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The Collaborating Cultural Organization: Legitimation through Partnerships

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ABSTRACT
The article studies the role of partnerships in Danish cultural organizations. The organizations face a legitimacy crisis. As a response they display openness to society. The article uses the theoretical framework of Orders of Worth and studies the role of the projective city in legitimation work. Openness and differentiated connections are necessary to maintain legitimacy for cultural organizations. The organizations frame their tasks as meetings and facilitation of connections, and they carry out many activities in collaboration with partners. If an organization has too few connections with others, the organization appears isolated and unattractive.

Introduction: Cultural organizations and the crisis of legitimacy
What is the purpose and relevance of arts and culture in society today? Do the arts and culture have a role to play in relation to social and political purposes? Alternatively, do the arts represent an absolute otherness in relation to the rest of society? Artists, intellectuals, researchers, and politicians have discussed these questions for centuries. Arts and culture have primarily been coupled to societal value by way of the assumption that the encounter between citizens of a society and cultural heritage or the arts would cultivate and empower the individual, and thus contribute to the strengthening of democratic society. Cultural organizations, such as libraries and theaters, are main institutions nation-states use to secure access to the arts and cultural heritage. However, these organizations face a legitimacy crisis. The demands for quantitative user surveys, the research interest in the value of culture, as well as the interest in these topics from national and local cultural agencies are all indicators of the legitimacy crisis (Phiddian et al. 2017; Crossick and Kaszynska 2016). A related indicator is the rise of instrumental cultural policy, which, according to McGuigan (2004) and Hadley and Gray (2017), undermines the legitimacy of the cultural sector. Another explanation for the legitimacy crisis is the lack of debate on cultural organizations in the public (Holden 2006; Hvenegaard Rasmussen 2018). This means that cultural organizations cannot maintain their legitimacy just by giving access to high-quality arts and culture. They must do something more. In the Nordic countries, researchers have pointed out that cultural organizations must connect to society in new ways in order to be perceived as relevant.
Larsen (2014, 2016) shows that it has become essential for state-funded cultural organizations to define a societal mission. Kann-Rasmussen (2016) shows that a number of cultural leaders experience a need for their cultural organizations to display an open approach to society.

Institutional theory defines legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values beliefs and definitions” (Suchman 1995, 574). This means that organizational legitimacy is related to the legitimacy of broader cultural and societal beliefs and values. If the value system around the cultural organizations changes, then their legitimacy changes. Research in institutional theory has shown how organizations conform to or resist prevailing norms in society (Drori and Honig 2013; Erkama and Vaara 2010; Suddaby and Greenwood 2005) through symbolic or substantial management (Ashforth and Gibbs 1990). However, in cultural policy research, the discussions on legitimacy of cultural organizations have often been limited to include prevailing rationales or paradigms in cultural policy (Bonet and Négrier 2018; Duelund 2003). On the one hand, this is not surprising, since cultural organizations are publicly funded organizations and, as such, their purpose and activities are driven by public policies. As a result, the field of cultural policy is an important part of the institutional environment for cultural organizations (Scott and Meyer 1991). On the other hand, cultural organizations have become more self-governing in recent years. Research in welfare management characterizes the current paradigm in public administration as a supervision administration (Andersen and Pors 2016; Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2005). This means that the administrative level (such as the Ministry of Culture) plays a more supervising role, as opposed to a more rule-setting or governmental role. Consequently, organizations (such as public libraries and theaters) must behave as “autonomous organizations [...] to be their own independent decision system with responsibility for goal setting as well as budgeting” (Andersen and Pors 2016, 128). Kangas and Vestheim (2010), Nisbett (2013), and Kleppe (2018) show that this is also the case for cultural organizations. When cultural organizations need to set the goals themselves, combined with the previously mentioned legitimacy crisis caused by an increased demand for displaying of value and a decrease in public debate, it means that the cultural field changes. Consequently, in order to be able to understand how cultural organizations connect themselves with society, it is not enough to study cultural policies.

