THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF ARTS

A Theoretical Compendium

Volker Kirchberg
Tasos Zembylas

mdwPress

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"This important book on the social organisation of the arts provides an engaging tour through key theoretical perspectives and is packed with insights that will shape scholarship. The combination of arts sociology, arts-focused organisational studies, and social theory, looked at with an interdisciplinary lens, is unique, making a major contribution to the field."

– *Victoria D. Alexander, Professor of Sociology and Arts Management, Goldsmiths, University of London*

"Sociological research on the arts has generated a wealth of descriptive findings over the past several decades as well as some powerful theoretical insights, without much focus on either cumulation or synthesis. The current volume is a welcome intervention, providing a panoptically comprehensive overview of this field with admirable clarity and astute critical judgment."

– *Paul DiMaggio, Professor of Sociology, New York University*

"This well-written and fascinating book of the social organisation of arts is a must-read for scholars, practitioners and students. It's not only suitable for sociologists, but also for arts managers, art historians and beyond, I couldn't put it down. This book sets a benchmark for research to come in the context of the arts, its organisations and the networks that sustain relationships."

– *Ruth Rentschler, Professor in Arts and Cultural Leadership, University of South Australia*

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"*The Social Organization of Arts* assembles and explains the three most influential theoretical constructs for the study of art worlds, fields or systems. It also covers the dominating approaches for understanding what it is that is actually produced, distributed and consumed in music, literature, the visual and the performing arts. There exists hardly a more concise, up-to-date treatment of this expanding field of research."

– *Michael Hutter, Professor emeritus, Berlin Social Science Center*

"A welcome addition to the literature on an important area: the social organization of arts. Based on a knowledgeable discussion of renowned theories, this compendium discusses conceptual tools useful to build-up meaningful empirical research while being sensitive to the complex, flexible, contingent and unpredictable dynamics of artistic organizations."

– *Marie Buscatto, Professor of Sociology, University of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne*

"*The Social Organization of Arts* masterfully displays both the centrality of the arts to society and sociological theorizing, as well as the centrality of sociological theory to understanding the production and organisation of the arts and their impact on society. Whether one looks at the arts from a societal perspective or society from the perspective of the arts, this book is an essential guide."

– *Chris Mathieu, Associate Professor of Sociology, Lund University and Chair of the European Sociological Association's Research Network on The Sociology of the Arts*

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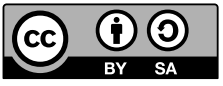

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Preface

For many decades and for many reasons, the social organization of arts and culture has interested us. It is true that there is extensive literature on many topics related to the organization of arts and culture, for example, in business management and cultural economics, cultural policy analyses, arts in urban environments, artistic copyright and other legal matters, as well as other issues about the particular aspects of managing arts. We have considered and interpreted the interconnections between these different approaches and empirically scrutinized cases on individuals and organizations, such as the corporate penetration of cultural markets, transformations of the music industry, the social positioning of arts organizations, particularly of museums, or the intrinsic dynamics of artistic practices. However, what was lacking in these two decades was a comprehensive understanding of arts and culture from a sociological organizational perspective. With this book, we want to provide such a systematic theoretical work that highlights the theories and theoretical concepts of the social organization of arts. We want to juxtapose these diverse and sometimes contradictory theories and concepts to highlight their differences and similarities.

We have different educational and professional biographies. However, we share common interests and perspectives. Volker Kirchberg has been researching the social organization of museums in the United States and Germany since the 1990s. As an assistant professor of sociology at William Paterson University in New Jersey, he taught the sociology of arts, organizational sociology and master's courses in contemporary sociological theory. Since the mid-2000s, as a professor of cultural organization and cultural mediation at Leuphana University in Germany, he has spent fifteen years developing and improving an introductory lecture on cultural organization as part of the university's cultural studies program of study. The contents and structure of this course served as the inspiration for this compendium. Tasos Zembylas began thirty years ago to analyze arts from a philosophical perspective in a pragmatic and practice-oriented approach. His ongoing collaboration with colleagues from social, political

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and economic sciences at the University of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna and with scholars at other institutions, and the in-depth exchange with artists, employees of arts organizations and politicians has deepened his approach. Volker's invitation in 2019 to write this compendium together was more than welcome.

The writing took several years as both of us had other professional duties to attend to. The writing process was generative, and the contents and the structure of this book took shape during the course of writing. Inevitably, our selection of the key theories is personal and we hope it will provoke some vigorous disagreement. Yet our choices of theoretical structures and processes are not intended to be immutable. Rather we hope this text will be a basis for further theoretical discussions involving, as in a sociology of arts they must, close collaboration with subdisciplines of sociology such as the sociology of culture, the sociology of organization, the sociology of work, the sociology of technology among others. In fact, it would also profit from an interdisciplinary dialogue with philosophy, economics, psychology, the sustainability sciences, the political sciences to name a few more. Such an approach to the arts and their organization should provide food for thought and for practice. We sympathize with Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* (2000, 2038) who laments, "Grey, dear friend, is all theory." And we have endeavored to make our compendium more colorful by not only addressing fellow academics, but also reflective practitioners.

In keeping with Howard Becker's dictum of arts as collective action, this book was realized with the support of many minds. We thank Tobias Lutze and Sharon Maluche for satisfying our precise and sometimes obscure needs for literature, Claudia Schacher for her graphical design expertise, Michele Perry for correcting first drafts, Ute Finkeldei and Paul Lauer for their comprehensive proofreading, and Ulf Wuggenig, Constance DeVereaux and Victoria Alexander for their scholarly advice. Additionally, we would like to thank mdwpress for their kind proposal and support for this publication. Last but not least, we thank our employers, the Leuphana University and the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, who have funded the open access electronic publication of this book.

Volker Kirchberg and Tasos Zembylas

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Chapter 1 | Introduction

When we talk about the social organization of arts, we are referring to two concepts that are closely linked, order and change. Social order is never static, and it is always complex. Social change is always dynamic, and it has different intensities and efficacies. Together, they are key to theorizing the social organization of arts. Theories do not explain the past, that is, they do not identify causes of historical developments, but they are able to make the present more intelligible and offer indications of what the future might hold. Such epistemic ambitions are bold and will undoubtedly be contested. For many critics, the belief that sociological theory should explain the causes and effects of social order borders on hubris (see Hallinan 1997; Hirschman and Reed 2014; Meyer 2017). As no single theory can do justice to the complexity of social affairs (such as the organization of arts), there is an argument to acknowledging the merits of theoretical pluralism. We prefer to see sociological theories as cognitive tools that provide conceptual support in our research.

How should we then approach the social organization of arts? What is the motivation to organize artistic activities, how and why does it happen, and what are the outcomes? Arts are a heterogeneous field of activities ranging from creation to consumption. They encompass artworks, specific services, material items and a variety of transient events. They are all-encompassing aesthetic symbols that generate aesthetic experience and signify meaning and status. The organization of arts ranges from very personal levels of creation, an isolated retreat of a sole author for example to the multiverse of global film and media corporations. Levels of distribution range from listening to intimate live music by a sole songwriter in a small subculture club, to a globally advertised and touring performance of a superstar pop singer. Levels of art consumption range from experiencing musicians in a trendy performing arts festival to the spontaneous lingering of a pedestrian to listen to busking. The many different levels and varieties of organizing arts are matched by the many different attempts to explain them. The sociology of arts provides many of these theories, and the purpose of this book is to present and compare a select few. An en-

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suing discussion could open up dialogues across different perspectives, which, we hope, would yield a fertile synthesis of theories.

By presenting different theories and perspectives of the social organization of arts, we hope to offer a rich picture on how sociological eyes understand this topic. Admittedly, the metaphor of the sociological eye (Collins 1998, 3), a reference to C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination (Mills 1959), suggests abstract ways of seeing and thinking society. There are many different sociological eyes, each with their own perspective, as social scientists are made of flesh and blood, have different intellectual backgrounds, and have gone through very diverse learning processes. Sociology as we experience it has blurred boundaries. Unsurprisingly, studies of the social organization of arts absorb insights from social theory, historical research, other sociological subdisciplines (e.g., industrial, organizational, occupational and economic sociology), from policy analysis, legal studies, consumption studies, cultural anthropology, cultural economics, social and cultural psychology – and this list is by no means exhaustive.

The title of this book, *The Social Organization of Arts*, refers to a process of institutionalization and structuration of various clusters of activities in the realm of arts and culture to sociological analyses of how such activities are situated and to how they interrelate. Since this process includes intentional social action, we prefer to speak of the social organization of arts instead of the social ecology of arts. However, this process remains to some degree implicit and unreflected upon since most practitioners usually do their work of planning, creating, cooperating, discussing, negotiating, managing, calculating, delivering, billing and more without being often able to make explicit how they proceed and what exactly makes up their particular skills (see Polanyi 1958; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986, 30f.). Furthermore, the social organization of arts includes hierarchical top-down action and bottom-up self-organizing. We are aware that arts – namely, artworks and people working in arts – are not destitute of agency. Sometimes arts resist certain organizational constraints, and occasionally they participate in shaping their own organizational environment.

The term arts has a generic meaning, one that acknowledges the volatility of the social inclusion or exclusion of artistic claims, the dynamic social life of artworks, the great variety of activities around arts accomplished by artists, delivered by non-artists and coordinated by networks and organizations. It includes the objectives, modes and outcomes of creative potential embedded in their reception and consumption, the power and diversity of organizational aspects, and the complex roles of background traditions. Arts are bound up in broader practical and institutional arrangements that provide the riverbed of all social, cultural and economic interaction connected to the social organization of arts. The (trans-)formation process of the social organization of arts varies

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over time, geographies, art forms, technologies and infrastructures, local and global political and structural frameworks, established practices and creative challenges.

Studying the social organization of arts has a number of implications. It means that there is no such thing as art in itself. Art – as a general term for bundles of practices, discourses, materials, symbolic forms and objects – always emerges and changes in a given social and cultural situation. Therefore, whenever they occur, terms like arts, artwork, artist, artistic value are related to temporal, spatial, practical and normative arrangements that shape their situational meaning. An emphasis on the social organization of arts therefore goes against the idea of monadic being, of radical singularity, and it also leaves space for agency that is ascribed to individuals, groups, organizations, objects and discourses. Let us engage in an open, nonteleological understanding of social organization. And be sensitive to complex dynamics, protean developments, contingent findings and unpredictable outcomes. In order to evaluate the similarities and differences among the various sociological theories we discuss in this book, curiosity is needed above all.

1 Some general notes on sociological models and metaphors

Art is then a general term for bundles of practices and discourses, objects and symbolic forms. Sociologically and organizationally we can classify these bundles into generative metaphors (see Schön 1979) like art world, artistic field, art sector, art system and cultural industries – and combine them with sociological concepts like institution, network and figuration. The labels of these concepts are derived from and embedded in broader social theories, suggesting different images for the social organization of arts and different epistemic functions. These metaphors stimulate ways of *seeing as* (Wittgenstein 1999 [1953], 197) and structure our sociological imagination and our understanding of the subject matter in different ways; therefore, they are not interchangeable (Black 1981 [1962], 243; Hughes 2015, 775–780). As metaphors, they produce associations containing certain interpretations and valuations of the bundle being studied. They create semantic frameworks that foreground some aspects and obscure others. This interplay of revealing and concealing certain semantic aspects is part of the effects of sociological metaphors. *World* expresses the idea of a functioning whole, a cosmos. *Field* draws our attention to a territory, or a terrain demarcated by visible signs. *Sector* is a term derived from geometry and presupposes a whole and its parts. Finally, *system*, with its origins in ancient Greek, designates a quantity or an entity that is ordered by an intrinsic logic.

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Each metaphorical term seeks then to communicate a particular way of looking at the social organization of arts. The coherence of a given metaphor is not solely due to its linguistic and empirical concurrence. It also reflects the level of recognition of the sociological works by the scholarly community (Fleck 1981 [1935] 104ff.).

Furthermore, the word *model* can denote a mold, a design or a pattern of something. Models are thus forms of portrayal, so that "to speak of 'models' in connection with a scientific theory already smacks of the metaphorical," as Max Black (1981 [1962], 219) puts it. This effect of metaphors stems from a fundamental attribute of human cognition (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 11). In contrast to some rigid epistemological conceptions of science in the first half of the 20th century, metaphors are not expendable components of scientific thinking (see Black 1981 [1962], Hesse 1970 [1963]). The metaphoric dimension of world, field, sector and system indicates a heuristic function. They contain presuppositions (Collingwood 1940, 31) and constitute complex yet succinct epistemic patterns. Yet it is worth noting that such metaphors are neither derived from empirical observation, nor from theoretical abstraction. Rather they are anticipated since they are making certain suggestive assumptions (Cassirer 1910, 13, 22).

Using the term model implies that we do not regard sociological theories as literally correct representations. Becker's interactionist theory of art worlds, Bourdieu's theory of artistic fields, Luhmann's analysis of arts as a social system as well as industrial, institutional, network and other approaches do not aim for empirical confirmation in the sense of a correspondence theory of truth, but display a creative function for rendering complex sociological topics intelligible. They are, in Nelson Goodman's (1979) words, different "ways of worldmaking." From this perspective, any evaluation criteria for such models are in principle disputable. People may take a theoretical (logically consistent, innovative) approach, or pursue an empirical (conforming to observations and empirically justified) line of argumentation, or they may take a pragmatic stance and come to different appraisals. We make this observation in order to ward off any illusion of scientific objectivity or other absolutist theories of truth. Models are, in essence, explanations that cannot be arrived at in a solely logical-deductive or empirical-inductive way. Sociology is about conceptual orientation, analytical method, logical inference and creative imagination (Black 1981 [1962], 243).

2 What organizes arts? Some cornerstones of this compendium

Contemporary sociologists generally accept that arts are socially constituted, but they disagree on how they are organized. Becker emphasizes the role of self-

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organizing processes, collaborations and shared conventions embedded in collective actions. Bourdieu tracks activities with the social structures of the artistic field and relational positions determined by the possession of different forms of capital and by alliances. Luhmann observes how structural and functional aspects characterize the art system, which he sees as autonomous and self-referential. The Production of Culture Perspective identifies a number of factors that shape arts and rejects any universal explanation to this question. Sociological Neo-Institutionalism provides explanations and featuring structuring concepts like sets of rules, resources, environmental pressures and shared cognitive patterns. Cultural Institutions Studies analyzes artistic and organizing practices embedded in institutional arrangements, highlighting the social formation of skills and abilities in combination with normative understandings, including ideologies about good practice and commitment. Social Network Theory considers social networks as the engine of social order and change. Indeed, this seemingly inexhaustible question of how arts are socially organized intersects with the question of how arts change. Here again sociologists offer different answers with references to cumulative effects of microchanges, to endogenous and exogenous factors, to the structuring environment (including prevailing ideologies) and certainly to the concatenation of these and other aspects.

Consequently, this compendium highlights the following seven theorists and perspectives on the social organization of arts: (1) Howard Becker, who stands for the interactionist approach, (2) Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of artistic fields, (3) Niklas Luhmann, who developed a systems theory approach to arts, (4) the Production of Culture Perspective, focusing on Richard Peterson's works, 5) Neo-Institutionalism, focusing on Paul DiMaggio's and Walter Powell's works, (6) Cultural Institutions Studies, a theoretical concept that further develops Peterson's approach with the help of philosophical and political science ideas, and finally, (7) Social Network Theory, derived from Harrison White's works. These theories and perspectives have emerged out of distinct epistemic constellations, that is, they are embedded in very different theoretical grounds, address different problems[1] and use different terminologies. They have been disseminated across different institutional sites and academic networks. They are in large part meaningful sociological constructs, or models, but

1 The reference to certain theoretical problems and research questions is circular in the sense that a "theory not only formulates what we know but also tells us what we want to know, that is, the questions to which an answer is needed" (Parsons 1968a, 9). It is worth noting that questions and answers establish and justify the value of the particular theory.

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they are also fueled with emotional directionality, since they plead for a better (i.e., richer, more comprehensive, more accurate, and more plausible) sociological view on this topic. Some of these theories founded schools, groups of enthusiastic academic scholars and stanch defenders of their respective doctrines and practices. The intellectual and institutional competition among these schools contributes to social dynamics, the formation of professional identities and boundaries, processes of valuation and devaluation, which in the long run may increase disciplinary reflexivity as well as interdisciplinary creativity.

These seven theoretical approaches to the social organization of arts do differ in important ways. Some refer to concrete historical situations, some focus on particular art forms, while others steer the reader's awareness to orders and regularities or to changes and disruptions. They are constructed in an inductive, deductive or abductive manner. And their terminology can be based on clear-cut sociological concepts or on metaphors and analogies (see Swedberg 2017). Comparing them is a challenge. The first three chapters of this book are about sociologists born between 1927 and 1930 – Howard S. Becker, Pierre Bourdieu and Niklas Luhmann – who claimed to have formulated comprehensive theories of the social organization of arts. Although their theoretical foundations are very different, their view of arts is rather sober, and often explicitly critical of mythical narratives – the artist as a singular genius, or visionary seer, the idea of autonomous artwork or of eternal artistic truths – and mechanistic views of the development of arts – such as the reflection theory of art or a purely formalist view on artistic developments. From this perspective, we decided to summarize their theories in a separate chapter. Yet our comparative discussion does not seek an evaluation, a judgment if you will, of which is the best theory.

Chapters 6 through 9 present sociological perspectives that were developed inductively (especially Peterson's Production of Culture Perspective) and claim to be middle-range theories (Neo-Institutionalism, Cultural Institutions Studies, and Network Theory). The generation of sociologists responsible for identifying these new research topics were born in the second half of the 20th century, with the exceptions of Harrison White, Richard Peterson and Diana Crane, who were born in the 1930s. Their observations focused on the entanglement of practices with institutions, the interrelation between social structuration and confusion, the dynamics of organizing, and the contingencies in the formation of meanings and values. For this reason, we put their perspectives in a second group and compare their sociological approaches in another chapter.

At this point we would like to note the epistemological elusiveness of the term theory (see Abend 2008). In a narrow sense, a theory should be capable

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of predicting and explaining the emergence, formation and disappearance of social phenomena. However, assuming that every theoretical explanation contains an interpretation, which can change over time, then there is no reason to think there is only one explanation, and so the meaning of theory becomes elusive. In a broader sense, theory refers to sociological approaches that are deductively constructed and claim, at least to some degree, generality and universality. Inductive approaches in sociology may be better called perspectives since they accept that the social world is an ongoing dynamic process and demand greater account to be taken of social diversity and particularity.

Sociological theories and perspectives are generative since they "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972, 49). However, this book is not a history of ideas or a discourse analysis. The task of presenting certain theories and perspectives on a particular topic implies the idea of comparison. We approached this by making use of a threefold structure, that is, each chapter contains sections on the foundations, the key theoretical concepts and selected critical objections. Textual comparison is somewhat challenging due to significant stylistic differences. For instance, some texts are more descriptive, while others are quite abstract. Style of writing is not a decorative attribute of scientific texts; style itself makes various claims. It displays an attitude to what matters, it mediates communication, and it establishes a specific relationship to readers.

A critic of our selection of theories and perspectives might argue that we have not considered this or that author or theory – for example, Adorno's critique of the cultural industry and other neo-Marxist streams, Actor-Network-Theory, Critical Studies related to gender, race and other intersectional categories.[2] Certainly, such a criticism is justified. However, from the very beginning we were acutely aware that we had to make a selection and that there were some approaches that we did not want to include and other that we could not discuss in-depth. A book of this size does not pretend to be an encyclopedia. However, we hope that we will be able to justify our selection by showing the links between the sociology of the organization of arts with social theory.[3]

2 It is important to note that these categories have different significance in different sociohistorical and geographic contexts when one thinks of the positionality and embeddedness of people who care about, and are affected by such categories (see Young 2012).

3 LGBTIQ+ and postcolonial approaches have doubtlessly made important contributions in analyzing social inequalities, economic domination and cultural hegemony. They are highly relevant and should be taken up by theories of the social organization of arts. However, we regard them as specific topics to be addressed in a broader social theory (for an in-depth discussion, see Go 2017).

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Another critique we anticipate will question our focus on North American and European discourses and empirical examples. This is not due to an unconscious epistemic devaluation of theories and cultures from the Global South, with its reference to the coloniality of power and issues of cultural hegemony. The reasons are instead to be found in the regrettable limits of our own intellectual biographies, our theoretical and empirical knowledge of other traditions and their practical embedding in other social worlds. We have chosen (well aware of the potential fallacy of self-interpretation) these theorists for another reason: to satisfy our (socialized) intellectual curiosity and desire to contribute to an understanding of the social complexity in the area of arts and culture. We hope that others who are familiar with theories developed in the Global South will join in the discussion of social theory and our understanding of the social organization of arts.

We both have interdisciplinary backgrounds in sociology and management studies, one being more empirically and the other more philosophically oriented. This influences the contents of this book, but our interests also imply a general appreciation of theoretical work in sociology. At this point, we would like to remark on the dangers of theorizing. What is dangerous is the tendency to define and control the research object to a degree that it deforms the subject of analysis, by systematically ignoring existing contingencies, ambiguities, exceptions, disorder, irregularities and vagueness. This tendency may lead to intellectual and analytical rigidity, and to a kind of monodisciplinary (and overdisciplined) thinking. Sociology is, after all, only one instrument in the toolbox of scholarly disciplines that study the interrelations between people, cultures, societies and environments. We are therefore pleading for a particular *undisciplined* way of thinking of the social organization of arts, one that integrates perspectives from neighboring disciplines.

Taking the diversity of sociological perspectives seriously (we are avoiding the term paradigm for certain epistemological reasons) means acknowledging their genuine value and contribution to the development of scholarly thinking. Presenting any particular sociological theory also involves a critical reflection of one's own process of reading, understanding and interpreting. We are not sure whether this process can always be explicit, as we feel that there is a tacit dimension in understanding that renders it opaque to some degree. We are aware that we favor certain theories, and we have tried to be critical but fair. To rephrase it slightly, valuing is unavoidable, but while it makes understanding a theory more challenging, it can also make it more insightful.

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3 Limits and pitfalls of studying the social organization of arts

Sociology of arts or sociology of the organization of arts?

When we started to design this compendium, we were aware of some excellent introductory books on the sociology of arts (e.g., Zolberg 1990; Alexander 2021 [2003]; Inglis and Hughson 2005; Rothenberg 2014; see Rodríques Morató 2023, 1–43). The merits of these books lie in their comprehensive discussion of various aspects concerning the sociality of arts, their reference to a number of contemporary theoretical approaches and to the overlaps between sociology of arts and other disciplines like art and social history, semiotics, cultural studies, cultural economics, arts management studies, cultural policy studies and various methodologies. However, our endeavor takes a different direction.

Special consideration and praise have to be given to Hans van Maanen's (2009) book *How to Study Art Worlds: On the Societal Functioning of Aesthetic Values*. Like our book, this volume looks at the social organization of arts from production to consumption, but with a focus on aesthetic values. In the first part of the book, he explores sociological approaches such as Becker's Art Worlds, Bourdieu's Field Theory, Luhmann's Systems Theory, Heinich's pragmatic approach to valuation and DiMaggio's Neo-Institutionalism. In the second part, he discusses philosophical ideas (e.g., from Immanuel Kant, Hans-Georg Gadamer, John Dewey, George Dickie, Noël Carroll and Richard Shusterman) on the aesthetic function of artworks, the role of aesthetic experience and the intrinsic and extrinsic value of arts. In the third part, van Maanen analyzes how various ways of organizing arts via, for example, markets or public subsidies and in centralized or decentralized forms are related to different functions and values, with the aim of sensitizing readers to the importance of context analysis. However, there are several differences between his book and ours. First, a thematic one, since van Maanen is interested in how artistic values, and not arts in general, are organized. Second, he looks at general theories on a more abstract level, including philosophical aesthetics. We, however, with our interplay of grand theories and middle-range approaches prefer a concrete and empirically based discussion of the social organization of arts. In contrast to van Maanen, we see the question of the social organization of arts as a part of a more general sociology of arts.

In light of this, it follows that a sociology of the organization of arts is not synonymous with a sociology of arts. Although seemingly trivial, we need to differentiate between two research agendas. To this end, we will now review three programmatic articles published over the last few years by renowned scholars of the field. Vera Zolberg (2014) is one of the founders of the contemporary so-

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ciology of arts (see Zolberg 1990). She revived a sociological engagement with arts by calling for a renewed disciplinary acceptance of a sociology of arts (see Rodríguez Morató 2023). Her justification was based on an understanding of the instrumental nature of arts, especially from the outcome of the art production. Sociology considers arts a research subject since it regards arts as no different from any other social phenomenon. Unlike arts studies and art history, the social autonomy of the artistic sphere has been generally (if not by all sociologists) rejected. Studying the influence of, for example, capitalist entrepreneurialism or of cultural politics distinguishes the sociology of arts clearly from other humanistic disciplines. For this reason, Zolberg (2014, 898) wishes to clarify the terminology "from 'art' to 'the arts,' from 'sociology of culture' to 'sociology of art' along with even more subtle variations, such as 'a cultural sociology.'" The introduction of social institutions as major factors in the "sacred world of high art" (2014, 899) is the pivotal point in the rise of a sociology of arts. Zolberg does not explicitly distinguish between a sociology of arts and a sociology of the organization of arts. However, there are sufficient suggestions in her text that would legitimate this distinction. She argues that a sociology of arts looks at arts and "the role they play in validating high social standing in modern, liberal democracies," (2014, 900) whereas a sociology of organizing arts has four more specific functions: first, "the roles of institutions and processes that give rise to or constrain the emergence of art," second, "the artistic practice of creators and patterns of appreciation," third, "opportunities of access of diverse publics to the arts," and fourth, "the societal context … of how and under what conditions" art is organized (2014, 901).

Following Zolberg, we can say that a sociology of arts is typically engaged with questions of the demarcation of art, the social construction of art genres, the waxing and waning difference between high and popular arts, mechanisms of valuation, prestige and status assignments, the social uses of artworks, the sociality of aesthetic experience and many others. By contrast, a sociology of organizing arts investigates the structuration of various activities and interrelations between institutional actors, the prefiguration of artistic, organizational and consummatory practices, the role of collective cognitive patterns in meaning-giving, issues of power and domination, and other similar topics.

The semantic complexity increases when we observe how the academic community develops different definitions of art sociology. For instance, Eduardo de la Fuente (2007, 416f.) argues that art sociology deals with "art as art" instead of focusing on the conditions of art production, distribution and consumption. Consequently, for de la Fuente, arts sociology does not treat artworks as objects and as social products but ascribes art agency, that is, the arts are able to affect us. He concludes that the relation between arts and the social

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should not be regarded as one-way but as a coproduction (2007, 418, with explicit reference to DeNora 2003, 37–39; see Rodríguez Morató 2023, 12ff.). One may agree or disagree with de la Fuente's interpretation of arts sociology in contrast to sociology of arts. From a linguistic point of view, the term *sociology of* gives primacy to the discipline of sociology, connoting one of its specific subdisciplines. The term arts sociology, similar to arts theory or art history, gives primacy to the subject of study and so connotes a specific sociological approach. Both terms therefore have a similar meaning, but a different connotation. In line with this linguistic distinction, we use the term sociology of arts when referring to sociological theories and the term arts sociology when referring to scholarly studies focusing on relations in arts and exclusively on artistic realms. De la Fuente (2007) criticizes the focus of sociology of arts on social frameworks as "a preference for studying the concrete networks of artistic production and consumption" (2007, 412) and an inclination toward socially organizational research in the sense of Howard Becker's (1982) art worlds. This is indeed at the core of our focus on the social organization of arts. And this is how this book differs from a book about art sociology.

Finally, we see similarities to our approach in Victoria D. Alexander and Ann Bowler's (2014) editorial article on "Art at the Crossroads: The Arts in Society and the Sociology of Art." They caution against ignoring the challenges of "the increasing dominance of neoliberal models of institutional and organizational success" in arts (2014, 1). Of the challenges they discuss, we will address at least half of them as topics for a sociology of the social organization of arts. First, the marginalization of arts comes with the ongoing public consecration of the fine arts since "fine arts venues are still frequently seen as forbidding and intimidating to the uninitiated" (2014, 2). Although institutions of high culture are trying to shed this image, the historical distinction between fine and popular arts is still prevalent. Second, the markets of arts (here with explicit reference to the visual arts) are powerful organizational frames for the production, distribution, consumption and valorization of artworks. The price of an artwork becomes an accepted indicator of its artistic value, as studies of auction house sales prove. Furthermore, the digitalization of music markets by global streaming platforms acting as providers, has revolutionized the distribution and valorization of music works (2014, 5ff.). Third, state institutions through public authorities funding arts, are likewise important players in supporting, shaping and hindering art production. In some national markets, especially in continental Europe, the state context of public funding has a similarly strong heteronomous effect on artistic creation as market investments (2014, 8). Fourth, and finally, Alexander and Bowler (2014, 8ff.) propose a comprehensive study of arts institutions and organizations, which is also one of the core themes of this book.

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All of these programmatic articles about the sociology of arts point out differences between the sociological study of arts and the study of the social organization of arts. We consider this as encouragement to establish a theoretical foundation for the social organization of arts.

Challenges of an organizational sociology for explaining the social organization of arts

Organizational sociology is one of the most widely acknowledged and well-established subdisciplines of sociology. For more than seventy years, it has provided sociological knowledge to the larger field of organization studies, but at times it has also been seen as an indistinguishable addendum to a broader field of organizational studies that is otherwise dominated by business and management studies (Scott 2004). Indeed, many sociological organization studies deal with business-related issues of entrepreneurship and profitability (see Grothe-Hammer and Kohl 2020), although there are also narrower areas of research in the nonprofit and public sectors, mostly concerned with health, education and law. If at all, arts and culture are of very peripheral interest in this field. Nonetheless, two theories that dominate organizational sociology today, Neo-Institutionalism and Network Theory (2020, 432), have found their way into our reflections on the social organization of arts. Arts as a subject of sociological organizational research have been largely associated with two names, Paul DiMaggio and Harrison White. The former used the fundamental sociological concept of the institution already in his early work in the mid-1970s, as White did with the concept of network in the mid-1960s, though in both cases full theoretical development happened later. Time and again, they are cited in the literature, DiMaggio (1991a) mainly for his neo-institutionalist text on the construction of the organizational field of art museums in the United States and Harrison and Cynthia White (1965) for their network analysis of the careers of French painters in the 19th century.[4] Outside these studies, organizational sociology has had little to say in research on the organization of arts. There are now some promising approaches that link aesthetics with entrepreneurship (e.g., Holm and Beyes 2022) or with everyday life in organizations (Ratiu 2017), but almost no research or publications explore the social organization

4 According to Google Scholar, DiMaggio (1991a) has been cited about 2,000 times. [https://nyuscholars.nyu.edu/en/publications/constructing-an-organizational-field-as-a-professional-project-th, access July 25, 2023] White and White (1965) has been cited about 1,000 times. [https://scholar.google.de/scholar?cites=5445217075418657900&as_sdt=2005&sciodt=0,5&hl=de, access July 25, 2023].

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of arts (the few exceptions will be discussed in chapters 7 and 10). The general dominance of the business-based orientation of organizational studies has also been criticized in the arts management literature (see DeVereaux 2019a). Julian Stahl and Martin Tröndle (2019), for instance, call for more and better innovative management concepts for the arts and not just the general management models having been taught since the 1950s. Instead they want "a management perspective that is empirically grounded in artistic practice … [and the integration of] more perspectives than just business administration" (2019, 251). The field of organizational studies may now be shifting its attention away from concerns with rational efficiency and business logic. However, Michael Grothe-Hammer and Sebastian Kohl (2020) are doubtful that this will be of any use for the study of the social organization of arts, since the great majority of organizational scholars remain focused on firms as their major research subject.

4 Overview

Chapter 2, Art Worlds as Collectives, draws on the work of Howard S. Becker, who argued that the social organization of arts is the result of collective action. Behind every artist there are various interacting collectives that participate in the creation, distribution, reception/consumption and (e)valuation of artistic processes and their outcomes. Collective action presupposes some shared conventions and knowing the most relevant conventions and rituals in particular art worlds is a precondition for participation. Becker's approach to the topic integrates the sociology of occupations, the sociology of knowledge and organizational sociology into the sociology of arts. Becker, in his later years, extended his focus to include a sociological perspective on artworks and creative processes into his interactionist account. By doing so, he offers an illuminating understanding of the social life of artworks.

Chapter 3, Fields of Cultural Production, presents Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of how contemporary Western societies organize artistic practices. His view is expressed by the metaphor of a *field of forces*, the relational arrangements of social positions, resources and dispositions that are associated with concepts of social power and domination. Bourdieu investigates the historical formation of the artistic field, its internal differentiation and intersection with other social fields. The picture he draws is one of constant conflicts and battles between antagonistic positions. Individuals acting in this field of practice are neither free actors nor passive elements. They rely on their habitual beliefs and take certain risks according to their practical sense and their alliances in a given situation.

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Social order and change are not seen as contradictions, but rather as the two sides of the same coin.

Chapter 4, Art as a Social System, deals with Niklas Luhmann, whose works were read in the 1980s in many European countries, but remain largely unknown to sociologists outside Europe. Rooted in systems theory, Luhmann investigates the formation of art and argues that the main difference between premodern and modern times is the self-determination and self-reference of art. This development goes hand in hand with the emergence of an art system that operates in an autopoietic, that is, self-referential way. The underlying idea is that modern societies allow social orders to emerge from established boundaries between different social systems based on a functional differentiation. Binary logics like belonging/not-belonging, fitting/not-fitting indicate the answer to the question, What is art? Contingency, or the unpredictability of artistic developments, is a characteristic feature of the social organization of arts.

Chapter 5 compares the sociological models offered by Howard S. Becker (art worlds), Pierre Bourdieu (art fields), and Niklas Luhmann (art system). Though most sociologists emphasize the differences between the three theories, there are also important commonalities. All are contextualists, presuppose social differentiation, consider distinctions and boundaries between belonging and not-belonging, inner and outer spaces as pivotal, but pay little attention to artistic materials and technologies. Yet it is correct to underline the significant differences that emerge from their general social-theoretical understandings – and more specifically – of social relations in organizational arrangements in arts. Consequently, they have developed very different ideas about artistic autonomy and domination, about social structure and contingency, evaluative regimes and artistic change.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the Production of Culture Perspective, including works of its prime initiator, Richard Peterson, as well as those of other to him connected sociologists. They understand arts as the outcome of various interrelated activities in which intermediaries play a significant part. Their mediations between the microlevel (artistic work) and the mesolevel (organizations, markets) impose a significant mark on cultural production and consumption. Yet all activities and mediations are framed by further conditions at the macrolevel, such as policies, economic and industrial structures, technology and occupational roles. The empirical character of its research makes the Production of Culture Perspective a middle-range theory. These sociological works have introduced new topics into the discussion of social order and change.

Chapter 7 presents Sociological Neo-Institutionalism. The key term institution refers to explicit norms and implicit rules, taken-for-granted beliefs and widespread cognitive patterns, which together make social situations and be-

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havior intelligible. The emphasis on the cultural explanation of social order goes against universal concepts like rationality, functionality or social structure. Neo-Institutionalists pay close attention to organizations, small and large, for-profit and not-for-profit, public and private. In their research, three key concepts have emerged, isomorphism, or the tendency of organizational adaptation; legitimacy, or the pursuit of social acceptance; and institutional decoupling, that is, organizations tend to officially obey formal rules, but in fact pursue informal conduct to allow for greater operational flexibility. These concepts have become key to the sociology of organizations.

Chapter 8 introduces the Cultural Institutions Studies, an interdisciplinary approach mainly known in German-speaking countries. Scholars associated with this approach are not only sociologists, some are economists or scholars studying business, others are pragmatist philosophers. They combine sociological perspectives with cultural economics, institutionalism and practice theory. Practices as observable units of analysis are combined with the concept of institutions to explore the social organization of arts. The integration of research from economics and business studies plays a pivotal role, for example, in the investigation of the transformation of cultural goods into commodities, the analysis of the role of public funding arts or the development of music industries. Additionally, Cultural Institutions Studies gives attention to the role of arts managers and arts organizations in establishing regimes of competence and steering (e)valuation processes.

Chapter 9 offers a comparative discussion of the Production of Culture Perspective, the Sociological Neo-Institutionalism, and the Cultural Institutions Studies. These approaches are represented by many scholars, a selection of which appear in our discussion. All three approaches seek interdisciplinary dialogue to increase the complexity of sociological analysis. They are middle-range in scope and generally reject methodological individualism. They focus explicitly on arts organizations while emphasizing the role of their environments. The comparison highlights two particular topics: their specific understanding of contextual relations and their discussion of mediation. For the last topic, we chose the Cultural Diamond (Griswold 2004 [1994]) as an analytical tool. Finally, our comparison shows that these three middle-range approaches are compatible and can build theoretical alliances.

Chapter 10, the last chapter in this compendium, refers to Social Network Theory and semantic network analysis, since we believe that the sociological concept of network can be a bridging concept for advancing theoretical work on the social organization of arts. Social networks are temporary and fragile products of social connectivity and embeddedness as well as sites of communication, coordination and flexible adjustments to social environments. Social network

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theories aim at explaining organizational hybridity and the contingence of social events. Semantic network analysis complements this goal by interpreting meaning-giving as a relational process incorporated into networks. The final part of this chapter then formulates a conclusion about the theoretical scaffolding of the social organization of arts and offers the reader with some general reflections about future advancements on the key topics of this book.

All the theories and perspectives discussed in this book are inherently critical in questioning the formation of existing orders and normative categories in organizing arts. However, some of them do not explicitly criticize the negative effects of social orders and disorders. All in all, the idea formulated by scholars of the Frankfurt School that culture is used as a system of control, has not been integrated into the majority of the post-1970 theories discussed here. Some might interpret this as an omission., but we believe that most of the theories we discuss in this book regard the relation between arts and society as too complex, contextual, ambivalent and heterogeneous to hold them to a possibly justified, but also normative directive.

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PART I

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Chapter 2 | Art Worlds as Collectives

In 1982, Howard S. Becker (1928–2023) authored *Art Worlds*, one of the most influential books in the sociology of organizing arts. He was born in Chicago, where he grew up in a well-off, liberal middle-class family. Becker studied and graduated from the University of Chicago, home to John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, William Isaac Thomas, Ernest Watson Burgess, Robert Ezra Park, Everett Cherrington Hughes and Herbert Blumer, who directly or indirectly contributed to the establishment of the so-called Chicago School of Sociology (see Becker 1999; Plummer 2003). Without doubt, Becker belongs to this tradition, but his sociological foundations, which can be labeled as pragmatist, might not only have been influenced by his academic career. Apart from being a sociologist studying social interactions, collaborations and conventions in art worlds, he was also a jazz musician who played piano in Chicago bars – Lennie Tristano was one of his teachers and mentors (see Becker 1990, 498). His own artistic engagement offered him insights that significantly enriched his sociological understanding of arts, as the following quotation illustrates:

> Maybe the years I spent playing the piano in taverns in Chicago and elsewhere led me to believe that the people who did that mundane work were as important to an understanding of art as the better-known players who produced the recognized classics of jazz. Growing up in Chicago … may have led me to think that the craftsmen who help make art works are as important as the people who conceive them.... Learning the "Chicago tradition" of sociology from Everett C. Hughes and Herbert Blumer surely led to a skepticism about conventional definitions of the objects of sociological study. (Becker 1982, ix)

Becker studied arts from a symbolic interactionist point of view, meaning he focused on the interactions of people and their negotiated outcomes. In that sense, artists and the people and organizations who support them are equally agents in their art worlds. Mutual understanding and the capacity to cooperate amid a social group (team, network, collective) have been important character-

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istics in all of Becker's work for more than seventy years. Both, mutual understanding and cooperation, are possible on the basis of shared conventions.

1 An introduction to Becker's thinking

Becker looks at social behavior from a non-normative viewpoint and approaches social phenomena from a very pragmatic perspective. For him, the core academic method of a sociologist is fieldwork, doing research in real environments, gathering data through observation and interviews and then telling stories about it. The observability of the research objects is assumed, and Becker rejects ideas of "deeper" or "hidden" structures as misleading (Becker and Pessin 2006, 285; Hughes 2015, 776). During his formative years in sociology, Becker took an equally critical stance toward purely quantitative and deductive theoretical approaches. Consequently, he has always been skeptical about abstractions and causal explanations. Instead he practices open and explorative approaches like Glaser and Strauss's Grounded Theory (see Strauss and Corbin 1997) and has great expertise in qualitative data gathering and data analysis (see, e.g., Becker 1970).

In one of his early publications in 1953, Becker writes about "becoming a marijuana user" without once interpreting this as "deviant behavior." The same is true for studying artistic activities. Becker (1982, 151) notes that sociologists need to not "decide who is entitled to label things art ... [they] need only observe." He deliberately avoids any aesthetic judgment concerning arts and nonarts or the artistic quality of an artwork. Similarly, from his perspective, there is no such thing as deviant artistic behavior – every artistic behavior can be accepted by at least one art world, if not several. Individuals who follow divergent artistic paths will succeed if they find other artists who will follow them and create their own art worlds together. The appreciation of any art, even the most unusual or eccentric, "stems from their being recognized by the other participants in the cooperative activities through which that world's work are produced and consumed as the people entitled to do that" (Becker 1982, 151; see Lena 2019). Therefore, a first and basic meaning of the term art world is a "network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for" (Becker 1982, x).[1] It is worth noting that Becker uses the plu-

1 Bruno Latour would have suggested adding nonhuman actants to this network. In a later interview, Becker expresses great sympathy for Latour's emphasis on the role of nonhuman entities (see Plummer 2003).

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ral term art worlds for his book published in 1982. This implies diversity among working relations, collaborations, conventions and evaluative standards as well as types of artists, or "modes of being oriented to an art world," as Becker (1982, 371) puts it.

This conception of many coexisting fragmented art worlds also reflects his understanding of sociology as an academic discipline. Becker has always viewed powerful organizations like the American Sociological Association critically, "I'd hate to live and see the time when any organization could speak for all of sociology" (Becker 1976, 43; cited in Danko 2015, 36). This statement is relevant to an understanding of his clashes with other schools within the sociology of arts.

When Becker developed his concept of art world in the 1970s, he was departing from two distinct sources: one was the concept of *social world* that was derived from Alfred Schutz (1967 [1932]) and was later further expanded to become one of the basic concepts of the Chicago School of Sociology (see Strauss 1978). The second source is Arthur Danto, a philosopher who used the term artworld (in the singular), arguing that contemporary artworks are not always immediately recognized as art because they break certain basic conventions. "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (Danto 1964, 580). Becker (1982, 156) appropriated Danto's thesis that art worlds ratify objects and performances as art. However, as Danto did not elaborate his concept of an art world any further, we view Becker's conception as a genuine theoretical contribution. Becker (2014, 170) explicitly refers to the so-called labeling approach that he developed in *Outsiders* (1963, 9): "The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label." Accordingly, he argues that the attribution of the label art to an object or performance means acknowledging membership in an art world. Therefore, art is something people do together; it is the outcome of collective action.

Being an artist goes along with participation in art worlds. The entitlement of creating art and the appreciation of artistic output by peers and consumers is based on consent for and acknowledgment of an activity as art. People's actions and judgments only have a situational validity since, as Becker insists, there are many different art worlds. Each one is based on the consensus of at least a few people who cooperate to realize concrete projects on the basis of specific conventions and shared identities. Cooperation is a keyword. Becker also speaks of "joint action" (1974, 767) and "collective activities" (1982, 1), and states that "collective actions and the events they produce are the basic unit of sociological analysis" (1982, 370; see Blumer's 1986 [1969], 16–20 analysis of joint action).

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A second and broader meaning of art worlds is the social, institutional and material sites of artistic production. Becker does not make this explicit – perhaps because he primarily focuses on interacting networks. Yet the chapters in his book *Art Worlds* include markets, cultural policies, funding structures and art criticism as parts of art worlds, thereby suggesting this broader aggregated meaning. In the last pages of his book, Becker emphasizes the importance of "a general approach to the analysis of social organization [of arts]" (Becker 1982, 369). From this perspective, Becker regards himself as an "unwilling organizational theorist" (Becker, quoted in Hughes 2015, 770).

2 The condition of cooperation in the creation of art

Howard Becker begins *Art Worlds* (1982) in a way that clearly identifies him as a representative of Symbolic Interactionism. This sociological paradigm emphasizes that an individual is the product of a cooperative community while the community is the product of many interacting individuals who consent on certain issues. Their reciprocal cooperation enables agreement on assignment, appreciation and evaluation of certain objects and activities. From this perspective, ascriptions like, This is an artwork, or judgments like, This is a good work are not subjective, but rather intersubjective cooperative outcomes (see Farrell 2001).

