Paradoxical autonomy in cultural organisations

An analysis of changing relations between cultural organisations and their institutional environment, with examples from libraries, archives and museums

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Paradoxical autonomy in cultural organisations: An analysis of changing relations between cultural organisations and their institutional environment, with examples from libraries, archives and museums

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Abstract: This article analyses the changing relationships between cultural organisations and their institutional environment. Cultural policy research has traditionally focused on a decline in the autonomy of cultural organisations with Pierre Bourdieu's theories as an overarching theoretical framework. However, recent studies of public administration tell another story. It shows how relationships between cultural organisations and their institutional environment are paradoxical. Cultural organisations have experienced a growing focus on societal value, users and performance indicators, which can be viewed as a decrease in their autonomy. Simultaneously, they have been able to pursue new ways of fulfilling their purpose, an increase in autonomy. The article discusses the theoretical perspectives on this paradox, with focus on New Public Governance, and shows that the paradox of autonomy entails a change in the roles of professionals, politicians and users. Politicians still determine subsidies, but they have increasingly left policymaking to the cultural organisations.

Keywords: cultural organisations; libraries; archives; museums; autonomy; public administration; institutional environment; societal relevance; new public governance

Introduction

This article seeks to analyse the changing relationships between cultural organisations

and their institutional environment. We particularly wish to discuss the state of autonomy for public cultural organisations. In cultural policy research, the relationship between cultural organisations and the surrounding world has often been analysed using Pierre Bourdieu's field theory (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). According to Bourdieu, a field is 'a separate social universe having its own laws' (Bourdieu 1993, 163). A field is characterised by distinct values and practices and has have a relatively high degree of autonomy. This autonomy is characterised by a field's ability to define quality and to define its own justification (ultimately, the *l'art pour l'art* argument). Bourdieu's influence on cultural policy research has been large, and many researchers have seen his field theory as an appropriate choice for research regarding the relationships between cultural organisations and society. Consequently, Bourdieu and several critical cultural policy scholars have emphasised a decline in autonomy for the cultural field (Belfiore 2004; Hadley and Gray 2017; Holden 2006; McGuigan 2004; Vestheim 2009). Bourdieu himself is most clearly worried about this decline in the essay 'Culture is in danger', which was written as a warning against the market's advancements in the field of culture. Bourdieu states: 'What is currently happening to the universes of artistic production throughout the developed world is entirely novel and truly without precedent: the hard won independence of cultural production and circulation is being threatened, in its very principle, by the intrusion of commercial logic at every stage' (Bourdieu 2003, 67). For Bourdieu, it is the 'commercial logic' that represents the threat to autonomy from the surrounding world. Along these lines, researchers have pushed forward two major shifts in the institutional environment of cultural organisations in their argument that the autonomy of cultural organisations is declining.

The first of these is the concept of the 'instrumentalisation of culture', generally defined as the fact that culture is not an end in itself, but a means to reaching an end outside culture in itself (Vestheim 1994). Instrumentalisation is a threat to autonomy because it entails that actors outside of the cultural field determine the success of a cultural organisation on the basis of criteria of quality that are external to the field of culture (Belfiore 2004; Duelund 2003; Hadley and Gray 2017; Vestheim 1994). An instrumental museum strategy may seek to utilise the museum for urban development (Bianchini and Parkinson 1994), social work (Sandell 1998) or health (Thomson and Chatterjee 2015). On the one hand, an instrumental approach creates new arguments for public subsidies for museums (Nisbett 2013). On the other hand, instrumentalisation legitimates actors external to the museum field to assess quality in relation to museum activities. The museum field loses autonomy when, for example, city planners define the quality of the museum's role in urban renewal, sociologists judge the museum's contribution to social inclusion and health professionals determine the museum's potential for public health (Belfiore and Bennett 2007).

Second, researchers have defined New Public Management (NPM), with its emphasis on performance measurement and demand for increased use, as a megatrend that has meant a decline in autonomy for cultural organisations. NPM is concerned with improving the efficiency of the public sector via the market and is based on a belief that competition among organisations will improve the efficiency and quality of the services they provide (Hood 1991). Belfiore (2004) has described this as 'audit culture' in an influential article that shows how NPM threatens the cultural sector's ability to define its own justification. Dominant criteria for success in the NPM include high visitor rates or activity figures. In this case, it is not the cultural organisations themselves that define their justification – on the contrary, it is administrators who set the performance measures (Clavier and Kauppinen 2018; McGuigan

2005). Ultimately, it becomes the users who determine the value of the cultural organisations based on their use or non-use (Stevenson, Balling, and Kann-Rasmussen 2017).

