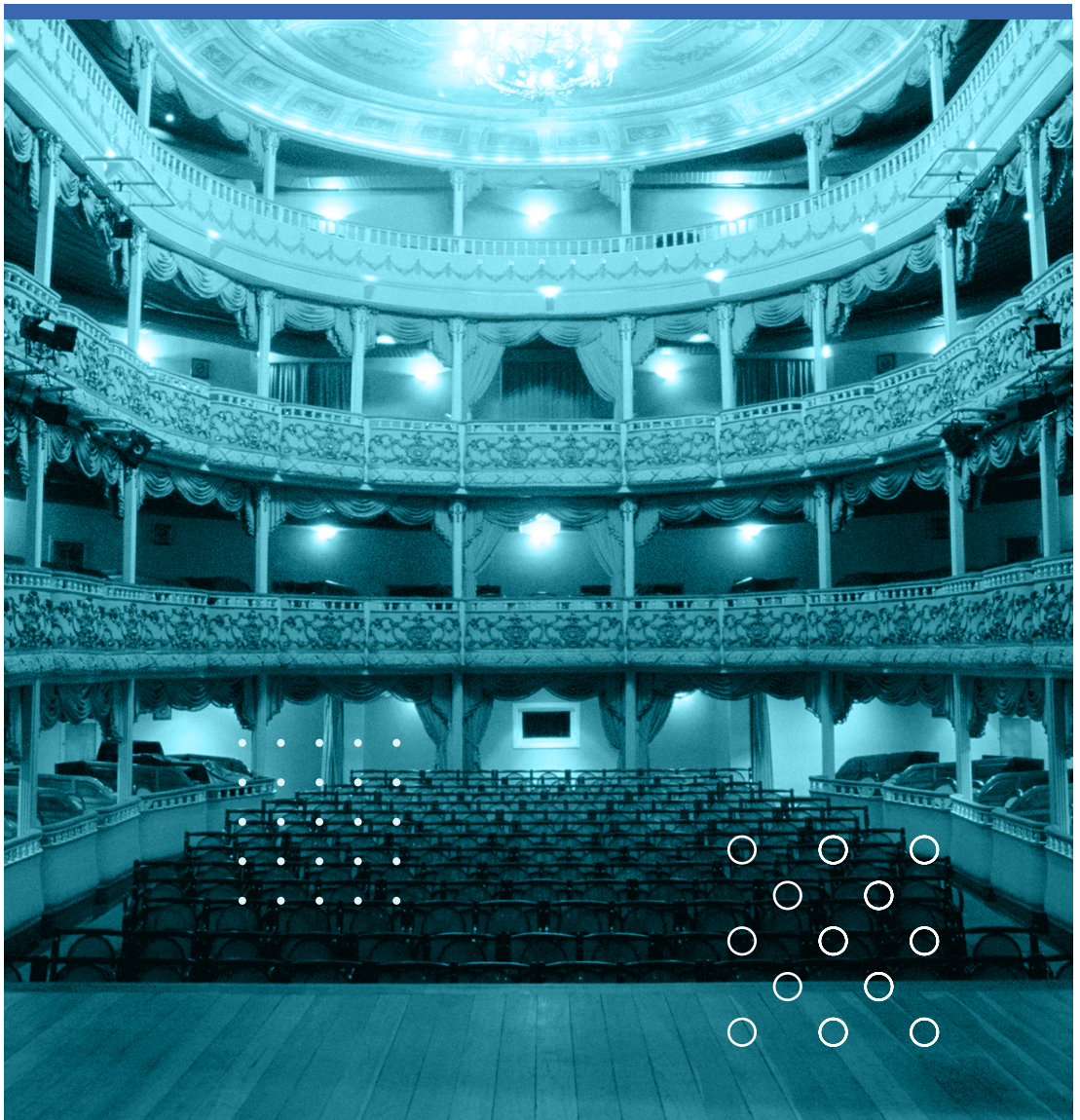


Bård Kleppe

## **Regulating Autonomy** Theatre policy and theatre management in three European countries





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# **Regulating autonomy**

**Theatre policy and theatre management in three  
European countries**

A PhD dissertation in  
**Culture Studies**

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## Preface

Theater is a collective art form in which the artwork is a result of a collaboration between a number of social actors. In this dissertation, I have studied the interaction between these actors from a sociological point of view. Most theatres also relate to a certain policy affecting the preconditions for their work. It is this linkage between cultural policy and theatrical work that I pay special attention to. Such studies of cultural production, in which social, economic and resource-based conditions are emphasized, characterize the academic tradition developed in Bø, Norway, under the leadership of professor Per Mangset.

As a researcher at The Telemark Research Institute (TRI), I have conducted several commissioned research projects with such an approach during the last ten years. Often with the purpose of assessing cultural policy schemes.

This project is based on a previous research project conducted at TRI in collaboration with Per Mangset and Sigrid Røyseng from 2008-2010. In this study, we compared working life in a Norwegian theater with a Norwegian orchestra. When the University college of Southeast Norway offered a scholarship in international cultural policy, I got the opportunity to investigate this topic from an international, comparative angle.

