

The State and the Concept of Public Art

-Explored through Policy Assemblage at a Swedish Public Art Agency

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Abstract

This thesis explores the concept of public art within a Swedish state agency called Public Art Agency Sweden through ethnography conducted at their virtual meetings from the fall of 2020 to the beginning of 2021. With the analytical tool of assemblages, the concept of public art is explored in terms of becoming and contestation through looking at policies within the agencies in relation to employee's everyday endeavours. I suggest that this gives an insight into the intersection between ideas and practices within a state agency that strives to make public art a meaningful contribution and integral part of Swedish society under the premisses of the Swedish national cultural political goal. As such the contribution of this thesis is analytical attention to public art in broader governance discourses within an area of the state and culture.

Keywords

The State, Public Art, Public Art Agency Sweden, Policies, Assemblages, Ideas and Practices

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Agenda 2030: a collection of 17 interlinked global goals set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly that are intended to be achieved by the year 2030, with the objective to contribute to socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development in all countries of the world.

Designed Living Environment (sw Gestaltad Livsmiljö): a policy that integrates architecture, design, art, and cultural environment with the objective to enable a holistic view upon living environments to deal with societal challenges and contribute to a more sustainable, equal, and less segregated society.

Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst: part of a previous governmental directive within Public Art Agency Sweden that aimed to initiate and support a wider dissemination of knowledge regarding public art.

One Percentage rule (sw Enprocentsregeln): an economic principle for investments, which means that one percentage of the budget for new, remodelling and extensions of properties, infrastructure and public environments is invested in relation to artistic design.

PAAS/ Public Art Agency Sweden (sw Statens Konstråd): a governmental agency with the overall mission to make public art a meaningful contribution in Swedish society under the premisses of the Swedish national cultural political goal.

Swedish Arts Grants Committee (sw.Konstnärsnämnden): a governmental agency with the overall mission to promote opportunities for artists to further develop their art, to promote artistic development and to support innovative culture. Moreover, they strive to disseminate and develop knowledge regarding artist's economic and social conditions.

Swedish National Cultural Political Goal (sw nationella kulturpolitiska målen): established in 2009, that guides cultural policy in municipalities and regions in Sweden.

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Part 1

Introduction

The idea was born, as many ideas are, while sharing red wine with a stranger. It happened over two years ago, before we had any knowledge about the approaching pandemic and its excessive impacts on our lives. I had asked an official from the Swedish Ministry of Culture to meet with me and discuss what she thought about my impulse to dive into the world of culture from a state perspective. Sitting together at a roof bar and looking over the city while the sun was setting, we shared thoughts regarding structures of inclusion and exclusion and it how can influence individual's experiences of the culture sector, such as theatre, dance, and art. We ended up talking for hours about the democratic importance of culture.

Lars Strannegård (2021) encapsulates my interest when he puts politics, culture and quality assurance together. In a democratic country politics is about driving activities in a direction that is considered desirable, however, within the area of culture, politicians should not direct art (ibid:74). Since a large part of Swedish cultural life is publicly and short-term funded, Strannegård contends, cultural politics balances on a delicate pursuit of driving culture in a desirable direction without explicitly directing the arts. The Swedish government's national cultural political goal is: "Culture is to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on freedom of expression, that everyone is to be able to participate in cultural life, and that creativity, diversity and artistic quality are to be integral parts of society's development" (The Swedish Government, 2021a). When state agencies are part of generating any form of art, the art has to be discussed in terms that provide legitimisation, because they represent the state and are funded by tax-money. Quality assurance is a term increasingly used to provide legitimisation, which becomes interesting because something needs to be measured in relation to the goal, the question is what and how? (Strannegård, 2021:91) I wanted to learn more about how this works, and thanks to the wonderful person I met from the Swedish Ministry of Culture, I was able to get a meeting with two employees at the Public Art Agency Sweden (PAAS), which is a governmental agency that strives to make public art a meaningful contribution in Swedish society under the premisses of the Swedish national cultural political goal (SFS 2007:1188).

PAAS produce, order, and preserve artwork and designs across Sweden and strives to develop and spread knowledge about public art. PAAS defines public art as encompassing all forms of

contemporary art that are displayed in public spaces or touches upon issues of the *gemensamma* (en. collective) (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). Moreover, they describe their commitments as participating in the aim to develop the field of public art and its relation to democracy and artistic freedom in public spaces (PAAS, 2021b). To my delight they accepted my request to conduct fieldwork at their agency. At an annual conference at the beginning of fieldwork of this thesis, one employee at Public Art Agency Sweden said:

Art is a type of knowledge and understanding of the world, it has the potential to offer other stories than those we are used to. It can stimulate conversations and be a bridge for people to meet across. Art can create debates and move us. It speaks to all aspects of humans, including those who are not measurable and rational. Art can contribute to better living standards.

This quote, I believe captures how passionately many of the employees spoke about public art within society. The topic of the conference regarded a new political area and policy called “Designed Living Environment”. According to PAAS, the role of art within the area of policy is vaguely formulated and the art field is vaguely organised. As such, the conference aimed to explore the possibilities of art within the political area, with the idea that “art as a field or sector can begin to formulate how art, its practitioners and other actors can and should contribute to the policy and why it is so important to do it together” (PAAS, 2021a). During the rest of the fieldwork, I came to delve into how policies both shape the work with-, and the conception of- public art within the agency, and how that is a continuous process in their everyday work. My interest to learn more about how the state work within the culture sector, led to an exploration of the concept of public art in the intersection of ideas and practices by taking part in everyday activities within the agency in relation to the different policies. This way of exploring the concept of public art thus became a way to understand an area of culture within a context of governance and the state.

Due to the pandemic and social restrictions, my first meeting with employees at the Public Art Agency was online, and because of my living situation, the only place I could have the meeting in privacy was in my bed. The curious feeling of having such an important meeting from there was just the start of what my fieldwork was going to consist of. As described by Colemans and Collins (2006), the field that this paper builds upon developed rather than existed. It emerged from circumstances of social isolation and my position as an ethnographer, which is constituted by my social origins, affiliations, and disposition. I viewed the particularities of entering the field as an invitation to methodologically explore additional ways of “being there” as sole

means for collecting an understanding and experiencing my upcoming ethnography and fieldwork. Hence, I took the opportunity to conduct a virtual meeting ethnography.

Research relevance and objectives

The fieldwork that this thesis is based upon was conducted from November 2020 to the beginning of January 2021, a time where public space was highly contested. As people around the world were asked to keep a safe distance from each other, our movement in the public sphere was changed dramatically. Katz Thor (2020) argues that art in the public sphere should always be discussed, assessed, and reassessed. She points to how increased awareness regarding art within public spaces was raised during the summer of 2020 when the Black Lives Matter movement questioned whether statues of former slave traders and colonisers should remain. As such, the relevance of exploring areas within the field of the state and public art became even more apparent as the challenging year of 2020 was coming to an end.

Discourses within research of the state oftentimes imply conceiving of the state as an own entity that is separated from society (Abraham, 2006:118, Delanda, 2019), and generally studied in terms of its formation, function, structure, laws, and relations to other similar entities, which tends to produce relatively abstract representations from above (Fassin, 2015). Frequent use of dichotomies like “strong” or “weak” states, or “authoritarian” or “democratic” indicates that the multiple dimensions of the state are often lost when it is implied that states can be measured in a one-dimensional way (Eggen, 2008:137). Moreover, Shore, Wright and Peró (2011:2) argue that a dominant perspective within academic research typically casts policies in terms of “authoritative instrumentalism” which assumes them as “objective entities” that are the result of decisions made by a rational authority, and as such are depicted as linear processes. The academic relevance of my approach is thus to contribute with an anthropological perspective of the field in terms that does not treat policies or the state as static and unproblematic givens, but rather as things that are contested and in a constant process of becoming.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore ideas and practices linked to the concept of public art within the context of the state. Looking at “what a policy is doing” can shift the analytical attention to the meaning of concepts in broader governance discourses and provide an exploration of the particular terms policy issues (Yanow, 2011:305), such as public art. The attention is placed on three reoccurring components of the everyday work at the agency that emerged during fieldwork, which I have named “relating to different policies”, “organisational

change and governmental directives” and “working in projects”. Through the perspective of assemblages, a theory that sees social complexity as composed by a variety of wholes emerging from heterogenous parts (Delanda, 2016) it is possible to explore the assortment of the concept in relation to these components, allowing attention to the various interpretations, navigations, and contestations of the policies within PAAS. Moreover, it provides a way to challenge and develop a more nuanced approach to understanding policies in particular spaces and times in the context of ideas and practices (Savage, 2020:321). As such, rather than providing a synoptic presentation of the concept of public art within a context of governance, this thesis aims to contribute to an explorative understanding of the field by taking notice of the contestation and navigations of the concept of public art within a state agency during the particular time of fieldwork.

The research question is:

In what ways do policies relate to the everyday work at PAAS and what aspects regarding public art do these instances surface?

Outline

This thesis builds upon shared moments in everyday-virtual meetings contextualised through strategic and evaluative reports, structured into three parts. The first part consists of an introduction, a background to the field, the theoretical framework, and the methodological navigations that have shaped the thesis and ethnographical exploration.

The second part consists of ethnography from the virtual meetings at PAAS and is divided in three chapters. In the first chapter I look at how relating to different policies involves considering how varied framing of public art and its funding play in relation to expected result and its role within society. Chapter two focuses on policies in relation to organisational and societal changes and adapting to governmental directives, in parallel with striving for cohesiveness. Navigation regarding being cohesive within PAAS and in their articulation towards others regarding public art is explored where issues of stress and contestation surface. The third chapter explores policies in relation to working in projects, where ideas of artistic quality and its contribution within public spaces are being discussed in terms of locality and processes. This is put in relation to navigating time and resources.

In the last part of the thesis, I discuss the preceding chapters and summarise the ethnographical journey. Here I point to how a continuous problematisation of quality and collaboration encompasses in the employee's everyday work in relation to the different policies and the concept of public art at PAAS. I point to how taking notice of processes of these problematisations can shed light upon the intersection of ideas and practices within the concept of public art within a state agency that works under the premises of the Swedish government's national political goal.

Background

Following, I will elaborate on how PAAS is situated within the context of the Swedish government's national cultural political goal. Furthermore, I will refer to the relation between the Swedish state and the arts, with an account of how I have approached the field from an anthropological perspective.

The Swedish National Cultural Political goal and PAAS

Sweden's current cultural political¹ goal was adopted by the *Riksdag* and established in 2009. The goal is broadly used to guide cultural policy in municipalities and county councils. The Swedish administrative model is characterised by decentralisation with relatively small ministries responsible for budgeting, governance, and drafting legislations. The government policy is mainly implemented through the work that is carried out by the agencies and institutions (UNESCO², 2016). Therefore, the implementation of cultural policy by the agencies are relatively large in comparison to the ministries.

PAAS is a government agency that was founded in 1937 and operates for the Swedish Ministry of culture. It was established in relation to the "one-percentage rule", a preposition from that same year based on a governmental inquiry regarding how artists could expand their role within Swedish society and make art more accessible to the citizens. The one-percentage rule is a financial principle for public art, which means that one percent of the total budget of reconstruction and building is reserved for artwork. The

¹ "Culture is to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on freedom of expression, that everyone is to be able to participate in cultural life, and that creativity, diversity and artistic quality are to be integral parts of society's development" (The Swedish Government, 2021a).

² This report by UNESCO has been compiled by the Ministry of Culture. Its content has been obtained from relevant parts of the Government Offices and from cultural government agencies, primarily the Swedish Arts Council, which is also the official point of contact for the Convention in Sweden.

principle is still present today, but it does not build on a specific model and is therefore applied and perceived in varied ways around the country (PAAS, 2021c).