The central concepts of collective action (Becker 1974) and collective activity (Becker 1982) address the social division of labor, the problem of social coordination and the interrelationship of different actions. Wider forms of social action emerge when actions by various participants with different motives and competences are interlinked. Thus, Becker defines art as the result of collective action by participants of art worlds. He refers not only to the creative process, but also to all activities, including production, editing, publication, marketing, distribution, evaluation, reception, archiving and the preservation of artistic work. Interactions within these collective activities constitute the focus of Becker's analysis.

Becker (2006) illustrates collective activities in music as constructive cooperation that includes negotiating conventions in the process of making music from the first notes to public performance. Indeed, the whole process from composing, finishing the musical score to rehearsals and performance of a piece of music at a concert hall is a complex process that includes myriad social interactions and cooperation at several levels. To be more precise, music presupposes a musical tradition since there is no musical practice from nothing. People need to invent, build and maintain musical instruments, and also to train

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others how to use them. In literary cultures musicians have invented and continue to invent elaborate musical notations (while in nonliterary cultures music is passed on orally). Music must be composed, properly noted, copied and distributed – and musicians must learn this notation and practice the musical performance. Rehearsals depend on the provision of finances, appropriate venues, times and technological means. Marketing and advertising must be targeted at an audience with certain cultural interests and competences in receiving and appreciating this kind of music, and concert tickets must be sold. These preconditions can be applied, with variations, to almost all arts. Evidently, many different people are needed, people who have a creative idea, people who can help realize the creative idea (as music, a film, a book, a dance or any other medium); people who facilitate artistic practice (producers of artistic materials and instruments, technicians, workers), people who facilitate financing and distribution (agents, legal advisers, managers, accounting personnel, advertising people), people who elaborate the symbolic value of artworks (journalists, critics, academic scholars) and finally an audience, which is ideally competent at creative interpretation, aesthetic appreciation and discussion. Wide cultural interest, sources of inspiration and public deliberation presuppose sufficient financial resources, leisure time, cultural education and a politically liberal atmosphere. Although the configuration of such activities certainly varies from one art form to another, Becker's generalized argument is simple: all of these varied activities and social conditions are necessary for arts. Arts are the outcome of collective actions (Becker 1974). The same holds true for arts organizations, which are the outcome of collective activities.

It takes many people to create cultural products, communicate them, secure audiences and facilitate the appreciation and ascription of value. Extensive participation and the complex coordination of many people in art worlds demand rules of communication and interaction. Becker uses here (with reference to David Lewis, 1969) the term conventions. Conventions are not prescribed by authorities, rather they result from practice-based coordination and negotiation, and they become widely accepted when they appear beneficial or meaningful for most practitioners.

Cooperation between members of an art world is necessary in order to organize the complex projects of production, distribution and consumption of art. At all levels, there is the need for finding and stabilizing artistic and action-related criteria. The artistic evaluation is a result of interactions between the members of an art world. Think of a team of people who together produce a movie. Let us assume that they share the same artistic judgment about the movie with relevant critics and distributors. Before releasing the movie, they may sample the aesthetic judgments of consumers or their peers in the film in-

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dustry. If the results are strongly negative and show that the projected audience will not appreciate the movie's artistic value, it may be returned to the screenwriter and artistic director for improvement until the three levels of production, distribution and consumption agree on its artistic value and appropriateness (Becker 1982, 192ff.; see also figure 1 below). At all three stages, we can identify certain people who have a stronger say in the matter, so-called opinion leaders or gatekeepers who open the gate for an artwork or close it from the next step in the process of production, distribution or consumption. As a rule, gatekeepers have the power to influence careers and reputations since "judgments about what constitutes great or important art are affected by the operations of distribution systems, with all their built-in professional biases" (Becker 1986, 72). However, Becker rejects notions of determination and ascribes efficacy to the members of the art world – in other words, they have the capability to negotiate with gatekeepers and persuade them or circumvent their instructions, break agreements, and so on. Processes in art worlds remain fluid, dynamic and undoubtedly somewhat contingent.

The appreciation of an artwork can be best described as a feedback loop of different claims and objections, with the artistic and monetary value of an artwork developing in a communicative process between various actors involved. This process is takes place in relationships between art producers and art distributors, between art distributors and art consumers, and sometimes directly between art producers and art consumers.[2] It is an iterative process of negotiation with the aim of enhancing the quality and increasing the value of an artwork for art producers, distributors and consumers (Becker 1982, 201). The following is our graphic interpretation of this interaction model (fig. 1).

The focus on such continuous negotiations is typical for the sociological paradigm of Symbolic Interactionism. Becker (1982, 202) notes that many artists "often take into account the way other members of the art world will react to what they decide." Finally, artists have an accurate feeling about the reactions of others since they share the same conventions. From this perspective, Becker believes that art worlds are constituted by "well-socialized members of society" (1982, 46). Socialization implies familiarity, embodiment and routinization (1982, 203); as a result, artists "experience conventional knowledge as a

2 Although Becker highlights the production process, he is aware of the importance of consumption. "The consumers of the work also share in its production. The work has no effect unless people see it or hear it or read it and they do that in various ways, again depending on the social organization of the world in which the work is made" (Becker 2006, 24).

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resource" that enables them to make appropriate choices (1982, 204). Conventions are therefore not the rule of the most powerful, but the result of shared learning processes, shared practices and negotiations among people who participate equally in an art world.

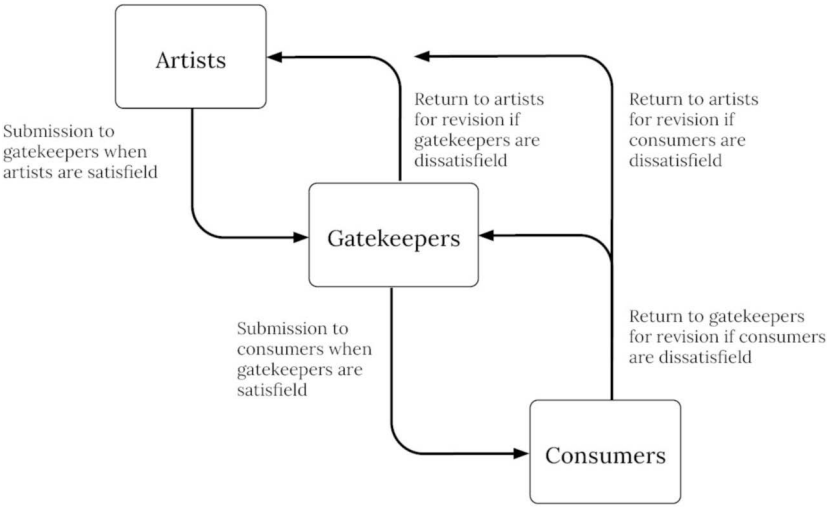

Figure 1: *Flow Chart of Interactions during the Formation of Arts. Image by the authors.*

3 Conventions as outcomes of collective actions

Conventions as a sensitizing concept indicate routines, patterns of action and evaluating criteria that are taken for granted and enjoy broad acceptance in, at least, one art world. Becker (1974, 771) understands this term as "being interchangeable with such familiar sociological ideas as norm, rule, shared understanding, custom or folkway, all referring in one way or another to the ideas and understandings people hold in common and through which they effect cooperative activity." For him, conventions fulfill practical needs by creating shared understandings, facilitating coordination, shaping expectations and reducing friction (see also Becker's reference to Lewis, 1969, in Becker, 1982, 55).[3] Fur-

3 David Lewis uses the term conventions (for a definition, see Lewis 1969, 78) to explain linguistic communication. The claim that linguistic understanding and

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thermore, conventions are central to the organization of activities and establish regularities that evoke a certain stability – for instance to the world of classical music (Becker, 1995, 301). Although conventions correspond to "ranked statuses, [and] a stratification system" (Becker 1974, 774), they do not represent structures that determine actions. For Becker (2006, 23), people are generally free to break conventions, choose among alternative ones or reinterpret their meaning. Furthermore, conventions change as the conditions of cooperative activities change (Becker 1982, 59). Therefore, Becker's use of conventions to explain collective action is not a structuralist one.[4]

The complex cooperation within art worlds and between different social worlds – that is, between artists, distributors and the audience – requires conventions.[5] Such conventions are not constantly rebalanced and redefined in every production, exhibition or performance, but are based at least to a large extent on routines that were already pre-established in these contexts and are backed by institutions. Such conventions are not only customary, but also taken for granted, since many have become so familiar that they are no longer consciously adhered to.

Successful art worlds that organize the production and distribution of art are thus based on shared conventions. "Only because artist and audience share knowledge of and experience with the conventions invoked does the artwork produce an emotional effect" (Becker 1982, 30). So sometimes, a famous pop musician merely names one of their titles in a concert and the listeners react emotionally, even before the first note, and can sing along at the same time. Artists take advantage of the audience's expectations and can sometimes also consciously break them. Think for instance of John Cage's composition 4'33" in 1952, which provokes by performing 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence while

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exchange is based on conventions (see Wittgenstein 1999 [1953], §355) goes against the idea that language is either natural or rational (based on explicit agreements), but underlines its contingency (see Shusterman 1986, 45f.).

4 The same goes also for the Neo-Institutionalists or the French scholars who developed the sociology of conventions. They argue that conventions inform and constrain actions, but do not determine them. These sociological theories thus overcome the dualism of structure and agency (see Biggart and Beamish 2003, 455–457).

5 Musical notation systems – whether the diatonic or the chromatic seven-step scale or the twelve-tone system – and the way musicians read them when they play are simply conventions. Similarly, a naturalistic painting, an impressionist, a cubist painting or an abstract informal painting differ since they are based on different painting conventions. Different conventions have a strong influence both on the creation of artworks and on the expectations and preferences of the audience.

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the musician behaves according to the typical conventions of a classical concert or of Peter Handke's play *Offending the Audience* in 1966, which – by rejecting all expectations of a theatrical play – make the audience aware of their taking-for-granted thinking about what a play should be and thereby question these assumptions.

Coordination and cooperation imply constant friction and harmony, arguments and negotiations of standards, conflicting choices and social relationships. Participants in art worlds may not always share the same understanding of particular conventions. When practical disagreements occur, people negotiate their practical approaches – practical in the sense that disagreements are not abstract or theoretical, but are generally related to immediate actions. Therefore, social action is continually changing. Yet change is not democratic in the sense that all participants have an equal voice, and some participants are more persuasive than others. People with greater control over crucial resources can, to an extent and under certain conditions, prevail. However, this aspect of power relationships amid effective norms remains rather underexplored in Becker's work.

4 Division of labor in art worlds

"Art worlds consist of all people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world and perhaps others as well, define as art" (Becker 1982, 34).[6] In any art world, there is a division of labor since any practitioner (e.g., an artist) depends to some degree on the contributions of others. As already mentioned, art worlds are interdisciplinary, that is, they integrate the work and competence of many different professionals: artists, producers of artistic materials and instruments, technicians, workers, agents, lawyers, managers, accountants, advertising people, journalists and so on. For Becker, all these people are equally important since the accomplishment of complex projects depends on their contribution. "Art is not an individual product" (Becker et al. 2006, 2). Becker's sociological approach goes against the traditional individualistic approach that focuses on the role of individual artists – often using the mystifying figure of a *genius* or the glamorous metaphor of a *star* – while neglecting social embedding and the cooperative conditions of

6 There are similarities between Howard Becker's (1982) art worlds and Etienne Wenger's (1998) communities of practice, but these have not yet been systematically explored.

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artistic work. From this perspective, Becker (1982, 194) argues that "it is not unreasonable to say that it is the art world, rather than the individual artist, which makes the work."

The division of labor between members of art worlds – for example, creators and distributors –, is not natural or rational, but rather conventional. Roles and tasks result from negotiations, long-term social interactions and existing institutions (e.g., professional training and specialization). The higher status people, the core personnel (mostly the artists), hand over the more laborious and routine work to lower status people, the support personnel (mostly craftspeople or technicians). This does not mean, however, that the higher status artists are independent of the support personnel (as can be seen from the occasional strikes in Hollywood or trade union negotiations at city theaters). A painter cannot easily do without craftspeople for frames, canvases, brushes and colors, or without art dealers, curators and art critics to make their works known. In other words, an artist would not need support personnel if, and only if, the social organization of arts was radically different than it is in our times. Moreover, in a very fundamental sense, no artist would exist without an audience – to be is to be perceived (*esse est percipi*, as the Irish philosopher George Berkeley put it). The social existence of artworks depends upon whether they are perceived or not (Becker et al. 2006, 5).

Art worlds are complex networks of cooperating groups, and the relationship between artists and non-artists varies according to the specific project, the art form, institutional arrangements, general budget and particular economic interests, etc. In their creative activities, artists – Becker (1976, 43–54) distinguishes between different types of artists, for example, integrated professionals, mavericks, naïve and folk artists – are dependent on other members. However, they may not have the same aesthetic, financial and professional interests. Some orchestra players, for example, may be more interested in their own performance and attracting individual attention, than in the success of the orchestra as a whole. This even extends to sabotaging an artwork if the artistic personnel think it could harm them personally. Another example from Becker (1982, 68f.) is the collaboration of an artist with printing craftspeople who are specialists in lithography. If the artist wants to have what would otherwise be accidental printing errors on the prints, the lithographers may decline to follow the instructions because they want to protect their reputation as professionals. Here conventions of artists (core personnel) and craftspeople (support personnel) collide. We could add more examples of conflictual situations when artistic interests and economic interests stand in opposition, and the people involved fail to find a viable agreement.

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5 Art worlds as a holistic approach

Art needs networks, and in order to network people need to communicate and cooperate in collectives. Without shared conventions of social exchange and artistic practice, cooperation would be highly unlikely. Therefore, without an agreement on conventions, which is mostly tacit, there would be no art worlds and no art. This is the main argument in Becker's *Art Worlds*.

We believe Becker has a holistic approach to arts. He uses analytical categories like production, editing, distribution, marketing, evaluation, archiving, artists, support personnel, experts and audiences, yet he emphasizes the interrelation and interdependence of all of these categories. Furthermore, since he discusses permanent adjustments, variations and changes in collaborative situations, practices, evaluative standards and organizational settings, his conception of art worlds is dynamic. Consequently, ontologically speaking, artworks do not exist as stable entities but are in a continuous process of (re-)actualization and becoming (Becker 2006, 22f.). Becker does not overlook the existence of asymmetrical dependencies and power relationships, yet he rejects the idea of determination. He emphasizes that art worlds are in a constant drift and borrows the conceptual distinction made by Thomas S. Kuhn (1962) between incremental and revolutionary changes to distinguish between changes that question dominant ways of organizing cooperative activities, from profound changes that have a transformative impact on central (though perhaps not all) conventions and institutions with the effect that new art worlds emerge (Becker 1982, 301ff.).

An art world does not appear suddenly – rather it is a slowly structuring network of people, with successively adapting attitudes and practices, for example, of ideas of what art is. Becker avoids defining the term art and instead uses a definition that is as broad as possible, even if it entails circular reasoning. He deliberately does not distinguish between popular and high culture.

6 Extension of the art worlds perspective: the sociological focus on artworks

From the late 1990s, Becker became more interested in the sociology of the artwork, which we regard as an extension of his concept of art worlds. Questions about the conditions of artistic work (networks, conventions, career paths) moved into the background and Becker started focusing on the artistic creative process. At the center of his sociological research were now questions like, How will you know when the piece I've watched you working on is done?

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and What will you do with it now that it's done? To answer such questions, he collaborated with some of his close colleagues and artist friends, among them Robert R. Faulkner, Richard Caves and Pierre-Michel Menger. This collaboration resulted in the anthology *Art from Start to Finish* (Becker et al. 2006), and its first chapter was entitled *The Work Itself* (Becker 2006). The qualifier *itself* indicates that sociologists should not interpret an artwork as a signifier for a specific meaning (e.g., as a reflection of social conditions or social structures), but should rather look at the work "for what it is just by existing" (Becker 2006, 21). Furthermore, *itself* should not be understood as an essentialist approach since Becker (2006, 22f.; see Danko 2015, 107f.) explicitly criticizes the idea of artwork as an autonomous entity. Instead, he acknowledges that artworks have a social life, that is, their individual use, meaning and value change. Distributors may promote them, but if the public (experts and audiences) loose interest in an artwork, then it dies and its social existence comes to an end. In all these phases, the quality and intensity of public interest may vary. There might be an emotional welcome, a bored or recalcitrant admission or a flat rejection (Becker et al. 2006, 5). The central question for Becker is the duration or stability of an artwork over time.[7]

A musicologist typically studies music pieces, the contexts of their creation and reception, and an art historian analyzes paintings or sculptures, their formal properties, references, allusions, artistic impact and so on. However, what is the object of an art sociologist? Sociologists mostly distance themselves from artworks and related aesthetic theories, and only look at the social contexts of production, distribution, valuation and reception or consumption of artworks. They focus on power relationships or on the social condition of artists, or they analyze institutional settings and their effects on arts – but they have rarely tried to investigate the work itself. In the introduction to their anthology, Becker, Faulkner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006) point out that they neither start with one theory (not even the art world concept), nor with a specific methodology of thinking (not even an interactionist position) to answer these questions. They let artists and art sociologists think about it in a transdisciplinary manner.

Becker et al. agree on the statement that social science *can* investigate the social life of artworks:

> The focus remains on the artwork and the people who create, distribute and consume this artwork (2006, 3). If the artwork is the product of collective cooperation, if the creation of an artwork is an interactive process

7 See Lena and Peterson (2008), who explored the concept of trajectories of music genres.

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> of materials and people [Becker et al. evoke Latour's *actant* concept here], then the question remains, when is the artwork finished? What conditions must be fulfilled (and for whom?) to decide when an artwork is done? Thus, many ideas e.g., about a finished artwork are elusive (2006, 4ff.).

Although a sociologist does not need profound knowledge of art, it is nevertheless helpful to know more about it than a regular consumer. Furthermore, an important part of the methodology to conduct a sociology of the artwork is the sampling of cases to be studied. Becker et al. (2006, 13ff.) prefer the method of contrast sampling, for instance, selecting an artwork from a painter, a theatrical production, a novel and a composition, thereby picking a highly structured artwork (e.g., a meticulously conceived novel) and a highly spontaneous artwork (e.g., action painting or improvised performances). The methodology of case studies touches upon the issue of generalization. If you have a number of independent cases, how can you generalize them? Becker et al. (2006, 16f.) are not looking for statements that are true for all films, sculptures, music or other art forms. They admit that they are very case-specific in their research choices, so any generalized statement from this research can be set aside because there may be other cases that prove the opposite. However, even when choosing highly specific cases, they look for the "underlying dimensions of artworks and their making" (2006, 17). In sociological research on artworks, particularity is the norm. One has to look for the *interesting* case that cannot be generalized, "to think against the grain, and to embrace the unpredictable" (2006,18). Conventionality is avoided for the purpose of being interesting – unfinished musical fragments in jazz are regarded as complete. A typical problem of musicians is, What shall we play now? (2006, xxx) The answer may vary, as jazz musicians have standard tunes, classical musicians have written scores, but *mbira* players in Zimbabwe have no such collection of tunes and scores and thus improvise from beginning to end. Acknowledging the great variety of "musicking" (Small 1998) does not permit any form of generalization. By selecting very different artistic practices, sociologists are able to look for general topics. For instance, there is always the issue of getting things done in any artwork production, and Becker et al. (2006, 19) note "that most arts that have some history and some organization have conventional, if not traditional solutions to such problems." By comparing different cases, sociologists can discover various resemblances in the process of art-making, from having an idea to the accomplished finish of an artwork. The claim made by Becker et al. is that sociologists can overcome the particularity of a singular case by discovering resemblances and analogies to other cases that are also backed by further research and analyses.

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The principle of the fundamental indeterminacy of the artwork

The main argument for letting arts sociologists contribute to an analysis of an artwork is what Becker (2006, 22f.) calls the "principle of the fundamental indeterminacy of the Artwork." He derives this principle from his observation that no permanent artwork is itself a stable entity: "It is impossible, in principle for sociologists or anybody else to speak of the 'work itself' because there is no such a thing" (2006, 23). This anti-idealist and anti-platonic position can also be found in earlier publications by Becker (1974). First, there are no clear and distinct criteria for defining what is an artwork, and second "there are only the many occasions on which a work appears or is performed or read or viewed [and] each can be different from all the others" (Becker 2006, 23). "And works will be different for people with different ages, genders, classes, emotional states. The 'work itself' may not be different, but the work the viewer takes in may well be" (2006, 24).[8] A composer finishes a work, but the musicians who play this composer's work create a sonic interpretation of the score and consequently a different finished work.

In an audience each person has a specific aesthetic experience in the context of their own enculturation and situational mood (see DeNora 2000), and each person perceives and creates a different musical work. Becker's argument, to be clear, is neither derived from a subjectivist position (see Hume 1987 [1757]), nor from a particular semiotic theory (see Eco 1989 [1962]). The thrust of his argument is on the different occasions of the (re-)actualization and forms of engagement (variations in performance, different contexts of presentation, various experiential perspectives, and prefigurations of understanding) with artworks (see Dewey 1980 [1934]). Therefore, artworks are never the same, they vary and therefore they have plural modes of being. Still, people talk about artwork, and the question is how this paradox of indeterminacy and singularity can be solved. According to Becker (2006, 23), it is up to "competent members of an art world to decide when an artwork is the 'same' and when it is 'different'" (e.g., whether the release of a Hollywood film is satisfactory to the director or whether he insists on a director's cut). The central contribution of art sociology is to describe how many different "occasions on which a work appears" there are (2006, 23), and what the conventions are to increase or decrease the number of these various occasions (2006, 24).

8 Becker's distinction between the "work itself" and the work the viewer takes in is similar to the distinction in phenomenology between the material work of art and the mental object, the so-called aesthetic object (see Ingarden 1961).

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For a better understanding of Becker's viewpoint, we should note that most often he is implicitly or explicitly thinking of jazz musicians (see, e.g., 2006, 28). When a jazz band plays *Take Five* (composed by Paul Desmond), the musicians interpret the score in a distinct and creative way based on conventions of the jazz world (see 2006, 25). Their choices are finite, because they are usually made in routine ways or in the course of performing in a flow modus (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Therefore, the main task of sociologists of music (and this distinguishes them from musicologists and music critics) is to find what conventions or routines are used to define "focused meanings" (Becker 2006, 26). Conventions are not social constraints but are, from an interactionist perspective, the result of practical negotiations. The analysis of these conventions and how they limit the number of an artwork's meanings brings us back to the central theme of what the concept of art worlds represents.

7 Critique of Becker's art worlds

Becker's self-critique: skepticism of art worlds as collective entities

Characteristically, Becker often plays his own devil's advocate. While he insists in *Art Worlds* (1982) that art is always produced in collectives, he looked and found examples of lone artists – so-called outsider artists – doing art all by themselves. In particular, the amateur artist Simon Rodia (1879–1965), who created the *Watts Towers*, fascinated him. Rodia emigrated from Italy to North America at the age of 15, had no professional artistic training and worked all his life outside of any art world (e.g., as a miner, a tile maker). So without any training or membership in any art world, Rodia built his towers with his own hands. When he was later asked who his role models were, he looked up some artists, and only then compared himself to Antonio Gaudí, an architect of Catalan modernism, who planned the *Basìlica de la Sagrada Famìlia* in Barcelona (Becker 1990, 499). Only much later, critics and architects recognized these kinds of amateur activities as artworks (and were then able to safeguard the *Watts Towers* from the wrecking ball).

This example gave Becker cause to reflect on his central thesis of art as collective action. Obviously, some people work literally alone and isolated from any art worlds. We may call them artists, but this ascription is, according to Becker's interactionist perspective, only justified after there has been some recognition by significant others. The *Watts Towers* became artworks only *after* they had been attributed this status by a curator. Therefore, the case of outsiders does not necessarily contradict either Becker's central thesis on the necessity of art

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worlds or Becker's open and dynamic concept of artworks, since an artwork is not simply a material entity but includes processes of presentation, meaning-making, valuing, consuming, etc. From this perspective, an artwork has an ontological temporality and spatiality (see Becker et al. 2006, 6). Any conception of artworks that would deny the many different temporal and spatial contexts of its appearance would be essentialist and, oddly enough, asocial.

Becker's neglect of external social structures

Becker's emphasis on the agency of the members of an art world, on their ability to negotiate conventions and to experiment with new artistic means has been questioned by sociologists who underline the importance of power and dominance in social relations. For instance, the French sociologist Natalie Heinich (2000b, 161) criticized Becker for being too egalitarian and relativistic to the extent that he ignored the fact that "the singularity realm governs the domains of art in the modern era." For Heinich, Becker's perspective disregards the hierarchy of artistic values and the fight for recognition and higher social positions. Regarding social constraints, Robert Cluley (2012, 206ff.) refers to Richard Peterson and the Production of Culture Perspective (see chapter 6 in this book), but we also relate social constraints to Neo-Institutionalism (see chapter 7). Both underline that organizations form relatively stable units by establishing formal hierarchies and structuring decision-making processes. Furthermore, we extend this critical argument by referring to the influence of Michel Foucault's (1991a [1975]) works on "disciplinary power" – think of the effects of contracts, plans, timetables, organograms and other managerial actions – and "governmentality" (Foucault 1991b [1978]), which have had a strong influence on organizational sociology (see Mackinlay and Pezet 2019). To be clear, Becker does show "the constraints on action by highlighting the power of conventions and the limits to structures by highlighting how actors innovate around conventions" (Cluley 2012, 204), but the structural argument of the concept of governmentality goes deeper. Techniques of governing form the subjectivities – the desires, projects, commitments and emotions – of people involved in art worlds. Thus, the agency that Becker ascribes to the members of art worlds is constitutively prefigurated by transindividual structures.

Although Cluley (2012, 208f.) defends Becker's microsociological approach, he underlines the importance of language and the sociological analysis of language use. Language facilitates and enacts social structures (2012, 211) and specific language styles are practically effective in segregating insiders from outsiders of art worlds. "Language use does not just reflect the world. It reflects the position a speaker has taken to the world" (2012, 212). According to Cluley,

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the use of language shapes and defines art worlds. "Cultural texts allow people to interact and are produced by people interacting" (2012, 209). Consequently, studying art worlds should be completed by studying art words (2012, 214). "On this point, Becker does not offer us assistance but, as we shall see, methods developed in social psychology, organization theory and discourse analysis provide us with techniques that draw on structuration theory" (2012, 211).

Let us respond briefly to both critiques, governmentality and language use. Without doubt, issues of power have always been at the core of sociology of arts, and as Peter Martin (1995, 178) remarks, the art worlds' perspective "is in no way incompatible with a recognition of the centrality of power and coercion in shaping the social order." The Foucauldian perspective on power makes a strong claim: power is omnipresent, polymorph and penetrates every single moment and event in social life. However, the main argument of the art world perspective is that one cannot explain the social organization of arts entirely by deducing it from class structures, political and cultural power, economic interests or any other abstract term. Becker claims that organizational variation and contingence – or to put it on an epistemological level, questions about the social order – need to be answered empirically (see Martin 1995, 179). He pays attention to everyday practices and circumstances and does not think there are any hidden or mysterious forces steering social processes (Becker et al. 2006, 3).

The second point made by Cluley is related to the role of language in the social organization of art worlds. We do not regard Cluley's argument as a fundamental critique of Becker's approach since interactionist research does consider language and especially conversations in its analysis. Becker himself undertakes such an analysis for instance in *Outsiders* (1963), though less so in *Art Worlds* (1982) since in the latter he does not work with original empirical material. In *Outsiders*, Becker shows that language use not only confirms membership (speech communities are related to social communities), but also has an epistemic function. Conversations and the creation of particular symbolic expressions help people to make sense of their actions and social environment. However, in our opinion Cluley argues almost like a structuralist: "It is through language use that cultural producers draw limits to their art world.... The boundaries of art worlds are defined, therefore, by art words" (Cluley 2012, 213). He implicitly separates doings from sayings, giving language structural power. His theoretical position can be disputed: First, it seems to underestimate the role of tacit understandings. Second, doings may stand in significant tension to sayings since actors may deliberately say something but act differently. Third, Cluley seems to overlook the body and the embodied cognition of

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actors. Meaning-giving and boundary work are not solely linguistic acts, they are also corporeal acts.

The underexplored relationship between the inside and the outside of art worlds

Becker's interactionist approach toward art worlds overlooks first the specific problem of the self-referentiality of modern art, which began approximately in the first half of the 19th century, and second the self-creation, the autopoiesis, of the art system, as the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (2000a [1995]) phrases it (see chapter 4 in this book). In this theoretical context, Willem Schinkel (2010) states that, contrary to Becker's argument, the structuring of art worlds as local collaborative networks takes place clearly outside of these art worlds. Communication about art does not take place between artists alone, but through gatekeepers that are not necessarily insiders of a local art world, that is, art theorists and art critics, art dealers, curators and theater directors, to name just a few. While Schinkel criticizes Luhmann's operative closure (the splendid isolation of art systems), his critique is similarly applicable to Becker's art worlds.

Consequently, the valorization of art, at least to a certain extent, is not made by artists nor by art lovers but largely by economic forces and influential art market players, and artists then adjust to these decisions (allo-reference becomes self-reference) or not.[9] Yet communication about art is rarely communication that really concerns art itself. Frequently it is communication *around* art. Many contemporary artists are aware of this – that is why they often accentuate their lack of power to define art and reflect this contingency in their artworks (see Buchloh 1999; Bourriaud 2002) – and the crisis of art becomes a theme of art (Schinkel 2010, 278). The self-referentiality of art is thus engaged with *ad absurdum* by artists themselves, and external powers are included in the art worlds in order to preserve them. In other words, If you can't beat them, let them join you. The irony of the artists' powerlessness in the face of other socially more powerful subsystems (e.g., the economy) is taken up in contemporary art and made a theme by famous visual artists such as Judy Chicago, Hans

9 This hypothesis is examined by Alison Gerber (2017) in her fieldwork, in which she observed and interviewed more than sixty visual artists in their art-making and their oscillation between a love of art and the need to make a living. She discovered that the shift of valorization from aesthetic admiration to economic value has a fundamental effect on the process of artistic practice. Nevertheless, according to her analysis, most artists still make art because it matters so much to them – despite the at times overwhelming economization of art-making.

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Haacke and Barbara Kruger. The externalization of evaluating art has many dimensions. Schinkel believes that aesthetics is neglected in favor of content, and art becomes action art or conceptual art. The attributes of aesthetics are lost in the process of hyper-reflexivity; and the appreciation and valorization of art is replaced by an external indicator, its economic success. The market determines the value of art, and other factors become negligible (see Velthuis 2003, 2013). However, this thesis is contestable (see Klamer 1996, Heinich 2014, Buchholz 2022), and, frankly, valorization and markets are not at the core of Howard Becker's art sociological works.

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Chapter 3 | Fields of Cultural Production

Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) was born in southwest France into a lower middle-class family. After finishing secondary school, he gained a place at the École Normale Supérieure, one of the elite universities in Paris, to study philosophy. During the 1950s, the French intellectual scene was characterized by a confrontation between proponents of structuralism (the assumption of social determination through structures) and proponents of existentialism (the assumption of the possibility of free action) (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1967). Bourdieu's theoretical development opposed these two positions. He aimed at overcoming the opposition between determination and freedom, objectivism (the idea that objective structures shape individual action) and phenomenological or psychological subjectivism (the notion that subjective forces drive individual action). As a result of his profound critique of speculative thinking, soon after graduating with a degree in philosophy, Bourdieu moved to the social sciences. Yet in most of his works he continually returned to the philosophical and epistemological aspects of his research topics. This is one of the reasons why his work attracts the interest of scholars from many different academic disciplines, notably philosophers (e.g., Shusterman 1999; Schatzki 1997, 2018).

In the development of his social thought, Bourdieu found in the works of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Norbert Elias and above all Max Weber many ideas and theoretical concepts that inspired him to build his own social theory, with some of the major elements being the view of society as a complex configuration of social positions, resources and dispositions; a profoundly historical understanding of social development; the concept of domination and the reproduction of domination; the idea that power and capital are relational social resources; the correlation between social position and beliefs; the idea that meaning-giving is socially prestructured by a shared symbolic order and social practices; and the idea of the internal differentiation of modern societies. We consider his merit to be the development of a comprehensive social theory with significant political implications. In this chapter, we will focus on his analysis of cultural production.

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In his oeuvre, Pierre Bourdieu rarely dealt directly with organizational entities as such. Instead he focuses on the societal level, and we therefore view his approach to arts and culture as a rather macrosociological one. His major publication on this topic, *Distinction* (1984 [1979]), focuses primarily on Parisian cultural life and analyzes the social formation of aesthetic taste, cultural consumption and the social uses of aesthetic judgment as a marker of social position and belonging, in other words, as a means for social distinction. In his later works, above all in *The Rules of Art* (1996 [1992]), he focuses on the social organization of arts production and its historical development as a distinct and differentiated social field. In this particular book, Bourdieu investigates the field of 19th-century French literature, its internal structure and transformation. Other art forms, for example, painting, music, film and photography, are more or less touched upon and are used to explain his model of a fragmented artistic field structured by various artistic genres that are associated with different levels of legitimacy and public appreciation (see Bourdieu 1979; 1989).

1 The concept of field as a structural approach for analyzing cultural production

Bourdieu used the term field already in the 1960s (e.g., Bourdieu 1971a; 1971b [1966]), but first explained it more extensively in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993 [1983]), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (with Loic Wacquant, 1992), *The Rules of Art* (1996 [1992]) and his essay *Le Champ Économique* (1997a). The term field had first been introduced in sociology by Kurt Lewin (1951 [1942], 62), "to describe a situation 'objectively,' [and this] means to describe the situation as a totality of those facts and of only those facts that make up the field of the individual." The description and analysis of a social field is conditional on the presupposition "that there exists something like properties of the field as a whole, and that even macroscopic situations, covering hours or years, can be seen under certain circumstances as a unit" (1951, 63). Bourdieu (1971b, 161) clarifies his own specific concept of field with the analogy of being "like a magnetic field, made up of a system of power lines" and the metaphor of a "battlefield" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 17). For him, field analysis aims at revealing social relations structured by different social positions together with possessions of various forms of capital and practical dispositions. Consequently, he defines his concept of field as follows:

> The field is a network of objective relations (of domination or subordination, of complementarity or antagonism, etc.) between positions.... Each position is objectively defined by its objective relationship with other po-

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> sitions.... All positions depend in their very existence, and in the determinations they impose, on their occupants, on their actual and potential situation in the structure of the field – that is to say, in the structure and distribution of those kinds of capital (or of power) whose possession governs the obtaining of specific profits (such as literary prestige) put into play in the field. (Bourdieu 1996, 231; see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 94–115)

In Bourdieu's conception of the artistic field, the idea of artistic singularity, individuality and geniality is nothing but a myth and a (self-)promoting assertion. Artists are *a priori* embedded in an artistic field and therefore their artistic work is framed by the particular properties and dynamics of the (sub)field. Consequently, "the producer of the value of the work of art is not the artist but the field of production as a universe of belief which produces the value of the work of art as a fetish by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist" (Bourdieu 1996, 229). Furthermore, as a part of a broader social field, all artists are involved in, or at least affected by, social struggles as they strive to promote and advance their own artistic production, their cultural values and individual interests. Consequently, the social organization of artistic production is not the result of individual subjectivities and actions but of power relations, field positions and strategies. The sociology of arts as practiced by Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (1996) consists of a combination of a sociohistorical analysis of the development and internal differentiation of the field of cultural production and its relevant institutions, the establishment of shared convictions and evaluative criteria within the subfields, and an analysis of the social, material and cultural conditions of production, dissemination, reception and valuation of cultural goods. Overall, Bourdieu draws a relational model of social processes. While others prefer to speak of sectors, networks, art worlds or systems, Bourdieu uses the metaphor of field to highlight particular relations and mechanisms fed by power forces and struggles that determine the social inclusion or exclusion of actors (individuals and groups), their behavior and relationships to each other, the extent of the field and the degree of artistic autonomy "as if of a well-regulated ballet" (1996, 113).

2 The historical development of the artistic field: the antagonistic structure of art and money

Pierre Bourdieu took from Karl Marx the idea of a historical development of social structures as a way to understand certain trajectories, collective actions and beliefs as temporal social phenomena. In *The Rules of Arts*, Bourdieu (1996) investigates the transformation of the French literary field in the second half

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of the 19th century; he analyzes the emergence of the antagonistic structure of art, money and politics, and of a state of relative autonomy[1] for certain parts of cultural production. The French literary field at that time was going through a profound internal differentiation and transformation that led to a strengthening of its autonomy. An indication of this autonomy is the separation of artistic success from commercial success. Consequently, art and commerce became at least on a discursive level binary opposites (1996, 71ff., 121ff.).

By the mid-19th century, certain kinds of French theater literature were economically very profitable, and a small number of authors made considerable amounts of money. In contrast, poetry was the least well remunerated genre, and consequently poets received few if any financial benefits for their work (see figure 2 below). Bourdieu highlights the contradicting logics of aesthetic and economic valuation, as well as the tension between the demands of a growing mass public and certain groups of artists who refused to fulfill commercial expectations and instead attempted to retain their autonomy and dedication to purely artistic goals. Yet Bourdieu is not a thinker in the romantic tradition or an essentialist who advocates a superordinate and idealistic concept of art. He describes these tensions while acknowledging that the demonstrative rejection of commerce and profit by certain groups of artists could also be understood as a strategic action either for self-marketing or to advance their own hierarchical distinctions in the literary field. Surely, the high artistic reputation of poetry was inherited from the French romantic tradition and retained its prestige until the end of the 19th century. Poetry was read by well-educated people, and although there was only a small market for this art form, a few *stars* like Baudelaire (1821–1867) were successful in attracting many young and ambitious authors to this field. The self-distancing of poets from others was important to create distinction and visibility. On the bottom rung of aesthetic reputation was writing for the theater, especially the *comédie-vaudeville* or the *litérature industrielle* (a term coined by Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve around 1839). Commercially successful authors of this genre were not interested in distinguishing themselves from poets, not only because they were not competing with them, but also because they were in a position to fulfill their ambitions by selling their plays to theaters. Therefore, the strategy of distancing and polemic rhetoric was one-sided. Bourdieu does not speak of poetry and *comédie-vaudeville* as ideal types, but we believe that this Weberian term might be appropriate here since the empirical reality is more complex and encompasses mixed types.

1 The term relative autonomy, which implies only partial dependency, runs contrary to the idealistic assumption of total artistic freedom, as well as against the Marxist assumption that art is a reflection of society.

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In between these two poles – the writing of popular theater plays and that of technically complex poetry – were the novelists. The artistic reputation of novelists varied. On the one hand, there were the novels of Stendhal (1783–1842), Balzac (1799–1850) or Flaubert (1821–1880), which as a literary production were demanding and strengthened the symbolic status of novels as a sophisticated genre. On the other hand, there were novels that were easy to read, the so-called *feuilleton* novels published serially in journals; their authors and publishers paid more attention to the texts' commercial value and meeting the tastes of a broad audience.

Bourdieu generalizes his findings in a model structured by two prototypical principles of differentiation. On one side, there is a kind of commercially oriented art or *l'art industriel*. Monetary profits are related to the length of the production cycle, the quantity of consumers and the duration of the sales. In a few cases, commercially oriented cultural production can also gain symbolic (but not aesthetic) value when high entrance fees for attending a theater or a concert creates exclusivity for members of the upper classes. The number and, in particular, the social status of fellow consumers is therefore a relevant factor in pricing, as well as in attributing symbolic value to a particular cultural product. On the other side, there is a countermovement that claimed artistic autonomy from the influence of other social forces and developed as a specific subfield with a particular internal logic. Since this subfield sharply distinguishes itself from other fields of cultural production, it produces exclusion. Consequently, the internal recognition of an artwork increases when the audience is exclusive and aesthetically competent. Yet if an avant-garde production is accessed by a broader audience, it risks aesthetic devaluation and the artists risk becoming discredited in their artistic field because of their economic success. Therefore, as the social dispersion and breadth of audience increases, cultural credit and aesthetic status decreases. Moreover, as Bourdieu (1996, 116) points out, these aesthetic and cultural hierarchies also reflect the social hierarchies of a respective audience (see figure 2 below). The idea of cultural hierarchy – Bourdieu also uses the term taxonomy – had already been expressed in *Distinctions* (1984).

Further antagonism: the conflict between l'art pour l'art and l'art engagé

Bourdieu analyzes not only the tensions between commercially oriented and artistically oriented authors, but also other tensions within the literary field during the 1880s. His sociological interest in these conflicts relates to his interpretation of a field as a battlefield (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 17). In his view, social battles are not only unavoidable, but the motor of social transfor-

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mation.[2] Thus, in the *Rules of Art* he investigates the conflict between naturalism (e.g., Émile Zola) and symbolism (e.g., Stéphane Mallarmé). This conflict emerged from different aesthetic positions and value judgments, but also from different ideas and aesthetics about the role of literature in society. According to Bourdieu's analysis, by the end of the 19th century in France there were two independent, but hierarchically ordered principles of differentiation in this literary field.

1. One differentiation is between elite production with a strong consecration,[3] targeted at an autonomous expert audience (*art for art's sake* on the top left side of figure 2) and commercial production with weak specific consecration, targeted at a heteronomous mass audience (*industrial art* on the lower right side of figure 2).
2. The other kind of differentiation is between an older generation of producers and audiences with a general high reputation (*bourgeois art* on the upper right side of figure 2) and a younger generation of producers with a general low reputation (*bohemians* on the lower left side). This generational conflict is extended between the bohemian and the established avant-garde (e.g., *symbolists* and *parnassians* in the left box of figure 2) and has a commercial dimension since young producers with almost no audience tend to regard those with larger audiences as adapted to the mainstream and thus corrupted.

The naturalists were outside of the field of art for art's sake because they were following a different aspiration. Their aim was to use literature to stimulate social reform. They thus criticized the idea of art for art's sake in favor of a socially engaged art driven by ethics and political commitments. To be clear, the structure of the conflict between the avant-garde *théatre de l'oeuvre* (e.g., Felix Feneon, Louis Malaquin or Camille Mauclair, see Bourdieu 1996, 367 fn. 4) and the commercial *théatre de boulevard* (e.g., Charles Monselet and Eugene Scribe; see Bourdieu 1996, 97 and 363 fn. 93) differs clearly from the conflict between symbolists and naturalists (see 1996, 60ff., 117ff.).

2 "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx 1998 [1848], 35).

3 Bourdieu deliberately uses the term consecration, which derives from a theological discourse and the granting of sacred dignity to a person or a thing, to refer to the distinction between the profane and the sacred that goes back to Émile Durkheim (1995 [1912], 34f.).

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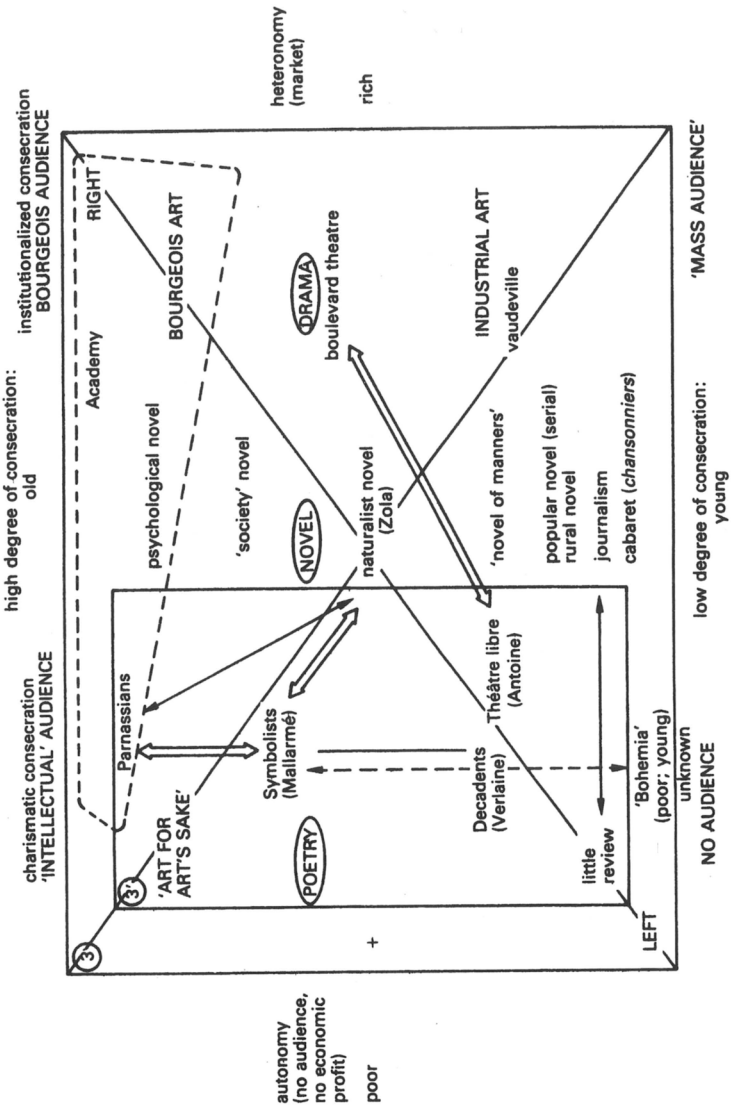

Figure 2: *The French Literary Field in the Second Half of 19th Century (cited in Bourdieu 1993 [1983], 49; see Bourdieu 1996, 122).*

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The former reflects the relationship between art and commerce, whereas the latter is ideological and refers to the role of arts in society and the relationship between the aesthetic and the political commitment of artists. Furthermore, the respective actors involved in the different conflicts occupied different social positions and were using different strategies to legitimize their production and, to some degree, were appealing to different audiences. It is thus possible to find structural similarities between different conflicts, as Bourdieu does, or elaborate their internal differences.