As a PhD fellow at the University College of Southeast Norway, and as a researcher at TRI, I have benefitted from working in Norway's leading academic environment for cultural policy research. Although this thesis is my work and thus my responsibility, it is very much a result of a collective research effort conducted by this solid academic environment. The "founding father", and one of my two supervisors Professor Per Mangset, have already been mentioned, but still deserves further attention. Even several years after retirement, he contributes daily with his knowledge and expertise for the benefit of a number of younger researchers following his footsteps. These cultural policy researchers at TRI, solidly led by Ole Marius Hylland, form the core of this academic environment. I am deeply grateful for their presence and their feedback to my work. In particular, I would like to highlight Ola Berge and Mari Torvik Heian, which both

have shared the struggles of being a PhD students parallel with me. I am further grateful to the rest of my colleagues at TRI, not least the Managing Director Karl Gunnar Sanda, who has provided me with perfect working conditions during my entire work.

At the University College of Southeast Norway, I am grateful to the students and staff in the doctoral program in Cultural studies, led by Nils Asle Bergsgard and Geir Vestheim. Their feedback on my work has been of great importance.

I am further grateful to my main supervisor, Professor Sigrid Røyseng. Sigrid has been of great importance for my work and has guided me in an excellent way providing me with considerable knowledge in both theoretical, empirical and methodological issues.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Ingrid Holmboe Høibo that has provided me with important insights into the art world. However, even though we share common academic interests, our joint projects at home have been of paramount importance. It's a fortune to put aside the thesis every evening and jointly share our interest in farming. It is also of great importance to spend my afternoons and my weekends with Guro and Alfred. Thanks to them!

This dissertation consists of an abstract and three scientific articles. The first article was published in the International Journal of Cultural Policy in 2016. The other two articles are currently under publication. The article *Managing autonomy: Analyzing arts management and artistic autonomy through the theory of justification* is under publication in the *Journal of Arts Managing, Law and Society*, while the article *Theaters as risk societies Performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk*, is under publication in *Poetics*. These published articles are slightly modified compared to the papers included in this thesis. I therefore encourage the readers to download the published versions.

Bø i Telemark, 17.08.17

Bård Kleppe

## List of papers

### Article 1

Kleppe, Bård (2016). The autonomous world reversed. Comparing liberal policy and autonomy in the performing arts. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. doi: [10.1080/10286632.2016.1184659](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2016.1184659)

### Article 2

Kleppe, Bård (2017). Managing autonomy. Analysing arts management and artistic autonomy through the theory of justification. Under review for *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*.

### Article 3

Kleppe, Bård (2017). Theatres as risk societies: Performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk. Under review for *Poetics*.



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## 1. Introduction

In Western society, *autonomy* is one of the most essential metaphors and highly valued symbols. Aristotle, Kant, Mill and Rawls all describe the ideal citizen as rational, reasonable, self-determining and autonomous. In Rawls' description of a just society, the autonomous individual is the main precondition (1973). Today, discussions of autonomy are central in the development of all welfare states. In healthcare, education, social security and justice, individual rights and autonomous decision-making are widely discussed. Institutions producing welfare services call for autonomy, while politicians outsource responsibility, and thus autonomy, through new public management.

In art production, autonomy holds a similar important position. When addressing artistic value in modern societies, the autonomy of the arts is the core value. While discussions of artistic quality seems to be a never-ending story, the importance of a free and independent art sphere is widely agreed upon, and a lack of artistic autonomy is considered as a lack of both liberal rights and democratic values.

Despite this, different countries, holding different political ideologies, approach autonomy differently and chose different ways in order to facilitate artistic autonomy. Autonomy is also a relational concept, as the autonomy of someone affects the autonomy of someone else. The question of *whose* autonomy is to be promoted may also vary between countries and political ideologies. In this thesis, I wish to address these questions based on a comparative study of culture policy and cultural production in three countries. Even so, I want to examine how cultural producers *experience* different political approaches to autonomy, how this affects artistic production, arts management and the working conditions of performing artists.

“L’art pour l’art” or “art for art’s sake”, a French slogan from the early 19th century, puts the self-referential logic of artistic valuation into relief. It expresses the intrinsic value of art by claiming that “true” art is divorced from any moral or utilitarian function. According to Pierre Bourdieu, this tautological sentence may still be considered the

“nomos” of the artistic field (2000). The sentence defines an informal law, or narrative, taken for granted in the artistic field. It is a higher common principle to which every artist relates. Even so, and as I will return to in Chapter 3.7.1, Bourdieu states that the autonomy of the artistic field is relative, and that some social actors<sup>1</sup> are more committed to this nomos than others. On the one hand, there are artists whose productions are more or less limited to the scope of other artists (what Bourdieu calls *the field of restricted production*), whereas there are others who are producing art for everyone (the field of large-scale production). This division is more or less equal to the common phrase, *high and low culture*.

From a philosophical perspective, the concept of artistic autonomy is commonly traced back to the Kantian work, *The Critique of Judgement*, in which Kant states that the fine arts are “purposiveness without purpose” (Kant 1914 [1790]:77). As I will return to in Chapter 3.6, several philosophers and artists have maintained this principle of artistic autonomy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

In recent years, the autonomous principle of the arts has been challenged, including politically, practically and philosophically. According to several scholars, the new wave of *instrumentalism* and neo-liberalism has put a remarkable amount of pressure on the autonomy of the arts (Belfiore and Bennett 2008, Duelund 2003, McGuigan 2005, 2016, Røyseng 2003, Skot-Hansen 1998). In one of the latest books by Bourdieu, *Firing back*, he expresses true concerns of a neo-liberal turn in (cultural) policy, in which the autonomy of the art is evidentially weakened:

The hard-won independence of cultural production and distribution from economic necessity finds itself threatened to its foundations by the intrusion of economic logic into all stages of the production and distribution of cultural goods. (Bourdieu 2003:67)

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the topic of this study, I consequently use the term “social actors” in order to separate social actors and actors as performing artists.