Since the beginning of their establishment, PAAS has tended to the area of visual arts, architecture, form, and design in public spaces. PAAS orders and preserves artwork within state buildings and other official premises. Moreover, in a bylaw from 2007 it was stated that PAAS should act to make and develop contemporary art as a meaningful contribution within our living environments (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). This mission is described as founded within the democratic ambition that mirrors the Swedish government's national cultural political goal (Ibid, 2019). In 2018 the Swedish *Riksdag* established the principle of Designed Living Environment, a policy that integrates architecture, design, art, and cultural environment. PAAS is one of four governmental agencies responsible for the policy, with the objective that together enable a holistic view upon living environments to deal with societal challenges and contribute to a more sustainable, equal-, and less segregated society. As such, their commitment involves producing and ordering art while contributing to it being an important aspect of society and the public environments (PAAS, 2021b). Moreover, the art they contribute to producing is aimed towards being representative and expressive of the contemporary time in society. During the time of fieldwork there were 41 employees within the agency.

The concept of public art within a context of culture politics

My initial interest in exploring culture from a state perspective stems from its ambiguous relationship. Kapferer (2008) states that the arts are ambivalent to the state and other agencies of political and economic control within society, however art and artistry are fostered and supported by official institutions around the world and have been used by the powerful to project their influence since long before the idea of the nation state came into being. Despite this long standing connection, art has, throughout history, been used to challenge institutions of power and conceptions, values and conventions that are associated by state authority and governing of social orders (Kapferer, 2008:5). According to the Swedish government, the role of culture within society should contribute to equality and societal development that extends and enriched the social and economic aspects of its citizens lives (Jacobsson, 2014:11). Since 2014 the government has brought both culture and media issues, as well as discrimination and democracy issues under one ministry which is the Ministry of Culture (The Swedish Government, 2021b). There are

a large number of agencies that report to the Ministry of Culture, including PAAS, where the principle for the relationship is an “arm’s length distance” (Jacobsson, 2014).

“Arm’s lengths distance” is the guiding principle for cultural politics in Sweden (and in many other countries³) between politicians and the art. Dahlberg (2019) explains it as cultural politics is an area where elected representatives should have ambitions and directions, while the art and cultural expression should not. In other words, politics should make possible and support conditions for art, but not interfere with the content. The principle is interpreted and implemented differently and can create conflicting viewpoints. Dahlberg’s (2019) study for instance, shows that an arm’s length distance contains many paradoxes, where forms of public management display a possible conflict between control of tax-money versus artistic freedom. Exploring the concept of public art from a state perspective becomes interesting because, in contrast to other areas, politics should not govern art and culture.

Jacobsson (2014) agrees that there are strict restrictions regarding what politicians can do within culture, which make culture politics distinct from other areas. However, the governance of culture politics, in similarity to other political areas, are characterised by organisation (ibid:22). He maintains that governance often is less about dictating what is supposed to happen within a specific area and more about creating circumstances for there to be an organisation, resources, and ideas, that will create good activity. Consequently, the possibility for ministers and departments to govern is by creating new organisations, asserting new management, providing budgets for specific purposes and initiating projects, investigations and evaluations. Thus, exploring “good” activity becomes a way to understand governance.

Culture as a defined area of politics was established in Sweden in the shift between 1960 and 1970 and it has since existed to support cultural life. According to Jacobsson (2014:12) the ambition that founded culture politics in Sweden builds upon the idea that culture would not only provide for the peoples “longing for beauty” but that it would contribute to other functions in society such as people’s education. In his review of the history of Swedish cultural politics Jacobsson (2014) describes how culture was perceived as an integrated part of building society. The founding idea was that culture

³ There is an important difference between how Sweden and other Nordic countries implement arm’s length distance in comparison to the British one. The British one build on a non-existing Ministry of culture nor defined area of cultural politics. However, in the Nordic countries and in France, there is a ministry within the government who are responsible to a varying degree of purposeful cultural policy (Kulturanalys, 2018)

politics would contribute to a better social environment and equality within society. Moreover, the idea that culture politics was built upon was that the citizens themselves would be active and co-creative. Culture within politics was considered as an important force in changing society for the better (Jacobsson, 2014:14).

In the formative phase of culture politics, a discussion regarding the definition of culture that considered at the one hand specific forms of cultural expressions such as dance, theatre, and art, and on the other hand considered as patterns that defines our social life. In the latter conception it thus includes all activities that one can engage in to understand the world. In other words, the two perspectives implied culture as either comprising distinct categories or as a wider ethnographic and sociological concept. Jacobsson (2014:15) explains that the establishment of culture politics was founded within both definitions, but because the wider one posed challenge in the concretisation of politics it rather became an understanding of the “position” of culture in reform politics in Swedish society. Since the establishment of cultural politics, the rhetoric and discussions have changed, however, for most of the organisations and actors within the cultural field its foundation still works as a point of reference (Ibid:57).

Within anthropology, the discussion of culture as a concept has existed since the birth of the discipline and is intimately tied to its theoretical history (Barnard, 2000). There are various ways that culture as a concept has been understood throughout history, which are based on theories that are situated in social and historical context that are part of broader economic, cultural, and political currents of their time (Moberg, 2013:2). Kuper (2000:247) summaries that it is a poor strategy to separate out a cultural sphere and treat it on its own terms, rather the anthropologist tries to separate out the various processes that that are lumped together under the heading of culture, and then look beyond the field of culture to other processes to create an understanding of it. Within this thesis the concept of public art is explored through policies. Separating processes that lie under the heading of public art through policies puts, as mentioned earlier, the analytical attention towards the meaning of the concept in broader governance discourse. Since policies are embedded in particular social and cultural worlds or domains of meaning that both reflect and create those worlds (Wright, Shore and Peró, 2011:1) they are not simply external, generalised or constraining forces confined into text but also productive, performative and continually contested. In other words, this thesis considers the concept of public art within a context

of “good activity” (Jacobsson, 2014), which can contribute with insights within an area of the earlier mentioned ambivalent relationship between the state and the arts.

The anthropological exploration of the state through a governmental agency

As mentioned by Shore, Wright and Peró (2011:11) any strategy of knowledge starts from questions about how to conceptualise the object of study. The state is an ambiguous and diffuse concept that encompasses a diverse set of empirical phenomena (Eggen, 2008). Abraham (2006) explains that the answer to the question of what “a state” is, is intimately connected to its historical construction and context, as such anthropologists have historically been interested in the state and have approached it differently throughout time. As mentioned in the introduction, conceiving the state as its own entity and measured in terms of dichotomies indicates that multiple dimensions of the state are often lost. The approach to explore the state through a governmental agency is built on Fergusson and Gupta’s (2006:10) argument that anthropology can offer useful lenses through which to examine the state because it regards its boundaries as constructed, by focusing on particular branches and levels of state institutions. Moreover, rather than taking the state for granted anthropologists can examine how state officials produce plans but also how practices of data collection, planning and so on produce the apparent autonomy and authority of the state (Li, 2006: 385). This view has enabled the approach of the thesis as it enables the illustration of the multi-layered, pluri-centred and fluid nature of this ensemble that congeals into different contradictions.

Furthermore, my approach to understanding the state through taking part in a governmental agency’s everyday work is inspired by Fassin (2015). In critique to the Weberian view of the state as a political association that rests on the “relation of men dominating men”, and the Durkheimian view of the state as a sovereign force preventing other social forces from “being subordinate to individual interest”, Fassin (2015:3) argues that those interpretations imply the state as a logic of power or an imperative for the public good. He contends that these analyses generally lead to a vision of the state as an impartial and dispassionate institution, cold rationality personified in bureaucracy. Beyond the idea of abstraction and neutrality that the state tends to be associated with, Fassin continues, the state is concrete and situated in reality. It is simultaneously embodied by the individuals and inscribed in temporality.

To address this issue, Fassin (2015:10) turn his attention to the physical persons who constitute the state and to the historical reasons which accounts for its developments. He argues that no analysis of the state can overlook the power relations, ideological evolutions, or the peculiarity of each national context. However, it is far from being an essentialised entity that exists in a sort of permanence; the state is at any moment a product of its time. Moreover, because they occupy this specific space where action is produced at the intersection of the national and the local, institutions allow for the theoretically delicate and methodological uncertain operation of interconnecting the macro-social biological and micro-social biological levels; an intersection that has posed a problem long faced by social sciences (ibid). Fassin argues that to study a state agency makes it possible to grasp on the one hand the rationale of the government as well as the work of the agent, the former defining the other and the latter giving content to the former.

Fassin (2015:4) proposes that researchers present what the agents do when working for the state and to consider the policies that it implements within the specific historical period. According to him, the state reveals itself through these professionals as they simultaneously implement and produce public action. Fassin argues that state agents are confronted with explicit and implicit expectations formulated in discourses, laws and rules, while keeping space to manoeuvre in concrete management of situations and individuals. In other words, it is not just the state that dictates a policy to its agents, it is also the agents themselves that makes the policy of the state. They do this by feeling more or less constrained by the scope of their job and resources, by taking more or less initiative with respect to the regulations imposed on them and ultimately by politicising in the fullest sense of the term their actions (ibid:6).

In conclusion, exploring the concept of public art within a context of governance is considered by acknowledging that the content of this thesis has been produced by taking part in a state agency that has been provided with budgets and directives for specific purposes, or what Jacobsson (2014) calls “good activity”. The state is explored through the employees at PAAS and by taking part in their confrontations with explicit and implicit expectations formulated in policies. Approaching policies as productive, performative and continually contested, contributes with a nuanced and fluid insight of public art within a state context. Next, an elaboration of the theoretical frames within this approach will be provided.

Theoretical framework

Within this thesis I take inspiration from the growing literature of assemblages. Stemming from a diverse body of literature, it presents opportunities to explore emergence and heterogeneity amid the data of inquiry in relation to other concepts and constructs without rigidifying into a final or stable state (Marcus & Saka, 2006:106). Theoretically, conceptually, and methodologically, scholars in a variety of fields have found different ways to harness the potential of the assemblage approach to generate insight into a diverse range of social formations (Savage, 2020:319), moreover, assemblages within anthropology have a broad perspective including many different themes (Marcus and Saka, 2006:103).

In the following sections I will present how this perspective has shaped the understanding of the field within this thesis, and finally, which main concepts that have been applied when analysing the empirical material.

Applying assemblage theory

In coherence with Fassin's (2015) viewpoint, the theoretical perspective of assemblages avoids viewing the state as a "seamless totality" because it invites an analysis of the different parts that implies a certain autonomy for the terms in which they relate (Delanda, 2016). The theory of assemblages, as previously mentioned, sees social complexity as composed by a variety of wholes emerging from heterogeneous parts, which invites an ontological scheme applied to different social entities through upward movement ranging from personal scale to territorial states (Delanda, 2006). The theory was developed by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, where they provide a framework for researching space, time, and structures of power (Page, 2020:223). The term assemblage is used to describe the coming together of diverse things and by emphasising on the ever-changing fluidity of an assemblage, it sheds light upon the "becoming" of what is researched, inviting a perspective of being in flux, which contributes to the aim of this thesis to generate a nuanced and fluid understanding of the concept of public art within the context of the state. Moreover, the relations between different parts, or what I call components, of an assemblage are positioned as key.

As mentioned earlier, the Swedish government's national cultural political goal is broadly used to guide cultural policy in agencies, municipalities, and county councils. As such, it

is a fundamental aspect of the explicit and implicit expectations that state agents are confronted with. Rather than emerging fully formed from a single source, Li (2006) argues that many improvement schemes are formed through an assemblage of objective, knowledges, techniques, and practices of diverse provenance. In other words, she points out that there exists no single state vision. Applying assemblage theory can provide a way to challenge and develop a more nuanced approach to the field of research, because it enables a processual understanding of how components, move, mutate, and manifest in particular spaces and times in the context of ideas and practices (Savage, 2020:321). Within the ethnographical scope of the research, this means looking at components within the everyday virtual meetings within PAAS.

Exploring policies as part of a range of components within everyday endeavours at the agency

As mentioned earlier, Wright, Shore and Peró (2011:1) describe policies as embedded in particular social and cultural worlds or domains of meaning that both reflect and create those worlds. Li (2006:386) emphasises that it is of importance to note how it involves different interests, experts, techniques and discourses, and that the shift from one to another is the outcome of agency rather than a master plan. Moreover, goals and desires of particular social groups contribute to the emergence of discursive formations, but such formations are not the preserve of one social group and do not necessarily serve the interest of the dominant class. It is formed within relations of power, but not conjured up by a sovereign will. This view enables a consideration of how other components are in relation and play their part in performing and contesting the policies, which I will now elaborate further upon.

