Chapter 8 | Cultural Institutions Studies

Cultural Institutions Studies represents an approach toward the social organization of arts and is widely used in German-speaking countries. This theoretical and empirical approach engages with interdisciplinary ideas that extend beyond but include an organizational sociology focused on artistic practices, structuring institutions and arts' fragile abilities to shape their forms and contents independently from external constraints. Cultural Institutions Studies understands the organization of arts as "a historically evolved form of socially organizing the creation, production, distribution, dissemination, interpretation, reception and consumption, conservation and maintenance of specific cultural goods" (Zembylas 2004a, 13; our translation). Its main interest lies in the analysis of patterns of practices from creating to consuming arts, particularly concentrating "on organizational structures of the institutional frame of action and the processes developing within it" (Tschmuck 2012, 6). The empirical exploration of the formation process of practices embedded within specific institutional contexts aims to disclose why certain artistic practices and their outcomes are ascribed a higher monetary and immaterial value than others (see Tschmuck 2020, 134; Zembylas 1997).

In the 1990s, a group of predominantly Austrian scholars from sociology, economics, business studies and philosophy established this approach by integrating several existing disciplinary discourses on the social organization of arts. The unifying element was the study of artistic and cultural goods[1] and their evolution by observing the social practices producing and distributing these goods and services. To avoid misunderstanding, the concept of a good has a

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1   In German, the words *Kunst* (art) and *Kultur* (culture) are used either synonymously or with overlapping meanings. From German idealism the word *Kultur* is understood as the cultivation of the soul/heart (Seneca's *cultura animi*). Moreover, *Kultur* encompasses all symbolic articulations of worldviews and all forms of self-expression. For this reason, in the German context culture is associated not only with arts but also with a humanistic concept of education (*Bildung*) (see Cassirer 2021 [1944]).

variety of meanings depending on the particular context in which it is used. An artistic good is an artistic performance or an artistic object with a specific value attribution (see Klamer 1996). The valorization can be based on an immaterial or a material criterion. A typical material value is often related to economic criteria including scarcity, the proportion of supply to demand or profitability. A typical immaterial value can arise from the function of art to enhance the status of an owner or an audience, or from intrinsic artistic criteria such as expressivity, originality, criticality or playfulness. Therefore, an artistic good has economic and noneconomic values and these two value groups are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other. The attribution of an artistic good as being of high or low value is not sharply delineated; indeed, a song or a movie is regarded as valuable for one social group whereas it might be worthless or even harmful for another social group. So, one of the main features of Cultural Institutions Studies is to understand artistic goods as elements of a collective practice that incorporates different and changing values.[2]

The establishment of Cultural Institutions Studies is embedded in the specific theoretical development of the social sciences in German-speaking countries. After years of the predominance of Critical Theory in social theory, many scholars sought approaches to arts and culture that were less normative. Two particular developments occurred: First, the field of cultural and arts research gained new momentum in this area. Many empirical surveys, which concentrated mostly on socioeconomic and occupational aspects of the cultural sector, appeared after a long hiatus, culminating in Alphons Silbermann's (1986) introduction to an empirical sociology of arts (see Kirchberg and Wuggenig 2004). These studies were often descriptive, but many researchers sought a dialogue with public authorities to overcome structural problems and to improve the conditions in specific professional fields (e.g., studies on artistic occupations, by Blaukopf 1984; Fohrbeck and Wiesand 1975, and Thurn 1985; the economic impact of arts by Hummel et al., 1988; on the role of arts and culture in postmodern societies by Fohrbeck and Wiesand 1989). Second, the application of

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2   Cultural Institutions Studies is a translation of the German term *Kulturbetriebslehre*, which was coined by the Viennese music sociologist Kurt Blaukopf in 1989. *Kulturbetrieb* can be translated as a single cultural enterprise or company, but also in a much broader sense as a cultural industry (Zembylas and Tschmuck 2006, 7). The English term Cultural Institutions Studies avoids the spontaneous but mistaken relation to business studies that occurs in the corresponding German term *Betriebslehre*. This prevents an association with business and management studies (Zembylas 2004a, 17). In the German-speaking world, arts management and culture management are mostly used synonymously, although most academic programs prefer the generic term cultural management.

Niklas Luhmann's systems theory and his grand theoretical interpretation of arts as an autopoietic domain (Luhmann 1995 [1984]) provided a new vocabulary for analyzing arts as an organized social process with its own logic and dynamics.

Cultural Institutions Studies connects these empirical and theoretical sociological orientations to investigate:

- "the formation of cultural goods as meaningful symbolic entities and their transformation into cultural commodities …
- [the formation of] cultural practices and their institutional frames, which constitute and shape the formation of cultural goods and services …
- the specific characteristics of institutions in organizational settings[3]
- the social organization of cultural labor and other cultural activities (for instance, cultural policy, funding and legal norms)" (Hasitschka, Tschmuck and Zembylas 2005, 157; see Zembylas and Tschmuck 2006, 8).

1 Theoretical foundations and basic concepts

Despite their background in business and administration studies, Werner Hasitschka and several other colleagues stressed that Cultural Institutions Studies is not "a special kind of business studies" (Hasitschka 1991, 84f.). Instead they underlined the relevance of sociology and practical philosophy as interdisciplinary foundations for this new approach (1991, 92f.; Mörth 1995, 439ff.). Their understanding has been affirmed by current research into the interrelation of the economic and cultural spheres, for example, the economization of culture and the culturalization of economy. "Economic and symbolic processes are more than even interrelated and interarticulated … the economy is increasingly culturally inflected and … culture is more and more economically inflected" (Lash and Urry 1994, 64; see Groys 2014 [1992]). Following this perspective in a pragmatist manner, Hasitschka (1997, 39ff., 43ff.) argues that all human activities transgress disciplinary academic boundaries. In other words, sociological inquiry can only benefit by working closely with other disciplines such as cultural studies, philosophy, economics, political sciences, among others. Establishing Cultural Institutions Studies as an interdisciplinary field is no small task (see Oswick et al., 2011). Apart from the fundamental tensions between the many descriptive, explanatory and prescriptive theories, between methodological individualism and methodological collectivism, between systematic deductive and

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3   For the distinction between institution and organization, see chapter 7.

phenomenological inductive methodologies, and the question of micro-macro-links pose significant challenges for the development of Cultural Institutions Studies.

