Together we achieve less? Regional governance for development of the independent arts sector and the toil of sector cooperation

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Together we achieve less?

Regional governance for development of the independent arts sector and the toil of sector cooperation

This paper offers an analysis of a case of cooperation, and in particular cooperation problems, between independent performing arts organisations in the region of Skåne, Sweden. The cooperation in question flows from visions of the organisations, and linked regional commission to develop the infrastructure and networks of the independent performing arts in Skåne. The case gives evidence of the challenges of regional cultural policy governance, as well as of the dilemmas faced by independent arts organisations receiving partial funding for their activities from public bodies, as expectations on governance and cooperation roles differ between the parties involved. The theoretical framework for understanding the challenges in the studied cooperation builds on network governance theory developed by Klijn (1996) and Klijn & Koppenjan (2000), as well as on research on public policy and management collaboration (Agranoff & McGuire 1999, Noble 1999, Bryson et al. 2006, Barretta & Busco 2011), discussed in relation to the specific conditions of the cultural sector.

Aim of the paper and research question

The aim of the paper is to describe a case of cooperation difficulties in the independent cultural field, where economic support for collaboration caused organisational paralysis rather than effective cooperation. The paper offers an explanation of the course of events, but fails to find clear suggestions in research on how to solve the problem in a resource-efficient and effective way. The paper thus points to limits in current management research on organising without formal organisation. The research question guiding the study has been: how did cooperation develop since the start in 2012, and what are possible explanations of the documented development?

Disposition

The paper continues with a presentation of the methodology used for the empirical study and collection and processing of data. Thereafter, the case is introduced. Only therafter will the theoretical framework used for understanding the empirical data be presented. This is because much of the concrete interaction relating to and the development activities of the cooperation is not disputed by the participating actors. The interpretation by the participating actors of the action of others has been more controversial, and here the theoretical framework for understanding the strategies (explicit or implicit) of various actors becomes central. After a presentation and discussion of research on cooperation and policy implementation in networks, some conclusions are drawn regarding the case. The paper ends with reflections on the inability of general management research to propose organisational solutions beyond increased hierarchy, and the inability (in some cases) of managerial reflection on the part of directors in the cultural field, something which highlights the often limited managerial skills within the cultural sector, especially in the independent field.

Design of study

The paper is based on work undertaken with a formative evaluation of the work of a resource centre for the performing arts in Skåne, a joint task for Riksteatern Skåne [Swedish travelling performing arts Skåne region], Danscentrum Syd [membership association for the furthering of independent dance actors in Southern Sweden], and Teatercentrum Södra regionen [membership association for the furthering of independent theatre actors in Southern Sweden], during 2013-2015. The formative evaluation work was funded by the Region of Skåne. The case study is thus based on action research into the collaboration in question between three independent cultural organisations within the field of performing arts. All three organisations involved in the resource centre are furthering organisations, with the aim of supporting and furthering the purposes of their members, and also the purposes of the population through public support for their activities. The researcher acted as formative

evaluator, and conducted repeated interviews with all the three directors of the three organisations, interviews with all representatives of the cooperation group (board representatives), and attended a number of cooperation group meetings and work meetings between the directors between November 2013 and April 2015. In addition, two reports preceding the formation of the resource centre, as well as several other reports and publications relating to the development of the performing arts in Skåne and the three organisations were studied. The focus of the researcher was to make sense of the stakes of the involved actors and organisations. Therefore, a theoretical framework for interpreting statements and actions was used for analysis of interaction. This theoretical framework was based on research within governance, in particular network governance and interorganisational collaboration within public management, which will be presented in the section on the theoretical framework.

Resource centre for the independent performing arts field in Skåne – long term development work without a formal organisation

A resource centre for independent performing arts organisations in Skåne was set up without a formal structure in January 2012 as a cooperation between three furthering organisations in the area of the performing arts in Skåne, Sweden, namely Riksteatern Skåne [Swedish travelling performing arts Skåne region], Danscentrum Syd [membership association for the furthering of independent dance actors in Southern Sweden], and Teatercentrum Södra regionen [membership association for the furthering of independent theatre actors in Southern Sweden]. These organisations are established membership associations with the aim of furthering the distribution of high-quality performing arts production outside locations with permanent stages (Riksteatern) and the furthering of production of high-quality performing arts events/pieces in the region. The organisations had experience of project-based cooperation, but in trying to develop activities under the common umbrella of the resource centre, found themselves being torn by internal conflicts. The organisations, together with the Culture Office of the Region of Skåne (Kultur Skåne), decided to invest resources in commissioning a formative evaluation of their initiative and interaction in 2013.

History of the collaboration

Collaborating around the resource centre for the performing arts in Skåne are Danscentrum Syd, a member organisation furthering the work opportunities of independent producers of dance and dancers in Southern Sweden, Teatercentrum Södra regionen, a member organization furthering the work opportunities and conditions for independent theatre companies in Southern Sweden, and Riksteatern Skåne, Danscentrum Syd, Riksteatern Skåne och Teatercentrum Södra regionen had since 2008 had ideas and visions for some kind of resource centre and cooperation with the aim of stimulating an increased audience

for the performing arts (dance and theatre). This cooperation had developed between two of the organisations at times, and some of the ideas had been developed jointly among the three organisations. From 2011, the Region of Skåne through its Office of Culture (Kultur Skåne), discussed a possible resource centre as a way to further increased interaction between the various networks of the three concerned organisations, and of more effective and efficient use of resources within the field of independent performing arts in the region. The Region was also interested in supporting development work among the three organisations as a way to approach shared challenges as regards audiences and outreach. There was an internal decision in the Culture Committee of the Region to support such a formation of a resource centre without a formal structure in order to reduce administrative costs, and in January 2012 the three organisations started their joint work on developing activities of a resource centre for the independent performing arts in Skåne. For their joint efforts, each organisation received between 100,000 and 200,000 SEK (c. 10,000-20,000 EUR) annually to put directly into project work expenses, whereas the working hours spent on the cooperation was to be covered by the organisations themselves. All three organisations, for a start, received annual support for their work in the region.