A similar concern is expressed by Jim McGuigan, a researcher in cultural policy studies (2004, 2016). Grounded in the theory of, e.g. Jürgen Habermas, McGuigan is particularly critical towards the economic reasoning that dominates cultural policy. Even though the writings of McGuigan sometimes tend to be more ideological than analytical, the increased emphasis given to instrumental cultural policy since the 1980 has been thoroughly documented empirically (Belfiore 2009, Gray 2007, Vestheim 1994).

This development within the field of art and culture is perhaps most evident through the *creative turn* experienced since the late 1980s. David Hesmondhalgh (among several others such as Caves 2000, Ellmeier 2003, McRobbie 2016)) provides a thorough analysis of the changes in art production and culture policy within the last 30 years. He concludes that a wave of neo-liberalism and globalism has swept across most countries over the past few years. These policy shifts “helped to create a context in which the cultural industries were seen as a good business investment” (Hesmondhalgh 2012:404). In doing so, this creative turn aimed at uniting “high” and “low” culture or the *autonomous* and *heteronomous* pole of art production (if one is to apply a term from Bourdieu). In cultural policy, the creative industries were not only looked upon as good business, they were also considered the new national pride of several countries. In Britain, bands like Oasis and Spice Girls and artists such as Damien Hirst, were promoted as the core element of “Cool Britannia” in the 1990s. In his book, *Creative Britain*, the great belief in creativity and creative industries was summarized by Chris Smith, New Labour’s first Minister of Culture (Smith 1998). Here, he states that “culture is the barometer of [a nation’s] health and one of the main factors by which we assess a civilization” (Smith (1998) cited from Belfiore and Bennett 2008:3).

In the new millennium (proudly introduced by Robbie Williams), several academic studies were undertaken to provide proof of the multitude of benefits associated with

the creative sector.<sup>2</sup> The most notable of these studies of economic impact and spill-over effects are possibly the “Bilbao effect” (Plaza 2006), as well as Richard Florida’s study of creative workers and their impact on regional development (Florida 2002, 2008). In addition to this, several studies have also aimed at proving the social impacts of art and culture, and thus the potential for saving welfare expenses through investments in arts and culture (see Belfiore and Bennett 2008 for an introduction). The reactions from the art sector on such studies have been two-fold. On the one hand, these studies devalued the intrinsic value of the art, thus meeting a classical worry regarding the autonomy of the arts. In contrast, such studies provided sorely needed arguments in the pursuit of public support. Hence, because of these turns and beliefs for the positive impacts of the art and the allocation of money rhetorically changed from “support” to “investments”. Allocating grants for the arts was considered an investment for both private and public funders, rather than an expense.

This turn in cultural policy marked a change in the way in which public support is understood in cultural policy:

While public support for artists has been seen as a way to secure the autonomy of artists, private funding and market income have been understood as incompatible with the autonomy of art (Røyseng 2016:1).

Traditionally, cultural policy and the allocation of public money have promoted a diversity of cultural expression and excellence through compensating for market failure. However, investments in the creative industries are all about supporting market success (Lee 2016, Oakley 2009). As argued by Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005:3), “The cultural industries were ‘the other’ against which cultural policy reacted”. If one is to promote

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<sup>2</sup> The prevalence of “economic impact studies’ was maybe more evident in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Myerscough 1988, Lindeborg 1991, Christiansen et al 1987). Such studies, however, met heavy critique and thus lost much academic legitimacy (according to e.g. Peacock 1991, Bille Hansen 1993, Bille Hansen 1995). Nevertheless, the new wave of impact studies after the millennium became hugely influential, not least the work of Richard Florida.

potential economic success, art forms traditionally suffering from market failure are not a good bet.

Several scholars have also claimed that the creative turn in cultural policy reflects a (neo) liberal turn in both cultural policy and labour policy (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2014, Lee 2016, McGuigan 2005, 2016, McRobbie 2002, McRobbie 2016). David Harvey defines neo-liberalism as the:

theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey 2007)

Within art production, the emphasis on “individual entrepreneurial freedom” is particularly relevant. The focus on individuality permeates the creative rhetoric, according to, e.g. Angela McRobbie, who states (2016:58):

The newly expanded middle class in the UK who have embraced the idea of creative work are being expected to test out the water of working life without welfare or with substantially reduced welfare.

The latest chapter in the creative turn has yet to be written. However, the golden age of “creative” cultural policy has maybe reached its end. Since the financial crisis in 2008, several countries have limited their “investments” in the cultural sector (Garcia et al. 2016, Inkei 2010). In the Netherlands, politicians cut the state budget for art by approximately 25% in 2013. Other European countries such as Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and United Kingdom have also experienced cuts.<sup>3</sup> This of course is mainly a result of a tighter economic situation in several countries budgets due to, e.g. the 2008 financial crisis. Simultaneously, however, scholars claim that art and culture are slowly disappearing from the creative economy discourse:

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<sup>3</sup>  
[http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/files/83/en/en\\_crisis\\_and\\_prospects\\_for\\_art\\_and\\_culture\\_in\\_europe\\_oct2010.pdf](http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/files/83/en/en_crisis_and_prospects_for_art_and_culture_in_europe_oct2010.pdf)

The current government's merging of creativity and economy, however, is not only producing unprecedented conceptual confusion around creativity, but is also taking creativity from cultural to economic (and financial) domains. Now culture hardly serves as a popular lens with which society can portray a creative economy; and the discourse of the latter does not necessarily bring new resources or public support for the cultural sector. (Lee 2016:450)

The observation, admittedly from Korean cultural policy, made by Lee is particularly relevant in terms of instrumental cultural policy. Once art and culture become a mean for, in this case economic development, politicians may realize that there are other parts of the creative sector that may contribute to creativity and growth.<sup>4</sup> Several scholars have therefore questioned whether the arts are in danger of disappearing politically in the creative turn (Garnham 2005, Lee 2016, Oakley 2009).