Research in cultural organisations has shown that they have become more focused on social relevance and their value to society (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016; Kann-Rasmussen 2016; Larsen 2014). Simultaneously these organisations have increased their focus on users, both regarding high levels of use (Gilmore and Rentschler 2002; Kann-Rasmussen and Balling 2015a) and on communities, participation and partnerships (Gilliland and McKemmish 2014; Golding and Modest 2013; Huvila 2008; Kann-Rasmussen 2019). Both tendencies (focus on social relevance and users) point towards the increased importance of the institutional environment. However, is it also a result of a decline in autonomy? In this article, we wish to explore the paradoxical nature of the impact of the surrounding world on cultural organisations. We do not wish to neglect the negative impact of instrumentalism and NPM, but we want to bring forward a perspective that cultural policy research has not much explored. This perspective comes from the field of welfare management and public governance. The Danish political scientist Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen has analysed the history of public governance in Denmark, and the overall conclusion of this analysis is quite contrary to the above-mentioned result of cultural policy research – namely that public organisations are gradually becoming more and more autonomous (Andersen and Born 2008; Andersen and Pors 2017; 2016). Furthermore, it seems that the NPM logic is challenged by yet another trend, which Osborne (2006) has called New Public Governance (NPG). For these reasons, the focus of this article is how different paradigms of public administration have changed the basis of autonomy in cultural organisations (Kann-Rasmussen and Rasmussen 2019).

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: First, we discuss the notion of institutional environments and autonomy. Second, we discuss some contributions from the field of welfare management and public governance. In particular, we discuss contributions that emphasise a growth in autonomy to balance the picture we described in the introduction. We end with a discussion that shows the paradoxical nature of the relationships between organisations and institutional environment using examples from libraries, archives and museums in Denmark.

Changing paradigms of public administration

In the following sections, we will describe distinct yet overlapping periods in public administration and management and show how researchers justify how these paradigms have each fostered seemingly more and more autonomous cultural organisations. Using the concept of the 'institutional environment', we assume, in line with new institutional theory, that institutionalised norms and logics form and permeate organisations. Organisations conform to these logics to appear legitimate. 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). We argue that the administrative paradigms form an important part of the institutional environment for public organisations. Not just because they have to conform to the administration by law, but also because the norms and rationales of the public sector permeate the individual organisation (Scott 2008).

In the field of cultural policy, Vestheim (2009), Blomgren (2012) and Kleppe (2017) have all emphasised that autonomy in cultural policy concerns someone's autonomy in

relation to that of someone else. For this article, the relationship in question is that of the autonomy of cultural organisations in relation to the political and economic system. Vestheim points out that 'cultural producers, distributors and mediators seek to be free from influence from the political and economic power. But at the same time, a democratic political system can guarantee and secure their freedom to autonomous decisions and behaviour. Thus, autonomy may be defined negatively as freedom from as well as positively as freedom to' (Vestheim 2009, 35). Consequently, when we discuss institutional autonomy, we refer to cultural organisations' capacity to make decisions based on its own laws, rules, norms and ideals, which, we acknowledge, are never entirely free from influence from the political system. In the following, we will present four paradigms in public administration and management that have influenced the relationship between cultural organisations and their environment. We have chosen to emphasise the work of Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen and Justine Pors, who have analysed the history of public governance in Denmark. They have described four cumulative periods of public governance: formal bureaucracy, which emerged at the end of the 1800s; sector administration, which appeared at the end of the 1950s; supervision administration, which gradually developed around the beginning of the 1980s; and potentiality administration, which emerged around 2000. Each of these periods defines the relationship between governance and self-governance in its own particular way. All four forms of administration coexist today – sometimes harmoniously so, and at other times in competition or conflict. Our focus is not public administration itself, but rather the relationship between cultural organisations and public administration. Accordingly, we have added John Osborne's distinctions between (old) public administration, NPM and NPG, because these paradigms have had a strong impact on the organisations' ability to make decisions (Osborne 2006). In the following, we therefore present a description of different periods of public administration and institutional autonomy coupled with examples from cultural organisations. Finally, we have described each period of public administration with an imperative that encapsulates the essence of the values connected to the specific period of administration.