Activities of the resource centre

The particularities of the concrete cooperation will not be given in this paper. A list, nevertheless, of the various projects/activities undertaken during the period 2012-2014, is included here.

- Producer pool
- Exploration of possibilities of a digital platform for distribution of performing arts productions
- VASS – joint development of productions between producers and organisers
- Work desks for short-term let
- joint marketing/repertoire events
- joint localisation has made more intense contacts and a broader interface possible between the organisations and their collaborative partners

## Formal structure of the collaboration

In short, the formal structure for the activities of the resource centre contained the following elements:

1. an agreement with Kultur Skåne regarding the cooperation of the resource centre, whereby Kultur Skåne through economic support contributes to the creation of conditions for cooperation between Danscentrum Syd, Teatercentrum Södra regionen and Riksteatern Skåne

2. conditions are stipulated in the annual letter with conditions for use of the Regional support through stated aims to be pursued with the regional support (verksamhetsbidrag) to the three organisations

3. an informal organisation, i.e., the activities do not take place within a separate formal organisation

4. the development of activities is undertaken by the directors of the three organisations on a highly informal basis, and decisions are taken on a consensus basis

5. the directors present their decisions and activities for a cooperation/consultation (*samrådsgrupp*) group, consisting of representatives of the boards for each organization, that meets with the directors regularly

6. there are differences in size, mission and purpose, history, and stakeholders for the tree involved organisations affecting perspectives and perceptions

Figure 1. Organisational structure of the cooperation relating to Resurscentrum för scenkonst.
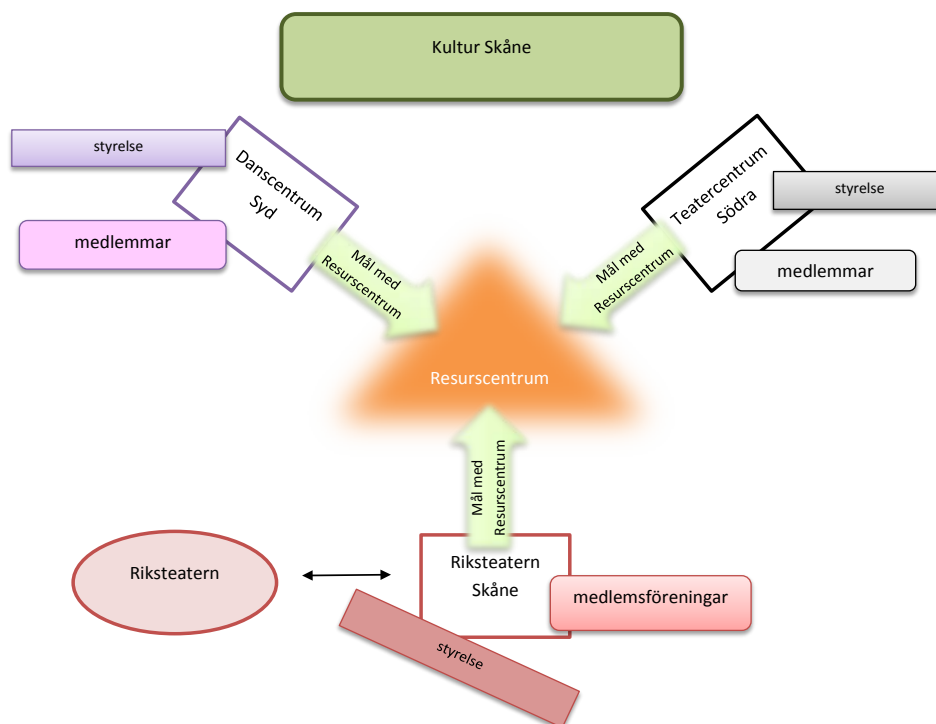
Management challenges

The main internal challenges, that the participants themselves formulated, were rather different. Danscentrum complained that Riksteatern was not interested enough in their proposed ideas, and felt that Riksteatern as organisation was old and tired, and not quick to try new ideas or new ways to reach out. Riksteatern, on the other hand, complained that

Dansteatern was not respecting the rules they had orally decided regarding delegation of project management authority. Teatercentrum saw that cooperation was difficult with Danscentrum since Danscentrum could not reflect on their strategic role in the cooperation, but was only pursuing direct benefits for their members and for dance actors.

Based on interviews and observations during meetings and similar occasions, the researcher concluded that the cooperation had the following challenges:

1. unstated division of decision-making power creates informal negotiations about important issues and decisions
2. unstated operative goals lead to difficulties to prioritize
3. significant differences in the perception of what are the main challenges to deal with as regards the activities and interaction of the resource centre (internal as well as external)
4. substantial differences in priorities and ways of communicating leads to difficulties in identifying common development areas
5. perceived dependence on the Region of Skåne creates insecurity about mandate

What became obvious for the researcher during the formative evaluation work was that the directors of the three organisations had difficulties deciding on and respecting each other's roles in specific development projects. This was also the challenge according to the board representatives regularly meeting with the directors at steering group meetings. The challenge was also identified by the Region of Skåne, which granted allocations to each of the three organisations for collaboration through joint development projects.