In the book The New Spirit of Capitalism, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) develop a theoretical framework in order to understand how and why organizations justify themselves through increased networking, projects and openness to the outside world. The authors call this regime of justification “the projective city.” The book concerns capitalist organizations; however, cultural organizations are not capitalist businesses. One would expect that state-subsidized cultural institutions would be subject to other modes of justification. There is a large body of literature on arts management and cultural leadership that shows how different values (artistic and managerial) compete in the arts organizations (e.g., Caust 2008; Cray, Inglis, and Freeman 2007; Royseng 2008; Daigle and Rouleau 2010). However, Boltanski and Chiapello claim that the “new spirit of capitalism” and its justification regime, “the projective city,” work in a way that transcends
fields. For that reason, I wish to explore what the case is for cultural organizations in Denmark. Thus, my research questions are:

1. How do cultural organizations in Denmark connect with society today?
2. What role does the projective city, as conceptualized by Boltanski and Chiapello, play in the legitimation work performed by these organizations?

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: firstly, I present and discuss the orders of worth framework, of which the projective city is a part, and some key insights on legitimacy from institutional theory. Secondly, I present data from four cultural organizations in Denmark and the methods I have used to study their legitimation work. The findings concerning the first question are presented in a display that shows the types of partners with which the organizations collaborate. The findings regarding the second question are organized according to three objectives or “tasks” that all four of the organizations emphasize. After the presentation of findings, I conclude by discussing the implications for understanding legitimation work in cultural organizations today.

**Theoretical framework: Orders of worth and legitimation work**

In their influential book *On Justification*, Boltanski and Thévenot wish to “analyse and develop a grammar of the critical operations that people carry out when they want to show their disagreement without resorting to violence, and the ways they construct, display, and conclude more or less lasting agreements” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 25). If someone wants to criticize or justify something, one must formulate arguments according to some superior common principle in order to win the discussion. These superior common principles represent something bigger than the actual situation; they each represent a common good. Boltanski and Thévenot identify these modes of justification, or orders of worth, and arrange them in six different common worlds. If one criticizes or justifies something with their point of departure in the inspirational world where greatness pertains to, e.g., an inspired artist, worth is independent of the recognition of others. An example of such an argument would be *l’art pour l’art*—the art for art’s sake principle. Another world of interest when studying the cultural field is the civic world, where the collective, the public, and society are focal points. Larsen (2014, 465) claims that cultural institutions draw on the civic world when they relate their worth to their societal mission. In this case, justification of the cultural organization bases itself on society and the society’s requirements. A third of Boltanski and Thévenot’s common worlds I wish to mention here is the world of fame. In the world of fame, greatness, unlike in the inspirational world, is completely dependent on the recognition of others. The highest goal is recognition, independent of who recognizes or why. Considering cultural institutions, the world of fame is of interest when observing how, e.g., museums legitimize themselves by user surveys, and argue for their worth by emphasizing the number of visitors (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 180).

Boltanski and Thévenot’s theory is a theory of legitimation. However, institutional theory has contributed significantly to the dynamics of legitimation processes and strategies (Drori and Honig 2013; Suchman 1995; Deephouse and Suchman 2008),
and as stated in the introduction, provided important definitions and insights on the relations between organizations and their environment (Scott and Meyer 1991; Scott 2008; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Institutional theory assumes that organizations are formed and permeated by institutionalized norms and logics. Organizations conform to these logics in order to appear legitimate. Scott (2008) notes that certain ideas or perceptions constitute the institutional setting of an organization. The institutional environment (or setting) is defined as: “rules and requirements to which individual organisations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy” (Scott and Meyer 1991, 123). The combination of concepts on institutional settings with Boltanski et al.’s ideas of justification organized in cities or regimes (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) will form a suitable theoretical framework for analyzing the role of how cultural organizations connect with society today and to describe the role of the projective city in legitimation work in these organizations. It is important to note that cultural organizations do not perform legitimation work solely to increase their possibilities of securing funding. They are equally dependent on artistic credibility and of being perceived as relevant and inclusive by a wider community of citizens (Holden 2006; Kangas and Vestheim 2010). The orders of worth framework is particularly appropriate for analyzing the cultural field, because it offers a grammar that can encompass the legitimation work in a complex setup.