Period/characteristics	Begins	Form of governance	Imperative for cultural organisations
Bureaucracy – 'Old Public Administration'	1890s	Regulation/control in a unitary state	Loyal administration of rules and standards
Professionalisation – Public administration as sectors	1950s	Planning in a state between unitarism and disaggregation	Professional judgement of quality
New Public Management and the strategic organisation	1980s	Supervision in a disaggregated state	Increased use
New Public Governance – administration for potentiality and wicked problems	2000s	Potentiality in a plural and pluralist state	Innovation

Table 1: Cumulative periods of public administration and cultural organisations

Bureaucracy – 'Old Public Administration'

The term 'bureaucracy' makes many of us think about Max Weber. Weber (1978) described bureaucracy as an ideal-type of organisation, characterised by distinct features. First, the 'principle of official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is by laws or administrative regulation such as a hierarchy and formal lines of authority' (p 956). Second, 'The principles of office hierarchy […] in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by higher ones' (Weber 1978, 957). What Osborne (2006) simply denotes as 'Public Administration' (Osborne 2006, 378) has many characteristics in common with Weber's bureaucracy. An institution's source of authority will always be unambiguous, because 'public administration' is characterised by a unitary state. Politicians make policies, and public organisations and organisations loyally carry them out. This means that, in the period of formal bureaucracy, which emerged at the end of the 1800s (Andersen and Pors 2016, 60), the civil servant or the employee in a public institution did not make many independent decisions. On the contrary, he was an administrator of rules. Formal bureaucracy was focused on processes and administrative decisions, defined as: 'a unilateral statement by an administrative body of specific and legally binding content' (Andersen and Pors 2017, 124), meaning that public administration in the age of bureaucracy makes decisions that are binding for the involved parties without the parties' involvement in the decision. In this regime, public organisations can be viewed as innocent subordinates with a low degree of autonomy (Andersen and Pors 2016, 90).

According to Cook (2013), archivists have traditionally considered archival records as 'evidence'. Cook cites the English archival pioneer, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, in describing the ideal archivist: 'His Creed, the Sanctity of Evidence; his Task, the Conservation of every scrap of Evidence attaching to the Documents committed to his charge; his Aim, to provide, without prejudice or afterthought, for all who wish to know the Means of Knowledge […] the good Archivist is perhaps the most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces' (Jenkinson 1947, 258–259, cited from Cook 2013, 100). In this same period, the first library act passed in Denmark (1920). This act was, according to Skouvig (2004, 37), a disciplinary framework for public subsidies for libraries. The act stated certain standards that municipalities had to meet to receive state subsidies for a public library. There were standards for the organisation of the library, as well as for the composition of the collection of books. If the libraries did not fulfil the rules and standards, the National Library Authority sanctioned them economically. These two examples show that traditional public administration did not leave much autonomy to organisations. Thus, the imperative of this period of public administration is an imperative of loyal administration of rules and standards.

Professionalisation – Public administration in sectors

Andersen and Pors (2016) describe how public administration in Denmark from around the 1950s became organised into separate sectors. In the period of formal bureaucracy, the public administration was hierarchically divided into offices with clearly delimited legal competencies designed to make decisions about particular types of cases. In the new paradigm of public administration, different policy areas became 'sectors', one of which was culture. Many European countries established ministries of culture in the 1950s and 1960s. At the local level, even departments of culture and education were formed. The important point is that such sectors do not make decisions about cases; rather, 'they are problem-directed and establish premises for subsequent case management by defining and prioritising problems'

(Andersen and Pors 2016, 63). Consequently, public organisations were established to deal with case management. It became possible for organisations to choose the means and methods for the problems they were asked to solve. During this period, the public organisation attained a high degree of autonomy in deciding how it would implement centrally determined plans. Accordingly, in the age of 'sector administration', the direction was set at the policy level, but organisations became more professionally independent and responsible. A main issue for sectors concerned ensuring equal public service within the sectors.

