Against collective delusions and misconceptions

Introduction to issue 1–2/2017

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The editorship of Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidsskrift circulates around the Nordic countries. Approximately every third year the editor-in-chief changes and the home country of the editorship moves across national borders. This journal is a true Nordic endeavour!

The current issue is the first one ever to be edited in Finland. After the journal’s successful years in Norway under the supervision of professor Sigrid Røyseng from the Norwegian Business School, I started as the new editor-in-chief at the beginning of 2017. The new home of the journal is at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research (CUPORE), where the new editorial secretary Anna Kanerva and I both work. We thank Sigrid and the previous editorial secretary, lecturer Anitra Frigenschou, for their great work.

This is a double issue (no 1–2/2017). Last year, two subsequent issues were published within a narrow timeframe late in the autumn, which raised some questions about the rationality of the schedule. Next year, we will react to our readers’ wishes and have one issue published during the first half of the year and the other one (which will be a theme issue on cultural leadership) close to the end of the year. That is also the pattern that we aim to follow from now on: publishing each year one “regular” issue of the journal with a continuous call for articles (CFA), and one theme issue with guest editor(s) and a separate CFA.

Besides this editorial, the issue consists of six referee articles and one commentary article. The commentary article is a showpiece that will hopefully encourage writers to send us discursive texts about contemporary issues. It seems that commenting upon some questions and discussions requires a “faster lane” than the double-blind referee process for manuscripts can offer. We welcome contributions that deal with latest developments within the policy field and/or discuss current debates within the academic field of cultural policy research to be published in the commentary section of the journal.

During the Nordic Conference on Cultural Policy (NCCPR) in August, a conference dinner was organized on the premises of Nordic Culture Point (Nordisk kulturkontakt) in Suomenlinna (Sveaborg), Helsinki. The attendees had an opportunity to visit the exhibition “States of Control”, organized by the Hel-
sinki International Artist Programme (HIAP) on their premises just next door to Culture Point. The cover picture of this issue was taken during the event: a conference participant looking at an artwork by Agnieszka Kurant entitled “The Half-Life of Facts”, presenting “the periodic table of collective delusions and misconceptions”. In the language of art, it reflects the area where cultural policy research has a lot to contribute, particularly in these times when the diversity of cultural voices is under threat and the domain of cultural policy could easily become explicitly politicized. It is a task of research to oppose any delusions and bring clarification on misconceptions.

In his commentary, Tobias Harding, the chair of the scientific committee of the NCCPR, and a new professor at the University College of Southeast Norway, reflects on the state of Nordic cultural policy research. In short, he is positive about the development. Personally, I share his faith in the future. The maturing of the field was nicely demonstrated in the active discussions and presentations during the NCCPR.

The six new referee articles of this issue offer a range of themes that demonstrates how a wide variety of research objects is of relevance for the academic research of cultural policy. In a sense, this issue verifies the observations of professor Harding about a research field that actively integrates perspectives from several disciplines into Nordic research of cultural policies.

The first article by Linda Portnoff (from the Stockholm School of Economics) deals with music industry and cultural statistics in Norway and Sweden. The article asks how to measure something that is becoming increasingly immaterial; and what this might mean for the development of cultural statistics in the eyes of cultural policy. The second article is written by Mari Torvik Heian and Johs. Hjellbrekke (Telemark Research Institute & University of Bergen). It scrutinizes one of the most recurrent topics in cultural policy research: the financial situation and recognition of artists. The article brings new light into how artists themselves experience their situation. Thirdly, Erik Henningsen (Oslo and Akerhus University College of Applied Sciences) and Roger Blomgren (University of Borås) take a critical look at the latest organizing cycles of cultural policy in Sweden (kultursamverkansmodellen) and in Norway. Is it all just organising for the sake of organising?

The last three articles lead us to debating about the “festival boom”, to archives, and to new forms of museums. Per Mangset, Lar Håkonsen and Heidi Stavrum (Telemarkforskning) conclude that both researchers and cultural policy experts have overestimated the extent of “festivalisation” Their data come from Norway but the results are interesting also in a wider sense: might this be the case also elsewhere? In the fifth article, Ine Fintland, Synnøve Østebø (Statarkivet Stavanger) and Geir Sverre Braut (University of Stavanger) take a close look at a series of audits of municipal archives in Norway. They conclude that audits have actually positively affected the local archives with regard to already existing local needs. Finally, Nanna Løkka (Telemark-
forsking) introduces to us the latest developments within the Norwegian museum sector, where complementary modes of communicating knowledge of the Viking period have emerged alongside the older university museums.

I wish you a nice read!