The main roots of difficulties to cooperate were by the researcher identified as, firstly, the *absence* of detailed instructions for cooperation, leaving the three organisations to operationalise their own priorities and cooperation, and secondly, relating to the first reason, the differing perceptions of verbal statements and action, and expectations on interaction, in short a policy game being formed. The perception of the stakes at risk in the game differed substantially between the partners, with Danscentrum fearing marginalisation as the smallest organisation and field of activity. This fear was, however, vehemently denied by the director and board representative of Danscentrum. They instead interpreted the action of other actors as malevolent or ignorant of the particularities of the dance sector.

Main external challenges

In addition to internal management challenges, the cooperation also faced concrete challenges within the larger field of cooperation, independent performing arts in Skåne. More specifically, the external challenges were foremost:

- cooperation about and through individual projects are most common in this field, not more long-term cooperation
- competition within and between areas and actors
- different types of support and grants from the Region with differing conditions
- audience, concept and organiser development is complex and challenging

The orientation and target group of each of the participating organisations differed, and thus finding common ground on which to build development and support activities is a challenge for the organisation. This is illustrated in Figure 2. The figure was a result of discussions among the three directors during 2014, and this information had only been shared orally during meetings, and had not been put down in any document. The illustration is therefore a construction made by the researcher to map the respective areas of focus and target groups of the three organisations.

Figure 2. The target groups and target activities of development priorities of the three organisations involved in the resource centre.
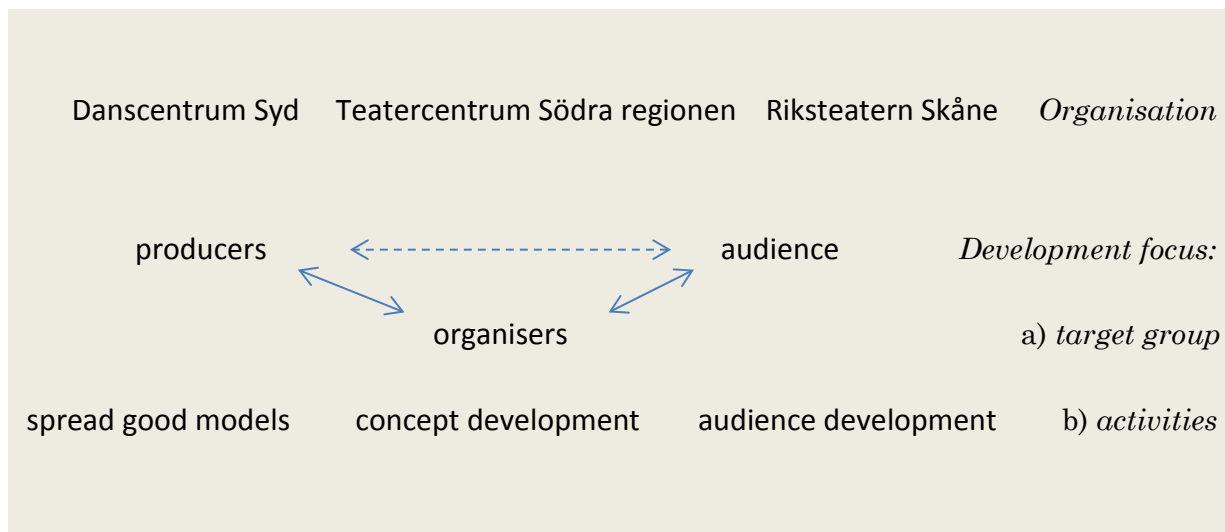
Theoretical perspectives on the challenges of the cooperation

Put shortly, the following descriptions of challenges to and conditions of cooperating in networks for the implementation of policy goals, or in similar circumstances, can be found in research on policy network management and cooperation management:

- the cooperation through the resource centre is a strategic political game in the process of being formed. The negotiation of rules for interaction is frustrating for the involved parties

- it is possible to change the framework of cooperation, the interaction itself, and the perceptions of interaction between cooperating parties, in order to improve interaction (Klijn, 1996)
- essential to cooperation is interest in and need for cooperation, also identification of common areas for goals relevant to achieve together
- formalisation of routines and interaction can reduce collaboration problems if trust is low
- formalisation of decision-making as activity conditioned from above does not necessarily generate better results of cooperation. This is because top-down demands on performance can lead to skimming and symbolic achievement of demands rather than action oriented towards the purpose and benefits of cooperation
- the primary risks for cooperation in the case of the resource centre are turf barriers, interpretive barriers, communication barriers, personality issues and differing goals (Noble, 1999)

A game in the process of being formed

Research indicates that the frustration that the parties involved in the resource centre cooperation have expressed, as a result of the formal organization of the cooperation, is very common in new cooperation. Especially when parties are told to cooperate, even though this is not the case with the cooperation relating to the resource centre, or when new forms for cooperation are sought, without these having been stipulated as regards forms of interaction in advance.

Cooperation relating to the resource centre for performing arts in Skåne is an example of network cooperation in policy contexts. Cooperation between different organisations is often needed in order to implement political decisions, and this means that organisations are dependent of each other for implementation. The political goals cannot be fulfilled if not various organisations want to contribute with their resources and/or competence to the cooperation needed. This in turn would imply difficulties in interaction, and also often difficulties in achieving the political goals that the cooperation aims to fulfil (Klijn & Koppenjan 2000).