There are several reasons to agree upon Bourdieu's concern about the future for a "hard-won independence of cultural production". Simultaneously, the actual result of this rhetorical instrumental turn in cultural policy does not necessarily imply a weakened artistic autonomy.

Some scholars have criticized the dichotomy commonly constructed between autonomy and instrumentalism. In cultural policy, Geir Vestheim claims that all policy, including cultural policy, per se is instrumental:

We can talk about different kinds of instrumental action and objectives but within political reason there are no non-instrumental objectives. This principle also applies for cultural policy. Within democratic political reason the concept of intrinsic value of culture and the arts becomes self-contradictory – despite the fact that politicians may say the opposite. (Vestheim 2012:536).

Vestheim does not necessarily claim that instrumental reasoning does not represent a threat to the autonomy of the art. Rather, he claims that all political reasoning is instrumental, and that the question is therefore what kind of reasoning is being used.

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<sup>4</sup> Recently, even Richard Florida has started to doubt his former belief in the creative class (Florida 2017).

The British scholar Melissa Nisbett also provides an interesting interpretation of instrumentalism based on a study on how professionals in museums react when their work is subject to cultural diplomacy. She rebuts the assumptions about the prescriptive and rigid nature of instrumental policies by demonstrating that instrumental policies can be “beneficial, open and non-prescriptive”, and further “easily manipulated in order to satisfy a range of personal and professional agendas” (Nisbett 2013:572). She hence raises the question as to whether professionals within the arts and culture promote, and benefit from, instrumental claims in cultural policy as much as politicians do.

My ambition in this thesis is to examine the current status of the autonomy of the art in this changing landscape of creative industries, individualization and instrumental reasoning. I will do so through a comparative study of theatre policy and theatre production in three different countries: Norway, England and The Netherlands. These countries approach theatre policy, theatre production and artistic labour differently, as my interest concerns how this affects artistic autonomy.

According to Bordieu, the autonomy of the art is not fixed but instead is relative (1993a). A presumption for my thesis is therefore that artistic autonomy varies between these countries. In cultural policy research, the autonomy of the art is considered a main variable when different approaches to cultural policy are described (Cummings and Katz 1987, Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989, Mangset 1995, Zimmer and Toepler 1996). In their classical comparative article, *The Arm's Length Principle and the Arts*, Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey (1989) present four different models for cultural policy, all of which all relates to how artistic autonomy is governed. Still, this study has been criticized because of its reliance on theoretical models, rather than empirical investigations. In so doing, they miss an essential insight into how political models turn into political practice, and further, how professionals in the field of art experience such a practice. In this thesis, I have chosen an empirical entrance to the comparative study. I have further chosen a qualitative case study approach trying to acquire in-depth



knowledge in these cases through the diversity of experience from different social actors.

Comparative studies have several benefits. What is maybe most important is its ability to challenge established knowledge from studies based on a single (national) context. One example of this is Michéle Lamont's contributions to comparative sociology in her book, *Money, morals and manners* (1992). Through a comparative analysis of American and French class cultures, she was able to show how Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital ignored moral status and national repertoires. Within cultural policy research, comparative approaches often reveal how existing knowledge from one country's cultural policy becomes challenged when comparisons are made (Gray 1996, Kawashima 1995, Looseley 2011, Mangset 2009, Olsen 2013).

In policy studies, comparisons are further useful as they enable policy-makers to learn from others. "Even if there are no direct lessons, policy comparisons will often throw light on hidden assumptions operating within one's own country", Heidenheimer et al. state (1990:12). I venture to claim that the insights drawn from the Netherlands and England in this study are useful to both cultural politicians, as well as theatre professionals in Norway (which is the author's home country). Simultaneously, I hope the insights from Norway may also prove to be valuable for politicians and practitioners in the two other countries.

As a chosen field of cultural policy and cultural production, I find theatres and theatre production to be particularly relevant. Theatre production involves a wide range of artistic professionals making artistic decisions on several different levels. This makes the question of artistic autonomy relevant in most negotiations between different social actors. Most theatres also relate to an ever-present tension between artistic motivation and financial concerns (or in a Bourdieusian term: between the field of large-scale production and the field of restricted production).

In terms of cultural policy, theatres are further interesting because they occupy a large share of culture budgets. This makes theatres potentially vulnerable to political intervention. In several countries there has been an ongoing debate concerning how theatres should be funded, and what type of theatre should be prioritized (Haselbach et al. 2012, NOU 2013:4 , Turnbull 2008). Traditionally, large institutional repertory theatres have received the lion's share of the performing arts budget. Such theatres have been considered stable producers of professional art, providing safe and secure working conditions for the artists and other professionals working there. They have also contributed to a steady performance of plays in the regions where they are located. Simultaneously, such theatres have proven to be costly, occupying an increasing share of most countries' culture budget. Furthermore, they tend to be slow-moving "Fordistic" organizations suffering from various forms of institutional inefficacy, as well as artistic stagnation (Løyland and Ringstad 2007, Taalas 1997). The growing number of independent "fringe" performing art groups, which normally do not receive a large share of the total public support for performing arts, have commonly expressed their discontent with such theatre policy and the prioritization of large repertory theatres. Embedded in the name of this *independent* performing art groups, we also find a critique towards the *dependency*, and thus possibly the lack of autonomy, in the institutionalized repertory theatres. Nevertheless, the dependency of public support for such groups is considerable, considering that their box-office income is generally low.