The addition of a practice-oriented approach[4] establishes another pillar in Cultural Institutions Studies. This orientation goes back to Peter Winch's thesis "that all behavior which is meaningful (therefore all specifically human behavior) is *ipso facto* rule-governed" (Winch 2003 [1958], 51f.) and that rule-following is related in constitutive ways to social practices, as Wittgenstein (1999 [1953]: 199–202, 217–219, 227, 292; see C. Taylor 1995; Schatzki 1996, 98–103) had already argued. Rules, which can be implicit or explicit, influence but do not determine human behavior, since individuals and organizations may break rules, or they may be unskilled so that they lack the necessary knowhow to follow certain rules (see Zembylas 2004a, 286ff.). Hasitschka (2018, 130, 150, 177) thus references multiple interdependencies and interrelations that are so dynamic that structuralist and causal explanations regularly fail to account for them. Zembylas (2004a, 294) confirms the relevance of this approach by pointing out the unstable situatedness and strong variability of artistic practices. A practice-oriented approach to arts and culture also brings Zembylas (2004a, 73–96) close to Bourdieu's rejection of a sole textualism paradigm ("culture as text"). "To understand cultural production (literature, science, etc.), it is not sufficient to refer to the textual content of this production, but it is equally insufficient to consider the social context, that is, to establish a direct connection between text and context" (Bourdieu 1997b, 17f., our translation).

Zembylas (2004a) set out a theoretical underpinning of Cultural Institutions Studies by establishing three interconnected conceptual settings, that is, contextualization, anti-essentialism and practice-theoretical orientation. First, he demands a radical contextualization of the research objects within Cultural Institutions Studies. Context is a general term for the idea that social phenomena are constitutively embedded in intricate webs of relations; it influences our sociological analysis of these phenomena in various ways (see Dewey 1985 [1931]). In this sense, contextualization is a methodological attempt to discover the various constitutive and regulative relations that can help us to better understand or explain a research object. Context is not a pre-existing theoretically fixed concept, and Zembylas (2019b) insists that it has to be described empirically

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4   The term practice is differentiated from action: practice is a comprehensive concept that unifies and interconnects doings, sayings, materials, institutional settings, and situations; while the term action is frequently used in other theoretical perspectives, which are often associated with methodological individualism.

and on a case-by-case basis then and there. By doing so, researchers construct their research objects in a manner that is inductive instead of deductive. Contextual analysis therefore helps to capture the particularities of social phenomena. Consequently, contextualization replaces the idea of objectivity with the notion of relationality (Zembylas 2004a, 93ff., 224f.; 2019b; Kirchberg and Zembylas 2010, 3), indicating the pragmatist roots of this approach (see Wicks and Freeman 1998).

Second, Cultural Institutions Studies overcomes essentialism and works with open concepts that accommodate social contingency. Therefore, art does not have a privileged social or epistemic position, as some philosophical arguments of artistic autonomy claim (for example, Kant 1987 [1790]; Adorno 2002 [1970]), but is instead an integrated part of culture in various societies (Zembylas 2004a, 128–131). Explaining art within its sociability does not deny the critical, reflective and epistemic potential of art, but stresses that social aspects such as market interests, organizational structures and cognitive patterns such as political ideologies, religious beliefs and gender-specific conventions shape artistic practices as much as artistic practices shape these societal institutions (see Alexander 2021, 245ff.; Zolberg 1990, 196f.).

Third, understanding the practice-theoretical orientation of Cultural Institutions Studies necessitates a distinction between practice theory and classical action theory (Zembylas 2004a, 227ff.; 2014a; see Joas 1996, 148). Zembylas (2004a, 298ff.; 2014a; 2018) looks at artistic practices as a social phenomenon that oscillates between on the one hand collectively shared practical understandings, established conventions and routines and on the other the capacity for intuitive improvisation and innovative artistic creation. He confirms this concept of artistic practices in his empirical research, highlighting creative processes in literary writing (Zembylas and Dürr 2009; Zembylas 2014b) and contemporary art music composition (Zembylas and Niederauer 2018). Moreover, there is a more general perspective on practices in Institutions Studies. Zembylas (1997; 2004a, 97ff., 135ff.) analyzes the synergetic effects of legal, economic, educational and critical practices and institutions to reveal complex social ecologies, that is, ways of coupling different practices, their interdependence and dynamic transactions. Cultural Institutions Studies connects therefore the practice-oriented approach with the institutional perspective and consequently interprets artistic practices as a mutual result of micro-, meso- and macroconditions. Artistic practices – understood as collectively organized activities and endeavors, and ways to cooperate with others (see Tschmuck 2003, 136f.; 2012, 254) – need mediation and organizational settings that support cooperation and coordination.

> Cultural mediation serves as a means of translation, as a kind of interpreter in the barter business … and this not only between cultural producers and cultural consumers but also between sponsors ("granters") and the sponsored ("grantees"). [It] simplifies communication between parties who speak different languages, but do not have incompatible interests. (Kirchberg 2005b, 154, our translation; see Hasitschka 2018, 151).

