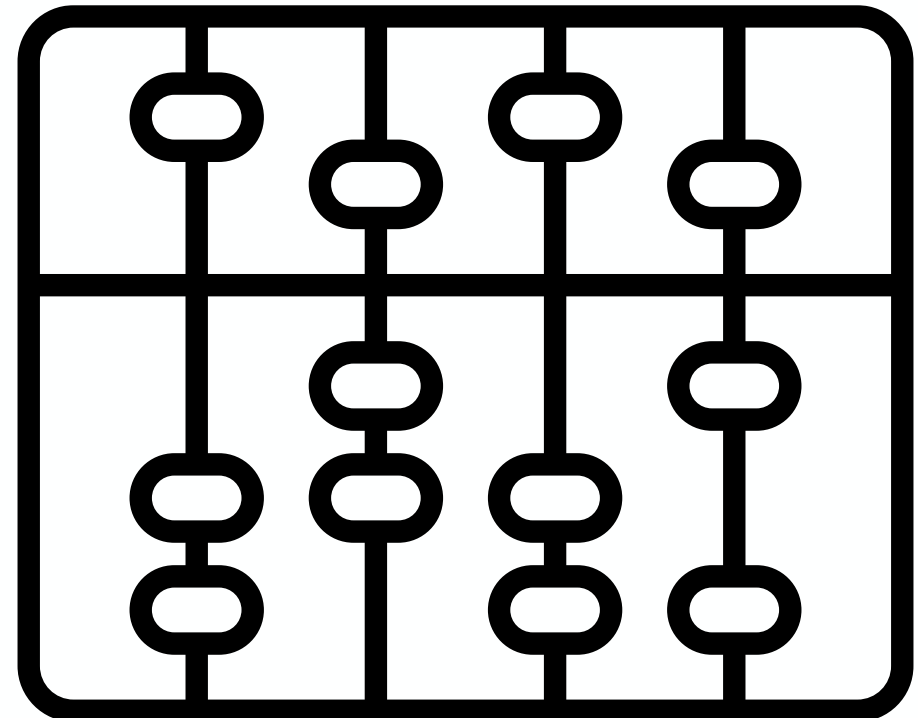
Norrköping – methods/implementation

- Extensive engagement through surveys, workshops, and targeted dialogues with youth in socio-economically challenged areas (e.g., Navestad, Hageby)
- Created the **Motala Ström** river as a central metaphor to describe the "flow" of culture across the entire municipality, not just the center
- Integrated the process with the city's ongoing branding work to ensure cross-sectoral alignment



Norrköping – methods

- **AI-Enhanced Analysis:** By using a custom AI agent, the team could process a significantly larger volume of data.
- **Cross-Sectoral "Internal" Mapping:** involved a breadth of internal municipal departments.



Norrköping

- Political decision on a **long-term strategy**: "When the Stream Reaches All of Norrköping" with priorities.
- Initiating "**Professional Paths In**" for creators to ensure the long-term survival of the creative industries despite budget pressures
- Political anchoring of the strategic role of arts and culture
- **Mobilization** of the cultural sector, Rebuilding trust



Norrköping - a few quotes

”Using AI allows us to afford collecting much more data because it becomes manageable.”

”We have truly reached out to so many and asked questions in this work. There is an **openness** that the city's cultural sector will truly remember.”



**I Norrköping rör sig utvecklingen
som vattnet i Strömmen...**

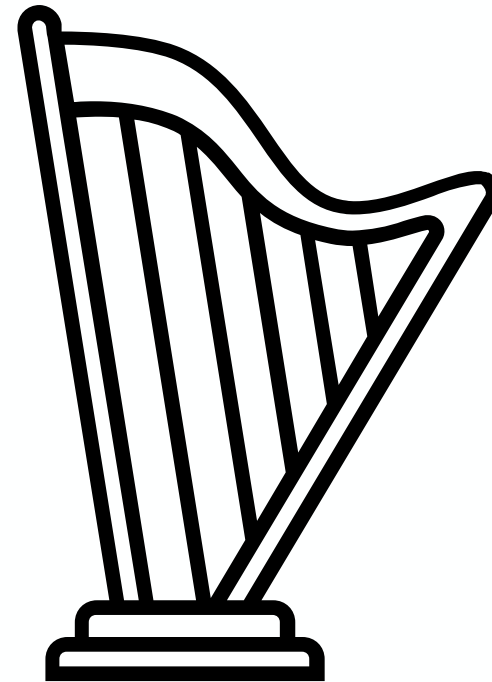
**Här möts stoltheten över
vår historia och modet att
förändra... där historia möter
framtid och det opolerade
förenas med det vackra.**

**Syftet med detta material är att lyssna
på bruset, motströmmarna och de röster
som nu ska forma vår kulturplan.**

Summary

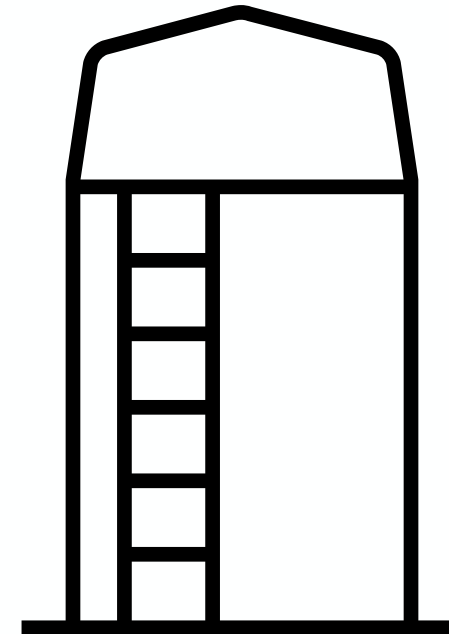
Summary

- **Crisis as a Catalyst:** While administrative silos are deep-rooted, a crisis serves as a necessary momentum to force cross-sector collaboration.
- **Focusing on the Core:** Budget cuts and external pressure forcing a return to traditional arts and culture and the essential tension between intrinsic and instrumental value.
- **AI as a Democratic Enabler:** Digital innovation allows handling of large-scale qualitative data, enabling us to afford to listen to many more voices in participatory processes.



Summary

- **Rebuilding Trust through mapping:** a powerful tool for bridging trust gaps between the public sector, citizens, and cultural actors.
- **Unlocking Hidden Resources:** mobilization of underused assets—be it Sami heritage, ethnic associations, empty buildings, or citizen labor.
- **The Need for New Competencies:** Integrated planning demands new skills for both officials and politicians to navigate the intersection of structure, innovation, and curiosity.
- **Courage is Critical:** Breaking silos and moving from traditional planning to holistic transformation requires political and administrative courage



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