In poetry (see the left subfield of figure 2) Bourdieu further distinguishes between a younger bohemian and informal avant-garde with a lower degree of consecration (lower part of this subfield), and an older academic and formal avant-garde with a higher degree of consecration (upper part of this subfield). Both literary avant-garde groups have high degrees of cultural capital and low degrees of economic capital, but because they are interesting to different audiences and employ different generations of artists, they have different degrees of consecration (see also figure 3 below). This juxtaposition is not fixed over time; after a few years, writers of a younger generation who prefer something new and original to the old and outdated, appear again on the literary stage and renounce the old style of the now older generation by compromising the dominant order, usually with the argument that older art has allowed itself to be corrupted by economic success. These kinds of field dynamics can be found in many subfields of literature – Gisèle Sapiro (2004) further develops Bourdieu's analysis of the French literary field up to the 1970s to discuss the internal differentiation, transformation and fragmentation of the field. This fragmentation comes with a delusion of innovation and a conflicted understanding of the role of literature that leads to new splits fueled by self-proclaimed leaders. The rapid and ever faster succession of such cultural distinctions, however, made the subgroups increasingly weaker in terms of status. A further effect of this fragmentation of the literary field is the stabilization of the commercially affine practices of cultural production.

3 A general model of the structure of the field of cultural production

Bourdieu's analysis reveals similar divisions characterizing contemporary artistic fields (see Buchholz 2015; Prinz and Wuggenig 2012; Zahner 2006). However, such internal divisions and antagonisms are never carved in stone; over time they are dynamic, and internal divisions weaken and transform the structural antagonism in the artistic field.

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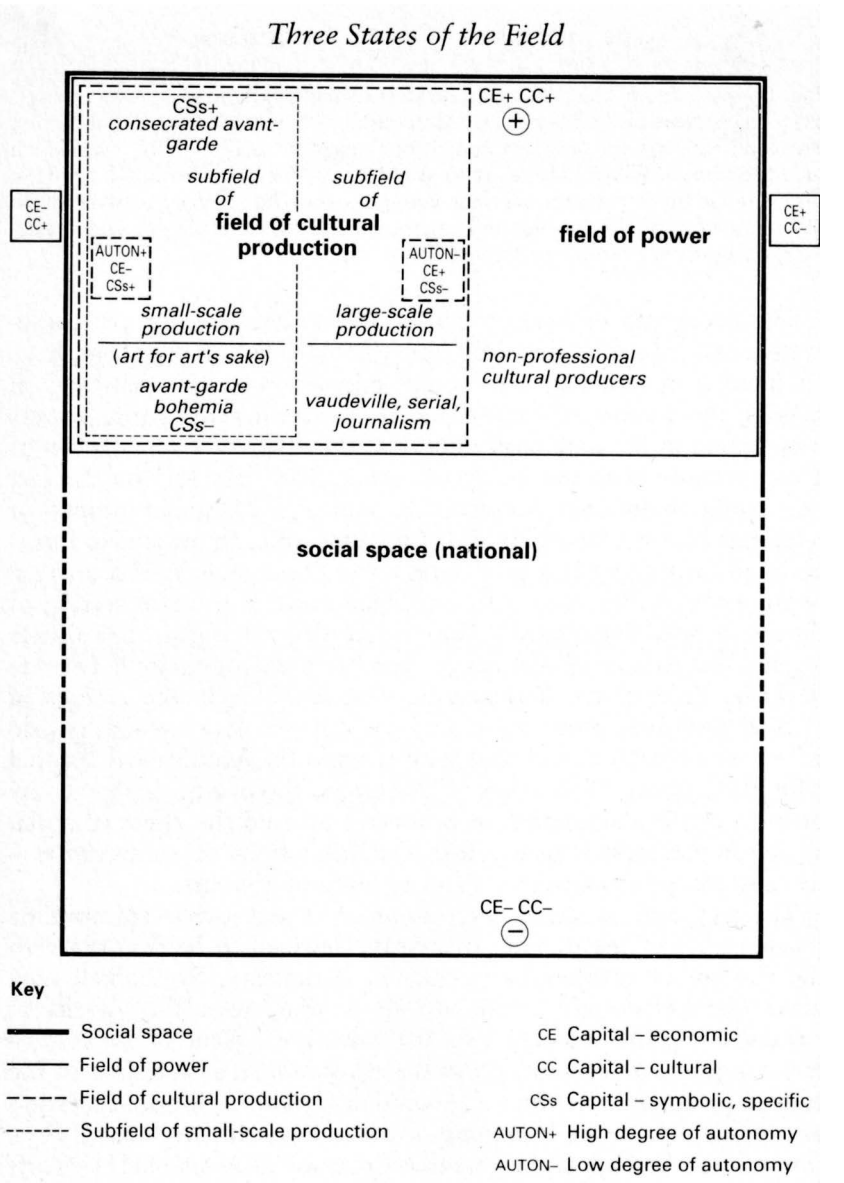

Figure 3: *The Field of Cultural Production Embedded in the Field of Power and in Social Space (cited in Bourdieu 1996, 124).*

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Subsequently, adversaries may approach each other and the contrast between distinct subgenres becomes less relevant compared to the contrast between the two poles of symbolic and economic interests. The difference between the pole of pure artistic production and the pole of mass production, subjected to the expectations of the general public, then becomes less important (see examples of the New Yorker avant-garde development in Crane 1987).

Bourdieu draws a general model of the French field of cultural production, which consists of the subfield of small-scale production and the subfield of large-scale production, both of which are embedded in a broader field of power and social space (see figure 3).

This differentiation may temporarily increase and change – for the late 19th century, Bourdieu identifies two further fields in the subfield of small-scale production: first, the bohemian or experimental avant-garde art, and second, the already consecrated and established avant-garde art. On the right side of this upper left corner, we find the subfield of cultural production called large-scale production. Here cultural products are adjusted to economic interests or the enticements of potential profits. The conflicts between actors from these different subfields are structural. The struggle is for visibility, appreciation, legitimization and domination. The history of arts and art criticism reflect to some degree the outcomes of these struggles.

The inner subfield of small-scale cultural production has a high degree of autonomy, a high degree of specific (artistic) symbolic capital and a low degree of economic capital. The demonstrative rejection of the economy and the emphasis on purely artistic production are both structuring principles of this subfield (Bourdieu 1996, 81ff.). Here the lower inner field of the bohemian and avant-garde art has a lesser degree of specific symbolic capital, whereas the higher inner subfield of consecrated avant-garde has a greater degree of specific symbolic capital. Compared to the avant-garde culture, large-scale cultural production, or mass culture, has lower degrees of autonomy (and consequently higher degrees of heteronomy, that is, commercial dependencies from the adjacent power field) and lower specific symbolic capital (less artistic status or prestige but higher degrees of commercialization and economic capital).[4]

The field of power on the upper right corner of figure 3 consists of people and institutions that have considerable social and economic but also cultural capital. The rest of society is located in the lower box of the (national) social space. Here, distant from the field of the so-called high arts, we find people with low cultural and economic capital who are not particularly interested in

4 See Kirchberg et al. (2023) for a study of politics as a heteronomic factor other than the economy.

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these kinds of arts and instead consume popular culture or are engaged in other cultural activities that take place within their social class.[5] This last point is also underlined by scholars from British Cultural Studies (e.g., Munt 2000).

Bourdieu acknowledges certain social dynamics. The artistic subfield of small-scale production is constantly trying to maintain autonomy, keeping the surrounding economic and political powers at bay. It thus tries to maintain its control by generating its own high levels of strong currencies, that is, artistic appreciation and reputation, which are kinds of symbolic capital in some territories of the field, as indicated by the plus sign in figure 3.

Near the artistic field's plus signs, market forces do not impact significantly on the subfield of small-scale production as there is no realistic expectation of attracting large audiences and generating economic profit. Here only the criteria of consecration are relevant and shape artists' endeavors (Bourdieu 1993 [1983], 38). The more autonomous an artistic subfield is, the less the laws of the surrounding field of power determine its inner hierarchical structure and the more powerfully the actors in this subfield can maintain their field-internal power. In the case of the subfield of small-scale production, which enjoys autonomy to a great extent, the audience is small and consists mainly of other producers or peers from the same subfield (e.g., in contemporary poetry). The inherent logic of this artistic practice is systematically inverse to the logic of markets, because here the loser takes all (Bourdieu 1996, 21, see also 114f., 141ff.).

However, the artistic field also has subfields with low levels of its currency (artistic appreciation and reputation), wherein artistic production can be dominated by the strong forces of the surrounding power field. Such structural relationships, Bourdieu emphasizes, are characterized by commercialization as a main factor threatening artistic autonomy. The power field influences artistic subfields not only economically (Bourdieu 1993 [1983], 40) as it can also promote developments by rewarding artists, funding arts organizations, promoting visibility and disseminating a particular kind of artistic production. Agents from the power field can also try to impede certain developments by refusing to grant them funding or even by censorship and repression – think, for instance, of the situation for film makers in the United States during McCarthyism in the 1950s (see Couvares 2006) or of literary writers in the communist countries (see Ermolaev 1997). Yet it is worth noting that the power field is homogeneous and in certain situations is fragmented by inner struggles, for example, between the

5 Here we see the difference between two meanings of the French word *culture*: one a narrow and selective meaning that refers to fine arts and letters and another that has a broader anthropological meaning that refers to various signifying and symbolic activities.

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old and the new bourgeoisie, and between the old political caste and new highly educated experts from the universities (e.g., in France in the 1980s). Therefore, the artistic field is not only influenced by the market but also by political ideologies. Yet power evokes counterpower and actors are generally able to act strategically (see Bourdieu 1990a [1980], 53ff.). From this perspective, Bourdieu ascribes resilience to the artistic field, since otherwise it would have disappeared and completely merged into the power field (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995).

When referring to field actors we should think not only of artists. Bourdieu (1996, 229) distinguishes between the actual art producers (e.g., writers, painters, musicians) and art distributors or intermediaries (e.g., art dealers, publishers, curators, museum and festival directors, critics, art theorists and academic scholars, but also art organizations as collective actors), who play a pivotal role in the formation of artistic and economic success. Many cultural intermediaries hold a hybrid position. On the one hand, they must know and apply market principles to the autonomous artistic field; on the other, they must know and appreciate the values and qualities of art producers so as to be able to act in their in-between position and not lose their special sense for the art producers or the consumers.[6] In many ways, these intermediaries must emulate the lifestyles of their fellow artists in order to gain and maintain their trust. In this sense, they are "merchants in the temple" (Bourdieu 1993 [1983], 40), since they have to trick art producers by showing no particular interest in economic or political advantages, although they most definitely have these interests. The rejection of the economically dominated field of power extends so far that one must appear to express one's disinterest in economic and political issues. However, this normative expectation does not mean that economic interests are not latently effective. They express themselves in such a way that the artist behaves economically as a gambler, taking great economic risks without hesitation and having little or no income over a longer period, although hoping that at some point there will also be an economic breakthrough (see Abbing 2002; Heinich 2000a).

4 Acting in the artistic field: Bourdieu's view of practice

According to Bourdieu (1998 [1994]), all human activities are conditioned by their social environment and the actors' relational positions in the various social fields. Additionally, Bourdieu ascribes people the capacity to act intelligently in

6 Nathalie Heinich (1998) elaborates further on this interplay and speaks of a "triple game" between artists, intermediaries and audiences.

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order to reinforce their positions and their gains (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98f.). Acting in the artistic field, and in arts organizations, implies antagonism, but also coalition and cooperation. Such dynamics are formed along structural parameters, such as power relations, resources and rules, which nevertheless do not exert a determining force in the strictest sense (Bourdieu 1996, 234ff.). When analyzing the actor relations in various historical situations, Bourdieu often speaks of "strategies" that are not the results of calculation and rational reasoning – although they may involve reflexive moments – but of a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990a [1980], 66f.; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 128). "The most effective strategies are those which, being the product of dispositions shaped by the immediate necessity of the field, tend to adjust themselves spontaneously to that necessity, without express intention or calculation," as Bourdieu (2000, 138) puts it. Consequently, having a feel for the game enables intelligent action. Consciousness, intentionality and reflexivity may play a role, although the feel for the game is indispensable, since the cognizant actor "exactly knows what he has to do … without needing to know what he does" (Bourdieu 2002a [1984], 74; our translation). Intelligent action goes hand in hand with knowing the mostly unspoken hierarchies and evaluative logics, the relevant cooperative bundles (e.g., artistic groups) and interdependencies in a certain field, but also intuitively anticipating actions by co-actors and opponents and knowing how to effectively achieve something. In other words, *le sens du jeu* (the feel for the game) and *le sens pratique* (the practical sense) presuppose familiarity with a particular social field.

People enter and play the game of the artistic field if, and only if, they believe that it is worthwhile doing so – for example, in following its rules, getting involved in antagonistic relations, investing time and energy in improving their position, etc. "The collective belief in the game (*illusio*) and in the sacred value of its stakes is simultaneously the precondition and the product of the very functioning of the game." (Bourdieu 1996, 230) This belief is less theoretical and more practical, as it is constituted and confirmed by "innumerable acts of credit which are exchanged among all the agents engaged in the artistic field." Consecrated artists promote younger ones and in return the latter create masters and schools.[7] Artists acknowledge the aesthetic sensibility of their collectors, and collectors – not entirely altruistically – promote the visibility of their artists. Curators and critics remain loyal to certain artists, and receive an image trans-

7 An artistic school generally consists of individuals from the same generation – except their master and hero – and have a strong aesthetic and epistemic coherence.

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fer from the successful ones whom they have discovered and championed, and so forth.

The practical sense of the agents is socially constituted. Here Bourdieu's concept of habitus plays an important role (Bourdieu 1990a [1980], 52ff.). Habitus is not understood as a causal force, but rather as a system of actionable dispositions that are socially constituted and practically acquired (Bourdieu 1990a [1980]; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98). Habitus is personal because it is developed through the particular experience of the agent (see also the concept of personal knowledge in Polanyi 1958). It is "the social embodied" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 127) and has a "socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu 2005, 211) because it results from an agent's socialization, and it has familiarity with a particular field of practice and to a particular agent's position in this field. With the concept of habitus and of practical sense, Bourdieu overcomes, first, the classical theories of action, that is, the idea that conscious and rational decision (1998, 92–123)[8] or that intentional will (1990a [1980], 43–51; 1998, 97f.) cause action and, second, the opposition between structuralist and agential theories.

As a central concept in his social theory, habitus is the site of a complex interplay of mediations between macrosociological conditions and concrete situations at the microlevel. Mediations guarantee stability, but also social changes – something that Bourdieu gives more emphasis on in his later works:

> Habitus goes hand in glove with vagueness and indeterminacy. As a generative spontaneity which asserts itself with an improvised confrontation with ever renewed situations, it obeys a practical inexact, fuzzy sort of logic, which defines one's normal relation to the world. (Bourdieu 1990b [1987], 77f.)

Moreover, the concept of habitus is associated with what Bourdieu calls "homology"[9] between the objective position of an individual in a given field and their positioning, or more generally between existing class structures and objective conditions in artistic fields, and elicit a range of aesthetic possibilities (including aesthetic taste) in line with one's class-bound disposition (see Bourdieu 1984, 230ff.; 1990a, 55ff.; 1996, 86ff., 141ff., 161ff.).

8 Bourdieu (1998, 92–123) explicitly criticized for instance Gary Becker's *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (G. Becker 1976).

9 The term homology was taken from the art historian Erwin Panofsky in a critique of the reflection theory of art.

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5 Changes in the field of cultural production: struggles, conversions and the dialectic of distinction

Membership in the field of cultural production is not strictly regulated since the boundaries of the field are permeable. In order to become an artist, one does not necessarily need a high cultural or educational background or any economic capital – though the possession of any form of capital can be advantageous. That is why artists are so diverse and barely organized in lobbying associations or unions (Bourdieu 1993 [1983], 43).

From Bourdieu's perspective, struggles among different social fractions occur due to conflicting interests, pretensions and divisions. Such struggles continuously reshape the field of cultural production and the relationship between the primarily economically determined, and the mostly artistically determined, subfields. Notably, struggles are unavoidable and never-ending, since every status, position, reputation and value in the field are relative and volatile. Bourdieu refers, for instance, to the structural antagonism between the young and the old, the established and the new or in Bourdieu's terms "orthodox" versus "heterodox" positions. When some artists become consecrated, they start to dominate their artistic field and "make gradual inroads into the market, becoming more and more … acceptable the more everyday they seem as a result of a more or less lengthy process of familiarization" (Bourdieu 1996, 159). Therefore, even highly autonomous artists fall, so to speak, victim to heteronomization when they become successful. In addition, there is a crowding-out effect: each new artistic act that occurs in the field can potentially displace or delegitimize a previous artistic act, at least in the subfield of bohemian avant-garde. This old art will then either wither or shift to the established avant-garde, and then to the commercial field of mass culture (if this art is very successful or is disposed to professional distribution and marketing services). Bourdieu (1996, 159) thereby brings the time dimension into his analysis of change. He understands the new as a fleeting phenomenon soon to be replaced by another new, and pushed into an archival or museum-like artistic valorization (a valorization that then translates into greater economic success): "The field of the present is merely another name for the field of the struggle …. Contemporaneity as presence in the same present only exists in practice in the struggle that synchronizes discordant times or, rather, agents and institutions separated by time and in relation to time" (1996, 158).

Internal struggles may lead to a change of positions within an existing field. However, such struggles do not necessarily cause a complete upheaval of the cultural hierarchies and field structures. Bourdieu (1996, 127f.) basically argues that any substantial transformation of the field of cultural production, or of its

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various subfields, requires the effective support of external forces that occur outside the field. He mentions, for instance, the growth of audiences' education and the expansion of cultural markets. And he adds: "Although largely independent of them in principle, the internal struggles always depend, in outcome, on the correspondence that they maintain with the external struggles – whether struggles at the core of the field of power or at the core of the social field as a whole" (1996, 127). External forces can be derived from major socioeconomic upheavals, for example, a transformation of the political system that leads either toward a more liberal or a more paternalistic and oppressive control of cultural public life, or a long military conflict with strong societal, economic and demographic changes. Therefore, internal cultural struggles depend on the extent to which they can establish a link to field-external conflicts; or, to put it in the terminology of Bourdieu's model, the field of cultural production, the field of power and social space are vessels communicating notably in both directions. Bourdieu's (1996, 117–128) example for this is the emergence of literary naturalism around Émile Zola and his companions in the 1860s, and the subsequent crisis of naturalism and the renewal of an idealism and mysticism among the bourgeoisie in the 1880s. Bourdieu associates these changes with the economic and political changes in those decades (1996, 128–131). Another example that Bourdieu uses to demonstrate the simultaneous influence of field-internal and field-external forces is the invention of the intellectual as a public figure in France. In the second half of the 19th century, publicly recognized intellectual authors received a more general as well as a certain political authority, which emerged from the social autonomy of the literary field.[10] One of the first public intellectuals in France was Émile Zola. Bourdieu references Zola's open letter (published in the newspaper *L'Aurore* on 13 January 1898 and addressed to the President of the French Republic), in which Zola took a clear position on the Dreyfus affair. Bourdieu analyzes how Zola conceived of himself as someone with "a mission of prophetic subversion" (1996, 129) who was intellectually and politically capable of acting as an aesthetical, ethical and political authority.[11] "The intellectual is constituted as such by intervening in the political field *in the name of autonomy* and of the specific values of the field of cultural production which has attained a high degree of independence with respect of various powers" (1996, 129; emphasis in the original). Zola's intervention in the field of politics does not presuppose autonomy of the intellectual field; it constituted

10 Sapiro (2004, 159f.) argues that from the 1970s onward there was a shift and decline of the figure of public intellectuals in France.

11 Victor Hugo represents another case of a literary author who gained a public reputation for his social and political critique.

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and confirmed this autonomy. Bourdieu concentrates primarily on the field of literary writers, but he sketches a similar dynamic for the field of visual artists (1996, 131ff.). Here he refers to the symbolic revolution of Édouard Manet and other impressionists against the Parisian Academy of Fine Arts (see *Salon des Refusés*, 1863 and later *Salon des Indépendants*, 1884), which stood for the autonomization of the field of visual artists (see Bourdieu 2017).[12]

In the second half of the 19th century, the increased power of the petty bourgeoisie is also reflected in artistic and institutional changes in the field of cultural production, that is, certain organizations that are related to the consumer preferences of the petty bourgeoisie. In this case, the most heteronomous cultural producers could not resist (and some of them did not want to resist) external demands from this group. They adapted to the interests of the ruling social class and to the class of the petty bourgeoisie, whereas the autonomous artists regarded these heteronomous artist colleagues as traitors in the service of the power class, and as enemies of art itself (Bourdieu 1993, 41). Avant-garde art producers, who were economically dominated but symbolically dominant in the artistic field, also had the capacity to act as mouthpieces for other dominated people in the wider field of power, and they also frequently used this potential (1996, 44).

6 Critique of Bourdieu's field theory

Before referring to some critical objections, let us recapitulate what Bourdieu has to offer the sociological and humanistic study of arts. First, by elaborating the concept of relative autonomy he overcame idealistic and Marxist views of arts that had dominated until the 1960s (see Heinich 2018, 183–186). Second, his concepts of domination and struggle for legitimacy gave a political meaning to artistic discourses and developments. Third, to our knowledge, Bourdieu was one of the first sociologists of the arts who combined qualitative and quantitative methods in his research.

Nevertheless, Bourdieu's oeuvre goes far beyond the scope of a sociology of arts. And, unsurprisingly, his readers saw many different Bourdieus in different phases and focuses of his long-standing scholarly works – some saw a structuralist, others a praxeologist, a pragmatist or a philosophically inclined and a politically engaged Bourdieu. Consequently, criticism is related to different readings of his works, one of which concerns the dominant position of

12 This transformation also took place two decades later in other European countries and is generally known as the Secessionist Art Movement.

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Bourdieu's ideas in sociology. Since Bourdieu positioned himself as a critic of the social inequalities reinforced by art and culture, as well as an opponent of the neoliberal economization of society, some scholars disapprove of his seemingly political or materialist and critical understanding of his research topics. Neither did Bourdieu refrain from criticizing other sociological positions, so it is therefore not surprising that he had his own detractors.

We will now summarize a number of critical perspectives, primarily related to Bourdieu's theory of artistic fields. One frequent accusation refers to his latent structural determinism (see, e.g., Born 2010; Prior 2011), evidenced by his emphasis on the structuring effects of the field. Moreover, it is worth noting that Bourdieu's metaphors – for instance, terms from classical mechanics, such as "force" – seemingly equate societal dynamics and laws in physics (for a critical comment, see Becker 2006). On the contrary, scholars from a phenomenological or an interactionist perspective generally ascribe actors a higher level of agency. Yet these critiques have disregarded the fact that, from the late 1980s onwards, Bourdieu explicitly rejected deterministic views (see, e.g., Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 135f.) and insisted on the generative capacity of habitus (Bourdieu 1990a, 55; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 122).

A further critique of Bourdieu's sociology of arts has been his neglect of artworks, and particularly questions of artistic form, style and content (see Becker 2006; Born 2010; De La Fuente 2007). It is clear that Bourdieu tends to conceive of aesthetics as an ideological discourse in a process of positioning and legitimizing a particular art form and fails to investigate *how* artworks affect people (see DeNora 2000; Hennion 2015 [1993]). There is also an absence in Bourdieu's oeuvre of any comments on youth culture and popular rock and roll music, which has had a tremendous effect on the various social fields of our societies. This neglect of artistic materiality, form and style goes along with a neglect of investigating the effects of technology on the structuration and transformation of the field of cultural production. Bourdieu's focus lies primarily on structural antagonism, internal conflicts, as well as on the historical process of autonomization.

In this chapter we have not discussed Bourdieu's analysis of the social formation of taste. While Bourdieu (1984, 20, 123, 175ff.) speaks of a close correlation and homology between taste and social class, other researchers emphasize the hybridization and eclectic aspects of taste and therefore argue for a looser relationship between class and taste (e.g., Hazir and Warde 2016; Peterson and Kern 1996). This is probably a less deep-rooted critique, since different empirical studies often apply different methods, generate different data and refer to different social spaces. Nevertheless, the contingency of empirical findings can be seen as an argument against a generalization of Bourdieu's homology thesis.

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It is worthwhile examining whether Bourdieu's analysis of the field of cultural production is still empirically valid. Intuitively one may assume that the structuration of the artistic field in late 19th century France differs from the structural conditions of contemporary artistic fields in other countries. From the 1930s onward the field of film production, from the 1950s the field of popular music and from the 1960s the field of visual arts, all went through a rapid globalization and market expansion, prompting many sociological scholars to speak of a "profound transformation" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), a "liquefaction of social structures" (Bauman 2000) or a "paradigm shift" (Heinich 2014). With explicit reference to Bourdieu, Nina Zahner (2006, 277ff.) refers to the "new rules" in the field of visual arts and Larissa Buchholz (2022) to the "global rules" of this field. In the 1960s, Zahner (2006, 282) notes that artists associated with pop art refused an ostentatious demarcation from popular mass culture, yet they succeeded in gaining a high artistic reputation. Furthermore, the upper middle-class, who started buying contemporary art, were less interested in highly sophisticated, autonomous art, or perhaps less competent to appreciate its genuine value. The structural opposition between art and economy, between highbrow and lowbrow arts, as well as between autonomy and heteronomy has therefore diminished – a tendency reconfirmed when Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (see Sapiro 2004; Bennett 2016; Abbing 2022; Kirchberg et al., 2023). But did Bourdieu ever believe that structural oppositions were permanent or universal? Most of his readers, including Zahner herself (as well as us), acknowledge that Bourdieu displays a dynamic understanding of field structures and the social organization of arts.

Buchholz's (2022) extension of Bourdieu's field theory from the national to the global level focuses on the newly emerged field of contemporary visual art. Globalization is evidenced by, first, the emergence of globally acting organizations (e.g., transnational art biennials, art fairs, auctions and global galleries), second, new millionaires and billionaires from non-Western countries (especially from China, Russia and the Arabian peninsula), third, digital platforms and online art rankings (e.g., artfacts.net or artprice.com) and, fourth, financial regulations that facilitate the global transfer of economic capital and reduce transaction costs (see Quemin 2006, 2021). Buchholz's analysis revises some central concepts of Bourdieu's work, for example, the typology of (semi-)autonomous and (semi-)heteronomous artists, and the divergent logics of the market and aesthetic evaluations. She introduces a decoupling of artistic consecration and market success that is less rigid than Bourdieu's theoretical concept and consequently refers to the emergence of a "dual economy," that is, new institutional structures on a global level with different temporalities and spatialities (Buchholz 2022, 111–120). The global field of contemporary visual arts in the neoliberal

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era of late capitalism seems to be more open and more inclusive for artists from less rich and privileged regions, compared to the national and regional fields of visual arts. Buchholz offers detailed empirical data for this argument, without ignoring the ongoing asymmetries of power and resources in the world. She comes to the positive conclusion that

> a more cosmopolitan, global vision of contemporary art originated [since] noncommercial art organizations and circuits provided the necessary space for curatorial risk-taking beyond Western orthodoxies.... Instead of joining the chorus of market-centrism ... this book spotlights the cross-border dynamics of institutions, artists, and their mediators that have run against the zeitgeist of financial instrumentality. (Buchholz 2022: xxi; see Buchholz 2022, 265ff.)

Her new empirical data does not necessarily challenge Bourdieu's field theory. Buchholz does not argue against his theory, but rather she points to the structuring differences between the artistic field in France in the second half of the 19th century and the global field of visual arts in the early 21st century.

Bourdieu's field theory is one of the most known and applied theories of the social organization of arts.[13] The attraction of his approach is the intuitive understanding of organizing the arts as a competitive scheme, which fits very well into the contemporary culture of capitalism. The contentiousness of his actors in different power fields stands in stark contrast to the rather peaceful negotiability of Becker's art worlds. A very different approach to understanding the social organization of the arts is Luhmann's systems approach toward organizing the arts, which we will discuss in the next chapter.

13 The international fame of this approach is reflected in the number of Google's English language search results that include the terms Bourdieu and field theory (approx. 108,000 in 2024), compared to the terms Becker and art worlds (approx. 83,000 in 2024).

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Chapter 4 | The Organization of Art as a Social System

The German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998) occupies a very different position in the academic world from that of Howard S. Becker and Pierre Bourdieu. Most English-speaking sociologists know very little, if anything, about his work, while in continental Europe Luhmann has made a significant impact. We believe that Luhmann's theory of art as a social system belongs to the fundamental theories of the social organization of arts.

Luhmann is not a sociologist of one branch of art, but rather a generalist who wants to analyze society as a whole. His magnum opus, *Theory of Society* (2012 and 2013 [1997]), is considered to be the "grand finale of Niklas Luhmann" (Lee 2000). In one of his books leading up to this grand finale he poses the question, What is art? (Luhmann 2000a [1995]) and answers this question without any essentialist ambition. Instead, he is highly conscious of the contingent meaning of the concept of art. Of course, the question What is art? interested many of his contemporary art philosophers, for example, Arthur Danto and George Dickie, whose works Luhmann was familiar with (see, e.g., Luhmann 2000a, 244f.). Danto (1964; 1981) analyzed the definitions of art and the bidirectional vicissitudes between imitation and reality in arts from the end of the 19th century to the 1960s. Dickie (1969) attributed these fluctuations to altered conventions and described an art world that has the power to assign, remove and reassign artistic value.[1] An art world is therefore a specific social institution that is influenced by external instances, but that also has the ability to self-define what art is and what it is not. Dickie's institutional, non-normative and anti-essentialist approach is one strand of analytical philosophy that gained recognition in the 1970s. And this is where Niklas Luhmann enters the scene. The concept of self-determination and the self-reference of art became crucial for his own understanding of modern art as a social phenomenon, as evidenced by the statement "without this self-reference, there would be no art"

1 "A work of art in the descriptive sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some society or some subgroup of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation" (Dickie 1969, 254).

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(Luhmann 2000a, 245). However, in contrast to Dickie and many other scholars, Luhmann denies that the environment can *directly* influence the art system since he regards social systems as self-producing, self-regenerating (autopoietic) and therefore operationally closed. This is one of the reasons we decided to present and explore Luhmann's approach in this compendium.

Niklas Luhmann was born in 1927 in Lüneburg near Hamburg, and died in 1998 in Oerlinghausen near Bielefeld. At the age of twenty, he went to university, gained a law degree and soon after became a public officer at the higher administrative court in his hometown. In 1960 he won a one-year scholarship to Harvard University, where he concentrated on the sociological theory of Talcott Parsons. Back in Germany, he began his academic career with a focus on organizational theory. In 1969 he became professor of sociology in Bielefeld, Germany. From that point on he dedicated his research to the development of a general theory of society. In the preface of his book *Art as a Social System* he formulates his theoretical aims as follows:

> This project seeks to distance itself from prevailing social theories that attempt to describe their object in terms of normative, integrative and unifying concepts… This is why we recommend rewriting the theory of society. To do so requires a shift, at the structural level, from stratification to functional differentiation. The unity of society is not to be sought in ethico-political demands, but rather in the emergence of comparable conditions in systems as diverse as religion or the economy, science or art, intimate relationships or politics—despite extreme differences between the functions and the operational modes of these systems. (Luhmann 2000a, 1f.)

1 General introduction to Luhmann's systems theory

The overriding question throughout Luhmann's sociological studies is how social order is possible. Clarification of this question demands a conceptual analysis of the terms social order and society. Social order is related to the boundedness of social entities (see Giddens 1990, 13f.). Acknowledging that there are different kinds of social orders, Luhmann puts forward the idea of social differentiation as a starting point for his analytical approach. The central concept of system is introduced not in an ontological sense, but as a concept of form. Any form exhibits its identity by a logical distinction between an inner and an outer space, that is, by boundaries. Here Luhmann (2012, 24) is referring to the work of the mathematician Spencer-Brown (1969). Luhmann transfers this axiom to his theory of society: if the concept of system is the adequate form for observing societies, then a basic property of any social system is its difference to its environment. The term environment refers to anything that is not an imma-

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nent part of a particular social system and includes the nonsocietal as well as the societal environment, that is, all other social systems. "Although system and environment are separate as two sides of a form, neither can exist without the other" (Luhmann 2012, 30). He goes on to explain that "from a methodological standpoint … although we assign key status to the distinction between system and environment, and thus to the form 'system,' we do so only in the sense that this is the point from which we organize the consistency of the theory, the coherence between a multiplicity of distinctions" (2012, 30). To be clear, the difference between a system and its environment refers to the distinction between belonging and nonbelonging. This difference should not be confused with the difference between one system and another system, which is based on different codes and operative logics, as we will explain below. While a system makes constitutive differences to operate inside its form, it observes itself. "Systems, if sufficiently complex … can distinguish themselves from their environment, but only in an operation within the system itself" (2012, 31).[2]

The concept of social system stands neither for a regionally defined entity, nor for social structures, nor does it consist of individuals (2012, 6, 92). It stands for dynamic relationships that fulfill certain social functions. For Luhmann, a social system is first and foremost an operationally closed entity of social relationships based on communication.[3] To refer to an operationally closed system of social communication simply means that communication is an internal social process that is not influenced by the external environment. Yet a complex system is not blind and indifferent to its environment. On the contrary, it regards its environment as a source of information that is relevant for its continuous adaptation and evolution. These general definitions also apply to the art system: it consists of self-referentially enchained communication that involves artworks. Artworks are coded in terms of an assessment of whether or not they fit certain aesthetic values. Luhmann states "that works of art are bought, sold, pledged and paid for … which is [however] not an operation that contributes to

2 Luhmann uses the term operation to replace the term action. According to this use, operation has a posthumanistic meaning: systems operate, not people.

3 Luhmann distinguishes his version of systems theory from Talcott Parsons's version: "The elementary process constituting the social domain as a special reality is a process of communication. In order to steer itself. However, this process must be reduced to action, decomposed into actions. Accordingly, social systems are not built up of actions, as if these actions were produced on the basis of the organico-psychic constitution of people and could exist by themselves; instead, social systems are broken down into actions, and by this reduction acquire the basis for connections that serve to continue the course of communication" (Luhmann 1995 [1984], 138f.).

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the production or consumption of the work of art" (Luhmann 2008c [1996], 395, our translation). At the moment artworks are assigned a monetary value, they also become elements of the market system. When they are assigned political relevance, they become elements of the political system. Luhmann argues that such systemic transformations have no direct effect on the art system since he insists that the concept of the art system (as with all social systems) is an operationally closed entity of self-referentially enchained communication. However, he maintains (2012, 49–68) a structural coupling of systems in the sense that in certain situations the art system observes events that take place in other adjacent social systems.

Society is an ambiguous notion. In Luhmann's terminology, it refers to the most complex and comprehensive system of social relations with three major systems: politics, law and economy (2012, 40ff.). Complex societies increase their internal differentiation, and so further social systems – such as the art system[4] – may occur. Each particular social system has a specific communication mode with bipolar codes, meaning that the code occurs or it does not. For instance, the communication of the political system deals with power and fluctuates from having power to not having power. The communication of the legal system deals with complying with the law or failing to comply with the law. The economic system is characterized by its particular medium, namely, money, and its code varies between having money and therefore being able to pay or not having money and thus being unable to pay. This oscillation of communication between two poles also exists in the art system and manifests itself in the attribution and classification of This is art and This is not art (Luhmann 2000a, 194, 295f.). The codes of a system are thus indispensable for filtering and assessing relevant information as criteria that put a work or an activity either in the category art or non-art. The specific code of each social system is the cement that holds each system together.

As mentioned above, modern social systems are, according to Luhmann, closed and operationally autonomous entities that exist and depend upon a basic difference from other social systems (via different codes) and from their environment (via the distinction of belonging or not belonging). However, complex systems observe other systems and their environment and react to their observations. At this point, Luhmann (2012, 49–68; 2000a, 48, 51, 243) introduces the

4 Luhmann (2000a, 242) sees certain particularities, "Art, however, bears a special trait which it shares only with religion: participation is optional. Inclusion, whether active or passive, is a matter of individual choice. The low rate of participation in art is astonishing."

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concept of structural coupling between systems to refer to multiple interdependencies between them.[5] Structural coupling does not contradict the postulated operative closure of social systems. Yet as Luhmann argues (2012, 55), structural couplings "limit the scope of the possible structures with which a system can carry out its autopoiesis. They presuppose that every autopoietic system operates as a structurally determined system, in other words, a system that can determine its own operations only through its own structures." Since social systems observe events in other systems, they are structurally coupled with them under the condition that the observations provide the systems with relevant information (see Jahraus 2012, 121–123). Structural couplings are only temporal and event-based, in other words, the coupling does not exist because of a permanent interpenetration of two or more different social systems. When the art system makes contact with other systems, for example, the market system, it does so only temporarily to maintain its own lasting specific and undisturbed (by other systems) functionality. Structural coupling here means that an artwork is attributed different values, for example, in an art system with artistic value, in a market system with monetary value, and in a political system with political values. The co-occurrence of such valorizations indicates a structural coupling[6] but also their functional difference (see Hutter 2021). However, ultimately the art system insists only on its own values; it remains autopoietic because it wants to perform its own operation, that is, an artistic-focused communication. If it so happens that another social system interferes directly with the art system's operations, this will destroy the latter's autonomous functioning; a situation which may occur in dictatorships or theocratic regimes. We will return to the concept of structural coupling later. Meanwhile, we should keep in mind that operational closure goes together with couplings and interconnected observations (Luhmann 1995 [1984], 340, 353; 2012, 201, 325). Both are necessary for the adaptation and evolution of social systems.

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5 Luhmann (1995 [1984], 220; 2012, 54f.) takes the concept of structural coupling from Humberto Maturana to replace the Parsonian concept of interpenetration that he used in earlier publications (see Luhmann 1978). Additionally, the emphasis on interdependencies of social systems goes hand in hand with a critique of the prioritization of the influence of a single social sphere. Luhmann has Karl Marx in mind when he writes that the "old argument about the relative priority of matter or ideas, basis and superstructure of society or culture" is outdated (Luhmann 2008e, 56, our translation).

6 Structural couplings do not determine "what happens in the system, but must be presupposed, because autopoiesis would otherwise come to a standstill and the system would cease to exist. To this extent, every system is adapted to its environment (or else it does not exist); but within the given scope, it has every possibility to behave aberrantly" (Luhmann 2012, 55).

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Communication is the most important building block of social systems and thus of society. "Communication is a self-determining process and, in this sense, an autopoietic system" (Luhmann 2000a, 11). "The system knows only one operator: communication. Communication is reproduced by communications." (2001a, 79) Communication is the smallest observable element of social systems and therefore it represents the unit of sociological analysis. Communication is the synthesis of three selections: information, utterance and understanding (Luhmann 1995 [1984], 40f. 139ff.; 2000a, 9ff.; 107). Information marks a difference that is significant according to a system's inherent logic (see Bateson 2000 [1972], 453). Utterance is a selection of information, a proposal and a suggestion, that is, a communicative act for the dissemination of information. Finally, understanding closes the communicative circuit. Understanding also includes misunderstanding; both evoke further acts of communication. These three concepts are not used in a psychological or hermeneutical sense, but rather as systemic operations since social systems exist through the generation and dissemination of information, responses, reflections and interpretations. These processes may also include ambiguity, which should nevertheless evoke interactions that keep systemic communication ongoing. The idea of communication as an operationally closed circuit corresponds to the idea that systems are not imposed by some mysterious external force but are self-referential and evolve along internal operations. Communication is therefore pivotal for the functionality, self-identity and evolution of any social system (Luhmann 2012, 325).

Individuals – for art systems as well as for artistic change – are essentially unimportant. For Luhmann, communication in any social system does not depend on human intentions and human consciousness. Communication emerges from the elements of social systems that, in the case of the art system, are artworks as objects, and therefore it is a system-intrinsic operation:

> Understanding system formation via communication requires excluding the material embodiment of artworks from the system. Bodies [and artistic materials like marble, colors, dancing bodies or sounds] belong to the system's environment – although they are connected to communication through structural couplings. What counts is their objecthood. (Luhmann 2000a, 79)

It is not surprising that Niklas Luhmann, quite unlike Howard Becker and Pierre Bourdieu, does not consider artists, dealers and managers, directors of art organizations, art critics or consumers to be elements of the art system. However, he interprets this professional differentiation as an indication of the advanced differentiation of the art system, which also implies more observations

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and more structural couplings (Luhmann 2000a, 166). He conceives individuals only as observing psychic systems that are structurally coupled with the art system. Their psychological states (desires, emotions, thoughts) are irrelevant for the sociological analysis of art since the analytical focus lies on systemic communication. For this reason, Eva Knodt in her preface to *Social Systems* (in Luhmann 1995 [1984], xxx) characterizes Luhmann's systems theory as "a posthumanist conception of the social."

We would like to end this short introduction by quoting Dirk Baecker, one of Luhmann's most well-known disciples, who comes to the following conclusion:

> Thus, systems theoretical thinking is an epistemological device to look at the ways in which, by communication, three distinctions are established and implemented: (a) the social distinction between actor and observer, (b) the ecological distinction between system and environment, and (c) the temporal distinction between past, present and future. (Baecker 2001, 70)

2 Central concepts: complexity, functional differentiation, autopoiesis and contingency

Luhmann's main building blocks as applied to the arts system are a tetragon: complexity (systems give meanings), functional differentiation (systems are defined by their multiple functions), autopoiesis (systems stress their self-referentiality) and contingency (systems limit unpredictable consequences by structural couplings and second-order observations). He developed these central concepts over time. The early Luhmann (see, e.g., 1970) is characterized by the first two concepts, complexity and functional differentiation. In information-theoretical terms, complexity is attributed to a situation where a system is unable (or finds it very hard) to observe itself or its environment in a meaningful sense. Therefore, complexity is observation-dependent. To avoid paralysis and to overcome difficulties in ascribing meaning to what happens within itself or occurs in its environment, a system may impose selectivity, which in turn leads to a reduction of complexity. Meaning implies the reduction of complexity, and as a systemic operation meaning-giving is prestructured by system-intrinsic codes and shaped by system-intrinsic communication. As a rule, routines have a strong impact on social functioning, and normally systems tend to stick to pre-established meanings and do not often change them.

Functional differentiation is a property of every social system, meaning that social systems tend to be divided into various subsystems by their different functions for society, for example, the political system is divided into several subsystems like the party system, the public administration and the public

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sphere (Luhmann 1969b, 262). The art system has its own internal differentiation along the various art forms and art organizations (Luhmann 2000a [1995], 180). Such internal differentiation is not vertical, in other words, hierarchical, but rather horizontal. Despite this demarcation of subsystems, they are joined through their different functions. Since Luhmann's interpretation of differentiation is based on different functions. but not on different structures, his systems theory is also called functional-structural systems theory.