The intermediary function of arts organizations is thus pivotal, especially but not only for the transferal between noneconomic and economic values (Tschmuck 2020, 63; Zembylas and Tschmuck 2006, 9f.). The concept of noneconomic values is complex and encompasses different kinds of values that are difficult to quantify or to commensurate (see Throsby 2001, 26f.). However, economic and noneconomic values are both outcomes of collaborative practices underpinned by specific organizational arrangements (Dewey 1949 [1939], 61f.). Therefore, Cultural Institutions Studies rejects the division into individual and organizational practices and emphasizes the dynamic interactions and interdependencies of different partners with respect to different individual, informal collective and formal organizational valorizations (Tschmuck 2020, 79ff.; Zembylas 1997, 84f., 150ff.; 2019b). This is exemplified in a study by Dagmar Abfalter and Martin Piber (2016) on the development of strategies in cultural clusters. The authors are interested in the microfoundations of organizational action and the embedding of organizations in larger cultural and political contexts. They argue that neither micro nor macrosociological explanations alone can adequately describe the formation of strategic action, since institutional and environmental complexities occur on and affect all levels.

This intersection of social entities on micro to macrolevels also is of ethical and political significance (Zembylas 2004, 109ff.). This interest in the inherent political and ethical dimension is driven by two facts. First, many European states consider arts and culture as public goods (*res publica*)[5] and thus as

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5   The concept of *res publica* is central to contemporary cultural policy discourses on a national and international level (see UNESCO 2022. *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity. Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380474, accessed on June 5, 2023). Additionally, many transnational organizations, such as UNESCO, understand cultural activities as "vehicles of identity and values and meaning" irrespective of the commercial value they may have (Unesco 2005. *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/2005-convention, accessed on June 5, 2023). Such intangible aspects are considered important for social and cultural development, and this makes arts and culture to *res publica*.

as merit goods.[6] Implementing cultural policy (see Mathieu and Visanich, eds., 2022) legitimates public arts subsidies and emphasizes that arts and culture are intrinsically valuable to the quality of our lives. Their place in society is not to be reduced to external justifications[7] such as fostering postindustrial growth or educational advancement. This intrinsic-value view is articulated in a self-confident cultural policy supported by legal norms, for example, cultural rights and funding regulations (see Poirrier 2006).

Second, arguments for a strong cultural policy with sufficient state subsidies need a public awareness of allocative justice, cultural development and social wellbeing (see Zembylas 2004a, 308–321; 2006b). The (originally Aristotelian) term "allocative justice" was taken up by John Rawls: "Allocative justice applies when a given collection of goods is to be divided among definite individuals with known desires and needs" (Rawls 1971, 77).[8] The allocation of public funds for arts needs a justification based on ethical and even moral values when discussed in Western democracies. The other reason is the ongoing tradition of critical social theory in Europe, as scholarly work on arts organizations within the realm of cultural policy does not take a neutral position but is rather embedded in social and political struggles (see Adorno et al., 1976 [1969]). Many scholars of Cultural Institutions Studies are convinced that their research should lead toward a cultural policy that removes cultural inequalities and intersectional discrimination by facilitating the development of capabilities and improving the wellbeing of societies through arts (Zembylas 2004a, 347f.; see Nussbaum 2000; Sen 2004).

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6   Richard Musgrave (1957) introduced the term *merit goods* for goods that are generally considered desirable. Consequently, the public is willing to support their consumption independently from individual ability or willingness to pay the going market price. However, the term merit good lacks a clear definition and remains ambiguous (see Tschmuck 2020, 44f.)

7   Justification and legitimation are not used as synonyms. Justification is strongly related to widely accepted conventions, moral standards and general expectations, while legitimation refers to the degree of acceptance and therefore corresponds to aspects of social order, general beliefs and dominant ideologies (see Potthast 2017, 359ff.).

8   The question of allocative justice is central to cultural labor markets (see Abbing 2002; Banks 2017) and to the political economy of cultural production in general (see Mosco 2012).

2 Main research topics of Cultural Institutions Studies

Since the 1990s, scholars of Cultural Institutions Studies have worked on a variety of issues, most of them empirically generated. We can identify six major topics, ranked here from primary general issues to secondary specific issues:

1. artistic practices as a core object of Cultural Institutions Studies
2. practice views in Cultural Institutions Studies
3. social agency and arts organizations
4. art managers as producers and mediators
5. perspectives on public art funding
6. the economization of artistic works and services

Artistic practices as a core object of Cultural Institutions Studies

Many theories of the social organization of arts leave the artistic creative process underexposed in favor of analyzing the social, cultural and economic conditions of cultural production.[9] This is probably due to problematic assumptions about the creative process representing a black box, although psychologists have been investigating creativity as well as the development of skills and abilities since the 1950s. Also, artistic knowing, which is closely related to the creative process, is a philosophical and art historical topic that has largely remained outside sociological thinking. This analytic neglect of the artistic process is remarkable, given that creation stands at the beginning of the cycle of cultural production (see Peterson 1994).

Cultural Institutional Studies addressed this gap by investigating literary writing and music composing to analyze the constitution of artistic agency[10] in practice (Zembylas and Dürr 2009; Zembylas 2014b; Zembylas and Niederauer

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9   Howard Becker is one of the few exceptions. He writes, "Any work of art can thus profitably be seen as a series of choices…. These choices are made in a complicated social context, in an organized world of artistic activity which constrains the range of choices and provides motives for making one or another of them. Sociological analysis of that context is well-equipped to explain the constitution of the range of possibilities and the conditions that surround, and thus might explain, the actual choices made" (Becker 2006, 26).

10   Agency here means without any metaphysical foundations (an I, a reason, a free will) and without an ontological claim (e.g., individuals are the true source of their actions). Like many other contemporary social theorists and sociologists, Zembylas conceives of agency as a prosaic result of training, opportunities and entitlements embedded in dynamic social and material constellations (Zembylas 2004a, 244ff.; Zembylas and Niederauer 2018, 93ff.).

2018). Some basic premises of this approach are the professional conditions of artistic work and artistic collaboration; the competitive situation of artists, and the resulting struggle for visibility and recognition; and effective access to important material and immaterial resources. Such preconditions not only facilitate the completion of a particular artwork but can also help to maintain a high level of productivity, ensuring an income for the artist.