The orders of worth by Boltanski and Thévenot have been applied to several empirical studies on cultural policy and cultural organizations (Larsen 2014; Kann-Rasmussen 2016; Lemasson 2017; Kleppe 2018; Daigle and Rouleau 2010). However, none of these studies explores how the projective city works as a regime of justification in cultural organizations. For this reason, I will now introduce the work of Boltanski and Chiapello.

In the book The New Spirit of Capitalism, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) develop a theoretical framework in order to understand how capitalism today justifies itself. They show how capitalism and life in organizations “arises on hitherto unused principles of equivalence” (24). The higher superior principle—the common good it represents—relates to the proliferation of connections.

The heroic figure in organizations today is the enthusiastic networker, the project head. To engage in projects, one must be capable of enthusiasm, available, adaptable, and able to attract the attention and sympathy of others (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 108ff). The new spirit of capitalism provides employees with a dream of meaningful work and personal development through participation in interesting projects. The new spirit of capitalism emphasizes networking, connections, trust, equality, and the project as the organizational form—as opposed to hierarchy and authority. Thus, from the new spirit of capitalism emerges a new order of worth: the projective city. In the projective city, the ability to create networks and connections is of high value; it creates legitimacy. The most valuable links are those that connect different fields or cross boundaries, the unlikely but productive link being the most respected. The project is a temporal transcending organizational form well-suited in the network society. Everything can be a project, including projects that are anti-capitalist in nature. When describing each result obtained within the realm of projects, the difference between the capitalist project and all other activities and creations is blurred. Completely different things can be projects, from opening a new factory to setting up a play in a theater. They honor the same
heroism. In this is the way the *projective city* wins over the forces that criticize capitalism. It offers a grammar that transcends all fields.

**Research design: Four cultural organizations in Denmark**

In order to understand how cultural organizations connect with society today and to describe the role of the *projective city* in legitimation work in these organizations, I have analyzed documents from four cultural organizations in Denmark: (1) the Danish Royal Theater; (2) the Danish Workers Museum; (3) the symphony orchestra Copenhagen Phil; and (4) Randers Public Library. The key criteria for selecting these four organizations have been their differences. They are different in terms of both their core activities (performing art vs. provision of access to cultural heritage), their position in the public sector (national or local), their funding, and their size. Choosing dissimilar organizations ensures breadth in the study. In addition, similarities are more interesting if the organizations have different characteristics (Table 1).

The corpus of texts I analyze consists of three parts: (1) annual reports and websites; (2) explicit strategies; (3) framework statues or articles of association. Annual reports and websites (xY and xW) are both document types that present an organization in a positive light. The website is an organization’s public face, primarily addressed to potential users. The website typically holds information about programming and activities planned. Annual reports are communications to shareholders about the current state of affairs. In the case of a public organization, by nature there are no shareholders. Here, the intended audience is instead the politicians and officials who need information about whether the institution has reached its goals. Strategies (xS) are documents that function as a particular mindset used to get hold of one’s future, understand one’s surroundings and oneself (Kornberger 2014, 479). For this reason, strategy formulations are particularly useful as empirical material in a study that seeks to describe and understand legitimation work. Framework statues or articles of association (xG) are a third document type. These are not automatically authored by the organization itself, but are the policy documents the organization needs to observe. The corpus of documents and the codes I have used for each are listed in the Appendix.

The common superior principle of the projective city is *proliferation of connections*, and the natural order of things in this regime is *coordinating and adjusting to others.*
Since my aim is to describe the role of the projective city and to describe how cultural organizations connect with society, my analysis of the documents has been guided by the following five questions.

1. What concept or notion of “society” does the documents convey? What is outside the organization?
2. With whom does the organization seek connections? What kinds of connections are in focus?
3. How does the organization describe itself—as an organization and as a cultural institution?
4. What characterizes the activities the organization undertakes?
   a. In terms of what it does.
   b. In terms of how it does it.
   c. In terms of how activities are framed in strategies and annual reports; that is, what is the justification for activities?
5. What does it mean to be relevant to society?

In the following, I describe the four organizations with a focus on questions 1 and 3.

