



The Cultural Rucksack

A National Programme for Arts and Culture in Norwegian Schools

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*A National Programme for Arts and
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KULTURRÅDET
Arts Council
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Foreword

The Cultural Rucksack¹ is a national programme for arts and culture for all students in Norwegian primary and secondary schools, in other words for all students 6–19 years old. The programme has existed since 2001, and is regarded as extremely successful. There has been considerable public acclaim for the Cultural Rucksack in Norway, and actors in both the fields of arts and education have expressed great enthusiasm for the programme.

In 2009 the Norwegian Ministry of Culture commissioned a three-year research project on the Cultural Rucksack. The Uni Rokkan Centre for Social Studies and Bergen University College were assigned the task of carrying out an independent, critical, and empirical study. This report is a brief English-language version of the book *Den kulturelle skolesekken* [The Cultural Rucksack] (Breivik & Christophersen, 2013), which describes the research project and its findings. This presentation of the research project and its results and findings is, of course, very compact, and many details have been left out. The authors have chosen to focus on specific main points and on some significant perspectives and issues. Arts Council Norway took the initiative to have the book translated into English.

Chapter 1 describes the Cultural Rucksack programme. Here the authors discuss the goals and principles of the programme, its background, political foundations, and how it is organised. Chapter 2 briefly discusses the issues, limitations, and execution of the research. In Chapter 3 the Cultural Rucksack is discussed from the point of view of those involved in the programme: students, teachers, cultural administrators, and artists. The chapter explains that the programme can be understood in a variety of ways. Chapter 4 reflects upon the many interpretations of the programme by those involved in it, and upon the questions and challenges that can arise from such interpretations.

1. The name of the programme alludes to the rucksack as a national symbol of Norway, and when used in connection with culture and schools it evokes associations with the cultural baggage carried by schoolchildren.

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The Cultural Rucksack

Goals, principles and background

The Cultural Rucksack project is a political collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research, intended to ensure that students in primary and secondary schools have an opportunity to experience professional artistic and cultural productions during school hours several times a year. Productions offered by the Cultural Rucksack entail that artists visit the school for a shorter or longer period, that students and teachers participate in arrangements outside the school, or a combination of the two.

The Cultural Rucksack is implemented in primary and lower secondary schools. Compulsory education in Norway lasts for ten years, and children start school at the age of six. Although there are private primary and lower secondary schools that are based on religious views or alternative educational philosophies, nearly all students (97 %) attend state schools (Statistics Norway, 2013). Upon completing ten years of compulsory education, nearly all students continue for three or four years in upper secondary school, thus qualifying for either vocational studies or higher education. The arts subjects, which consist of music and arts and crafts, are compulsory for all students in the ten years of compulsory education, but relatively few teaching hours are devoted to these in comparison with other subjects.

One important objective of the Cultural Rucksack is to be a supplement to the arts subjects taught in the schools, while not being a substitute for them. An additional objective of the programme is to ensure that students have access to professional arts and culture of high quality during school hours. This access will enable students to develop an understanding of a variety of artistic and cultural expressions, and will help to integrate these into the learning objectives of the schools (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the

Storting²). According to mandatory guidelines for the programme (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting), productions should be of high quality and should represent a wide range of cultural expressions, including stage productions (theatre, dance), visual arts, music, film, literature, and cultural heritage projects. These cultural encounters should be incorporated naturally into the school day, and should help to integrate arts and culture into efforts to fulfil the school’s learning objectives.

The programme should be designed and continuously assessed on the basis of the following ten principles, or criteria:

It should be a permanent programme. It should be for all students regardless of their financial, social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds and regardless of the particular school they attend. The Cultural Rucksack should help achieve the goals of the national curriculum, both the general part of the national curriculum and the specific subject curriculums. The programme should maintain high-quality standards, and students should be offered professional arts and culture of high artistic quality. Cultural diversity should be emphasised, and the Cultural Rucksack should thus include artistic and cultural expressions from a variety of cultures and historical periods. A wide range and variety of genres and types of presentation should be offered. Furthermore, the programme should be characterised by regular access for every school year. The Cultural Rucksack should be viewed as a cooperative effort between the cultural sector and the schools at every level: local, regional, and national. Regarding the division of roles between the education and the cultural sector, the education sector should be responsible for ensuring educationally sound preparation and follow-up of activities, and the cultural sector for the production’s content and for ensuring that schools have sufficient preparation time. Last but not least, emphasis is placed on local responsibility and ownership. According to programme guidelines, “the individual school, the municipality, and the county should all be involved in the Cultural Rucksack. This [local involvement] will ensure enthusiasm and a sense of ownership among all parties and provide room for local variation” (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting, p. 26).

2. The mandatory guidelines for the Cultural Rucksack are formulated in a white paper, a “Report to the Storting” (the Parliament), that is translated into English. The other white papers that are referred to in this publication only exist in Norwegian language, and are therefore referred to in Norwegian (as “Stortingsmelding”, or “St. meld”).

Background and political foundation

The precursors to the Cultural Rucksack were various local cultural programmes for children and young people in Norway in the 1990s. These were an important inspiration when the government then in power proposed to allocate funds to the Cultural Rucksack in the 2001 budget for culture. The programme thus achieved national status, and provided a response to the challenges that had been pointed out in cultural and educational policy documents in the early 1990s. For example, it was stressed that children and adolescents should be able to experience professional arts and culture as well as to make use of their own cultural resources (St.meld. nr. 61 (1991–1992)). In addition, increased collaboration between the school system and the arts and culture sector was given priority (KD & KUF, 1995). The current school curriculums emphasised the school's importance as a place where children and young people could encounter high-quality arts and culture provided by professionals, and where their own activities in this field would be encouraged (KUF, 1997). The Cultural Rucksack, the municipal culture schools, and to a certain extent also the Norwegian Youth Festivals of Art,³ are seen as key instruments in this regard. The programme has thus been part of the government's cultural policy efforts for primary and lower secondary schools since 2001, and has been gradually extended to upper secondary schools. Since 2009 all students 6–19 years old have been included in the programme.

This extension suggests that the Cultural Rucksack is firmly anchored in both cultural policy and educational policy. An important characteristic of Norwegian cultural policy is the attempt to balance between appealing to an elite and to a wider public, while simultaneously giving due weight to diversity, accessibility, and participation (Mangset, 1992; Dahl & Helseth, 2006; Grund, 2008). Cultural policy has increasingly focused on professionalism and quality. This focus is clearly illustrated in Norwegian cultural policy efforts in the period 2007–2013,⁴ which benefited children and young people through an increased commitment to, for example, the Cultural Rucksack and the municipal culture schools. Norwegian educational policy has undergone extensive reform and change within a relatively short time, focusing

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3. The Norwegian Youth Festivals of Art are festivals where young people can participate with all forms of cultural expressions and artistic performances. The municipal culture schools provide instruction for children in music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. These schools have a statutory basis in the Education Act and fall formally under the Ministry of Education and Research, but they nevertheless strongly identify themselves with the cultural sector.
 4. These were called the *Cultural Initiatives I* and *II*, which were the names of the government's measures to increase allocations to the cultural sector by 1 % of the national budget. The *Culture Initiative III* was not implemented, because of a change of government in autumn 2012.

on basic skills, testing, and evaluation of measurable competencies. The concern about a lack of quality in Norwegian schools has manifested itself in a strengthening of “basic skills” and “core subjects”, while the aesthetic subjects have been given relatively less attention in the schools (Sæbø, 2009; Espeland, Allern, Carlsen, & Kalsnes, 2011).

Mandatory guidelines for the Cultural Rucksack state, “Appreciating art and culture plays a significant part in the development of the individual’s personality and quality of life”, and, “Understanding artistic expressions is often a learning process” (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting, p. 10). The programme thus involves giving all students in Norway, or in any case most of them, cultural baggage, with contributions from both the cultural sector and the education sector.

Organisation and design

Administration of the Cultural Rucksack is carried out at three levels: national (central government), regional (county authority), and local (municipality). At national level, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research jointly define programme objectives and instruments to achieve them. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for financing the programme and for following up allocations to ensure that funds are used as intended. Day-to-day responsibility lies with a secretariat under Arts Council Norway.⁵ The secretariat is responsible for administrative tasks, but does not determine the programme’s content. In practice, county authorities and municipalities plan and implement the Cultural Rucksack through their programming activities. Consequently, approaches to organising and implementing the programme often widely diverge.

At regional level, county authorities have a special responsibility for developing the programme. They administer most resources, and are responsible for offering artistic and cultural productions to municipalities. County authorities also help to develop the programme within municipalities, and are responsible for coordinating productions offered on a regional basis. At local level, municipalities work together with county authorities to provide a cohesive programme for all schools. Municipalities own the schools, and must coordinate Cultural Rucksack activities with the schools’ curriculums. Between one third and two thirds of resources earmarked for the programme are allocated to municipalities by county authorities. Some municipalities wish to receive their entire portion of the allocation directly, and this wish

5. Arts Council Norway advises the government on cultural issues and is responsible for implementing Norwegian cultural policy.

is complied with. These municipalities then do not participate in activities organised by county authorities, but organise their programme events themselves (these are called “100 % municipalities”).

In addition to programme administrators, each school has a “cultural coordinator”, a school staff member, usually a teacher, responsible for following up the programme at the school. Students also act as event organisers at many schools. They receive instruction in how to deal with visiting artists, and help to implement the school’s Cultural Rucksack productions. The programme is supported by major national players in the arts and culture sector who work in a consultative capacity and offer their own productions to the programme.⁶

The Cultural Rucksack is mainly funded by the surplus from Norsk Tipping, the state-owned gaming company, which supplies funding for both cultural and sports activities. In 2013 the programme received NOK 200 million (around EUR 24 million), which was allocated to and distributed by regional and local authorities. The vast majority of cultural institutions and a number of related institutions are involved in the programme’s content. These institutions, regional authorities, and many local authorities contribute substantial sums from their own budgets.

Approximately 840 000 students annually are involved in the programme: 614 000 in primary and lower secondary schools and 230 000 in upper secondary schools (Statistics Norway, 2013). Coverage for the primary and lower secondary schools is nearly 100 %. In 2011 the programme generated over 54 000 arrangements for students in primary and secondary schools, making it the largest workplace for freelance artists and cultural workers in Norway. According to reports by county authorities, the Cultural Rucksack has a total audience of around 3 million annually (Norsk Kulturråd, 2013). Each school has an average of around 11 arrangements annually. The programme covers all types of art, but reports show that the most heavily represented art form in the Cultural Rucksack, by far, is music (34.5 %), followed by dramatic art and literature. A slight majority of the productions (around 56 %) are performances, concerts, and exhibitions, in other words, traditional ways of presenting the arts, where the audience plays a conventional role, while a slight minority of the productions (around 44 %) emphasise approaches in which students are more active, such as projects and workshops (Vibe, Evensen & Hovdhaugen, 2009).

6. The major national players: Concerts Norway (national body responsible for the music field), the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design (visual art), the National Touring Network for Performing Arts (dramatic art), Film og Kino (film), the Norwegian Writers’ Centre (literature), and Arts Council Norway (cultural heritage).

The research project

During the Cultural Rucksack's existence as a national programme, a number of evaluations and reports, scientific articles, chapters in books, Master theses, and PhD theses related to this subject have been produced.⁷ The objective of the research project carried out by Uni Rokkan Centre for Social Studies and the Bergen University College was to problematise stereotypical viewpoints and to generate new questions about and perspectives on the Cultural Rucksack. The intention was to promote discussion of the programme as a cultural and educational policy project, to contribute to further developing the programme's fundamental ideas.

The research project addressed this overarching question: What significance does the Cultural Rucksack have at different levels and for different actors? This question was concretised in the following sub-questions: (a) What are the objectives, interests, and values of the various actors? (b) How are these expressed in various practices? (c) How are political objectives implemented? (d) What consequences does the Cultural Rucksack have for the various actors?