According to research on networks in policy contexts (Klijn, 1996), cooperation between organisations in order to achieve policy goals (policy implementation), be understood as a game between actors regarding the policy goal to be implemented. Cooperation as a game means that involved parties have, and mutually develop over time, certain expectations on the behaviour of involved parties. When the game works these expectations, that is the rules of the game, are mutual and shared. The rules of the game define different types of situations

and behaviours that are acceptable in order to achieve the cooperation goal (often to implement actions in order to achieve policy goals). Many of these rules are created without the actors being aware of it. The network is a durable but constantly changing framework for games played between actors. The involved actors constantly interpret and reinterpret the characteristics of the network related to its structure, as they try to understand what rules are appropriate for the game situation they find themselves in. involved actors also constantly claim resources within the network in order to achieve the policy goals. Authority and power in the game depends on resources and rules in the network. Both problems and solutions are developed during the policy process, and need to be solved by the involved parties through formation of rules of the game. The rules for cooperation and interaction take time to develop, and therefore their development is dependent on all parties being willing to participate in the game.

The benefit of describing organisation and action in order to achieve policy goals in networks as a game, is according to researchers that it makes visible the rules that are the result of negotiations between the parties involved in the game. This means that it is possible to understand, analyse and discuss the action of different actors. This in turn increases the possibilities for reflective action. Optimal cooperation takes shape on a voluntary basis, as a result of the parties having identified common needs or opportunities to achieve their respective or common goals more efficiently than if they acted on their own. When cooperation is used as a policy tool, the point of departure is different, not always based on voluntariness. Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) point out that cooperation between organisations or actors that normally are part of different networks is more difficult than cooperation between actors that interact in the same or closely located networks. The reason for this is that if the normal networks between cooperating parties differ a lot, there are not so well developed rules for interaction, and neither is trust between the parties necessarily high. Rules for conflict management, and for the level of autonomy within the network, are vital for the sustainability of cooperation in networks.

Policy network cooperation

As an actor in cooperation, it is important that each actor is aware of its participation in a policy context, and all parties need to play the political game (Klijn 1996). This means, among other things, that all actors need to approach the political demands on accounts and reports on the use of resources for the achievement of stipulated goals. Demands on accounts of resource use should not be confounded with demands on specific performance. Klijn och Koppenjan (2000: 140-141, earlier in Klijn 1996) distinguishes two levels in the structure of network cooperation, an operative level ("process management"), and a strategic level ("network constitution"). This division is of relevance for the analysis of opportunities to

change and improve different elements in network cooperation. Actors in cooperations can choose these strategies without being conscious of the analytical categorization that researchers do. Several of the strategies distinguished by researchers were identifiable also in the case of the resource centre. These strategies will be discussed later.

What the actors in the network around the resource centre, especially the three directors of the operative organisations, can seek to influence are the perceptions of the common game of the other parties of the cooperation (level Perceptions in table 1). In particular, the parties can influence the perceptions of the goals of cooperation, and try to increase the level of goal alignment of different actors, since this creates better conditions for joint action. This is a central aspect of the common game, since all parties are mutually dependent. It is possible, for example, to work for a change of other parties' perceptions of the content and interaction in the common process by introducing new ideas by external actors or through organized brainstorming. These are informal ways of attempting to change the organization of the network. More formal ways are to decide on rules for interaction, or to change existing rules, or to introduce new elements in order to secure interaction, for example through a facilitator, special project groups, a coordinator, or similar. The power balance in the network can be changed by introduction of new actors or positions to the network.

If an actor wants to change the game itself, in other words the overall framework for what is to be achieved, it is possible to try to influence all involed parties' perceptions of what the purpose and task of the network is, in other words influence the perception about the implementation of the policy decisions. It is also possible to introduce new actors in the network, or formally change the different parties' function, and thereby their power in the network (the column Network in Table 1).

Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the fact that strategies and preferences (goals) change over time, and that the perception of what the game is about is created among the actors. It is also important to remember that who is going to organize and lead the cooperation is negotiated between the paries. This coordination can lie within or outside the network, for example a facilitating person (the column Process in Table 1). Finally, management is an interactive and interorganisational activity.

It is also important according to Klijn and other network researchers, that all parties in a cooperation are aware that everyone is mutually dependent of each other, and together discuss what strategies can be developed to manage this mutual dependence.

Table 1. Klijn (1996: 106)

A Typology of Strategies of Network Management

Targets/ Aspects of Management	Level of Management		
	Policy Management	Process Management	Network Constitution
Actors	—	Selective activating Selecting games Influencing inter-dependencies	Bringing in new actors Changing positions of existing actors
Perceptions	Promoting goal congruency Bargaining Providing incentives to affect strategies of other actors	Innovating: changing perceptions on content and interaction of concrete policy processes by elaborating existing perceptions (introducing new ideas by third actor; organized brainstorms)	Reframing: changing perceptions fundamentally (on goals, interaction rules or relations between actors)
Institutions	—	Creating/changing (ad hoc) arrangements to secure couplings between interactions of actors (project group, facilitator/ mediator, etc.) Setting interaction rules for series of games	Changing (formal) laws that distribute material or authoritative resources Changing (laws on) permanent organizational arrangements (example: changing advisory bodies, consultation procedures, etc.) Changing (formal) interaction rules (example: conflict regulating mechanisms)

In addition, insecurity is created in cooperation for the implementation of policies, since different actors perform different actions over time, and these processes are interpreted by all involved parties, something which in turn forms the basis for actions of other actors. This means that actors react to each other's actions and perceived intentions, regardless if these have been discussed explicitly or not.