Norway, England and the Netherlands, the three countries treated in this study, also make up an interesting comparison, due to both their positioning in this creative turn and their different approaches to theatre policy. As previously mentioned, Britain has been a locomotive in the development of cultural/creative industries and policy, at least as far as Europe is concerned. Theatres have been an important part of this policy, and even though private theatres in the *West End* have existed for decades, the commercial success of these theatres has been commonly referred to in policy documents and debates. Standing in contrast to this, the creative turn in Norway has more or less been limited to political rhetoric (Pyykkönen and Stavrum 2017). There have been few

changes in general cultural policy and theatre policy since the 1900s (Henningsen 2015). The same theatres still occupy a similar share of the budgets as they did 30 years ago, and most theatres still perform a variety of plays, consisting of both musicals and avant-garde performances. In the Netherlands, the great changes took place in the late 1960s, when the commercial and non-commercial, avant-garde theatres divided into two different branches (Hamersveld 2009). Ever since, the large commercial theatres and small fringe theatre groups, with each receiving a large amount of public support, comprised the Dutch theatre landscape. The tradition in Dutch theatres also differs from those in Norway, England, and most other European countries for that matter, in that they separate theatre production and theatre performance. None of the Dutch theatre groups keep their own stage. Instead, they maintain premises for rehearsals; however, when plays are to be performed, they make an agreement with an external theatre venue. Even though there have been some changes in this landscape, and definitely some reduction in public funding, Dutch theatre groups are still considered largely autonomous.

## **1.1. Research question**

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The autonomy of the arts has been the topic of several contributions in art history, aesthetic philosophy and cultural sociology. It has also been an important topic in studies of arts management and cultural policy. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of studies that analyse how principles of artistic autonomy on a structural level are experienced and dealt with through a daily artistic practice. There is also a lack of empirical comparative studies of both cultural policy and cultural production. In cultural policy and cultural management, artistic autonomy has been safeguarded through arm's length principles or labour division separating artistic work from non-artistic work. Such principles have maybe become even more important during the creative turn.

Through a comparative approach, my ambition in this thesis is to analyse how artistic autonomy is negotiated and experienced on different levels in performing arts organizations in three different countries. I further wish to analyse how professionals

working in theatres experience the principles of autonomy, and how such principles actually facilitate artistic autonomy and autonomous artistic production.

**My overall research question may thus be formulated as such:**

*How do professionals in different theatres experience and safeguard their artistic autonomy in relation to different political, economic and organizational frameworks?*

The three levels that I wish to study represent three levels where artistic autonomy is at stake, and where negotiations about decision-making are being made: 1) At a political level where the theatres' autonomy toward the funding government are at stake; 2) At an organizational level, where artistic autonomy is negotiated through differentiation between artistic and financial concerns, and 3) on a personal or artistic level, where the relationship between the actor and the theatre concerns the autonomy and the independency of the single artist.

These three levels also make up the framework of my thesis. The three articles embedded in the thesis address artistic autonomy on each of these three levels. A summary of the subject, methodology and the research questions in these articles is displayed in Table 1:

Table 1: Schematic display of the three articles in this thesis

Title	Level	Research question	Subject	Methodology
The autonomous world reversed. Comparing liberal policy and autonomy in the performing arts	Cultural policy	How does cultural policy affect the autonomy of theatres?	Policy regimes/Welfare regimes  Political influence  Economic influence	Comparison  Document studies  Qualitative interviews
Managing autonomy. Analysing arts management and artistic autonomy through the theory of justification	Institutional	How is artistic autonomy negotiated in theatre management?	The relationship between artistic and non-artistic management  The symbolic value of arguments, persons and	Comparison  Case studies  Qualitative interviews

		How do executives in theatres legitimize their artistic decisions?	positions in artistic decision-making  Justification of artistic decisions	(participant observation)
Theatres as risk societies. Performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk.	Artistic/individual	How may autonomy be interpreted as risk?  How do artists balance between artistic and economic risk-taking	Economic risk  Artistic risk  Theatre organization as system of risk management  Cultural policy as system of risk management	Comparison  Case studies  Qualitative interviews  (participant observation)

## 2. The field of theatre

Imagine you bring your partner to a play at The National Theatre where *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen is performed. Before you are able to see this play, a wide range of actions and processes have been undertaken, and a wide range of people have been involved. The actors appearing on stage have been cast in the play; maybe it is that they are employed at the theatre or maybe they have been hired for this specific play only by a casting director? These actors have been guided by a director who has transformed the play from a text to a live performance. Even if the director has been in charge of staging this play, he<sup>5</sup> has had several assistants. Composers, musicians and technicians have been in charge of the sound and music. Stage designers, painters and carpenters have been in charge of the scenography, tailors have made the costumes, makeup artists have coiffed the actors' hair, and a dramaturg has helped the director in the interpretation of the play.