The research project's empirical scope covered one urban municipality and one rural municipality in each of four counties, for a total of eight municipalities. Counties and municipalities were selected on the basis of their histories and different models for organising and preparing the ground for the Cultural Rucksack. The programme offers a wide variety and extensive choice of activities, and to limit the project's scope, the research group decided to focus their observations on music productions, drama productions, and cultural heritage projects. These limits and priorities reflect the areas of expertise of the research group, which consisted of four researchers and eight master students in the areas of social anthropology, political sci-

7. See, for example, Borgen & Brandt, 2006, 2008; Bjørnsen, 2009; Digranes, 2009; Haukelien & Kleppe, 2009; Mæland, 2009; Berge, 2010; Bjørnsen, 2011; Borgen, 2011a, 2011b; Hylland, Kleppe, & Stavrum, 2011; Kvile, 2011; Markussen, 2011; Tveit, 2011; Aasen, 2011; Bakke, 2012; Bamford, 2012; Breivik & Christophersen, 2012; Kayser, 2012; Breivik & Christophersen, 2013a, 2013b; Stavrum, 2013; Holdhus, 2014.

ence, administration and organisation theory, music education, and drama education.

During data collection, the research group participated with teachers, students, and artists on a number of Cultural Rucksack productions, both within and outside of the schools, including concerts, exhibitions, walking tours of the city, dance performances, theatre performances, and museum visits. Researchers also interacted with cultural promoters, artists, and cultural administrators at various seminars, debates, network meetings, etc. where focus was placed on the Cultural Rucksack and/or arts promotion for children.

The empirical foundation for the study is observations of around 100 Cultural Rucksack productions in a variety of art forms and genres, both within and outside of school. These observations were carried out mainly in the 4th and 8th years of primary and lower secondary school and in the 2nd year of upper secondary school, but there were variations due to practical considerations. The data material also includes qualitative interviews with 67 students, 9 teachers, 35 artists, and 21 cultural administrators. Teachers and students were mainly interviewed at school, either during an on-going arts or culture project or just after a performance, to secure their immediate responses to how they experienced their encounter with arts and culture. In addition to qualitative interviews, we conducted an electronic survey among cultural coordinators (mainly teachers) and head teachers in the selected counties (N = 432, response rate of 53 %). In addition, relevant documents have been studied: policy documents, public documents, and various reports and evaluations.

The Cultural Rucksack as it appears to those involved in the programme

Administrators: Cross-pressure and space for action

We are involved in this [programme] to make a better society, to develop a more humane society, a society that is connected, but also to create a better school, to produce well-integrated people, maybe reach more people, more students who do not fit into the traditional school. (From an interview with two Cultural Rucksack administrators)

Hundreds of employees work with the Cultural Rucksack on a full-time or part-time basis. These programme administrators are responsible for developing and implementing local programmes in municipalities and counties. In Norway a municipality refers to both a geographically limited area and a democratically elected governing body, the municipal council, which maintains a certain level of independence from superior authorities regarding, for example, primary and secondary schools and primary health care. A county is a geographic area that encompasses several municipalities, and a county authority is the democratically elected governing body for administering certain welfare services that apply across municipalities within a county.⁸ The Cultural Rucksack is one of these services, along with upper secondary education and regional development, among others. Together with artists, teachers, and students, programme administrators play a key role in developing local Cultural Rucksack programmes. When administrating and implementing the programme, they encounter a number of challenges and dilemmas that they manage in different ways. The national Cultural Rucksack programme is the result

8. Norway has 428 municipalities and 19 counties.

of choices made by administrators within the framework of the programme and their working conditions. Taking implementation theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973) as a starting point, we investigated what administrators actually do, how they relate to their tasks, and how their actions and relations to tasks influence policy. We combined the implementation theory approach with insights from institutional theory, a combination which emphasises how both formal rules and informal norms and values are embodied in organisations and legitimise their activities (March & Olsen, 1989).

Who are the administrators?

Many administrators have other responsibilities in addition to those related to the programme. Cultural Rucksack administrators can be difficult to identify on the basis of job titles or position categories such as “consultant”, “coordinator”, or “adviser”. They may be alone in carrying out their programme responsibilities, or may have colleagues working with them. Their tasks can vary, but often administrators are responsible for programming, touring activities, finances, administrative procedures, and contact with external artists and producers, with municipalities, and with schools and school staff. Cultural Rucksack administrators thus do not constitute an occupational category or profession. On the contrary, administrators have a wide variety of educational backgrounds and previous work experience. On the basis of the research data, four main groups of qualifications can be identified among the administrators: artists, academics holding art degrees, teachers, and administrators. Many administrators have a background as performing artists in music or other art forms. Some also have experience as producers within different genres. Several have studied one or more art subjects at college or university level. Others come from a teaching background, and many have degrees in administration.

Most administrators thought that it was important to include people with different areas of expertise in the administration of the Cultural Rucksack. Professional artistic expertise was considered a valuable asset. If they lacked this expertise themselves, they were concerned about ensuring that the programme be quality assured through (more or less formal) consultation with experts (Tveit & Christophersen, 2013). Having work experience from the school sector or holding a teaching degree was emphasised as being especially significant for cooperation between the cultural and education sectors. Several administrators regarded administrative experience within the field of culture as extremely important. Knowledge of the cultural sector and of the actors involved in it, at both national and local levels, was emphasised as being at least as important as, and perhaps more important than, professional

expertise within particular areas of arts and culture. Such specialist knowledge can be obtained by consulting experts in the fields. Administration of the Cultural Rucksack can thus be viewed as an open field, where many different types of education and areas of expertise are relevant. In addition, it would not be possible for one person to encompass all the relevant types of Cultural Rucksack expertise.

Cultural Rucksack administrators work in a policy field that is relatively new, diverse, and multi-faceted. They can thus not be regarded as a homogeneous occupational group or profession that will act in predictable ways (Kjellberg & Reitan, 1995). Kleppe, Berge, and Hylland (2009, p. 40) claim that Cultural Rucksack administrators' personal characteristics are the factors that most influence the programme's success. Our study shows that programme administrators' interest in arts and culture and in implementing policy priorities in the area, along with their knowledge of the cultural and education sectors, plays a decisive role. We can thus assume that the process of forming the content of the work occurs at the workplace because of the interaction between colleagues and with other Cultural Rucksack actors, and because of their different kinds of experience and areas of expertise.

Designing the programme

Cultural Rucksack administrators experience a broad space for action in designing the programme (Tveit, 2011). Tasks can include planning activities, producing brochures, and monitoring such logistical elements as time frames and the capacities of schools and venues. Designing a programme demands thorough knowledge of the productions, the artists, the municipality or county, and often the individual school. Organizing the design process varies between the different county authorities. Cultural Rucksack administrators may be responsible for different art forms, or relevant administrators might assess the productions of artists and institutions. In some places, productions are designed and produced by professionals, while the county authority functions as the coordinator and source of funding. A third variant is one in which artists apply at regional level for funding of Cultural Rucksack productions, and allocations are made locally after national actors or other professional bodies have approved the productions. A basic division exists between county authorities who prepare a fixed programme that all municipalities and schools participate in and county authorities who offer activities that can be selected from a catalogue of available events. Consequently, municipalities and schools have very different space for action. Despite the different approaches, it is increasingly common to specify firm time limits for artists who are submitting applications. Sometimes this can

be more of a formality than a decisive factor for being included in the programme (Tveit, 2011), and in such cases the administrator's familiarity with productions, artists, or promoters can be crucial in determining whether artists are admitted to the programme.

In the 100 % municipalities (see pp. 12–13), local actors and productions are more often used. Nevertheless, it is not usual to choose local productions exclusively. Some productions tour in several counties, and some are even brought in from abroad because foreign artists and cultural promoters are increasingly interested in participating in the programme. Administrators are invited regularly to arrangements, often by organisers of, for example, national festivals or programmes where artists and cultural promoters present productions. They can then book productions or encourage artists or promoters to apply for funding. Cultural Rucksack administrators at local and regional level collaborate to ensure that presentations correspond to the school's needs and objectives, or to provide information about venues and necessary equipment. In practice, the collaboration differs in how much and in what way(s) the individual county authority and municipality become involved. As school owners, municipalities are responsible for contact with the primary and lower secondary schools, while county authorities are responsible for contact with the upper secondary schools. Nevertheless, sometimes programme administrators in the county authority are in direct contact with the primary and lower secondary schools. Thus the programme breaks down the traditional jurisdictional boundaries between local and regional levels.

Expectations, demands, and dealing with uncertainty

Cultural Rucksack administrators encounter a number of demands and expectations in formulating the programme. For example, they must include a variety of cultural expressions. They are thus expected to put together a varied programme representing the entire range of cultural fields (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting), which in turn entails that administrators be knowledgeable about various genres. In addition, Cultural Rucksack administrators confront quality criteria: Productions should be of high quality, provided by professionals, and preferably adapted to the school curriculum's objectives (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting). Furthermore, administrators should take into account limited budgets and restricted resources; they should adapt activities to the limited economic framework while simultaneously providing a high-quality programme accessible to students throughout the county. Programme administrators also confront demands and expectations regarding local adaptation and participation. The

participation requirement can be interpreted differently: The programme may be subject to a political decision of the local authority (municipality or county authority) and thus democratically grounded, but the participation requirement might simply imply that local actors contribute to developing the programme. A third way is to give students responsibility for arranging activities at their own schools, and to actively involve them in productions, rather than to let them remain passive listeners and spectators. Finally, there is a conflict, or tension, between the responsibility and the authority held by Cultural Rucksack administrators: they have a great deal of responsibility, but lack formal decision-making authority.

On the basis of an implementation theory approach, we assume that the demands and expectations mentioned influence policy implementation, and thus affect local development of the Cultural Rucksack, which is to say that we assume that experiences, evaluations, and established routines of the staff affect how the programme is formulated locally. Having a wide range of educational and occupational backgrounds and experiences can naturally be advantageous, but can also foster different views on the need for expertise and on what generates insecurity and stress. Implementing Cultural Rucksack policies can thus be conducted as a trial-and-error process, in which local conditions and coincidence play a major role in determining the outcome. It will thus be very interesting to see how programme administrators address this dilemma and the challenges facing them, and how they legitimise their situation.

Interviews showed that to deal with uncertainty concerning the programme's quality, one strategy is to obtain internal or external expertise with specific specialist knowledge in areas encompassed by the Cultural Rucksack. In addition, some administrators confer with colleagues in other counties and municipalities about their experiences with productions and artists (Tveit, 2011, p. 61). It is regarded as important that administrators be familiar with the artists, not only because artists can help to assess the programme's quality, but also because collaboration over time can serve to upgrade artists' skills (Tveit, 2011, p. 58). On the other hand, using the same artists in several productions over time is considered as a type of quality assurance (Kleppe, Berge, & Hylland, 2009, p. 48; Haukelien & Kleppe, 2009, pp. 59–60).

Cultural Rucksack administrators also obtain internal or external expertise regarding the inclusion of all artistic and cultural expressions. Administrators obtain tips about new productions and interesting artists from national actors and from other county authorities and municipalities. Cultural Rucksack administrators establish contact with and among representatives of arts communities that do not actively seek funding from the programme. Another strategy is to choose actors and artists previously

involved in the programme. This strategy saves time that administrators would otherwise spend searching for good-quality productions within specific areas of artistic or cultural expression.

Cultural Rucksack administrators complain little about budgets and restricted resources, but envisage what they could accomplish if they had more resources. Budgetary limitations are decisive in the selection, development, and presentation of productions. Using local artists and institutions is regarded as economical because it reduces travelling expenses. While it is expensive to send large productions on tour in rural municipalities, urban municipalities can take advantage of economy of scale. They often have centrally located arts and culture institutions that cover all forms of artistic expression, and can avoid costly tours. Thus the Cultural Rucksack can become a means of making the city's centrally located arts and culture resources accessible to all children, rather than bringing arts and culture to them in the schools. Routines followed by programme administrators for addressing a shortage of time also help to reduce time pressure. For example, when administrators sign artists to long-term contracts and establish fixed agreements with institutions that organise their own productions, they need not spend time each year getting to know the market and finding new productions. Another way of limiting the amount of time needed for programming is to set an annual deadline for applying for the funding of productions.

Cultural Rucksack administrators have developed various measures for dealing with the requirements of co-determination, participation, and local involvement. Some counties have established collaboration forums, which include municipalities and schools, to develop the programme, while others offer a choice of activities from which schools and municipalities can choose. Participation is also ensured when plans and/or programmes are adopted politically. The simplest form of participation is for students to arrange events at their school. Students are also active participants in many productions. These productions are often more time-consuming and expensive than, for example, museum visits, concerts, or theatrical performances. Several administrators thought that watching and listening also should be considered as a form of student participation.