The reduction of social complexity through basic codes, the prestructuring of meaning-giving and the functional differentiation of social systems have two major consequences: social systems, as the main structure of society, distinguish themselves first by their different functions and second by their conscious demarcation from each other. Each system has an inside and an outside, and the difference between in and out are, for example, different codes, different languages and different meanings (e.g., classifications, interpretations of observations or evaluative logics).

Luhmann (2005 [1975], 10f.; 2013, 131–153) accordingly describes three forms of societal systems. Interaction systems are the simplest form of a social system, in which mutual perception and the informal interaction of individuals and objects are the main components. Organizational systems (e.g., art organizations at the mesolevel, such as music labels, museums, theaters, festivals, publishers, film production companies, cultural foundations) are interaction systems on a more formal level, where rules of membership, a high degree of motive generalization, complex coordination and behavioral specifications exist. Social systems (e.g., the economic system, legal system, political system, religious system, art system) are very complex systems. Social systems are located in the macrolevel, the highest level of social aggregation. The more complex a society is, the further apart and functionally independent these social systems are. However, Luhmann does not see this differentiation as negative, nor as a sign of social dysfunctionality, as distancing prevents crises at a lower-system level that could lead to crises on higher levels. He seems to take an affirmative stance with regards to functional differentiation since he argues that through advanced functional differentiation societies become more efficient and resilient. Particularly by the principle of "legitimation through formal procedures" (Luhmann 1969a), tensions can be shifted from a higher level to a lower level without endangering the upper-level systems. For instance, Dadaism questioned the traditional concept of art, and the conflicts around Dadaist artworks (e.g., the exhibition *International Dada Fair* in Berlin 1920) were conducted on the level of art criticism without questioning the art system as such. The same happened during the culture wars in the United States throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, when some artworks, for example,

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Andres Seranno's *Piss Christ* (1987), or Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibition *The Perfect Moment* (1989), which certain groups found offensive, provoked debates about arts organizations and funding bodies without destabilizing the art system as such (see Dubin 1999).

From the 1980s onwards, Luhmann extended the two central concepts of complexity and functional differentiation by two further terms: autopoiesis and contingency. Autopoiesis literally means self-creation, and according to Luhmann (1995 [1984], 34ff.) self-reproduction and self-preservation through self-reference. The introduction of autopoiesis dramatically modified systems theory, as a social system that is autopoietic does not emerge from any pregiven elements but builds its elements itself. It is thus defined solely by its self-referential communication, which affirms and reproduces its own operational logic. Self-reference is conditionally dependent on the ability of a particular social system to establish an effective demarcation from its environment. Therefore, a particular social system is self-referential in as far as it organizes itself from within (1995, 218ff.). The opposite of autopoiesis is allopoiesis (also heteropoiesis); the opposite of self-reference is allo-reference (also hetero-reference), that is, externally driven reference. As an aside, it should be noted that Luhmann's concepts of autopoiesis and allopoiesis are rather akin to Bourdieu's concepts of autonomy and heteronomy. However, in Luhmann's systems theory there is no room for allopoietic (externally directed) processes since from the moment such processes occur within a particular system that system loses its specific functionality and ceases to exist. For instance, when the political system interferes directly in the art system, something that often happens in a dictatorship, communication in and through publicly exhibited artworks become political communication. Consequently, this means the end of the autonomous art system. It is important not to confuse allopoiesis with structural coupling (1995, 219). The art system can find its environment abrasive without losing its autonomous functioning and therefore its autopoiesis (Luhmann 2000a, 50). This happens, for instance, when issues of gender inequality, racism or violence that emerge in the social environment become artistically reflected on and incorporated into artworks. In so doing, they do not cease being artworks – think, for instance, of the following cases: Virginia Woolf's novel *A Room of One's Own*, Valie Export's performance *Touch Cinema* or Bob Dylan's song *Hurricane*.

Contingency by definition excludes necessity and impossibility and refers to the dynamics and ambiguities of social relationships, to the unforeseeable consequences of events in a complex society, as well as to the structural possibility of acting differently, that is, to the indeterminacy of social systems (Luhmann 1995 [1984], 106ff.). In our complex societies, it is increasingly

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difficult to choose a course of action because we cannot fully estimate the consequences of action. Therefore, we all pervasively experience contingency, for instance, randomness, unforeseeable risk factors or fuzzy sets (1995, 112, 358). As a quasi-safety procedure against unintended consequences, people therefore make greater use of double observation and orientation: actors do not only observe what is happening, but also observe themselves, and are observed by others while observing others (see 1995, 103). Here Luhmann is referring to Parsons (1968b, 436).[7] Either actors themselves realize that they should change their behavior or others will tell them. Luhmann defines this double observation as an observation of second-order that,[8] especially in autopoietic systems, contributes to the formation and then to the consolidation of subsystems. This double observation, which accompanies double contingency, promotes reflexivity and self-reflexivity. This is the case for any artwork that reflects itself in relation to its own (physical, social, institutional) environment.

7 "The crucial reference points for analyzing interaction are two: (1) that each actor is both acting agent and object of orientation both to himself and to the others; and (2) that, as acting agent, he orients to himself and to others and, as object, has meaning to himself and to others, in all of the primary modes or aspects.... From these premises derives the fundamental proposition of the double contingency of interaction. Not only, as for isolated behaving units, animal or human, is a goal outcome contingent on successful cognition and manipulation of environmental objects by the actors, but since the most important objects involved in interaction act too, it is also contingent on their interaction for intervention in the course of events" (Parsons 1968b, 436).

8 A brief explanation of the terminology: first-order observations are primarily concerned with the question of what is being observed, for instance, when someone looks attentively at a work of art (see Luhmann 2000a, 62). Second-order observations are concerned with the question of how one communicates through arts, how others observe and decode artistic communication, and what specific rules of communication exist in the art system (2000a, 71ff.). Producing art according to a particular artistic program, buying a painting as an investment, and art criticism include second-order observations. Both types are not mutually exclusive, since "the second-order observer, mind you, is a first-order observer as well, for he must distinguish and designate the observer he intends to observe" (Luhmann 1999, 20). See also Heinz von Foerster's (1979) distinction between first-order cybernetics as the cybernetics of observed systems, and second-order cybernetics as the cybernetics of observing systems.

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3 Specific characteristics of the art system

Autonomy, autopoiesis and self-referentiality: three interrelated characteristics

The formation of art as an autonomous social system is understood as a historical process that began in Europe in the 16th century. Luhmann embedded this formative process within a general process of transformation and functional differentiation by modern European societies. Particularly during the final decades of the 18th century, social domains like science, the economy, jurisdiction and arts gained greater distance from other influencing external forces (Luhmann 2000a, 144, 179). During this period, the authority of clerical institutions and the established segregation of social classes based on the nobility system started dissolving. The emergence of a public sphere (newspapers, journals) and intellectual discourses in salons, greater mobility and specific art organizations (art academies, museums, theaters) all supported the development of an art discourse with its own logic. However, Luhmann is unlike other scholars who also refer to the autonomy of the arts. The postulated autonomy of social systems, and in particular of the art system, does not refer to independence from society, but to the operational self-reproduction of the system. In this sense, autonomy means primarily the establishment of system-intrinsic criteria for selection and programming (2000a, 185ff.).[9] This operational autonomy accompanies resistance to the influence of other social systems (e.g., religion, politics and censorship, the economy). Yet, Luhmann (e.g., 2000a, 252) would never argue that other systems (e.g., art markets, public funding) are irrelevant for the art system. The operational autonomy of the art system therefore takes place within society, and the art system is structurally coupled with other social systems. He writes that "art participates in society by differentiating itself as a system" (2000a, 134; see also Luhmann 1990).

Operational autonomy, in other words, the principle of self-determination of the art system, leads to what Luhmann calls autopoiesis. Autopoiesis denies any external direct influence (allopoiesis). Autopoietic systems are self-referential systems, meaning that the system's relational self-production governs the system's capacity to have contacts with its environment (Luhmann 1995 [1984], 218ff.). In other words, the system's connection with its environment is no longer a kind of immediate and direct relationship between the system and its environment, but instead becomes a reflexive relation mediated by the self-

9 For Luhmann (2000a, 166f.; 2008d), Romantic artists in the early 19th century were the first to become aware of their artistic autonomy.

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referential loops that constitute the system itself. When one speaks of an autopoietic social system one also means a self-referential system (see Luhmann 1990).

Autopoietic closure and self-reference organize the art system as an integral whole. However, they do not imply predictability, that is, rote iteration. Here the idea of complexity has to be introduced: the art system cannot fully oversee and understand its internal communications, nor the huge amount of information from its social and physical environment. Furthermore, information is ambiguous and polyvalent, as understanding includes a priori misunderstanding (Luhmann 2000a, 40). Anticipation is but one of the many intriguing features of self-referential systems, but it is inseparably linked to surprise (2000a, 129, 157; 2012, 19, 36).

Luhmann is aware of limits and challenges to his theory. With reference to artworks that irritate and provoke observers, he writes:

> This is true of "modern" art, especially when it acts capriciously enough to explode the boundaries of the tolerable and pulls the rug out from underneath all previously valid criteria. Doing so requires a memory that allows the art system to construct and reconstruct its evolution as if it followed an intelligible order. (Luhmann 2000a, 230)

However, the Duchampian proclamation that everything can become a work of art and the artistic transgression of codes, logics, criteria and definitions presents a problem for Luhmann's systems theory and the identity logic of the art system. He acknowledges that

> The avant-garde has raised the issue and put it into form. It remains to be seen whether and how the art system will deal with this challenge [that anything could become a work of art]. With growing freedom, the uncertainty of criteria will increase, and distinguishing between success and failure in art will become more difficult. (2000a, 315)

Artistic communication and structural couplings

According to Luhmann (2000a, 66, 186), the art system consists solely of internal communication that establishes relations and interactions. Luhmann (2000a, 116f.) refers to two kinds of communication: first of all, artworks as carriers of information communicate *with* other artworks. This kind of communication is unique if, and only if, art avoids common patterns of language and creates its own language for communication. "Art functions as communication although – or precisely because – it cannot be adequately rendered through words (let alone through concepts)" (2000a, 19; see also 22, 30). In this state, art's in-

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commensurability[10] confirms the autonomy of the art system. The second kind of communication is *about* artworks that become objects of communication (2000a, 118, 21).

> Communication can tolerate and even produce vagueness, incompletion, ambiguity, irony, and so forth, and it can place indeterminacies in ways that secure a certain usage. Such deliberate indeterminacies play a significant role, particularly in artistically mediated communication, to the point where we find ourselves confronted with the hopelessly unending interpretability of 'finished' works. (2000a, 11f.)

Communication between artists, intermediaries and art consumers about artworks takes place with reference to internal differentiations such as different aesthetic conceptions, artistic styles and art programs. Consequently, internal communication uses elaborate artistic criteria, such as beautiful/ugly, expressive/inexpressive, aesthetically complex/dumb, sensually inspiring/boring, or innovative/epigonal. Collectively accepted codes and criteria are not only effective in communication and in determining an adequate way to look at an artwork, but they also structure preferences (Luhmann 2008a [1976], 15f.). Finally, codes, criteria, programs and styles have a reciprocal relationship (Luhmann 2000a, 191). It is important to note that codes and criteria do not express an aesthetic judgment in a concrete sense – for example, This painting is beautiful – but rather create a basic logic, a "marked space," which is constitutive for communication. Communication does not necessarily lead to agreement about the value of an artwork, since the commonly applied criteria often have semantic variation (2000a, 193). Yet as long as people speak the same language, apply the same logics and operate in the same marked space, they participate as observers in the art system (2000a, 70, 78; see van Maanen 2009, 107).

An artwork is always both form (carrier) and meaning (information and utterance) (Luhmann 2000a, 11, 25–28). An observer – Luhmann does not think only of people, as he writes that "the observer can be a social system, and observation can be communication" (2000a, 128) – perceives aesthetic meaning ensconced in formal (e.g., stylistic and structural aspects) and symbolic elements (e.g., codes, allusions, metaphors).

> The work does not reveal itself "at a glance"; at most, it evokes some kind of stimulation or irritation that might trigger a deeper, more penetrating concern with the work. One needs indicators to recognize a work of art as

10 Dagmar Danko (2011, 205, 136) links Luhmann's concept of art with Derrida's interpretation of art as incommensurable, and Deleuze's conception of art as rendering the invisible visible.

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> an object, but these indicators offer no clue to understanding the artistic communication. (2000a, 21)

The judgments of observers convey their understanding of an artwork, and it can stimulate further communication. Again, it is important to note that Luhmann's (20000a, 11) use of observation, meaning and understanding is explicitly free of any psychological or hermeneutical reference. Since the art system is above all "a system of communication" (2000a, 3), artistic success should be associated with an increase in communication. Nevertheless, as we have already mentioned, communication is rarely straightforward and unambiguous. Therefore, Luhmann believes that "we might answer this question by considering that every artwork is its own program, and that it demonstrates success and novelty if it manages to show just that" (2000a, 202, see also 229).

Luhmann (2000a, 306f.) does not ascribe to art any metaphysical significance, but he acknowledges that art has a particular function in complex societies. A work of art is first and foremost a medium for the dissemination of aesthetic information. Art communicates through artworks about itself but also about society.

> Contrary to widely held notions, the function of art is not (or no longer) to represent or idealize the world, nor does it consist in a "critique" of society. Once art becomes autonomous, the emphasis shifts from hetero-reference to self-reference – which is not the same as self-isolation, not *l'art pour l'art*... But there is no such thing as self-reference (form) without hetero-reference... The function of art, one could argue, is to make the world appear within the world. (2000a, 148f.)

Therefore, a work of art can also become a medium of second-order observation if it enables the observer to reflect on the difference between medium and form (Luhmann 2008b [1986], 127f.). This is the case in conceptual art when particular artworks reflect the conditions of their formal properties, institutional embedding and the ambiguities of their significance. An example would be Hans Haacke's exhibition *Manet-PROJEKT* in 1974, which analyzes the provenance of Eduard Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880).[11] Therefore, art also stim-

11 Like in many of Haacke's artworks, he broke down the boundaries between art and business systems, or politics and history. By investigating the provenance of Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* he discovered that all preceding owners or art dealers of this painting were Jewish. The transfer to the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne in 1967 was carried out by the patron Hermann Josef Abs, who was not only at that time chairman of the Wallraf-Richartz curatorial board but also from 1937–1945 and from 1952–1976 in various leading positions in the board of Deutsche Bank, and an inglorious player in the "Aryanization" of Jewish as-

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ulates reflection about society. Furthermore, certain topics like ambivalence, contingency and fuzziness seemed to preoccupy many artists from the 1960s to 1990s, the period that Luhmann regarded as contemporary. Therefore, he sees art as a societal medium for deconstructing and redescribing the world (Luhmann 2000a, 142–144, 303–307, see Schinkel 2010, 270ff.).

Even if Luhmann describes the art system in a posthumanist manner as an operatively closed system, and therefore underlines the pivotal role of artworks for making relevant utterances as well as of a system's intrinsic communication, selection and evaluation, he expands his view on communication circuits. Although artists, intermediaries, experts and art consumers are not elements of the art system, Luhmann (2000a, 3) reintroduces them as meaning-giving "psychic systems," or "systems of consciousness" that are structurally coupled with the art system (2000a, 48).[12] Individual artistic subjectivities, like thoughts, desires and aims, are internal operations of psychic systems that sometimes interfere with the art system's communication, especially during the formation of utterances. Such interferences generate arbitrariness and contingency in communication that irritate and sometimes trigger changes within the art system. Probably the most prominent examples for these mechanisms are the effects of the civil rights movement, feminism, LGBTQ+ contributions and current postcolonial discourses on arts organizations, art criticism and the valuation of artworks. As previously outlined, the problem of contingency becomes a particular problem of the art system, and the best means of coping with irritations, ambiguities and uncertainty is through second-order observation (2000a, 54ff.).

Another important aspect in Luhmanns' analysis of communication is its differentiation from observation. From the end of the 18th century – Luhmann (2000a, 132) here refers to museums, art collections and academic discourses – "a reflexive concept of culture" appeared. This intensified second-order observations and self-descriptions in arts. At that time the role of art criticism and art philosophy therefore gained importance. Luhmann does not regard these domains – art criticism and art philosophy – as parts of the art system, notably because they use language as a means of communication (2000a, 53). At the same time, he admits that "this world of art criticism, which is affected by art

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sets during the Nazi era. Haacke conveyed this in his conceptual art project in 1974, putting the selling and reselling of this painting in a broader historical and political perspective. However, the director at the Wallraf-Richartz Museum uninvited Haacke from the exhibition, so the work was first shown at a private gallery in Cologne.

12 Public opinion is, for Luhmann (2000a, 65), "not an aggregate of psychic system states, but rather a product of a specific communication that provides the starting point for further communications."

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and reflected upon in works of art, is the true source of the art system's self-description" (2000a, 166); and "criticism is where intellectual fashions affect the art system" (2000a, 308). His remarks make sense because the art system and the realm of intellectual analysis and interpretation of art are structurally coupled. But they remain essentially different. Structural coupling presupposes this difference and independence; therefore, with reference to Arthur Danto (1985), Luhmann (2000a, 307) denies that philosophy of art could influence the internal decisions of the art system. Mutual observation as it occurs between art and philosophy of art is simply not communication.

4 Critique of Luhmann's systems theory

Luhmann did not develop his theory empirically, and he remains skeptical about the epistemological relevance of empirical data. It is therefore unclear under what criteria and what evidence his theory could be falsified or proved to offer inadequate explanations of the social organization of arts. Therefore, even some of his sympathetic critics (e.g., Starnitzke 1992, 83f.) admit that the "ground contact" of his theory is weak. We also acknowledge that his sociology of art is equally self-referential and autopoetic as his own interpretation of the art system. Luhmann is well aware of this problem and is ready to defend his position by arguing that sociology "should not allow itself to be duped by reality. Viewed in this way, abstraction is an epistemological necessity" (Luhmann 1995 [1984], ii); "This kind of (theoretically directed) conceptual abstraction … makes comparisons possible" (1995 [1984], 2). Certainly, his theoretical approach has its merits and its weaknesses.

Anyone who reads Luhmann faces several challenges in trying to understand his texts. However, his strict and artificial language is not idiosyncratic, but rather indicates his struggle to create a stringent theoretical transformation of traditional systems theory in order to address the complexity of postmodern societies (see, e.g., Luhmann 2000a, 2). These societies are polycentric and polycontextual (2000a, 186, 190, 243; 2013, 156, 183, 282). It is crucial for his systems theory that there is no predominance of any social system. His elaboration of functional differentiation and autopoiesis strengthens this basic assertion.

Although the concept of function is central to Luhmann's theory, he overcomes the limitations of classical functionalism because in his work functions do not serve social structures. He puts functions before and above structures. By postulating the operative unity of a social system, functions are systemic operations that enable selection (e.g., via the binary code of fitting/nonfitting forms) and communication (e.g., by marking distinctions and hence fostering

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art's autopoiesis). In order to identify the main function of art in contemporary societies, which consists of "integrating what is in principle incommunicable – namely, perception – into the communication network of society" (2000a, 141), he relates sensory experience – which originally occurs in consciousness mostly in a tacit and incommunicable form – to social communication about experiences through artworks. Artists make first-order observations, but these observations are not sufficient for creating art. Artists' second-order observations introduce a dynamic interplay between their sensory experiences, socially distributed artistic forms and meaning-giving toward a significant artistic communication (see 2000a 95, 109, 137–141). If the contemporary art system was not autonomous, then art would not have a genuine artistic function – for example, to represent the power of the state, to legitimize or criticize social order, to make good business, etc. Luhmann (2000a., 148f.) acknowledges these possible functions, but his functional analysis of the contemporary art system highlights its self-reference and autopoiesis.

Luhmann's theory is a postontological theory of society that was developed deductively on a strictly theoretical basis. As a constructivist, he considers the main endeavor of sociological analysis to reduce complexity. Therefore, his theoretical modeling of how modern societies organize communication around artworks highlights the internal operations of the art system. Although Luhmann explicitly insists on reducing complexity, his systems theory develops a dynamic picture of social structuration: social systems generate sets of possibilities before any specific decision or operation can take place. These sets of possibilities are not pregiven as fixed social structures, but are constantly reproduced and re-invented by the actual selections and decisions currently feasible (see Baecker 2001, 66). In Luhmann's theory, society in general, and the art system in particular, operate and develop conditionalities that do not eliminate contingency and indeterminacy.

Now we can turn to the theoretical weaknesses. Luhmann's systems theory quickly polarized the academic field in Germany. Some of his early critics, among others Jürgen Habermas, dubbed Luhmann's theory technocratic functionalism and further lambasted it for demonstrating a remarkable indifference to crucial normative topics, like social inequalities, gender-based discrimination, exploitation and violence. It is true that Luhmann does not explicitly criticize any social arrangements since he does not see social and cultural critique as a sociological task. However, Habermas' verdict was also clear: Luhmann's systems theory is nothing but "an apology for the existing social order" (Habermas 1971, 170, our translation). This critique reflects a normative understanding of sociologists as citizens and political thinkers that is essential for any critical sociology.

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Richard Münch (1994, 304) criticizes Luhmann's version of systems theory for being too detached from social reality. Social systems are not closed but are mutually interpenetrated; they are not indifferent toward system-external values since culture as a system of shared and binding values is omnipresent in all social systems (Münch 1982, 789ff.). Münch notes:

> One can analytically construct how economics, politics, law and science would function autopoietically. However, concrete social action is always a network of economy, politics, law and science at the same time.... Especially in modern society, the empirical systems (or better: fields of action) of economy, politics, law and science are ... zones of interpenetration of systems which can be separated from each other analytically, but which always ... interact together. (Münch 1991, 172f.; our translation)

Although structural coupling is, according to Luhmann (2000a, 50), pivotal for any social system, he writes very little about the structural coupling of art systems with other social systems like the economic system (art market, labor market, distribution of wealth), the legal system (basic cultural rights, copyright), the political system (cultural policies, public direct and indirect funding, public patronage), or the academic system (philosophy of arts, arts studies, artistic education).[13] Indeed, Luhmann regards such couplings as less significant:

> There are only a few, rather loose structural couplings between the art system and other systems. As before, a specialized art market couples the art system and the economic system. But in this market, artworks are traded as capital investments or as extremely expensive individual goods.... However, one should not overestimate the irritating effects of the market on the production of art. (Luhmann 2000a, 242f.)

So it is not surprising that a great deal of criticism has arisen around Luhmann's concept of structural coupling. Again, Münch points out where the theoretical problem lies:

> The term structural coupling is a response by Luhmann that was forced upon him by an increasing amount of criticism.... In fact, the introduction of "structural couplings" into his theory is nothing less than the collapse of the theory of the autopoietic system itself.... How can a system reproduce itself through its own operations and through nothing but these operations when we learn that its existence simultaneously depends on operations that lie outside the system itself? ... An autopoietic legal system would have to empirically reproduce its definitions of right or wrong. However, this is

13 In most cases, Luhmann (2000a) discusses the art system's structural couplings with psychic systems or structural couplings between first-order and second-order observations.

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> far from the reality, since the empirical definition of legal right or wrong, the legal code and especially the legal program depend not only on clear legal concepts, but also on cultural concepts of justice, people's general trust in the courts, the assertiveness of the legal professions, payments for legal services and political constellations. Therefore, the definition of what is legally right or wrong is empirically a legal, cultural, community, economic and political act at the same time. (Münch 1996, 352, our translation)

Willem Schinkel finds Luhmann's radical concept of autonomy and autopoiesis dubious. It is true, as Schinkel points out (2010, 272, 275, 287), that certain art theorists, among others Clement Greenberg, emphasized the self-referentiality of modern art; and that postmodern constructivists regard the art system as the sole determinant for defining what art is, but Schinkel is critical about overvaluing self-referentiality. If art does not reflect the established power structures in the world, then it fails to fulfill its function of making alternatives to reality visible and of forcing reflection on intangible aspects of the world (2012, 270). It is worth remembering that Luhmann (2000a, 149) himself states:

> The function of art, one could argue, is to make the world appear within the world.... A work of art is capable of symbolizing the reentry of the world into the world because it appears – just like the world – incapable of emendation. The paradox unique to art, which art creates and resolves, resides in the observability of the unobservable. (Luhmann 2000a, 149)

Furthermore, Schinkel criticizes Luhmann's neglect of power relationships manifest in the role of gatekeepers:

> When analyzing communication through art, one cannot do without communications by artists, connoisseurs, distributors, dealers, publishers, exhibitioners and the like. All the positions of these actors fulfill gatekeeper functions in the artworld, which is intended here also in the sense of control over legitimate meanings of communications through art.... Pace Luhmann, I therefore maintain that communications through art do not gain meaning independently of communications about art. (Schinkel 2010, 279)

Last but not least, we are critical of Luhmann's conception of art as it is rooted in Kant's aesthetics (1987 [1790]). So, for example, Luhmann argues:

> But where is the orientation toward a special function of art headed?.... In accordance with the literature on the subject, we established that an artwork does not grow naturally but is an artificially manufactured object, and we emphasized its lack of utility for social contexts of any sort (whether economic, religious, or political).... The function of art would then consist in integrating what is in principle incommunicable – namely, perception – into the communication network of society. Kant already located the func-

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> tion of art (of the presentation of aesthetic ideas) in its capacity to stimulate thinking in ways that exceed verbal or conceptual comprehension. (Luhmann 2000a, 140f.)

We are of the opinion that Luhmann has an incomprehensibly narrow definition of art. It is surely problematic to ask what distinct features (according to Luhmann's own codes) and functions (e.g., the aesthetic communication of the incommunicable) artworks have in common (for a critique of such kinds of definitions, see Wittgenstein 1999 [1953], §§ 66–72). Instead, we prefer to highlight the plural manifestations of contemporary art. In its separation from its environment, art crosses several boundaries. Art sometimes becomes social action, participates actively in community life, copies economic goods and financial products, shapes aesthetic identities and forms of life, mimics natural processes, becomes conceptual and thus close to humanities and so on. Furthermore, Luhmann's negation of art's social utility could be understood to mean that arts are free of any ideology, that is that social and political ideologies are irrelevant to arts. Perhaps Luhmann (2000a, 134) would respond to this criticism by arguing that the sociology of arts is "not primarily concerned with problems of causality, of society's influence on art and of art on society. (Such issues are of secondary importance.)" However, many artists that are committed to socially engaged art projects would feel excluded for unintelligible and perhaps normative reasons. Finally, since Luhmann uses a very traditional and narrow concept of art, he does not discuss the emergence of commercially oriented arts and mass production, nor cultural expressions that are not part of the traditional high arts, for example, music forms like blues, bossa nova, reggae or visual art forms like graffiti, art brut and folk arts. By neglecting these differentiations, Luhmann's art system appears homogeneous and monocultural. Perhaps Luhmann tacitly has a normative concept of art, in other words, a blind spot in his theory.

5 Extending Luhmann's art systems theory

With reference to the above-mentioned critiques, and especially after Luhmann's demise, several social theorists who were generally sympathetic to systems theory tried to extend and modify it by criticizing his concept of entirely closed systems, by emphasizing the porosity of the demarcation between one system and its environment, and by commenting on the interpenetration of various systems. In what follows, we will present two positions: the Finnish art sociologist Erkki Sevänen counters Luhmann's differentiation approach with a

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de-differentiation concept; and the German cultural economist Michael Hutter deepens Luhmann's concept of relations to other systems by pointing out the important need for structural coupling among systems.

Luhmann's emphasis on closed systems is at the heart of Erkki Sevänen's attempt to modify the systems theory approach to arts. Luhmann's theory stands and falls with the differentiation theory of modernity. This means that from the moment one can observe a dissolution of the boundaries of social systems or a social de-differentiation – for example, because global crises like climate change disrupt the autonomy and autopoiesis of individual social systems – Luhmann's version of systems theory loses its validity. Sevänen (2018, 3) proposes the principle of de-differentiation, which is characteristic of late modernity. Culture and the rest of society are not as clearly separated as Luhmann insists. Globalization has caused states to lose their economic and political independence and their traditional cultural identity. Several crisscrossing subsystems have merged, for example, economy and technology (e.g., companies like Google and Facebook, but also Netflix or Spotify) as well as art and technology (such as NFT art, electronic music and DIY culture). Furthermore, Sevänen suggests that communication should at least be complemented by an emphasis on action, and Luhmann's firm allocation of socially important functions to systems should at least be amended by an agency approach.

The boundaries of the art system should be softened because there are too many interactions and communications among other systems with the art system (Sevänen 2001, 88). For instance, money (the economic medium) has become an essential part of the art system; the same can be said for knowledge (the education medium) or power (the politics medium) (see Sevänen. 2018, 20ff.). These relationships among the art system and other systems were not developed by Luhmann. He would argue that there are no direct relationships; such relationships are always products of second-order observations, that is, strong control and even sanctions in the art system if they were to be tested. Sevänen (2001, 2018) criticizes this formalist view by indicating that many boundaries of art vs. non-art and artistic codes – like beautiful vs. not beautiful – are obsolete, at least since Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades and in many participatory art projects that intervene in social space. Since gatekeepers have the authority and the power to determine an object to be a work of art, the medium power (or the system of politics) becomes relevant in the art system as well (Sevänen 2001, 93).

The significance of powerful people and organizations, which Luhmann locates outside the art system, makes it worth looking at the relationship between the art system and the political and economic system. Luhmann mentions this in passing when he develops his concept of structural coupling, but he dismisses

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the significance of the markets for the art system because markets use different codes and valuations. Breaking free of this rigid formalism, Sevänen (2001, 95ff.) applies Münch's (1982) theory of action and proposes overlapping areas between the differentiated systems, so-called interpenetrating zones that belong to different systems simultaneously – for example, art galleries not only sell artworks, but also constitute a public sphere and often convey understanding of art works by interacting with visitors or publishing exhibition catalogs. Therefore, such interpenetrating zones do not exclude autopoiesis, because only certain activities are to be found in such zones. De-differentiations of this kind certainly imply that the art system loses parts of its assumed normative autonomy and distinctiveness. However, the interpenetration of systems is much more empirically grounded than the thesis of strict demarcation between systems.

In many respects, Michael Hutter's (2001; 2015; 2021) emphasis on the concept of structural coupling takes a similar path to Sevänen's emphasis on interpenetration. This is clear because Hutter criticizes the lack of an interweaving of social systems in Luhmann's original theory, although he also remarks that Luhmann was aware of this deficiency and therefore developed the rather abstract concept of structural coupling (Hutter 2001, 290). According to Luhmann (2000a, 54ff.), these couplings have the function of "irritating" the operations of the other system. As a cultural economist, Hutter focuses on couplings between the art system and the economic system, even though each system has its own medium, code and logic. Artists, art dealers, art managers, art collectors and art buyers, who could be grouped as "psychic systems," are involved in collaborative situations and therefore have to communicate using their specific language and symbols despite the difficulty that each side speaks its own language and uses patterns of regularity called "schemes." The schemes of the other side are sources of irritation, and Hutter (2001, 293ff.) mentions many historical examples of such structural couplings. Hutter (2001, 298) describes how Bauhaus spread a new set of elementary forms that shaped Western architecture and interior design for many decades. Architects and designers who worked at Bauhaus, an art school in Weimar Germany from 1919 – 1933, were inspired by abstract geometric shapes as were developed by Dutch De Stijl and Russian constructivism. When most of them moved to North America, they succeeded in transferring the Bauhaus style to mass market production, taking advantage of cheap industrial production techniques. Because the Bauhaus style was highly appreciated aesthetically, its mass commodities could be sold for higher prices, an example of how artistic reputation leads to economic benefit.

Hutter (2001, 303) also refers to Honoré de Balzac, who wrote several novels dealing with the social and economic structures in France of the mid-19th century (e.g., about pawnshops, money lending, financial speculations), espe-

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cially about how money changes personal relations and shapes social behavior, illustrating how social and economic issues influence the content of artworks (see also Hutter 2015).

Hutter adds organizations, another group of players, to the coupling of systems. No study of the confrontation of codes, meanings or values from different systems is complete without an inquiry into the communication of organizations (see Hutter and Shusterman 2006; Hutter 2021). Luhmann was well aware of their pivotal role, and he interprets organizations as autopoietic functional systems. "Organizations deserve more attention, and in different ways, than they have found so far" (Luhmann 2000b [1978], 7). Organizations like museums, theaters, concert halls, but also for-profit businesses that are part of the cultural industries "know and use the valuation scale of the system within which they operate. At the same time, they know and use the valuation scales of the other functional systems in their environment" (Hutter 2001, 308). Therefore, organizations often use artistic codes in their communication – sometimes aided by advertising companies – to embellish their goods (2000b, 310). Additionally, many nonprofit arts organizations (concert halls, museums and theaters) rely more and more on funding and sponsoring, and thus need to have friends' associations that, as intermediaries, can translate between the different systems of arts, economy and cultural policy (see Kirchberg 2005a). Different perspectives on cultural goods and valuations cause systemic irritations that can have positive or negative effects, that is, they create inspiration and innovative impulses or conflicts between different participants.

With his systems theory approach, Luhmann certainly has the most organizational structure-oriented approach of all three sociologists we have now presented. His explanatory approach is the least emotionalized, his deliberately sober and certainly therefore vulnerable position on the subject is at odds with both Becker and Bourdieu. Today systems theory appears to have a critical revival in sociology and organizational sociology. This might be due to the increasing clashes of lifeworlds and spheres of actions, norms and values due to times of crises that the arts and their organization cannot escape. One advantage of Luhmann's holistic approach is its usefulness for many different topics (or systems) – and thus a starting point for more specific research, which is the focus of part II of this book.

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Chapter 5 | A Comparative Discussion of the Theories of Becker, Bourdieu and Luhmann

All three sociologists – Howard S. Becker, Pierre Bourdieu and Niklas Luhmann – are classics in the sense that their works had a major impact on sociology in general and prompted a boom in the sociology of arts in particular. Despite varying criticism, many scholars still appreciate the intellectual quality of their oeuvres. It is also appropriate to call them classics because their works have become integral to many sociology curricula.

All three worked on a variety of sociological topics and therefore are not only sociologists of art. Becker (1982, xi) makes it explicit that his "principle of analysis is social organizational," adding that his "approach seems to stand in direct contradiction to the dominant tradition in the sociology of art" and therefore he "would not quarrel" with others if they said "that what I have done here is not the sociology of art at all but rather the sociology of occupations." Bourdieu's predominant interest focused on issues relating to power and the reproduction of social inequalities. So, he was aware of the political dimension of his research – and of his sociology of arts – and strove to integrate scholarship and commitment as a public intellectual in order to achieve *un savoir engagé* (Bourdieu 2002b, 3), that is, a socially and politically engaged knowledge. Luhmann devoted his life's work to formulating a general theory of society, which is functionally fragmented into several societal systems (e.g., legal, economic, political, art systems) and smaller interaction systems (e.g., psychic systems, love relationships). His interest in arts serves his ambition of creating a new post-Parsonian – one might add, postmodern – systems theory and he acknowledges that "art becomes a topic in the first place, not because of a peculiar inclination of the author, but because of the assumption that a social theory claiming universality cannot ignore the existence of art" (Luhmann 2000a, 3).

Coincidentally, all three sociologists were born between 1927 and 1930 and belong to the same generation, though they grew up in quite different social, political, cultural and intellectual environments. It is difficult to argue that all

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three have a common subject, but we can identify overlapping interests and commonalities:

- All three scholars set their topics of research within dynamic networks of relationships and interdependencies called either social worlds, fields or systems, which coexist and are situationally coupled with each other. In this sense, Becker, Bourdieu and Luhmann are contextualists and generally argue against essentialist positions[1] (see also our theoretical discussion of "context" in chapter 9).
- All three presuppose social differentiation – Becker focuses more on horizontal, Bourdieu on vertical, and Luhmann on functional differentiation.
- All three highlight distinctions and boundaries between open and closed organizational forms, belonging and nonbelonging, inner and outer spaces in worlds, fields or systems. However, the distinction inner/outer, belonging/not-belonging is less important for Becker,[2] but pivotal for Luhmann and Bourdieu.
- All three clearly distanced themselves from methodological individualism and the dualism between micro and macro. Consequently, they emphasize the collective origin of artistic developments and reject the glorification of artists via the idealistic concept of genius.

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1 Essentialism with reference to sociological theories means that central social categories – for example, class, power, family, gender – refer to stable and unambiguous states, entities, structures or properties. Essentialist claims do not allow for contingent variations among individuals and social categories. Anti-essentialism argues that social categories are volatile because they refer to social entities with certain constitutive conditions that are semantically and situationally ambiguous. Furthermore, social entities undergo temporal changes within dynamic contexts that modify their shape and meaning.

2 Becker (1982, 35) notes: "Art worlds do not have boundaries around them, so that we can say that these people belong to a particular art world while those people do not. I am not concerned with drawing a line separating an art world from other parts of society." However, his emphasis on the role of particular conventions (1982, 40ff.) and his distinction between integrated professionals, mavericks, folk and naïve artists (1982, 226ff.) add relevance to the dimension of belonging and nonbelonging. Therefore, he (1982, 233) states: "Every organized art world produces mavericks." Mavericks are at the margins, and they can only succeed "by circumventing the need for art world institutions" (1982, 235). In an even more exposed outside space, we encounter naïve artists who "do not know the members of the ordinary art world" (1982, 258).

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In this chapter we want to compare Becker's, Bourdieu's and Luhmann's sociological models of how contemporary societies organize arts, including their production, distribution, consumption and valuation, and how they structure artistic practices through educational programs, professional specialization, legal regulations, formal organizations and the allocation of resources. Although we have just noted certain commonalities, their sociological oeuvres are based on very different theoretical and methodological approaches. All three sociologists knew the works of the others, and their reciprocal comments (more often in polemical rather than analytical) tend to highlight their differences. Only Becker and Luhmann seem not to have commented on each other – maybe because their differences are indeed very fundamental. Bourdieu and Luhmann are first and foremost theorists of society, whereas Becker focuses on occupational and organizational relationships from the interactionist and the grounded theory perspective. Bourdieu as a critical sociologist aims to reveal art's "function of legitimating social differences" as well as the fundamental logics of artistic fields (Bourdieu 1984, 7; see Zolberg 1990, 156–161). As a radical constructivist, Luhmann does not claim his theories correspond with empirical reality, since he regards concepts like reality and truth as nothing more than products of a system-intrinsic communication (Nassehi 1992, 61f.). From this epistemological perspective, Luhmann developed his work in relative isolation and far removed from empirical research.

1 Sociological models

For Becker, art worlds are networks of interacting people that are formally or informally organized around a shared project. Art worlds as a kind of social formation with varying rules are emergent phenomena (Hughes 2015, 773). In this sense, the term art world, which is embedded in the tradition of the Chicago School, suggests a logical demarcation through participation, although Becker emphasizes that art worlds are related to each other and consequently form a broader web of working and organizational relationships. The original term social world refers to a practical and cognitive community (Unruh 1980). Such a community is built upon a practice domain – one could also call it an occupational collective (Zembylas 2004, 251–263). World is a sociological metaphor with a relatively open meaning and therefore does not suggest spatial boundaries (Hughes 2015, 778f.). In this interpretation, several interrelated art worlds form a sector through different umbrella organizations, such as unions, professional associations and other interest groups. Although Becker does not focus much on this higher level of aggregation – Richard Peterson, Diana Crane,

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Paul DiMaggio and other sociologists of the Production of Culture Perspective do (see chapter 6) – this extension is, from his own theoretical perspective, permissible. To sum up, the metaphorical term art worlds highlights social interactions framed by shared beliefs and understandings including conventions, tastes, judgments and practical reasoning. Yet, Becker's approach is not an individualistic one. Structuring elements, like conventions and powerful positions with access to and control of resources are regarded as effective, though not determining in a causal sense. By drawing an analogy to musical improvisation, Becker therefore underlines the openness and contingency of working processes at all stages (production, distribution, presentation and valuation).

Field is a very different metaphor. Bourdieu (1971b [1966], 161) himself refers to magnetic fields that are defined by the effects of magnetic forces on other particles entering the field. This image suggests that there are structuring properties of attraction and repulsion that make one social field distinct from another. To be in a social field means, according to this spatial and physical analogy, to occupy a position and to be affected in a certain determining manner by the particular properties of this field. (We deliberately avoid the idea of causal effects because of the multiplicity of social relationships.) Since there are better or worse positions in a social field (Bourdieu does not regard this valuation as subjective), individuals always fight for better positions. Therefore, *position* has an objective but also a relational meaning, being the result of possessions, quarrels and struggles (Bourdieu 1996, 231). However, Bourdieu (1996, 187, 291, 298) avoids essentialism, since he emphasizes that the structural properties of artistic fields are volatile due to the formation of internal forces and to the possible interferences by other social fields, especially the field of power in a given historical situation. His understanding of social fields is not mechanical, because the nexus of place, time and situation form "a space of possibilities" – Bourdieu refers to Elias's concept of configuration – that prestructure individual action (Bourdieu 2000, 183f.). Yet, the individual does not vanish into an ocean of various social forces. Bourdieu ascribes an individual's potential for agency as framed by the space of possibilities since individuals can strategically act, invest resources, build alliances and acquire dispositions to avoid external domination (Bourdieu 1996, 57ff.; Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, 73f.). Here Bourdieu's theory comes very close to Giddens's (1984) thesis of the duality of structure and agency and is opposed to Foucault's theory of a comprehensively disciplined subject (Bourdieu 1998, 55; Cronin 1996; Kirchberg 2007).

In social science the introduction of the term system, which was already used in modern mathematics, the theory of logic, and biology, can be traced back to Talcott Parsons (1951). Systems, by definition, have precise and un-

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ambiguous structural characteristics (e.g., unity and clear demarcation from the outer; consistency, functionality, self-referentiality). Several metaphorical analogies to biology and living organisms can be found in the works of Parsons (who received his bachelor's degree in biology) as well as in the works of Luhmann (Haines 1987; Villanyi and Lübcke 2011). Originally, Parsons used the term system as an epistemic tool that, first, helped bypass the very general term society by emphasizing its differentiation; second, gave sociological concepts such as social order and structure a particular interpretation; and, third, argued that social phenomena are grounded in basic organizing principles. Since then, system as a master concept has evolved further. Luhmann is a post-Parsonian scholar, who formulated systems theory in a constructivist spirit, arguing that it is the observer who conceives of modern society as a functional whole. Consequently, system is not an ontological concept, because Luhmann's theory implies "a radical de-ontologizing of objects as such" (Luhmann 1995 [1984], 177). Luhmann therefore differs from Parsons on several points: his supra-individual systems theory is devoid of any concept of human action or social behavior,[3] is more radical in asserting system-intrinsic codes and operational autonomy, and acknowledges contingency as having an important role in evolutionary processes. All these characteristics also apply to his sociology of art (see Luhmann 1986, 620–671).

Summing up, Bourdieu and Luhmann claim to have formulated a comprehensive account of the social and therefore their theories do not need other social theories to supplement their own theoretical approach. Becker's interactionist approach, on the contrary, is compatible with other approaches for example, with the Production of Culture Perspective (see chapter 6).

2 Understandings of art

As we have already argued, different metaphorical images go hand in hand with different ways of viewing, analyzing and modeling the social organization of arts. In this section, we will explore these differences analytically.

All three are sociologists rather than art philosophers; therefore, they refrain from explicit normative definitions of art or artistic judgments and are more preoccupied with the complex role of arts in contemporary societies.[4]

3 Luhmann deliberately speaks of operations instead of actions, but this technical term is so comprehensive that it may also include mechanical, preprogrammed and algorithmic operations.

4 It is not a coincidence that all three sociologists refer several times to the notorious Marcel Duchamp.

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Becker discusses several times the classification of a work as an artwork, arguing that there is no dogmatic answer but only a sociological response to this question. With a critical proximity to Arthur Danto and George Dickie, Becker (1982, 148f.) affirms that art is practically negotiated in existing art worlds. Therefore art is "what an art world ratifies as art" (1982, 156). The analysis of such labeling and justification processes – This is a work of art because ... – should therefore focus on who is claiming what, what the social relationships of people who engage in such negotiations are, what reasons they offer to support their judgments, and how institutions intervene in these processes (1982, 150–162). Additionally, Becker (2006, 23) takes an anti-essentialist stance when he states that "it is impossible, in principle, for sociologists or anyone else to speak of the 'work itself' because there is no such a thing." Artworks appear and are used in very different situations, which in turn aesthetically and socially, formally and semantically infuse the artworks presented or performed there.