The lack of a dominant actor in a cooperation does not mean that resources are evenly distributed among actors. Also rules and demands can benefit some of the cooperating actors more than others. This is because rules and demands are designed at a specific point in time with specific interaction conditions, which may change over time. It becomes important to visualize invisible power factors that condition the participation of different actors in cooperation and network games. The concept of game refers to different actors handling strategically based on the rules that exist for cooperation and fulfilment of policy goals.

Small actors can block decisions that benefit large actors most, therefore large actors need to be conscious about their power, and take smaller actors into consideration, in order for the cooperation to be effective and efficient in relation to policy goals. Ways of avoiding blocking of decisions and work need a certain amount of common perspectives on the cooperation and its goals and how and when these are met. Every cooperation is not of equal interest for all actors. Actors that have worked together can display a certain level of group think, meaning that the stakes of the environment or of other parties may not be sufficiently paid attention to, or at all. Cooperation with clear results can, for example, have been achieved precisely because certain actors have been excluded from decision-making or cooperation.

According to Klijn (1996), there is no objective reality as regards the game relating to cooperation. The reality is an interactive construction between the actors participating in the game (Klijn 1996: 99). The reality that is perceived by the actors/participants of the game are relevant for the game, and how different actors perceive reality determines their strategies and thereby ultimately the development of the game and its outcome. Perceptions of reality are those images or definitions that the actors use in the game. It is through these perceptions of reality that actors in the game understand both their own actions and the actions of other actors, and evaluate them. According to Klijn (1996), these perceptions of reality that reveal influence from rules in other networks that individual actors are part of, and are the result of an actor's interaction history. This in turn means that different actors can have very different views on the nature of the game, on what is at stake, and sometimes even of a correct interpretation of the rules of the game. Central aspects of policy network games are, according to Klijn, the perception of individual actors of

- the mutual dependence between actors;
- the ambitions and stakes in the game of individual actors; and
- the policy area and the related political problems that are important within the policy field in question.

For the parties in a cooperation, to create the best possible environment for cooperation means actively finding ways to develop strategies that can unite the different perceptions that various participating actors have, and solve the organisational problems that individual organisations with independently developed strategies may have, since every organisation has its particular and differing goals. Individual actors cannot change the strategy of other actors, but it is possible to discuss common strategies if there is an open and trust-based dialogue among actors. Important dimensions in the process work, therefore, are openness, trust and legitimacy.

Other perspectives on interorganisational cooperation

According to resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik 2003), and exchange theory (Levine & White 1961), the motivation for cooperation between organisations is that this enables each organization to achieve goals that they do not on their own possess enough resources to achieve. Therefore, it is only when an organization realizes that it is dependent on cooperation with others to achieve own prioritized goals that cooperation becomes interesting. In research, it has been pointed to the fact that policy decisions with demands on cooperation within organisations, that cooperation across professional fields is more difficult than cooperation within a professional field, but also that differences in organization size and organizational complexity across cooperating organisations creates difficulties on cooperation, as does different ways of working. Kurunmäki and Miller (2011) indicate that strong professional interests can make interorganisational cooperation in policy implementation more difficult.

Research on social entrepreneurship has indicated that people with long experience within a specific field (for profit or non-profit), may have difficulties in developing new ventures and services that are based on hybrid logics of purpose and organisation (Battilana et al., 2012). Likewise, research on organisational identity and identity hierarchies indicates that a strong organisational identity and identification with the organisation of individual members may cause difficulties when the environment of the organisation changes, and poses challenges for adjustment on an organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

Tyrstrup (2014) used the concept of organizational gap, which occurs when the responsibility, accountability, ambitions, competence, information et cetera of any one individual, group or organisation, ends without any other individual, group or organization takes over. There is a gap in the organisational web, and where there is no organizational preparedness for a specific situation, there is an organisational gap. Tyrstrup also points out that the challenges with organisational gaps often are addressed by further structuring—through the creation of a new organisation that is to enable cooperation between departments. Tyrstrup has studied both cooperative professional teams as well as large organisations such as hospital departments, and has seen that there is negotiation taking place about the relevance of specific competences in a specific organisational (cooperation) setting, and that the outcome of these negotiations depend on the views of those with decision-making power, such as boards or managers, rather than professionals. There is apparently a power game being played in the case of the resource centre, whereas less focus on organisational domains and more on common opportunities would benefit cooperation.

This line of argument goes well with the main ideas of organisational identity theory. Cooperation in order to generate new values is not helped by a strict focus on separate

entities and differences in expertise. This is of course from the point of view of organisational survival, not from the point of view of actors as stakeholders.