Cross-pressure and space for action

Administrators participate in different networks that can significantly influence how tasks are organised and how shared challenges are resolved, as well as influence the development of enthusiasm and identity (see also Wenger, 1998; Kleppe, Berge, & Hylland, 2009, p. 76). Through these networks, participants learn from each other and find solutions to problems and new ways

of working, for example, regarding designing and marketing the programme. In the networks, administrators develop a common perception of values that should underlie the Cultural Rucksack and of workable solutions, although they do not necessarily agree on every detail. Over time, networking can provide the basis for a more robust organisation, even if local solutions vary. Clearly, some routines and practices among administrators become more similar because of the sharing of experience within networks. Collectively, the networks promote a common “Cultural Rucksack administration culture” supporting a common understanding of demands and expectations that relate to implementing national programme policies.

Administrators at county and municipal levels feel a strong sense of ownership towards the Cultural Rucksack. They are passionate about their jobs and have a large and varied network. They are active administrators whose efforts are decisive in the selection processes and in the programme’s composition. In their work they may be, on the one hand, subject to considerable cross-pressure between national guidelines and local needs, and between their own employers and the interests of various artists and of the education sector. On the other hand, the external legitimisation does not necessarily correspond with the organization’s internal prioritisation (Brunsson, 1989). Administrators may experience significant cross-pressure and many dilemmas in work situations because of conflicting loyalty obligations (Jacobsen, 1960) regarding political decisions, employers, colleagues, their own professions, schools, and students. However, these dilemmas may provide space for action and substantial influence in determining the programme’s content. On the other hand, we found indications that a common culture was emerging among administrators. A common culture is apparent in the establishment of common routines, and it suggests that administrators are becoming more similar. This similarity could reduce the cross-pressure that they experience, but could simultaneously prevent them from choosing untraditional solutions. It could also limit variety in the programme that is offered. The development of common standards, routines, and rules implies an institutionalisation and streamlining of the field. It remains to be seen what institutionalisation and streamlining will mean for the driving forces behind the programme, for the zeal and enthusiasm that have so far characterised the programme, for the artists and promoters who offer their services through the programme, and for the art and cultural productions that the Cultural Rucksack should offer to an extremely diversified group of students.

Students: “The good encounters” with the artists

Penny: That time when we should draw what we felt from the music. Then...

Ella: Yes! I remember!

Penny: I just drew whatever ...

Helene: But it was fun. I drew lots of things.

Penny: I just used, I think I just drew a work of art. I just scribbled, really, but I felt that ... that the music was guiding my hand.

Helene: That didn't happen with me.

The Cultural Rucksack encompasses a wide range of productions. Some are performances of 30–40 minutes' duration, where students are expected to assume a traditional audience role. Other productions are workshop based, where students are expected to work with musicians, visual artists, actors, glass artists, authors, or filmmakers for a week or two, for example, during which the objective is to create something expressive or a product that will be shown at an exhibition or performed at a concert or elsewhere. There are also combinations where students work with a concrete art form before or after a production, for example rehearsing a dance before going to a dance performance, holding a drawing workshop after a museum visit, composing music inspired by a famous work, etc.

An important goal of the research project was to gain more knowledge about how students experience Cultural Rucksack productions. In what follows we will begin by focusing on the students' own statements about their arts and culture experiences within the programme. With this as our starting point, we will address and discuss some fundamental issues related to students' participation and involvement, particularly in connection with the concept of “good encounters” between students and art. Important to point out is that “students” do not constitute a homogeneous group; they differ in age, areas of expertise, backgrounds, and preferences. We emphasise that this research was based on interviews with students around the age of 10 and that a different choice of students might have resulted in different types of statements and discussions. The highlighted statements are therefore to be seen as examples that constitute a starting point for reflecting on and discussing students' experiences with the Cultural Rucksack.

What do students say?

Students we interviewed were not familiar with “the Cultural Rucksack” as a concept, but seemed to have a positive attitude towards arts and culture in their everyday lives at school. The form of artistic expression and genre appeared to be irrelevant; students attached more importance to the way the

production was presented and performed. It seemed to be crucial to their experience that they be involved and be allowed to participate, but humour, surprise, and excitement were also mentioned as important elements. Students often talked about art in very concrete terms: the time when the artist put on a fancy dress, when they were drawing or painting, when they looked at pictures, or when they made something.

Students we interviewed were, for the most part, negative towards taking the role of passive listeners or spectators, and clearly signalled a desire to participate and to become involved in what was going on: they wanted to play, sing, dance, and paint. They also wanted to participate in conversations with the artists. Productions where artists or art promoters talked to them rather than with them were criticised. The desire to engage in activities and to enjoy greater freedom was a running theme in the interviews, and students expressed frustration with rules, administration, and control. A desire for greater freedom of movement was apparent in several interviews: "I really wished that we could have walked around on our own", Helene said. Students wanted to participate actively by moving, touching things, and exploring.

Students' quality assessments appeared to be based on whether they had fun, and whether they thought artists were good. As one student said, "If they seemed uncertain, we would have seen that they weren't any good, and if they had suddenly fallen down while they were dancing when they didn't mean to, then they hadn't rehearsed enough". Another vital factor in students' quality assessments was the extent to which they had been involved in the artistic happening; this could refer to actual participation in the happening, or just a feeling of involvement, for example, an urge to dance, move, or join in. "I felt the urge to move all the time", said one student appreciatively about something he had experienced.

When students were asked to classify and assess artistic expressions, words such as "cool", "boring", "great", and "fun" were used frequently. Although their vocabulary was seemingly rather limited, it was nevertheless apparent in the interviews that some students might have a more comprehensive knowledge of artistic expressions than their words might imply. When they were asked to express themselves specifically, to go more in depth and to give examples, artistic expertise and knowledge often came into view that otherwise would have remained unseen. Some students demonstrated considerable knowledge about instruments, and could discuss differences in the construction and maintenance of instruments as well as differences in performance techniques. They also exhibited knowledge of music technology and of different musical styles, and could reflect on the differences between listening to music at home and in a concert setting.

Students described art as something one makes, something that is nice, and perhaps a bit strange, and something one might need to practise to be able to produce. They seemed to agree that appreciation of art is subjective, as art can be perceived in different ways by different people: “For some people ugly music is beautiful and beautiful music is ugly”, said one girl. Therefore, apparently, students had a liberal and democratic concept of art. An apparently widely held view was that everyone (the students too) could create art. Students were thus very far from perceiving artists as charismatic geniuses; it rather seemed as though students were most concerned with their own performances and creativity, and with how they could derive artistic inspiration from the work of others. Canonised art or the artworks themselves were thus less important to them.

The “good encounter” and resistance to pedagogy

The idea of the “encounter” is seemingly a general designation for what happens when the Cultural Rucksack is put into practice, in other words, when children receive, experience, or are exposed to art. An “art encounter” refers to an encounter between the student and art, or between students and artists, which is presumed to be of a fundamental nature, and thus to influence the students’ lives. Such an assumption about the transformative potential of art is the basis of what the Danish-Norwegian arts education researcher Helene Illeris (2011) calls “arts education based on theories of aesthetic experience”. This view implies a focus on individual and existentially transformative arts encounters between the spectator and the artwork. The arts are thus viewed as holding significant experiential potential for students, as having a liberating and stimulating effect. The encounter between students and art is therefore essential.

Illeris (2011) also describes another view of arts education, a view which deals with how students learn, and therefore also with how the learning processes involved in arts encounters can be planned optimally. Such a perspective is found in the Cultural Rucksack primarily as a fictive position that serves to emphasise and contextualise the view of children’s interactions with art as existential encounters that are disengaged from teaching and education. Despite a seemingly official consensus that arts and education are not necessarily contradictory, the view has consistently been expressed that arts encounters within the Cultural Rucksack should not be about learning and education, but about experiences. For example, “schoolish” has, in several contexts, been used as a negative concept in reference to the programme. “Schoolish” is described as methodical, systematic, and intellectual (Ofsted, 2012, p. 112), and thus construes aesthetic experience as some-

thing emotional, spontaneous, liberating, and stimulating. Within the Cultural Rucksack, educational activities are often presented as having to do with manners, lessons, morality, and rules, in other words, as something entirely different from art (Digranes, 2009; Hylland, Kleppe, & Stavrum, 2011). Thus, “proper” art is defined as that which is different from the art that is taught in schools (Nyrnes, 2008, pp. 10–11), something that appears to be a common rhetorical tactic in the Cultural Rucksack context. This distinction between “proper art” and “school art” serves to construct a contradiction between experiences and learning, between freedom and structure, and between aesthetics and education.

The view of arts and education as being essentially contradictory appears to be based on a narrow understanding of educational activities and mandates. It could be asserted that the concept of the encounter, as it is used in the Cultural Rucksack, is an educational concept. The idea of the “encounter” between a person and a phenomenon as a basis for change and development is a fundamental principle in what could be called “dialogue pedagogy”, where certain encounters – for example, between a student and a teacher, or between a student and a phenomenon, for example art – can generate discontinuity or change in human life (Buber, 1967; Bollnow, 1976).

The concept of the encounter, as it is used to describe arts encounters within the Cultural Rucksack, thus appears similar to a way of thinking about education and development that is found in some types of educational philosophy. This way of thinking can function as a third arts education position, which could be designated “arts education based on theories about *didactics* and *Bildung*,”⁹ which describes how encounters with art can enable students to deal with reality independently and freely, while simultaneously their relations with the community and humanity in general must be attended to (Illeris, 2011, p. 31). This idea of *Bildung* can be found among teachers we interviewed (see chapter 3.3.), and is clearly expressed in the Cultural Rucksack’s mandatory guidelines:

Contact with culture and the arts throughout childhood can give children knowledge and experience that will stimulate their own creativity and increase their ability to evaluate the various forms of cultural expression. Understanding artistic expressions is often a learning process, and children must be given the

9. *Didactics* and *Bildung* are common concepts in German and Scandinavian educational philosophy. *Didactics* refers to a theory of education, and often includes theoretical and philosophical reflection on educational aims, content, justification, and methods, and the relationship between these. *Bildung*, is regarded as the ultimate educational objective, and denotes education and growth in terms of a human being’s relationship to him/herself, to culture, and to society.

opportunity to develop an appreciation of a broad range of cultural expressions, so that they are equipped to meet the challenges of the knowledge-based society. (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting)

The Cultural Rucksack's artistic activities can thus be seen as attempting to achieve a systematic form of education, which ironically would be the very essence of an educational institution's work, broadly speaking.

The staging of students in the "good encounters"

As a result of the emphasis on existential experiences and of the opposition to pedagogy, students and art are, metaphorically speaking, staged in certain ways. Expectations of an existential heartfeltness and meaningfulness appear to be implicit in the concept of the encounter. Such emotional responses are not necessarily reflected in the students' own experiences with and statements about artistic and cultural expressions. Our informants do not describe and assess productions in terms of emotions, but by referring to concrete things, events, and actions. Borgen (2001) emphasises the predisposition of children towards the concrete, and writes that artists in the project she investigated tended to use professional arts terminology and abstract language, while children take notice of concrete events. She writes, "This does not mean that children have not experienced something meaningful. But most children have experienced something entirely different from what the adult actors have stated was the intention of the performance" (Borgen, 2001, p. 25). This assertion also applies to ways of speaking about art and culture. Children and adults can have different vocabularies, and thus have different concepts and nuances at their disposal; there will also be considerable variation within a group of students. A student who says that a Cultural Rucksack production was "fun" might mean that it was a meaningful experience, but not necessarily "meaningful" in the same sense as another student (or an administrator, artist, or teacher) would find it meaningful. The experience of meaningfulness can be very different from student to student, just as meaningfulness for adults and for children can be different. Consequently, it could be asked whether the idea of heartfelt and enriching art encounters in the Cultural Rucksack could be based on the emotions of individual adults and on their experiences of meaningfulness in their encounters with art. Furthermore, art encounters need not be experienced as exclusively positive. Even if students are intended to have powerful experiences with art, and thereby to develop an aesthetic sense and a familiarity with artistic expressions, such positive effects may not actually occur. So-called art encounters could also be perceived as boring, meaningless, and irrelevant. Encounters with arts are

therefore not necessarily “good”; they may also be “mis-meetings” – encounters where reciprocity and dialogue are absent (Buber, 1967; Bauman, 1991).