One of the ways that PAAS works towards achieving their visions is through working towards governmental directives that they receive every third year in the shape of different projects. At the time of fieldwork PAAS was coming to the end of a governmental directive and project called *Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst* that aimed to initiate and support a wider dissemination of knowledge regarding public art (Kunskapsnav offentlig konst, 2020). PAAS argues that artistic design in public spaces involves a complex and multifaceted knowledge area, and it is suggested in many cases that it is a lack of expertise that causes decisions that lead to failures in function, sustainability, and design (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). Since 2018 PAAS has, through *Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst*, been involved with research, collaboration,

networking, and knowledge production with artists, researchers, civil servants, and officials, through art and design projects around Sweden to address these issues. This is one of several initiatives within the area of the previously mentioned “Designed Living Environment” that takes an integrated approach to living environments and is a comprehensive national architectural policy (Ministry of Culture, 2018), which will be a continuous undertaking for PAAS.

Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst is described as building upon the idea that knowledge develops and disseminates when people meet across different professional groups. In an evaluative report it was said that “artists, art consultants, curators, and civil servants from municipalities and regions and agencies have participated in the continuous work to surface and develop knowledge about how to better realise public art of higher quality in living environments” (Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst, 2020:2). As many organisations during the pandemic, PAAS has been forced to adapt their daily activities to the circumstances. However, they have still been able to produce public art across Sweden during the last year, open for anyone to visit. Moreover, virtual meetings and conferences, are described as one of the ways to overcome the obstacles of social isolation and continue their work to protect the democratic value of art and the role that it plays in society (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019).

The three-year governmental directive that was coming to an end during the time of my fieldwork and the newly assigned policy Designed Living Environment are important aspects of the context to the following chapters. As was mentioned earlier, the daily activities at PAAS are attached to governmental directives and the projects that are shaped around these. Additionally, the following chapters take place at PAAS within a period of societal changes due to the pandemic. In coherence with earlier mentioned perceptions of the relation between state agents and policies, Wright, Shore and Peró (2011) argues that policies find expression through sequence of events. It can create new social and semantic spaces and new sets of relation, new political subjects, and webs of meaning. Assemblage is an ongoing process, and discursive formation is never complete or finished, rather always subject to contestation and reformulation by a range of pressures and forces it cannot contain (Li, 2006:386). The different components that have been mentioned within the context of research are interrelated, however, the chapters have been structured by dividing the different components into: “relating to different policies”, “organisational changes and governmental directives”, and “working in projects”.

Analytical concepts

Savage (2019) provides three core foundations that are theoretically and conceptually central to an assemblage approach within the area of policies. These are: (1) relations of exteriority and emergence; (2) heterogeneity, relationality and flux; and (3) attention to power, politics and agency. He contends that these foundations signal a coherency with assemblage thinking and suggest an approach that has powerful potential, allowing researchers to see and explain things in a way that many established traditions within policy research do not.

Relation of exteriority and emergence draws attention toward the process of arrangement and power relations that makes some arrangements possible and others not. Savage (2020) exemplifies this by the questions: how are these parts made to cohere and how does the policy relate to other components? These questions help to avoid the assumption of a linear or straight forward relationship between policy and impacts and contribute to a wider understanding of the policy as in relation to other elements (ibid:322).

Heterogeneity, relationality, and flux emphasises the moving and evolving social formations. It pays attention to the process where components come together and transform. It enables a view upon the hard work that is actually required to draw the pieces together within a policy. It offers a view on the components within policy that are not static, rather a process of assembly, disassembly, and reassembly. Savage explains this as assemblages as always in a process of becoming, by coming together and pulling apart (ibid:326).

Lastly, exploring power, politics and agency, helps examine how components are arranged to create a governable form of imaginations, rationalities, technologies and infrastructures, and agents towards a particular direction. It means considering the state as inhabiting both power and resistance and sheds light upon the enactment process. A central practice here is to explore the navigation that occurs; how problems are defined as problems in relation to particular schemes of thought (ibid:330).

In summary, when analysing my fieldnotes I have taken into consideration how policies create new social and semantic spaces and new sets of relations, political subjects, and webs of meaning regarding public art. Within the context and scope of this research, I have further taken into consideration different components within the everyday endeavour at PAAS. Looking at how policies find expression through these sequences of

events and by applying the concepts provided by Savage (2020), draws analytical attention to the intersection of ideas and practices linked to the policies that enable them. This in turn, contributes to a processual understanding of the concept of public art because it emphasises ever-changing fluidity and sheds light on the “becoming” of what is explored here. Next, I will elaborate on how the two themes that this thesis builds upon emerged through the methodological considerations.

Methodological considerations

“Can you hear me?” and “can you see me?” have been the most extensively used phrases within the virtual meetings I participated in. The meetings that the fieldwork is based on have evolved around discussions of art in public places, in parallel with the challenging experiences of adapting to meeting people who are in two spaces at the same time. The virtual aspect has influenced both the context for the employees at PAAS and the way that this study has been undertaken.

The province of anthropology is to interrogate the familiar and learn from the richness of everyday practice. However, one problem that modern anthropology faces is to develop research strategies for investigating the small details of social change that are observable in particular places and the connection to wider processes of social, economic and political transformations (Shore & Wright, 1997:27). The subjects that this paper investigates, such as the state and policies explored within a virtual context, involves methodological negotiating of some of the taken for granted aspects of research such as conceptualisation of the “field”.

Coleman and Collins (2006) describe the ethnographical field as being more than space and place that requires a multi-dimensional approach to understand and “locate”. Rather than existing out there they suggest that ethnographic fields can be conceptualised as an emergent form, which is as much performed as discovered during the process of the research. Therefore, the following parts will elaborate on the methodological aspects that have shaped the content of this paper and to give context to how the knowledge was produced.

An emerging field

During the first two weeks of fieldwork the social restrictions were not as strict as they later became, which made me able to visit the office for two whole working days. A

schedule was made so that there would only be seven employees in the office at the same time. Even though we were in the physical space of the office, a majority of the activities that occurred were done virtually since the people that my interlocuter were working with were not there. At the end of the day after “shadowing” (Czarniawaska-Joerges, 1989) an employee, she asked me: “How are you going to capture all the things that happen between meetings? I mean, right now I am writing emails, that is difficult for you to take part in. Emailing is a huge aspect of my daily work, how are you going to incorporate that into your research?”.

As mentioned earlier, the people I have conducted fieldwork with are themselves involved in reviewing the production of knowledge within their organisational objectives. I have appreciated being challenged in my position as a researcher and my methodological strategies, and how we have been able to discuss how the approach shapes the research. Initiating the fieldwork, I realized that I had to limit my methodological scope to what was happening during the meetings. However, virtual meetings were expressed by employees as a significant aspect of their every-day work and as Sandler and Thedvall’s (2017) points to, essential in how to organise. A stimulating intersection that Sandler and Thedvall highlight is how meetings both produce structures but similarly challenge and question them, thus both creating and challenging social orders. Moreover, meetings are time-spatially bound but are comprised of a dimension with the aim to create something, both consciously and unconsciously. Thus, the ethnographic field aiming to explore what employees were doing is limited to virtual meetings. Nevertheless, it became a stimulating ethnographical field to explore employee’s consideration of policies as meetings are an essential part of their everyday work and can provide interesting insights because meetings have potential to both produce and challenge structures. I shared my methodological scope with my interlocuter concurrently as the social restrictions became more stringent, and the rest of the fieldwork was done from home.

Participatory observation in virtual meetings

The virtual aspect has on the one hand been challenging since it has created difficulties in creating relationships to the people at the PAAS, on the other hand it has contributed with central insights into their challenging contemporary situation which is very much virtual. Adapting to virtual presence has had implications on different levels of conducting fieldwork, from how to approach interlocutors to how to analyse experiences within the field.

As noted from my two days of participant observation at the office, I missed having the spontaneous interactions that happened during lunch, or conversations by the coffee machine, details that can provide contextual knowledge. I connect it to Abidin's (2020) contemplation about her methodological decisions during her digital ethnography where she discusses the encounters in the betwixt of physical and digital field sites. Adapting to solely digital encounters impacts aspects such as visibility and negotiating one's own position within the field where precious moments of connection "behind the scenes" are lost. Moreover, I experienced that the virtual encounters are very much linked to a temporal aspect. A regular day within the field could range from two meetings of around one and a half hours each, to days of back-to-back meetings from nine in the morning to five thirty in the afternoon. They always consisted of a time frame, an agenda, and designed to be as efficient as possible, which has had implications for the interlocutor's experience and their interaction between themselves as well as my own interactions within the field.

In the virtual meetings I participated in, two people cannot speak at the same time and the sensory and bodily interactions are minimized to a square on a screen. If someone wants to bring something up to another person in the meeting, all of the participants can hear it, which additionally delays the agenda of the meeting. As such, the conditions that many of the ethnographic methods presume have been different. Because of the efficiency of the meetings and the awkwardness of taking up precious time while speaking to all participants when saying something, caused me to not speak much at all. Therefore, I questioned if I could define my methodology as doing "participant observation", which is usually seen as the archetypal form of research employed by ethnographers (Aull Davies, 2008:77). However, during further reflections I concluded that I was participating in a very embodied way. My back was aching, my eyes were hurting, and my legs were twitching, as I knew from taking part in meetings that others experienced these sensations as well. As van Ede (2009) points out, emphasis on partaking and experiencing requires an open mind and open body that entails a willingness to give up distance and trust subjectivity. Implementing this into fieldwork meant that I was being attentive to not only what was said during the meetings, but the experiences of the meetings as well.

As a complementary methodological decision, I had individual virtual meetings with eight interlocutors ranging from around thirty minutes to one hour. Rather than viewing these meetings as interviews I was inspired by Pink (2009) and displayed them as a "social

event” or a conversation. When sending invites for these meetings through google calendar, I usually named the meeting as “having coffee together”. Moreover, I have had weekly “reflections” every Friday with my key interlocutor who I have relied on getting access to different types of meetings during fieldwork.

These “social events” did not only create a sense of relief for myself as it enabled informal talks with interlocutors, but the interlocutors also expressed that they appreciated having the opportunity to create a wider understanding of my purpose within their everyday meetings. At a point during a “social event” one employee told me: “I appreciate that we can take the time to talk about our week here! I don’t have the time to stop and reflect during the week.” These conversations and social events have been important to create heightened reflections and new ways of knowing. Furthermore, as Pink (2009) elaborates, these types of settings do not only provide the researcher with enhanced understanding of people’s experiences, but it is also a context where “interviewees” might arrive at new levels of awareness about their own lives and experiences. Through being specific about the meetings not being interviews, but rather a conversation over a cup of coffee, I strived to create an opportunity for a multiple kind of communication about experiences and situatedness that according to Pink (2009) allows empathy and imagination about our ways of being and understanding. In other words, these interactions have been central in my way to interact and create a relationship to the people within the field and bridge the distance that the virtual context has challenged me with.

Because I intended to have an inductive approach (Aull-Davies, 2008) I participated in as many meetings as I could. In total I participated in around 57 hours of meeting-time within the PAAS, additionally five and a half hours of individual “social events” and around five hours of “reflection meetings” with my key interlocutor. The topics of the meetings ranged from discussing working environment, budget, previous art projects, current research projects, and weekly staff meetings. Other meetings were networking meetings and digital conferences, where participants included employees from municipalities, officials from the Swedish Ministry of Culture, artists, and other private actors. Moreover, insights acquired from day-to-day interaction can equip the anthropologist with insights to scrutinise a wide range of materials emanating from other sources than the field, which provides embedded assumptions and nuances of meaning (Wright, Shore & Peró, 2011:29). As such, to get a wider understanding of

what surfaced during meetings, I have furthermore read reports and documents published both by PAAS and other agencies.