Policy implementation networks: the challenges of top-down network management

Lindsey (2014) studied cooperation between a number of public organisations and associations with the aim of stimulating active leisure time in the UK. This was done within the framework of a national policy about cooperation on local level to improve the information about and the access to sports and training for people, and in this way enable them to live a more active life. The network had difficulties in showing clear results. This had the effect that the cooperation was increasingly formalized over time. The study shows that even with a project manager, it can be difficult to establish real cooperation and clear goals, if not all parties in the policy network are engaged and see benefits through cooperation that are larger than focusing on their ordinary activities. Even if all parties share the opinion that a common goal is important and in line with their own organisational objectives, and the network get a large degree of freedom to design the organization themselves on the basis of the wishes of their members. In the studied case, the cooperation was organized with an external chair for the network, and the operative work was led by municipal officials, and there were clear expectations both from the participating municipalities and from national government that performance of the networks were to be accounted for. The networks could formulate their goals themselves, something which led to discussions among the participating organisations about how the goals of the performance of the network could be formulated. This became important, as there were possibilities of "skimming" participants, and therefore be able to show good results, at the same time as they had the aim of taking the policy goals seriously in the sense of helping inactive people to become more active. In these activation alliances, as they were called, the activities during the first two years in principle consisted of ordinary activities that the involved member organisations of the network offered.

Since the management in a municipality in Lindsey's (2014) study perceived that the network did not perform satisfactorily in relation to the goals that were stipulated nationally, the municipality employed a person to develop an activity plan for the coming three years of the cooperation this decision destabilized the network, since a formal activity plan focused more on measurable goals and performance more than previously, and simultaneously resulted in the trust and consensus based climate that had reigned was replaced by more formal negotiations. This development was questioned by a representative of one of the voluntary organisations, apparently more used to informal than formal negotiations in their ordinary activities. National government had no demands on strategic plans for the alliances, so this decision was made by the municipality on their own account. This development, however,

according to Lindsey (2014) shows that the municipality had more specific demands on goal and performance measurement, and this was brought also into the participation in the alliance network. Presumably, this demand was not the result of individual control needs, but of the general demands to report resource efficiency of tax-funded municipal activities.

This development in the UK highlights the risks with politically ordered cooperation—they risk creating symbolic implementation of national policy goals and "skimming", i.e. that certain activities that give high performance points or remuneration levels, but which imply a selection of for example users or cooperation partners, and this risks creating new hierarchies and additional administration.

In the referred study, the difficulties to coordinate worsened so much that the formation of a strategic management group was discussed, alternatively the division of the network into smaller groups in order to increase the capacity to act. In the British case, the municipality decided to implement a more hierarchical structure that would secure that decisions could be made. This decision eliminated the decision paralysis that the network had suffered from, but it is not necessarily a solution that generates a better outcome of the policy, according to Lindsey.

Lindsey's study shows that paralysis in cooperation that is politically ordered, is a real scenario. In the case of the resource centre in Malmö, it can be emphasized that the small amount of involved parties make the demands lower than in many other studied cases, but even the three organisations involved in the resource centre cooperation say that they have difficulties in making decisions. In the case of the resource centre, it is not two public actors that are involved, but the freedom to design the cooperation organization themselves has, as in the British case, created problems, although the idea was to facilitate interaction between the operative parties.

The resource centre in Malmö avoids many of the political demands and frameworks that the British case study that Lindsey (2014) shows. For example, the Region of Skåne has not forced the organisations to report performance in quantitative terms, and not even in any detailed qualitative terms. On the contrary, the Region has left most of the goal formulation and choice of priorities and activities to the organisations of the network themselves. Reporting of activities has during the first three years taken the form of oral presentation of activities and ideas a few times per year to officials at the Culture Office of the Region. In addition to this reporting to the Region, the three organisations have accounted for activities in their annual reports to their boards and members. Through consulation group meetings where representatives for the board of each organization are present, approximately every

two months, even the boards of the organisations are updated on the activities related to the resource centre.

From the discussion above it can be concluded that the network form of organization comes with certain difficulties, especially as regards decision-making based on a principle of consensus. The network risks difficulties in making decisions, and thereby delays in the implementation of prioritized action. At the same time, a more hierarchical organization is a less open and democratic organisations, and may be important in larger networks than what is the case with the resource centre in Malmö, where only three organisations are involved.

The British example (Lindsey 2014) also points to the benefit of being able to choose the level of formalization among the participants of the network, as compared to demands on specific demands on formal organization from above. The organisations involved in the resource centre therefore should appreciate the possibility of deciding themselves on the lever of formalization of routines. A formalization of work processes could result in discussions of alternative ways to organize the cooperation can become more difficult to undertake, and the climate for discussions could be negatively impacted. At the same time it is obvious that the lack of detailed demands is what makes cooperation difficult as regards the resource centre.

The cooperation that was realized in the network in the British case was enabled, as often, through personal relationships. Due to the fact that persons that had been active in the network switched jobs or positions within their organization, and this meant that contacts had to be initiated with new persons. Constant changes among the members of a network makes it difficult to create cooperation, since new relationships between individuals continually must be established and developed, and there are no formalized cooperation routines that reduce the importance of the engagement of specific individuals. Also a general climate of competition that has spread throughout the public sector as a result of New Public Management reforms, makes cooperation more difficult, especially if organisations are concurrently the target of cutbacks. Network cooperation is based on trust, and if competition is prioritized politically, it can be difficult to combine cooperation with network organization of cooperation, where the sharing of information if central.

Normative perspectives on cooperation management

There are many techniques to support decision-making in organization, for example work with different kinds of goals and work processes linked to decision-making (Eden & Ackermann 2014). In cooperation among several organisations, there are several different tools that can be used in the process of formulating common goals. It is important for participants in cooperation how the organizational goals are related to the goals to be achieved in the cooperation. However, these two do seldom coincide completely. It can also

be fruitful to formulate negative goals within a cooperation network, in other words goals that participants do not want to happen. Eden and Ackermann (2014) also point out that formalised work methods in organisational development processes or cooperation easily becomes an obstacle for creative development work, and therefore clarification of differences between goals and strategies between participants in organizational cooperation may facilitate discussions between the parties. This is then a way to work towards achieving defined goals. Goals within a cooperation network can be overlapping or not possible to rank, and therefore be important to discuss.