A related question is to what extent the “good encounter’s” emphasis on individualised and transcendent experiences represents a simplified picture not only of art, but also of the audience, in this case the students. For example, does the concept of the “good encounter” also encompass critical or political art? Some artistic expressions and productions can aim to highlight and transcend established power relations in order to promote freedom and new points of view, an aim which would represent a conception of “arts education based on theories of social criticism and change” (Illeris, 2011). Within the field of music education, the term “major-key syndrome” is sometimes used, referring to the preference for major keys¹⁰ in children’s songs as well as for jolly and edifying lyrics. As our research indicates, artistic expressions that thematise social, cultural, or political conditions could, in some cases, be regarded as offensive, frightening, or inappropriate for students. Such artistic expression may therefore not gain a foothold within the Cultural Rucksack programme. Consequently, we might ask whether the programme is influenced by a “major-key syndrome”, that is, by an approach which presents idealised and embellished views of reality to students.

The concept of the “good encounter” seemingly favours an artwork-oriented approach that affects the perception of the audience (in this case the students), what space for action they are allowed, and therefore also their opportunity to participate. An artwork-oriented approach to arts education could be perceived as closed – as a one-way communication between the expert and the uninitiated, where the answer can be found within the artwork, or in art itself (Aure, 2011). According to such a point of view, children’s participation in artistic productions must be understood by taking the artwork, not the audience, as the point of departure. Aure (2011), on the other hand, calls for a more relational approach to arts encounters, an approach that will take into consideration youth culture, social issues, and construction of meaning in children’s and adolescents’ lives. A question then naturally arises as to the inclusion of children’s and adolescents’ experiences and life-worlds in Cultural Rucksack productions, as mentioned in interviews with students that form the empirical starting point of this chapter.

The rhetoric of the good encounter leaves little space for thematising the context of the arts encounters. Important aspects of such context are gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, all of which can influence children’s experience of art. When students’ backgrounds and life-worlds are different,

10. Music in a major key is often perceived as happier than music in a minor key.

it is reasonable to believe that their respective understanding and experience of artistic expressions will also be different. Focussing exclusively on personal and individual dimensions of arts experiences may obscure the fact that appreciating art could also be connected to cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1995). The school context is also somewhat disregarded when individual encounters with the arts are highlighted. Norwegian children attend school for many years, and the schools are responsible for teaching a number of subjects, including the arts. When some claim that there is a fundamental dichotomy between experiencing and learning, and that experiencing should take priority over learning, it is then natural to ask whether artistic experiences are enough per se, or whether teaching of the arts is also necessary. One can hardly participate in something that one does not understand or master. In many cases, participation entails mastery and competence, which means that practice, discipline, and learning can be essential prerequisites not only for experiencing art, but also for being able to participate in artistic processes. One might therefore ask why artists, promoters, and administrators who hold artistic convictions that conflict with the school's core activities nevertheless want to be connected to the school organisation. An obvious answer could be that the Cultural Rucksack offers both an income and an audience for artists. According to Borgen (2011b, p. 381), the Cultural Rucksack is an example of how artists and arts organisations have succeeded in presenting schools and local actors as incompetent, and thus presenting themselves as indispensable for arts education in schools.

Teachers: Helpers, guards, or mediators?

*... when something happens, it is often the teachers who are messing it up.
(Artist)*

The Cultural Rucksack can provide things that you have no chance of doing in a music room at school. Listening to an orchestra in a concert hall – now, that's something different. Carrying out an opera project is impossible for one person alone; no matter how good a teacher you are, you'll have trouble getting it off the ground. (Teacher)

Since the Cultural Rucksack was introduced as a national programme in 2001, a large number of students in Norwegian schools, probably most of them, have been involved in cultural projects several times each year. Likewise, many teachers have had extensive experience with the programme, but little focus has been placed on their thoughts about it and their experience with its practical implementation. Other actors in the Cultural Rucksack

system have expressed views, sometimes strong ones, about teachers' attitudes and actions. In our data, we found many negative comments about the school, individual teachers, and teachers in general. Cultural bureaucrats, producers, and artists refer to schools that did not welcome artists, and to teachers who did not become involved, did not pay attention to the artists, did not attend productions, or who behaved poorly at performances. Our data show predominantly negative references to teachers and a systematic lack of positive references to teachers' presence and actions. It seems reasonable to conclude that teachers are generally regarded in a negative light by other actors in the Cultural Rucksack system. This has also been pointed out in previous research on the programme: "The interviews have given us the impression that responsibility for 'everything that goes wrong' is often assigned to the teachers" (Borgen & Brandt, 2008, p. 88). Teachers themselves, however, seem to take a positive view of the Cultural Rucksack. In what follows, we examine teachers' statements about the programme more closely.

What do teachers say about the Cultural Rucksack?

Teachers we interviewed were not primarily concerned with arts and culture in and of themselves, but with how arts and culture could contribute to their students' educational, personal, and social growth and development. They said that Cultural Rucksack productions could support learning, both within the arts and in other subjects. However, many teachers were very much aware of the focus on achievement that could be fostered by the requirements of school curriculums. For teachers, the Cultural Rucksack meant that students could have experiences that would engage and inspire them, and that involved more than teaching and tests. Arts and cultural experiences could have a lasting influence on students, which they could take with them throughout their lives. For them, the programme was not about learning in a narrow sense, but about a holistic process of growth and development. According to teachers, arts and cultural encounters broadly influence students' lives. Knowledge of art provides a foundation for participating in debates on the subject, and can teach students to "make the good choices in life", as one teacher said. If arts and cultural encounters are to have growth potential for students, the arts and artists must address the students. Teachers did not mean that art should be easily digested, but it was nevertheless important for teachers that artists communicated with students and presented their art in a way that seemed relevant to the students. Teachers perceived this as a reciprocal relationship: not only should art be made accessible to the students, but the students also had to open themselves up to art. Therefore teachers emphasised the importance of learning proper audience behaviour: behaving well at a performance,

being able to sit still, and not disturbing the artists or other audience members, all matters of respect, according to teachers.

Informants were very enthusiastic about the programme on their own behalf and on behalf of their schools. The value of Cultural Rucksack events is perceived to be their potential to transcend the normal school day and to offer something out of the ordinary. According to teachers, the programme also enhances the school's everyday activities. Teachers were naturally even more positive to the programme when Rucksack events could be directly integrated into the school's daily activities in support of the curriculum and of students' learning objectives. According to teachers, direct collaboration with an artist in the classroom could contribute to students' learning and to creative inspiration for the teachers. They ascribed this two-fold benefit to differences in expertise between the teacher and the artist: while teachers have the advantage of broad competency, artists are highly specialised within a narrower sphere. Thus Cultural Rucksack productions can provide teachers a good opportunity to gain insight into artists' highly specialised fields of expertise while simultaneously providing them an opportunity to learn how they themselves can use new techniques and methods with students.

Teachers praised the programme and the artists, although some critical comments were made indirectly. Several teachers, for instance, questioned artists' communication skills. Teachers believed that their own expertise was not used when productions were being prepared and implemented. In the teachers' view, a certain amount of planning is required if art is to function in schools: Good art is not good art under all circumstances, and the art's quality could thus depend on how it is presented to students. Although many teachers emphasised that many artists make good presentations, not every production has been equally successful. "It varies", one teacher said. Several teachers indicated that their knowledge of children and class management could have been used more efficiently.

Inconsistency, ownership, and space for action

The teachers' positive attitude towards the programme is sharply contrasted by artists' and administrators' perception of the teachers. Negative comments made by artists about the schools and teachers seem concern short productions or happenings such as performances, lectures, guided tours, etc. In such contexts, artists are not necessarily familiar with the total context within which the event takes place. The artists' basis for drawing conclusions about what is happening may therefore be limited to the situation they are experiencing then and there. It could thus appear that artists' assessments of teachers are based on individual events detached from context. Artists' statements could therefore

also be understood as revealing a lack of knowledge of and respect for the complexity of the teaching profession and of the school's professional activities.

However, teachers' effusively positive statements are not necessarily expressed through actions that are perceived as positive by others. A closer investigation of the interview statements suggested a gap between principles and reality, in other words, between words and actions, regarding the pre- and post-production work involved in the Cultural Rucksack. On the one hand, teachers claimed that preparation and follow-up were important, while on the other hand, they said that they worked only "a little" with such things, and "did not spend much time on them". The interviews provided no basis for drawing conclusions about the quantity or quality of teachers' actual preparations and follow-up. Perhaps their statements reflected their actual efforts, or perhaps they reflected their insecurities. In any case, it is interesting to register that teachers' reservations about their own effort are incommensurate with their strong emphasis on preparation and follow-up. There were also clear differences in the way teachers referred to different topics. They responded, as expected, thoroughly and in great detail when asked about students, their relationship to arts and culture, and their experiences with productions presented at their schools. When the questions involved direct and concrete issues regarding the Cultural Rucksack, responses were often short and vague, perhaps because of insecurity, and might have indicated a lack of knowledge about the programme and how it functions, as several teachers also suggested.

A lack of insight into and influence over the programme may have affected teachers' sense of ownership towards it, and this, in turn, could be reflected in how teachers act when dealing with the programme. It is thus reasonable to ask what space for action a teacher can have in a Cultural Rucksack context. Debates about the programme are usually characterised by a rhetoric of enthusiasm and by the prominent use of superlatives. It is therefore understandable that objections, tensions, and conflicts could be under-communicated or denied; teachers' positive statements can thus be interpreted as the result of political correctness. Also, it appears to be customary to refer to Cultural Rucksack productions as warm, intimate, and happy encounters between artist and student (Aslaksen, 2005). This "two-someness" between artist and student, in turn, leaves teachers with very little space for action, as will be discussed in more detail.

The teacher as helper, guard, or mediator

Teachers' interview statements about their own potential and actual contribution to arts encounters indicate that there are several possible roles available for

them, roles which we could call subject positions (Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999; Edley, 2001): teachers can function as artists' helpers, as students' guards, or as mediators between artists and students. In a workshop setting, where students work side by side with artists, teachers said that they would let artists lead the activities, while they helped out as a pair of extra hands. Prior to presentations and exhibitions, teachers contributed by preparing students for the event in accordance with instructions issued by artists or event organisers. As one teacher said, "Well, there isn't very much we can do there [in the venue]. It's actually only in advance that we can do something. At the concerts we're just watchdogs". During performances, teachers seem to assume the role of guards who ensure that students arrive at the arranged time and behave well.

When examining observational data from Cultural Rucksack productions, another possible position for teachers emerges: they can also function as mediators between the art/artist and the student. As mentioned, teachers emphasised the potential of arts and culture to contribute to students' educational, personal, and social growth and development. Human growth, or development, is traditionally regarded as one of the primary objectives of education, and growth is here understood as an individual process that occurs within a community framework (Gustavsson, 2009; Markussen, 2011). Teachers' interview statements thereby display a clear *Bildung* orientation. According to teachers, realising the arts' educational or *Bildung* potential depends on two elements. First, it demands a long-term effort. Second, it requires an ability to communicate with students to ensure that even complex and challenging artistic expressions are presented in a way that makes them accessible and relevant to students. As a result of these statements, teachers created a space for themselves within the Cultural Rucksack as the ones who are experts on children and who are present in their lives for many years, and who therefore can help students approach artistic expressions. Thereby, teachers positioned themselves somewhere between the artists and the students, as "a sort of link, in a way", as one teacher said.

The perception of the teacher as a mediator, or translator, between artist and student requires some explanation. "The issue of 'mediation' or 'translation' logically suggests some degree of misunderstanding; if people fully understand each other, there is no need for translation", the anthropologist Gísli Pálsson wrote (1993, p. 29). Thus is it natural to ask which problems or misunderstandings can reasonably be inferred such that, in the context of the Cultural Rucksack, teachers are logically thought of as a link? To shed light on this question, we will mention an example from a project where students in year 7 wrote, composed, and performed their own opera in collaboration with three artists and two teachers:

One group of students composed and rehearsed the music for the opera together with a musician from the project group. The musician established a good rapport with the students, but clearly expected much of the group. He would say, for example, "Mind the accents in the bridge!", which some students did not understand at all. Several times the teacher had to help translate the musician's instructions into something the students could understand, by explaining verbally or by showing the students musically what the musician might have meant, for example, by singing it for the students.