Bourdieu would not disagree with Becker's understanding of art, but he would presumably ask what might be the question that precedes the classification of an object as an artwork. Since artistic fields have historically emerged and are characterized by objective social structures, he argues that the artistic field (including its various subfields) generates the space of possibilities with regards to artistic claims and recognition. Classifications and taxonomies reflect social struggles, and consequently Bourdieu (1984, 6) admits that "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make." The sociological analysis of artistic classification should, according to Bourdieu, uncover policies of inclusion and exclusion, vertical hierarchies and mechanisms of domination, and hence the practical functions of these social acts (see DiMaggio 1987a and chapter 6 in this book). In his later works, Bourdieu (1996, 242) recognized the self-reflexive and critical potential of contemporary art,[5] which, however, cannot be tapped if the viewers do not appreciate the context (see Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, 19f.).

5 The term contemporary art is ambiguous. In its temporal meaning it usually refers to artworks of the last two decades, but it also refers to a particular theoretical concept that demarcates certain kinds of artistic production from other art forms that are oriented toward established forms, for example, classical music, modern painting, the narrative novel in literature, etc. (see Danto 1997, 3ff.; Heinich 1998). Contemporary art in the latter sense is associated with a "trespassing of boundaries" (Heinich 2014, 34). Moreover, it is worth noting that this term is exclusively used for the so-called high arts, but not the popular arts.

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Luhmann relates the concept of art to historically changing expectations and explains the observation that nowadays there is no social consensus about aesthetic norms that would differentiate the art system (Luhmann 1992, 372, 376; 2000a, 18). He therefore does not ask What is art? but What does art do? First, art is distinctively different from other social domains (Luhmann 2000a, 21f.), and consequently artworks become media for establishing via a particular code of communication the art system as an autonomous social system. Second, Luhmann believes that in modern societies art transforms sensory experience, which originally occurs in consciousness in a tacit and incommunicable form, into social communication about experiences. Creating and presenting an artwork implies making sensations and aesthetic ideas intelligible in the context of aesthetic communication (see Luhmann 2000a, 95, 109, 137–141). Luhmann (2000a, 148f.) builds this functional analysis of contemporary art upon two assumptions: self-reference and autopoiesis. With the autonomy of the art system, aesthetic judgments such as beautiful/ugly, interesting/boring become self-referential because they are derived from system-internal criteria. Anyway Luhmann ascribes self-referentiality a central position in contemporary arts and he identifies the emergence of conceptual art – "a painting which is not to be seen" (Baldwin, Harrison and Ramsden 1994, 44) or "ideas can be works of art" (Lewitt 1969) – as a significant change. "The art of the past [is] no longer a model, an exemplary standard, or a reservoir of *paradigmata* or examples. Instead it offered the possibility for a hetero-reference that does not interfere with the autonomy of art" (Luhmann 2000a, 303).

Becker (1982, 18f.) and Bourdieu (1996, 187ff.) emphatically reject romanticizing concepts of art and the artist as an exceptionally creative person, a genius with innate talents, who deserves a privileged position in society.[6] Luhmann (2000a, 243, 265, 270) sees the concept of genius as the result of a historical discourse that is related to a particular culture of aesthetic admiration. Interestingly he does not explicitly criticize this concept, perhaps because he rejects the idea of a critical sociology.

6 Although the concept of genius has for the last hundred years been repeatedly criticized as theoretically problematic and misleading, it still (often tacitly) persists within the humanities as well as in a general public discourse that characterizes particular artists as erratic, nonconformist and exceptionally heroic people (often white and male).

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3 Understandings of social relations in organizational arrangements

Social relations occur in informal and in formal organizational arrangements, which are sociologically important since they radiate into several areas of society. Therefore, any sociology of art that does not address the social effects of organizational arrangements would be incomplete. Certainly, all three sociologists focus on organizational aspects in different ways, but all three apply a kind of relational thinking when analyzing and modeling such phenomena.

Becker takes a pragmatist stance by focusing not on individuals but rather on situations and social networks. A network of cooperating people represents the basic unit of sociological analysis. Becker (1982, 369f.) sets the focus of such analysis on coordination and interaction, which are shaped by shared conventions. Networks that form art worlds are in some cases informal and temporal, in other cases (e.g., orchestras) formally structured and lasting organizational entities. Furthermore, formal organizations – like art schools, art journals, commercial galleries, music labels, film production companies, museums, theaters, concert halls and clubs – can be complex since they may consist of very different departments and professional specialists.

Bourdieu emphasizes the "objective" (1996, 169, 181) and "competitive" (1996, 168, 181) character of social relations that occur when participants occupy different positions in a social field. The complex synergy of positions, the possession of various forms of capital, habitus and socially inculcated dispositions generate practicable potentialities within the given organizational arrangements (see Botero and Crossley 2011, 102). However, Bourdieu is not an organizational sociologist and he did not offer a deep and systematic analysis of arts organizations.

Luhmann's interest in organizations changed during his career. His early works were situated in the sociology of organizations, and he regards organizations as pivotal.

> If entry into and exit from a social system is assumed to be decidable and rules can be developed for this decision.... Organization presupposes that the role of membership in the system is contingent, i.e., that there is a recruitment field of possible members and that there are exit possibilities for the members. (Luhmann 2003 [1975], 99; our translation)

Since Luhmann deems interaction systems generally as "time-consuming" and unable to effectively cope with "high complexity" (2005 [1975], 11f.), he offers a functionalist explanation of the emergence and necessity of formal organizations. In this spirit, he states that "the more rationally organizational systems

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are conceived and constructed with regard to their specific performance, the more difficult it becomes … to also realise interactions" (2005, 17). (Here the differences between Becker's and Luhmann's theoretical perspectives become clear.) Later on, organization plays a subordinate role in his systems theory. Now he conceives of organization as a derived term, "as a case of system formation that uses a conditioning of membership to draw the line between system and environment" (Luhmann 1992, 372; our translation). For Luhmann, the term relation refers to the elements of the art system – not to individuals, but to artworks. Relations are outcomes of systemic functions, like self-reference, generating difference and communication. He acknowledges that the concept of relations "relativizes the concept of element" (Luhmann 1995, 22) and clarifies that "systems are not merely relations among elements. The connections among relations must also somehow be regulated. This regulation employs the basic form of conditioning" (1995, 23). System-intrinsic codes and binary differences are crucial for this regulation.

The role of individuals in various organizational arrangements is discussed in very distinct ways. When Becker (Becker and Pessin 2006, 278) says that "people do not respond automatically to mysterious external forces surrounding them," he explicitly criticizes highly theoretical concepts like field and system. He certainly acknowledges objective constraints such as rules and conventions – he does not consider them as "external structures"[7] – but these must be observable for sociological analysis, and not theoretical derivations and reifications (Becker 1982, 370). Implicitly he argues that the relation of agents to rules and conventions is more a duality than a dualism (Hughes 2015, 775). Furthermore, Becker puts much more emphasis on the abilities of practitioners to negotiate meaning, to persuade others and to build groups for advocating certain matters of interest. From Becker's perspective, Bourdieu fails to fully recognize the practical potentialities and effects of personal interactions, bonds and commitments (Becker and Pessin 2006, 277).

Bourdieu sets individuals in historically emerged "spaces of possibles" (1993 [1983], 64), which are constituted by objective variables. Within a concrete space of possibilities, agents may intelligently act according to their practical understandings and capabilities (Botero and Crossley 2011, 99f.). It worth noting that here the term relations does not primarily refer to personal relationships, but to social categories, like class, gender, race or possessions of various forms of capital that classify individuals and prestructure their position in a social field.

7 Becker (1982, 370) urges us not to forget that the term social structure has been used in "a metaphorical way of referring to those recurring networks and their activities."

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Luhmann does not regard people as members of the art system. However, even from this posthumanist perspective, people are not fully negligible entities since they are in certain moments structurally coupled with the art system and irritate its internal communication. Unlike both Becker and Bourdieu, in Luhmann's theory agency is replaced by the concept of autopoiesis.

Interestingly neither Becker nor Luhmann discuss gender as an important category for sociological analysis. Only Bourdieu (2001) has extensively discussed patriarchy as a source of symbolic and physical violence and domination that also affects the social organization of arts. Additionally, we think that a comparison of these three sociologists reveals that Bourdieu's analysis of power is the most differentiated. Readers of Becker's *Art Worlds* will not find much about power, although evaluative distinctions between artists – for example, integrated professionals, mavericks, folk and naïve artists – are interfused by power asymmetries (Becker 1982, 226ff.). Without doubt, Becker is sensitive toward issues of power within art worlds (1982, 100, 171 181), but at the same time he notes that power is regularly contested and fragile (1982, 163) and that people also have the power to oppose and do things "in the way that is, most convenient for them" (Becker, cited in Hughes 2015, 780).

Luhmann (2003 [1975], 11) conceives of power technically as "limiting the partner's scope for selection" (our translation). In formal organizations power is based "on the competence to give instructions, the recognition of which is a condition of membership and can thus be sanctioned by dismissal" (2003, 104, our translation). However, he also recognizes informal kinds of power, which greatly influence career and reputation (2003, xxx). On a societal level, power is a symbolically generalized medium of communication that prevents disorganization. Basic binary codes that distinguish between directive giver/receiver and superior/inferior shape the order of a social system, for example, the education system, legal system or art system (Luhmann 2003 [1975], 16; 1995 [1984], 32, 161). The constitution of political power, which implies a monopoly of some kinds of power, affects all other systems. At the same time, various interdependencies generate politically uncontrollable sources of power in society, so that contingency becomes a concomitant effect of power (Luhmann 2003 [1975], 91–93).

Bourdieu shares with Michel Foucault a relational understanding of power as a function of social encounters and both focus on strategies rather than on individuals. Bourdieu goes further, relating power to material, social and symbolic resources, that is, with different forms of capital. Exercise of power can occur on the material level by controlling relevant resources and decision-making processes. On this level, power can also become manifest in forms of physical violence and exploitation, as the #MeToo movement has revealed. Power can also occur on a symbolic level by dominating meaning-making and valua-

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tion, by discursive surprise and arbitrariness as the symbolic demonstration of power. The correlation between both forms becomes clear when power positions are connected to social reputation, and reputation is reflected not only in higher remuneration but also in the exploitation of others.

Bourdieu acknowledges that power is in principle fragile and therefore needs to be legitimized, which happens not only symbolically through ideologies, but also practically through socially constituted schemes of understanding, meaning-giving and valuation incorporated in the shared *doxa* and habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 164; 1984, 480; 1998, 56f.). Bourdieu's approach to power is therefore embedded in a specific theory of practice that includes his concept of habitus. This makes power tangible for analyses at the micro and the macrolevels of society.

As mentioned above, power exists not only in interpersonal relations in the artistic field, but also in the artistic field, which in modern societies is represented by different state institutions (Bourdieu 1998, 41f.). Domination on various levels is secured by the conformity of state power with the interests of the dominant social class (1998, 34, 56f.). Unlike Foucault, Bourdieu does not overemphasize practices and technologies for disciplining bodies (though such practices are undoubtedly effective), but rather highlights the role of institutions in the normalization, objectification and formalization of preferred practices through symbolic activities (see Cronin 1996, 73). Consequently, Bourdieu thinks that resistance against domination should use the same means, which are primarily symbolic. For this reason, he ascribes social sciences, humanities and arts with a critical potential (see Bourdieu 1975; Bourdieu and Haacke 1995).

4 Conceptions of autonomy

Howard Becker does not discuss the concept of autonomy, because he considers such claims "superficial" and the related arguments "philosophical" (1982, 14, 39). His reluctance is rooted in his understanding of sociology as an empirical and to a great extent value-free science (1982, 369f.; 1986, 37f.) and of arts as a prosaic activity. Although Becker (1982, 15f., 46f.) describes, along with Michael Baxandall (1972), historical artistic developments such as the distinction between art and non-art, artist and craftsman, he does not interpret modern art as occupying a state of higher autonomy. Indeed, the concept of autonomy makes little sense in his approach. Art worlds are largely integrative since they involve not only artists but also supporting personnel. Even if Becker does not use the term gatekeeping in *Art Worlds*, he addresses several times the issue of power holders in the processes of production, distribution, presentation and

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evaluation of artworks (Becker 1982, 100, 163, 180ff.). Furthermore, he insists that other non-artistic social worlds affect art worlds and vice versa (1982, 36f., 165ff.). Therefore, his critical distance from the concept of autonomy relates to his understanding of art worlds being "not a functionalist theory which suggests that activities must occur in a particular way or the social system will not survive. The social systems which produce art survive in all sorts of ways, though never exactly as they have in the past." (1982, 6)

Pierre Bourdieu focuses on social inequalities and domination and argues that artistic fields are structured by an unequal distribution of different forms of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Furthermore, fields are characterized by various oppositions, for example, between positions that are situationally defined as orthodox and legitimate versus heretical and illegitimate. Particularly the subfields of small-scale cultural production are to some degree relatively autonomous as long as they can impose their own rules on their participants against the desires and interests of other agents, especially from the economic and political fields (Bourdieu 1996, 103ff., 115ff.).[8] Yet artistic autonomy is evidently fragile since internal and external forces try to increase their influence and promote their own interests on artistic productions and (e)valuations.

Niklas Luhmann takes a different argumentative stance. He regards modern, that is, highly differentiated social systems, in principle, as autonomous functional wholes, provided that they are able to give themselves their own structures according to internal functional operations and to distinguish themselves from other systems and their environment. This understanding of operative autonomy is also expressed in his concept of autopoiesis. Luhmann (2000a, 157) writes: "Autonomy implies that, within its boundaries, autopoiesis functions unconditionally, the only alternative being that the system ceases to exist. Autonomy allows for no half-measures or gradation; there are no relative states, no more or less autonomous systems." He immediately adds in a footnote; "One can certainly reject this conceptual decision [autonomy], but one would then sacrifice almost everything gained by the concept" (2000a, 356). To avoid any misunderstanding, autonomy in Luhmann's systems theory does not refer to agents but only to elements of communication in the art system, in other words, to artworks. Their autopoiesis and self-reference constitute their autonomy. "Modern art is autonomous in an operative sense. No one else does

8 Bourdieu does not associate autonomy with emancipation, but we assume that he would probably agree with Adorno by not defining autonomy individualistically. Resistance needs collective action and consequently it follows, as Adorno (2005 [1951], 173) writes, there is "no emancipation without that of society."

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what it does… The societal nature of modern art consists in its operative closure and autonomy, provided that society imposes this form on all functional systems, one of which is art" (2000a,134f.). What exactly does art do that other social systems do not? Luhmann refers to well-established philosophical ideas: art has to find an adequate representation or expression of what is by definition undepictable and unrepresentable,[9] or in Luhmann's words:

> Kant already located the function of art (of the presentation of aesthetic ideas) in its capacity to stimulate thinking in ways that exceed verbal or conceptual comprehension. The art system concedes to its own unique adventure in observing artworks – and yet it makes available as communication the formal selection that triggered the adventure. (2000a, 141)

Bourdieu does not regard autonomy as an essential characteristic of artistic fields, but rather as a historical process located in the 19th century when a shift from the primacy of the instrumental function of arts to the primacy of the artistic form (i.e., art for art's sake) took place. He interprets the emergence of artistic autonomy from a radical rejection of the economic orientation of art production, that is, from the contradiction between artistic and economic logics. To build his argument, he analyzes the emergence of this contradiction by referring to the French literary field around the mid-19th century, noting that other art fields had different developments. He believes that Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) and Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) represent the turning point as they resisted subordination to "the forces of power" and insisted on their artistic independence (Bourdieu 1996, 60f.).

Luhmann develops a purely theoretical argument: if other social systems were to interfere in the art system, then the art system would fail to exist. Autonomy is by definition constitutive to the very existence of the art system. Bourdieu is less categorical and therefore speaks of different degrees of autonomy, but in any case, the field of power, which is "the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions" (1996, 215) is never absent. Therefore, the autonomy of arts organizations can never be absolute. It is also worth noting that Bourdieu articulates a critical and ironic view of the idea of autonomy.

> The evolution of the field of cultural production toward a greater autonomy is thus accompanied by a greater reflexivity, which leads each of the "genres" to a sort of critical turning in on itself, on its own principle, on its

9 See Lyotard's (1984 [1979], 78, 81f.) reference to the crisis of representation and the role of art to witness the "unpresentable" as well as Adorno's (2002 [1970], 196) comments on the "communication of the incommunicable" through artworks.

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> own premises: and it becomes more and more frequent that the work of art, a vanitas which betrays itself as such, includes a sort of autoderision. (1996, 242)

5 Conceptions of change

Stability through relative temporality is the motto for every concept of the social organization of arts, whether developed by Becker, Bourdieu or Luhmann. However, stability is fragile and observable only in relation to ongoing changes, either in organized relations or in environments. To argue that stability and change go hand in hand means integrating a complex understanding of social processes. There is no historical doubt that from time to time, societies in general – and art worlds, fields and systems in particular – face disruptive situations that challenge their organizational form. In such moments, they can either (slightly or radically) change themselves to meet new challenges, or they may cease to exist.

For Becker, art worlds are temporarily existing cooperative networks, shaped and stabilized by shared conventions and routines, overlapping purposes and complementary competences, and by intensive interactions including personal bonds. He also speaks of "packages" that create "the inertia that keeps things as they are" (Becker 1995, 306). Art worlds and packages break apart when their members develop significant differences that complicate doing things together, when the need for organizational work is terminated, or when the efforts to control the output of creative work are ineffective (Becker 1982, 310ff., 367ff.; 1995, 309). Changes in art worlds can be induced by internal dynamics, since innovative people may be deliberately engaged in producing unconventional artworks (Becker 1982, 300ff.; 1995, 306). Unconventional projects are risky, but if they receive artistic appreciation then they affect other art worlds too. Changes in art worlds can also be brought about from the outside. Becker (1976, 46ff.; 1982, 226ff.; 1986, 71f.) explicitly mentions mavericks and outsiders who do not participate in mainstream art worlds. Such examples are art brut, the popularization of African-American music and music created by other minorities, the shifting of photography, cartoons and crime novels from so-called low arts to high arts. Materials, new technologies, changing production and distribution chains, new audiences along with societal transformations on the political, economic, cultural and demographic levels also affect the organization of art worlds as well as the development of formal organizations (Becker 1982, 306f., 322ff.).

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Becker's analysis of change focuses primarily on artistic conventions. Shared conventions do not guarantee stability since the internal dynamics of artistic practices occur from the very fact that even if people share the same conventions, they may have in a particular situation a different understanding of the rightful implications of a convention. Therefore, negotiations about the work to be done occur frequently because the process of situational meaning-giving and valuing is an intrinsic part of the creative process (Becker 1986, 13f.). Such negotiations – for example, about the organization of the working process and related constraints, about the qualities of the artworks and their aesthetic impact on audiences, about the recognition of individual contributions to the production process – are also sources of change. Negotiations may be settled when individuals agree on what to do and how to proceed. Sometimes however, conflicts appear to be unresolved under a given constellation and this will sooner or later lead to a change or dissolution of a particular art world. Subsequently some of its former members will eventually try to form new art worlds with new conventions (Becker 1982, 310ff.; see Mathieu and Stjerne 2014). Becker (1982, 301ff.) borrows Kuhn's (1962) distinction between continuous and revolutionary change to distinguish this kind of ongoing re-organization, modification and transformation of art worlds from other revolutionary changes that take place when the character of artworks significantly alters. Becker (1982, 305) refers to impressionism and cubism in painting, and to Schönberg and his circle who used the twelve-tone system in composing.[10] However, in a revolutionary transformation not all conventions are washed away (1982, 307). Only very rarely are there changes so profound that an entirely new form of art emerges.

Bourdieu also emphasizes the fluidity and dynamic nature of artistic fields. His discussion of the tensions between orthodox and heterodox positions is similar to Becker's analysis of the relations between integrated professionals on one side and mavericks and other outsiders on the other. Bourdieu reformulates Heraclitus' quotation that "war is father of all" and sees the struggle be-

10 Impressionism and cubism challenged the concept of pictorial representation in European painting, which was based on perspective, light and shadow contrasts, and volume. Schönberg, especially, introduced a new way of composing by treating all 12 notes of the chromatic scale as equal and therefore used them equally often. A twelve-tone composition is atonal in the sense that it does not have an order in a key. This contrasts to the established tradition of European music, which is characterized by the idea of harmonic tonality. For Becker, these changes in Western arts are analogous to Thomas Kuhn's (1962) concept of scientific revolution.

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tween "antagonistic positions – dominant/dominated, consecrated/novice, orthodox/heretic, old/young, etc." (Bourdieu 1996, 239) – as the engine of change.

> The principle of change in works resides … in the struggles among agents and institutions whose strategies depend on the interest they have.... But the stakes of the struggle among the dominants and the pretenders, between orthodoxy and heresy, and the very content of the strategies they can put into effect to advance their interests, depend on the space of position-takings already brought about. This, functioning as a problematic, tends to define the space of possible position-takings, and thus to shape the search for solutions and, consequently, the evolution of production. (1996, 239)

Struggles are structured by the "space of position-takings" and by habitus (1996, 235), although the outcome of such struggles is not predetermined. Struggles develop in a dynamic way and although dominant positions can mobilize more power resources, the space of corresponding possibilities provides particular opportunities for a weaker position.

Bourdieu applies relational thinking to social events, so he links artistic revolutions to changes in the social space and especially in the field of power. "The internal struggles always depend, in outcome, on the correspondence that they maintain with the external struggles – whether struggles at the core of the field of power or at the core of the social field as a whole" (1996, 127). Consequently, his analysis of artistic change goes against formalist interpretations of artistic developments (1996, 198f.). He generalizes his argument beyond the literary field: "In effect, the interplay of homologies between the literary field and the field of power or the social field in its entirety means that most literary strategies are overdetermined and a number of 'choices' hit two targets at once, aesthetic and political, internal and external" (1996, 207). A careful reading shows that Bourdieu does not formulate a causal argument. On the contrary, his term homology aims at avoiding determination. Therefore, he specifies that:

> Changes continuously taking place at the center of the field of restricted production are largely independent in their source from the external changes which may seem to determine them because they accompany them chronologically (and this is so even if these changes owe part of their ultimate success to this "miraculous" intersection of causal series which are – highly – independent). (1996, 239)

The openness of the art system to artistic novelty that occurred in the late 18th century – Luhmann (2000a, 203ff.) refers several times to Immanuel Kant – was a precondition for the development of a dynamic art system in the 20th

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century. If, and only if, arts can successfully implement self-programming,[11] which requires the operational closure of the art system, can change then occur as the mode of a system's existence (2000a, 207f.). This evolutionary approach operates with the concepts of variation, selection and restabilization (2000a, 214f.). Luhmann therefore interprets changes as necessary outcomes of the system's self-organization and internal differentiation. Since artworks have to make themselves distinct from other artworks and create irritations to stimulate communication, they evoke artistic change. Here Luhmann uses the term distinction, mostly referring to formal and stylistic aspects. Irritation has a different meaning since it appears when artworks introduce typically non-artistic materials, forms, and references to the art system. Therefore, irritation relates to the "unmarked space" of the art system (2000a, 31). Collages, ready-mades, noise music, certain types of body performances are examples of artworks, which when they first appeared triggered irritation and public scandals.

Operational closure and autopoiesis are accompanied by structural couplings, which increase the system's dynamics and adaptability. In the development of Luhmann's systems theory we can observe a successive distancing from Parsons' version of systems theory. The term coupling replaced the Parsonian idea of the interpenetration of culture, society and personality (Parsons 1959; Luhmann 1978). In order to respond to the tension between the postulated autopoiesis and structural couplings, Luhmann insists that other social systems and environmental aspects cannot directly influence the art system. Couplings occur alongside situational observations and can affect the art system only if such observations can be translated into the art system's intrinsic communication. Therefore, external influence is situational and most importantly indirect. Autopoiesis "implies that any specification of structures (here any determination of artistic form) is produced by the system itself; it cannot be imported from the outside" (Luhmann 2000a, 50f.). This is also true conversely. According to Luhmann, art cannot directly influence people or communities:

> The autopoiesis of life and the autopoiesis of consciousness come about without art, although they may be influenced by art (the brain, for example, or the fingers of a piano player).... The same is true for the communication system of society. We can certainly consider the structural consequences of a society without art. (2000a, 51)

11 Luhmann (2000a, 203) understands self-programming in Kantian terms: "The Kantian formulation conceives the artworks self-programming as the freedom of the observer to let his cognitive faculties play without being guided by concepts. The point in speaking of an 'end in itself' or of a purpose without purpose—for Kant, at any rate—is to distinguish art from a conceptually fixed cognition."

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From this perspective, Luhmann interprets modern art as the historical situation when "art can orient itself–and in this sense, art becomes historical–only in its own history, the history of an individual work's production and reception, be it the history of styles, or the intertextuality of the art system itself" (2000a, 204f.). Clearly, Luhmann's interpretation of artistic change differs significantly from Becker's and Bourdieu's.

6 Epistemic potentials and inherent limitations of the three theories

We have seen that Becker's theory of art worlds, Bourdieu's field theory and Luhmann's theory of art system display some similarities but also significant differences due to their different sociological understandings and research practices. By comparing their views on the social organization of art, we are not trying to judge which theory is best – this would be dogmatic – even if our comparison surely contains evaluative moments.

Let us begin with a contextual appreciation. Their empirical and historical references are geographically limited – Becker mainly highlights art worlds in the United States, Bourdieu the French artistic field with a historical focus on the second half of the 19th century, and finally Luhmann, although he did not work empirically, discusses certain historical developments mostly located in continental Europe. Critical reflections on these limitations are legitimate. Yet there are some additional limitations: from the 1960s and 1970s onwards we have experienced, in Western countries and a few decades later on a global level, significant transformations:

- First, we have seen a global growth in the cultural economy that accelerated in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union; China's development into a global economic power; and the global reach of the internet.
- Second, from the 1990s onwards, the effects of digitization on the social organization of arts (the production, presentation, distribution, consumption and conservation) have been overwhelming.
- Third, the world overall, as well as individual societies, are on the threshold of profound change. The ecological crisis affects us all, and its disastrous effects have led to a new awareness of global inequalities, postcolonial domination and cultural hegemonies. Furthermore, while new global players emerge (states like China and India; new companies such as Apple, Alphabet, Amazon and Microsoft), established powers are going through systemic crises that generate uncontrolled situations.

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All these transformations have directly or indirectly affected arts (artforms, artworks, artistic topics, materials, means) and related organizational activities. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether Becker's, Bourdieu's or Luhmann's sociologies of art can still be intelligibly applied to an understanding of these new constellations.

Becker considers his theory of art worlds as a middle-range theory. Interestingly, his concept of an art world as a cooperative network of people doing things together on the basis of shared conventions is modest and can easily be applied to analyzing the organization of artistic production in varying centuries and countries, for example, the studio of an Italian sculptor in the 15th century, the work of a French composer in the 17th century or of a Japanese painter in the 19th century, the organization of a Russian ballet company in the 20th century, and the creative efforts and constraints of contemporary musicians in Argentina, Nigeria or Indonesia. Sociological analysis would then have to identify the people interacting, analyze their cooperation and resources, underline their shared conventions, highlight their relationships to other art worlds and display the different "occasions on which a work appears" (Becker 2006, 23) with the final aim of understanding how a particular constellation led to such a form of organization. This approach has the potential to create a comprehensive picture of how social and cultural parameters shape occupational competences, cooperation, formal and informal organizations, types of valuation and remuneration. Becker did not focus much on the materialities of art production, distribution and consumption, but other sociologists can, drawing on Becker's approach, extend their research perspective and investigate, for instance, the effects of digitization on contemporary art worlds.

Bourdieu and Luhmann claim that their theories can be generalized. But can they? Both base their own theories on other theories of social differentiation and argue that artistic fields and art systems are the results of a historically particular societal transformation. Historians who look at art production, presentation, distribution, consumption and conservation up to the 18th century can obviously not use concepts from the theories of Bourdieu and Luhmann. Moreover, it is worth noting that social differentiation did not simultaneously occur on a global level, nor did it take on the same intensity and shape in all societies. Therefore, one may ask whether Bourdieu's and Luhmann's theories are tacitly Eurocentric, as they take European societies as models for analyzing the social organization of arts. We believe that this criticism applies particularly to Luhmann's systems theory rather than to Bourdieu's field theory. Bourdieu extended his nondeterministic structuralist view with an ethnological understanding of practice (e.g., habitus, practical sense, disposition, strategies), which can also be applied to different premodern historical contexts as well as non-

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European ones. However, this objection does not undermine the centrality of Bourdieu's and Luhmann's works, whose systematic view of the internal functions, mechanisms and dynamics of the social organization of arts advanced general sociological understanding.

Technology and especially digitization are beyond the scope of these three sociological theories, and we think there are some plausible explanations for this. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Becker wrote his *Art Worlds*, digitization was not yet a part of everyday life. So he acknowledged that technological means affect labor division and specializations (Becker 1982, 10f.), that sound and recording technology changed musical performances, distribution and consumption (1982, 17f., 314f., 330f.), but admittedly his analysis of these aspects remains weak. Sociologists who are involved in the Production of Culture Perspective, for example, Richard Peterson, who also acknowledges an affinity to Becker,[12] investigated more extensively and as early as the 1980s the role of technology in arts. This subject is absent in all of Bourdieu's and Luhmann's publications. This could be partly explained by their focus on historical cases from the 19th century, but we must also criticize this decision, since technologies were significant for art production and art distribution even in the 19th century. For example, new printing technologies emerged that facilitated the production of cheap pocketbooks and increased consumption figures, or the invention of new instruments and apparatus happened that enabled the emergence of new art forms.

12 In an interview Richard Peterson (in Santoro 2008b, 48) states that he first met Becker in 1968 and "by the late 1970s we both had come to see his emerging 'art world' perspective as complementary to, not as competing with, the Production of Culture Perspective." While Becker focuses on interactions and collaborative situations, sociologists from the Production of Culture Approach concentrate their analytical explorations on organizational structures and constraints. Consequently, Peterson does not speak of different approaches, but rather of "different levels of analysis" (2008b, 48).

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PART II

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Chapter 6 | The Production of Culture Perspective

The Production of Culture Perspective is represented by a number of loosely connected, mostly North American sociologists who take an empirical approach. They focus on organizational factors that enable or impede the production of arts and culture in organizational settings. This approach is primarily associated with the name of Richard A. Peterson (1932–2010). The formation and transformation of cultural goods, including artistic content, can only be explained within the context of the concrete, that is, material steps of creation, distribution and consumption. The emergence of this perspective can be traced back to a thematic panel at the annual conference of the *American Sociological Association* in 1974, organized by Peterson and entitled, *Culture and Social Structure: Production of Culture*, with a presentation by Peterson under the all-encompassing title *The Sociology of Culture*. Two years later, Peterson (1976a) published an anthology with the same title and eight contributions that promised to investigate the social processes that shape the form and content of cultural production (Peterson 1976b, 14f.; 1979, 139; 1994, 165; Peterson and Anand 2004, 311).

The Production of Culture Perspective emerged in a specific sociological situation (see DiMaggio 2000; Nathaus and Childress 2013; Peterson 1979; 2000, 231f.). After the Second World War, only a few sociologists in North America were interested in arts and culture (see Foster 1989, 2–4; Ryan 2000, 92). Those few, familiar with the work of predecessors like Max Weber (1958 [1921]) and Georg Simmel (1916), were mostly influenced either by interpretive and hermeneutic art studies (e.g., Haskell 1962; Panofsky 1955), or by Marxist art historians and the reflection theory[1] (e.g., Hauser 1999 [1951]; Schapiro 1977 [1936]). Within the broader sociological framework, systems theory had a dominant position in the 1950s. Systems theory in the Parsonian version mainly understood

1 In this context, the term reflection theory refers to the idea that trans-subjective features – Hegel was referring to the world spirit (*Weltgeist*), Marx to social structures and class struggles – shape individual subjectivity, as well as artistic content.

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culture as a set of norms and values that latently steer social action. However, beginning in the 1960s, critical approaches with a neo-Marxist background (e.g., the Frankfurt School and the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies) became widespread. The influence of Symbolic Interactionism also increased and began to oust Parsonian functionalism. On a societal level, sociologists witnessed an expanding arts sector (e.g., an increasing number of museums, theaters, publishers, concert venues and their visitors); an unprecedentedly widespread commercialization of popular culture; and various fusions of traditional highbrow and lowbrow arts (e.g., pop art or free jazz), which together lead to a greater diversity of tastes (Gans 1974; Abbing 2022). These transformations indicate that arts started to play a central role in modern societies, particularly for distinct social groups (e.g., youth, cultural minorities); it was thus no longer possible to consider arts and culture as a peripheral topic in sociology (Denisoff and Peterson 1972; Peterson 1979).

In addition, some sociologists argued – like Adolph S. Tomars in his *Introduction to the Sociology of Art* – that if there was a genuine sociological perspective on art at all, then it would be an institutional perspective, that is, sociology "is interested in art as an institution (a system of institutional procedure)" (Tomars 1940, 19; see Albrecht 1970). Roger L. Brown (1968, 614f.) suggested asking how "mass production techniques (and the bureaucratic, formal organizations that go with them)" influence the creative process, production and circulation of popular arts (see Peterson 1979, 139). These ideas implied that the sociology of art is related to other sociological subdisciplines – for example, Rudolph Morris (1958, 317) referred to intrinsic relations to "the sociology of ideas ... to the sociology of knowledge ... to the sociology of change, and [to] urban and industrial sociology," since "the organization of arts deserves our attention." Therefore, the increased significance of a sociology of arts in the 1970s in North America was based on the opening up of this subdiscipline to other sociological areas (see LaChapelle 1984). Other sociological subfields provided role models with which to compare, contrast and replicate. Examples include the study of networks, contracts and unions in artistic professions; the acquisition of findings from industrial and organizational sociology; and the integration of technological changes in the analysis of arts production. Such crossdisciplinary approaches have generated a new view of arts and helped to overcome idealistic conceptions, for example, the exceptionality of arts or romantic ideas such as the image of the alienated artist. These crosscurrents enabled an unprecedented flourishing of the sociology of arts. This development was

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characterized – at least within the United States[2] – by a turn toward empirical research on aspects of production, distribution and consumption of arts, leaving behind grand theories, for example, Marxist reflection theory or the Parsonian correspondence theory of values and social structure (see Peterson 1979; Nathaus and Childress 2013; Quemin 2017).

Clearly the Production of Culture Perspective does not claim to be a universal theory since it is based on empirical findings that correspond to a particular historical situation. It thus represents a middle-range theory (in the sense of Robert Merton 1968 [1949]). Therefore, various representatives of the Production of Culture Perspective criticized the functionalist understanding of culture as a set of norms that provide orientation, as well as critical approaches to mass culture resulting from a normative distinction between high and low arts, serious versus commercial arts, and the idea of a radical opposition between the economic and the aesthetic realm (Peterson 1976b, 7–14; 2000, 226–228; DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976, 74; DiMaggio 2000, 123f.). Although the Production of Culture Perspective suggests that the analysis of institutional and organizational conditions may help to explain changes of cultural production, it does not produce a general theory; rather, it emphasizes the historical and geographical contingence[3] in cultural formations. Factors that were relevant in North America in the 1950s did not necessarily have the same significance in other countries.

The influence of American pragmatism on the Production of Culture Perspective was indirect and has not yet been sufficiently explored (see Joas 1993, 14–53). Certainly, John Dewey criticized the traditional equation of culture with high arts as a prejudice that obscures the plurality of artistic practices, expressive forms and aesthetic experience (Dewey 1980 [1934], 6; see Gans 1974). He therefore argued that the social character of aesthetic phenomena should be emphasized, and he conceived of the task of the philosophy of art as "recovering the continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living" (Dewey 1980 [1934], 10). His aesthetics offer philosophical arguments for overcoming the dichotomy between fine and popular arts. From a sociological point of view, this approach led directly to the analysis of the social organization of cultural production.

2 Although we refer to the situation in the United States, it is worth noting that in the 1950s and 1960s there were sociologists of arts in Europe who were also working empirically, such as Franco Ferrarotti in Italy, Raymonde Moulin in France, Alphons Silbermann in Germany or Kurt Blaukopf in Austria.

3 Contingency runs contrary to the idea of determining forces, for example, of zeitgeist, value orientations, structures, class interests, etc.

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Those representing the Production of Culture Perspective trace their sociological lineage to Robert Merton and his analysis of the relations between science and society (see Crane 1976, 72; Peterson and Berger 1975, 158), to Charles Wright Mills' concept of "cultural apparatus" as an agglomerate of various organizations and milieus (see DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976, 74; Peterson and Anand 2004, 312), to Arthur Stinchcombe's inquiries on the effects of the organization of work on production, and to Jacques Ellul's analysis of how new techniques and technologies underlie social and cultural change.[4] With this rich backdrop of inspiration, the Production of Culture Perspective analyzes contexts in which arts and culture are made and remade, since "cultures simply cannot be understood apart from the contexts in which they are produced and consumed" (Crane 1992, ix; see Peterson 1976b, 11, 13; Zolberg 1990, 9). Admittedly similar contextual approaches were formulated in earlier decades, for example, by Howard Becker (1951, 1976) or by Harrison and Cynthia White (1965). However, the main difference from Becker's interactionist approach is Peterson's and White's emphasis on an approach to the production of culture that was relational, organizational and systemic. Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that both perspectives are related and complement each other.[5]

In this chapter we will focus on the sociological contribution of the prime initiator of the Production of Culture Perspective, Richard A. Peterson (1932–2010), but we will also look at the work of Diana Crane, Paul DiMaggio, Paul Hirsch and others. Since we refer to a network of sociologists that constitute the Production of Culture Perspective, we have decided to forgo individual biographical information.

1 Key terms of the Production of Culture Perspective

The Production of Culture Perspective incorporates views from the sociology of organizations, industries, and occupations in arts and in popular culture (see DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976, 74f.). The Production of Culture scholars use the term culture to refer to the realm of expressive-symbolic production. Culture

4 In preparation for the conference *Euro-Pop: The Production and Consumption of a European Culture* in 2009 in Italy, Richard Peterson delivered a paper outlining the Production of Culture Perspective; see https://codeandculture.wordpress.com/2009/08/26/production-of-culture/ [accessed on Dec. 19, 2021]

5 In fact, most members of the Production of Culture Perspective were in contact with Howard Becker (see for example, DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976, 74f.). In later interviews both Becker and Peterson acknowledge the proximity of their work (Santoro 2008b, 48).

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includes therefore not only arts, but also sciences, religion, media and fashion. Instead of claiming a particular status for arts – for example, autonomy, singularity and exceptionality – Peterson (1976b, 12f.) looks for commonalities and suggests a comparative analysis of different cultural domains (see Crane 1972, 129–142; 1976, 57–72). Furthermore, since he regards culture as socially produced, he suggests highlighting "the complex mediating infrastructure" between creators and consumers (Peterson 1976b, 14) in order to overcome individualist (e.g., the creative genius view) explanations of culture (see Peterson 1979; Peterson and Anand 2004, 312). This mediating infrastructure includes financial and technological means, but also human intermediaries in various positions.

In an analogous way, the term art has a comprehensive meaning that aims to leave behind exclusive doctrines and professional ideologies that devalue the activities of outsiders, amateurs and minorities, for example, immigrant, indigenous and other marginalized communities.[6] The general attitude toward arts is dispassionate: making art should be conceived as a sociocultural process embedded in particular industries, organizational arrangements, networks, reward systems, gatekeeping and acts of mediation (Peterson and Berger 1975, 158; Crane 1976; Santoro 2008b, 34f.). In this sense, scholars of the Production of Culture Perspective regard contemporary artistic production as the result of collective effort under certain conditions (e.g., cultural patronage, entrepreneurship or nonprofit organizations). Therefore, they are well aware that the various concepts of art are never free of social biases (see DiMaggio 1987a).[7] This insight implies a certain level of skepticism toward aesthetic value judgments in scholarly research. In a later interview, Peterson (in Santoro 2008b, 35), while making a critical reference to Adorno's pejorative judgments on jazz and rock music, (2008b, 38) emphatically insisted that his personal musical preferences – he was a passionate piano player – were always irrelevant to his sociological analyses.

The term production is understood in "its generic sense to refer to the process of creation, manufacture, marketing, distribution, exhibiting, inculcation, evaluation and consumption" (Peterson 1976b, 10). Production thus relates to

6 Representatives of British Cultural Studies also shared this open and pluralistic understanding of arts.

7 Elisabeth Bird (1979, 43) writes that "the premise of aesthetic neutrality is … impossible to maintain, because the historical process itself assigns a value." Peterson would probably not deny this and would add that the sociological task is to explain how value ascriptions take place and how evaluative processes are shaped by institutional and organizational settings.

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a chain of interconnected activities that go beyond the completion of a cultural product, as it also refers to the interrelation of creators, distributors and consumers (see Alexander 2021, 61–64).[8] Moreover, in these early years Richard Peterson and David Berger (1975) spoke of "cycles" in cultural production, referencing a market model that consists of successive phases of innovation, product development and successful market placement; the achievement of market dominance through vertical and horizontal integration, market saturation, stagnation and crisis. In the 1970s, their research focus was on the analysis of "the three key areas of production … [in the music industry, which are] artistic creation, merchandising and distribution" (Peterson and Berger 1975, 169). Many of their research interests targeted the interrelation between the organization of cultural production and its outcome (e.g., art forms, styles, content), asking how markets encourage or constrain artistic decisions and how particular audiences affect cultural organization (Hirsch 1978, 317; Peterson and Berger 1975). Later, from the 1990s onwards, Peterson put more emphasis on how consumption influences production, as he came to acknowledge that consumption includes meaning-making and valuing. Consumers are therefore not a passive but a productive force in cultural change. Anticipating the concept of *prosumers*, he spoke of the "autoproduction" of culture which points at the consumers' appropriation, modification and recombination of cultural and aesthetic symbols, leading to new social uses and new forms of cultural expression (Peterson 2001; Peterson and Anand 2004, 324; Santoro 2008b, 49).

The Production of Culture Perspective puts much emphasis on structuring processes and on structural constraints (Peterson 1985; 1990). Subsequently, additional key terms are the industrial and organizational structures of cultural production (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976, 73–90; Peterson 1986, 161–183; Blau 1992, 73–113). However, despite the apparent stress on organizational factors, Peterson also assigns individual agents an important role in cultural production. the Production of Culture Perspective cannot be classified only as a dichotomy of individualism versus collectivism or agency versus structural determination, but as a spectrum between these poles, with organizations as an outcome of both, that is, agents in the industry and structures of the sector (Anand 2000, 173f.).

In the first instance, organizations are social entities characterized by various structural intensities regarding formalism and boundaries. They emerge

8 Paul Hirsch (1978, 315f.) distinguishes production from distribution. This distinction is justified for analytical reasons, yet all researchers associated with the Production of Culture Perspective underline the interrelation and interdependence of both domains.

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around certain tasks, which in arts are mostly related to artistic production, distribution of artworks and associated services. In order to fulfill their goals, organizations plan their actions, select according to their cognitive schemas between alternative options, face specific problems and seek solutions that seem appropriate, convenient or acceptable to their stakeholders. In order to operate, they need material and immaterial resources, and this generates a constant subliminal pressure on cultural production. From work that had already been done in organizational research – DiMaggio (2000, 128) refers to "a distinct affinity to the perspective of James March, Herbert Simon and the Carnegie School of organization theory" – scholars of the Production of Culture perspective knew that formal structures and bureaucratic internal processes of the (at that time) prevalent industrial age not only shaped the output of arts organizations top-down (see, e.g., Peterson 1982, 143–153), but also the thinking, behavior and professional roles of people working in these organizations (DiMaggio 1987b; Peterson 1986, 161–183). The insights afforded by industrial power structures were the starting point of the Production of Culture Perspective (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976, 75; Peterson and Berger 1975, 159; Peterson 1982, 143), though various scholars analyzed different topics. For instance, DiMaggio and Hirsch (1976, 79–84) looked for structural tensions, such as between innovation and control, individual creativity and managerial ruling, or between various evaluative perspectives. Useem (1976) observed the political environment of arts organizations and asked how cultural policies and public funding influence organizational policies.