However, the ticket you bought for the *Dolls House* did not cover all the costs associated with the play. In order to afford to stage the play, the National Theatre was in need of substantial additional funding. Luckily, the politicians support the performing arts through several different support schemes. In addition to that, one of the large oil-companies promoted their products through sponsoring culture, which made it possible for the theatre to cover all the costs associated with the production of the play.

When you woke up the next day, after an intense and exciting night at the theatre, you realize that the theatre critic in the national newspaper thought the performance was dull and amateurish. And further, one of the leading directors in the country criticized the national theatre for not staging a contemporary drama.

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<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, I will refer to persons as he/him. This decision is based on a coin toss witnessed by one of my female colleagues.

All the people mentioned here, and several more, cooperated or at least interacted, thereby allowing us to be able to go to the theatre to watch a play. This not only count towards a theatre performance, as all artistic work involves the joint activity of a large number of people. All these people constitute what Howard Becker calls “The Art World” (Becker 1984). The fact that art production is a social phenomenon also makes it highly suitable for sociological studies:

The existence of such art worlds [...] suggests a sociological approach to the arts. It is not an approach that produces aesthetic judgment [...], it produces, instead, an understanding of the complexity of the cooperative networks through which art happens. (Ibid.: 1)

My ambition for this study is to conduct a sociological study of the interactions between people involved in making a play. My sociological study of theatre therefore differs from a theatre study (sometimes also referred to as theatrology or dramatics), as the latter is primarily concerned with the content of the play and how it is performed. As Becker points out, it is also important to emphasize that my ambition for this study is not to produce aesthetic judgements of plays or theatres. I am also cautious about making any judgement concerning which policy or which way of organizing theatre makes the best art. My emphasis is primarily on analysing how this different approach affects artistic autonomy.

Considering that this is as a study of the art world, and in particular the production of theatre performances, I find it necessary to present a brief presentation of the social actors involved in such productions, as well as the several forms of interaction and organization taking place. Because of my comparative ambitions, I further find it necessary to introduce the similarities and differences in theatre production and theatre policy among the three countries.

## **2.1. Theatre and theatre production**

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In the academic field of cultural sociology, and especially cultural policy research, theatre is possibly the art form that has been subject to the most research. This is not accidental. Bearing in mind that sociological approaches to the arts pay special attention

to social processes, theatre production is one of the most complex art forms when it comes to the plenitude of social actors involved. Theatre also integrates several other art forms, including literature (the drama), visual arts (scenography), music and dance. The theatre is further important in regard to being the subject of cultural policy research because of its significant need for public subsidies.

In the introduction, I mentioned several persons involved in creating and staging a play. To provide a better understanding of what it takes to create a theatre performance, I will present a brief summary. The first step towards a theatre performance starts when someone, whether it be one person, a group of artists or a theatre organization, decides they want to produce a certain play. This decision is one of the most important artistic decisions made. In theatres, the decision is commonly based on a strategic plan or at least some kind of an artistic vision. Staging a play is generally expensive, and the investment in a play implies great economic risk. Hence, the producer needs to be economically capable of carrying all the expenses before the play is ready for an audience. This limits potential producers to those able to attract private investors and private money into a play, or those who have received public support for either a certain production or several productions as part of an institutional support. The limited amount of producers willing to invest in theatrical productions, and certainly the lack of people willing to invest in performances with limited commercial potential, provides the need for public support and thus a cultural policy. As I will return to, this intervention and public investment may be arranged in several different ways.

In order to spread the risk, producers may also cooperate with other producers. Two theatres may co-produce a play which is to be performed at both theatres. Moreover, theatres may also co-produce with private producers, thereby splitting the risk and the potential income of the play.

When the producer has decided which play he wants to stage, he is dependent upon several persons. First, he needs to get the legal rights to the manuscript, and maybe a translation of the manuscript if one does not exist. He then needs to decide who is to



direct the play. In some cases the producer will hand over much of the responsibility to the director, while in other cases the producer will participate and make joint decisions on several details of the production. The producer, perhaps in collaboration with the director, then needs to hire composers, musicians, technicians, scenographers, costume makers and stage managers. Many of those also need to hire additional assistants and stage crew, and the play then needs to be cast. In some cases a casting director is in charge of this job, whereas in others it can be the producer or director. All this professionals may hold a permanent position at the theatre, or they may be freelancers that the producer needs to hire for each production. This is something I will return to.

When the details associated with producing the play are arranged, the producer needs to make decisions concerning the performance of the play. He needs to decide when the production will be performed, and where. The latter may be obvious in those cases where the producer works at a theatre with its own stage. In other cases, the producer will sell the production to different stages, or set up a tour. Quite often, there is a mix between different ways of staging a play. In Britain, many productions premier locally; the production then tours before it finally ends up a private theatre.

When the place and date for the performance are set, the producer needs to promote and market the play, get journalistic attention and possibly arrange school visits, etc. All of this of course is an effort to attract visitors.

## 2.2. Organization of the theatre

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Even though this brief summary of theatrical production counts for most theatres, there are several ways of organizing this process. The main difference between theatres relates to different types of producers. First, there is a visible line running through theatres in Europe, which divides public theatres in terms of those receiving subsidies and commercial non-subsidized theatres and producers. Simply put, commercial producers exist in order to make money (Klaic 2013). Commercial producers produce plays, particularly musicals, with the intention to reach a large audience that makes the

plays profitable for years. Today, musicals like *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Chicago* and *The Lion King* have run for more than 20 years and have been performed approximately 10,000 times. For example, the total revenue of *The Lion King* is estimated to be \$ 1.3 billion.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, the commercial producers and the commercial theatres are not the focus in this thesis. Rather, the focus will be on public theatres, artistically oriented and subsidized by public authorities. Producers in such theatres are often closely linked to the theatre or the performing art group producing the play, and sometimes also to the theatre staging the play. The typical producer in such a theatre will be the artistic director, who's running a public theatre. The way the producer is connected to the organization producing the play also comprises an important distinction in the organization of theatres.