**The Royal Theatre**

The Royal Theatre is the national theater of Denmark. The original venue (*Gamle scene*) is situated at one of Copenhagen’s most prominent addresses, *Kongens Nytorv*. Besides this original theater building, which is home to the Royal Ballet, the Royal Theatre owns a venue for plays (*Skuespilhuset*) and an opera house (*Operaen*). According to the framework statues, its purpose is threefold: (1) to create and perform plays, ballets, concerts, and operas; (2) to educate ballet dancers and opera singers; and (3) to host events and rent out the facilities in the building (TG16). A main concern for the Royal Theatre is to ensure a wide audience. This aim permeates all of the documents in the study. The notion of society—that is, the environment—in which the theater needs to navigate is also influenced by this wish. Society is *the whole country, the whole population* (TS, 5), and society is described as a place where cultural institutions *compete for potential users‘ time* (TW).

**The Workers Museum**

The Workers Museum is an LAM-organization, meaning that the organization covers library, archive, and museum functions (MG). The Workers Museum is located in central Copenhagen, in what used to be Copenhagen’s Assembly Building for Workers. The purpose of the organization is to “collect, preserve, research and convey the lives of workers as well as the work of the labor movement in all of its facets. […] The aim is to create a comprehensive picture of the conditions for workers and their organizations up to the present, including the history of workers’ living conditions” (TG, 1). The notion of society in the documents is influenced by the subject matter of the museum. Reading between the lines, the workers movement’s fight for justice permeates the documents’ records of purpose and activities. Democracy, equality, and the securement
of welfare for all are not something we can take for granted (MA16, 4, MS, 3, MA15, MA16). The Workers Museum describe itself as authentic and unique (MS, 1), a place for the many, not for the few (MA17, 4), as a museum engaged in important societal challenges such as working life, communities, and democracy (MS, 4).

**Copenhagen Phil**

Copenhagen Phil is a symphony orchestra with seventy employed musicians, and is a year-round professional regional orchestra. The orchestra is housed in the concert hall belonging to the Royal Academy of Music. In 2010, the orchestra’s name changed from Symphony Orchestra for Zealand to “Copenhagen Phil—all of Zealand’s symphony orchestra.” The name change was made in order to ease cooperation and strengthen the orchestra’s position on the European music scene (OW). The name change taps into the most prominent aspects of the documents concerning Copenhagen Phil: this orchestra wants to be a modern, innovative and even entrepreneurial orchestra (OA16, 8). Furthermore, the orchestra is curious, self-reflexive, and passionate (OA14, 5), all adjectives that point to a modern organization. Thus, the orchestra is framed as an organization in dynamic interplay with the surrounding world (OS, 1). The notion visible in the documents of this surrounding world is rather defensive. It is a world where the problem is that there is no “automatic” need for classical music (OS, 1), but it is also a world that represents opportunities for the orchestra.

**Randers Library**

Randers is a municipality in central Jutland with 98,000 citizens. Randers Library consist of a main library (in the center of Randers), three branch libraries, and a mobile library (a bus). The library is the biggest cultural institution in the municipality (LW). The main library is co-located in the city’s major cultural venue, Kulturhuset (literally the culture house), which also houses two museums, the city archive, and a community center. The Danish library act (LG) states that the purpose of libraries is to “promote information, education and cultural activity.” An important characteristic in the documents concerning Randers Library is its willingness to succumb to other institutions’ agendas. The library explicitly states its desire to support the municipality’s visions, strategies, and agendas (LS17, LS18). The library holds an inferior status regarding “international, national and local events,” of which it pledges to be “aware of” in its strategy (LS17, 2). Like the other institutions in this study, Randers Library is devoted to attracting non-users to the library. The document authors describe themselves as inviting and emphasize their use of “participatory methods” to attract non-users.