A good example from the cultural sector would be the cultural policy strategy widely known as the 'democratisation of culture'. The policy had a double aim. First, it aimed to ensure the production of high culture by subsidising artists and other cultural producers through arms-length bodies. Second, it aimed to ensure that the entire population, regardless of geographical or economic distinction, had access to good quality culture (Duelund 2003). The policy was implemented by, for example, establishing theatres and museums throughout the country and subsidising tickets to cultural organisations. During this period, the cultural sector gained increased autonomy compared to the bureaucracy, because the professionals (e.g. artists, directors, curators) were recognised as having a competence (or even genius) and a professional ethos that enabled them to take on the task independently. They could do this because they were professionally trained. This meant that professionals in the arts and cultural organisations confidently claimed theatres, museums or libraries to be core institutions for democracy, as well as claiming their competence to be independent of political and economic interests. According to Vestheim, they: 'even argue for professional self-determination by referring to the freedom of expression and the freedom of information. They consider themselves free and neutral providers of information and culture, and their relative autonomy is supposed to be for the benefit of the citizens' (Vestheim, 2009, 41–42). Vestheim continues by discussing the potential tension that the claim for professional autonomy may cause, because these organisations also are politically bound democratic public agencies that are supposed to implement public cultural policy. However, Vestheim's remarks show how the professionalisation increases the cultural organisations' claim for autonomy. The former imperative, the loyal administration of rules and standards, does not vanish in the sector administration of culture; it is supplemented with a new imperative: the professional judgement of quality. With this point of departure in the thinking of Bourdieu, the imperative of professional judgement of quality is the zenith for the autonomy of the cultural field.

New Public Management and the strategic organisation

Beginning around 1980 and focusing on competition, performance measurement, documentation and management, NPM has had a strong impact on cultural organisations, as well as on all other public organisations. NPM is characterised by a disaggregated state 'where policy making and implementation are at least partially articulated and disengaged, and where implementation is through a collection of independent service units, ideally in competition with each other' (Osborne 2006, 382). As we described in the introduction, much cultural policy research has focused on how NPM has meant a decline in autonomy for cultural organisations, but here we aim to complement this research with another perspective by focusing on how NPM also has meant an increase in a new form of autonomy. Andersen and Pors (2016) have described the dominant public administration model in Denmark from around 1980 to 2000 as 'supervision administration'. The change in administrative model grew out of a need for adaptability, as it became impossible for the public sector to meet changing demands and challenges by 'planning from above'. Instead, the focus for public administration

became 'coordination from below'. The role for the 'supervision administration' therefore changed into providing support and guidance for the organisations' self-management and strategy development. Interference in the form of control or rules about how the organisation should manage its area is contrary to this logic. However, it is clear that it is not the autonomy of the professionals that increases with NPM, but rather the autonomy of managers and administrators (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2005; Olsen 2009). According to the NPM rationale, it is a weakness that management in public organisations is primarily management in terms of administration, and not so much in terms of leadership of the core services, which is the domain of the professionals. Thus, the introduction of managers creates parallel hierarchies in many public organisations. In the field of arts management, the dichotomy between the logic of arts and culture vs. the more rational management logic has been discussed by many researchers (see e.g. Caust 2008; Cray, Inglis, and Freeman 2007; Daigle and Rouleau 2010; Røyseng 2008). Consequently, NPM reforms and 'supervision administration' are a period of governance that fosters a conflict of interest between the organisations' experts and their right to decide on professional terms and administrators and their wish to decide in order to provide the institutional environment with high visitor rates, visibility and other performance measures.

In the cultural sector, NPM's heavy emphasis on performance measurement has meant that organisations have focused intensely on increased use. Use has been the dominant performance indicator since the 1980s, meaning that the number of tickets sold, performances staged or books lent has been key objective for cultural organisations. Increased use is an institutionalised norm that permeates the institutional environment consisting of taxpayers, policymakers and administrators. In that context, it is not surprising, as Stevenson et al. (2017) have shown, that cultural organisations have largely defined 'the non-user' as the problem, to which they themselves could be the solution. Consequently, the NPM paradigm in the cultural sector has resulted in an imperative of increased use, which is apparent in many cultural organisations, where managers have focused on increasing the number of visitors and patrons through blockbuster exhibitions or staging plays with star actors combined with meticulous studies of user preferences.

For libraries and archives, the imperative of increased use is primarily connected to the question of legitimacy. For museums and performing arts organisations, increased use is also directly connected to their economy, which is dependent on generated earnings. Consequently, museums and theatres are very much subject to market mechanisms and must think in terms of business while also serving their cultural purpose. The notion of quality thus changes in the wake of NPM. In the professionalised cultural sector, experts had the power to define quality, while this power is partly left to the audience/users in NPM. Seen through the lens of Bourdieu, this is a clear decrease of autonomy. In the imperative of increased use, field-external agents (the audience/users) have the symbolic power to define quality. However, NPM also adds a new kind of autonomy: the power for cultural managers to form their own strategies, as long as they can prove (with figures) that they are used.