In several large *institutionalized theatres*, the producer or the artistic director is hired by a board, as the organization employing him possesses most of the resources needed for producing the play, including the financial, personal and technical resources. This way of running a theatre will be my primary focus in this thesis, so I will therefore describe this model in detail later. Before doing so, it is also important to introduce a third and important way of organizing a theatre: independent groups. In commercial theatres, the producer initiates a play based on his belief in its economic potential. In the independent sector, a producer or group of producers initiates a play based on their belief in the artistic potential (Klaic 2013). In the independent sector, the producer, or artistic director, is commonly not employed by an organization; instead, he is the entrepreneur who established the group based on his artistic ambition. Furthermore, it is quite common in an independent theatre that the producer's access to resources is limited. He needs to apply for funding for each individual play, and he often needs to hire both persons and facilities in order to produce the play. The independent groups commonly

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.broadwayworld.com/grossescumulative.cfm?sortby=totaltotalGross&orderby=desc>

do not own their own stage for presenting the play. Consequently, they need to sell their production to theatre halls, community houses and schools, or hire a stage for performances. Most of these stages also receive public support, which implies an additional subsidy of the performance.

If we return to the large institutionalized theatres, it might be worth taking a historical glimpse back to 1898 when Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko founded the Moscow Art Theatre. Their ideas and way of organizing a theatre have been considered the prototype of the modern, ensemble-based repertory theatre, which today is still perhaps the most evident form of theatre production across Europe (Klaic 2013, Senelick 2008). The idea behind this model was an assumption that the theatre company could sustain an ensemble of actors of various ages, capable of playing various roles, working and developing within the company for several years, maybe even for a lifetime. Opposite to contemporary theatres at that time, which mostly relied on one star actor, Stanislavsky encouraged collectivity rather than individual vanity. His commonly cited quote: “There are no small parts, only small actors” (Carnicke 2009:43), reflects this ethos.

The word *repertory* implies that such theatres perform a repertory of different plays at one location. In contrast to a commercial theatre performing the same play for years, or independent theatres touring extensively with one play, repertory theatres produce several plays during a season. In that way, they may provide the citizens in the city or the region where the theatre is located with a variety of plays for both children and adults. Several repertory theatres also rerun old productions after some years.

Typical for a repertory theatre is that most of the resources are possessed by the theatre. They function as a theatrical ecosystem, or maybe as a *total institution*, in which most tasks related to theatre production and the staging of a play are carried out by people employed in the repertory theatre.

Throughout the 20th century, hundreds of repertory theatres were established across Europe and Britain. Today, repertory theatres are to be found in most German-speaking countries, the Nordic countries and parts of Eastern and Central Europe (Klaic 2013:37).

Although even Stanislavsky was in need of subsidies, the costs of such repertory theatres have increased remarkably during the past 100 years. The labour-intensive nature of performing arts institutions does not allow for rationalization as most other industries do. While the labour demand of most industries has been remarkably reduced, creating a play still requires approximately the same amount of people as it did 100 years ago. The rising costs associated with this have been described by the economists William J. Baumol and William G. Bowen (1966). In economic terms, this phenomena is referred to as Baumol's cost disease. In addition to this, empirical economic studies have also shown how several repertory theatres suffer from various forms of institutional inefficacy (or sclerosis), as the productivity of repertory theatres has dropped (Løyland and Ringstad 2007, Taalas 1997).

This increasing cost of repertory theatres working with a fixed ensemble has led to huge debates, as these organizations occupy a large share of the culture budgets of several countries. For example, in 2013, 142 German theatres received approximately €2.4 billion in public funding, on average €16m per theatre.<sup>7</sup> This spending was heavily criticized in the book *Der Kulturinfarkt (Haselbach et al. 2012)*, which caused great debate in Germany.

In Norway, maintaining institutionalized repertory theatres across the country has implied a remarkable rise in public expenditures. In other countries not willing or able to cover these rising costs, the theatre sector has been more or less reshaped, as is the case of Britain. In the early 1980s, most British regional theatres used to work according

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.buehnenverein.de/de/publikationen-und-statistiken/statistiken/theaterstatistik.html?cmsDL=b7381b25f1bf8c537d4a8a51b87dc53d>

to the Stanislavski repertory tradition, maintaining their own ensemble for one or two seasons, working on their own stage and presenting a repertory of plays. In the 1980s, most British regional theatres experienced a financial crisis. The politics of Thatcher entailed a reduction on state expenditures and increasing expenses due to inflation, which led to the closure of several theatres (Turnbull 2008:72). Theatres that survived had to make drastic cuts and changes; this included the disbanding of both ensembles and repertory planning.