The sociological analysis of artistic practices understood as multiple processes displays complex networks of human and nonhuman participants,[11] for example, individuals and organizations, peers and nonpeers, material and immaterial objects, such as software programs, machinery, various instruments and artistic materials, symbolic forms, artistic ideas and artworks, discourses, and specific resources (Zembylas and Niederauer 2018, 13–53). The most challenging aspects of the investigation of artistic work processes, which often last months or years, are: 1) the tacit dimension of creating, inventing and making; 2) the internal dynamics that result from incremental working processes where the final shape of the work is not clear from the outset; and 3) the synergic interplay between different forms of knowledge, especially propositional knowledge, artistic practical and sensual embodied knowing.

Artists repeatedly experience a gap between what they know and what they can do, between what they imagine and what they can realize. To explain this experience, one needs a conceptual analysis of inventing and creating. Artists are mostly aware of what they are doing, but are usually unable to say much about *how* they are doing things.[12] This does not indicate a lack of reflectivity, but rather the limitations of making the act of creation explicit (Zembylas 2014b, 117f.). Furthermore, it suggests something that is tacit and implicit in doing. At this juncture, we believe that a sociology of work and a sociology of arts need conceptual help from the theory of personal knowledge (see Polanyi 1958) for a deeper understanding of artistic practices.

The intrinsic dynamics of artistic practice correspond to its generative functions. Emerging writers do not write down what has previously popped into their minds, but the writing process generates ideas and promotes further

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11   This reference to nonhuman participants and especially to material and immaterial objects seems to be aligned with the Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2007, 63ff.). However, Latour's ideas have not been taken up by scholars within Cultural Institutions Studies. Their intellectual references relate to the work of Lev Vygotsky, Michael Polanyi and Kurt Blaukopf.

12   Under the pressure to convey the meaning of their work, artists sometimes say more than they can know (Nisbett and Wilson 1977). Artists' narratives may therefore include rationalizations and mythical figures that help them present and mediate their work.

imaginative processes. Writers therefore often write so that they can continue to write (Zembylas and Dürr 2009, 103–119). The intrinsic dynamics of artistic processes also become manifest in the constant interlinking of various activities that Zembylas and Niederauer (2018, 60–63) classify in four intersecting and interdependent clusters: exploring, understanding, valuing and making. During these activity clusters, different forms of knowledge are at work. First, practical forms of artistic knowledge (e.g., experience-based knowledge of the working process, body knowledge and situative sensual knowledge) and, second, propositional forms of artistic knowledge (e.g., scholarly artistic knowledge, formal technical knowledge and knowledge of the local artistic field). These different levels and forms of knowledge thus affect thinking, doing and creating together (Zembylas and Niederauer 2018, 97–105). By using case studies to analyze individual artistic processes, Zembylas underlines the sociality of artistic practical knowing.

Practice views in Cultural Institutions Studies

Inspired by the practice-oriented view of social and cultural life, Zembylas (1997; 2004a, part III; 2014b) regards industries and organizational sectors as compositions of practice collectives that emerge around systematic efforts to organize activities around shared projects. To be clear, practice does not mean action; practice is a comprehensive concept that unifies and interconnects doings, goals, sayings, materials, discursive contents (like moral ideas, beliefs, norms) and situations, all of which shape social worlds. Furthermore, it incorporates general knowledge and practical skills, emotions, commitments and purposes (see Schatzki 2002; Wenger 1998), which are together considered to be pivotal for understanding various artistic practices (e.g., artistic experimentation, different literary writing styles, different musical aesthetics in compositions, choreographic approaches in dance, formal aspects in paintings, etc.). These aspects are not anchored in private subjectivities, but in socially organized arrangements that are situated in traditions and in local cultures (see Zembylas and Dürr 2009; Zembylas and Niederauer 2018).

   In line with Ludwik Fleck, Zembylas (2004a, 254f.) ascribes to practice collectives that they not only share styles of thought but also styles of doing things. This means that the members of a practice collective act in ways that are mutually intelligible to themselves (see Schatzki 1996, 116; Wenger 1998, 51ff.).[13] Practice collectives need rules to coordinate their internal relations,

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develop various organizational forms and use resources (including various forms of knowledge, material objects and discourses) to improve their collective agency. However, they do not invent practices out of nothing; rather, they are embedded in already existing traditions, for example, in particular musical traditions, in narrative traditions, in symbolic forms, etc. To put it in the words of Theodore Schatzki (2005; 2014), practice collectives are constellations of various practice-arrangement bundles, for example, referring to music constellations of practices improvising and composing music, organizing concerts and performing music, recording and editing sound, marketing, distributing, listening attentively to music and valuating, making or repairing instruments, creating music software, elaborating notation systems, developing aesthetic theories, teaching, etc. Therefore, learning and unlearning are central to practice collectives (Zembylas 2004a, 240–246, 252–257; Zembylas and Niederauer 2018, 93–97). Learning and unlearning denote the transfer of established and accepted knowledge, the generation of new knowledge and the attunement to existing customs of doing things together or, as other sociologists would say, to existing institutions (see Bloor 1997, 47).

In addition to the term practice collective, Zembylas (2004a, 261f.; see Van Maanen and Barley 1984) also uses the term professional collective, which is a strongly institutionalized form of the practice collective. In this case, formal and organizational structures are established, tasks are formally distributed, hierarchies are reinforced, and the allocation of resources, information and remuneration are regulated. In professional collectives, status symbols, information barriers and jargons are created, interests are bundled into subcollectives, and an ethos of belonging is created and allegiance (loyalty) is promised. Access to a professional collective is institutionalized either by the training on offer, accreditation procedures, mostly tacit professional performance criteria or, incidentally, by being distinct from competing professions. If one is a member of the professional collective, one has access to formal and informal information networks and to privileged shared experiences. This professional integration is also recognized externally, outside the professional collective (e.g., by arts funding organizations).