During the process of fieldwork, I have conducted fieldnotes (Aull-Davies, 2008:235), consisting of descriptions of what was said during the virtual meetings in combination with notes of observation and reflections. These fieldnotes were then categorised into different themes. As mentioned by Sattari (2018) ethnography is a “dialectic” rather than linear process, meaning that researchers move back and forth between collecting insights and interpreting them. As such, the themes that this thesis is structured around took form from organising my fieldnotes and reflecting on them in relation to theoretical literature, which has been a process of challenging, modifying and refining the themes. The methods that have been applied throughout fieldwork has affected what insight that has been emerging, what has been collected, and how that has been analysed. Additionally, the theoretical frames that I have mentioned have in turn shaped the methodological navigations. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2003:3) points out, to employ an open- ended approach and a flexibility towards what is surfacing, such as further social restrictions, within my area of interest has led to the research being redefined and transformed over time. As explained by Cerwonka and Malkki (2008:20) doing ethnography is more than the sum of the various task one does during fieldwork. My experience of the methodological navigation resonates with their description of fieldwork; not a steady, linear accumulation of more and more insight rather rushes and lulls of activity and understanding (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2008:5).

Ethics and positionality

Throughout fieldwork I have striven to create a daily engagement with ethics as a process (Cerwonka & Malkki, 2008:4) by being transparent about the ethnographical techniques towards interlocutors and within the thesis and by implementing ethical guidelines (ASA, 2012) such as writing in a way that provides anonymity to the interlocutors. All the mentioned names of the employees at PAAS are pseudonyms. Moreover, I decided quite quickly when embarking on fieldwork that I did not want to record the meetings or the “social events”, which has been a bittersweet decision (mostly experienced through cramps in my fingers during the excessive typing during meetings). Despite the benefits of recording devices, the methodological decision has been an ethical one. Most importantly I wanted interlocutors to feel safe in meetings and not experience the pressure of someone recording their every word. Furthermore,

that explains the lack of personal descriptions or titles in the thesis; they are excluded to protect the anonymity of the people within an agency with a small staff working within a relatively small professional field.

Additionally, the decision to not record has a time aspect. If I were to ask permission to record at the start of every meeting it would initiate a process that inevitably would take away time from their work. The decision to not record the “social events” and the weekly reflections can simply be explained by the setup of the interaction. The intention was, as previously mentioned, to have a social event and a reflection, not an interview. I wanted to create a space where we had the best opportunities possible to create an open and natural dialogue.

The methodological aim has been to make the fieldwork as participatory as possible, to capture the everyday experiences of working within a state agency involved with public art. My knowledge regarding art is limited, which created a worry that I would not be able to participate in the field in a valuable way. Even though it has been challenging going from being a complete outsider within cultural spheres to take part in a prestigious organisation in Sweden when it comes to working with public art, the entry point throughout fieldwork has been that my position can be beneficial when exploring the concept of public art precisely because I had little preconceptions of it. The ways that I have approached the concept is through focusing on policies using theories of assemblages. Consequently, my position, methodology, and theoretical framing have affected the way that this thesis has developed. Being reflexive⁴ and transparent about the methodological navigations is one way of giving context to what will be narrated in the following chapters.

⁴Aull-Davies (2008:4) describes reflexivity within research as in the most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research. These effects can be found in all phases of research process from initial selection of topic to result.

PART 2

Relating to different policies

Discussing the implications between the One Percentage rule and Designed Living Environment

Me and Roger, an employee at PAAS, had decided to have a “breakfast hangout”. It was early in the morning and his computer did not want to collaborate, so we decided to phone each other. Sitting in our respective sofas our sleepiness disappeared once we started to talk about his work within PAAS. His tone got increasingly engaged as we spoke about his view of the state and public art. The conversation orbited around a discussion of the One Percentage rule and Designed Living Environment.

Prior to the breakfast hangout I had read an overview by The Swedish Arts Grants Committee⁵ of how the One Percentage rule was applied in Sweden in 2018 and I was curious to hear Roger’s perspective. In the overview I had learned that 33 % of all the municipalities did not use the One Percentage rule at all (Söderbeck, 2020:7). However, there has been an increased usage in general since 2012. It was argued that the One Percentage rule is important for artistic practises within public environments because in contrast to project-based budgets, that is common within culture politics, it is described as providing continuity (Ibid). The stated aim of the overview was to contribute to increased knowledge about how the state, regions, and municipalities can create financial capacity for public art⁶. Since the “rule” presupposes growth, municipalities and regions that do not build or rebuild need to be creative to find economic resources. Suggestions of how to regard those challenges were presented where they pointed to how collaboration between regions, municipalities with state support through designing commitments (sw. gestaltningsuppdrag) (Söderbeck, 2020:8) as one way. Additionally, artistic initiatives were mentioned as an important factor (Ibid:101).

The rule, as mentioned earlier, is not a rule but a principle and has existed since 1937 when PAAS was founded. Within the overview the One Percentage rule is depicted as long-lived and

⁵ The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (sw.konstnärdsnämnden) is a governmental agency with the overall mission to promote opportunities for artists to further develop their art, to promote artistic development and to support innovative culture. Moreover, they strive to disseminate and develop knowledge regarding artist’s economic and social conditions.

⁶ For further information read “Ingen regel utan undantag”: it was written in 2013 by The Swedish Arts Grants Committee where they made a historical review of how the 1 % rule has been implemented. Moreover, two larger investigations have been carried out by the agency since then.

fruitful because it provides flexibility to implement it depending on the circumstances of the municipalities and regions. Moreover, it is said that implementing the One Percentage rule involves a process where different actors within different competences are involved and is therefore argued to contribute to a continuous discussion about artistic quality in public spaces, which enables a democratic conversation about public art (Söderbeck, 2020:109). Roger stressed the importance of collaboration. We talked about how processes of creating funding for public art also reveals applied arguments of why it is important within society. Here, he argued, Designed Living Environment offers a contribution to the One Percentage rule when working with public art in Sweden. Speaking about the implications between the One Percentage rule and Designed Living Environment, Roger said:

The One Percentage rule, in my opinion, does not only speak about how to finance public art but it also speaks about the proportion of the expected result. The culture has 1 % influence in what is happening when we are rebuilding. What happens within the other 99 %? The relationship between Designed Living Environments and the One Percentage rule can be interpreted that way, it is not only about the budget but about the expectation and approach towards the role of art and culture within our living environments.

Roger explained that developing interaction between contemporary art and public spaces and facilitating continuous work with public art within municipalities and regions, involves an interplay between creating financial means and distinguishing its relevance. He pointed to how collaboration and co-creation has the potential to shift ideas of what public art should contribute to our living environments. Designed Living Environment, Roger continued, adds to this interactivity.

The aim of Designed Living Environments is described within the policy as “to make the most of what architecture and design can bring to the development of society, for the benefit and enjoyment of all” (Policy for Designed Living Environment, 2020). It is framed as having people’s needs at the centre of society’s development, enabling people to live in inclusive and well-designed living environments that are sustainable in the long term. As Roger said: “It is about public spaces and environments that build upon co-creation and democracy. The challenge is to make these ideas into action”. The specific area of responsibility for PAAS, stated by the Ministry of Culture, is to elevate the artistic perspective and the role of art in our public environments in the pursuit of sustainable designed environments. Moreover, together with state property owners, developing supportive methods for implementing the One

Percentage rule. The overall aim is to increase the knowledge of the artistic contribution to Designed Living Environment, where government agencies are expected to act as “a role model” when ordering and achieving sustainable living environments (Ministry of Culture, 2018:8).

I spoke to Eva, another employee at PAAS, about “acting as a role model” when achieving sustainable living environments. Like Roger, she expressed the pitfall of ambitions becoming words rather than actions and how achieving sustainable living environments involves a focus on collaboration. Eva oftentimes during meetings raised the importance of PAAS supporting and highlighting the small-scale work. For her, acting as a role model within the area of sustainable living environments includes working with the policy that connects to more than the larger cities. Eva told me:

“Place” and “locality” are a national and societal issue, there is an ongoing segregation. Especially between the rural and urban areas. We have great examples of smaller regions that have been undertaking great progress for sustainable strategies considering their living environment, and PAAS wants to highlight and support this. I believe that the urban and large-scale projects need to take a step back here. In the smaller communities there is a closeness to the inhabitants that larger cities never can achieve. When speaking of the visions within Designed Living Environment it is usually urban and large-scale focus, I think it is of importance to nuance this and surface and empower what happens in the rest of Sweden.

Eva pointed to how local knowledge provides opportunities for sustainable strategies and emphasised how rural areas might be forgotten within the expansive visions of Designed Living Environments. Furthermore, she said that there has been a persistent idea that PAAS as a governmental agency is a concern for Stockholm and larger cities in Sweden. Therefore, Eva explained, it is of additional importance for PAAS to take part in regional structures and contribute to further dialogue to dispute this view. She emphasises that this is something that they need to work hard with, because it does not happen automatically. She said: “It is about prioritising resources.”

PAAS describes the purpose of Designed Living Environments as the democratic right to culture and art, which is a national standard, however it is very much a locally entrenched enterprise (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). During various meetings it was pointed out how locality and knowledge about a place is the fundament of Designed Living Environments. Eva,

Roger, and other employees explained that the challenge is to find ways to collaborate and create synergies that extend the boundaries between the different parts within the field. These could be boundaries between different agencies, local actors, civil society and the state, rural and urban areas.

In a report written by The Swedish Arts Grants Committee, it is explained that prior to Designed Living Environment, public art did not have a concrete connection to community planning, architecture, and shared environments (Söderbeck, 2020:107). As such, with Designed Living Environment there is a process of involving additional actors within the field of public art. In similarity to what was emphasised as the importance of the One Percentage rule as continuously bringing different actors together to contribute to a democratic conversation about public art, Designed Living Environment was described by Roger as providing an additional valuable dimension because it involves an approach to public art that is incorporated in a holistic approach to living environments. Roger connected the shift in the expectations to the definition of quality within public art. He explained that “quality” is dualistic and has many different features. He argued that collaboration within art is a quality within itself. I had a hard time following his argument, so he gave me an example:

Let us imagine that we leave the idea of the lone genius who does everything by themselves and start thinking about what happens when co-creation and participation becomes the quality of art. What happens then, when we create a shared context, a common space, or a movement, within society? What has been created through this might not be visual or tangible, you might not be able to visit it on the square, but it definitely contributes to quality. Then we move away from art as being decorative and towards something else.

What Roger mentioned here is that he views policies as indicating different expectations of what public art should contribute to, which also shed light upon the perception of the quality of public art. Policies imply different frames of funding for which art projects are created and were discussed within the agency as shaping the ways that public art is both conceptualised and performed. The One Percentage rule that has been employed since the start of PAAS in 1937, assumed an approach to art that is tightly connected to the history of industrialisation and material growth (PAAS, 2021c). The prerequisite of financing public art has been through rebuilding of cities and towns and was moreover expressed by some of the interlocutors as implying “decorative” purposes. With Designed Living Environments, there is a shift in the approach to public art as incorporated within a holistic approach to living environments and

with the expectation to what the art is supposed to contribute to. However, the persistence and reliance of the One Percentage is contended, by both interlocutors and within reports published by governmental agencies, by emphasising the flexibility of the policy since it can be applied in a way that fits the particular context of the municipality, region or state. Because it is a principle rather than a rule, it is moreover argued by employees at PAAS and within reports written by The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Söderbeck, 2020), to contribute to a continuous dialog on how to work with public art. In the next section, the discussion of how to proceed cultivating a continuous dialogue regarding public art and its contribution to society in relation to different policies is elaborated upon.

Creating a dialogue to consider the future and Agenda 2030

As mentioned previously, PAAS has historically tended to the area of visual arts, architecture, form, and design in public places and the agency was established in relation to the One Percentage rule. As such, communicating towards regions and municipalities has been fundamental. As mentioned earlier, the One Percentage rule has a long history and has been, and is still, applied differently across the country. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee describes in their report that concern towards the One percentage rule has varied in pace with circumstances for state involvement and influence within public environments, due to increased structures of privatisation for instance. However, during the 2000s within municipalities, county councils and regions it got renewed attention, which has actualised how to work with the One Percentage rule within the area of public art (Konstnärsnämnden, 2013:37). Moreover, during the last couple of years several seminars, conferences, workshops, and networking events have been conducted within PAAS through *Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst*, that aimed to stimulate knowledge and enable a critical dialog (Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst, 2019:32).