New Public Governance – administration for potentiality and wicked problems

In recent years, it seems that the NPM paradigm is being supplemented by a new rationale, NPG (Osborne 2006). For NPG, outputs (performance) are no longer the single most important factor in legitimisation. Rather, public organisations must also legitimise themselves

by displaying social relevance and actual outcomes. Furthermore, organisations legitimise themselves through their ability to create meaningful interactions with stakeholders and rethinking their role in society (Jensen and Krogstrup 2017; Osborne 2006; Torfing and Triantafillou 2013). NPG is network oriented, as opposed to NPM's basis in economics. NPG takes its point of departure in the competing bottom lines and so-called 'wicked problems' of the public sector by trying to mobilise the knowledge, resources and energy of all relevant and concerned parties in the effort to create innovative solutions to urgent problems and challenges (Torfing and Triantafillou 2017). Osborne focuses on the nature of the state in NPG, which he describes as plural and pluralist, as opposed to the unitary state in bureaucracy and the disaggregated state in NPM. The plural and pluralist state means that several interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services and that several processes inform policymakers. Consequently, NPG emphasises negotiation and interaction between stakeholders within a policy area. This means that many different actors are at play in both policymaking and in the organisations' delivery of services. This resonates with Andersen and Pors (2016), who characterise public institutions today as 'heterophone' (120), meaning that many voices and logics are at play in the production of public service. Furthermore, they describe public administration today as 'potentiality administration'. It is now no longer enough that public organisations display independence by making strategies for how they will reach goals (as required in the NPM regime). Today they also need to explore their innovative possibilities and rediscover themselves and their potential (Andersen and Pors 2016, 58). This rethinking occurs through horizontal processes in which managers of organisations empower and engage stakeholders (users, policymakers and potential funders) not only in problem-solving and service production but also in discussions about what the organisation might become. Consequently it is no longer politicians or professionals who exclusively define the raison d'être of the organisations, which rather becomes an ongoing discussion that involves many kinds of stakeholders. Accordingly, NPG and the potentiality administration add another layer of autonomy to public institutions.

How does NPG manifest itself in the cultural sector? At the policy level, NPG entails that the policymaking system encourages dialogue with and seeks input about strategies and policies from relevant stakeholders. In Denmark, the Ministry of Culture invites artists, opinion formers and leaders of cultural NGOs and organisations to the annual 'Rødding meeting'. This meeting consists of 'a free and open debate' about contemporary challenges for culture (Kulturministeriet 2019).[i] At the institutional level, NPG manifests through organisations more systematically involving citizens, communities and partners in solving jointly defined tasks (Kann-Rasmussen 2019). In recent years, the concept of participation has gained substantial influence. This is the case for both research (Bonet and Négrier 2018; Jancovich and Bianchini 2013) and practice, where arts managers and professionals are working with concepts reaching from audience development and outreach to co-production and a widening of the voices in actual decision-making (Huvila 2008; Hvenegaard Rasmussen 2016; Roued-Cunliffe and Copeland 2017; Simon 2010). The participation trend has gained such an impact in the cultural sector because it taps perfectly into the NPG. In a regime where arts managers' most important task is to create platforms where different stakeholders can communicate, share knowledge and find the solutions that make sense for all involved, focus shifts from meeting externally set performance goals to creating social relevance. Likewise, neither managers nor policymakers or users have the final say in the discussion of good quality. Interestingly, there is no pre-set definition of quality or social relevance, and for this reason, organisations try out different strategies to solve their self-defined problems. Precisely the fact that organisations in

the potentiality administration are expected to explore their innovative potential and reinvent themselves continuously is central to understanding the development that is taking place in the field of cultural organisations. Public libraries have experimented with new focus areas from digital education to experiences in the physical library (Rasmussen and Jochumsen 2003) and from stimulating reading (Kann-Rasmussen and Balling 2015b) to lending out tools, seeds and even people[ii] (Thorsen 2020). The public libraries' erratic course can be seen as a crisis due to ongoing digitalisation, but also as a result of changing expectations in the wake of NPG. According to Andersen and Pors (2016, 75), public organisations have been expected to continuously transcend existing horizons of expectation. Many cultural organisations have noted that their activities should be relevant to society and to a wide array of stakeholders. Consequently, they must address several bottom lines at the same time – for example, they are tourist attractions at the same time as they are places for learning and agents of national identity building.