The development and evaluation of practical knowledge, professional skills and abilities is dependent on legitimized rules and routinized practices. These rules and routines are incorporated in an institutionalized social space with locally differentiated power structures. Actions in this space appear intelligible and are evaluated as meaningful or appropriate when they are based on certain

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priate techniques; this mastery is not at all trivial (Wittgenstein 1999 [1953], §§ 125, 150f., 199–203).

shared symbolic forms, cultural techniques, material foundations and conform to the regimes of competence recognized there.

Professions generally arise when a specific expertise or service is in demand and an authority accompanies the professional activity (Zembylas 2004a, 259f.). Not everyone then may pursue a particular profession, and the social constitution and legitimation of professions is carried out by professional collectives, and peers usually decide whether and how well a profession is practiced. The existence of various professions in cultural industries already presupposes established practices in which doings, sayings[14] and work settings are coordinated in an institutionalized way through mostly implicit rules and are thus harmonized (standardized) (2004a, 255). Although there normally exists a prevailing normative consensus about what good practice is and what professional competence means (see Wenger 1998, 136f.), individuals do not always have to adhere strictly to this consensus since practice collectives may very well consist of people from different social backgrounds who also participate in other practice collectives at the same time. Therefore, "professional collectives create an optional field of action, a legitimate space of possibility" (Zembylas 2004a, 257), leaving room for variations and differentiations. Here the concept of professional collective has many similarities to Richard Scott's organizational sector (see Scott and Meyer 1991).

Zembylas' epistemological perspective on professional collectives leads to a more general sociological theory of skills and abilities. Furthermore, he ascribes institutions an important role in the formation of practical knowledge and practice collectives when he notes that "knowledge and action, connoisseurship and skills are attributes of collective ascription and recognition based on shared ... standards" (Zembylas 2004a, 251; see Friedland 2018). Moreover, he agrees with the social anthropologist Mary Douglas (1986, ix), who argues that "a theory of institutions that will amend the current unsociological view of human cognition is needed, and a cognitive theory to supplement the weaknesses of institutional analysis is needed as well."

The concept of institution (see Bloor 1997, 27ff.) goes hand in hand with the concept of rules that is central to the social theoretical approaches inspired by Wittgenstein's philosophy (see Zembylas 1997, 16, 242f.; Zembylas 2004a, 289ff.).

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14   Putting doings and sayings (including writings and other symbolic activities like calculating, justifying, classifying) together is done to overcome the dichotomy of action and discourse and acknowledge that doings incorporate discursive elements and that discourses are specific activities that are also linked to further concrete doings.

From this perspective, rules – whether constitutive or regulatory[15] – are the most important components of institutions. David Bloor (1997, 17; see Schatzki 1997; 2021) sees rules as tacit social agreements that offer orientation about right or wrong. In order to learn how to follow the rules of a specific practice, you have to practice (a case of learning by doing). "And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice" (Wittgenstein, 1999 [1953], §202) or a skill that cannot be explained by the rules themselves (Wittgenstein, 1956, VI §2; 1999 [1953], §199; Bloor 1997, 14–18): "It is necessary to introduce a sociological element into the account to explain normativity. Normative standards come from the consensus generated by a number of interacting rule followers." (Bloor 1997, 17; see C. Taylor 1995)

Let us consider orchestras as a particular institution in the world of Western classical music. An orchestra consists of a number of musicians playing different instruments, a conductor and possibly a number of administrative personnel that stand in the background and help to ensure that contractual agreements, rehearsals, performances and activities with audiences run smoothly. By grounding their work on shared learnings and understandings, musicians are able to perform certain musical works well. Their practical agreement, as Wittgenstein notes, is "not agreement in opinions but in a form of life" (1999 [1953], §241) and, to put it more concretely, an agreement "in action" (1956, VI, §39). The orchestra as an institution exists in Zembylas' terms as a practice collective. Rule-following and institutional orders show themselves in practical accomplishments. They are therefore observable and public. The conformity of a person or of an organization with the institutional rules implies their willingness to adjust their doings and sayings with others. "Only agents actively concerned to modify their idiosyncratic rule-following activities appropriately are able to sustain a shared sense of what it is to follow a rule," as Barry Barnes (2001, 28) writes. This shared sense is collectively negotiated and modified, but it is not itself a product of the rules since rules cannot control their own meaningfulness and modification. Therefore, "every practice transcends its own rules" (Zembylas 2004a, 312) and this insight emphasizes the indeterminacy of human activities.

Overall, the fuzziness and contingency of practical situations, the semantic ambiguity of institutional rules, the differently situated orientations of actors and the intrinsic dynamics of social interactions lead to situations where the

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15   To the best of our knowledge, the use of the terminological pair constitutive/regulative is first found in John Searle (1994, 33–37). However, in the 1950s, John Rawls (1955, 3–32) was already writing about the logical difference between justifying a practice and determining a single action, but without using the terms constitutive and regulative (similarly to Winch 2003, 24ff.).

reglementation of practice by institutions, norms and regulative discourses is constantly undermined. Cultural Institutions Studies aims to integrate the observable diversity of practices into its theoretical framework.

Social agency and arts organizations

Structures of art organizations – which are generated by formal rules, control of resources and different practices – vary according to their mission statement, their economic orientation (for-profit or nonprofit), financing and their social and cultural environment, etc. Furthermore, larger arts organizations in particular often employ people with very different educational and professional backgrounds (artistic, managerial and administrative personnel, technicians, educational staff, etc.). They are composed of interdisciplinary teams (practice collectives) that are characterized by diverse professional standards, career paths, shared practical understandings and styles of thinking and acting. The complexity of the occupational structure allows these larger arts organizations to produce a multiple and diverse output, even though managing this diverse organizational structure is often tedious (Zembylas 2004a, 251–275). Such occupational diversity produces conflicts, especially among different hierarchical levels, artistic and administrative identities, protean value orientation, assessments of purpose-means relations and practical understandings (Hasitschka 2018, 111f.; 151ff.; 187ff.). Therefore, there are many external and internal aspects that affect an art organization, especially if it is large and complex.