Elevating a critical dialogue regarding public art is of importance, an employee explained to me, because it is connected to creating engagement and in the making of relevance. For future endeavours, PAAS employees described the importance of cooperating to develop knowledge about public art and improve its circulation between a wider array of people and professions. Various employees mentioned how public art is important for those who are not “born” within spheres of artistic interests because it is a part of the public domain. Furthermore, they said that art with high quality can contribute to common living environments which benefits us all, including those who do not “care for art”. However, they were asking themselves how to reach

people. Curious to hear more about employees' perspective of the general mild engagement of discussing public art, I asked an employee called Clara about it. She said:

Public art might not always be something that people become aware of. It might be felt and experienced but not consciously reflected on. And maybe that is one of the good things about public art, it does not have to be seen. Sometimes it is just there to generate a feeling about a place.

Even though the experience and feelings that public art can contribute to is described as essential, the policies imply the need to create a dialogue about it. Clara spoke about the intersection of creating engagement amongst more people and developing knowledge regarding public art. She told me that there are different layers of information that need to be communicated. For example, illustrating how their work, through Designed Living Environment, is part of Agenda 2030 was mentioned as one way to create conversations. In the Designed Living Environment policy, it is written that the importance of many people being knowledgeable about the Designed Living Environment is vital to the development of democracy (Ministry of Culture, 2018). It is argued that factors that determine how it develops is a comprehensive and dynamic public debate about what is built and produced and our environment within urban and rural areas, public spaces, housing, and surrounding features.

ArkDes writes, in their report about Designed Living Environment, that the current Swedish national architect came into position in 2019 and has since worked to implement the Designed Living Environment policy into practice (ArkDes, 2020). The national architect is described as having a leading role in networks within the area of sustainable living environments, part of the UN:s Agenda 2030, which the policy of Designed Living Environment is linked to. Previously to the policy for Designed Living Environments there were *Framtidsformer* (Prop. 1997/98:117). When the proposition *Framtidsformer* was introduced in 1998 it was the first time ever that public space and environments were presented as a political area (ArkDes, 2020). And now, as mentioned earlier, public art is through Designed Living Environments connected to community planning, architecture, and shared environments. PAAS writes on their webpage that during the early 2000s, social sustainability and people's opportunities for participation were increasingly highlighted in discussions of planning of living environments. Due to this, amongst other things, a government inquiry was appointed to understand how *Framtidsformer* could be developed and renewed, which led to Designed Living Environments (PAAS, 2021c).

In an evaluating report done by ArkDes, they highlight that one of the most crucial aspects to take into consideration within the political area is to take the inhabitant's needs and desires as a central entry point. This is described as one of the greatest challenges within the development of society; how to involve the inhabitants in a meaningful way in connection to decisions of developing their local environments (ArkDes, 2020). The report argues the importance of developing cities and towns in interplay with the people who live there, a process which requires innovative methodologies. During a meeting where a discussion considered how PAAS as a governmental agency can contribute to reaching out to the public about Designed Living Environments, employees pointed to how it connects and counters large societal phenomena such as 100th year of democracy or the year of a general election.

Eva reminded us during strategic meetings that in the year of 2021 it is the 100th anniversary of democracy in Sweden, and in the year of 2022, it is time for a general election. Employees spoke about how these are important events to counter when raising Designed Living Environments and how public art contributes to society. PAAS point out in one of their reports that art in shared public spaces has the potential to surface unarticulated feelings as it creates different reactions, engagements, and experiences, which is important for public debate. When opinions clash about public art, it creates opportunities to reflect on both our own and other's standpoints, which can change and develop us as human beings (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). During various types of meetings, employees discussed how there is a need to make visible how public art is created in order to make room for further reflections and conversations. They raised questions such as: how can they make visible and inspire a reflection on our living environments and cultural heritage?⁷ Employees said:

-We have mainly focused our communication on the civil servants so far, that is part of the foundation of our agency. If we want to reach public society, we need to shift the spotlight on other things that we are doing. Stories about art that can reach anyone. We just need to think about what is accessible.

-There are many pieces that must be put together. When we communicate, we need to make it accessible and easy to understand. Kunskapnav Offentlig Konst is a part of PAAS, but the project is finished. We need to demonstrate how future attention will still disseminate knowledge, but in a new way. Moreover, we need to put it within the context of Designed

⁷ Further information about PAAS work regarding cultural heritage can be found in the report: "Ett kulturarv": <https://statenskonstrad.se/rapporter/>

Living Environment as a political area. We need to think far ahead. PAAS is also engaged in Agenda 2030.

As mentioned earlier, the public sector is portrayed in the Designed Living Environment policy as representing the public interest and considers “the bigger picture”. To increase inclusion and democratic participation, “development of methods” is described as important in the context of design processes (Policy for Designed living environments, 2020). However, what this entails is not elaborated upon within the policy. To understand organisational decision-making processes and methods in relation to budget and time frames within public art, PAAS hired a researcher to investigate⁸. An employee called Ronja told me:

We wanted to understand the nexus of official assignments and self-initiated projects and how we can create a local rootedness within the work of public art. As we can tell from the report, there are already synergies happening within the field of Designed Living Environment. Some have interpreted the Designed Living Environment as an indication to build completely new structures, where some agencies should have a more prominent role than others. But I think that instead of building new structures we can utilize what is already there and make visible the ongoing connections and interactions. PAAS should not come with a “solution”, I think we can use the report and the Designed Living Environments to surface the possibilities that lies ahead of us and contribute to collaboration.

Designed Living Environment presents the need to reach public society and further collaborate with other agencies and actors. Employees at PAAS spoke about the importance of local rootedness within projects of public art and creating opportunities for collaboration. However, as mentioned by Ronja, there has already been collaboration within the field. Ronja’s way of navigating the implications of Designed Living Environment is to shed light upon the synergies that have happened thus far. However, she too, further emphasised that reaching civil society is of importance. Engaging the public is a journey, another employee said, and since there is a lack of exchange between silos, and between politicians and artists for example, makes it difficult to collaborate to reach the public. During meetings when this was discussed, employees raised questions such as: “How can we create a sense of belonging within the whole field?” and “How can we create a context where we can work on the relationships?” These questions were

⁸ “Utanför de institutionella väggarna” read report here:
https://issuu.com/statenskonstrad/docs/utanfo_r_de_institutionella_va_ggarna_200203_webb

discussed by employees as fundamental for enabling the policy Designed Living Environments and within the making of public art visible to the public. Here is a sequence of what was said:

-Everything is connected to Agenda 2030, from the little piece of art or design. There are a variety of examples of this that we can bring up. We need to be strategic about our communication so that it reaches people in the way we intend.

-We have already reached a lot of the officials, and the area of regions, municipalities, and people who work with art. So, we are not starting from zero.

-But we need to connect it to the larger picture; we need to illustrate why art is important for public society. We need to demonstrate how the art is not only there for the officials, but there for everyone. Also, we need to consider the pedagogical aspect of communicating when speaking about a particular piece of art and tying it to the larger issues.

Navigating intention and expected result

In this part I have focused on a component within PAAS everyday work that I call relating to different policies. PAAS strives to make public art an integral part of Swedish society where they historically have tended to work in relation to the One Percentage rule. Finding economic capacity through the guideline when rebuilding and developing, the One percentage rule is described as providing flexibility and continuity within processes of public art. Even though it has gotten increased interest since 2012, there are still a lot of municipalities that do not use it. What Roger, Eva and Ronja pointed out is that collaboration between different actors can enable finding economic resources outside of the assumptions of material growth within municipalities and regions. Maintaining a conversation is argued as surfacing how expectations of public art and the different qualities it entails shapes ideas that are linked to how to perceive a public space and the contribution of art within those spaces.

When asking Roger to elaborate on the implication of the policy Designed Living Environment, he pointed to how Designed Living Environments removes the focus from the separate parts when thinking about public spaces, to view it holistically instead. According to him, Designed Living Environment invites a shift of the perception of expectations and conception of the quality of the art and its role within public environments by viewing the process within a public art project as significant rather than the actual monument for instance. Moreover, what is mentioned as providing financial capacity to produce public art through rebuilding is described as challenging for the smaller municipalities in Sweden. Employees at PAAS knows, from previous missions and projects, that smaller municipalities are in especial need of support when

working with public art, which has been addressed within PAAS in the last couple of years (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). However, Eva points out that smaller communities have a closeness to its inhabitants in a way that the larger cities cannot achieve. Working with Designed Living Environments invites the concept of public art in relation to “locality”, which implies that knowledge about a place is vital for the development of sustainable strategies for living environments, which benefits smaller municipalities and regions.

The One Percentage rule and Designed Living Environment from the perspective of Wright, Shore and Però (2011) are not simply external, generalised, or constraining forces confined into text, rather they are productive, performative and continually contested. Everyday work, such as supporting municipalities, incorporates creating the means for financial capacity and viewing artistic quality and collaboration as contributing to sustainable living environments. The ways that employees handles different policies in different aspects of their everyday work, and how that play a part in navigating expectations and intended result, can be regarded as one of the ways that ideas and practices connected to the concept of public art at the state agency are assembled, disassembled, and reassembled (Savage, 2020).

Jacobsson (2014) describes how culture is perceived within culture politics as contributing to a better social environment and equality within society. In this context, public art is conceived as encompassing the potential to surface unarticulated feelings, creating engagement and reactions, which is important for public debate and democracy. Moreover, Designed Living Environment being linked to Agenda 2030, involves “public space” and “living environments” as a political area. Savage (2020:325) points to how an assemblage approach draws attention to the ways in which heterogeneous forms hold together, and that forms of coherency are thus established out of multiplicity. Pointing to how ideas within artistic quality and its contribution within public spaces in these instances involves different interests, experts, techniques and discourses (Li, 2006) such as being part of Agenda 2030, enables a processual understanding of how the concept, moves, mutates, and manifest in particular spaces and times in the context of ideas and practices (Savage, 2020:321). As PAAS writes on their webpage Designed Living Environment was developed from the proposition *Framtidsformer*, to incorporate social sustainability and people’s opportunities for participation in planning their living environments. Exemplified through the conversation between employees in the discussion of how to be strategic about their communication; working with public art includes articulating public art in a way that creates engagement. The concept of public art thus involves what they call the

“larger picture”, in a sense, its ties to artistic quality contribute to living environments within society.

What is mentioned as a prerequisite of creating public art of high quality within the different policies is collaboration between various actors, both for creating financial capacity for the art but also for creating a continuous dialogue. As illustrated from the conversation with Ronja, PAAS has investigated the nexus of official assignment and self-initiated projects within public art. She pointed out that there are already synergies happening within the field of Designed Living Environments and that instead of building new structures of collaboration, it is important to utilize the connections and interactions that are already there. Designed Living Environments, for her, provides opportunities for PAAS to surface the possibilities that lie ahead regarding public art and to continue the creation of opportunities for collaboration.

Policies find expression in the practice of everyday work but are also navigated and contested within these different instances. Working with various policies, employees are taking into consideration what implications there will be for the intentions and expected result of a public art piece, and the effects on the process behind it. In other words, it supports Fassin’s (2014) argument that it is not just the state that dictates a policy to its agents, it is also the agents themselves that make the policy of the state. They do this by feeling more or less constrained by the scope of their job and resources, by taking more or less initiative with respect to the regulations imposed on them and ultimately by politicising in the fullest sense of the term their actions (Fassin, 2014:6), which is a topic the next chapter will elaborate further on.

Organisation and governmental directives

Finding clarification within change

Most of the meetings within PAAS started with a check-in. Before briefing the rest of the participants where they were with their individual tasks, the check-ins usually started with employees saying one or two sentences about their current state of mind, which often included feeling stressed or tired because of the huge administrative load at the end of the year. PAAS runs regular branches within the organisation which are: “permanent art”, “temporary projects”, “urban development”, and “art collections”. As of 2018, urban development produced in the government assigned to *Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst* are also reported under this branch, while the whole government direction in its entity is reported under “develop and disseminate knowledge” (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). PAAS describes that these branches together contribute in various ways to an increased understanding of what public art can contribute to people and society (ibid). Ronja told me whilst “having coffee together”:

As a governmental agency, we have the duty to distribute tax money in a way that is systematic and accountable. We need to clarify, make plans of actions, and continuously answer the question of why; why are we doing this.