According to Noble (1999), there are a number of factors that facilitate the implementation of policy (or other) goals at an operative level. These are

- clear goals
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- schedule
- incentives and sanctions
- feedback and adjustment mechanisms

A limitation with this type of general descriptions of good cooperation management is that they seldom give advice on how to act in individual situations. In relation to the resource centre, it can be said that several of these factors are missing. In particular, clear operative goals and priorities, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a schedule for cooperation. There exists an overarching goal for the cooperation, but the three organisations had not, before the autumn of 2014 when they together with the researcher, formulated the goals for each organization for the cooperation and for the resource centre. In the same way, the roles and responsibilities are still in 2015 not clearly defined, and there is no clear schedule for work and initiatives. But after three years of operation, the organisations start to feel that certain expectations exist, especially form the Region. Rewards and sanctions can in the case of the resource centre be said to be linked to the schedule for cooperation, as the Region allocates resources to the three organisations for the resource centre annually, and continued inability to cooperate probably will result in withdrawn support for the cooperation. Some of the organisations involved in the resource centre claim that feedback is not very clear, as the Region has left to the organisations themselves to formulate operative goals, whereas the organisations have perceived the lack of operative goals as lack of detailed management by objectives, and therefore as unclear steering of the cooperation.

The most commonly proposed solution to cooperation problems between organisations is to appoint a project or cooperation manager, which has a superior position in relation to the organisations of the cooperation network. The manager may have been appointed by a

government (Region or municipality), or else have been recruited by the network and given a clear mandate to make decisions on the part of the network. The Region of Skåne did not want such a solution for the resource centre, both in order to avoid unnecessary administrative costs, and in order to keep the decision-making power in close proximity to the operations undertaken. At the same time, the lack of a superior formal decision-making manager for the cooperation has resulted in the paralysis of the organization, since the three organisations have had difficulties in agreeing on projects and activities to pursue.

Noble (1999) further lists to a number of challenges for implementation of political decisions in cooperation between organisations or functions on operative level:

- physical barriers
- turf barriers
- interpretive barriers
- communication barriers
- personality issues
- differing goals
- organisational resistance
- subversives

In the case of the resource centre, it can be noted that the physical barriers have been reduced by the co-localisation of all the three organisations at the same building and floor. But all the other factors need to be discussed between the cooperation partners in a way that strengthens the trust between the three organisations involved. Perhaps in the case of the resource centre, the organisations do not consciously perceive there to be turfs to protect, but at least for Danscentrum Syd and Teatercentrum Södra regionen, being member organisations for independent actors in areas dominated by institutional actors, the importance of making sure that the member stakes are considered is evident. The three organisations involved in the resource centre need to concretise and find ways of managing differing priorities, and this can be done by identifying common goals for the development of the resource centre.

Work with common priorities has as an effect that decision-making regarding different projects do not need to be taken on an informal basis, but can be discussed with reference to how well they fulfil the common goals. This should make turf wars or the monitoring of members' direct benefit from each new proposal less painstaking. The cooperating organisations need to find areas where they have common benefits from cooperation, and the benefits from each new project may not be immediate, but should at least to some extent strengthen the members of each organization by the common activities, as well as the field as

a whole. Important to discuss between cooperation partners are possible conflicts or tensions between organizational and common priorities. It is also important to account for goals in a way that strengthen the trust between the cooperation parties (Agranoff & McGuire 1999). If no common goals or interests can be found, there is no ground for cooperation. Therefore it is important that all parties are aware of and act based upon the fact that each party is dependent on all other parties, if cooperation is to be successful. A first step is the insight that implementation of policy decisions is a game between the political level and the implementing parties.

Interpretation barriers, communication barriers and personality issues are also factors that affect cooperation between organisations. These difficulties can depend on many factors— organisational culture, professional culture, personality and experience, but also experience from cultural policy contexts may differ and influence perceptions of cooperation in the cultural policy area. During the work with the organisations involved in the resource centre, differences in communication styles have become evident, as have differences in expectations on communication and interaction, as well as in ways of working. Often difficulties to cooperate that are based on such factors diminish over time as the cooperation partners as individuals learn each other's cultures and ways of interacting and communicating. The three organisations can strengthen the clarity of communication by deciding on clear rules for communication. This is a formalization of interaction, but it brings with it lower levels of insecurity regarding forms and processes of interaction, and thereby can allow the partners to focus more on other dimensions, in particular the contents of interaction. For example routines for how proposals for new concepts and activities are presented and discussed, are currently creating insecurity within the group of directors. Therefore, a clear procedure for presentation and treatment of new proposals, including decision-making, should be developed.

One of the main challenges from a governance as well as a management perspective is the unspecified rules for interaction. This affects all relationships between the organisations, as there are no agreed decision hierarchies, leaving all decisions to be taken on a consensus basis. This may well work when working on a project basis with a clear direction or goal. But the study has shown that in the case of the resource centre, differing stakes and competition between both organisations and fields affect interaction negatively. A general suggestion in research when it comes to manage difficulties to make decisions due to politics in cooperation in a network is to insert a superior function as manager or coordinator with a decision-making power over those concerned. But in the case studied, the Region as funder wanted to avoid purely administrative costs. Therefore there is no separate organization for the activities of the resource centre. As important as decision-making hierarchy, according to

research, is the identification of common goals or areas of mutual interest that contribute to, or at least does not impact negatively on, each organisation's goal fulfilment. If goals or mutual areas of interest cannot be found, and there therefore is no reason for the parties to cooperate, they can stop or delay cooperation. This results in the goals not being achieved.