The metaphor of gatekeeper complements the structure-oriented view on cultural production (see Becker 1976; Bystryn 1978; Hirsch 1972; Kadushin 1976). This term refers to professionals like arts managers, administrators, curators, critics, censors (Peterson 1976b, 15), and occasionally to organizations and institutions that prestructure the selection and presentation of cultural goods in markets, in exhibition and performance venues, and in public mass media (Crane 1987, 110ff.). This focus on powerful individuals goes hand in hand with the assumption of key occupational positions and their preponderance in certain cultural areas. Diana Crane (1992, 70ff.; see Hirsch 1978, 315) sees two different types of gatekeeping processes: The first concerns the production and presentation of an artistic work, that is, financing the production costs and enabling production. The second follows the dissemination of an artistic work. In this case, gatekeeping occurs in those areas that are involved in the formulation, publication and imposition of evaluations. Empirical analysis of gatekeeping processes is easier in industries with oligopolistic structures since the oligopolists impose their (economic, political-ideological, etc.) selection criteria for shaping the mainstream so that niches for innovative productions re-

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main small (see DiMaggio 1977, 436–452; Tschmuck 2012, 239–243; 268–271). The gatekeeper is one type of agency in cultural production; another, related to the concept of gatekeeper, is the cultural intermediary. Except in cultural markets with many players and competitors – a polypoly[9] – cultural producers depend on the support of intermediaries, that is, people in the cultural field who are capable of translating between, for example, potential business sponsors and arts organizations (Martorella 1996), or indeed docents in art museums, who communicate art to an audience (Leinhardt et al., 2003). A useful and empirically applicable theory for the significance of these intermediaries is Network Theory (see chapter 10): analyses calculate network clusters (in our case cultural areas) that are connected by linking brokers to arts organizations or other stakeholders, in this case gatekeepers or intermediaries (see Jackson and Oliver 2003; Moldavanova and Akbulut-Gok 2022).

2 Main focuses in the Production of Culture Perspective

The Production of Culture Perspective developed several specific research interests. One unifying characteristic of these is the strong emphasis on empirical quantitative and qualitative data as a basis for generalized statements. Empirical evidence is solely derived from inductive data analysis, exploring the complexity of observable sociocultural events and processes and, as a result, formulate perspectives, not theories.

Changes in cultural production

An important predecessor to the Production of Culture Perspective is the study by Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers* (1965; see Santoro 2008b, 42f.). This sociologically informed historical analysis of artistic production examined the shifting conditions of production, distribution and reception of the visual arts in France in the second half of the 19th century. New forms of organizing the visual arts and new social networks led to a systemic change of the production of artistic meaning and value. The turning point was the strategic decision by the impressionists to openly protest against the conservative jury of the Salon of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Subsequently they established their own exhibition space, first the *Salon des Refusés* (1863)

9 *Poly* means *many*, and polypoly is used in contrast to monopoly and oligopoly. We deliberately do not use the more common term free market for polypoly, because it is associated with a specific interpretation of markets and social relations.

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and later the *Salon des Indépendents* (1884). These initiatives were successful thanks to the continuous support of some art critics and art dealers. The dealers "took up the old role of entrepreneur … [and] the critics became theoreticians of art" (White and White 1965, 150); together both offered to many impressionists higher visibility, public acceptance, more sales and a steady income. The authority of the old (academic) reward system then imploded, and with the establishment of impressionism by the end of the 1880s, "the new system was fully developed and legitimate" (1965, 151). This change of the evaluative regime enabled the development of modern art. The system lasted until the 1960s, when it was replaced by the system of the art market, art fairs and affluent collectors (Zembylas 1997, Zahner 2006; Buchholz 2018).

White and White (1965) inspired many scholars of the Production of Culture Perspective, including Diana Crane (1987), who went on to analyze the development of New York's artistic avant-gardes from the 1940s to the mid-1980s – though it should be noted that she focused on abstract expressionism, pop art, minimal art, figurative painting, photorealism, and neo-expressionism, and deliberately ignored conceptual art and performance art. She furthermore underlined the role of art galleries as places for informal encounters and network building among participants of art worlds (Crane 1987, 25ff.). Gallerists are also interested in gathering artists with a similar style because this simplifies their marketing (1987, 29ff.). Beyond that, she emphasizes the shifting of professional boundaries. Since the 1950s, many participants of New York's avant-garde art worlds "performed more than one role: artists served as critics; critics as curators and vice versa; art editors as curators; curators as collectors; and collectors as trustees of museums and as backers of art galleries" (1987, 35). Contrary to the general image of the avant-garde as countercultural, in the 1960s, Crane observed various networks and constituencies comprising organizational patrons, professional art experts, gallerists and collectors (1987, 35f.; 44f.). Crane concludes that the Production of Culture Perspective also applies to avant-garde arts. "Art styles develop within reward systems. Groups of artists choose their own cognitive and technical goals, but they function within a support structure where they compete for symbolic and material rewards" (1987, 110).

Peterson (1990) took the advent of rock and roll music as a case study to explain the lasting commercial success of rock music throughout the following decades. As an industrial sociologist, he perceived individual creativity as a capacity that is always socially embedded in a larger industry. Therefore, his key question was what gave rise to rock and roll and why it emerged so abruptly in a short period, precisely between 1954 and 1956, when Chuck Berry, Bill Haley, Elvis Presley and Little Richard among others became the new stars of the popular music world (Peterson 1990, 97). Peterson deliberately rejects theoretical

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concepts like the zeitgeist, recourses to the idea of creative genius or indeed vague demographic explanations (e.g., the baby-boomers). Instead he suggests that:

> In any era there is a much larger number of creative individuals than ever reach notoriety, and if some specific periods of time see the emergence of more notables, it is because there are times when the usual routinising, inhibition to innovation do not operate as systematically, allowing opportunities for innovators to emerge. (1990, 97)

One basic hypothesis in Peterson's work is that habits and routines in organizations cause myopia and inertia, which inhibits innovation. Times of crisis and "creative destruction" through entrepreneurship – an echo of Joseph Schumpeter (see Peterson and Berger 1975, 159; Peterson 1981) – are therefore necessary to generate new impulses for innovation (see Tschmuck 2012).[10] Another hypothesis central to Peterson's analysis is that competition has positive effects on innovation and diversity (Peterson and Berger 1975, 159). Consequently, Peterson looks for empirical evidence to validate such hypotheses, and his analysis of the music industry between 1948 and 1958 is multidimensional. He makes weighty references, *inter alia*, to the role of licensing and collecting, to the effects of federal laws and regulations on broadcasting, to the developments in record technology and sound carriers (e.g., vinyl records), to the role of technology (e.g., portable radios and record players thanks to the invention of transistors), to market concentration – all being examples of factors that shape cultural production (see the six facets model below). In a similar way Nick Prior (2012, 405f.) asks, Why 1983? in reference to the invention of musical devices and processes (e.g., digital synthesizer, affordable drum machines, audio software packages, MIDI, CDs), which had a strong impact on the formation of DIY cultures and more generally, on the production, distribution and consumption of popular music.

Art managers as intermediaries

Richard Peterson's paper *From Impresario to Arts Administrator* (1986) and Paul DiMaggio's survey of *Managers of the Arts* (1987b) are examples of how to study

10 Peterson (e.g., in Peterson and Anand 2004) understands innovation in much the same way as Schumpeter, in other words, as the ability to create economic value from a new product or service (market innovation). However, he also considers management (e.g., new forms of work organization and coordination) and institutional innovation (e.g., new organizations that offer new services, which in turn create new markets) (see Brooks 1982).

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changes among the managerial personnel of arts organizations from a sociological perspective. Arts management[11] is a relatively young profession, first appearing in the mid-19th century, and it evolved as organizational environments changed over time (Peterson 1986). In his survey, DiMaggio (1987b) describes contemporaries in arts management and investigates their formal education and career paths, recruitment and forms of reward, training opportunities and professionalization. Since this survey was undertaken, many of the professional conditions for art managers have changed. Academic courses – even PhD programs on arts management – have been established in many countries around the world. The understanding of managerial responsibilities has also shifted since many large organizations have introduced dual management concepts with a formally equal position for both an artistic and an administrative director (see Cray, Inglis and Freeman 2007; Reid and Karambayya 2009). Management consultants and market researchers have entered the field to help professionals improve their performance (for a critical view of this, see Negus 2002).

Finally, many more women – but rarely people of color or people with underprivileged social backgrounds – are succeeding in occupying senior management positions in arts organizations. However, the extent of self-organization of arts managers (e.g., through professional organizations and formal membership, professional standards and extensive interchange) is still generally low – in this regard, museums are an exception. There are many reasons for this situation: First, many managers think that arts organizations (e.g., art galleries, museums, theaters, orchestras, dance companies, operas, film studios, music labels, concert agencies, publishing houses) are intrinsically very different from each other and therefore they tend to overlook their commonalities (see DiMaggio 1987b, 9). Second, the professional identities of art managers are very diverse so that some managers see themselves primarily as artists and distinguish themselves from business administrators (see Proust 2019). Third, the cultivated individualism and singularity of the fine arts (propagated since the Renaissance, see Wittkower 1961) inhibits a better understanding of cooperative and collective professional performance, good governance and ethics (see Wolff 1993 [1981]).

11 Arts management stands for several tasks in arts organizations that are sometimes performed by various individuals and teams. Arts management includes programming and production management, artistic and organizational development, strategic management, human resource management, accounting, controlling and finances, management of facility and technical services, marketing, audience development, hospitality management, public relations and communication.

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Classification of cultural production

In Europe, the court system had a long historical tradition, and from the 16th century onwards systematically promoted arts, paving the way for the development of certain art forms as part of the nobility's cultural identity. The historical situation in the United States was different because the court system was never established and also because the urbanization and the foundation of the first arts organizations took place later, in the second half of the 19th century. Paul DiMaggio (1982a, 1982b, 1992) analyzed the fabrication of highbrow culture in North America by showing how organizational policies were successful in segregating artistic domains and establishing cultural classifications. He focused on the role of social and economic elites in Boston after the Civil War. By taking control of a few nonprofit cultural organizations (through establishing and participating in boards of trustees, engaging particular individuals in leading positions, etc.) members of Boston's elites initiated a purification of arts from the 1870s onwards, separating high from low, American from foreign, and white Anglo-Saxon protestants from immigrant and black culture (see Levine 1990, Lena 2019). In the early 20th century, the institutionalization of high arts was extended by the foundation of national umbrella organizations, which bundled together organizational interests, and by private foundations, whose systematic support of a few arts organizations determined merit and public value. DiMaggio (1987a; 1992) is unequivocal that this cultural segregation through a classification system was brought about by cultural hegemony, which served to legitimize established social asymmetries and racism. In other words, not only production but also consumption is socially organized according to social stratification and cultural differentiation (DiMaggio 1987a, 446ff.; see Lena and Peterson 2008). However, this observation is not static, since DiMaggio (1991b, 141ff.) acknowledges that in his time, the so-called late modern or postmodern era, there is an erosion of the segregation of high and popular culture (for more on Peterson's omnivore thesis 1992, see next section). The reasons are indeed varied: the spread of higher education, increased social mobility, growing cultural heterogeneity, the consecration of artistic forms that were previously considered popular and commercial (e.g., jazz, art photography, *film d'auteur*), the broad dissemination of some genres of popular music (e.g., rock), the economic constraints for art organizations (e.g., the so-called cost disease), and a shifting of interest among economic elites promoting exclusivity (e.g., from classical music to private art collections) (see also Boltanski and Esquerre 2020).

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Cultural consumption as the other side of the coin

Although the Production of Culture Perspective focuses on the production and distribution of cultural goods and services, audiences also have a significant influence on the production site. Peterson (1997; see Lena 2012) ascribes audiences an active role in the meaning and value-creating process, and speaks therefore of "autoproduction" in order to explore:

> how that idea [cultural production] moved from a focus on the institutionalized culture industry worlds to the autoproduction that takes place as individuals and collectivities adopt expressive symbols and, in recombining them, make them the source of their identity. (Peterson 2000, 225)

The erosion of the strict segregation between high and popular culture already points to the significance of changes among audiences and consumer behavior. With critical reference to Bourdieu's seminal work (1984) on cultural tastes and preferences, Peterson and others have investigated the tastes and cultural practices of a highly educated, liberal and mobile milieu living in North American cities and developed the concept of cultural omnivorousness in contrast to Bourdieu's homology concept. Using representative quantitative data gathered over many years on cultural consumption in the United States, Peterson (1992) and Peterson and Kren (1996) observed a broad spectrum of cultural interests and preferences that led to the conclusion that this population segment – well-educated, prosperous urban people with a liberal lifestyle and a pluralistic value orientation – is less interested in exclusive cultural practices that distinguish them from other social classes with a lower status (for empirical analyses of European societies, see van Eijck 2000). This omnivore thesis is distinct from a univore taste that, according to Peterson, is found mainly in lower social classes. Cultural omnivorousness is multifactorial and depends not only on education, but also on cosmopolitanism (Regev 2007), place of residence (Shani 2021), membership in socioeconomic networks (Meuleman 2021) and age (Ma 2021). Despite recent doubt about the stability of omnivorousness among cultural consumers (Rossman and Peterson 2015), this thesis has become an integral part of the analysis of consumption that completes the production perspective.

Correlating several factors of cultural production: the six – or ten – facets model

From the outset of his scholarly work on cultural industries, Peterson's concern was to explain change (Peterson and Berger 1971; 1975). He was particu-

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larly interested in industrial conditions (e.g., concentration, competition), with a focus on the popular music industry as he had already gathered systematic data mostly related to the record industry (Peterson and Berger 1975, 159ff.). He subsequently identified a variety of structuring aspects – Peterson also spoke of "constraints" (1982), "factors" (1990), and of "facets" (Peterson and Anand 2004) – that regularly influence not only forms and styles, prices and production numbers of cultural products, but also more generally cultural diversity, innovation and therefore cultural change (Peterson 1997; Dowd 2004). These six facets include:

1. A legal and political framework: e.g., copyright and patent law, antitrust law, cultural and media policies, but also constitutional rights related to freedom of artistic expression[12]
2. Technological changes: e.g., artistic materials and instruments; printing, recording, and audiovisual technologies; broadcasting and TV; digitization, internet and artificial intelligence
3. Industry structure: e.g., size, capitalization and financial conditions; interconnections between production and distribution chains
4. Organizational structure: e.g., hierarchies and formalization of decision-making processes; cooperation between internal units; relations to other companies. Organizational structure is divided in three substructures: (a) bureaucratic with a hierarchical chain of command from top to bottom; (b) entrepreneurial based on short-term projects and fluid teamwork, without any manifest hierarchy; and c) variegated form tries to keep central control of the bureaucratic structure, but is combined with the free-wheeling creativity of short-term services,
5. Markets: e.g., monopolies, oligopolies or polypolies; contracts with producers; supply-side analysis of demand; marketing strategies; distribution processes; digital platforms
6. Occupational roles in the context of organizations: e.g., professionalization, functional differentiation and specialization, forms of collaboration, career paths in relation to various intersectional aspects; regimes of competence, unions.

12 Peterson mentioned only the legal framework, but we have added policies to refer to other countries (e.g., European countries) and artistic domains (e.g., opera, cultural archives), where public funding plays a stronger role than in North America.

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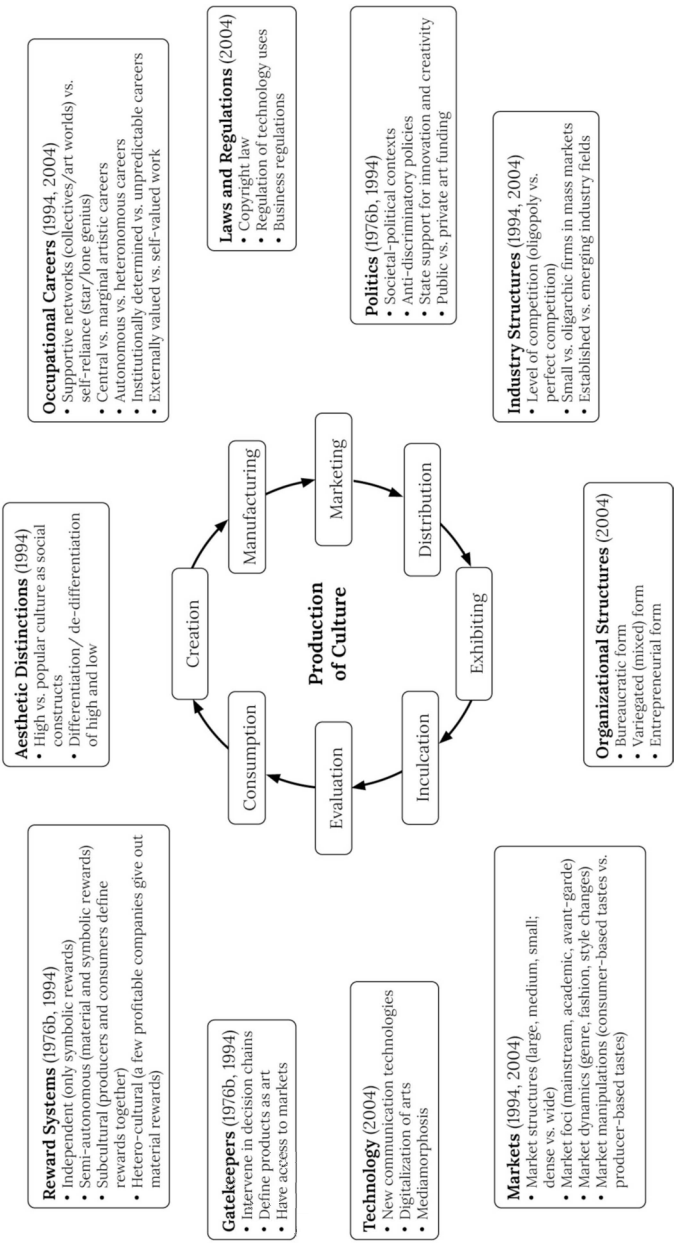

Figure 4: *Ten Facets of the Production of Culture (see Peterson 1976b, 1994; Peterson and Anand 2004). Note: the year in the figure is the year of publication.*

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Peterson (1985, 64) himself does not claim to be exhaustive when providing these six facets, and because his model is inductively generated, these facets can be extended. Indeed, a careful reading of his publications offers a larger number of facets. In 1976 (revised in 1994), Peterson, following Crane's works, introduced the significance of reward systems, gatekeepers and politics. In 1994 (revised again in 2004), he stressed the significance of aesthetic distinctions, occupational careers, markets and industry structures as additional facets, and in 2004, he added technology, organizational structures together with laws and regulations. This development prompts us not to speak of a six-facet model, but a ten-facet model (see figure 4).

It is evident that a more in-depth examination of each facet is only possible with the appropriate interdisciplinary competence (e.g., a competence in legal studies and policy analysis, in the history of media and technology, an in-depth knowledge of particular industries and their local structures, in organizational research and management studies, in cultural economics, in occupational sociology and communities of practice; see Hirsch 1978, 325–330). Therefore, this kind of industrial and organizational analysis is quite challenging and requires interdisciplinary teamwork.

To sum up, the Production of Culture Perspective is characterized by these central features:

- It is an empirical and inductive sociological approach with strong links to sociology of industries, organizations and occupations. It aims to explain the emergence and change of cultural goods, and in doing so it transcends deterministic views of cultural production and consumption.
- A broad definition of the term production includes consumption (Peterson, 1976b, 10). Peterson (1986, 1990) frequently analyzed how consumption and production affect each other, for example, how images of consumption shape decisions of cultural producers and arts managers. A strict production/consumption dichotomy is therefore called into question.
- Neither cultural production nor consumption is spontaneous; they are also not the outcome of rational planning. Multiple institutions are involved in shaping cultural production and consumption, yet without determining them.
- Cultural industries consist of clusters of cooperative activities. A number of professionals intervene, mediate and contribute to cultural production and value creation. Their mediation is constitutive for acts of consumption as well.
- The evaluation and valorization of cultural production (i.e., various reward systems) usually happen within contexts where arts and culture are pro-

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duced, presented, discussed, mediated, sold and consumed. These processes influence the content and style of new cultural products.
- The cultural industries are not disconnected from social and political ideologies. Therefore, non-artistic criteria (e.g., moral, political, economic criteria) may also play a crucial role in the classification and valorization of cultural production.

3 Critique of the Production of Culture Perspective

Paul DiMaggio (2000, 130) comments retrospectively that the Production of Culture Perspective "has received relatively little criticism" and this might be "a result of the open endedness of the perspective and its consequent tendency to absorb new ideas and problems." Peterson himself advises researchers "to avoid clinging to any single level of analysis" (Peterson 1994, 180–182) and to view the emphasis on organizational factors and markets as "heuristic … [and not as] an empirical given" (DiMaggio 2000, 130). Notwithstanding, a general critique finds fault with the strong focus on institutional and organizational analysis and in turn a neglect of the cultural objects and their sociocultural contexts. This critique took several forms.

Coming from an interpretative sociological approach and acknowledging the role of consumers as co-creators of cultural meanings, Wendy Griswold (2004, 10, 12) investigates how cultural meaning is formed and how it changes in relation to different social contexts (in theater, Griswold 1986; in fiction, Griswold 1981, 1987). She defines cultural objects as "shared significance embodies in form" (2004, 13) and ascribes receivers (consumers) the ability to create and adapt meaning through interpretative frameworks and horizons of expectations (2004, 92, 95f.). In doing so, she refers to "social minds," which people "as members of particular groups and categories" share (2004, 92). Meaning is, however, not a subjective, but a social outcome of a dynamic relation between, first, creators, who are usually embedded in organizational arrangements, second, receivers, who are embedded in social worlds and, third, cultural objects that afford aesthetic experience and meaning-making. Griswold (2004, 21ff.) made a significant contribution to analyzing the formation of cultural meaning by integrating cultural objects into the meaning-making process. She sees her own contribution as an extension of the Production of Culture Perspective[13] when she writes that "our definition of cultural objects is much broader [than

13 In the acknowledgement of *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, Griswold (2004, xviii) names Richard Peterson as one of her teachers.

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the understanding of the Production of Culture Perspective], embracing concepts and ideas" (2004, 89). Victoria Alexander (2021, 50f.) adopted and modified Griswold's Cultural Diamond by ascribing distributors (cultural intermediaries) a central role in mediating between creators, consumers, artworks and society (see chapter 10).

Similarly, Keith Negus points to the necessity of supplementing the Production of Culture Perspective with a perspective on the cultures of production, by which he means an analytical expansion to include the meaning of cultural products. With reference to Raymond Williams and British Cultural Studies, Negus argues that cultural production involves a "whole way of life," arguing that "we need to do more than understand culture as a 'product' …. We need to understand the meanings that are given to both the 'product' and the practices through which the product is made" (Negus 1997, 101; see Negus 1996, 59ff.).[14] In a similar vein, Harris Friedberg (2001, 156f.) suggests that it was not only various facets of the music industry that brought about musical developments, but also that there is evidence "that rock and roll itself changed the industry." Ron Eyerman and Magnus Ring (1998, 281; see de la Fuente 2007) follow this critique when they write that the focus on "the social organization of cultural production has been reluctant to consider … the content and meaning of an artifact."

There are plenty of arguments to counter these criticisms. First, it is worth noting that the primary goal of the Production of Culture Perspective was not to explain cultural meaning, but to shed light on the social and organizational factors that produce and shape cultural products and their content (DiMaggio 2000, 131). Peterson himself (1994, 184f.) acknowledges the limitations of the Production of Culture Perspective, which runs "the risk of eliminating 'culture' from the sociology of culture," yet he also reminds us that researchers working from the other side "who focus on the content of cultural products run the risk of focusing on critical concerns and taking the 'sociology' out." Second, one should take into account the constructivist approach of the Production of Culture Perspective regarding meaning-making processes (see Bryson 2000; Crane 1987; Fine 2003; Grazian 2004; Hirsch 1978; Peterson 1997). Clearly Peterson posits that meaning is not incorporated into symbolic products, but emerges from the conditions of their production, presentation, mediation and consumption (Peterson and Anand 2004, 327; Santoro 2008b, 51). Moreover, he focuses on "situations where the manipulation of [cultural] symbols is a byproduct rather than the goal of collective activity" (Peterson 1994, 164). Therefore, as Vera Zolberg (2000, 160) rightly remarks, the Production of Culture Perspective

14 Diana Crane (1992; see Peterson 1994; 2000) compares the British Cultural Studies with the Production of Culture Perspective and identifies many differences.

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"envisaged the arts less as objects [which is common in humanities], and more as process."

Another objection, first formulated by Janet Wolff (1993 [1981], 31), refers to a non-normative attitude and the lack of a critical perspective on cultural production. This view is also shared by David Hesmondhalgh (2002, 36), who believes that the Production of Culture Perspective appears "uninterested in even asking such questions" relating to power, domination and hegemony. Paul du Gay (2013, 10) argues in a comparable direction: the study of the production and consumption of culture should be seen in the context of what he calls a "circuit of culture," in which issues of cultural meaning, regulation and normativity; representation; and identity must be taken into account (see chapter 10 in this book). This critique is to some extent justified, since the Production of Culture Perspective did not analyze cultural industries from a theoretical or a political economy perspective (see Mosco 2012).

In the words of Peterson (1994, 185), it tries to avoid "the unanswerable questions about the causal links between society and culture." However, the research focus on gatekeeping processes, reward systems and cultural classification systems indicates a clear attention to power relations and normative issues.

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Chapter 7 | Sociological Neo-Institutionalism: Organization of Arts as a Social Construction

Organizations are essential in creating and shaping art contents, art styles and art genres. The case of Duchamp's ready-mades in the Armory Show 1913 is a well-known example (Danto 1964), but there are also many examples from the popular arts (Brown 1968; Peterson and Berger 1971). Internal and external institutional forces determine how and how much organizations influence artistic forms and functions. Institutions are not the same as organizations, though in everyday language both terms are often interchanged. An organization, which is usually a legal entity embedded in a framework of official regulations and per definition distinct from its environment, coordinates collective action, often in an established and open manner. Classical organizational theory emphasizes the understanding of organizations by their specific and manifest goals and functions (Stinchcombe 1965, 142), and highlights internal structures and processes that lead to organizational decisions of goals and means (March and Simon 1993 [1958]). Promulgated by earlier organizational and management theories, rational, consistent and agreed upon decisions were believed by many academic scholars to drive an organization's success. This view on social order goes back to Émile Durkheim (1997 [1893]; see Segre 2008), who understood the institutionalized division of labor as a mark of modern societies and to Max Weber's (2019 [1922]) theory of rationalization and bureaucracy.

Sociological Neo-Institutionalism disagrees with the general assumption that social actors tend to act rationally. As a product of social action, organizations exist outside of rational determinacy. Sociological Neo-Institutionalism stresses the effectiveness of nonrational elements that are neither reflected nor acknowledged in everyday organizational life. This shift from formal rules to informal conduct and from openly deliberated to latently manipulated organizational behavior was already found in the first departures from the idea of rational organization in the 1950s, by Herbert A. Simon and James G. March's (1993 [1958]) concept of bounded rationality and by William H. Whyte's (2013 [1956]) study of conflicts between personal values and organizational goals in

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the white-collar workforce. Instead of being built on reasoning, organizations are run by normative ideas, latent beliefs, unconscious routines and unchallenged practices that are taken for granted and go unquestioned (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, 15). These powerful norms and routines, labeled as institutions in sociology, give the members of organizations cognitive and interpretive scripts and meanings for their attitudes and behaviors. Organizations are therefore social orders based on institutions (Brunsson and Olsen 2018 [1993]). Old institutionalism overlooked how persons in organizations obey organized patterns of attitudes and behavior without any need to rationally reflect on or legitimize these patterns for themselves.

The label Neo-Institutionalism stirred a brief debate about the seemingly obsolete old institutionalism. In 1985 at a conference at UCLA, Walter W. Powell, Richard W. Scott and John W. Meyer first used this term (see DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 12). The justification to add the attribute neo was the implementation of three sociological ideas to organizational theory. These are, first, the dramaturgical approach to microsocial relations (the significance of impression management in social interactions, following Goffman 1959); second, the constitution of social structures as a result of routines in social life (the theory of structuration of society, Giddens 1979, 1984); and, third, the unconscious internalization of everyday rules (the theory of ethnomethodology, Garfinkel 1967). Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, two protagonists of Neo-Institutionalism, emphasize Goffman's contribution to earlier organizational theory:

> Goffman ... made a decisive contribution in ... interpreting interaction as mini-ritual, ceremonial activity oriented to affirming the sacredness of selves.... What is crucial ... is the sense of affirmation that exchange partners derive from successful encounters, the feelings of selfhood that are reinforced. Commitment is to the 'interaction ritual' and the self, and not ... the explicit object of interaction. (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 23)

In addition, they criticized the old institutionalism's ignorance of hidden reflexivity, which creates powerful routines:

> [Giddens's] distinction between ... tacit and conscious reflexivity ... emphasizes the role of routine in sustaining social structure.... Giddens contends that the control of diffuse anxiety is "the most generalized motivational origin of human conduct".... The means of such control is adherence to routine, and the compulsion to avoid anxiety motivates actors to sustain the social encounters that constitute the stuff of both daily life and social structure. (1991a, 23)

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Finally, they understand Neo-Institutionalism as a theory that emphasizes cognition as an important sociopsychological process in organization:

> Garfinkel shifted the image of cognition from a rational, discursive ... process to one that operates largely beneath the level of consciousness, a routine and conventional "practical reason" governed by "rules" that are recognized only when they are breached. (1991a, 20)

Wherever the early protagonists of Neo-Institutionalism looked, they found organizations behaving irrationally (see Brunsson 1985). Their empirical explorations gained insights,

> that are hard to square with either rational-actor or functionalist accounts.... Administrators and politicians champion programs that are established but not implemented; managers gather information assiduously, but fail to analyze it; experts are hired not for advice but to signal legitimacy. (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 3)

Surrounded by irrationality, these sociologists demanded a radical rethinking in the analysis of organizations.

Sociological Neo-Institutionalism is different from other theories discussed in this book in that it does not specifically target arts organization. Neo-institutionalism has been more in the general realm of the sociology of organizations and institutions. Its empirical focus has been mostly on corporations and nonprofit organizations in the educational and health but not in the arts sector. The organization of arts and culture, whether commercially or nonprofit-oriented, has until recently rarely been a focus of sociological Neo-Institutionalism (Kirchberg and Marontate 2004). An exception in the early years of neo-institutionalist theory was Paul DiMaggio, who studied the institutionalization of the high arts in 19th century Boston (DiMaggio 1982a; 1982b) and the organizational field of North American art museums between 1920 and 1940 (DiMaggio 1991a; see 2006). Although there are still only a handful of scholarly articles applying (neo-)institutional studies on arts organizations, for us this theoretical approach is pivotal and should be employed more often in order to achieve a better understanding of the social organization of arts and culture. We will refer to the application of Neo-Institutionalism in the study of arts organization whenever possible.

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1 Roots: old institutionalism

To understand the perspective of Neo-Institutionalism in greater depth, it is necessary to look at its predecessors. Older versions of institutionalism did not naively embrace rationality either and were already slightly critical about the general rationality of organizational behavior, emphasizing internal and external forces (state regulations, legal restrictions, bureaucratic barriers, etc.) working against the desired state of rationality. For instance, external stakeholders might abuse an organization for the benefit of their own particular interests. Applied to arts, politicians may approve or reject funding of an art organization, not because of a cultural policy, but for issues relevant to their re-election. Internal actors, for example, art managers, also have their own personal agenda separate from the objectives of their organization; their own promotion might be more important than advancing organizational goals, and conflicts of interests are played out at the expense of the organization. Moreover, organizational objectives might stand in opposition to societal goals, as supporting the fine arts at the cost of neglecting sociocultural support of the less privileged has shown. All these processes have been described and analyzed by representatives of old institutionalism in many different ways. As DiMaggio and Powell (1991a, 12) say, Neo-Institutionalism "traces its roots to the 'old institutionalism'.... Both the old and new approaches share a skepticism toward rational-actor models of organization." Neo-Institutionalism is an advancement on old institutionalism, and does not seek to replace it. Organizational sociologists have generally agreed that both perspectives complement each other and are not in competition (see Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997).

The main predecessor of old institutionalism is Weber's (2019 [1922]) understanding of the rational organization, especially his praise of bureaucracy. Weber regarded bureaucratization as a desirable and inevitable process of rationalization that allows individual members and organizations to be efficient and effective for the benefit of social progress (see Du Gay 2000). Rational modernity no longer permits erratic individuality and arbitrariness by powerful people but makes organizational behavior transparent and understandable. Building on these arguments, American organizational sociologists Robert Merton, Max Blau, Philip Selznick and Alvin Gouldner, scholars at the Columbia School of Organizational Sociology in the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, did not just look at organization as an object of social research, but as the epitome of modern society (see Haveman 2009). Especially processes within organizations became their main research topic. Organizations were now regarded as continually shaped by surrounding social structures, classes, status groups and other organizations. Many of these old institutionalists were not armchair scholars

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but conducted empirical studies on relations between organizations and society. Philip Selznick (1949) showed that legitimate social values and goals of organizations can be undermined and reshaped by superior social and political influences (e.g., Roosevelt's Tennessee Authority Plan). William Whyte (2013 [1956]) pointed out the inner conflict between individual and collective demands in the lives of employees of large bureaucratic corporations, universities and state administrations. Due to the obligations and constraints imposed by the organization, these conflicts change the psyche, friendship and lifestyle of the people involved. Herbert Simon and James March's treatise (1993 [1958]) on the bounded rationality of decision-making in organizations connected organization theory, economics, political science and cognitive psychology to show the limits to rational behavior in organizations. Three main factors – cognitive inability, time constraints, and imperfect asymmetric information – reduce the likelihood that rational choices will be made. Many empirical studies on management decisions, for example, Simon's dissertation on administrative behavior (Simon 1947), decision-making in farming (Wolpert 1964), or motives for buying life insurance (Yaari 1965) confirmed the thesis of bounded rationality.

As a critical sociologist, Alvin Gouldner – the doctoral adviser of Richard A. Peterson – is a case in point because he considers covert power to be pivotal for organizational decision-making. Whenever power occurs, a countervailing power will emerge. Departing from Parsons (1951), Gouldner does not see actors solely as bearers of social order but ascribes to them a potential for resistance and a capacity to shape structures. In *Wildcat Strike*, Gouldner (1954a) presents an empirical study on a strike in a gypsum mine to illustrate the extent to which regulatory bureaucratic measures are subversively undermined by informal rules. Legal norms and the management's lack of understanding of the company's workers and employees lead them to reject newly introduced bureaucratic rules. Gouldner (1954b) distances himself from Weber's theory of bureaucracy by classifying three types of bureaucratic patterns: mock bureaucracy, where rules are imposed by outsiders and are not enforced, representative bureaucracy, in which both union and management initiate and enforce rules, and punishment-centered bureaucracy, where management initiates and enforces the rules. His emphasis on covert power against manifestly enforced domination makes him a pioneer of Neo-Institutionalism.

2 The emergence of Neo-Institutionalism

From the mid-1970s on, a number of sociologists elaborated the ideas of the Columbia School of Organizational Sociology. Political influences (regarding

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the exploration of power, social standstill or change) no longer played a major role for them; instead, their research focused on examining social relations and individual interactions in and among organizations, and their causes and consequences. Neo-Institutionalism in this phase attached more importance to investigating the relationships between organizations and their extensive environment. It also adopted the skepticism about rationality in organizations but, whereas old institutionalism understood organizational irrationality, in a Mertonian sense, as an exception that can be quickly accounted for as an unexpected consequence, Neo-Institutionalism – in an almost Deleuzian sense – grasps irrationality as the fundamental current of social action. Empirical studies by social science scholars since the 1970s confirm this view on organizations. One of the first studies in this tradition was Lynn Zucker's (1977) description of an American meat-processing company regularly receiving loans despite its obvious insolvency. This case of economic irrationality was explained by legitimacy being founded on noneconomic factors such as loyalty and tradition. Other studies from this new perspective were conducted in the nonprofit sector, analyzing organizations with strongly institutionalized environments (schools, hospitals, churches). John Meyer's (1977) analysis of educational organizations demonstrates education as a system legitimizing unequal resource allocation, allowing the establishment of elites at the cost of other members of society. This study makes him a forerunner of a neo-institutional analysis of high culture organizations that legitimize state allocation on the same rationale.

It turned out, however, that not only nonprofit organizations but also commercial enterprises operate in strongly institutionalized environments that eschew rationality. Even economic criteria such as cost efficiency or thriftiness are not rational arguments in an objective sense, because they are assessed in an institutional environment that has much leeway to define how these terms should be understood. Efficiency and responsibility become managerial myths to legitimate externally unintelligible organizational action, for example, top managers' extremely high remuneration and bonuses. Neo-Institutionalism does not look for objective reasons for the purposes and means of organizational conduct but for unconscious and unreflected institutional rules that are substitutes for rational explanations. These rules are born from the social environment of organizations, especially from other organizations of the same sector. In addition to these tacit power influences are the unconscious effects of daily routines. Consequently, Neo-Institutionalism "comprises a re-

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jection of rational-actor model … [and a] turn toward … cultural explanations" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 8).[1]

Although the basic pillars of Neo-Institutionalism were in place around 1980, the theory first became widely known about ten years later, in 1991, through the anthology *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, published by Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio. Neo-institutionalists compile explanations of organizational behavior from microsociological interaction, the construction of routine practices and the social context constituting an institutional environment, including empirical examples. Subsequently the connection between organization and institution is broken down to different concepts, institutional decoupling (Meyer and Rowan 1977), isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991b [1983]), cognition (Zucker 1977), societal sectors (Scott and Meyer 1991), and legitimacy (Suchman 1995; Deephouse et al., 2017).

3 Central concepts of Neo-Institutionalism

In this section, we will thus discuss the theoretical concepts of (1) institutional decoupling, (2) isomorphism, (3) cognition, (4) societal sectors and (5) legitimacy. As said before, Neo-Institutionalism does not have a genuine arts-sociological focus. However, it has been applied in studies about arts organizations and arts management. We will complement each of the following theoretical concepts with exemplary studies from arts organization studies, providing evidence for the usefulness of Neo-Institutionalism in explaining the social organization of arts.

Institutional decoupling

The concept of institutional decoupling is based on the concept of bounded rationality, which we have been already touched on earlier in discussing old institutionalism. Incomplete information, uncertainty about environmental conditions, personal opportunism and a general inertia toward change explain organizational behavior far better than technical or economic rationality. John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) have built the bridge from the concept of bounded

1 DiMaggio and Powell (1991a, 19) acknowledge that "[James] March and his colleagues' recent work on the 'garbage-can model' has deepened our knowledge of the complexity of decision-making processes: organization members discover their motives by acting; problems and solutions are typically decoupled; and decisions often occur through oversight or quasi-random mating of problems and solutions." DiMaggio and Powell here refer to Cohen, March and Olsen (1972).

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rationality to Neo-Institutionalism by emphasizing that formal rules in organizations are nothing but myths and ceremonies. Their main examples are evaluations of organizations that are carried out without any consequence. Many organizational goals cannot be achieved by formal rules but only by informal procedures, continuing Gouldner's example of subversion against inappropriate official rules. Subordinates follow formal rules while they are observed. However, as soon as they are unobserved, most rely on the informal rules that have proven to be more efficient or viable in everyday life. According to Meyer and Rowan, the decoupling of formal rules from informal conduct is at the core of any work in an organization. Formal rules confirm and propagate the conformity of an organization to its leadership and its external organizational sector. Members of organizations work between powerful formal rules, which need to be legitimized, and contingent informal rules, which need to be efficient. If employees were to publicly discredit the ceremonial character of their formal rules, they would be confronted with sanctions from their organizational field. If, on the other hand, an organization completely adheres to formal rules controlled through evaluations and managerial oversight, it would be counterproductive, inefficient and inflexible, especially in contingent and unforeseeable events. A common solution is to decouple formal rules that are externally imposed on the organization from informal rules that are internally adhered to in the organization in order to achieve everyday organizational goals. Decoupling is part of most organizations, and in a macroclimate of increasing standardization it becomes more and more important.

Transferring the decoupling concept to arts organizations, Redaelli and Haines (2014) explain tacit and informal forces of arts policy as powerful because they hide behind legalistic and formal frames, decoupling specific goals of a normative arts policy behind generally accepted legislation. For instance, the state of Wisconsin enforces a law that requires the establishment of a mandatory master plan for every urban planning activity. Concealed behind this master plan is the domination of cultural heritage over other forms of culture in a city. Arts and culture are defined as overarching cultural resources but the state law for urban planning defines arts solely as historic buildings and monuments. Since this law is taken for granted, and is thus unassailable, the funding preference of cultural heritage over other cultural offerings goes unnoticed.

Piancatelli et al. (2020) also use decoupling processes to explain how the digital art consultancy platform *Artvisor* became a legitimate player in the exclusive arts field of contemporary art galleries, despite the bad reputation of digital platforms as art sellers. Following Meyer and Rowan's (1977) concept of decoupling, this digital art platform conforms to the power of ceremony and separates their very elitist advertisement, marketing and selling processes

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clearly from other similar digital platforms, representing itself as a professional art gallery, although it is in a digital marketing sphere. The gallery insists on an invitation-only access to the website, has a strong and professional management of its image (all employees are certified and endorsed with academic degrees), and performs all the necessary features of an established actor in the offline art market.

Institutional isomorphism

A second important pillar of Neo-Institutionalism is the need for an organization to adjust to the environment of its sector or field. This adaptation does not simply happen, as old institutionalism claims, through contact (co-optation). Instead organizations (1) adapt to the cultures of their environment because other externally powerful organizations force them to do so, (2) do not recognize alternative organizational options due to the lack of known alternatives, and (3) gain legitimization through adaptation. The social ecologist Amos Hawley (1968, cited by DiMaggio and Powell 1991b) calls the adaptation to environmental conditions isomorphism. DiMaggio and Powell (1991b) transfer the concept of the biotope from ecology to the idea of the sociotope, making the organizational sector analogous to a biological environment. Following the three issues of force, ignorance and legitimization, they define three types of isomorphism:

1. Coercive isomorphism: external pressures can be violence, the threat of violence, persuasion and the promise of rewards. The pressure on organizations may be the prospect of a government mandate, legal ties, withdrawal of financial subsidies or the social pressure to follow symbolic obligations, which, if violated, could lead to a damaged reputation and exclusion from the field. Organizations with strong external dependencies are therefore forced to adapt to outside forces, to behave isomorphically. Dependencies on resources in particular determine this type of adaptation. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003 [1978]) therefore speak of resource dependency theory. For example, the dependency of some arts organizations on state subsidies leads to coercive isomorphism. Especially in continental Europe, due to its specific resource monopoly, the state has power over many nonprofit arts organizations, often beyond pecuniary aspects to include technical and cultural dependencies.
2. Mimetic isomorphism: this type of isomorphism results from structural uncertainties experienced by organizations. To solve contingency problems, organizations borrow characteristics and imitate structures from neigh-

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boring organizations in the field. This does not have to happen consciously, as already the recruitment of trained newcomers and the migration of professionals from one organization to another within the same field provide occasions for imitation. Mimetic processes often occur in fields that lack diversity, with a limited number of known strategies on how to manage an organization.

3. Normative isomorphism: the third type of isomorphism aims at justifying the existence of an organization in a field. This is not done by rational social, legal or economic justifications, but by moral, cultural reasoning and symbolic pressures. The pressure to justify an organization's existence or progress might come from the organization seeking to gain symbolic capital (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 2013), social status (see Weber 2018 [1922]) or corporate reputation (see Lange et al., 2011). Organizations are embedded in a field-specific professional network, and membership in this network is crucial to reputation. The accreditation of an organization depends on formal membership in a professionally acknowledged network. In addition, organizations (or rather the members of organizations) become a network or a team if they communicate in the same way, in a similar jargon, with accepted conventions on interpreting the field regarding problems, goals and means (see Goffman 1958, 47ff.). Members of a professional collective approach problems from a similar perspective, find similar solutions, use similar formulas for organizational behavior and evaluate organizational practices according to shared criteria (see Zembylas 2004a, 251ff.).

We chose two papers that demonstrate the validity of isomorphism as a mechanism in organizing the arts. Kirchberg (2006) compares changes in art organizations based on these three concepts of institutional isomorphism. A mixture of normative and mimetic isomorphism explains the appearance of cars and motor bikes as legitimate artistic exhibits in fine art museums. Powerful museums in New York and Boston are key actors in legitimizing these popular exhibitions, and as other museums observe the success of these popular exhibitions, they develop similar exhibitions, as described by the concept of mimetic isomorphism. Normative isomorphism prevented the cooperation of commercial Broadway theaters (focused on profit) and smaller nonprofit drama theaters (focused on artistic merits) due to different values and standards of legitimacy. Brisson (2014) explains why, although in a state of bankruptcy, the Philadelphia Orchestra could continue the expensive technological development and provision of a new app for digitally enhancing the live musical experience of its audience. The incorporation of a new technology was not based on rational decisions (e.g., efficiency and effectiveness, balancing costs and benefits) but on

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field forces. Isomorphic pressures from funders, the successful implementation of a similar app by the Kansas Symphony Orchestra, and the need to appear successful despite lurking financial disaster led the orchestra to continue development of the app. Isomorphism occurred in this case because technological advances were accepted by the field as a substitute for economic and artistic successes, the pretext of being technologically innovative replaced any other concerns.