What she mentioned about the organisations, by way of clarification, make plans of actions and answer questions of “why are we doing this” was especially noticeable during the time of fieldwork when employees were on the one hand in an evaluative period because of the culmination of *Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst*, but also in a period of change when preparing themselves to adapt to new governmental directives. Hours of the meetings that I participated in evolved around collecting different forms of data (such as descriptions of processes of collaboration with various actors, such as municipalities for example, and reviewing of used budget) from different employees or units into one platform. These components contributed to a hectic time, where employees’ regular work included writing reports about the past three-year period and multiple part-projects in parallel with preparing themselves to adapt to organisational changes.

It got closer to Christmas, and the annual Christmas lunch was coming up. Many of the employees looked forward to having the opportunity to do something fun together to relieve the stress within the organisation. It was decided that the employees would receive food

delivery and that they would eat together (virtually), after that there would be a digital tour at an art museum.

The day before lunch I received an email from one of the employees called Olivia that surprised me. In the email she said that there had been a misunderstanding regarding me being invited and that unfortunately I could not participate. I had assumed my invitation since I had got the email with an attached meeting-link and Olivia and I had spoken about the Christmas lunch previously where she had asked me for advice on fun digital activities. When I had the chance to ask her about this privately a few days after, she explained that employees are under a lot of pressure. Employees had raised their need to feel at ease and not having to take in consideration that there were people outside of PAAS present. I was told that the interns at PAAS were not invited either.

During a staff meeting, prior to the Christmas lunch, it had been announced that some employees are to leave PAAS due to a budget cut because of the new government directive at the turn of the year. Roger told me that generally it is a demanding period at the end of the year at PAAS, but this time, he said, he is especially tired. The organisational changes in combination with coping during a pandemic had proven to be a challenging time. Olivia explained that since employees have not been able to physically meet because of the social restrictions, there was a heightened need to express themselves in a personal way. Olivia said that since a lot of the everyday work occurs close with various actors outside of the agency, employees looked forward to just spending time amongst themselves since there was such little time otherwise.

Speaking to Eva about the organisation, she told me that within the past three years PAAS had grown in tremendous speed. *Kunskapsnav offentlig konst* had enabled resources to work in a way that involved new structures within the organisation. However, linked to the issue of Christmas lunch, it was described by her, in agreement with what had come up by others during various check-ins, that the fast pace had taken its toll. The pressure amongst the staff was illustrated yet in another meeting. The meeting intended to create an overview of the forthcoming organisational changes after the turn of the year and Erik, one of the employees that were present, had been infected with covid. Sitting at the meeting pale and with dark rings under his eyes, he confirmed everyone's fear that he was very ill, however, he felt the urgency to be there. He said that he could rest after this meeting, when there had been further clarifications within the organisation.

During the meeting where Erik was infected with covid, the employees discussed how there was a need to create a cohesiveness within the organisation that connects the different parts that PAAS work with. This was described as both being an internal and external organisational matter, where a mapping of the different units was required to create coordination in how to proceed. As mentioned in the background, PAAS is a relatively small organisation with around 40 employees with different competencies and areas of responsibility. The number of staff is decreasing while their responsibilities due to Designed Living Environment have expanded. An employee described it as, in a nutshell, the scale of public art as a field has altered from “statue thinking” to “public space thinking”. But they were asking themselves what it means specifically. Designing Living Environment was oftentimes discussed as evolving. At the annual conference that was mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, PAAS describes the art field within the policy as vaguely organised where they want to invite the sector to begin to formulate how to contribute to the policy.

As PAAS is one of four⁹ governmental agencies who are responsible for Designed Living Environment, Ronja described that it is important to set the right expectations. ArkDes¹⁰ writes, in a report about Designed Living Environment, that the different scopes of practice within the responsible agencies together create a foundation for a holistic approach to living environments which Designed Living Environments strives for (ArkDes, 2020). The Ministry of Culture states that agencies have been assigned particular and joint commitments that revolve around knowledge-making, guiding, and collaboration. The purpose of their collaboration is to enhance the long-term pursuit to architectonic quality and *omsorgsfullt* (en. considerate) living environments through civil, private, and public actors (Ministry of Culture, 2018). In agreement with this, one employee said:

We have four different agencies with different knowledge and experiences. We need to think about our own entry point within this. What questions need to be addressed? We need to utilize the knowledge and resources that already exist.

The discussion that followed can be linked to the previous section “Creating a dialogue to consider the future and Agenda 2030”, in how articulating public art and the process behind it

⁹ These are: The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket), The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design (Riksantikvarieämbetet), the Swedish National Heritage Board (ArkDes) and PAAS.

¹⁰ ArkDes is a governmental agency with the mission to increase knowledge and debate on how architecture and design affect our lives as citizens.

connects to creating opportunities for engagement and dialogue. However, what is distinguished within meetings such as these is that new governmental directives entail hard work in creating internal cohesiveness and clarification within the organisation to facilitate collaboration with other actors. The official statement is that the outcomes from the past three-year period and governmental directive will be implemented into the general objective of PAAS (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). However, how that is supposed to be done was still unclear at the time of fieldwork which posed a lot of stress within the organisation. Employees spoke about how the policy Design Living Environment is not concrete in how they are to proceed, but that it has the potential to empower the role of art in society. The vague indications in how to proceed regarding Designed Living Environment was also something that came up within the evaluating report done by ArkDes, where they point to how there is a need within the field to concretise and become further goal oriented within the area (ArkDes, 2020:6).

Adapting to governmental directives and the pandemic

During the year of 2021 the government decided that PAAS will purchase art for 25 million SEK, which aims to support artistic life during the crisis (PAAS, 2021d). During a discussion in a meeting where art consultants employed by PAAS evaluate and spoke about their experiences of working for PAAS towards municipalities, they reflected upon the upcoming governmental directive (2021-2023). Here is extract of what was discussed:

- Why do we let go of *Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst*?"

- It was written in the governmental directive. The idea was that the insights we have gathered during these past three years are to be implemented into the ongoing organisation. Beyond that, the pandemic has played a part as well. Purchasing is a prioritization and within the new governmental directive.

-I get that. But one can question if buying art is the right strategy. Is that how we support our artists? In my opinion it feels like a panic measure by making a direct correlation between purchasing and supporting artists. Or what do you think?

- Other state institutions have also received a huge budget for buying art. There is a tremendous lot of money out there for purchasing...

-If I were an artist at this stage, I would hope that I have lots of work to sell right now...

-We have examples of how to support artists without the idea of purchasing, for example what we learned during “Konst Händer¹¹”.

-The corona-management is built on expertise, have they made an overview about the situation of the market today, about how artists work?

- Yes, there is a lot of knowledge about how artists work. But it is frustrating how it feels like it is not taken into consideration. I think the directive indicates what role we want artists to play in the future. In my opinion focusing on purchasing makes us take a step back, we will just push the artist back into their studios to produce things.

-What will the effects be? How will the distribution go?

In this meeting, PAAS employees and art consultants were reflecting upon what the effects would be when there are new frames of funding due to the ending of a governmental directive that has enabled focusing on knowledge development within the field of public art. As with many other aspects of society the pandemic drastically affected the culture sector with great economic consequences¹². Due to the prevailing challenges of Covid-19, the culture sector heavily relied on governmental support and received a historically large budget from the government to cope (Ministry of culture, 2020). However, there is an expressed worry amongst the employees within PAAS that the frames of the funding will lead in directions that do not support the ways that public art has been worked with in the last couple of years.

Furthermore, digital accessibility was expressed by employees as having become even more important because of the pandemic. Not only the material (such as reports, information about art projects etc.) that is produced by PAAS, but also the conferences, networking and seminars have been conducted digitally during the last year. Within PAAS’s annual report it is said that

¹¹ An initiative that PAAS describes as aimed at enabling conditions for increased participation and influence regarding art and design for the local people in residential areas.

¹² The restrictions on public gatherings and the loss of revenue have threatened the survival of many cultural organisations worldwide, and European governments have developed different initiatives and measures for financial aid. In Sweden, crisis measures are being distributed to actors through national government, regions, and municipalities. Individual artists and cultural organisations can apply for financial aid from Swedish grant allocating agencies. Moreover, aid packages have been distributed to support public institutions such as theatres, art galleries and museums who already receive support from the government but prompts additional aid (Intercult, 2021).

in order to disseminate and develop knowledge, a central issue for PAAS long-term commitments lies within the virtual. PAAS describe that during 2019 they have cultivated their digital strategy to create better space for knowledge-material that will be produced virtually (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). Reaching different target groups virtually was addressed during meetings when considering how to contribute to enable inspiration and collaboration between different actors in the future. Eva told me the digital accessibility is something that PAAS has lots of potential to develop and become better at. However, she pointed to how this is part of navigating time, effort, and resources.

Drawing pieces together

Savage (2020:326) points to how it is of importance to be attentive to the many ways which policies are subject to forms of disruption and change, in doing so, he argues, attention can be drawn to the complex process through which policies come into being but are also dismantled and reassembled into new forms. Moreover, investigating the moving and evolving form of how components come together and transform, offers a view of the hard work that is required to draw the different pieces to come together (Li, 2006). As was mentioned by Ronja, public sector resources must be utilised in an optimal manner, and evaluations are done every year. Working within a governmental agency requires employees to clarify, make plans of actions and continuously question their work, in order to distribute tax money in a way that is systematic and accountable. However, what Roger pointed out was that the working load had been especially challenging during this period. When Eva reflected on what PAAS has been doing the last couple of years, she pointed to how everything has happened at a tremendous speed. She said: “The organisation has had a rough time. There has been a huge work load and pressure to try to both complete the work and communicate the work.”

Since 2018 PAAS has collaborated with different actors throughout the country in an effort to empower development of knowledge within the field of public art and design of collective environments (PAAS, 2021b). Empowering and disseminating knowledge regarding public art was the focus of the previous governmental direction maintained by PAAS, where artists, researchers and officials, amongst others, participated in art- and design projects, networks, conferences, and seminars around the country. Savage (2020) argues that the particular way in which components are brought together will determine the properties and effects of any given agenda. If the same components were to be arranged differently, or new components were introduced or included, different effects would be produced. It was explained to me that PAAS

is in a period of change, due to new governmental directions, organisation changes, and societal changes because of the pandemic. During times of changes, employees are required to navigate the potential effects of the concept of public art where new frames linked to other ideas and practices are presented. The effects of the pandemic and new governmental directive invite other components that are discussed by employees as shifting the frames for how to continue their work.

For example, what is problematised in the previous sequence, when employees were discussing the implications of the new governmental directives, can be connected to the first chapter where employees discussed how funding of art plays a part in intention and expected result. Developments within politics and policies such as Designed Living Environment, are expressed by employees as creating opportunities to further collaborate and question what constitutes artistic involvement and qualities of art within public spaces. What is expressed as of importance, in both the One percentage rule and Designed Living Environment, is that they presume collaboration between different actors and that it will maintain a continuous and democratic conversation regarding the role of public art. Maintaining a conversation is argued as surfacing how expectations of public art and the different qualities it entails shapes ideas that are linked to how to perceive a public space and the contribution of art within those spaces. However, in this case, the new directives are discussed as indicating artists are to be pushed back into their studios to produce things. In other words, shifting focus from the practices of public art as circulating around knowledge dissemination to purchasing.

Li (2006) argues that when an assemblage becomes stabilised in a discursive formation it supplies a complex of knowledge and practice in terms of which certain kinds of problems and solutions become thinkable whereas others are not. Within times of changes, employees are posed to navigate resources, time, and effort and the potential effects of the concept of public art where new frames linked to ideas and practices are presented within the assemblage. Taking notice of components such as organisational change and adaptation within PAAS and the work and navigation behind drawing the different pieces together, contributes to a view of the field and the concept of public art as moving and evolving but also seeing how the state inhabits both power and resistance. In the following chapter, projects within the previous governmental directive will be elaborated upon. Here, we can follow some of the work that PAAS has carried out that involves questioning and expanding the concept of public art.