**Findings 1: How do cultural organizations connect with society?**

The first research question concerns how cultural organizations connect with society. In order to answer this question, Table 2 shows both the types of partnerships that I have identified in the documents, as well as the organizations’ descriptions of connections to the outside world. The guiding questions I used to study the data were: Question 1:
Table 2. Connections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner/Org</th>
<th>Royal Theatre</th>
<th>Workers Museum</th>
<th>Copenhagen Phil</th>
<th>Randers Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>We must involve artists from other genres, so that they can renew our view of the classics ([TS, 22])</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Copenhagen Phil's vision is to be visible in the European music community, in order to be able to attract partnerships with the best conductors and musicians ([OS, 2])</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiences</td>
<td>[In the future] we see ourselves as catalysts that stimulate local activities, and [...] consider the audience as co-creators rather than just being passive consumers ([TS, 5])</td>
<td>The aim is to develop exhibits with broad involvement of stakeholders and the public ([MS, 3])</td>
<td>[on partnerships with businesses] The project creates relevance and awareness of classical music for a completely new audience and thus acts as a powerful and effective 1:1 marketing ([OA16, 11])</td>
<td>It was a young man who started our endeavors to become “Reading municipality of the year” ([LA15, 6])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial contributors</td>
<td>The collaboration [with Audi] is another step towards a closer partnership between companies and the Royal Theatre to jointly develop commercially driven initiatives on art’s terms ([TA17, 25])</td>
<td>None of this can be carried out without good partners and contributors. I want to thank everyone [...] ([MA17, 5])</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other external</td>
<td>In collaboration with Meyers [caterer], we must ensure a good overall experience for our customers ([TS,32])</td>
<td>In our efforts to communicate the labor movement’s history, [...] we seek to collaborate with the research world, with companies and associations, at educational institutions, and at organizations across the political spectrum</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>The library is a relevant partner across the functions of the city ([LA16, p5])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public organizations/</td>
<td>We must focus on long-term municipal and regional partnerships, so that greater geographical similarity is created through knowledge sharing and development ([TS, 39])</td>
<td>In 2015, the museum collaborated with a large number of educational institutions and youth organizations as part of the work on the exhibition “Unheard Youth” ([MA15, 7–8])</td>
<td>[...] the collaboration with the local councils of Rødovre and Kage that supports socially marginalized children through music ([OA, 14])</td>
<td>We support Randers Municipality’s strategy: Randers as educational city ([LS18, 6])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar organizations</td>
<td>Develop the Ballet School through guest teachers and international collaborations, so that it appears up to date ([TS, 20])</td>
<td>With “Den Gamle By –museum” the Workers Museum developed a method for dilemma-based teaching ([MA17, s.10])</td>
<td>We must develop our cooperation with other cultural organizations in order to develop cultural life</td>
<td>The project was carried out in collaboration with seven other libraries in Central Denmark region as well as libraries from Poland, Holland and Belgium ([LA17, 7])</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What concept or notion of “society” do the documents convey? What is outside the organization? Question 2: With whom does the organization seek connections? What kinds of connections are in focus? The entries show typical statements, and I consider them representative for the material.

The findings detailed earlier show that the four cultural organizations utilize partners in order to secure the quality of their work, funding, and further contacts. Audiences are framed as partners in all of the organizations. The organizations describe the audience as genuine contributors to content—most dominantly in the library and the museum. Even though the audience does not actually come up on the stage, the orchestra and theater see their audiences as something more than just audiences. All of the organizations collaborate with similar organizations. This makes the organizations “up to date”; it “enhances their performances” and it creates “broader horizons.” Together, the analysis of the documents shows that the organizations perceive society as something they must be a part of, not something that is “outside” the organization.

The organizations all highlight relations with partners that are dissimilar from themselves; a good example is Audi (for the Royal Theatre) or Polish libraries (for Randers Library, which has a local obligation). In the projective city, the most valuable connections cross traditional boundaries. Moreover, the ability to connect with many different kinds of people or organizations shows that a person or organization is capable of change, which is an important value in the projective city (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 116). This helps us understand why annual reports and strategies emphasize diversity in types of partners and relations. The orchestra and the theater both highlight their connections with the business world. Today, private companies represent both audiences and business partners for the cultural organizations. This is the case when they rent out their premises and facilities (as even the museum does) and when they offer workshops on creativity and leadership for companies. In this way, the cultural organizations have to navigate between playing the tune of the business world and simultaneously representing an alternative to the market. The important issue is to be able to show that the organization engages with society. The findings indicate that legitimacy is connected with crossing the borders of the organization.