Volker Kirchberg (2005a) systematically investigates the social functions of museums from a threefold perspective: on a micro, meso and macrolevel. His empirical data refer to museums in Germany. However, he develops his analysis comparatively and includes museum studies from other countries and in particular from North America. For him, the major external constraints on museums are changing numbers of visitors, the vicissitudes of public funding and the increasing competition from other leisure opportunities. Large museums with adequate resources can react to these external changes, for instance, by organizing a more diverse exhibition program (e.g., from traditional permanent exhibitions to more temporary and entertaining cultural events); and they are able to implement new marketing strategies and to foster collaboration with sponsors and supporters. Smaller museums, especially those at a municipal level, seek cooperation with local actors and create new educational formats on a small scale. Generally, a stronger customer orientation by museums is observable, but Kirchberg (2005a, 31) rightly asks whether new offerings induce new demands, or vice versa. Looking at the existing data, there is a mutual dependency between supply and demand, that is, to alleviate the potential problem

of a lack of demand (an external factor) internal structures and processes must be aligned.

However, there is also the possibility of influencing external factors – at least on a narrower and local scale – by a museum's active engagement in society. Museums can connect to local communities, certainly to the wealthy few who may offer sponsorship but also to other social groups and organizations such as schools, clubs and other actors in civil society. Museums can construct and improve their public acceptance and support, and they can forge a good relationship with the municipal leadership by, for example, emphasizing their contribution to the image of the city (Kirchberg 2003, 68) and to communal identity (2003, 70). Such immaterial functions are always accompanied by material ones. Museums are employers and business partners for locals, and they stimulate cultural tourism. But museums are also agents of political discourses; they can foster cultural democracy or establish themselves as a political arena of confronting, mediating and bringing together political ideas (2003, 69). Art organizations can therefore shape all three urban spaces, or as Edward Soja (1996) names them, firstspace (physical structures), secondspace (mental and cognitive structures), and thirdspace (political structures). Especially smaller organizations with a low degree of institutionalization, bureaucratization and organizational complexity can often engage the local population and specific societal groups and directly relate to them, consciously address the sensitivities of locals and offer them forums for self-expression, unlike large organizations (Kirchberg 2005a, 179–182). Many arts organizations are thus able to work as powerful agents of social change, at least in their immediate vicinity because they are able to reach out to their audiences, and (trans)form them.[16]

Organizational agency eventually establishes or removes symbolic boundaries and inequalities (see Gaupp 2021a; Zembylas 1997, 162ff., 201ff.). Lisa Gaupp,

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16   Kirchberg's statistical analysis of a representative sample of 1,080 German residents and their museum visits also reveals the structural force of the demographic imposition on museums. Social background and education are still the most determining factors of cultural preferences, in close correspondence to lifestyle factors such as subjective and emotional motivations, inherent curiosity about museums, desire for aesthetic stimulation and having a good time with partners and friends (Kirchberg 2005a, 257–259). Nevertheless, his conclusion is far from a pure structuralist subordination of museums to a demographic context: "The museum is a cluster of social practices, an institution of a cultural-symbolic order to which visitors submit consciously and voluntarily…. In this sense, museums also have a structuring effect on visitors, not coercively, but exclusively with their consent" (2005a, 317f.; our translation).

based on an elaboration of concepts of intersectional otherness and cultural diversity,[17] argues that arts organizations can actively support broader participation, representation and inclusion in society. This vision implies a fundamental revision of the predominant, typically Eurocentric understanding of arts and culture, art history or artistic qualities and values (Gaupp 2021b, 297ff.). Like Kirchberg (2005a; 2019), she believes that art organizations have the potential to become agents of transformation by supporting the development of cultural freedom and capabilities, since they can "co-create versions of culture, in order to extend cultural democracy" (Gaupp 2021b, 311).

Art managers as producers and mediators

Most early scholars associated with Cultural Institutions Studies have taught arts management and cultural administration studies at universities,[18] shaping the direction of their research. On a general level, arts management represents a field of activity in which organizational decisions are prepared and strategies are planned and implemented. Typical managerial tasks are leadership, programming, planning, curating, evaluating, marketing and controlling. The study of these managerial activities requires a differentiated concept of professional practice and practical skills (see Abfalter and Piper 2016; DeVereaux 2009; 2023; Jarzabkowski 2005). Understanding management as a practice means that much of the local and situated knowledge of arts managers – for example, the ability to capture contextual dynamics, sense conflicts early on, and communicate and mediate between different logics and language games, to motivate and inspire others, and solve everyday problems – constitutes "personal knowledge" (Polanyi 1958; Zembylas 2004a, 242f.). Therefore, in practice, arts management has different roles and tackles various tasks aiming at legitimacy from internal and external stakeholders (see Kirchberg 2005b). This diversity of roles generates different professional images for arts management; Zembylas (2006a)

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17   The definition of diversity is ambiguous, at least since this term is used for instrumental purposes, for example, as an indicator of organizational success and legitimacy, especially in relation to public funding.

18   The Anglo-American literature mentions pioneer arts management and arts administration programs at universities, including Yale University (Theatre Management, 1966), University of Wisconsin-Madison (Arts Administration and Arts Management, 1969) and York University Toronto (1969) (Paquette and Redaelli 2015, ch. 1.2). In 1976, the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna established the first postgraduate course in cultural management in the German-speaking world (see Schramme 2017 for Europe). From the late 1980s onwards, other German universities (e.g., in Hamburg, Ludwigsburg, Weimar, Lüneburg, Hildesheim and Berlin) established similar programs.

mentions four metaphorical images; arts management as head, interface, enabler and obstetrician.

