

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.”

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

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.

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-

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:

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

the so-called creative industries. They search for “qualities that are guarantees of success in this new spirit – autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphic 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 *cit  *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 *cit  *, and the English translation (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) uses the even more confusing term *city* for a normative support structure. In the French original, *cit  s* is defined as “les agencements soci  taux, dans la mesure o   ils sont soumis    un imp  ratif de justification, ... un type de conventions ... pr  tendant    une validit   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 *cit  * or *city*. The German translation (Boltanski and Chiapello 2006, 61) uses *polis*, which is close to the English *policy*. Whether *cit  *, *city*, *policy* or *polis*, these support structures are similar to Becker’s conventions and White’s domains.

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

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-

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

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).

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).

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 trans-disciplinary 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.