**Findings 2: The role of the projective city in legitimation work**

The second research question for this article concerns what role the projective city plays in the legitimation work performed by these organizations. In order to answer the question, I have studied the documents with focus on Question 4: What characterizes the activities the organization undertakes? (a) in terms of what they do; (b) in terms of how they do it; and (c) in terms of how activities are framed in strategies and annual reports; that is, what are the justifications for activities. I also focused on Question 5: What does it mean to be relevant to society?

The findings build on the premise that legitimacy can be studied through an analysis of how activities are framed. I have specifically looked for wordings that belong to the projective city, such as network, connection, collaboration, link, project, meet/meeting and partnerships, trust, and equality (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, 108ff). I have also paid attention to activities and objectives that the four organizations have in common,
in order to be able to comment on the role of the projective city in legitimation work in cultural organizations in general.

The first section concerns tasks aimed at \textit{strengthening ones field and widening ones audience}. The second concerns \textit{education, debate, and enlightenment for the good of democracy}. Lastly, I touch upon the organizations’ \textit{contribution to agendas and problems outside the cultural field}. The following is not an exhaustive account of all of the tasks the organizations must solve, but a selection of three important tasks that the organizations share.

\textbf{Education, debate, and enlightenment for the good of democracy}

The objective of contributing to citizens’ personal cultural education is an important task for all of the organizations. Their approach to this task spans from, e.g., the library’s help with digital communication with the municipality or state: [\textit{We} support citizens in becoming digitally competent (LS17, 4), to the more bold and self-confident orchestra: [\textit{We} lift the competencies, happiness and level of overall performance in young people (OS, 1). The Workers Museum emphasizes how they connect the past to the present (MS, 1). A typical example is a photo exhibition which: \textit{was capable of pulling out photos from the past and put them into play with the questions that are on our minds today} (MA15, 13). The same type of framing is visible in the theater’s description of the plays’ importance: “[\textit{they}] connect the Danes with generations before and with the future” (TA16, 21).

When audiences are able to learn about history, or experience classical plays, the organizations highlight the connection between then and now. On the one hand, this is the core perspective of the Enlightenment. On the other hand, I argue that it is not coincidental that cultural institutions today frame their core activities as a meeting. Greatness in the \textit{projective city} is dependent on the ability to facilitate meetings. Thus, a major value in the New Spirit of Capitalism seamlessly intertwines with the traditional values of the Enlightenment.

Besides facilitating the connection between the past and the present, the organizations (except for the orchestra) talk of the task of strengthening democracy through debate. The organizations have different perspectives on this task. The theater wants to create agendas and participate in public debates (TS, 7). In the annual reports, performances, which revolve around contemporary agendas, are highlighted; e.g., “\textit{It was a raw, at times grotesque, performance which relates to how power is managed around the world in our time}” (TA16, 9). In this light, performances become a voice in the public debate. The museum has a similar approach to the public debate: \textit{current and debate-creating topics are prioritized} (MS, 3). However, the museum also does two more things. It focuses on giving voice to different groups (MS, 4) and, finally, it wishes to become an arena for discussions: \textit{The workers’ assembly building is a unique and authentic venue and as a LAM-institution, we wish to create a meeting place for different opinions and perspectives on how we can create an equal and just society} (MS17, 1). The library’s take on contribution to democracy is twofold. Firstly, they frame themselves as providers of knowledge \textit{so that the individual can participate in democratic processes} (LS17, 5). Secondly, they designate the library as \textit{the free meeting place} (LS17, 7). The library frames its activities around debate and democracy, not as a voice like the museum and
the theater, but (like the museum) as an arena for deliberations and meetings between citizens, who are knowledgeable and educated.