As this example illustrates, encounters between artists and students can present some fundamental challenges: one is an adult, and the others are children. They do not meet each other by chance, but in an encounter that has been arranged for them; one of them is at work while the others are required to participate. They jointly explore a form of artistic expression in which one party is regarded as being an expert, while the other is expected either to learn directly from the expert and/or to have an aesthetic experience that stimulates growth, development, and recognition. In connection with the roles ascribed to the adult expert and the young novices, there is also a difference between a specialised, somewhat abstract language and a more concrete, everyday language (Borgen, 2001; Kvile, 2011), a difference which became very clear when the musician used abstract professional terminology. The teacher translated the musician's professional expressions into a more everyday, concrete form for students, thus closing the gap, that is, verbally explaining or even singing so that students could understand the meaning of the musician's professional musical terminology. This example suggests that the teacher feels obligated to intervene and help:

(...) if I feel reasonably sure that I satisfactorily understand someone else, I may be equally convinced that I will have to intervene to help that someone understand [sic] somebody else again [sic], whose perspective and characteristic forms of expression I am somewhat familiar with. (Hannerz, 1993, p. 51)

Several worlds and realities meet when artists and students come together under the auspices of the Cultural Rucksack. The teacher can smooth the path, ensure communication and understanding, clarify to students how art is relevant to school life and daily life, and help to provide good working conditions for the artists. The teacher is able to do all this because he or she participates in these different worlds, and can transmit, mediate, or translate between them if necessary.

The balancing act that is necessary for teachers

The position of mediator has many nuances, and we have chosen to present it in a way that coincides closely with the teachers' self-view. Seen from this perspective, the position of mediator implies that teachers can contribute to the Cultural Rucksack by planning children's encounters with culture through promoting connections and relationships between children and artists.

It is also possible to arrive at a more critical interpretation of the mediating role, where the position of teachers as mediators can be seen as a way of conforming and adapting to a system to which they do not entirely belong or into which they do not comfortably fit. In this case, the position of mediator might be imposed on teachers out of necessity, because of a situation in which the Cultural Rucksack, as has been mentioned, appears to be constructed around the relationship between student and artist, in which the teacher lacks a natural place. This position could also be regarded as a logical consequence of a situation where the arts and cultural sector has the power to define the programme, while the education sector has been assigned an organisational function. The role of mediator can thus enable teachers to balance contradictory demands and interests, while additionally generating a space for action within the programme that does not conflict with the teacher's role and professional identity.

Although the position of mediator can be said to have been created by the way the Cultural Rucksack is organised, it can, paradoxically, also be perceived as controversial within the same programme. The very idea that some form of translation, or mediation, for children should be necessary in an art encounter may thus be regarded as problematic because it can impinge on ideas about art's autonomy (Røyseng, 2007; Bjørnsen, 2009; Kvile, 2011; Tveit, 2011). It can be perceived as unnecessary or even negative to plan, enhance, or mediate art, because some people view these actions as giving the art an educational slant that diminishes the artistic expression's quality (Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Mæland, 2009; Oftedal, 2012). Others claim that school art is a distinct and hybrid genre (Bresler, 2003), and that because children seldom visit cultural arenas without being accompanied by an adult who is responsible for them, it will always be necessary to place art within a context and thus to prepare it in particular ways (Aslaksen, 2005). The position as mediator can thus be linked to a larger debate that addresses not only the presentation of art to children, but also the distinctive nature of art within the Cultural Rucksack programme. Therefore the mediator position could be problematic, as it could intensify disputes about concepts and definitions, and thus also about what the Cultural Rucksack is and should be.

Enthusiasm and “goodness”

The Cultural Rucksack is a gift to the entire educational community. It enables both students and adults to experience high-quality encounters with arts and culture. Being exposed to such forms of artistic and cultural expression is important for everyone, and is vital if children and young people are to develop into well-rounded human beings. None of us can know what kinds of arts and culture we like or do not like if we are never exposed to them, and here the Cultural Rucksack plays an indispensable role. (From the “Comments” field in the questionnaire)

The Cultural Rucksack is valuable for many. It affects teachers, cultural coordinators, and principals at schools, and affects administrators at various levels. It also affects artists; promoters; arts and culture institutions at local, regional, and national levels; and various artists’ organisations. Not least, it affects students who have been and continue to be offered arts and culture through the programme. Enthusiasm permeates descriptions of the programme. It is “rich”, and associated with “excitement” and “happiness”, it is perceived as something “magical”, “extraordinary”, “like a fairy tale” that gives us “stars in our eyes”, and so important that it reflects “life itself”. The Cultural Rucksack is thus associated with something “good”: it is a good thing that children are allowed to participate in or experience arts and culture. On this basis, we wanted to investigate how those responsible for implementing the Cultural Rucksack in the schools experienced the programme. To this end, a survey was sent to selected cultural coordinators and principals responsible for implementing the programme. Was support as strong in the schools as it was among administrators and bureaucrats? And what variations could be found? What does it mean when the programme creates such enthusiasm?

Survey results¹¹

Support for the Cultural Rucksack was high among both principals and cultural coordinators. They were predominantly positive to both the programme itself and the intentions behind it. A total of 97 % believed that it was important for students to be exposed to professional arts and culture in the school, and over 90 % agreed that the Cultural Rucksack provides students with

11. An electronic questionnaire was sent to a selection of 830 potential respondents, half of whom were cultural coordinators and half principals. They were selected from a broad range of schools (primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools) in the four counties which were the focus of the project. A response percentage of 53 % provided a good basis for robust findings.

TABLE 1: SUPPORT FOR THE CULTURAL RUCKSACK. PERCENTAGE AGREEING. N = 432.

	PRINCIPALS	CULTURAL COORDINATORS	TOTAL SAMPLE
The Cultural Rucksack gives students good arts and culture experiences.	92	92	92
The Cultural Rucksack helps schools achieve their learning objectives.	85	83	84
The Cultural Rucksack helps students learn.	57	64	62
The Cultural Rucksack disturbs the ordinary school day.	9	7	8
The Cultural Rucksack has little influence in my school.	4	3	4

qualitatively good arts and culture experiences. A majority also believed that the programme contributes positively to education. Very few (8 %) felt that the programme was a disruptive element in a normal school day.

To understand how individual schools prioritise culture, those receiving the survey were asked to assess the following statement: “My school wants to provide students with good cultural experiences”. A total of 95 % of principals and 89 % of cultural coordinators agreed. Around 90 % disagreed that the programme had little influence on their school, and around 85 % disagreed that it had little influence, generally speaking, on students. A large majority agreed that students had benefited from the Cultural Rucksack in the form of scholastic development, self-realisation, or coping with life. There was also a consensus that the Cultural Rucksack provided qualitatively good arts and culture experiences to students (92 % agreed, see table 1). According to table 1, over 80 % also agreed that the programme helped schools to achieve their learning objectives.

The questionnaire had an open field for written comments, where respondents could make general comments about the Cultural Rucksack. The comments clearly showed broad support and enthusiasm for the programme. More than 80 respondents chose to comment, and most emphasised the importance of the programme:

I think that the Cultural Rucksack programme is a fantastic opportunity to experience a wide range of cultural events. Our school would not have been able to participate in these kinds of activities without the Cultural Rucksack. Many, many thanks to the Cultural Rucksack for that! (From the “Comments” field in the questionnaire)

THE CULTURAL RUCKSACK

One question listed the various objectives of the Cultural Rucksack, and asked cultural coordinators and principals to indicate how important they felt these were. In general, it would be difficult to disagree with most of the programme's objectives since they are both broad and rather positive. Still, respondents' comments varied (Figure 1). Most agreed that it was important to reach the target group (98 %), to enable students to encounter a variety of artistic expressions (94 %), to ensure that performers and activity presenters be professional (88 %), and to ensure that programme events be accessible to all students (84 %). Fewer were concerned about whether the production and presentation reflected the premises set by art itself (58 %), whether the event included student participation (49 %), or whether the activity contributed to developing local identity (38 %).

Consideration of the students' and the school's respective situations seemed more important than consideration of providing art: More respondents emphasised that the programme should be adapted to students and to the school and teaching situations than emphasized that production and presentation should reflect the premises set by art itself.

In other words, attention was primarily on students, schools, and what schools should offer students. Respondents also emphasised that the Cultural Rucksack should give students challenges and ensure learning. The survey also shows that cultural coordinators and principals emphasised

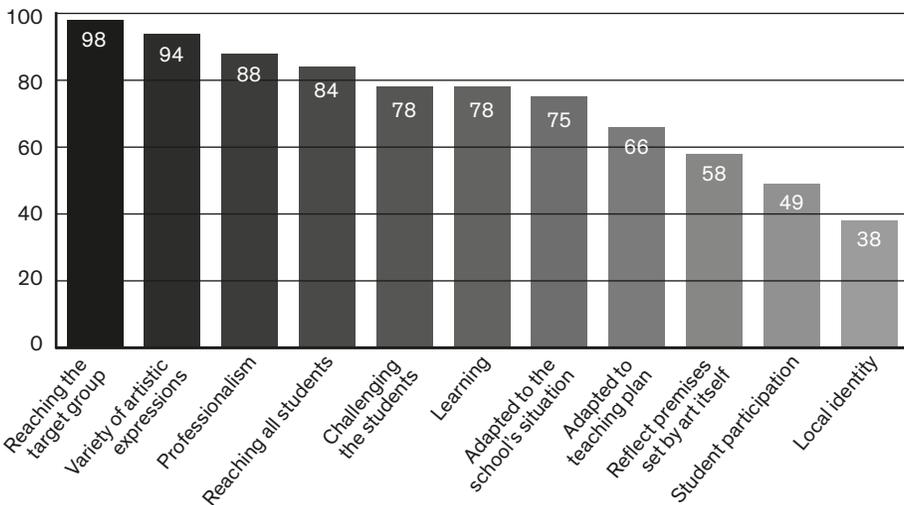


Figure 1. What do you regard as important in achieving the objectives of the Cultural Rucksack? Percentage "important": N = 432.

the traditional audience role more than they did student participation. This finding supports previous research (Vibe, Evensen, & Hovdhaugen, 2009). One explanation could be that Cultural Rucksack productions that allow for student participation often require more preparatory work by teachers and cultural coordinators.

A large majority (78 %) felt it was important that students learn something from the productions. Fewer were concerned about ensuring that productions be adapted to the curriculum (66 %, 12 percentage points lower). Most respondents agreed that the Cultural Rucksack helped schools to achieve their learning objectives and helped students to learn. There was a significant difference in how principals and cultural coordinators emphasised the learning aspect, on the one hand, and the importance of arts and culture in itself, on the other. More cultural coordinators found it important that art be given priority when activities were produced and presented (the difference was 10 percentage points). A greater percentage of principals emphasised that students should be challenged and should learn something from the event, and that the Cultural Rucksack should be adapted to the curriculum.

To summarize, respondents generally emphasised the value of experiencing qualitatively good arts and culture more than they emphasised the learning aspect. Being exposed to art was also evidently more important than were details concerning how the Cultural Rucksack actually contributed to or fit into the school's usual activities. Student participation was not very highly prioritized. That experience was emphasized more than learning is interesting, especially considering existing debates about learning vs. experience in the arts (for example, Aslaksen, Borgen, & Kjørholt, 2003; Lidén, 2004; Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Digranes, 2009; Breivik & Christophersen, 2012).

The Cultural Rucksack – a “goodness project”

The Cultural Rucksack receives high praise and enjoys broad support, both of which are evident from evaluations of and research on the programme as well as from media reports (for example, Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Haukelien & Kleppe, 2009; Lidén, 2004; Digranes, 2009). Many eagerly point out how valuable and important the programme is for the local community, for the country, and for art itself, but primarily for students. There are few limits to what arts and culture in school is expected to contribute to: the Cultural Rucksack is expected to lead to a higher quality of life and to a better ability to cope with life, to better learning and greater educational advances, to social cohesion and integration, to democratising culture, and to enhancing a local identity. It is rather difficult to find critical voices, and in the rare case of open criticism, a large number of people mobilise to counter it. What does it

mean when something is perceived as valuable, as this programme evidently is, and when there is so little criticism? What are the consequences when something is presented as being so obviously good?