The notion of quality also changes as a result of NPG. Former notions of quality such as professional/artistic quality (professionalisation) or output (NPM) are mixed with an increasing focus on impact, which is much more difficult to measure than output (Bille and Olsen 2018). Furthermore, in the wake of NPG, it is not enough for cultural organisations to be loyal to their legal foundation, build collections of high professional standards or create high-quality performances. We argue that cultural organisations are assigned to an imperative of innovation. If the culture and the arts are subjected to a demand of innovation, they must have a relatively high degree of autonomy to define their own problems. Therefore, we argue that two kinds of autonomy are at play in the cultural sector: Freedom to define the purpose of arts and culture as non-measurable and freedom to define professional and artistic quality characterises classic autonomy. Freedom to choose one's own strategy or approach and to go ahead with the solution to all types of tasks in collaboration with relevant actors, and thus continuously redefine one's purpose, characterises the new autonomy.

Classic autonomy	New autonomy
Freedom to define the purpose of arts and culture as non-measurable	Freedom to (re-)formulate own purpose
Freedom to define professional and artistic quality	Freedom to choose both means and ends in problem solving

Table 2: Classic and new autonomy for cultural organisations

The paradoxical nature of autonomy in LAM organisations

In the final part of this article, we want to unfold the imperative of innovation in the LAM context. Our examples are from the metropolitan area of Copenhagen. The two first examples, Ballerup Public Library and Copenhagen City Archives, are solely included to illustrate how LAMs conform to NPG and the imperative of innovation in different ways. However, as mentioned, the imperative of innovation is not absolute. In reality, all of the mentioned imperatives are in action. In some cases, one imperative may be at the forefront, while other (more traditional) imperatives will not be noticed because of the observer's perspective or because the imperative is broadly accepted. Consequently, several imperatives

are at play simultaneously. This is the case in the third example, the Danish National Museum. We have chosen Ballerup Public Library, Copenhagen City Archives and the Danish National Museum because of their suitability to illustrate how present-day LAMs conform to NPG. However they are, to our knowledge, not outstanding in the Danish context.

Libraries as arenas for public debate

Digitalisation and the imperative of increased use have caused severe legitimation problems for public libraries (Hansson 2010). The declining significance of collections and librarians as guardians of good quality has meant not only a decline in libraries' autonomy, but also a threat to their very existence. As a response, libraries across the Nordic countries have focused intensely on becoming an arena for public deliberation and debate (Audunson et al. 2019). This development has been driven by both researchers and politicians, but to a great extent also by the field itself (Rasmussen, Jochumsen, and Skot-Hansen 2013). The role of libraries as arenas for debate legitimises them because they can fulfil their democracy-supporting task by being a place for everyone.

An example from the Greater Copenhagen region is Ballerup Public Library, which, like all other Danish libraries, has faced a decrease in circulation figures. Ballerup has been successful in both coupling itself to the strategies of the municipality and independently developing solutions that exceed the horizons of expectations. In 2018, the municipality of Ballerup decided they wanted to integrate the UN's sustainability goals in all administrative departments (Ballerup Kommune 2018). As the municipality is an important part of the library's institutional environment, the library aligned itself with this strategy. However, rather than just making books and other materials on the subject available to the inhabitants of Ballerup, the library has taken on a leading role in creating connections between organisations working with climate change and libraries (not only in Ballerup) in order to debate how libraries can contribute to the sustainable development goals (Lerche 2020). Besides this work, Ballerup Public Library has made itself the municipality's arena for deliberations about future sustainable societies, by organising 'knowledge festivals', cooperating with students of the Technical University of Denmark and exhibitions of welfare technologies (Ballerup Public Library 2019).

This example illustrates that libraries, because they cannot live up to the imperative of increased use with their traditional means (lending out books), must find new ways of legitimising themselves. They have stronger ties to the municipalities than museums, for example, but like museums and archives, they also live up to the changed expectations that stem from potentiality administration and NPG. They take on 'real challenges' and try to solve them in collaboration with relevant stakeholders – even stakeholders who are outside of libraries' traditional focus. Making the cultural institution an arena for deliberations is a development that has reverberated in many parts of the LAM field. Numerous museums today also house debates, salons and conferences to emphasise their position as both a voice in the debate but also as an arena for public deliberation (Kann-Rasmussen 2019). Even archives host lectures, digitisation workshops and commemorative clubs for, to take on example, dementia patients.