This analysis highlights how the projective city plays a role in legitimating the task of education, debate, and enlightenment. Giving access can be linked to democratization of culture. Cultural institutions give access to, e.g., music, plays, cultural heritage, or literature. This in turn creates enlightened citizens who can participate in democratic processes (all of the four organizations have grown out of this idea). The second, giving voice to the unheard, relates to diversity and cultural democracy. These two framings of “the task” are traditional legitimization strategies. The final strategy, providing the very arena in which debate takes place, is not institutionalized in all of the performing arts organizations, but more so in libraries and museums. From the perspective of the projective city, to undertake the task of being an arena for democratic debate is honorable. The decline of public service media and the rise of social media have left a need for neutral, trustworthy spaces for discussion. Concurrently, museums and libraries face a situation in which collections have lost significance (why go to the library, when you can download books at a small cost), so museums and libraries have an interest in claiming new tasks. Furthermore, to frame the organization as a meeting place for everyone and an arena for democratic deliberations is a way of signalling openness to society, willingness to take on a task that is needed, even though it has not been a part of the organizations’ original purpose.¹

**Strengthening one’s field and widening one’s audience**

Permeating the documents for all four organizations is the theme that it is important to strengthen their respective fields; i.e., literature, classical music, opera, ballet, and knowledge of history. There are two means to this end. The first is artistic and professional excellence. The documents show that professionalism and excellence require external partnerships in order to succeed in strengthening the field in question (literature/classical music, etc.). The second means to strengthen one’s field is to have a wide audience. A wide audience is a very important legitimization strategy. In the following are just two examples—please note that all four organizations highlight their visitor rates.

The Royal Theatre rode on a positive wave of artistic productions and a wide range of collaborations with external partners in 2017. This brought the theatre into contact with more people than ever. (TA17, 6)

We are interested in how our visitors can contribute with their own experiences and views about the topics we address. […] apparently, not only we appreciate it. Our visitors do as well. In 2017, the Workers Museum achieved the highest number of visitors ever. (MA17, 4)

Proving a wide outreach is a legitimation strategy. Researchers have linked this legitimization strategy to the policy rationale of democratization of culture, as well as to a neoliberal marketization of culture (Duelund 2003; McGuigan 2004; Skot-Hansen 1999). Consequently, the fact that the four organizations frame widening of audiences as a main concern is no surprise. However, the Royal Theatres’ annual report, which emphasizes that the theater [was in] contact with more people than ever, can also be explained by Boltanski and Chiapello as a justification built on the
Projective city. Legitimacy is not only connected to a large number of (paying) guests; all connections, all kinds of collaborations are valuable. An indicator of this lies in the very name of the current strategy of the Royal Theatre: “Transverse thinking and cooperation 2016–2019” (TS).

When the Workers Museum emphasizes its interest in visitors’ contributions, it is easy to couple the statement with the participative turn. Bonet and Négrier (2018) describe the participative turn as a reconfiguration between cultural behaviors and cultural institutions. I would argue that the participative turn and projective city in the new spirit of capitalism are two imperatives that support each other. Participation requires exactly the types of relations that are valued in the projective city. Relations are not hierarchical but equal and built on mutual trust (Jancovich 2017). Thus, audiences and visitors are framed as equal partners, which the cultural institutions can learn from (e.g., LA15, 7–8). This does not mean that the organizations neglect their own excellence. Particularly for the two performing arts institutions, their annual reports also recount performances of high artistic excellence. Relevance has a close relation to the audiences’ reception of performances. For all of the cultural organizations, the need to attract new visitors/audiences is a crucial task in the efforts of being legitimate. In line with the projective city, the cultural organizations use a combination of participatory methods, high visitor rates, and framing audiences as partners as a legitimation strategy.

**Contribution to agendas and problems outside the cultural field**

The orchestra, the museum, and the library display the most direct determination to contribute to agendas outside of the cultural field. In the following, I provide one example from three of the four organizations.