Working in projects

The artistic contribution

I took part in a conference called “what happens when a local artist initiates public art?” where PAAS employees, together with artists and other agents within the field of public art, presented and discussed art projects that had been part of *Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst*. These projects were described by PAAS as aiming to explore the concept and meaning of public art where local artists themselves had initiated the projects (PAAS, 2021e). It had started a few years ago with PAAS making an *utlysning* (en. publication) where artists could apply to participate. Subsequently, projects were selected based on local rootedness, achievability, geographical position, and creative methodologies, which had lastly resulted in twelve projects (ibid).

A project that got a lot of appreciation from the meeting participants was called ”Skogen Kallar”, which was described by the artists as exploring the artistic-juridical possibilities in taking an area of forest out of production for the logging industry to ensure its agency and survival in an infinite future. The forest is 3.7 hectares in the form of a triangle located in Fogelstads Säteri lands, near lake Aspen in the municipality of Katrineholm. A tenant’s contract of 50 years has been the first step of the artists’ commitment. Within the timeframe of the contract the forest is taken out of production because it can then be defined as a “mature forest” with invaluable diversity of forest life.

The artists explained that instead of making the piece of forest into a nature reserve aiming to “protect” an environment, the artistic framing enables “a polysemous exploration of our complicated mutual dependence within our planet”. They explained how the forest thus becomes a form of monument, an ongoing changeable and performative public art. Furthermore, when the forest becomes public art, it becomes reconceptualised from “its predetermined context as a forest of production and thus becomes a kind of resistance towards the westernised theological conception of time”. The project has several dimensions that were discussed, one of which that was highlighted during the conference was that their art did not involve producing material or object within a public space rather about reconceptualising the forest. Widening the idea about what public art can be by conceiving its quality as a process, and how that might not always be concentrated into materiality or specific result, manifested in most projects and was a continuous theme throughout the conversations of the conference¹³.

Within this art project, it was discussed that a reconceptualization of the forest both widens the idea about what a public space is and the art itself, and the meaning of what art is within that space.

Many artist that I spoke to during smaller “breakout rooms” at the conference, highlighted the importance of reconceptualising what our public space is, specifically how we view nature and more-than human life. One of the artists said she had abandoned the idea of painting and sculpture because it just “produces so much waste”. Instead, she focuses on performative art now, to raise awareness about water consumption for instance. A manager from an art gallery in south of Sweden shared with all participants of the conference, the problematising notion that one of the most fundamental motives for a municipality, region, or state, is that there will always be a purpose for starting an art project. She exemplified this by declaring how a place from the perspective of a municipality, region, or state, should be gentrified, “activated”, or “decorated”. But when a local artist takes the initiative, the manager continued, their gaze is different and most probably involve other types of questions, which she argued are of important value.

An artist further problematised the concept of place, and how it is defined. She said:

Usually when we (people in general) approach a public place, we ask ourselves “how is that space used? But it does not have to be used! Its fundamental importance is just to exist. When we speak about public spaces, I think often we forget that. A public space is about freedom, care, and love. To make invisible or to remove a public space, that is exploitation. We need to look at it from an intersectional perspective and work with it collectively.

The projects that were presented during this conference were self-organised and often performed with collective and collaborative methods. PAAS writes in their report (Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst, 2020:40) that the *utlysning*, through the twelve projects, explores what happens when artists choose a place for their art, which contributes to ask relevant questions and creates creative work within different sorts of public environments. Moreover, it was highlighted by employees at PAAS that these projects were working outside of the traditional frame of the one percentage rule. They explained that many of the art projects took part in rural areas where there has not existed any public art before, and additionally had a focus

¹³ Read more about the different art project in PAAS report: “Vi förändrar varandra”.

on sustainability. A concluding remark in the evaluation was thus that PAAS sees a need for long-term public support for enabling self-initiated art in shared environments. It was suggested that a funding model with free funds would open up for the creation of art in places that would otherwise be without it, and furthermore expand the idea of what public art can be (Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst, 2020:6).

There had been other projects previously to *Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst*, that were described by interlocutors as expanding the idea of how to perceive public art. I found an example when hearing and reading about a governmental directive from 2016 to 2018 when PAAS carried out a project called *Konst Händer*. It was an initiative that PAAS describes as aimed at enabling conditions for increased participation and influence regarding art and design for the local people in residential areas. The ambition was described as an initiative that would create a resource of culture and artistic design that would reach locals of all ages to participate in a democratic way (konst händer, 2018:3). In the evaluative report it was expressed that PAAS viewed the directive as using the entry point of the local people in producing public art as enabling the process to be co-creative. Furthermore, PAAS considered the assignment as having clear links to cultural politics and the Swedish Government's national cultural political goal since the content of the art initiatives should be based on the residents needs and knowledge of that place (konst händer, 2018:6). In that way it was argued in the evaluation, to be contributing to culture being a dynamic, challenging, and independent force with freedom of expression as a foundation.

When asking about this project, employees told me that what was acknowledged by PAAS after *Konst Händer* was finalized, was that working from specific places and situations resulted in challenging the perception of what public art can consist of. Moreover, it was argued in an evaluative report, that during *Konst Händer* a diverse set of expression came about, such as conceptualising public art as a process (konst händer, 2018:2). It was explained that expressions like these occurs within private art, but not so often supported by public funds. However, during the last couple of years of the government directive *Kunskapsnav Offentlig Konst*, PAAS has been able to fund and expand on the ideas of working "from a local perspective", as the previous example illustrates. In the next section I will share an instance from a meeting that involves the discussion of locality that is put in relation to the need for contextualisation.

Locality and contextualisation

It is Friday and we are getting close to lunch time. We are in a smaller meeting of four people, PAAS employees and me. The topic of the meeting is an art project from a few years ago. The project is described within the meeting as unique in the way that it was ahead of its time because the mode of procedure connects to Design Living Environments in the methodology and its holistic approach. However, some challenges arose during this project that the employees think needs to be surfaced. The suggestion is to make two texts about this, where they can produce and contribute to knowledge. Here is a sequence of what the employees discussed:

-The owner of the space has not really understood the purpose of the art, they have even questioned if it is art. I think it could be a great example when describing the process of how different actors view public art and cultural heritage and then draw connections to the field of Designed Living Environments. Working cross-sectorally is complicated. We have different “languages” and different understanding. By giving voice to the separate actors, and bring their perspectives, we can discuss how we can develop and preserve this type of holistic art in our environments.

-I agree, it is of importance to illustrate the complexity of an art project, illustrating the different actors and their perspectives, and what consequences that can have on the preservation of art.

-So, we want to write about the knowledge and learning outcomes that have happened during these years and the challenges that have occurred. There is not a lot of budget left for this project, but we can use the remainder to write about this and create an opportunity to learn from it. Why do we need two texts?

- I think it is of importance to separate the voice of the artist and the voice of PAAS, they must be distinct parts. We need to create a space where the artist can express themselves in a way that is not limited by the scope of bureaucratic language and the structure of a report. I think it is of value to make distinctions so that we can capture the artistic speculations, connections, currents, and phenomena.

- Maybe the voice of the artists is a great way to describe the process? Maybe it can exemplify how they think about space? And how that is separated from other examples of public art? We have had difficulties communicating this when speaking about Designed Living Environments. People ask us: what is the difference when we implement the approach of Design Living Environment to art? What if we can incorporate this story as a

way of communicating an answer to this question within the governmental directions for agencies?

- I think we can incorporate all of this in one text and one report. I agree that we need to raise the voice of the artist and separate it from the discourse of agencies, but PAAS always needs to contextualize.

-I just think that the work with this report should not be dry and bureaucratic. We should introduce the idea of Designed Living Environments because people do not know what it really means. This project gives us an example to illustrate it in a simple way.

In this sequence employees discussed the benefits of illustrating challenges that arose during an art project to facilitate knowledge and illustrate learning outcomes. The artists and owner of the space have had difficulties in creating a common understanding, which has had implications for the preservation of the art. Working cross-sectorally is described by employees as complicated. When considering producing text to share knowledge about the challenges that arose, they contemplate the importance of contextualising while also creating space for the different views and perspectives within the project. Through writing one or two texts about this, they were also contemplating whether it can enable a further understanding of the implications of Designed Living Environment. As they expressed, many actors within the field are still feeling uncertain of what the policy implies. The idea is that an illustration of the complexities posed within a public art piece can contribute to knowledge, and furthermore facilitate understanding for collaboration between different professional groups. What is not incorporated in the above sequence is that within this meeting they were also questioning what is really meant when speaking about spreading and enabling development of “knowledge”. When they tried to concretise what this would mean with PAAS in relation to external actors they spoke about different target groups.

There are many different types of target groups. In the Swedish Arts Grants Committee’s report, it is said that around 270 civil servants within Swedish municipalities work with public art in some way or another, encompassing areas such as preservation, planning and organising (Söderbeck, 2020). Moreover, people who work within the field of public art range from arts consultants, art curators, administrators, project coordinators and strategists. As mentioned in the previous part of this chapter, reports about how to work with Designed Living Environment emphasises the importance of developing cities and towns in interplay with the people who live there, a potential which is described as requiring “innovative methodologies” that has not yet

been concretised. However, the concept of locality is reoccurring and emphasised. I asked an employee about it, and she said:

The thing about being “experts” is that it signalises that we know most. But working with public art and collective spaces builds upon closeness and knowledge about a place and environment. Only people at that place are the experts. That is when we need to talk about: methods. How do we (PAAS) work with this, and what is local expertise?

Employees told me that in smaller municipalities, civil servants who become “accountable” unfortunately must take on a huge responsibility. PAAS has noticed that such individuals frequently handle many different areas, projects, and requirements at the same time, often including areas that are very distant to public art. I had been told that such civil servants commonly request policies and guiding documents from PAAS when working with public art. An employee explained: “within smaller municipalities where a lot of responsibility lands on individuals, guiding documents can be conceived by civil servants as the most forward tool of support”. Understanding their vulnerable position and bureaucratic contexts as the reason for wanting guiding documents, the employee however problematised this. The employee pointed to how public art projects are always situated within a specific context and that documents emerging from PAAS stems from various sites are usually tailor-made. Thus, PAAS endeavour for locality within art projects makes general guiding documents problematic to hand out. However, PAAS strives to provide support for civil servants.

During various meetings employees considered how illustrating examples from art projects within municipalities that has developed their organisation regarding public art with the support of PAAS the last couple of years, could contribute and support other municipalities. Moreover, as the initial sequence demonstrates, illustrating processes of public art and how different actors view them, was considered as a one way to provide support, and to enable further understanding of the policy of Designed Living Environment. By producing stories of municipalities development within public art and by making it accessible, it was considered by employees as one way to provide inspiration and support for others to continue- and initiate work regarding public art.

Connecting short-term work with long-term ideas

Previous chapter explored how organisational and societal changes interact with policies and how these play part in ideas and practices regarding public art within PAAS. Projects are linked

to governmental directives and societal circumstances, and by looking closer at the different projects it is possible to dive into the work behind the processes in the re-conceptualisation of public art. Delanda (2016) argues that an assemblage is not a pre-existing thing of the world with pre-given properties. Instead, an assemblage brings together entities in the world into a proximity in which they establish relations between themselves while remaining external to each other, thereby retaining their original properties. The One Percentage rule, Designed Living Environment and Agenda 2030 are, in the context of organisational change and adaptation to governmental directives, assembled (Savage, 2020) in projects to enable public art and its potential within society in a way that they are both relating and encompassing distinct features.

As came up during the conference with the artists, employees at PAAS agreed with and encouraged the conception that local people's or artist's perception of public space can be different from a perspective of the state or government, which PAAS emphasises of significance linked to the Swedish government's national cultural political goal. However, linked to the previous section and the example around the project where there had been a misunderstanding regarding the art, there is a need for PAAS to contextualise. Employees point out that people at the place are the experts but what is surfacing in the last example is that actors within a space, in this case, the artist and the owner of the place, had different understandings. PAAS balances between being experts and "role models" while emphasising locality and the artistic contribution within public spaces. Thus, striving to connect public art to different actors incorporates adjusting knowledge about the processes within public art to support different views while contextualising and connect the short-term work with long-term ideas.