Røyseng (2007, 2012) shows that there is a strong belief in the value and influence of arts and culture, and discusses this belief in relation to the virtue, or “goodness”, of art. Loga (2004) writes about the power of goodness as a type of power particularly evident in debates on the politics of values. Another designation for the same concept is the goodness regime (Tvedt, 2003). The power of goodness, or of the goodness regime, involves what is called discursive power: power that is generated by a particular belief system. The system defines legitimate statements, reference points, questions, and answers. In the context of the Cultural Rucksack, these might involve that authorities, through administrators at various levels, argue that they know “best” what type of arts and culture children or different groups of children need. Some groups of artists and performers gain entry, while others do not. A goodness discourse implies that something good exists and that most people will agree to it because it is good (Loga, 2003, p. 75). Something that is good for many is difficult to criticise. Opponents are seen as cynical or even self-centred, as having the “wrong” values and priorities, and as lacking knowledge. Criticising the discourse will be perceived as support for the opposite of goodness: indifference, ignorance, or even self-centredness. Those involved in the discourse possess an unassailable power: it is difficult to criticise or oppose what is good. And that something cannot be discussed can have a paralysing effect. It does not encourage debate, criticism, or divergent views. Opposing positions are often ridiculed, rejected, or ignored, or the status, competence, knowledge, or methods of the opponent are attacked. There have been examples of such things related to the Cultural Rucksack, and research highlighting more positive aspects of the programme (for example, Bamford, 2006, 2012) has not been the subject of the same critical scrutiny as has research that highlights challenges inherent in the programme (for example, Borgen & Brandt, 2008; Vibe, Evensen, & Hovdhaugen, 2009).

In a discourse, positions and power can be allocated without participants’ being aware of it. Therefore, power exercised through a goodness discourse does not necessarily imply a negative intent (Loga, 2003). A goodness discourse develops over time, but it is not necessarily developed consciously or something that actors reflect over or use as a power strategy. The discourse is developed by the actors (those working with the Cultural Rucksack), sometimes unknowingly. It is something that is inherent in the programme. The development of a goodness discourse is not necessarily a conscious power strategy, but may indicate a heartfelt need to protect and defend the programme. This need might be related to the programme’s origins, when it had

a limited budget and small scope. Public funds are still limited, and the need to protect the Cultural Rucksack is understandable given the fact that the cultural sector must fight for attention against other, more salient political issues and important societal sectors.

The survey revealed broad and strong support for the Cultural Rucksack. The research project's qualitative material supports this finding, and also revealed strong enthusiasm for and commitment to the presentation of arts and culture to children, within the administration as well as among teachers and artists. The discourse surrounding the Cultural Rucksack emphasises what is good in the programme. This goodness is supported by the enthusiasm and involvement of those who work with the programme. Working with arts and culture for children is perceived as important, fulfilling, and enjoyable. It is essential for the students and for society in general. Providing scientific "evidence" for the connection between arts and culture and "the good society" which it aims to achieve is difficult. The goodness discourse that characterizes the Cultural Rucksack seems an important factor behind its apparent success, however.

Cultural policies and programs to support arts and culture are frequently the subject of public debate and criticism. There was little evidence of criticism of the programme in our data, however. The positivity and enthusiasm surrounding the programme seem to mirror its success. The Cultural Rucksack is characterised by a particular kind of enthusiasm and many involved in the program use what we may call a rhetoric of enthusiasm. They are naturally eager to maintain the programme, and thus continue to emphasise its positive aspects to attract public attention and garner support.

In the rare case of criticism, it tends to be about how the programme is administered and implemented. As noted, there has also been debate surrounding some of the research and the evaluation of the programme. A general goodness discourse emphasising the inherent virtue of the programme might silence these voices. A problem arises if the positivity hinders the programme's development. The excitement and enthusiasm should not obstruct constructive criticism. A democratic society needs discussions about what priorities are desirable and what changes might be necessary. Therefore, debate on the Cultural Rucksack from all involved parties should be encouraged and held openly.

Artists: The conflict surrounding art

There is actually a very great difference in how a person relates to art, depending on the kind of background he or she has. (Bjørnar, author and filmmaker)

THE CULTURAL RUCKSACK

Yes, an attempt was made to control us, and it was very unpleasant. (Lise, musician)

The music students listen to through us [the Cultural Rucksack] should be something different from what they hear all the time on the radio, hit songs and such. (Alf, musician and county-level event producer)

An on-going conflict exists in the field of art regarding the power to define what is accepted as good art, and many attempts have been made to maintain hierarchies based on the differences between high and low culture, autonomy and adaptation, art and handicraft, professional and amateur, purity and pragmatism. In addition, many people are seeking to abolish such distinctions by pointing out that art is inherently messy because it is contextual. As the quotations above indicate, a similar battle is currently going on within the Cultural Rucksack. This is in no way surprising. In practice, the programme actually encourages such a conflict through its multitude of objectives and through its dual basis in the school sector and in the arts. Although the separation between autonomous art and Cultural Rucksack-art is a somewhat artificial construct, it is nevertheless present within the programme when someone points out that his or her art might suffer by being “adapted” for an audience of students. This concern can reflect different traditions and perceptions of art on the part of the artists regardless of their genre, but it can also reflect a general on-going conflict in the field of art regarding views of art, acknowledgement, commissions, and financial support, all of which apply to the Cultural Rucksack. As part of this conflict, various attempts are made to exclude as “out of place” (Douglas, 1997) those cultural forms of expression that do not fit in or are not considered good enough when contrasted with those that are, supposedly, purely autonomous.

We were interested in investigating how tensions, dilemmas, and challenges are experienced by artists. In our research, we carried out in-depth interviews with 35 artists. Most had commissions from the Cultural Rucksack, while a few had applied for admittance to the programme. We also talked with some artists who were not interested in participating in the programme for various reasons. The artists were active in the areas of music, theatre, film, visual art, applied art, food art, and cultural heritage. Most were both performing and creative artists, and several crossed genre boundaries. Some worked mostly locally, while others worked throughout Norway as well as abroad. In addition, we contacted a number of artistic mediators, producers, curators, and cultural mediators, and our conversations with them are included in the material.

The artists appeared to have dissimilar views of the Cultural Rucksack. Several were extremely critical towards what they perceived as a lack of transparency and predictability in the selection process and programming. Some saw little problem in operating at the interface between art and school; on the contrary, they found it productive and constructive. Others clung to the idea of art's autonomy, which seemed to entail an inclination to define artistic activities as being the opposite of those in schools or in education. Some artists we interviewed have been involved with the Cultural Rucksack for a long time, often in a variety of settings. These artists stated that they have experienced a change in how they are received by schools and by their employers in recent years. Artists specifically mentioned the system whereby students worked as event organisers. Everywhere this system was used, both students and teachers seemed to be better prepared and more accommodating, both of which appeared to create more favourable conditions for well-functioning productions. The artists nevertheless gave the impression of experiencing differences from county to county and from municipality to municipality in the way they were received and in the extent to which their artistic integrity was safeguarded. Several artists mentioned examples of good cooperation, and referred to the mutual benefits of having artists and teachers working together. These examples given by the artists indicate that it would be advantageous for Cultural Rucksack administrators to analyse what makes certain collaborations work. Productions in which teachers serve as assistants to artists are not recommended. What these artists call for are productions in which participants with, respectively, educational and artistic capabilities work together rather than oppose each other. In what follows, we examine the concept of "critical events" to shed light on the perpetual balancing act that artists must perform between positive and negative aspects of the Cultural Rucksack.

Critical events

The Cultural Rucksack has often been referred to as one of the most important workplaces for freelance artists in Norway today, and as one of the artistic and cultural offerings that reaches the largest audience (Baldersheim, 2012). Both seem mostly true, with slight modifications. One modification is, of course, that the number of freelance artists is much larger than the "Cultural Rucksack market" has room for, and several artists have said that it is difficult to get a foot in the door. Gaining access to the programme can influence positively the creative work of artists, and access provides a good source of income. In addition, artists find that participating in the Cultural Rucksack might be risky. For example, artists themselves must

often cover production expenses, and developing potential productions for the programme can thus represent a considerable financial risk. Such risk is experienced strongly as creating art “with a knife at one’s throat” (see also Larsen, 2011). Relations with Cultural Rucksack administrators at county and municipal levels can also be marked by tension. Several artists said that they were reluctant to criticise the programme and current employers because they were afraid of losing future jobs.

For artists, there can thus be both advantages and risks in participating in the programme. The mixed blessings of participation are also manifested in the ways artists discuss how their productions are received within the programme. Their comments can be expressed in the concept of “critical events” (Das, 1995; Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad, & Vestel, 2012), which denotes major and minor events that decisively affect people at both personal and collective levels. At a personal level, a critical event can represent a turning point – where old points of view are challenged, and worldviews and elements of identity must be revised. At a collective level, the critical event represents a common reference point that affects many people.

Within the Cultural Rucksack, such critical events are arts encounters that decisively affects a person and those with whom the person is experiencing the event, and where the person or group gains a different perspective towards the world and themselves, which in turn may have consequences, either positive or negative, for the person’s direction in life. Such influence is often referred to as “the transformative power of art” (Ranciere, 2004). Some artists referred to such events in their own lives as having been decisive in their decision to choose a career in art. Others related that students had approached them during productions, or more often afterwards, and had told them how important a particular art encounter had been for them.

Artists also referred to other critical events where a performance or art encounter had gone badly. The cause could lie with the artists themselves, for example, because they had misjudged their audience. However, artists often blamed unsuccessful encounters on a poor reception by the schools, on teachers who did not care and thus legitimised negativity, on indifferent students, or on distractions from the surroundings (substandard lighting or acoustics).

Sometimes, internal tensions in the Cultural Rucksack system can trigger unpleasant experiences for artists, either during or even before tours. For example, a production might be purchased but later cancelled because local actors find that it lacks quality or is morally objectionable. A more typical situation is one in which artists are asked to moderate elements in their programme to “avoid offending someone”. Researchers in this project witnessed a situation in which, while a concert performance was touring, a producer’s taste preferences were more or less forced onto musicians, who were thus

subjected to “taste policing” and disciplining despite having undergone several rounds of quality assurance before the tour. Such interventions can be artistically problematic and can be experienced as dramatic, and they can result in a significant financial burden. Not least, they can be experienced as offensive by artists, an experience which might reduce their desire to participate in the Cultural Rucksack.

Art and social class

In the types of critical events mentioned, it was obvious that different views of what the Cultural Rucksack and art were, and should be, obviously collided. The attempt described above to control the musicians indicates, in line with Bjørnsen (2009, 2011), that the Cultural Rucksack, in its practice and its ambition to “civilize” cultural policy, can serve to devalue those forms of art and cultural expression that are alien to the cultural elite and to the middle class.

In our material, we found, for example, assertions that the art presented under the Cultural Rucksack tends to comply with the middle class’s preferences and artistic tastes. Examples of programming practices and examples from the counties and municipalities clearly contradict or call into question such assertions; therefore, we cannot verify them. We nevertheless want to promote a discussion on this topic, because several artists referred to an allegedly narrow selection process and to a lack of knowledge about and understanding of diversity among Cultural Rucksack administrators (Tveit, 2011; Tveit & Christophersen, 2013). In a historical investigation, Egil Bjørnsen (2009, 2011) finds that Norwegian cultural policy is based on a certain “civilizing” aspiration, which is expressed by a belief that arts and culture have the ability to change human beings. The Cultural Rucksack fits into this view because of the shift in cultural policy since the 1970s, whereby the policy has increasingly focused on children’s exposure to selected forms of professional art, chosen by a cultural elite. According to Bjørnsen, this focus also implies a low level of individual activities and a strong emphasis on audience development. A further development has been the devaluation of commercial art and children’s contact with it, because policymakers assume that such cultural idioms will not contribute to growth (Bjørnsen, 2009, p. 216). The Cultural Rucksack, on the other hand, focuses on giving children access to certain types of art (Bjørnsen, 2009, p. 228). Bjørnsen calls this “Cultural Rucksack-sanctioned art”, art which is meant to ensure that children be exposed to “correct” and developmental cultural experiences to equip them with the necessary cultural competence. According to Bjørnsen, the Cultural Rucksack hovers on a cloud of belief in the transformative power of the arts

and a conviction that its benefits are self-evident. Nevertheless, there are artists who do not participate in the programme and who do not necessarily want to gain entry. For example, one artist said the following concerning a visual artist about whom the children were very enthusiastic:

I do not like her pictures very much, but she has an unbelievable ability to reach children. But if she comes back year after year, that's not so good. Then you give up your role as an artist, and become a pedagogue. It's a fine line, because not everybody knows how to teach. They [the Cultural Rucksack programme] don't let just anybody into the school; there are rules for everything. No, that's probably not the place where I would choose to apply first. (Kristian, visual artist and curator)

This artist's wish to remain outside the programme appears to be based on the same elitist cultural viewpoints that Cultural Rucksack administrators have to some extent been criticised for holding (see above). Perhaps less successful artists find it necessary to align themselves with this view of Cultural Rucksack art. This tendency implies that the conflict surrounding art and the tension between different views of art are alive among artists who clearly hold different views and have different interests concerning the programme.