Crowdsourcing in public archives

To highlight how the imperative of innovation manifests itself in the field of archives,

we use an example from the Copenhagen City Archives, which have exploited the possibilities of digitalisation to create social relevance in collaboration with new and existing users. Digitalisation has been a positive development for archives in several ways. First, it provides better opportunities for archivists and their users to work together for mutual benefit (Jansson 2020). Second, digital records do not suffer from use, unlike physical records, which degrade from wear and tear from over time. When it comes to digital records, this means that archives no longer have to face contradictory considerations of being of service to users vs. safeguarding records. Third, digitalisation allows users to create new content. When archives give users access to cultural heritage data, it not only increases use, it also allows users to use the data in new ways, such as by building applications, databases and maps themselves (Roued-Cunliffe and Copeland 2017). In the following, we show how digital opportunities for crowdsourcing have made it possible for Copenhagen City Archives to transcend existing horizons of expectation in accordance with the potentiality administration and NPG.

The example concerns a collection of records called the 'Politiets Registerblade', (Police Registration Forms), which is a precursor to the Danish National Register of Persons, and is a highly used collection in the Copenhagen City Archives. The staff took the first initiative to digitise the records in 2008. From the beginning, it was considered an impossible task. It was estimated that the project would take 3,500 years to complete (Bundgaard 2013). However, amateur genealogists and other volunteers rose to the challenge and succeeded in digitising the collection in four years. This edifying narrative shows that communication and cooperation play a greater role for archives (see also Körmendy 2007; Cook 2013; Jansson 2020). It also highlights that archives solve tasks that they have not been given; in other words, archives themselves can identify new problems that they can contribute to solving. This project and the others that have followed along have allowed the Copenhagen City Archives to position themselves very well towards the potentiality administration. They can legitimately claim that they have increased their capacity to build and make available relevant collections through partnership with the volunteers. Furthermore, they have helped new user groups gain access to knowledge. The Police Registration Forms as a digital archive are now available (and used) by new types of users, including researchers from the climate or health sciences. As a digital corpus, it can be used by researchers and students who want to explore demographics, social issues and urban life in a completely different way than before, for example by investigating the relationship between life expectancy and residence in Copenhagen. The Copenhagen City Archives are funded by the City of Copenhagen, but have contributed to research that can have national or perhaps even international impact. This example also shows that the archives have expanded their reach. Today, the archives also have vital relationships with history-interested volunteers and new user groups interested in digitised data, besides their traditional users (researchers and amateur genealogists). We argue that this example illustrates an increased autonomy for the archives, although they are still subject to the imperative of increased use.

The field of museums: Navigating the market

The final example from the museum serves the purpose of illustrating the paradoxical nature of autonomy. Many different imperatives are at play simultaneously, and the museum's autonomy can be seen as both declining and increasing. On 1 July 2017, celebrity anthropologist Rane Willerslev filled the position of director at the National Museum. A year later, the National Museum opened a new Viking exhibition, 'Meet the Vikings'. Huge photographs of 'Vikings' flanked the artefacts on display. The exhibition's scenography was

designed by Jim Lyngvild, a fashion designer, well known to the Danish public, due to his distinctive opinions about immigrants and the fact that he designed his own Viking castle. The museum described the photographs as 'artistic interpretations' of Vikings, but the fact that the 'Vikings' in the photographs wear costumes and jewellery from different periods and cultures sparked a heated debate about professionalism and quality among museum professionals (see e.g. Sindbæk 2019). However, the debate also provided the National Museum with enormous publicity and increased the number of visits (Nationalmuseet 2018). Director Rane Willerslev himself has also increased the museum's visibility in the Danish media. His first year at the museum was immortalised in the docusoap 'Rane's Museum' on national television. In 12 episodes, the camera followed Willerslev while he reflected on how to increase the museum's earnings and which parts of the staff he would have to let go as a result of budget cuts. It is easy to interpret this development as a realisation of what Bourdieu anticipated 20 years ago. The market logic erodes autonomy and the result is poor quality. Instead of legitimising the institution through an interesting collection and professionalism, the museum now focuses on visibility and generated earnings at the expense of professionalism and quality.

However, the development of the Danish National Museum is also a history of increased autonomy. In late 2019, the museum launched a new media division 'Our Time'. The National Museum calls it a 'media house', which connotes an independent business. This division of the National Museum provides podcasts, documentaries and radio programmes to a new public service radio station ('Radio Loud') targeting young people. Director Rane Willerslev states in a press release that the media house will be 'the museum's digital hub addressing the outside world […].With an even greater focus on engaging more Danes, the National Museum will help to better understand the world around us. Communication is a very central discipline here' (Nationalmuseet 2020, our translation). The statement is interesting, not because it states that the museum's mission is to help Danes in understanding the world, but because of the approach the museum chose to carry out this mission. The museum chose both means and ends to carry out their mission. The fact that museums in Denmark fulfil their purpose by producing podcasts and documentaries is an expression of increased autonomy. If museums were solely subject to audience figures and research publications, such an idea would never have been fostered. In addition, their patchwork economy – the demand for earnings and independence – has enabled museums to discover new objectives to pursue and new ways to solve existing problems. Museums have discovered the media arena as a source to supplement their funding, that is, money from the so-called public service pool (Kassebeer 2019). We argue that the example of the National Museum illustrates how museums experience declining and increasing autonomy simultaneously. A decline in the classic autonomy as a result of increased marketisation combined with a rising new autonomy allowing the museum to define new problems to solve. Furthermore, the example of the National Museum illustrates that different imperatives coexist at the same time.