Cognition in Neo-Institutionalism

Where the above concepts of decoupling and isomorphism have a meso and a macrosociological reference, the third central term, cognition, delivers a microfoundation to Neo-Institutionalism. In general, cognition is the process of individuals and groups making sense of their perceptions and experiences, and it is therefore associated with information processing, understanding and judging within a social context (conventions, norms, expectations). Social contexts affect cognition; some contexts are restrictive and imposing, others are malleable and open for discussion. If these contexts are fixed and resistant to changes, they are labeled as institutionalized. The more institutionalized and culturally persistent the context is, the less it will be tested for its legitimacy. A state prison is an extreme case of an institutionalized organization. There no rewards or punishments are needed to enforce the rules of conduct, since the setting is entirely internalized by the members of the institution. The standard model of cognition in sociological Neo-Institutionalism is, however, not the open pressure to obey but the tacit influence of latent peer pressures.[2] If an

2 The significance of cognition as peer group pressure was first illustrated by Lynn Zucker's (1977) laboratory experiment about an optical illusion. A group of people enter a completely dark room. Then a small white spot of light appears on the wall. One of the individuals in the group is the test person (not knowing that they have this role). Everybody else is the peer-pressuring group that colludes in stating that the light spot is moving, when in fact it is not. However, because of peer pressure, the test person undergoes a cognitive process changing their mind from perceiving the light spot as not moving to moving. This cognitive reorientation depends on the degree of institutionalization that comes with the peer group members. Change of mind has a higher probability when the peer persons have stronger characteristics of institutionalization (i.e., members of a reputable professional organization, wearing a doctor's white coat, introduction on a surname basis, distant and depersonalized behavior). Zucker's experiment shows that conventions are especially powerful when they are taken for granted, unquestioned and accepted not only as legitimate but as pillars of the cultural foundation of an organization or an organizational field. The microsociological

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individual wants to be a member of an organization, they will gladly consent voluntarily to the rules of the organization.

Organizations are thus a product of a reality that is symbolically and practically generated by its members and external actors. The neo-institutionalist concept of cognition recognizes that individuals regulate their organizational activities by the approving or disapproving reactions of their fellow workers and of related organizations. This is an essential difference between new and old institutionalism, since the latter exaggerates the regulatory power of superiors and underestimates the role of fellow subordinates (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 15). The difference between what an organization is (an insignificant issue) and what it should be (the significant issue) is the main reason for applying cognition as a means to maintain organizations. If uncertainties, discrepancies and inconsistencies about goals and means occur in an organization they will be eliminated by cognitive mastery – however, if an organization fails to address its own ambiguities it may risk a major crisis.

In addition, the individual desire for safety looks to avoid dissonance, and any representation of an acceptable, safe reality provided by an organization legitimizes this organization in the eyes of its members. Organizations thus provide scripts of reliability to their members for interpreting situations, defining challenges and solving problems. Scripts are cultural rules in an organization that determine the relationship among goals and means, the constitution of easily accessible versus scarce resources, the definition of collective sovereignty and the maintenance of social control (Meyer 1977). If everybody in the organization agrees on them, cultural scripts do not need to be rational, and there is no need to enforce these scripts formally because they are regarded as self-evident. Without focal awareness, the members of an organization use these scripts and assume that they are thus acting efficiently. Although these scripts are largely accepted by the employees without critical reflection, the executive level knows about the powerful influence of these scripts, and they deliberately bolster them by internal communication tools. The script-producing and script-enhancing effects of these communication channels are not to be underestimated. In Neo-Institutionalism, cognitive reality generates limited knowledge for the benefit of the organization's goals (DiMaggio 1997). However, cognition is the product of individuals, and these individuals can change the contents of this product if they are conscious of the manipulative function of organizational cognition (e.g., corporate identity) and agree upon changing it. This statement is worth noting because it shows that Neo-Institutionalism is

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foundation of Neo-Institutionalism has been erected on this social-psychological experiment.

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not only unilaterally structuralist-oriented but also agency-oriented through the possibility of changing cognitive processes by the members of an organization.[3]

There are only a few studies about cognition as a factor for organizing the arts. Victoria Alexander's (1996a) study of a proactive behavior of museums to counter potential restrictions from funding parties is an example of the effective and conscious employment of cognition for the benefit of an arts organization. Pascale Landry (2011) explains succession in artistic leadership by hidden cognitive mechanisms and contrasts these with formal regulations. Cognitive mechanisms are scripts of succession that are related to informal rules of organizational values not manifestly stated. The opposite are manifest regulative pressures, that is, laws and governance rules, which arts organizations try to avoid since they reduce their scope for decision-making. Sally Mometti and Koen van Bommel (2021) analyze how performing arts organizations navigate between the opposing organizational goals of artistic and market logic. Both types of logics are socially constructed normative patterns that provide meaning to social reality, and performing arts organizations have to actively decide which logic they want to lean on. Possible opposing reactions to the market logic pressure from the outside are either acquiescence, compromise, compartmentalization or defiance and attack. The preferred reaction of the performing arts organizations is to remain in a relatively autonomous artistic state. Their main response to the powerful external intervention is therefore compartmentalization, that is, isolating and sealing the imposed commercial and non-artistic activities in their own organizational units far away from the central artistic units, and thus pretending compliance to external stakeholders by ceremonially accepting their demands, but in fact undermining their outside pressure.

3 The agency of organizations regarding pressures exerted on their sectors has been studied by Strategic Decision Theory (Child 1972), as a countertheory to Resource Dependency Theory. Strategic Decision Theory assumes that organizations react strategically within their sector to counter the constraints of, for example, financial providers. They develop strategies that shape their organizational sector according to their own organizational agenda. Following Strategic Decision Theory, the concept of organizational sectors explains that organizations actively and strategically work on increasing their cultural legitimacy in the sector to make better use of the financial and other resources of this sector.

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Societal sectors and organizational fields

Neo-Institutionalism emphasizes that organizations are shaped externally, following the model of open organizations (see Scott 2003 [1981]),[4] which observe and interact with their environment. Richard Scott and John Meyer (1991, 126f.) refer to a great variety of organizations: public or private, regional or national, international or transnational, branches or headquarters, etc. Environments affect organizational structures and behavior. However, the term environment remains diffuse. The early neo-institutionalists refer to either societal sector (Scott and Meyer 1991), institutional sphere or organizational field (DiMaggio 1991a; Scott 1992). These terms are used interchangeably but with slightly different theoretical connotations. Generally, all assume that the sector determines how an organization can behave legitimately. Sectors are categorized based on organizations with similar purposes, goals and means. Scott and Meyer (1991) describe them according to five dimensions, that is, institutional versus technical, wide versus narrow, programmatic versus financial, procedural versus result-oriented, and procedural-controlled sectors versus result-controlled sectors. The most important sector category in Neo-Institutionalism is the assignment to institutional sectors – which are defined by the significance and scope of cultural norms, conventions and rules – because these institutional characteristics affect the thinking and acting of its members. However, the political differentiation of sectors is also relevant. Scott and Meyer (1991) consider power differences as crucial to explain the importance of a sector. Domination of organizations in a sector has been described as coercive isomorphism. Here "social [and organizational] choices are shaped, mediated and channeled by the institutional environment" (Wooten and Hoffman 2017, 55). However, sector members (i.e., the organizations of a sector) can also affect the sector as a whole because integrated organizations can then actively shape their sector. There are parallels to Giddens's theory of structuration and to Bourdieu's field theory.

Even a behavior that looks "kind of wacky" (DiMaggio 1995, 395) from outside the sector may appear rational inside the sector if it supports the position of an organization within the sector (see Wooten and Hoffman 2017, 59f.). This kind of, from the outside, strange, deviating and possibly sanctioned organizational behavior is accepted and praised on the inside because it benefits the

4 Scott (2003 [1981], 26–30) distinguishes natural systems (organizations similar to biological entities, with structures and processes that can be explained solely within organizations), rational systems (organizations existing for external rational-technical reasons through, e.g., flows of money, information, goods or services), and open systems (organizations existing for reasons of social and cultural interdependencies with the environment).

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sector. In this sense, deviation is a precursor to innovation, and this emphasis on the organizational sector as a source of change makes the immediate social environment an advantageous partner for the organization. Then the sector is a voluntary community of organizations that not only share a common meaning system but give all members the opportunity to evolve (2017, 64).

Change can also occur when a new sector emerges. This happens when there are disruptive experiences and exogenous shocks such as environmental catastrophes, wars or extreme political reorientations that change general organizational strategies and goals. These social or political ruptures connect organizations with very different backgrounds as long as they believe in symbiotic support. Disparate organizations can cooperate in one sector as long as they agree upon a few common motives, goals and means. Sectors are loosely knitted, voluntary and special-purpose commonalities instead of closed systems.

Related to arts organizations, the most frequently cited example for a neo-institutionalist interpretation of power and an example for the dynamics of an organizational sector is the analysis of the effects of the institutionalization of art museums in the United States between 1920 and 1940 (see DiMaggio 1991a). The then newly constructed sector of art museums gave younger museum professionals and social reformers under the old museum leadership a voice for reinventing the museum. Early in the 1900s, there was still strong discord about the forms and functions of museums. After institutionalization of the field from 1920 on, this new professional constituency redefined the goals of museums. Another neo-institutionalist illustration of the significance of an organizational field is Kirchberg's (2004) study on the changing corporate world between the World Wars and its understanding of arts support. His case study explores the motives of the United States tycoon Pierre Samuel du Pont for arts support in these years and explains the changes from personal whims to corporate logic. The change of corporate arts support from patriarchal patronage to corporate sponsorship in these years is a consequence of the change in corporate leadership from companies led by single owners and entrepreneurial personalities to a collective of executive managers.

Legitimacy in organizational institutionalism

The most important concept of Neo-Institutionalism is legitimacy. This term unifies all of the above concepts, as decoupling, isomorphism, cognition and sector can all be traced back to issues of legitimacy. Whereas cognition allows the members and stakeholders of an organization to make sense of their activities, legitimacy is tantamount to the trustworthiness and recognition of an

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organization. Whereas cognition has a more microsociological orientation, legitimacy has a more macrosociological orientation because it leans on legal and moral rightfulness as well as on power and domination in society. However, the determination of cognition and legitimacy is not a simple polarity. Domination can be enforced by the structural force of norms but also by personal will. Legitimacy will become lasting if it goes hand in hand with cognition. If rulers have legitimacy, the dominated submit themselves to the belief of their rulers (Weber 2019 [1922], Berger and Luckmann 1991 [1966]). John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) see the success of an organization as dependent on its ability to argue that its dominance is legitimate. Organizations are then accepted by their stakeholders (e.g., fellow sector organizations, suppliers, consumers, politicians) even if there are reasons to doubt them. For instance, organizations of so-called national significance or system-relevant organizations like major banks and infrastructural enterprises are placed under special protection by the state, making them exempt from the competitive logic of the market. An organization that would normally fail can thus live on if it is able to maintain a strong facade of legitimacy to the outside.

Legitimacy is a multifold concept, ranging from fully accepted and socially necessary to illegal and socially damaging. Mark Suchman (1995) and David Deephouse et al. (2017) present several kinds of legitimacy. Pragmatic legitimacy is based on rational arguments as the definition of realistic goals and means of an organization. These goals are profitability in a market context or break-even in a nonprofit context, means of investment as a profit-generating act, or creating a nonprofit health insurance co-op as a welfare act. Legal legitimacy is gained by adhering to the law and political regulations. Moral legitimacy is based on moral obligations defined and controlled by societal agencies. These agencies look at the implementation of values and subsequent ethical consequences, for example, fair treatment of employees, financial transparency, sustainability or social solidarity. Cognitive legitimacy is the view of an organization as a pillar of national identity or history, as a role model for civic reputation or as a supporter of a community's wellbeing.

Organizations need to gain legitimacy to achieve attributes that are socially laudable, to give themselves meaning beyond a one-purpose function and to pursue public acceptance. Subordinated to these goals are narrower objectives such as market access, good marketing, convincing communication, external endorsement, sector cooperation and avoiding negative judgment from the outside. Outside actors include the governing state, regulatory agencies, the surrounding professional sector, the scrutinizing public, the digital social media and civil society's social movements and their sensibility toward moral obligations and sustainable objectives. Civil society and its growing demand for

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an emotionally grounded legitimacy makes them a major player in legitimating an organization. Besides the increased importance of emotional exchanges between an organization and its surroundings, Deephouse et al. (2017, 46) stress symbolic means versus substantive efforts when gaining legitimacy.

As yet another proof for this concept of Neo-Institutionalism, we provide examples in the fields of arts and culture. The first example is museum scholar Stephen Weil's (2002) insistence on legitimacy as the main justification for the existence of a museum. While museums once did not need legitimacy for collecting, preserving or exhibiting objects, in the last decades, museums have been in a phase of continuous existential self-examination, questioning their legitimacy as a societal institution. Weil points out that the significance of museums should now be gauged by how, why and how much they reach what kind of people. Deprived of its former sacred and taken-for-granted functions, the museum can no longer convincingly claim legitimacy in society. The new meaning of a museum thus depends on external social impacts. It is only by opening up to the outside world and discussing their social functions that museums can survive as accepted social institutions.

Jan Marontate (2004) looks at visual art production as a public matter during the Great Depression (1929–1941). As a political product of Roosevelt's New Deal, most artworks in the Federal Art Project of the Work Project Administration (WPA) were widely criticized by artists and curators for their poor quality. However, these works gained legitimacy by replacing ambiguous artistic criteria with convincing technical standards. Instead of assessing artistic value, the technical improvement of the oil paints used became the main benchmark for evaluation. The institutional intervention by the state changed the norms and standards of assessing the arts produced and enabled the legitimation and acceptance of WPA art.

4 Critique of Neo-Institutionalism

Neo-Institutionalism has inspired many researchers, but it has also received criticism. We identify three major criticisms: the first critique focuses on the supremacy of the construct institution over the construct organization. For instance, organizational theorists Greenwood et al. (2014, 1206) argue that the analysis of institutional processes has been used to explain issues at the level of the organizational field, rather than "to gain a coherent, holistic account of how organizations are structured and managed." On this basis, they accuse Neo-Institutionalism of neglecting organizations. We acknowledge that various scholars have differing research interests. Some of them might focus on more gen-

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eral research interests, that is, Neo-Institutionalism claiming to be a theory, while others focus on the more specific, that is, understanding organizations as having a genuine practical value. Scholars may also have different theoretical perspectives, that is, some might see organizations as functional units, while others focus on structural elements, for example, institutional rules and logics, coexistence, dependency and coercion. By contrast, some might see organizations as social actors and tend to focus on organizational differences related to particularities, for example, organizational structures and cultures, managerial abilities, the ways available or scarce resources are used, environmental aspects and other factors. We consider such differences as epistemologically legitimate, but in this section, we focus on critical arguments related to the conceptual foundations of Neo-Institutionalism.

Second, the emphasis on structure (societal forces and constraints) over agency (individual and organizational power) has been criticized. Fligstein (2008, 229) and Wooten and Hoffman (2017, 60) regret that neo-institutionalists do not think highly about the power of individuals. Instead, they emphasize the structural embedding of actors in organizations and fields facing challenges to their activities, for example, maintaining cooperation, understanding others, dealing with uncertainty and struggling with a lack of resources. Fligstein (2008, 232) accuses neo-institutionalists of simplification, since they "focus heavily on scripts and the structural determination of action," ignoring "how actors 'get' action." He further states that isomorphism implies that organizational actors orient their behavior toward one another, increasing conventionality. Explanations of deviant and thus innovative organizational behavior are missing in this theory, "institutions are 'sticky'. They tend not to change because the interests of actors are embedded in them, and institutions are implicated in actors' cognitive frames and habits" (2008, 241).

Is agency thus a product of structure and only a simulacrum scripted by institutions? Here we face the problem of the independence of agency (Meyer 2017). From a pragmatist theoretical point of view, there is no innate reflexive, completely voluntary and individually rational capacity in agency-driven individuals; instead agency has to be built upon the thesis of "the primary sociality" of action (Joas 1996, 148). Frequently some individuals are more skillful than others and can better cope with certain challenges (Fligstein 2001). The less skillful can then benefit from the more skillful and increase their agency as members of a group. In addition, according to Fligstein, judgments of situations are better based on evaluative regimes in professional collectives such as organizations. People seek advice from their colleagues in the same organization when making difficult choices. In the case of a group of people with a strong consensus about their view, they collectively share mutually recognized skill-

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fulness, dexterity, competence and mastery, and this is a basis for making easier and perhaps better decisions than would be made by group members on their own. The support of individuals by the mutually recognized skills of a collective makes the division between structure and agency blurry if not obsolete.[5]

Third, critics complain about the supposed value freedom of the theory, the highly political concept of power, and conflict being neglected by Neo-Institutionalism (see Munir 2019). In that sense, power is related not only to organizational operations, but also to normative topics such as domination, exploitation, discrimination, injustice and inequalities – altogether important topics for the analysis of organizations (for a discussion of the multiple entanglement of arts and power, see Gaupp et al., 2022). Kamal Munir alleges that neo-institutional theory is thus uncritical because it lacks an understanding of power, as it regards power only "as a *possession* employed *episodically* by social actors to attain their goals" (italics in original; Munir 2019, 2). Power establishes unjust permanence in social relations,[6] and Munir and his coauthors argue correctly that Neo-Institutionalism "has hardly been used to engage with some of the major social issues of our time, including the financial crisis, exploitation of workers, corporate power and inequality" (Amis, Munir and Mair 2017, 719f.). Munir (2015) also highlights the role of ideologies – not considered by the neo-institutionalist – that steer cognition. Referencing Critical Theory, Munir brings another normative dimension into the discussion and claims that institutional theory has "no moral compass" (Munir 2019, 5). Does the analysis of the social organization of arts need a moral, ethical or political commitment? Given the widespread misery in the world, the persistence of dictatorships and autocratic regimes, the devastating effects of wars and anomic conditions on people, the environmental pollution and climate crisis, one can rightly ask about the normative and political role of arts organizations. Consequently, one should also

5 As said before, structure and agency depend on each other; a sociological theory of institutions needs an enhanced theory of practical knowledge to better understand the reciprocity of agency and structure. Anthony Giddens (1979, 69) was very clear in elaborating the reciprocal relation between agency and social structure, "By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems." Agency has a social effect on human capabilities, and social structure is thus a result of agency and human capabilities (see Douglas 1986, ix).

6 This is already true if we think of the differences between the income of artistic managers (museum and theater directors, music and film producers, publishers, and others) in relation to artists' wages within the same organization, or of the differences between the average income of artists in correlation to intersectional categories such as class, gender, race and age.

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ask how obliged organizations should be to work for the societal transformation of a crisis-laden world.

As a critique on Munir's critical stance, Gili Drori (2019) questions his use of the word critical, since Critical Theory does not have a monopoly in determining what critical means. Without doubt, power is an important topic in sociology. However, Drori (2019, 3) warns that the role of power should not be overestimated, since in certain situations the attempt to control events by using instruments of power fails.[7] In Drori's view, Neo-Institutionalism is critical in a different sense. It challenges the major theoretical assumptions of not only organizational theory but all dominant social theories of the 1960s and 1970s "by highlighting the irrationality of rationality, isomorphism and the Weberian notion of the iron cage" (2019, 5). By providing new theoretical tools, Neo-Institutionalism offers social actors a chance to analyze their situation, reconfigure their understanding of it and gain power. For Drori, the epistemic potential of Neo-Institutionalism can be regarded as critical, not of the world but of preceding theoretical views on organization. The conflation of Neo-Institutionalism with neo-positivism, which is implicit in Munir's critique, is misleading (Drori 2019, 7). Normative restraint is not an objectionable sign of a positivist epistemology, but of an understandable cultural relativism. For Drori, neo-institutional theory is reflexive and context-sensitive, and interesting for a "plurality of issues and disciplines" (2019). It incorporates a situated critical observation of social phenomena without being normative.

In conclusion, the neo-institutionalist perspective is mindful of arts. Whereas some other theories discussed in this book have the objective of finding a generalizable theory (on a middle-range level) of organizing arts, Neo-Institutionalism is a multifaceted theory that emphasizes the diversity of possible explanations for organizing arts. The former theories strive for a small number of (ideal) types of different arts organizations, whereas this latter theory strives for broad and contingent kinds of arts organizations. The social context – created by the neo-institutionalist organization-shaping constructs of decoupling, isomorphism, sectors, cognition and legitimacy – fosters a broad variation of possible organizational styles and practices. Especially the inclusion of irrationality in neo-institutionalist theory makes it less probable to find just a few ideal types of arts organizations. Bounded rationality already limited the explanation of organizational behavior, but Neo-Institutionalism assumes a complete abandonment of rationality if the organization and its

7 For instance, there is the subversive potential of arts. Elites might have hegemonic power, but they cannot always be successful in using arts as an instrument of legitimation.

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sector practice other reasoning in an autopoietic manner. Together with the concepts of decoupling and isomorphism, in particular the organization of artistic production might negate the rationality of a cost-benefit analysis and replace it by a multiplicity of other causes to be creative. Artistic genres and – in neo-institutionalist vocabulary – the interdependencies of societal sectors and their member organizations further strengthen the autopoietic (see Niklas Luhmann in chapter 4) and autonomous (see Pierre Bourdieu in chapter 3) tendencies of arts organizations to decide and behave in ways outside the established societal narratives of, for example, economic or reputational reasoning.

The broad variety of arts organizations is even more affected by the combined input of cognition and legitimacy. Since organizations are continually making sense of everything, its actions are legitimate as long as the members of this organization and its societal sector agree on the implicit cognitive framework. A generalizable understanding of the social organization of arts is thus difficult from the outside because their organizing and evaluating criteria are idiosyncratic and situated products of an inside collusion, and a general emphasis on rationality might not be significant to explain an organization. More important is the agreement of the actors of an organization and its peer organizations to avoid dissonance and uncertainty among themselves (similar to Howard Becker's formation of conventions). Constant internal communication among each other allows a clear definition of the meanings of organizational behavior, of what makes sense and what does not. Here cognition and legitimacy go hand in hand. Gaining trustworthiness and legitimation is important when the organizations' actions are not generally accepted by the broad public. Building on Suchman (1995) and Deephouse et al. (2017), we argue that moral legitimation with emotional reflections of organizational action have become more important in organizations' strategies in recent times, replacing the formerly indisputable modern (cognitive, that is, mostly economic) categories of a seemingly objective pragmatic legitimacy (see Hampel and Tracey 2019; Rentschler et al., 2022). The social organization of arts is not unaffected by this: whereas the evaluation of arts could once be traced back to autonomous criteria (e.g., artistic quality) versus heteronomous criteria (e.g., commercial success, see Bourdieu's field theory), arts now become unratable and almost impossible to categorize due to a lack of generally recognized evaluation categories.

The few examples of a neo-institutionalist analysis of arts organizations in this chapter indicate the broad spectrum of neo-institutional analysis from arts policy (Redaelli and Haines 2014), commercial art galleries (Piancatelli et al., 2020), major art museums (Kirchberg 2006), a live music enhancing app (Brisson 2014), art leadership succession (Landry 2011), the emergence of a museum

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association (DiMaggio 1991a) to the legitimation of WPA art (Marontate 2004). This variety of topics can be construed as a weakness, since there are no generalizable results applicable to other studies of arts organization. It can also be interpreted as a strength, since the multitude of findings reflect an equally diverse reality that cannot be categorized into a few theoretical boxes.

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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

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]).

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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

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.

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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

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

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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

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.

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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.

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> 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

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*.

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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).

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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

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.).

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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

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.

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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,

13 There are also similarities to Wittgenstein's concept of language games. To master a language game means to apply intelligible and certain situationally appro-

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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).

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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.).

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.

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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

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.).

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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

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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,

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).

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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)

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.

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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

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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).

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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.

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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

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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

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.

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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).

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Chapter 9 | Comparing the Production of Culture Perspective, the Sociological Neo-Institutionalism and the Cultural Institutions Studies

For the analysis of the social organization of arts, many sociologists resort to social theories in order to explain the formation and transformation of social order, collective action and processes of interpretation and valuation of arts. They generate a perspective on the arts as a social activity that is connected with other social domains such as religion, business, education, labor, technology, legislation and ethics, to name just a few. This approach links different organizational arrangements to society on a superordinate scale (e.g., Clegg and Pina e Cunha 2019). Although the connection to social theories definitely has its merits, theoretical considerations are not easily transferable to the empirical level.

The approaches of the previous three chapters – the Production of Culture Perspective, the Sociological Neo-Institutionalism, and the Cultural Institutions Studies are interconnected to various theoretical sources in sociology, but they all have the advantage of being relevant in empirical studies, for example, of arts management or arts policy.

- The Production of Culture Perspective is inductively developed. Cultural Institutions Studies uses inductive findings and some deductive derivations as its basis. In contrast, Sociological Neo-Institutionalism is largely grounded on theories such as structuration theory (Giddens), ethnomethodology (Garfinkel) and social dramaturgy (Goffman). It explicitly criticizes utilitarian theory as underpinning the dominant understanding of organizational behavior as rational (Simon and March). Nevertheless, Neo-Institutionalism started from empirical findings of the Columbia School of Organizational Sociology, it also has inductive roots. None of the three theories seeks to formulate a grand theory but they do claim middle-range results (see Brodie et al., 2011).

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- The Production of Culture Perspective, Cultural Institutions Studies, and Sociological Neo-Institutionalism use terms like industry, institution, or sector to describe large-scale societal phenomena. These three theories reject methodological individualism and therefore insist that organizing arts cannot be explained as the aggregate result of individual actions. They would argue that, for example, the popular music industry is nothing but a large network of music worlds, beyond individuals who produce, perform and distribute a certain kind of music.
- All middle-range theories of arts organization build alliances with many other disciplinary approaches, especially with organizational and occupational sociology, arts management studies, cultural economics, cultural policy studies and the humanities. This transdisciplinary spirit has been their trademark, particularly in arts management research (Paquette and Redaelli 2015, 7–17).
- All these three middle-range theories refer to Giddens's structuration theory, bridging the dichotomy of structure and agency when studying arts organizations and organizational practices. Even the Production of Culture Perspective resonates with structuration theory when analyzing strategic action as motivated by reward patterns (Crane 1976) or when exploring the role of gatekeepers (Peterson 1994), as Santoro (2008a, 24) notes.
- All three approaches have at least tacitly arrived at a single-level social ontology by connecting different aggregation levels of the social (see DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976; Zembylas 2004a, 40, 99f.; Steele et al., 2020).

The three perspectives (we do not use the term schools because the groups are intellectually open and have not created an orthodoxy of their respective views) use different basic concepts, and address different research questions. However, their approaches display some resemblances and are to a large degree compatible with and complementary to each other. So, most scholars of these perspectives are skeptical about a single logic or one overriding infrastructure that shapes the cultural production and the relations between creators and consumers. For example, arts managers who are generally considered to have a crucial control over resources and play a key role in arts organizations, are also intermediaries between different institutional spheres (e.g., arts producers, arts market organizations or arts communicating media) and various social groups (e.g., creators, sponsors, critics and consumers) (see Peterson 1986; DeVereaux 2019b). However, the variety of situations, the complexity of social relations and the diversity of mediation types imply a lack of an overarching rationality and of a singular institutional logic that could essentially characterize managerial practices. All three perspectives reject social determinism and un-

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derline the relevance of situational particularities and contingencies. Nonetheless they acknowledge that global and local power relations, institutional constraints and established practices lead to overarching cognitive and structural patterns. These patterns are not necessarily developed hierarchically, that is, top-down, but also bottom-up. Social structures are shaped by shared experiential learning processes and common material practice arrangements too.

There are differences as well, but these are not too substantial. For instance, Richard Peterson uses the term industry while neo-institutionalists use the term sector or field. Scott and Meyer mark the difference as follows:

> A societal sector is defined as (1) a collection of organizations operating in the same domain, as identified by the similarity of their services, products or functions, (2) together with those organizations that critically influence the performance of the focal organizations: for example, major suppliers and customers, owners and regulators, funding sources and competitors.... However, the concept of sector is broader than that of industry since it encompasses the different types of organizations to which these similar providers relate. (Scott and Meyer 1991, 117)

Without denying the analytical point of the authors, we think that Peterson also has a broad analytical scope when he refers to the six facets and notes that some of them, for example, law and technology, exceed the reach of a given industry. Many scholars of Cultural Institutions Studies take an intermediate position. They frequently use the term industry in its widest sense, referring to "a specifiable overall 'clustering of institutions' across time and space" (Giddens 1984, 164; see Zembylas 2004a, 13) and to a large number of people who cooperate with and compete in the production and distribution of certain groups of artistic goods and services.

Another difference is that scholars associated with Cultural Institutions Studies explicitly discuss ethical and political issues, for example, questions of wellbeing, inclusive policies, issues of cultural diversity or of discrimination, nepotism, transparency, fairness and distributive justice (see Mathieu and Visanich, 2022; Zembylas 2004, 109f., 310ff.; Zembylas and Alton 2011). Scholars associated with the Production of Culture Perspective or Neo-Institutionalism are, although sensitive to these issues, less explicit and even restrained. This might be related to the different roles of the social sciences in North America and in continental Europe, to different academic values and to different ideas of the relation between arts, state and civil society.

In the further course of this chapter, we will focus on two particular topics. First, all three middle-range theories can be described as contextualist, and they have developed methodologies for contextual analysis. We will be dis-

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cussing their understanding of contextual relations and contextual analysis. Second, all three theories focus on mediation among the main groups of organizing arts, creators, distributors and consumers. Mediations actively shape (and are shaped by) the meanings of artworks, and arts' social role and impetus, as sketched out by the *Cultural Diamond* (Alexander 2003 [2001]; Griswold 2004 [1994]).

1 Context as a major concept for comparing the three middle-range theories

General remarks on the emergence of contextual thought

The idea of contextual relations emerged in the 19th century and is associated with an understanding of social and cultural transition as a dynamically evolving process, which – as it was then generally believed – follows intrinsic and determining conditions or driving forces. For Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, it was the "spirit of the times," the progression of zeitgeist; for Karl Marx, class struggle; for Herbert Spencer, the principles of social evolution; and for Wilhelm Dilthey, tradition and the respective historical and social environment. Many early sociologists – for instance, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and Georg Simmel – therefore viewed social phenomena like professions, rules, bartering relationships, various forms of artistic expression and religious forms of life as conditional, dependent and evolving.

The very idea of context implies a given situation that is shaped by its own surroundings. Figuratively speaking, it is a container or frame in which social phenomena are embedded. In other words, the different concepts of context, embedding, situatedness and relationality go hand in hand with a specific social ontology, namely, the assumption that social reality does not consist of isolated monads, but of interrelated and interdependent entities (see Granovetter 1985).[1] The logician Gottlieb Frege (1953 [1884], xxii) formulated the so-called context principle: "never ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition." The term context (in Frege's German *Sinnzusammenhang*) refers on the one hand to the inherent logical and semantic relations between the words in a sentence and on the other to the circumstances under

1 The significance of relational sociology, particularly of Social Network Theory, for the study of the social organization of arts shows up intermittently in the works of the middle-range theories, but also in all three grand theories. We will revisit this topic as a future theoretical focus of the sociology of arts in the concluding chapter 10.

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which a statement is made and understood. Wittgenstein (1922, §3.3, §3.314), incorporated Frege's ideas into his own theory of meaning. We point this out in order to emphasize that the concept of context is intrinsically associated not only with a social ontology, but with a basic theory of meaning as well.

Context was also relevant in pragmatism and explicitly in John Dewey's work. "When context is taken into account," Dewey (1985 [1931], 8) writes, "it is seen that every generalization occurs under limiting conditions set by the contextual situation." Later he defines the term as follows, "Context includes at least those matters which for brevity I shall call background and selective interest.... A background is implicit in some form and to some degree in all thinking. Background is both temporal and spatial." (1985, 11) By selective interest he refers to "the subjective, [which] is after all equivalent to individuality or uniqueness." Dewey (1985, 20) also names

> three expanding spheres of context. The narrowest and most superficial is that of the immediate scene.... The next deeper and wider one is that of the culture of the people in question. The widest and deepest is found in recourse to the need of general understanding of the workings of human nature.

Since then, the idea of context has become a basic concept for most social theorists and empirical sociologists. The statement made by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990, 131) is exemplary of this notion:

> The context is the specific set of properties of the phenomenon – the conditions – in which actions are embedded.... The context is really an arrangement ... of the properties of the general phenomenon ordered in various combinations, along their dimensional ranges, to form patterns.

Or, in the words of Theodore Schatzki (2002, 21):

> Context-forming configurations of life characterize all social phenomena, from chance meetings on the street and local council meetings to the world credit market and international crime syndicates. Indeed, a phenomenon is social to the extent that it embraces or pertains to so-configured lives.

Let us close this discussion by indicating some problems of contextual analysis. The basic assumption is that the objects of social research exist within contextual relations, and therefore sociological analysis aims to examine these multiple interrelations in a given situation. Accordingly, it is important to provide a comprehensive specification of the term relation, and we therefore need to ask what kind of relations and conditions can exist between a research object and its context (e.g., social arrangements which include people and organizations,

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natural objects and artifacts, symbolic forms and symbolic entities, institutions, etc.)? In principle, different relations may occur:

- Causal relations, where a condition or a well-defined variable is considered as the cause of the emergence, evolution or disappearance of a social object (x makes y happen). Typically, claims of causality are associated with claims of social stability, and reproduction of social structures.
- Conditional relations, which can be either constitutive (a necessary relation) or regulative (i.e., enabling or restrictive) can be one-way or reciprocal. The idea of conditional relations suggests the formation of social patterns.
- Modal relations, which play a role in the emergence and alteration of a social entity. The idea of modality and interdependence suggests an increase of social dynamics and unpredictable events. Therefore, such relations differ from causal or conditional relations.
- Transitive relations, which occur when an attribute of an institutional sphere is transferred to an object that penetrates that sphere (each object that penetrates the market contains a monetary value). Transitive relations refer to how institutions channel activities.

These relations are derived from formal logic. Since social relations occur in a spatial-temporal continuum, there are two additional types of relations:

- Spatial relations, which refer to spatial or geographic positions (e.g., up/down, in/out, proximity/distance or north/south).
- Temporal relations, which indicate a position within a particular concept of time and temporality, which extends the physicality of time. They also include the history of previous events and relations.

Finally, there is another category relevant to social analysis, which takes into consideration how people actively relate themselves to a situation in general.

- Intentionality (or directionality), which refer to interpretations, sense-giving and addressing situations and the active attitude people have toward their social environments. However, the concept of the "affordance" of objects (see Greeno 1994) also ascribes to artifacts a kind of intentionality, since they practically invite people to use them in a certain way.

Yet no relation can be taken for granted, but needs evidence. Another problem of contextual analysis is the extension and delimitation of what researchers

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mark as context. Presumably, there are a number of reasonable answers to this problem since theories of the social organization of arts are grounded on different social ontologies and theories of meaning. Here we want to underline that the way sociologists think of their research objects shapes their understanding of context and vice versa. Therefore, both aspects, research object and context, maintain a reciprocal relationship, that is, they constitute each other.

Concrete contextual analysis, we believe, must be pragmatic by focusing on case-specific and empirically founded research designs. "Being problem-dependent, the relevant features of the context are those that will contribute to generating a convincing solution of the puzzle" (Boudon 2014, 19). The three middle-range theories discussed here do exactly this: they give primacy to those contextual aspects that are empirically tangible.

The role of context in the three middle-range theories

The Production of Culture Perspective looks at the industrial and organizational conditions of cultural production and emphasizes the interrelatedness of production with other domains that are not genuinely cultural or artistic. Here context is understood as specific and empirically explorable relations between an artwork's production and its social, cultural and industrial environment (see Crane 1992, ix, 112f.). Peterson's distinct facets – legal framework, technology, industry structure, organizational structure, markets and occupational roles – explain changes in cultural production (Peterson and Anand 2004; see Crane 1992, 120). He considers the context of cultural production – in his words, facets – as ontologically real, that is, as trans-subjective structural constraints and windows of opportunity. The actors in the production process perceive facets at their discretion. Objective structuring conditions are affected by subjective assessments and are by no means factual occurrences.

The understanding of context varies in Cultural Institutions Studies. Zembylas (2004a, 91f.; 2019b; see Hasitschka 2018, 139ff.) takes a constructivist stance and argues that context – which he understands as a complex web of temporal, spatial, material/medial and intertextual aspects – is constructed by scientists in line with their particular research direction to facilitate analysis and interpretation. Other scholars (e.g., Tschmuck 2012) identify surrounding institutional spheres, similar to Peterson's facets, and focus on their synergies. They also emphasize the importance of a particular situation and therefore make use of case studies to explore similarities and differences (see Schad 2019; Tschmuck 2001b). Another example can be given from the work of Kirchberg (2003; 2005), who contextualizes arts organizations like museums by assigning specific temporal and spatial functions in urban settings that socially legit-

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imize them. Such functions compel museums to deliver a postindustrial urban purposiveness with respect to the physical, mental and political space of a city.

Sociological Neo-Institutionalism has also developed a particular understanding of contextualization. Since organizations "do not exist and compete as individual autonomous units, but as members of larger systems" (Scott 1992, 160), they cannot be understood without taking into account their relations and interdependencies with other organizations and with their extended environment (see Scott and Meyer 1991, 137). Their environments wield power by generating broadly accepted norms (DiMaggio and Powell 1991b), institutional logics (Friedland and Alford 1991), the density and scale of networks (Powell 1990) and sector-wide cultural forces such as social cognition that is, trust and credibility (Zucker 1977) or moral legitimacy (Suchman 1995). Because the terms environment, network and culture are semantically open, Neo-Institutionalism has elaborated particular analytical ways to use them. For instance, Richard Scott and John Meyer look at the organizational environment and distinguish between the institutional, spatial, political and control sectors. Their analytical view allows for the use of case-specific contextual analyses "in order to (1) consider the determinants of these characteristics at the sector level; and (2) examine the relations between these characteristics and the properties of organizations functioning within the sectors" (Scott and Meyer 1991, 122).

A prominent example for the application of this type of contextualization is DiMaggio's study of the institutionalization of North American art museums in the first half of the 20th century. Before the First World War, most art museums were privately owned and reflected the particular interests of their wealthy patrons (DiMaggio 1991a, 170; see Alexander 1996a, 20). Changes to museums' financial structures and their relations to the public, and the emergence of publicly funding facilitated the professionalization of its staff, the establishment of umbrella associations (such as the American Association of Museums), the development of standardization, quality control and museum ethics, together with increased means of support, better flows of information and the emergence of informal professional networks. One important result of this transformation was an increase in managerial agency, which led to a collective definition of the organizational field (DiMaggio 1991a, 275–277; see Mometti and Van Bommel 2021, for a recent example). This example shows that processes of scales and differences in organizational cultures are based on processes in the surrounding contexts, that is, the sector. In line with Giddens (1979; 1984), DiMaggio (1991a, 287f.) speaks of a structuration process that incorporates the duality of social structure and agency. On the one side, structural sector-caused developments drive and foster change of an organization; on the other, organizational actors

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also shape their environment and sector, for example, through their collective action.

All three middle-range theories – Production of Culture, Neo-Institutionalism and Cultural Institutions Studies – thus fall back on context-related concepts like environment and sector when explaining the emergence of and changes in cultural production structures and processes, and of arts organizations' power or weakness. The three theories provide slightly different interpretations of contextual relations among arts and their environments. Contextualization involves selective interpretation, and there might be different forms and ways of contextualization according to different theoretical understandings, methods and research directions.

2 The Cultural Diamond template of comparing the middle-range theories

The emergence of the Cultural Diamond

Intrinsically connected to the discussion about the meaning and significance of context is the relational sociology of four elements of arts organization (see figure 5), as outlined by Wendy Griswold (2004 [1994], xvi, 16ff.; first published in Griswold 1986, 8). Griswold (2004 [1994], 13) draws the analogy to an ecosystem to illustrate the interconnectedness of four elements: cultural creators (people and organizations involved in arts creation and production), cultural receivers, cultural objects (in general, symbolic forms, and specifically, art objects), and the social world (the social, political and economic conditions of art creation and reception. By doing so she bridges the binary opposition between culture and society and proposes a new nondeterministic model, which can be applied in various empirical cases.

A decade later, Victoria Alexander (2021 [2003], 51) added a fifth element, the distribution of arts, which mediates between the other four elements, that is, creators, receivers, cultural objects and social world (see figure 6). Distributors are individuals (art dealers, art directors, publishers, curators, art critics, etc.), organizations (museums, theaters, concert halls, festivals, art fairs, commercial galleries, digital enterprises, radios, TV stations, art journals, etc.) and networks (formal networks like professional associations, and informal networks based on personal relations and common interests) (2021, 75–88).

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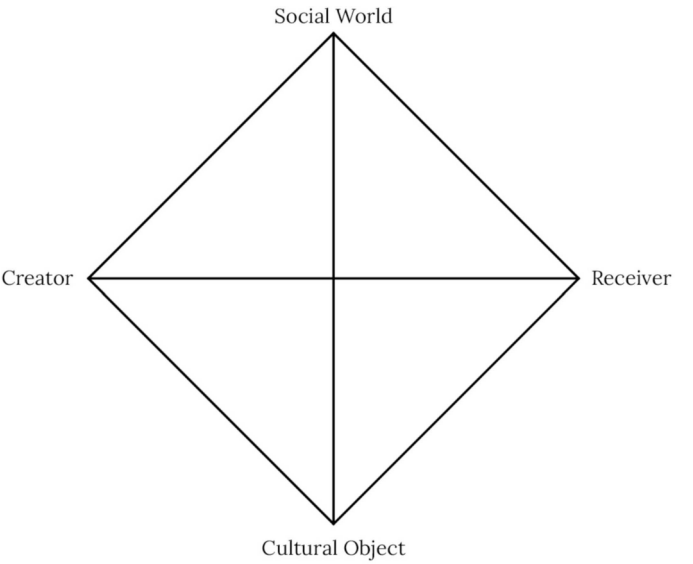

Figure 5: *The Cultural Diamond (see Griswold 2004 [1994], 17).*

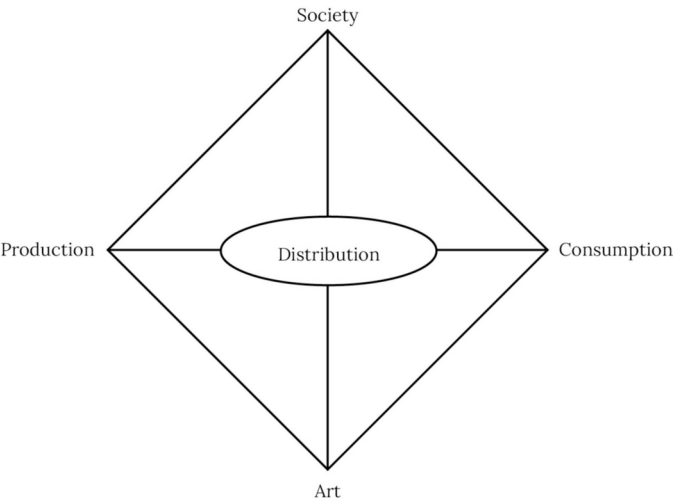

Figure 6: *The Cultural Diamond, according to Alexander (2021 [2003], 51).*

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Where Griswold speaks more generally of connections among various cultural elements (not only arts), Alexander focuses on arts and labels the relations among the elements as communication (2021, 50). She applies her model of the Cultural Diamond directly to the analysis of the social organization of arts, emphasizing that "the Cultural Diamond suggests that links between art and society can never be direct, as they are mediated" by distribution (2021, 51). This understanding of mediation makes clear "that cultural products are received by a variety of different audiences, not by a general 'society', and that people [that is, specific target groups] vary in what types of cultural products they consume and in what meanings they take from them" (2021). Creators may either work closely with distributors or they may want to distance themselves from these processes, but they will never be unaffected by the ways and means of distribution. No single group, neither creators, distributors, nor consumers, defines a single meaning and value assignment to an art object; instead, meanings and values are multiple outcomes of essentially unpredictable dynamics[2] (2021, 76ff.). In summary, the Cultural Diamond is a useful device for contextual analysis and for comparing the three middle-range theories along the lines of the five elements and their relations.