Should art be "polite"? Moralism and decency in the Cultural Rucksack

Another related theme concerns a possible tendency towards moral decency in the service of goodness, where attempts are made to eliminate or modify some expressions and elements of content. For example, such attempts are made whenever productions use violence, death, sex, and politics, elements that are feared to exert a bad influence on an audience of tender children or to offend the values and decency threshold of their parents, even if using such elements might be artistically justified. An amusing example involved the production *A tribute to the art of football*, with the Jo Strømgren Ensemble dance company, which has toured in several Norwegian counties. The male dancers' naked backsides are exposed in the shower scene that ends the performance. The production was never censored or withdrawn, but was discussed in the media when some parents reacted to their children's being exposed to such elements. More serious is that some artists have experienced what they perceive as direct interference in their artistic freedom. We have not seen many concrete examples, but several artists have mentioned instructions to remove elements in existing productions, for example, a scene in a play portraying self-harming behaviour in an eight-year-old girl. We also see among artists a trend towards self-censoring and avoiding subjects such

as violence, sex, politics, death, and religion. It is relevant to keep in mind that the Cultural Rucksack takes place in a specifically Norwegian context, a context that plays a role in determining what is considered permissible and what is prohibited. What is considered acceptable or taboo might be entirely different in another culture.

In some cases, evaluations of the art's suitability might be influenced by considerations related to the students and parents. In other circumstances, one particular view of art might predominate. A specific example from the Cultural Rucksack concerns the play *Sinna Mann* [Angry Man]. The play deals with family violence, and its objective was to help children who were victims of violence in their own homes. However, it met with considerable opposition from some people who felt that children would be frightened by the play, while in the view of other actors in the art and cultural sector, the play had an instrumental starting point, in other words an objective other than art per se. On the basis of a professional theatrical assessment that the piece was too instrumental, it was rejected by the Cultural Rucksack. The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion nevertheless sent the play on tour. A follow-up study was commissioned to investigate how the play could help children who had experienced domestic violence, and whether criticism of the play was valid. Research (Kleppe, 2009) showed that children who had seen the play were sad, but not frightened. After the production, several cases of violence were uncovered when children came forward and told others about their own experiences (Kleppe, 2009, pp. 9–10). The production was also enthusiastically received in the schools.

In seeking to help child victims of domestic violence, *Sinna Mann* broke with traditional views of art's autonomy. The production thus challenged established norms for what is understood as good art for children, and therefore was eventually considered not artistically good enough for the Cultural Rucksack. A theatre critic wrote that it was "discouraging, but not unexpected" (Larsen, 2010, p. 20) that neither the tour nor the subsequent research report provoked a public debate in the media. On the other hand, the *Sinna Mann* controversy indicates that, art projects targeted at children and young people can be subjected to various types of assessment, evaluation, and disciplining. We cannot conclude unambiguously that the elitist portion of the art sphere dominates the Cultural Rucksack, or that moralism in the selection process and artists' self-censorship make what is offered spineless and "polite". Our research and that of others indicates that some productions might be perceived as immoral or disturbing because they aspire to something beyond the purely artistic. In such cases, debate is clearly justified.

Challenges and questions

Diversity and ambiguity

The Cultural Rucksack involves a number of actors: students, teachers, artists, cultural coordinators, principals, school owners, and various public authorities at local, regional, and national levels. In encounters between these actors, different viewpoints and concepts clash and acquire different content with regard to text, speech, and actions. We devoted a substantial amount of time in our research to describing how the Cultural Rucksack can be perceived from different viewpoints, and how different actors understand and interpret the programme. When considering the perspectives and viewpoints of individual actors, certain challenges and questions arise that demand attention and discussion. One such question addresses diversity and ambiguity in the programme.

When we scrutinize programme actors' perspectives and viewpoints, it seems that many programmes with varied content exist within the Cultural Rucksack. One obvious reason for this variation is the Norwegian national policy principle of local involvement, which entails a great degree of freedom to locally shape the Cultural Rucksack programme. Another obvious reason is that different people, according to who they are and where they are placed within the programme, perceive the Cultural Rucksack differently. The programme will appear different from the viewpoints of symphony orchestra musicians, primary school students, science teachers, cultural policymakers, municipal bureaucrats, or researchers. Even within these groups, there might be considerable variations according to gender, geographical location, socio-economic status, etc. Among other things, the Cultural Rucksack can be seen as an arena for audience development, as a framework for meaningful arts experiences, or as a breathing space in everyday life. The programme can be viewed as a financing scheme, a policy measure, or an educational activity. It is also a work sphere for public employees and for artists, and it even can function as a cultural flagship both within and beyond Norway's borders.

There will, thus, at any given time be contrasting views of both the Cultural Rucksack and its key concepts and principles. These views will clash and serve as a source of strife and conflict, for instance, regarding the concept of quality, a concept that is fundamental in the Cultural Rucksack, and that influences decision-making about which artists will receive support and thus, about which productions will appear in schools. The quality requirement is repeated in both written and oral sources, almost as a mantra, to justify and explain Cultural Rucksack activities; nevertheless, both the mandatory guidelines and individuals involved in the programme more or less avoid precisely explaining the concept's content. In many cases, the concepts "quality" and "professional" seem to function as circular reasoning: good-quality art is professional art, and therefore professionals produce good-quality art. Many definitions and evaluations of artistic quality are thus, in practice, left to administrators. Consequently, the concept of quality in the Cultural Rucksack appears to be empty; nevertheless, it is interpreted and imbued with significance on a daily basis in how it is practically applied and manifested, for example in programme productions. The Cultural Rucksack thus appears to encompass a number of what are called "essentially contested concepts", which according to Walter Gallie (1956, p. 169) inevitably lead to endless discussions regarding how to use them correctly. These discussions are not due to confusion about the concepts themselves, but occur because the concepts are regarded as being so important and valuable that those involved disagree about how they should be interpreted and applied. "Quality" is an example of such a disputed concept in the Cultural Rucksack, and "students" and "art" are other types of concepts whose meaning will be disputed in various ways by those involved in the programme. Such disputes indicate that the concepts are not clearly defined in the programme.

We have signalled that we view the Cultural Rucksack as a diverse programme. "Diversity" is usually regarded as having a positive connotation. We must nevertheless ask whether the diversity of views and interpretations might conceal a lack of clarity, and also whether, and if so to what degree, such diversity is productive. The multitude of ambitions for the programme that are set out in the mandatory guidelines (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting, p. 22) are ambitious: the Cultural Rucksack should serve objectives and interests related to cultural and education policy, it should be both universal and local, and it should represent both a wide range of artistic expressions and high quality, to mention a few of the worthy objectives the Cultural Rucksack is intended to help achieve. We wonder whether it is possible to realise all the objectives in one programme, and whether the Cultural Rucksack should relinquish some of its ambitions. There is a risk that the programme wants to accomplish so much and to cover such a broad

spectrum that some of the worthy objectives might be rendered unachievable. We do not arrive at a conclusion here, but to encourage a debate we also ask whether it would be appropriate to raise the discussion about concepts to a more formal level. The objective, in this case, would not be to define the concepts once and for all, but a certain amount of concretisation, for example of the quality concept, would make it easier to address some challenges in daily practice.

The Cultural Rucksack for everyone

A fundamental principle of the Cultural Rucksack is that the programme should be for all students, regardless of which school they attend or their social, ethnic, or religious backgrounds (Report No. 8 (2007–2008) to the Storting). On this basis, it is reasonable to claim that the programme is founded on social-democratic ideas of equality. To maintain and further develop democracy, learning, and values related to equality and equal status in Norwegian society, the Cultural Rucksack should ensure that art and cultural experiences be offered to all students. Vibe, Evensen, and Hovdhaugen (2009), for example, point out that considerable variation exists regarding how many productions schools participate in, and that these variations are found not only from county to county and municipality to municipality, but also from school to school. There can be many reasons for these variations; for example, a lower rate of participation might be linked with the schools' geographic location within the municipalities, where transport challenges might play a role. Some schools are very active in producing their own art and cultural activities for students, and activities offered by the Cultural Rucksack are thus not necessarily as relevant for them as they are for other schools.

The programme also faces challenges in planning and implementing art and cultural activities that offer equality to, for example, disabled children and children from minority groups.¹² Activities available to the blind, deaf, and physically disabled are not adapted effectively enough to their needs, and do not adequately address their experiences, lifeworlds, or conditions (Borgen & Brandt, 2006). Some activities function poorly for those whose first language is not Norwegian, or who are new to Norway. For example, Heidi-

12. We acknowledge that something is being done in this area. Norway's two northernmost counties devote a great deal of attention to Sami art and cultural heritage, the Norwegian Deaf Museum in Trondheim makes a serious effort to present sign language and the history of deafness in the Cultural Rucksack, and Concert Tours Norway has held seminars on the challenges of diversity.

Beate Aasen (2011) points out that students with special needs and linguistic challenges encounter more of the same challenges in the Cultural Rucksack. This can affect these students' participation and the inclusiveness they experience. In her fieldwork, Aasen found that students who did not speak the language as fluently as other students did, for example children with a different mother tongue, tended to be unable to understand what was being said, or tended to find that their reflections and comments were ignored or corrected by adults (Aasen, 2011, p. 60). In our fieldwork, we have seen that students can be denied access to Cultural Rucksack activities as a disciplinary reaction to their actions at school. Geographic location can also result in exclusion from the programme because in some municipalities schools have the choice of opting out of the Cultural Rucksack. Grounds exist for questioning whether the programme really is for everyone if the form and content of activities do not sufficiently reflect cultural expressions connected with experiences of minorities or with variations in social class and gender.

The extent to which the Cultural Rucksack should be for everyone is another question. This question was raised by the liberal think tank *Civita* as a criticism of social-democratic cultural policy, and represented an attempt to launch a new, liberal cultural policy (Meisingset, Matre, & Hørrigmo, 2012). Their views are based on, among other things, the critical discussion of Bjørnsen (2009, 2011) on the programme as a civilising project. Bjørnsen's point of departure is that access to arts and culture is regarded as a democratic right – a right that is rendered obligatory through the Cultural Rucksack. A state-sanctioned dissemination of high-quality culture, according to Bjørnsen, expresses a devaluation of the cultural competence of students and parents and of their ability to choose for themselves. *Civita* gave this point of view a political interpretation, and proposed to terminate the Cultural Rucksack based on the argument that cultural experiences must be chosen by the individual, not by the state.

Because our mandate did not include drawing up measures for cultural policy, education policy, or the Cultural Rucksack, we have chosen to read Bjørnsen's discussion as a critical comment on the participation of children and on the status of the actors in the programme. Bjørnsen poses a rhetorical question about whether the right to arts and culture also encompasses the right to reject arts and culture. The Cultural Rucksack's connection to the school and to school hours means that the programme is not optional for students. On the contrary, it is compulsory, and at upper secondary school, students might be marked if they do not appear at Cultural Rucksack productions (Markussen, 2011). According to the Norwegian Education Act (Opplæringslova 1998, § 2–3a) exemption from instruction in the academic content of the curriculum cannot be demanded unless the content is perceived

as offensive in relation to a person's own religion or life stance. Everything that is part of the school's instruction and curriculum can thus be regarded as compulsory for students. Consequently, questions arise regarding whether the Cultural Rucksack is part of the instruction in primary and lower secondary schools, what relation there thus is between the programme's content and the schools' objectives and curriculums, and how the Ministry of Culture's role should be understood in relation to the school.

The assumption that encountering arts and culture generates emotions and experiences that contribute to human growth and development is essential in the Cultural Rucksack. Because the programme is compulsory for students in Norwegian schools, an important part of many children's and young people's experiences of and reflections on art is expected to take place among their peers. A group of peers can be open, inclusive, and supportive, but it is also a social space where children and adolescents measure themselves against each other, and where one is subjected to, and can subject others to, hurtful, potentially offensive glances and remarks. In contexts other than the Cultural Rucksack, it is usually up to individuals to decide not only which art they would want to experience, but also with whom they would want to experience it. In addition, how and how much one wants to process experiences and emotions after having an art encounter are usually individual decisions. Some experiences could fruitfully be shared within a community, while at other times one would wish to keep an experience private, guarding it from being viewed by the community and from being inspected and discussed.