The examples above illustrate how the relationships between LAMs and their institutional environment have undergone major changes. A prominent characteristic is that the library and museum focussed on something other than their collection. Within the fields of museum studies and library and information science, researchers have described these changes as movements from 'collections to connections' in libraries (Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen, and Hvenegaard Rasmussen 2012) and from 'collection-driven to user-driven museums' (Anderson 2004). The common denominator for the descriptions of change in all three institutions is that they have traditionally focused on maintaining collections, but that the

focus on collections can no longer stand alone. Dilevko and Gottlieb (2003) describe how libraries and museums have entered a 'post-object period'. This may not be the case for archives, but the archive example illustrates another common characteristic of change in the LAMs – that they handle their task in new ways that are more independent of the public administration under whose auspices they belong. Furthermore, users have gained a changed role in today's LAMs. In accordance with the innovation imperative and NPG, users are co-creators and partners in the development of new solutions for the LAMs.

Concluding remarks

We set out to discuss how different periods of public administration transform the basis of autonomy in cultural organisations. We have shown that autonomy appears as paradoxical, and our discussion shows that it is reasonable to claim that LAM organisations have faced an era where autonomy is both declining and increasing simultaneously. The NPM and the instrumentalisation of cultural organisations have impaired professional hegemony in the LAMs because of externally decided performance goals and criteria for valuation. However, we have also showed that NPM has given the leaders of the organisations increased latitude to define means and ends. The seeds of a new form of autonomy is growing in NPG, where the organisations' responsibility to develop meaningful solutions that involve relevant actors outside the institution is emphasised. The organisations themselves are expected to define the problems and solutions they want to pursue, on condition that society deems them relevant and that users are interested. Accordingly, museums can address topics of interest and communicate to the public in many ways other than exhibiting their collections. Archives have seized a unique possibility of reaching new audiences and establishing meaningful collaborations with citizens, including minority groups that have been neglected by archives in the past. From safeguarding evidence and being of service to historians and genealogists, digitised archives can now also be of use in, for example, research on climate and health, as well as for identity building in communities. Likewise, libraries today are more than collections and lending centrals. Their role as meeting places and arenas for debate is not something politicians have imposed: it is a development they have shaped themselves.

Autonomy of LAM organisations consists of two parts: the right to define quality and the right to define one's own problems. If one focussed on the LAM organisations opportunities for defining quality themselves, one must speak of declining autonomy, while the opposite is the case if one focuses on the right to define the field's own problems. The development of this autonomy paradox has created a changed distribution of power among professionals, politicians and the population, where professionals, especially leaders, have gained increased power when it comes to defining the organisations' tasks. Similarly, because of the imperative of increased use, visitors/users have also gained influence on the LAM organisations. Professional quality can no longer legitimise cultural activities in itself. The logical consequence of these two movements is that the political scope has been reduced in relation to the cultural field. Politicians still determine subsidies, but they have increasingly left policymaking to the cultural institutions. Finally, it is not hard to find examples of the imperative of innovation within the LAMs or the entire cultural field. However, it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the balance of power between NPM (the imperative of increased use) and NPG (the imperative of innovation). Is innovation just a means in an NPM regime or are we witnessing something new? Alternatively, do the two imperatives coexist in relatively harmony? The answers to these questions probably depend on national differences

and the relative size of the public funding. Consequently, we call for more studies of both an empirical and theoretical nature in this area of cultural policy research.

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[i] Remarkably, even the themes at last years' meetings resonate with NPG: The role of art and artists in the social debate and in civil society in 2018, or volunteers, children and public service in 2019.

The Human library hosts events where readers can borrow human beings serving as open books and have conversations they would not normally have access to. The human 'books' represent groups in society that are often subjected to prejudice, stigmatization or discrimination because of their lifestyle, diagnosis, belief, disability, social status or ethnic origin (The Human Library 2020).