The first project mentioned in the library manager’s summary of the year 2016 reads:

[…] we initiated a partnership with Randers Health Centre. For a month, health was on the agenda in the library. We established a health folk school with lots of citizen-oriented activities aimed at increasing citizens’ knowledge and health competence. (LY16, 5)

*Copenhagen Phil Business* is a concept that the orchestra has developed. It aims at inspiring the business world, with equal focus on music and management. The webpage reads:

Founded in the classical music and management theories, we unfold […] concepts such as imagination, creativity and innovation, development processes rooted in traditions, (re)branding and image, recruitment, absenteeism, business and strategy development. (OW)

The Workers Museum engaged in a project financed by the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces:

The museum contributes more and more to projects that develop models and solutions to current societal challenges. By 2016, one of these challenges was integration. Therefore, we petitioned for funding to a project, in which the museum with a number of collaborators develops models for a good and safe introduction to Danish society, the Danish labor market and the welfare state’s history for refugees. (MA16, 10)
All of the activities aim to solve problems that are situated a stretch from the core purpose of the organizations. Likewise, all of the activities aim to solve someone else’s problems. The examples show similarities in terms of how the organizations seek to solve the problems—through partnerships. Another important feature of the three examples is that the organizations display a willingness to cross the boundaries of their traditional objectives. Undertaking tasks such as strengthening public health, branding issues for private companies, or the integration of refugees into the Danish community shows openness, willingness to change, and ability to work in a projects-oriented way—all features of the projective city.

**Being out of sync: Concluding discussion**

The analyses detailed earlier show that both objectives and the means to accomplish them are influenced by the projective city. The cultural organizations frame their tasks as meetings and facilitation of connections, and they plan and carry out many activities in collaboration with partners. If an organization has too few connections with others, the organization appears isolated and unattractive. Showing openness, or willingness to open up one’s organization and engaging in partnerships and networks, has become a legitimization strategy for private as well as public organizations today. It is the appropriate conduct of organizations today.

Following Boltanski and Thévenot’s notion of the orders of worth, criticism and justifications shape the development of institutions. The field of arts and culture is closely linked to the inspirational city, in which the superior common principle is the outpouring of inspiration, and in which value cannot and ought not be measured (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006, 159). The field of arts and culture arose and constituted its own sphere in the sixteenth century. This was possible because there were a number of factors present at the same time. According to Nielsen (2007) the notion of autonomy and freedom from serving anything but artistic purposes has stood strong, even in the modern art institution’s self-understanding and discourse, because it provides the cultural institutions with an elevated status, a sacred aura, and a humble audience. However, as the earlier analysis has shown, this discourse is outdated. In fact, I argue that the field of arts and culture today makes active efforts to couple itself to other institutions in society.

Instrumental cultural policy can be seen as a criticism of the autonomous cultural field. It is not a direct or outspoken criticism. Politicians and policymakers who want to use culture in order to obtain economic or social goals impose instrumental cultural policy on the field from the outside. Cultural policy research and accounts from artists and leaders in the field have been primarily negative towards instrumentalism. The countercritique (of instrumentalism) from the cultural field has been important because it maintained an image of the cultural field as “innocent.” Artists and cultural leaders could claim innocence, because instrumental cultural policy was imposed by actors outside of the field. Thus, the justifications made from the inspirational city could keep their dominant position.

What we see today is a turn towards the values from the projective city that happen from within the field. There is no critique of collaborations, networks, and projects in
the documents of this study. Seemingly, there is no conflict between the inspirational world and the projective city. Cultural organizations have been measured and have had to prove themselves valuable in terms of the civic world (focus on common good, and certain groups), the world of fame (focus on, e.g., number of visitors, visibility, and good ratings), and even the industrial world (focus on efficiency and professionalism). However, the cultural field has always reserved the right to criticize these criteria.

The appearance and advance of the projective city, with its value and emphasis on connections, make it very difficult to maintain this type of criticism. When capitalism takes a form that can adjust to all kinds of activity (the project), it becomes acceptable for cultural organizations to adapt to it. The alternative is to be discordant. This is a paradox. The new spirit of capitalism grew out of what Boltanski and Chiapello call the artistic critique, a critique that accused companies of disenchanting the world and the life of their workers, who were deprived of a life of freedom and creativity. As I have shown in this article, even arts and cultural organizations must conform to organizational forms, which have grown out of this critique. It is absurd to imagine cultural organizations being subject to the artistic critique. Nevertheless, the new spirit of capitalism permeates even institutions that were created to be capitalism’s counterweight.

Note
1. The library legislation in Sweden and Norway has incorporated this task in the preambles of the library acts.

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References


## Appendix. Corpus of documents studied.

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