One important question in this context is whether the programme leaves room for a variety of experiences and for a way of processing them. We will also address the question of whether the Cultural Rucksack contributes to segregate children's arts experiences from other areas of life, thus establishing a division between aesthetic experiences and everyday experiences – and if so, whether this division is a problem. In our material, artists have expressed concern about whether the Cultural Rucksack or similar programmes, such as the *Cultural Lunch Box* for employees and the *Cultural Walking Stick* for the elderly, serve to segregate audiences by age. We ask whether, and if so how, such measures can influence the development of art and cultural programmes across generational boundaries, for example, for families with children and families spanning several generations.

The cultural sector, the school, and the arts subjects

A number of reports and evaluations of the Cultural Rucksack (see, for example, Lidén, 2001, 2004; Aslaksen, Borgen, & Kjørholt, 2003; Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Digranes, 2009; Mæland, 2009; Borgen, 2011a) have pointed

out that there is a tense relationship in the programme between the school sector and the cultural sector. Our research confirms this. Because of this tension, different ways of understanding goals, objectives, and key concepts have arisen. This tension becomes tangible in debates on the programme's selection criteria, in the practice of making teachers superfluous in the practical implementation of the programme, in a lack of ownership of the programme on the part of the school's representatives, and in divergent views of what should be perceived as children's interaction with art. Some cultural sector actors define their artistic activities as being opposed to the school's activities, a definition which results in an unsettled relationship with the school.

The Cultural Rucksack has many similarities with the school, even in areas where the school and the programme are ostensibly different. The programme has a great deal in common with the schools. It takes place during school hours and in connection with the school's curriculum and learning objectives. Its purpose is to contribute to children's education, development, and maturation through an encounter with a material, a content, or a phenomenon, in this case art. Like school, the Cultural Rucksack is not something that students can opt out of; they must participate. Its affiliation with the school and school personnel can confer legitimacy on the programme and make it an inherent part of everyday school life. Simultaneously, the programme is freed from a number of formal requirements, rules, and obligations that the school must comply with. In other words, the relationship between the Cultural Rucksack and the school is unsettled and fraught with tension, factors that create many challenges in program implementation.

The programme's political involvement is twofold: it is both a cultural policy measure and an educational policy measure. Developments within these two policy fields have differed; cultural measures for children and young people, including the Cultural Rucksack, have been strengthened, while basic skills and core subjects have received greater focus in the schools. It is difficult to predict what effect these differing developments will have on the schools, but in what follows we will reflect on some aspects of them.

The quality of teaching in primary and lower secondary schools has been the subject of discussion in recent years. The dropout rate in upper secondary school and the ranking of Norwegian students in international academic tests have caused concern, and a number of measures have been instituted to strengthen "basic skills" and "core subjects". With a few exceptions, similar concern, attention, and measures have not been devoted to education in the arts and culture in the schools. The emphasis placed on arts and culture in education is thus not in accordance with how education is actually carried out in the schools (Sæbø, 2009). A national survey of competence in pri-

mary and lower secondary school (Lagerstrøm, 2007) shows that teachers of practical¹³ and aesthetic¹⁴ subjects lack specialisation in the subjects they are teaching to a greater degree than do teachers of other subjects. According to a 2008 study, a large percentage of principals (36 %) find it acceptable that teachers of aesthetic subjects have no specialist training in the field (Gran, 2008). Furthermore, principals state that it is difficult to obtain financing for continuing and further education in aesthetic subjects (ibid.). A report commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research establishes that the relative percentage of hours devoted to aesthetic subjects in primary and lower secondary school has dropped from 20 % in the National Curriculum of 1974 to 12.3 % in the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion of 2006 (Espeland, Allern, Carlsen, & Kalsnes, 2011). In the same report, the authors point out that the structure of a 2010 reform concerning education for new teachers can make it difficult for student teachers to choose specialist training in aesthetic subjects, which in turn can lead to a further decline in the professional level of teaching in primary and lower secondary schools. Anne Bamford (2012, p. 87) shares the same concern in her report on arts and cultural education in Norway.

While teachers' artistic competence and the aesthetic subjects in schools are under pressure, several external cultural initiatives are being directed towards schools and students. The Cultural Rucksack is one example of such an initiative, and the municipal culture schools and the Teaching Artist programme are others. Although the municipal culture schools are subject to the Education Act's provisions, and belong formally under the Ministry of Education and Research, they are nevertheless part of the government's *Cultural Boost* [Kulturloftet], and have been designated local resource centres for art and cultural education. They are increasingly encouraged to offer arts and cultural activities to the schools. In 2012 the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training allocated NOK 39 million to the municipal culture schools for "stimulation measures", most of which was used for measures whereby the culture schools brought educational projects into the schools and into after-school programmes. The Directorate has also initiated temporary research schemes with Teaching Artist, or "creative partnerships", where artists teach in schools. For instance, Seanse, a centre connected with Volda University College that works to develop professional art and cultural activities for children and young people, receives financial support for its Teaching Artist programme from the *Cultural Boost*, through the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

13. Subjects such as food and health, and physical education.

14. Music; arts and crafts.

We can thus see the outline of a situation where art and cultural competence in primary and lower secondary schools is in the process of decline, while simultaneously, external actors from the fields of arts and culture receive financial incentives to assist with or take charge of tasks in the schools, tasks which have traditionally been the teachers' responsibility. This change in responsibility entails incorporating special expertise, for example through the Cultural Rucksack, which in and of itself could be regarded as an advantage. We will nevertheless consider what consequences the programme and other external cultural measures directed towards the schools will have. Are we witnessing the beginning of an outsourcing of arts instruction in the schools, and will the Cultural Rucksack and other measures eventually weaken rather than strengthen arts subjects in the schools?

Bureaucracy, enthusiasm, and power

As an organisation, the Cultural Rucksack functions at the interface between formal regulations, on the one hand, and flexibility and discretionary evaluations, on the other. The goals of programme activity are politically determined and governed centrally, whereas policies are implemented locally. When combined with unclear and vague guidelines, this central–local disparity leaves considerable space for discretionary decisions locally. The local Cultural Rucksack administrators experience a high level of responsibility and pressure in their jobs, and adopt various strategies for simplifying the decision-making process and for coping with the cross-pressure exerted by professional considerations and obligatory work responsibilities (Tveit & Christophersen, 2013). Administrators' tasks and decision-making responsibilities could be simplified by establishing additional routines and standards. According to the cultural policy principle of “arm's-length distance”, which establishes the need for a certain distance between the allocating authorities and art and artists that receive public funding (Aslaksen, 2007, p. 74), art should not be subject to political control.

It is thus difficult to imagine that administrators' wishes for additional routines and standards will be fulfilled by interventions from above. Still, the Cultural Rucksack seems to give rise to a common organisational culture through discussions and exchanges in various networks that foster a common understanding of tasks and fields of responsibility. This common understanding could lead to standardisation and homogeneity, resulting in a situation where Cultural Rucksack administrators become more similar in their approaches to their work. This similarity could generate greater openness, transparency, and predictability in the selection process, as called for by the artists, but it could also reduce the variety of artistic expressions. Concern

has also been expressed that the programme's selection process could bring about a bias towards nice, safe, decent, and polite middle-class art.

We see that there is broad enthusiasm for the programme, while simultaneously there are conspicuously few objections or critical voices. This enthusiasm could be perceived as a sign that the programme is a success. We have nevertheless chosen to emphasise an alternative interpretation: the programme is characterised by a distinctive type of enthusiastic rhetoric that arises both because the programme is relatively new, and because the field of cultural policy is battling against other, "weightier" fields for political prioritisation and budgetary allocations. This enthusiasm could, on one hand, be regarded as a strength of the programme, while on the other, it could stifle constructive criticism and open debate. The Cultural Rucksack can be linked to a goodness discourse, where arts and culture for children is perceived as being something inherently "good". A position of goodness is often unassailable, which makes it problematic to offer constructive criticism. Opponents or critical voices can find it difficult to be heard and taken seriously, and can be subjected to strategies involving attacks or ridicule. We have seen in connection with the Cultural Rucksack that critical references to the programme previously were met with scepticism and rejection, while far greater emphasis was placed on neutral or positive comments. The current trend towards institutionalisation, standardisation, and routinisation can be viewed as a sign that the organisation is becoming well established. The strong enthusiasm towards the programme is a natural response to an organisation in its initial phase. It will therefore be interesting to investigate what happens to this enthusiasm when the programme matures. Will the collective enthusiasm be less necessary for maintaining the organisation, and will it eventually decline somewhat? On the other hand, could it be that the enthusiasm is institutionalised, in other words that it is encapsulated in the organisation as informal rules and norms that are instrumental in governing the organisation? In that case, which outcomes would such institutionalisation have?

We want to point out that in addition to stifling criticism, enthusiasm can also conceal the entirely necessary execution of power that occurs within the Cultural Rucksack daily. Because of the lack of clear guidelines and the considerable space for action locally, Cultural Rucksack administrators not only exert significant influence, but also wield real power in determining how priorities should be assigned and what the programme's content should be. Such wielding of power is not problematic per se. It is nevertheless important that power should not be camouflaged or referred to as something other than power. On the contrary, in our view, power and the basis for its exercise should be rendered visible and problematised, thus enabling administrators to acknowledge and accept responsibility for their exercise of power. For

example, on what basis do administrators make decisions? Are there different ways of choosing and prioritising, and how can the basis for the selection process be rendered visible?

Concluding remarks

In line with the assignment we were given by the Ministry of Culture, our research has closely examined individual actors and productions. In using that approach, we have acquired empirically based, detailed, and nuanced insight into how the programme is experienced by many of its different actors. Consequently, the broad political, cultural, and social analyses were not included in our study. Proximity to the actors' perspectives provides neither the basis nor the ambition to make unambiguous statements about the Cultural Rucksack as a programme. Our research has thus been focused more on curiosity, discussion, and questions than on unequivocal findings and results. We acknowledge that an element of power exists in making choices and in prioritising some points of view and issues over others. Other choices and research positions might evoke other insights and discussions.

One of our main insights is that the programme is characterised by a "goodness discourse" that in some cases has rendered criticism inappropriate. In our opinion, criticism should rather be viewed as contributing to necessary renewal, to potential change in practice. Out of respect for the Cultural Rucksack, we will argue that the programme must be subjected to more resistance and more comprehensive debate. It would also benefit from being subjected to more, and more varied, research, especially research from a child's point of view, as well as research that takes into account political, social, and cultural analyses. One major challenge is to find new forums for debate and new spaces for discussion, where programme actors can engage in dialogue and discussion without instigating a battle. We recommend greater openness in the selection process, greater opportunity to examine programming work and selection practice, and greater collaboration and influence from the schools, from both students and teachers.

There seems to be a consensus in Norway that the Cultural Rucksack is an extremely good and exceptional programme, and it has indeed attracted international attention. The Cultural Rucksack is by no means the only programme of its type, but joins a long line of international arts programmes based on collaboration between artists and schools, such as the *Lincoln Center Education* in New York City and *Arts in Education* in the United Kingdom. Similar programmes are found in Denmark, Australia, Germany, Canada, and other countries. *Creative School* in Sweden and *Listaleyipurin* on the Faroe Islands are, for example, directly inspired by the Cultural Rucksack. Norway

is a small country, and therefore the Cultural Rucksack involves relatively few students. However, the programme is unique because it is a national programme that includes all schools and all students in Norway. It is thus regarded as comprehensive: “The Cultural Rucksack is one of the largest programmes in the world that aims to bring professional arts and culture to children” (Bamford, 2012, p. 33).

Nevertheless, the Cultural Rucksack is carried out within a particular national context. Norwegian culture and history play a vital role in the programme, a role that could explain the programme’s particular development. Independent art is of great value, in a Norwegian context as well as in others, but the arts and cultural expressions that are produced in and offered to a society are shaped by the prevailing administrative policy and cultural conditions. Our research has shown that organisational frameworks, formal conditions, and financing significantly influence the programme’s implementation. In addition, room is allowed for adaptation and local variation through more informal norms and practices that have developed over time. Programmes such as the Cultural Rucksack are about political priorities. Norway has a large public sector and a long tradition of public support for arts and culture. The private sector exerts less influence on arts and cultural life in Norway than in some other places. Norway also has a relatively low level of political conflict and has broad agreement on the allocation of resources in society. These factors have most likely played a role in the wide approval that the programme enjoys.

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