A similar approach has been outlined by Paul du Gay (2013), he calls it the Circuit of Culture. He and his colleagues discuss cultural meaning and value making processes, stating:

> The five major cultural processes ... are: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation.... Taken together, they complete a ... circuit of culture – through which any analysis of a cultural text or artifact must pass if it is to be adequately studied.... One should at least explore how it is represented, what social identities are associated with it, how it is produced and consumed, and what mechanisms regulate its distribution and use. (2013, xxx)

The circuit illustrates a methodological diagram: "It does not much matter where on the circuit you start, as you have to go the whole way round before your study is complete." (2013, xxx).

We consider the Circuit of Culture model to complement the Cultural Diamond. Du Gay's issues of representation, identity and regulation in addition to production and consumption are also embedded in the broader concepts of Griswold's and Alexander's elements of social world and distribution. Although

2 Especially the volatility of preferences generates a systemic uncertainty, which Richard Caves (2000, 3; see Zembylas 1997, 81) coins as the "nobody knows principle" of cultural industries.

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the circuit model has its benefits, especially by allowing us to visualize the continuous interconnectedness of all the elements and the poststructural emphasis on representation and identity as key aspects of arts production and consumption, for the purpose of clarity, we will make use of the Cultural Diamond model.

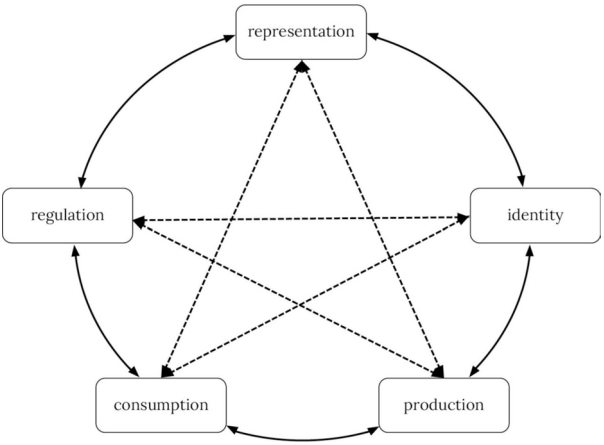

Figure 7: *The Circuit of Culture (see du Gay 2013, xxxi).*

Cultural and art objects as elements of the three middle-range theories

Wendy Griswold (2004 [1994]) speaks of cultural objects, and Victoria Alexander (2021 [2003]) of art, while Richard Peterson (1976, 11) speaks of symbols produced in the domains of art, science and religion. Later he emphasizes cultural symbols, which occur in "art worlds, science laboratories, religious institutions, the legal system, popular culture, and similar sociocultural fields, or realms" (Peterson 1994, 163). As an empirically inclined sociologist, he understands culture as "the code by which social structures reproduce themselves from day to day and generation to generation" (Peterson 1976, 16), which approaches the hermeneutical term of cultural objects as used by Griswold. In a pragmatist fashion, the Production of Culture Perspective studies topics like "the fabrication of expressive-symbol elements of culture such as books, paintings, scientific research reports, religious celebrations, legal judgments, etc." (Peterson 1994, 165) but with the specific sociological purpose of uncovering the major conditions of organized cultural production.

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Similarly, the analysis of cultural meanings is also one of the main agendas of Neo-Institutionalism. Scott (2001) has presented this in his three-pillar model that displays the regulatory, cognitive and normative aspects of institutional stability of organizations and society as a whole. The constitution of meaning is particularly pivotal for arts organizations since it reduces uncertainty about their goals and purposes. Neo-Institutionalism describes how meaning-making is an important task for organizations, not explicitly and consciously, but mostly by using "taken-for-granted scripts" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 15).

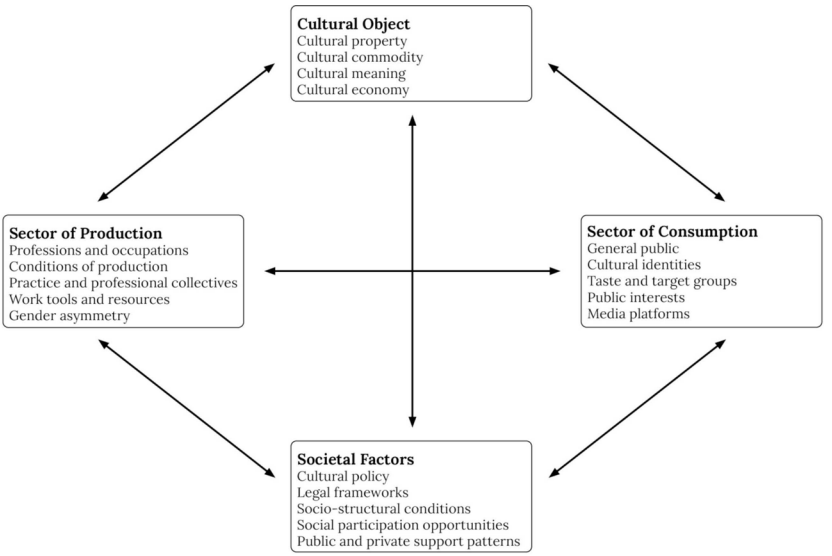

Figure 8: *Embedding the Research Objects of Cultural Institutions Studies (adapted from Zembylas and Tschmuck 2006, 9).*

Cultural Institutions Studies provides a research model very similar to the Cultural Diamond. In their introduction to the fundamentals of Cultural Institutions Studies, Zembylas and Tschmuck (2006, 8f.) highlight that every analysis of artistic practices and processes implicates the study of the social, political and economic contexts. Their research focus lies on the study of the creation, distribution and mediation of cultural goods under premises of artistic attributions and societal influences. The production and consumption of aesthetic symbols (as carriers of meanings) goes hand in hand with an economic valorization of these symbolic goods in late capitalist and highly industrialized market

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societies (cf. Boltanski and Esquerre 2020). The posited vicinity of cultural objects to a cultural economy places this theory close to the Production of Culture Perspective. The attribution of meanings to cultural objects, however, places this theory near the organizational task of meaning-making as outlined by Neo-Institutionalism.

Social world as a major element of the three middle-range theories

Griswold's social worlds and Alexander's use of society are aligned with Peterson's (1976, 10) call for sociological research to focus on "processes by which elements of culture are fabricated in those milieux where symbol-system production is most self-consciously the center of activity ... turning away from grand questions about the relationship between science and society." Limiting the concept of society to issues of empirically observable social milieux allows a pragmatist social scientist to set up a plausible research design to develop their hypotheses on middle-range societal structures and processes. Peterson repeats time and again that his approach rejects a general societal perspective, "The danger in looking from the societal level is that the workings of the production process may be seen to follow automatically from the society-level constraints" (Peterson 1994, 181). This is a criticism especially of the Frankfurt School's analysis of the "culture industry as an expression and reinforcer of the sociopolitical system of the larger society" (1994). The epitome of this pragmatist view on the middle-range concept of society is the six-facet model of the production nexus (Peterson and Anand 2004), limiting the external environment to six elements: technology, law and regulation, industry structure, organizational structure, occupational careers and the market.

Neo-Institutionalism looks at ecosystems of institutionalized organizational sectors to distinguish itself from the old sociological institutionalism that had mainly focused on the structures and processes within organizations. The emphasis on the external organizational environment can be seen especially in the works of Scott and Meyer (1991). They understand such institutionalized sectors as surroundings in which organizations mutually exchange cultural characteristics such as expectations, cognitions and worldviews and reinforce their similarity. The inclination toward isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991b) and the striving for legitimacy (Deephouse et al., 2017) are the most prominent effects that different societal sectors effects have on organizations.

Similar to the Production of Culture Perspective, Cultural Institutions Studies understands society as a complex of intersecting and mutually influencing practices, often prestructured by institutions. Instead of the six facets, Zembylas and Tschmuck (2006) focus on issues of cultural policy, law,

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social (i.e., bureaucratic) regulations, participation opportunities and private or public funding as aspects of society. Zembylas illustrates this by the changes of functions and values that cultural goods experience when they enter the sphere of the market. "Since the market itself is a field with its own valuations, it impregnates every cultural good with its own logic by giving it an economic function and value" (Zembylas 2004, 110). However, this does not mean that all the other values that cultural objects represent and generate are pushed into the background. On the contrary, different meanings and values form complex webs according to their particular social embedding (see Zembylas 2019a; 2019b).

Cultural production as a major element of the three middle-range theories

The understanding of producers (Griswold) and creators (Alexander) in the Cultural Diamond is closest to the concept of creation and cultural production in Peterson (1976, 2004), although he differentiates between creation as the emergence of an artistic idea and the construction of this idea as its realization intended for an audience. In his early works, he also subsumes activities of distribution and even consumption under the term of production. "As used here, the term 'production' is meant in its generic sense to refer to the processes of creation, manufacture, marketing, distribution, exhibiting, inculcation, evaluation, and consumption" (Peterson 1976, 10). In his later works he drops consumption from this list and replaces it with the production-related facet of the market: "Markets are constructed by producers to render the welter of consumer tastes comprehensible.... Once consumer tastes are reified as a market, those in the field tailor their actions to create cultural goods like those that are currently most popular" (Peterson 2004, 317).

Neo-Institutionalism is only peripherally concerned with production. Here the production of cultural goods and services is limited to the activities of "institutional entrepreneurs" (Battilana et al., 2009). Therefore, not the output of the production process is of interest, but the social mechanisms that lead to an output, especially the irrational and cultural scripts that cause production decisions (see DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 15).

Cultural Institutions Studies again is closest to the Production of Culture Perspective when studying cultural production processes under limitations such as scarce work and human resources, the lack of support for innovations and the suppression of creativity, inequalities in the workplace, or the (in)efficacy of producing arts performances at, for example, a theater. Almost identical to Peterson's list of production processes, Cultural Institutions Stud-

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ies deals with the "conception, production, distribution, mediation, reception or consumption, conservation and preservation of specific cultural goods and services" (Zembylas and Tschmuck 2006, 7). One important difference between this theory and the others is the introduction of practice collectives and professional collectives as a necessary factor of cultural production. Art is always created by various practice collectives (similar to Becker's art worlds, see chapter 2), and these communities can be conceived as *thought collectives*, that is, a community of people who create a common social identity through the same attitudes, language games and ways of thinking and coping with problems (see Fleck 1979 [1935]). Actions in a practice collective are valued by their members as meaningful and legitimate when they are based on mutually recognized symbolic forms, cultural techniques and material foundations. The existence of a practice collective in an arts organization is necessary for the successful production of arts and culture. The professional collective is an institutionalized form of the practice collective, where formal organizational structures are introduced, tasks are formally distributed, hierarchies are introduced and the forwarding of resources, information and remuneration are regulated. Practice collectives and professional collectives are important empirical research objects of the Cultural Institutions Studies (see Zembylas 2004a, 251–257). Another difference is seen in several microsociological studies on artistic creative processes by Zembylas, together with other colleagues, where they analyze various topics from the creators' perspective (in literature, Zembylas and Dürr 2009; Zembylas 2014b; in music composing, Zembylas and Niederauer 2018).

Cultural consumption as a major element of the three middle-range theories

The groups of receivers (Griswold) and consumers (Alexander) are certainly connected to the process of consumption, although Peterson (1976, 10) subsumes consumption under the umbrella term production. As previously mentioned, the closest the Production of Culture Perspective comes to the concept of consumption is through the term market. As a line of research, the production perspective "focuses on the impacts on cultural production in a single market structure" (Peterson 1994, 167f.). Only in his later work, does he account for an impact of consumption on production by the use of his new term auto-production, where cultural choices by specific population groups with specific lifestyles affect production outputs, linking production and reception theory (see 1994, 183).

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Neo-Institutionalism does not pay too much attention to the production side either, and it mostly ignores the consumption side.[3] However, the power of social cognition – that is, the group-oriented and taken-for-granted normativity of established patterns of behavior and attitudes – can be easily transferred to the consumption side. All members of organizations act in an institutionalized setting and thus use their cognitive and tacit knowledge as scripts, whether as producers or as consumers. In general, consumers or consumer organizations (such as consumer protection agencies) are not however, pivotal players in organizational sectors.

Cultural Institutions Studies understands cultural consumption – as does the Production of Culture approach – more as a production-decision issue than as a stand-alone element. From an arts organization's point of view, consumption analysis is primarily a marketing issue, labeled as customer orientation, customer loyalty or public response (e.g., Vakianis 2006). Target group analysis is limited to the purpose of being more effective in finding demand for the output produced than an independent affecting factor of organizing arts. Zembylas (1997, 149–189) also pays attention to the role of art critics as a group of professional receivers, who contribute to public awareness of artworks and consequently influence to some degree consumer behavior.

Cultural distribution as a major element of the three middle-range theories

Besides production, distribution is probably the most important element in the Cultural Diamond (see figure 6). This node encompasses the largest and most central area of the Production of Culture Perspective, being pivotal for organizing arts and culture as "marketing, distribution, exhibiting, inculcation, evaluation" (Peterson 1976, 10), for researching from the production perspective looking at "comparative market structures," "market structures over time" and "gatekeeping" (see Peterson 1994), and for defining facets of production such as technology, law and regulation, industry structure, organizational structure and occupational roles (see Peterson and Anand 2004).

Distribution in Neo-Institutionalism focuses on the relational networks and commitments of organizations to their sector when, for example, connecting supply with demand in a vertical organizational sector (see Scott and Meyer 1991) or when dealing with accountability (see Meyer 1994).

3 A rare exception in sociological arts research is Walmsley (2012), who argues for a neo-institutionalist approach from the visitor side to explain artistic value in theater.

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Cultural Institutions Studies to a large extent does not have a single research field for cultural distribution. However, the framework conditions of distribution are dealt with in the sectors of production (conditions of production) and especially in the sector of societal factors (sociostructural conditions, cultural policy). As with the Production of Culture approach, Cultural Institutions Studies points out the importance of gatekeepers for the distribution of artists and their performances. Gatekeepers are those entities "that generate a relatively broad art public" (Zembylas 1997, 67, 198) and "that participate substantially in the formulation, dissemination, and enforcement of evaluations" (Zembylas 2006c, 27). Arts organizations are thus based on networks of cooperative activities that are shaped by distribution structures in addition to production conditions and demand.

3 Conclusion: Comparing the three middle-range theories

The three theories have been compared regarding the significance of social context and mediation of the main organizational components. In the Production of Culture Perspective, context is understood as six measurable relations between a social environment and arts objects, or genres. From an industrial sociology point of view, these six factors are regarded as opportunities or constraints for an industrial entrepreneur. The six facets of legal frameworks, technology, occupational roles, industry structure, organizational structure and markets are institutional realities and must all be observed when analyzing the success or failure, the emergence or decline of an artwork or an art genre. Cultural Institutions Studies displays some similarities to the Production of Culture Perspective by identifying institutional spheres that are comparable to the facets. In contrast, Cultural Institutions Studies is not prone to ideal type contexts, as it stresses that the contexts of artistic work vary so comprehensively that case studies cannot be easily accounted for in a few context categories or facets. Neo-Institutionalism pays close attention to interdependencies among organizations in the same sector, their density, their scale and the scope of networks (see Powell 1990), thus providing explanations for social cognition, isomorphism and legitimacy. Of all middle-range theories, it is Neo-Institutionalism that underlines the contextual importance of the organizational environment the most when discussing the multiple impacts of the organizational sector.

Finally, we would like to make some critical remarks about the concept of context. First, context is not just made up of features that are measurable and stable; second, analysis of context has to be limited to a few important as-

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pects and layers; third, relevant contextual relations have to be theoretically and methodologically justified; and fourth, any context analysis is necessarily incomplete because a holistic understanding of the social surroundings, including all tacit aspects, is almost impossible to achieve. Therefore, while context analyses among all three middle-range theories have unavoidable limitations, they are tolerable.

The Cultural Diamond illustrates the relations of arts organization among the five groups of object, creator, distributor, consumer and society. The mediations among them shape and are shaped by the various meanings of art, their power and social effect, and the interference by social powers, structures and processes.

- First, from the Production of Culture Perspective, cultural objects are symbolic goods produced in specialized industries. They are "very concrete elements such as books, paintings, scientific research reports, religious celebrations, legal judgments, etc." (Peterson 1976, 165). Peterson argues that his approach is close to industrial sociology and focuses "on the more fluid and creative entrepreneurial form of organization" (Santoro 2008b, 46). The main research objects of Neo-Institutionalism are not (artistic) outcomes but (art) organizations. Cultural Institutions Studies defines its research objects very concretely as cultural industries and cultural industry products, for example, the music industry, the economic valorization of artistic goods or artistic attributions based on sociopolitical effects.
- Second, from the Production of Culture Perspective context remains ambiguous because it may encompass everything from the global (e.g., for India and the national music industry, see Peterson and Anand 2004) to the local (e.g., for the impact of Manhattan neighborhoods on local styles of classical music concerts, see Gilmore 1987). Conversely, Neo-Institutionalism understands society very specifically as organizational sectors. Cultural Institutions Studies further extends the idea of society to different spheres, for example, policy, law and markets.
- Third, from the Production of Culture Perspective and in Cultural Institutions Studies, production is everything from creation to evaluation. Neo-Institutionalism avoids the term, and most scholars of the field use the term entrepreneurs instead of producers.
- Fourth, consumption has been largely neglected by the Production of Culture approach since as a market factor it is often subsumed under the production term, for example, as autoproduction. Neo-Institutionalism pays no attention to consumption. For Cultural Institutions Studies, consump-

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tion is mostly considered a marketing issue of a cultural industry. For all these theories, the interest in consumption is rather marginal.[4]

- Fifth and finally, distribution as an element of organizing arts is of very high significance for the Production of Culture Perspective, as it includes all central activities of arts organization such as marketing, exhibiting, inculcation, evaluation and gatekeeping. For Neo-Institutionalism, distribution means solely the flow of resources and commitments in organizational sectors. Cultural Institutions Studies understands the area of distribution primarily as a condition of production (e.g., cultural policy, legal frameworks) and not as a stand-alone element.

All three middle-range theories help us understand the social organization of arts. They should be regarded as cognitive tools rather than ends in itself. None of these theories is preferable to the others; they all provide conceptual orientation, and their specific advantages or disadvantages depend on their specific application. As such a ranking of these theories would be counterproductive to their purpose, which is to achieve a deeper understanding of the various phenomena of arts organizations in social contexts.

4 Peterson's omnivore thesis (1992) was developed as a response to Bourdieu's analysis of the formation of cultural taste and preferences, and not as a genuine development of the Production of Culture Perspective.

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Chapter 10 | Networking the Arts – Going Beyond the Discussed Theories

This concluding chapter will be divided into several parts, expanding on the strengths and weaknesses of the theories discussed in this book in a way that is hopefully constructive and convincing for the reader. Consolidating appreciations of these theories have been written in the chapters 5 and 9. Now we take on the task of looking beyond these theoretical foundations and anticipating, speculating or calling for future theoretical pathways that the study of the social organization of arts could follow. Our premise is that all the theories we have presented here are starting points for further theoretical developments. These might be derived from the comparative reflections undertaken in the previous chapters, considerations about, for example, social relations and contexts, conflict and cohesion, creative practice and regimes of evaluation, or structure and agency.

This section will take on issues that have arisen concerning relational sociology.[1] We believe that Social Network Theory, together with semantic network analysis, is the most promising way to advance theory about the social organization of arts and its empirical research. A caveat is in order here; our goal in this book is to stimulate discussion, not to preclude it. It is up to our readers to draw their own conclusions.

1 Social network analysis as a tool to analyze liquid organizing in arts

There are two conceptual views we have not yet addressed in this book. First, the idea of organizing as a bundle of various activities and as a fluid process,

1 Pierre Bourdieu explicitly states that "to think in terms of fields is to think relationally" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 96), and Niklas Luhmann (1995 [1984], 21) repeatedly insists that the elements of any social system "acquire quality only insofar as they are viewed relationally."

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instead of a stable organization as a fixed structure with rigid rules (see Robichaud and Cooren 2013, xiff.; Scott and Davis 2015, 1f.). This idea is captured in metaphors of liquidity (Bauman 2000) and the noniron-cage organization (see Clegg and Baumeler 2010), with the centrality of communication (Schoenborn, Kuhn and Kärreman 2019) and self-management (Lee and Edmondson 2017). In the industrial past of the 20th century, the modern bureaucratic form of a hierarchical organization dominated both state authorities and corporations. In the postindustrial era, liquid forms of organizing appeared, and they have since become prevalent, especially in arts production and the creative industries. In these sectors, many organizations are now understood as temporary entities that are neither strongly established in a hierarchical or bureaucratic sense, nor pursuing orderliness as a sign of efficiency. Instead of organization, the terms initiative or project are often preferred. We posit that many arts initiatives and projects are, especially when they are in their emerging and most creative phase, organizing in a liquid manner (see Piazza 2017). This metaphor of organizational liquidity generates a rather new perspective on the social organization of arts. It is a process-oriented picture that highlights the permanently ongoing microchanging and environment-adjusting activity of organizing. The concept of a liquid organization is not without predecessors among the major theories discussed here. Peterson and Anand (2004, 316) introduced the tripartite concept of organizational structures as one of the six facets of cultural production, distinguishing between (1) the bureaucratic form with a hierarchical chain of command from top to bottom; (2) the entrepreneurial form based on short-term projects and fluid teamwork without a manifest hierarchy; and (3) the variegated form that tries to keep control by adopting a bureaucratic structure but would nevertheless like to take advantage of entrepreneurial creativity (see also chapter 6). Peterson's entrepreneurial organization structure already mirrors the idea of organizational liquidity. In organizational sociology, this view has also been made popular through Richard W. Scott's term of "open organization" (Scott and Davis 2015), which interprets organizing as a bottom-up principle (see J. Taylor 2009) and implies an accentuation of the informal (see Ahrne, Brunsson and Seidl 2016).

The second view brings the concept of social networks to the core of the analysis of the social organization of arts. A social network is a dynamic and contingent construction, like an entity whose existence and functioning much depends on nodes between its own elements and on events and developments in its environment. Therefore, communication, coordination and flexible adjustments are crucial. To put it in other words, networks only exist through relational activities (see J. Taylor 2013). It is evident that networks are fragile products of social connectivity and embeddedness. The analysis of social networks

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offers the opportunity to understand the situated perceptions and understandings of its core members, especially how they manage their relationships and attune their experiences, emotions, goals and actions (see White 1995).

Taking networks as a basic relational concept for analyzing the social organization of arts is not new. The social interactionist perspective of Howard Becker (1982), the isomorphism concept of Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1991b [1983]), and the approaches of Wendy Griswold (2004 [1994]) and Victoria Alexander (2021 [2003]) focus on the relations of individuals, networks and organizations. Cooperation, communication and exchange are central features of relational sociology and considered constitutive for understanding networks and networking in arts (e.g., see McLean 2017). One of the many origins of this perspective is the development of Georg Simmel's concept of social circles by Charles Kadushin (1976), who viewed these circles as preconditions for successful cultural production. He has been cited repeatedly to legitimize social network analysis as an explanation for the organization of arts, especially by Harrison White and his disciples in the Harvard revolution of Social Network Theory. This school advanced a sociology based on social connectivity instead of on attributes of individuals or organizations, not unlike the analysis of communication strands, modes and goals in Luhmann's systems theory (see chapter 4).

Probably the best-known monograph on the network approach is Harrison White's *Identity and Control*, first published in 1992 and revised in 2008. The central idea of a network-oriented approach is the localization and elaboration of social circles or, in White's vocabulary, relationship blocks. These blocks depict social structures better than solely personal characteristics such as individual socioeconomic or demographic indicators. The basic assumption of a network theory is that participants are embedded in and actively shape social relationships, creating a common identity of their circle or block. These socially shared identities can only be created in networks, where common stories shared by all actors form block-specific social identities (White 2008, 27ff.; see Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Based on these shared stories, networks have local identities or cultures, which not only hold together actors but also control them as members of a network.[2] A contingent social environment fosters the desire for social identity, making this available in a common network. Network formation is realized through disciplines (all members accept the same norms), catnets (all members share the same meanings), and netdoms (all members of a domain follow taken-for-granted scripts).

2 Control in this case has a double meaning as dominance and, in Goffman's sense, as shaping the frame of behavior to get a social footing.

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As early as 1965, in their book *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, Harrison and Cynthia White applied such a network-based analysis of the relations of artists, their careers and the establishment of artistic innovation, for example, in the emergence of impressionism as the dominant French visual arts scene in the second half of the 19th century. They speak of impressionism as "a persistent network of beliefs, customs and formal procedures, which together form a more or less articulated social organization with an acknowledged central purpose – here the creation and recognition of art" (White and White 1965, 2). Furthermore, they point out three different types of networks that make up the foundation of this art institutional system in the French painting world in the second half of the 19th century:

- "Alternative communication networks" (1965, 103) of artists, critics and journalists in the undercurrent of the formal painting system, undermining the dominance of the academic institutional communication channels.
- "Informal network[s] of people who ... sold paintings" (1965, 108; see 98f.). Dealer-artist networks built a new institutional system in cooperation with like-minded buyers who supported this new artistic movement (1965, 100f., 157f.).
- "Informal network[s] of association" among outcast artists that generated an artistic anti-establishment, with "friendships" as "working relationships" (1965, 116f.) "in stylistic accord" (1965, 157).

Summing up, Harrison White is committed to empirical research as an attempt to break away from abstract theoretical and speculative explanatory constructs, and therefore he disapproves of theoretical premises without empirical evidence. His theory represents a multidimensional approach with certain implications for an ontological realism (the relations of social actors are real and measurable) and a methodological design (a preference for in-depth fieldwork to generate own data).

Additional early examples of Network Theory explaining the social organization of arts are the analysis of relationship blocks, or social circles, in the literary field (Gerhards and Anheier 1989; Anheier and Gerhards 1991); the significance of networks for the demarcation of cultural genres (DiMaggio 1987a); and the shaping of visual arts by networks (Thurn 1983). Following the rise of the view of creativity as a human resource in postindustrial societies (Florida 2002; Landry 2000), networks were considered necessary frames for artistic creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Amabile 1996). Nevertheless, social network analysis is not commonly applied to the study of the social organization of arts. It is worth noting that the most prestigious journal of social network analy-

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sis, *Social Networks*, has rarely published research articles about organizing the arts, namely, only three of 325 published articles (0.9%) between 2019 to 2023 (i.e., Aerne 2020; Ternovski and Yasseri 2020; Jones et al., 2020). *Poetics*, the most prestigious and pioneering journal in empirical research on arts and culture, does not really fare much better either: it contributed only 13 to the 314 published articles (4.1%) on social network analysis between 2017 and 2022.

There are a few sociologists of the arts who have addressed this gap in research and theory. In 2020, a special issue on semantic networks appeared in *Poetics* (Basov et al., 2020). In addition, sociologists in England have looked into the connections of social capital, taste, space and networks in music worlds (Crossley, McAndrew and Widdop 2014). In one example, scholars showed how the social networks of 20th century British composers had a major influence on the creation, performance and reception of classical music as well as on their personal artistic reputation (McAndrew and Everett, 2015).

Paul McLean describes cultural networks as "particularly fecund spaces in which invention and innovation arise in all kinds of creative fields, from science and philosophy to music and visual arts" (McLean 2017, 6; see 2007). Networks are "incubators" (2017, 98) and "germinators" (2017, 99) for a culture that is "multifaceted, comprised of cultural objects (art works, films, music, ideas), cultural identities (as artist, as punk, as beat poet, as goth, and so on), and ensembles of gestures, philosophies, beliefs, and styles" (2017, 90). Theoretically embedded in Harrison White's groundbreaking network model (see 2017, 93), McLean refers to studies by Robert Faulkner (1983) on composer-producer networks in Hollywood and by Katherine Giuffre (1999) on personal networks that ensure the success of fine art photographers. McLean lists further studies about cultural networks facilitating artistic creativity (McLean 2017, 103) or encouraging cross-fertilization genres such as punk and rap (2017, 104f.). Network analyses find gatekeepers who shape cultural fields and new artistic talents (2017, 107f.), and enable "*distinctly* different ways of thinking about the creation of culture" (2017, 109, italics in the original).

Beyond this focus on cultural production, Aleksandar Brkić (2019, 175–182) describes cultural networks as an important intersectional space of artistic creativity, cultural policy, academic reflection and territorial communities. Current trends in cultural network research are the dynamics of changing networks, the institutionalization of networks (2019, 180), the excluding and including social power of networks, and the significance of identity formation for connecting networks. Echoing White's statement in *Identity and Control* (2008), Brkić stresses that the future of studying arts organization lies in researching adhesion and separation in and among cultural networks:

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> With arts/cultural organizations being consensus driven organizational models, networks should be representing non-spaces of dissonance that not only tolerate, but actively support and encourage differences. Cultural networks have the potential to be in the center of a new social framework. (Brkić 2019, 182)

2 The network principle as a condition for the "new spirit" of capitalism

In their magnum opus *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2005) analyze capitalism in a synthesis of cultural criticism, network sociology and the social psychology of human relations. Capitalism has been a success so far due to its generally accepted ideological framing. While the first spirit of capitalism (until the 1930s) was based on the prospect of profit for everyone; the second spirit took up the normative need to be efficient (until the late 1980s); and the current third spirit sells capitalism via a worldview of personal flexibility, autonomy and creativity. The freedom of the individual is embodied in the employee, and "from this perspective, valuable members of staff are those who succeed in working with very different people, prove themselves open and flexible when it comes to switching projects, and always manage to adapt to new circumstances" (2005, 92). Work is fragmented into projects, and a successful career is a quick succession of successful projects, since "the post-entrepreneurial career is a constant race from one project to the next. The value added at each project signals so many successes" as Rosabeth Moss Kanter writes (quoted in 2005, 93 fn. xviii). One's professional advancement determines everything and differences between private and professional spheres are ignored (2005, 114). The bearer of a project-based life (not only a working life) is a chameleon who is able to adapt for the sole purpose of keeping their professional autonomy (2005, 124). This ethos of freedom and independence has its roots in the work patterns of the autonomous artist, and thus in the fields of cultural production. During the Fordist industrial era, artists criticized the systemic containment of workers and lived autonomous lives as opposing role models (2005, 123). Obviously, the idea of an autonomous life fed off various romantic and idealist sources. In reality, the socioeconomic situation of the vast majority of modern artists in the 19th and early 20th century was precarious if not catastrophic. Later, in the phase of the third spirit, postindustrial capitalism began to appropriate this very artistic critique and since then has used it in a modified ideological form for its own purposes. Today an echo of the anti-authoritarian critique of 1968 can be found in statements by management consultants, university presidents, advertising agency directors and other leaders of

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the so-called creative industries. They search for "qualities that are guarantees of success in this new spirit – autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphous capacity, multitasking … conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity to differences" (2005, 97). All of this requires the basic ability to form project-promoting networks. It obviously affects the way societies organize the production, dissemination and consumption of arts and culture. Project work and networking requires an openness to others, new ideas and the ability to give in to a tendency toward the informal (2005). Social networks in late capitalism are thus used to relate even disparate elements to each other (2005, 103). In the networks of project-based lives, structures of the family community are indistinguishable from professional spheres:

> In a reticular world, social life is composed of a proliferation of encounters and temporary, but reactivatable connections with various groups.... The *project* is the occasion and reason for the connection. It temporarily assembles a very disparate group of people, and presents itself as a *highly activated section of network* for a period of time that is relatively short.... It is thus a temporary *pocket of accumulation* which, creating value, provides a base for the requirement of extending the network by furthering connections. (2005, 104f.; italics in the original)

Networked projects are antagonistic entities between formulistic and calculable relations, "which makes it possible to venture judgments and generate justified orders" (2005, 106). Networks build on conventions that allow the networked relationships of individuals to be defined and judged beyond a purely quantitative observation (2005, 107). Therefore, the project-based *cité*[3] structures networks and vice versa. The valence of a person in such a network depends on that person's function as a broker among other individuals in the net-

3 The original French publication (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999) uses the unfortunate term *cité*, and the English translation (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) uses the even more confusing term *city* for a normative support structure. In the French original, *cités* is defined as "les agencements sociétaux, dans la mesure où ils sont soumis à un impératif de justification, … un type de conventions … prétendant à une validité universelle" (1999, 63). The English translation is rendered as "Cities as normative supports for constructing justifications … [that] tend to incorporate reference to a kind of very general convention directed toward a common good, and claiming universal validity" (2005, 22). We prefer the older term *policy* used in the English translation of Boltanski and Thevenot (2006, 19), which is semantically more precise than *cité* or *city*. The German translation (Boltanski and Chiapello 2006, 61) uses *polis*, which is close to the English *policy*. Whether *cité*, *city*, *policy* or *polis*, these support structures are similar to Becker's conventions and White's domains.

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work and subnetworks, and this again depends on the quantity and quality of their contacts. People look for other people who might be useful as nodes to expand one's own network. For that reason, people who are too similar are ignored because they can only provide redundant information and similar contacts. "The most interesting links often consist, in fact, in crossing zones where there were few, if any, mediations" (2005,116). Projects can only be initiated by functioning networks. In such a networked capitalist world, one always has the desire to get in touch with others, make connections and be flexible. One is polyvalent, has many skills, easily changes one's fields of activity and does not shy away from risks (2005, 112). The successful networker is embedded in different networks, which they are continuously cultivating. The strength of Boltanski and Chiapello's work is that it provides plausible rationales for studying networks in the broader societal context of the organization of the arts. It goes beyond a detailed network analysis, which has its merits too, and rightfully asks why social networks are of significance for the microlevel (artists) and for the macrolevel (societal shifts).

Other social science scholars who carry out critical work on the instrumental usefulness of networks in art worlds are Pierre-Michel Menger and Ulrich Bröckling. In his research, Menger focuses on the transformation of the social organization of artistic production into a multitude of small, marginally institutionalized, highly fragmented and temporarily networked working worlds (see Menger 1999, 2014). Artistic production processes have to be carried out more and more under the conditions of short-term and underfunded projects in liquid networks. The simultaneity of fragmentation and network orientation reinforces an individualized subjectivation and a manipulative governability (governmentality) of cultural production systems (see Bröckling 2016 [2007]). Ulrich Bröckling (2005) refers explicitly to Boltanski and Chiapello when he adds another mode of individual agency and social cooperation to the project-based networks, that is, the "project ego" as the personal epitome of the networking human. The transfer to the artists' networking of art organizations is obvious. Therefore, the relations between artists' livelihood and their networking obligations have been made exemplary even before the introduction of the project concept in the new management literature by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). This becomes even more acute with the neoliberalization of artistic works. Especially (but not exclusively) in the life of musicians, the need to network and survive from one short-term project to the next has been figuratively and concretely expressed in Colin Crouch's (2019) notion of the "gig economy." In a dramatic way, he describes the flexibilization, de-unionization and general contingency of mostly low income levels as typical for present and future work relationships, not only for gigs of classical or popular musicians, but for almost all

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occupations. The criticism goes beyond the life insecurities of artists – all fields of work are burdened by the neoliberal work ethos. The precarization of artists has been studied in detail by Mona Motakef (2015). For her, following Robert Castel (2000), artists are atypically integrated but integrated nonetheless. As "hopefuls", they see precarious employment as a temporary steppingstone to better employment, and they do not feel excluded, because they are closely socially networked. Likewise, Alexandra Manske and Janet Merkel (2009) point out that the creative industries lead to a normalization of precariousness in the sense of legally and financially insecure forms of employment, perpetuated by the need to network to make ends meet. A similar orientation, although less critical about the artists' precarity, is presented by Nick Crossley (2023) when he introduces his concept of event networks, that is, the temporary networking of artists, audiences and support personnel in gigs and festivals. Using Becker's art worlds as a point of departure, Crossley shows that many music worlds are based on temporary professional networks (events), although they do not have the longevity that Becker posits.

3 Connecting relational network analysis with semantic network analysis

There is still a methodological gap in the development of Network Theory between the specialists of relational network analysis of McLean, Kadushin and White and the critical analysts of personal networking strategies enforced in capitalism of Boltanski and Chiapello, Menger, Bröckling and Castel. Theoretical interpretations and empirical research are not always sufficiently satisfying and methodologically connected. Harrison White (2008) was aware of this problem – he was indeed critical about theoretical abstractions and was committed to empirical work – and therefore he presents a way to combine these two approaches to networks. Besides a quantitative analysis of network relations, White studied jointly accepted norms (disciplines), meanings (catnets) and behavioral rules (netdoms), integrating qualitative components into his analysis. In doing so, he underlines the importance of meaning for a better understanding of how social networks are formed and evolve, and how they constitute and influence the social organization of arts (see Basov 2020). A similar direction is taken by Achim Oberg and Valeska Korff (2020) who emphasize that social networks should not only be measured by observable relations, but also should include ideas (2020, 204). The density and stability of a network does not simply rely on countable relations, but also on the mightiness of a jointly pursued idea. Their advanced network analysis demands the application of multiple corre-

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spondence analysis (2020, 200), quantitative social network analysis and qualitative semantic network analysis (2020, 208).

This merger of relational and semantic network data has been also proposed by Walter Powell and Achim Oberg (2017). They applied this two-dimensional network analysis by studying the relations between biotech companies, university research units and hospitals in Boston, which together build a network hub. Yet we can imagine some analogies to arts, especially to the multiple networks among artists, markets and organizations, which present arts (e.g., museums and other exhibition venues, theaters, festivals); with service providers (e.g., advertising companies, technical assistants, hard- and software providers, transport, gastronomy, hotel industry) and consumers. According to Powell and Oberg (2017, 446):

> Networks are conduits that channel the flow of ideas and information.... Networks look more horizontal than vertical. In contrast, institutions are obdurate structures. They reflect long-standing conventions and widely understood sources of power and influence. Institutions are 'sticky' ... appear more vertical ... [and] institutions reflect widely accepted cultural understandings. They are imbued with legitimacy and taken for granted. In this regard, institutions are cognitive constructions. Networks, in contrast, are much more active forms of engagement ... [as] scaffolds for institutions.

Here, the focus does not lie on the intersection between Neo-Institutionalism and Network Theory, but on methodological issues. The nexuses between concrete social entities (e.g., individuals, teams, and organizations) and large-scale social phenomena (e.g., sectors, widespread institutions, and local cultures) ask us to generate and connect quantitative and qualitative data to highlight relational aspects in the construction of meaning (2017, 447). Consequently, Powell and Oberg refer to "multi-level analyses that interweave the study of social relationships and meaning structures" (2017, 446). Complex nodes among very different social entities from very different fields (artists, dealers, lawyers, managers, technicians, academic scholars, educators, diverse groups of consumers, diverse networks, organizations, projects, informal rules, legal regulations, financial conditions, governmental actors and policies) support the notion of organizational hybridity that occurs due to multidirectional links and intense connectivity. Powell and Oberg (2017, 459) offer a good example of an applied method to capture organizational hybridity in a circular visual pattern. Applying appropriate methods for semantic analysis is a way to show how networks operate creating new or transformed meanings, share common or dividing mindsets, cause inclusion and exclusion, and create meaning as a kind of "relational process" (2017, 461f.). The direction of this analysis assumes that social networks

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of countable relations and networks of semantic relations are interconnected (2017, 467–471). Therefore, relations occur on many levels, for example, in deliberate interlinking or in latently emerging coincidences. Importantly, networks play a pivotal role in the identity creation of actors, as Walter Powell summarizes, "in the short run, actors make relations, but in the long run, relations make actors" (Padgett and Powell 2012, 2).

4 Outlook: advancing the study of dynamics in organizing arts

In this book, we presented a variety of sociological perspectives on the social organization of arts. In our attempt to create an innovative connection of social theory with the sociology of arts for analyzing the social organization of arts, we argue that contemporary arts-sociological perspectives should highlight the fluid and multidirectional relations that appear when organizing the arts, that is, how do artists, intermediaries and organizations relate to each other. Most recent studies in the field use the image of a dynamic process instead of a static social structure and an established status quo. In the preceding section, we focused on Social Network Theory, which is increasingly applied on behalf of understanding the social organization of arts. Of course, other theoretical approaches interpret the organization of arts differently, for example, as a process of structuration, as a practical trial-and-error iteration that generates differences and similarities, as a consequence of a hegemonic organizational sector logic, or as a contingent flow of polyphonic events on local, national and global levels. The sociological images and analogies may differ, yet sociology (and our compendium) tends to highlight clear and unambiguous regularities as results of mechanisms or intrinsic dynamics. But by excluding deviant examples, the illusion of uniformity of the social phenomena under scrutiny reveals itself. With this self-critical comment we want to draw attention to the underexposure of the irregular and the haphazardous, and of untypical and unpredictable practices that occur at the margins of arts, which go unobserved by the sociological gaze. We recommend that future attempts to develop theory should not refrain from ambiguity and messiness if we are to better understand the existing irregularities and atypical cases as deeply social. Zooming in on sociality and the social organization of arts does not mean that human activities are firmly determined. On the contrary, indeterminacies are characteristics of societies structured by power, manipulating institutions and social coercion. Shifting structuring aspects prefigure the organization of arts and related activities (whereas the term prefiguration does not mean causation, see Schatzki 2002, 210–233).

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Several influential theories on the social organization of arts were developed out of a retrospective analysis of historical processes; for example, the conflicts in the Parisian literary world in the second half of the 19th century, the emergence of impressionists as an art movement against the academic salon, and the rise of country music and rock and roll in the 20th century. However, can one generalize from the analysis of a particular historical case? A skeptical position draws on the assumption that the formation, maintenance and change of social orders may not follow a law-like rationale. A stronger sensitivity to the particularities of history and local social contexts can therefore increase our sociological understanding of contingencies, our willingness to accept the fuzziness of social affairs and the uncertainty of predicting future developments. Although most of the sociological theories we have discussed claim to explain the social organization of arts, we think that readers should not conflate sociological theory and social practice (at this point we deliberately avoid the term social reality). With a critical perspective, John Meyer (2017, 865f.) states that:

> The social scientific failures in explaining large-scale change are stunning. The movement for racial and ethnic equality, the women's movement, the environment movement, the modern movements for organizational transparency, the breakdown of the Communist system, the movement for gay and lesbian rights – all these worldwide changes were poorly predicted, and are poorly explained by social scientific thinking.

It would be overly optimistic to expect that the fuzziness and contingency of social affairs could be captured by sociological theories.[4] However, they have their epistemic value, not in explaining or even foreseeing social phenomena of organizing arts but in positing alternative ways of making meaning of social phenomena. We emphasize the term alternative because theories are most valuable in a pluralist world where they can be contrasted and elaborated in relation to other perspectives, styles of thought, understandings and experiences. Sociological theories of organizing arts provide us with cognitive tools and conceptual orientation to cope with and to make sense of social life in the artistic worlds. This epistemic value would be greater if sociological thought avoided substitutive competition and an evaluative ranking of theories and thus helped to overcome rigid theoretical oppositions. This includes the bipolarity of concepts like arts and non-arts, creators and audiences, professionals and

4 "Of all the disputable problems connected with the definition of sociology, the nature of its object matter is certainly the most vague and indefinite" (Znaniecki 1927, 533).

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amateurs, and individuals and organizations in order to treat them as relational concepts with context-dependent meanings.

It would be wrong to believe that the social organization of arts is merely a sociological topic and that it is only discussed by sociologists of arts. It is equally wrong to think that organizations are merely the research object of organizational theorists or organizational sociologists. With only a few exceptions, the works of scholars of one field (e.g., sociology of arts), and the other field (e.g., organizational sociology) rarely overlap. However, an inclination for a transdisciplinary cooperation comes from practice: artists, arts managers, and cultural intermediaries are outspoken in their political and moral criticism. Think, for instance, of the critique of conflicting economic and artistic interests, of excessive exploitation and precarity, the fight for self-determination and for sustainable development goals. Think of the push for feminist, post-colonialist and anti-racism objectives, not only but also in arts. Therefore, in this book, our discussion of the social organization of arts focuses only on some, mostly established, theoretical perspectives. We have left some sociologically important topics open, among them social aspects of the formation of artistic styles, and the political relation of the contemporary social organization of arts to the many crises unfolding, such as the fight against climate change and the urgent need to mediate and implement sustainable practices, to react to and interpret global geopolitical and economic changes, and to reflect on and discuss the impact that these global changes have on the forms and contents of arts. Consider the many questions we have raised in this volume as an invitation to reflect on and further develop the theories and empirical research on the social organization of arts in problematic and dynamic local and global environments.

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Appendix

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