- Arts management as the head of an organization: The head metaphor directly refers to the function of leadership and control, but also to concepts of rationality and reflectiveness. Irrationality is tacitly attributed to other participants, especially to artists, in order to legitimize the role of the management as an ordering element in organizations.
- Arts management as interface management: Interface presupposes at least two distinct areas that overlap – for example, arts and economy, or arts and the public sphere. By being an intermediary, arts management offers solutions to systemic conflicts of objectives or communicative misunderstandings between different social spheres.
- Arts management enables artistic production: The role of an enabler is a pragmatic one emphasizing the role of arts management in securing the necessary resources for the realization of projects. Here the aspect of planning for the future is stressed, and the focus shifts from the what to the how.
- Art management as obstetrician: This Socratic metaphor accentuates the involvement of managers in creative processes. It emphasizes the intention to work closely with the artistic creator and to take responsibility for, for example, the program selection in arts organizations or artistic decisions related to individual productions.

These professional roles are manifestations of the division of labor and the institutionalization of social relations. Despite the differences between these professional roles, there are also commonalities among art managers, such as similar defensive reactions to stakeholders' interventions or strategies against domination by evaluation (see Becker 1995).

From the perspective of a sociology of occupation, Kirchberg (2010, 98) states that arts managers have a messy and protean identity since they "do not have a uniform opinion about the infiltration of economic values" in their actions (see Kornberger et al., 2015). This heterogeneity reflects the diversity of institutional embedding and the intrinsic ambiguity of relations between arts managers, artists, audiences and other stakeholders. Therefore, art managers are confronted with contradictory values and may pursue different goals that are inconsistent with each other (2015, 99f.; Tschmuck 2020, 123–126). The traditional opposition of arts versus economy is based on the assumption that art is ideally a self-sustaining activity that develops for its own sake and that the economy is an activity mainly determined by self-interest and profitability. To

model this contradiction, Kirchberg (2010, 102ff.) refers to anti-capitalist versus capitalist-affirmative orientations. Following DiMaggio (1987b; see Palmer 1998), these different orientations are not primarily related to the art form, but to the underlying financing models, that is, for-profit, nonprofit and governmental arts organizations. However, Kirchberg (2010, 110f.) stresses value orientation by referring to the inherent social responsibility of arts managers and therefore to social values to which arts managers may feel committed. Lisa Gaupp (2021b) extends this argument by discussing how curators who are programming and managing cultural events can foster cultural diversity. She posits that arts managers who are sensitive to social problems, such as cultural inequalities and injustice in the arts sector, need to overcome utilitarian thinking when organizing arts production. This work of self-transformation is an ongoing process with no foreseeable end (Gaupp 2021a).

Perspectives on public art funding

In many continental European countries, there is a strong tradition of public funding for arts (see Zimmer and Toepler 1999). During the premodern court system, the nobility founded arts organizations (e.g., orchestras, opera ensembles, theaters) and established art collections to represent itself and legitimize its privileged role as a culture-promoting and sublime taste-defining class. After the decline of courtly structures, the modern bourgeois state took over most of these organizations and subsequently the state became a major player in the arts sector. Additionally, from the late 1960s onwards, having recovered from the huge economic and social damage of the Second World War, many Western European states established a wide funding system to promote cultural democracy, support artistic development, ease access to culture and ensure a minimum of social security to freelance artists. Today total public spending for arts and culture have reached a relatively high level, with most EU countries spending 0.4–0.8% of their GDP (Rius-Ulldemolins et al., 2019; The Budapest Observatory 2019).

Cultural Institutions Studies investigates allocation issues in public arts funding. Franz-Otto Hofecker and Peter Tschmuck have analyzed changes in the funding focus of the Austrian federal state over ten years and detected a decrease in the total cultural budget, but at the same time an increase in funding for large art organizations and festivals (Hofecker et al., 2006; Tschmuck 2006). A further analysis of the concentration of funding on a few big organizations explains some negative effects of strongly unequal allocation policies (see Tschmuck 2005; Zembylas and Alton 2011; Schad 2019).

Another sociologically important topic is the asymmetric power relation between funding public authorities and applicants (individual artists and organizations). The legal standards that exist in certain continental European countries and that have been established to prevent intersectional discrimination, arbitrary decisions, and nepotism and ensure equal treatment to all applicants under the principle of objectivity and impartiality try to avoid such asymmetry (Zembylas 2005). Yet, an empirical analysis of the funding process on the federal level in Austria (from application to final decision) showed a gap between the legal regulations and the administrative practice, which can also be understood as a gap between official rules and unofficial administrative realities (Zembylas 2006b; Landau-Donnelly et al., 2023). Good governance, which is embedded in a broader discourse of political legitimation (see Börzel et al., 2008; European Commission 2001), demands that public authorities not only adhere to high procedural standards, but also to transparency and accountability. Cultural Institutions Studies accordingly inquires why governmental agencies fail to fulfill such formal requirements. As a result, Cultural Institutions Studies emphasizes the role of everyday routines, formal hierarchies, hidden agendas and the bureaucratic interest in suppressing criticism (Schad 2019; Wimmer 2006; Zembylas 2019a).

The economization of artistic works and services

Cultural Institutions Studies does not understand artistic practices as the spontaneous or natural activities of people. The Durkheimian concept of *fait social* – that is, certain activities are social because they shape individual identities and cognitive patterns – also applies to organizing arts (Zembylas 2014a). Arts matter for societies, and consequently the creation, distribution and consumption of artistic symbols and expressions are subject to politics and political power. Fait social also means that concepts of artwork, artists, artistic success and values cannot be viewed as socially independent. Cultural industries consist of and are structured by intersecting institutional spheres, e.g., art markets, art academies, mass media and art criticism, art museums, concert halls, art festivals, art fairs and theaters. These spheres emerge in particular historical situations and have been shaped and transformed by time-dependent social and political developments (Kirchberg 2005a; Tschmuck 2001a; 2012; Zembylas 1997). Therefore, the sociohistorical and economic analysis of institutionalization processes, gatekeeping, symbolic and monetary valorization helps us to understand the contingent dynamics of artistic practices and their transformation.