Moreover, the conference can provide background to the discussion regarding the new versus the old governmental directive and the effects upon intention and expected result. The different projects can point to aspects of how problems are defined as problems in relation to particular schemes of thought (Savage, 2020:330) and how these in turn shape and play a part in navigating everyday activities within the agency and striving for future visions (Li, 2006). Artists within these projects raise the need to leave the idea of materialistic art projects and work within ideas of sustainability, which challenge the new directives in how to incorporate these ideas into frames of purchasing. During fieldwork I heard that there is something called "project fatigue" within PAAS and within the sphere of public art in general. I was told that funding of art projects is sometimes experienced as elusive and usually does not span a long

period of time, which makes art projects that builds on process and collaboration difficult to maintain. This connects to the argument of why the One percentage rule is important for artistic practises within public environments because in contrast to project-based budgets, that is common within culture politics, it is described as providing continuity (Söderbeck, 2020:7). This issue of project-based budget can be interpreted as connecting to what PAAS argues is one learning outcomes from the projects: that there is a need for long term support for enabling self-initiated art. It was argued that free funds, in other words, funding outside of the traditional frames can invite an expanded conception of what art is and where it can happen.

The One Percentage rule and Designed Living Environment both reflect ideas that collaboration will enable public art and that the democratic discussion can contribute to its potential within society. Moreover, this connects to what was illustrated by Jacobsson (2014:14) that the idea that culture politics was built upon was that the citizens themselves would be active and co-creative, and how culture was considered as an important force in changing the society for the better. Within projects employees are posed to navigate these issues in the short-term and the long-term to enable public art and its potential within society.

Part 3

Concluding discussion

Public art as a concept within a context of the state can be explored in a myriad of ways. The way that this thesis has approached it is by focusing on policies and viewing them as part of a wider set of components within an assembly of the state and public art. Rather than investigating the concept as inscribed in text, this thesis approaches the policies within the everyday activities at a state agency, following Fassin's (2015) suggestion of exploring the state as embodied by individuals inscribed in temporality. Viewing policies as part of daily activities within a state agency, I have avoided restricting the understanding of policies as directives confined into text or assumptions of linear implementation and invited a processual exploration including ideas and practices.

Taking part in daily activities in the form of virtual meetings at PAAS has affected the ethnography in different aspects. Firstly, meetings are part of daily practices within PAAS but, as accentuated by employees, a lot of work happens outside of the meetings. Thus, the research is limited to the scope of taking part in meetings when exploring the daily activities within a state agency. However, as mentioned by Sandel and Thedvall (2017) meetings are central in organising and provide an interesting intersection because they produce structures but also challenge social orders. Thus, taking part in meetings provided insight into how employees navigated and contested how components affecting their work influences the concept of public art. An example illustrating this, can be found under the subtitle "adapting to governmental directives and the pandemic" where PAAS employees and art consultants were contesting the governmental directives when reflecting upon what the effects on public art would be with new frames of funding. Rather than continuing to enable a focus on knowledge development within the field of public art, some employees considered how the directive might lead in a back-wards direction because it pushes artists back into their studios to produce material things. This goes in contrast with ideas regarding public art that PAAS has elevated previously, as illustrated within the example of the project that reconceptualised the forest: quality within the art piece is emphasised as found within the process of the artwork rather than the artwork itself.

Secondly, virtual meetings posed methodological challenges about how to relate to interlocutors and conducting participant observation. As previously mentioned, fieldnotes have been built upon transient moments in a shared virtual space, characterised by efficiency through

meeting agendas and time frames. To contextualise these transient moments when conducting fieldwork and writing ethnography, they have been combined with texts produced by PAAS and other state agencies. This has required yet another dimension of how the ethnography has been shaped, as further heightening the process of dialectic understanding (Sattari, 2018) by going back and forth between collecting and interpreting insights.

Assemblage theory sees social complexity as composed by a variety of wholes emerging from heterogeneous parts and presents opportunities to explore emergence and heterogeneity amid the data of inquiry in relation to other concepts and constructs without solidifying into a final or stable state (Marcus & Saka, 2006:106). Consequently, analysing empirical material through the theory of assemblages has shaped the approach to exploring the concept of public art within a state agency in terms of being in flux and in a process of becoming. When exploring the concept of public art through policies within a context of governance, assemblage theory has enabled avoiding conceiving the state as a “seamless totality”, in coherence with Fassin’s view of the state, and has invited an analysis of the different parts that implies a certain autonomy for the terms in which they relate (Delanda, 2016). This has meant not striving to create a synoptic presentation of the ideas and practices within the concept of public art within PAAS, rather pointing out how it can be understood through viewing policies as part of a wider set of components within daily activities, such as art projects and adapting to governmental directives, and by illustrating how the concept emerges and changes in heterogeneous ways during those instances. For example, the One Percentage rule has existed since the beginning of PAAS’s establishment. In parallel with the policy Designed Living Environment, the contribution of the policy is discussed as corresponding with the importance of continuity and collaboration but criticised for narrowing the idea of what public art can contribute to society. The difference between making public art accessible towards citizens and creating circumstances for citizens to take part in public art, is discussed as developing a holistic approach to living environments and creating circumstances for participation and democracy. Moreover, this can be related to how employees describe the concept of public art going from “statue thinking” to “public space thinking”.

Daily virtual meetings at PAAS that the ethnographical material is based upon, play a part in creating governance but also challenging and contesting it. As policies are embedded in particular social and cultural worlds of domains of meanings that both reflects and create those worlds (Wright, Shore & Peró (2011), noticing how they involve different interests, experts,

techniques and discourses is of importance (Li, 2006). As exemplified through the instance at the conference “what happens when local artist initiates public art?” PAAS employees work closely with other actors within the field, which contributes to the contestations and challenges to the perceptions of what public art constitutes. For instance, the person at the art gallery was directly criticizing the perspective of the government when approaching public spaces. Through the project *Kunskapsnav offentlig konst* employees have actively sought to invite development of the conception of public art, as they describe, it builds upon the idea that knowledge develops and disseminates when people meet across different professional groups (Kunskapsnav Offentlig konst, 2020:2). These professional groups are mentioned in the evaluative report as artists, art consultants, curators, and civil servants. The navigation and contestation of policies within the period of the governmental directive resulting in *Kunskapsnav offentlig konst*, is thus part of creating new social and semantic spaces and new sets of relation, new political subjects, and webs of meaning. As described by Wright, Shore and Peró (2011) policies find expression through these sequences of events. Pointing to how these are tied to processes of employees navigating resources, such as budget and time frames, illustrates how they are part of a wider assembly, as described by Li (2006), that are never complete or finished rather always subject to contestation and reformulation by a range of pressures and forces it cannot contain.

Through the three concepts provided by Savage (2020) the three ethnographical chapters have been analysed through looking at how the policies within those areas are subject to forms of disruption, challenge, and multiple interpretations. For example, as expressed both within meetings and within the report written by ArkDes, many actors within the field are still feeling uncertain of what the policy of Designed Living Environment implies. An instance illustrating how employees navigated this was offered under the subtitle “locality and contextualisation” where employees contemplated producing text regarding the various understanding of public art from a project that had posed challenges for collaborating between the agents involved. In this example, employees navigated between on the one hand contextualizing the concept of public art, and on the other creating space for the different views and perspectives within the project by keeping the different views distinct from each other. Through writing a report about this, they were considering whether it can enable a further understanding of the implications of Designed Living Environment and public art.

Furthermore, as illustrated by the examples under the subtitle “Creating a dialogue to consider the future and Agenda 2030” the policy Designed Living Environment implies communicating

the concept of public art in a way that creates engagements outside of the professional sphere of public art. In contrast to the One Percentage rule that clearly indicates communicating the concept of public art towards professionals within the public art sphere, employees were considering how to navigate the shift in making the process of public art and the public art itself, engaging for a wider array of people. Employees were considering linking it to larger societal events such as the 100th anniversary of democracy or the year of a general election. These navigation and interpretations of the policies can be viewed as linked with the ideas of the concept of public art within PAAS, such as public art having the potential to surface unarticulated feelings as it creates different reactions, engagements and experiences, which PAAS highlight as of importance for public debate (Public Art Agency Sweden, 2019). Moreover, employees describe that when opinions clash about public art, it creates opportunities to reflect on both our own and other's standpoints, which can change and develop us as human beings. Policies within the mission of the agency are part of a wider assembly of components that employees challenge and interpretate, which shapes the practices regarding the concept of public art, and in this case questions how the concept of public art is communicated.

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the concept of public art at a state agency that works under the premisses of the Swedish government's national cultural political goal. This has implied taking into consideration how to perceive the state, governance, and how to explore the concept of public art. Through my research question I have focused on policies by viewing them as continuous processes of contestation across a political space, through the entry point of "what work a policy is doing" (Yanow, 2011:305). By looking at how they are part of the daily work at PAAS, has put the analytical attention towards the terms "public art" that these policies issues are put within a broader governance discourse. As written in the background Jacobsson (2014) describes governance within culture politics, in accordance with other political areas, as characterised by organisations aiming to create circumstances for "good" activity by providing budgets for specific purposes and projects. By taking part in daily virtual meetings at PAAS that works under these premisses and within the Swedish government's national cultural political goal, has become a way to understand and explore governance within public art during the particular time of my fieldwork. In this thesis I have suggested that policies shape the ways employees can work with public art which also simultaneously shapes the concept of public art in the everyday efforts at the agency. Artistic quality is described as contributing to public spaces and collaboration is described as enabling art and its potential

within society. Questioning, navigating, and developing the practices and ideas within these assumptions are part of what was mentioned by Ronja earlier, when she emphasised the importance of answering the question of *why*, in order to distribute tax money in a way that is systematic and accountable. I suggest that taking notice of this processes and how that is influenced by current policies, can shed light upon the intersection of ideas and practices within the concept of public art within a state agency that works under the premisses of the Swedish government's national political goal.

Summing up the end discussion, I have illustrated how policies such as Designed Living Environment and the One Percentage rule, in relation to everyday work such as projects, organisational changes and adapting to governmental directives relates to ideas and practices that aims to achieve artistic quality as a contribution to public spaces. By depicting instances in which these components are subject to forms of disruption and change, I have looked at how these manifest and change in the context of ideas and practices that occurred during my fieldwork. Nevertheless, these insights are just a part of greater field of inquiry about the production of public art, and culture generally, that operates under certain bureaucratic conditions. As mentioned by Strannegård (2021), a large part of Swedish cultural life is publicly and short-time funded. The implicit notion is that the art that is produced will, in one way or another, come back to the taxpayers. Problematising what art is and what the purpose of it is, while having a monopoly on a large part of its production inherently creates counterpoints. This thesis has scratched the surface of these in terms of employee's orientation within themes of artistic freedom, the processes behind the art and the art itself, knowledge, and approachability. Other perspectives, exploring ideology, art, and politics, could contribute to discussing these deeper. However, looking at the policies that are part of funding art can provide insight into the state's delicate pursuit of driving culture in a desirable direction without explicitly directing the arts. Moreover, various ways in which that art is legitimised will probably change through time. A concluding remark is consequently that, as Savage (2020) points out, when enacted, policies take highly varied forms with impacts that are both partially predictable and unpredictable. Furthermore, as described by Shore, Wright and Però (2011) policies will eventually disappear or change form and since they are never complete, unified, or static, they are always subject to multiple and evolving interpretations.

Epilogue

After a suggestion from one of the employees, I read a historical overview about PAAS from 1937 to 1987 that they had published. In the preface Henry Montgomery reviewed the past 50 years of enactment (except the temporary stop during WW2), where he asked himself if the separate art pieces that have been produced through the agency are in themselves successful (Stensman, 1987:5). He concluded that every artwork is bound to the specific historical context and mirrors the particular time it was created. I would like to suggest that the ideas of “successful” also, besides the particular artwork, can be understood through exploring the concept of public art within the agency and through noticing components within the assemblages of the field of the state and culture.

The idea that founded PAAS was to make artwork accessible for more people, today the idea is still part of the agency, but the historical context is of course different. What has been noticeable to me throughout my fieldwork is how passionate and how hard-working employees at PAAS are. I have enjoyed taking part in the ongoing becoming of ideas and practices within the endeavours of making public art a meaningful contribution to society, and I am curious to follow how this effort will change and form in the future.

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