Recommendations for future management and governance

As part of the formative evaluation commission, the researcher proposed some alternative ways to organise cooperation relating to the resource centre. The preferred option, according to the researcher, was to stick to the current organisation of interaction (solution d) below). If choosing this option, the organisations, in order to improve the cooperation and pursue the vision for the resource centre, would need to:

1. identify and clearly account for the specific areas that are most central/important to the three parties in the cooperation regarding the resource centre
2. formalise the cooperation with the aim of strengthening the elements (mission documents, reports and accounts, et cetera) that support the future cooperation
3. make efforts to strengthen the trust between the organisations
4. formulate common goals for the resource centre in a 'living' document
5. Danscentrum Syd would be a stronger part in the cooperation through the resource centre if it worked with a strategic analysis of the position, role and possibilities in a more aggregate perspective on the dance and performing arts area
6. improve external communication and reporting relating to achievements

In the autumn of 2015, the organisations were planning to start discussing the forms of cooperation based on the experience of the formative evaluation and its results. It is still, therefore open how the organisations and the Region of Skåne will react to the development of the cooperation in the coming months.

Organisational alternatives

There were, in the researcher's view, some alternatives to the current form of cooperation, as regards governance and management. These alternatives proposed by the researcher, partly based on ideas generated by the participants in the cooperation themselves, are listed below. Alternatives a) and b) were proposed as a possible option by Teatercentrum, since they felt that too much effort was wasted on negotiations instead of on activities. Option c) was discussed by all three directors at one occasion, as they felt unsure about their respective board's engagement in and knowledge of the cooperation and its challenges. The researcher's interpretation was, however, that this option was a way of shifting responsibility to another party rather than taking on the decision-making power themselves. The same wish can be seen in the options a) and b), according to the researcher.

a) the cooperation between the parties ceases relating to the resource centre, and is replaced by other types of collaboration or inititatives, for example between two of the organisations in singular projects. The Region of Skåne designs other types of incentives for development and strengthening of the performing arts field and its accessibility for the audience in Skåne

b) the current organisational form is kept, but decision-making power concerning common activities is moved from the directors to the Region

c) the current organisational form is kept, but decision-making power concerning common activities is moved from the directors to the board of each of the three involved organisations

d) the decision making power is kept within the group of directors and the consultation group, with a formalisation of decision making and a hierarchy of decision making positions within both groups in order to avoid difficulties. This demands changes in interaction as listed under the heading recommendations

It has not been possible for the researcher to find any evident theory or perspective that would explain the difficulties in cooperating between the parties involved in the resource centre, besides general observations of differences in networks and stakes in the cooperation, in competences that are not adequate for the cooperative situation among the positions involved, and the general existence of competition within the cultural field between independent organisations, that colour their interpretation of the cooperation in a destructive way (for the cooperation). At the same time, the three parties involved in the resource centre all state that they want to continue the cooperation. This is probably due to the extra grants allocated for cooperation, that the organisations otherwise would not receive. There was apparently not full confidence in the researcher, as several of the meetings were clearly politicised instead of allowing a discussion and specification of common and differing stakes and goals.

Conclusions

An interesting result of the study is that the literature consulted does not offer alternatives to a hierarchical solution to the cooperation problems of the three organisations involved in the resource centre for independent performing arts organisations. What is suggested in research is to a a superior hierarchical level at which decisions can be made that the directors of the organisations are to execute. The suggestion of introducing a superior hierarchical position where management can be undertaken is equal both in network management research and cooperation management research.

Barrettta and Busco (2011) argue that more research is needed on cooperation related to policy implementation and inter-organisational cooperation involving the public sector, and in particular as regards the role of management control systems in such networks. They acknowledge the general political ideal of cooperation in the public sector, but less is known of how cooperation efficiency and effectiveness are managed. In particular, they identify the issues of management and control of mandated cooperation, governance of public sector networks including formal and informal mechanisms such as control systems and trust), and thirdly the impact of lack of mutual understanding and trust among partners due to previous unfamiliarity or competition on management and control of cooperation. All these three issues are addressed by the current study and paper, although they are far from answered by this paper alone.

It is apparent that much of the frustration and hesitance in the interaction concerning the resource centre is linked to expectations. Expectations on the part of the three organisations as regards the Region's expectations on them to deliver. And expectations among the three organisations on how the interactions should evolve and what (unstated) norms they should be based on. In interviews with representatives of the Region, there have not, however, to date been any specific expectations on performance. This is due to the development having been rather recently initiated (three years at the end of 2014).

The main conclusion is that the competence and the identification of both directors and board representatives is essential in conditioning the possibilities of cooperation without formal structures. Envy and competition have a direct and negative effect on trust, and thereby on cooperation. Independent organisations do not always manage to see themselves as parties comparable to the Region as a funding body. This caused problems in communication on the part of the independent organisations in relation to the Region, as they felt vulnerable and insecure about the attitude of the Region to statements and demands from them.

The study points to the need of further investigation of the usability of general (public) management models and theories in the cultural sector. Another question raised by the study is whether similar challenges to network cooperation occur in other areas of non-profit cooperation, for example in the social sector, or within the public sector.

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