The current openness and diversity of art concepts and practices create doubts about the established social order of arts. Does the Duchampian idea that everything can be an artwork apply for contemporary art sectors, or do institutional constraints restrict such a radical pluralistic claim? Most scholars associated with Cultural Institutions Studies follow an institutionalist perspective and therefore highlight structuring forces. For instance, legal restrictions – such as contract, copyright, property and penal laws (Tschmuck 2009), acts of censorship, and a politically enforced jurisdiction – have shaped the arts sector worldwide with respect to access to the art market, the public sphere, artistic evaluations or organizational bureaucracies that enable and obstruct artistic practices (Zembylas 1997, 24–55, 69–70). In the visual arts, the penetration of powerful commercial objectives has led to a continuous expansion of art markets and especially art fairs, which can determine the contents of arts and arts consumption patterns, impeding "a pluralistic and diverse production [that] in the long run depends on a pluralistic and diverse consumption" (1997, 60; our translation). Furthermore, the institutionalization of visual arts as a product and symbol of the emerging bourgeoisie from the 18th century to the 20th century established art biennials and festivals, which corresponded to a growing awareness of the profitability of investing in arts. Tax benefits and robust financial returns encourage private collectors and corporations to collect artworks for economic and symbolic purposes (1997, 86–89). However, this economization and commercialization of arts is contestable; for instance, the capitalist embeddedness of arts contradicts concepts of the public good and, to a certain degree, concepts of human rights, such as just and equal access to arts (1997, 63–67). These latter concepts strongly question the legitimacy of art markets and private or corporate art ownership. However, the transformation of public cultural goods into profitable private economic goods does not negate their immaterial values (Klamer 1996; Zembylas 2004a, 102–116). Art markets are still strongly aligned with other art organizations such as art museums, analog and digital media, art criticism and academic institutes in such a way that the latter confer dignity and symbolic valorization to (private and profitable) artworks. Furthermore, markets are also able to conceal these contests about their legitimacy as economic goods by co-opting their critics (Zembylas 1997, 79ff.).

In addition, the historical transformation of cultural labor corresponds to economic, social and technological changes in the arts sector. Peter Tschmuck (2001a, 2001b) looks closely at the example of composers from the 17th to the 19th century and their transition from courtly dependents to freelance musicians. His historical focus is on the Habsburg Empire and especially the court

in Innsbruck, Tyrol.[19] At that time, the socioeconomic status of leading courtly musicians was as high as that of court physicians; yet, until the mid-18th century, composers could not make a living from their occupation in the court system (Tschmuck 2001b, 158f.). After the 1760s, some entrepreneurial individuals started to work as freelancers – for example, Johann Adolph Hasse, Georg Friedrich Händel and, of course, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. This transition was strongly connected to the emergence of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of private music salons, as well as of commercial concert halls that were accessible to those who could afford the admission fee (2001b, 162f.). By the end of the 18th century, music outside the court system had gained new cultural significance. Classical music was able to ignore the fading dominance of the aristocracy and its role as a major hegemonic class. Instead, classical music was now understood as the voice of a self-conscious, creative subject capable of expressing itself in complex musical forms.

3 Critique of Cultural Institutions Studies

One critique stresses the prevalence of a structuralist view in Cultural Institutions Studies. Cultural Institutions Studies argues that artistic creative work is largely shaped by institutional and organizational structures, and this has been illustrated especially by research into the music industry (Tschmuck 2012). Changes in music are causally related to changes in industrial structures, technological means and consumption practices. What significance does artistic agency have in this institution-oriented view? The critique issuing from an artists' perspective posits that Cultural Institutions Studies neglects "those 'personalized' forms of creativity that brought about changes in the structures of music and music business" (Hardy 2012, 329). However, there is also a practice-oriented Cultural Institutions Studies branch (e.g., Zembylas 2004a; 2014a), which has been described in the previous pages. To respond to this critique, it is necessary to understand the relationship between agency and structure. In line with Giddens's thesis on "the mutual dependence of structure and agency" (Giddens 1979, 69) one should look at both sides of the coin. "In the sense that it is only *along with* the performance of an action, as a feature *of* the performance, that what determines the activity … is determinate." (Schatzki 2014, 30) This topic, that is, artistic agency, is central to Zembylas' empirical

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19   Tschmuck (2001a) explicitly refers to different local dynamics when he compares court orchestras in various European cities from the 16th to the 17th century.

studies (Zembylas and Dürr 2009; Zembylas 2014b; Zembylas and Niederauer 2018).

A second critique suggests that Cultural Institutions Studies (and more specifically studies of the music industry) focuses too much on mainstream and commercial arts. Such critiques (for example, Klages 2022) state that niches, the amateur sector or traditional arts are neglected. This observation is correct. Some scholars in Cultural Institutions Studies do indeed have a personal research interest in cultural economics and therefore tend to focus on arts and business. However, nonprofit organizations, amateur and volunteer activities are not completely uninvolved. Material resources like money and human resources like creative ideas and skills are all needed in artistic practices. Sociologically speaking, there is no convincing argument for not taking all practices (including all actors, objects and networks) into account. The fact that an artistic activity is of little economic relevance does not mean that it is not important from the point of view of cultural sociology.

A third objection is that Cultural Institutions Studies might be too Eurocentric (Klages 2022). This criticism is related to the observation that publications in this field are largely from European and North American countries. This does not necessarily imply a devaluation of other cultural regions, but reflects the situatedness of the individual scholars. As Wittgenstein (1975, §94, §160ff.) argues, knowledge is always based on a practical, experiential and cultural background that usually remains beyond the focus of reflection. Many scholars working in Cultural Institutions Studies generally distrust the claim of transcending one's own horizon of understanding and thinking to arrive at bias-free, cross-cultural knowledge. Therefore, they focus on topics that they are familiar with to avoid the imminent danger of "telling more than we can know" (Nisbett and Wilson 1977).