### 2.3. Theatre policy

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This increasing need for public support brings us further to cultural policy, in particular, theatre policy. Generally speaking, states always play some role in the creation of art, in the sense that they have a monopoly over making laws within their own borders (Becker 1984). Laws, or legislation, are an important aspect of cultural policy in that it regulates artwork as property. This of course is especially relevant in the case of visual art, in which the artwork is “materialized”. Nevertheless, the regulations of property also concern theatre production. Two important aspects may be relevant to mention here. If a producer wants to produce a play, he needs to obtain the right to the dramatic text. If a theatre wants to stage a production produced by others, they are obligated to pay royalties to the owner of that specific production. As mentioned earlier, this may be an important income source for a producer, as well as an important reason for investing in a production. Public theatres may also profit from such royalties. In Britain, several public theatres earn income from performances that were previously produced, which later have been performed in private theatres. One example of such is the play *War Horse*, which has been performed in the West End, in addition to being on tour in several countries around the world generating tremendous royalty income for the National Theatre in London. Tax policy is also regulated by law and benefits theatres. In several countries, theatres are exempt from VAT and corporate tax, while in other countries, theatres and other cultural organizations benefit from a low VAT rate.

Even though both legislation and tax benefits are important elements in theatre policy, the most dominant and perhaps most relevant policy implementation for this thesis is the allocation of grants and support, not least because such support is based upon political considerations and decision-making. As with private investors, the state and its actors also invest and allocate money in pursuit of their own interests (Becker 1984:165, Vestheim 2009a). In most Western countries, the interests of the state largely correspond with the interests of the artists. The existence of an autonomous art field appears as a sign of cultural development and national sophistication. Yet, even though this motive may explain why most countries support a relatively autonomous art production (commonly referred to as intrinsic values (Hylland 2009, Røyseng 2007)), politicians do implement different political aims through cultural policy. This brings us to the discussion on instrumental cultural policy. Geir Vestheim described this as a cultural policy “emphasizing culture and cultural venture as a means, not as an end in itself (1994:65)”.<sup>8</sup> Instrumental aims like economic profit and regional development, that attract skilled labour, social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal, have become important aims in cultural policy (Belfiore 2002, Belfiore and Bennett 2008, Vestheim 1994). Such instrumental cultural policy becomes highly relevant in this thesis. In line with the economic return private producers expect on their investments in theatre, public authorities also expect to various degrees a return on their investments.

The way in which art and culture is funded and treated in cultural policy varies between countries. There is currently a lack of comprehensive comparative research providing good and updated descriptions of various approaches to cultural policy. When scholars in cultural policy are to describe different approaches to cultural policy, two papers, both published in the late 1980s, are commonly referred to: *The Patron State* by Cummings and Katz (1987) and *The Arm’s Length Principle and the Arts* by Hillman-

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<sup>8</sup> Vestheim, however, later asks if there exists something like a policy where culture is an end in itself (Vestheim 2009a).

Chartrand and McCaughey (1989). Cummings and Katz make two important distinctions on the administration of public funding relevant to this thesis: First, they emphasize how funding may be administered. They highlight three ways: 1) The Ministry of Culture model, in which grants are allocated through the budget of a single ministry or minister, 2) A model of diverse responsibility between various ministries, and 3) a quasi-independent arts council model in which funding is provided through an arm's length body.

Mangset and Hylland make similar distinction between three main models for cultural policy and public support (Mangset and Hylland 2017):

- 1) The American tradition, in which direct public support is almost absent. Art institutions in these countries collect more than half of the income box-office, whereas the remaining amount is generated from gifts, sponsorships or other income-generating activities. However, gifts and sponsorship are politically stimulated through tax exemptions, which imply a form of indirect public support.
- 2) The continental Western European tradition, where a large share of art institutions' income is provided by public support, and only a modest portion are generated through box office income, gifts and sponsorship.
- 3) The British tradition, including Canada and some other Anglo-American countries, is situated somewhere between these two: Performing cultural institutions in the UK tend to have a higher box-office income than similar institutions in Europe, but lower than those in the US. They receive relatively less public support than other Western European countries, but still much more than the US institutions.

How about our three countries? What is theatre policy like in Norway, the Netherlands and England, and how do large theatres produce plays?

In Norway, public support for both artists and art organizations has been high compared to most other European countries.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously, the amount of private donations is low, and the financial instruments to facilitate such are few. The state, the municipalities and the regional level all provide allocations for culture. State support for the arts is directly provided by both the Ministry of Culture and through the arm's length body, Arts Council Norway.

Organization-wise, there has been a clear division between large repertory theatres and small, fringe independent theatre. Additionally, there are some private, commercial theatres primarily located in Oslo. The repertory theatres, however, have dominated Norwegian theatre policy for the past 100 years and still do (Dahl and Helseth 2006, Grund 2008). Figures from the State budget of Norway for 2012 (Prop. 1 (2011–2012)) show that 83% of the total governmental support for theatre (opera and dance are excluded here) is allocated to the 17 institutionalized repertory theatres around the country. These theatres are primarily directly funded by the Ministry of Culture. In addition to this, most of them also receive regional support. Generally speaking, these theatres receive the lion's share of their income from public support, which today in 2017 is somewhere between 75-95% (Mangset 2016:255). In such theatres, administrative and artistic personnel are commonly permanently employed.

Additionally, there are a growing number of independent performing arts groups in Norway. These groups are mostly funded through the Arts Council Norway; however, their share of the total allocations is relatively small compared to the repertory theatres.

In England, the amount of public funding for the arts is far lower than in Norway. According to statistics from Arts Council England, large theatres in England earn 61% of their income.<sup>10</sup> English cultural policy does, however, rely more heavily upon private

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<sup>9</sup> Details concerning public support for theatres are presented in the first article in this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> ACE: National Portfolio Organizations - Annual Survey: 2012/13



donations. Most theatres and cultural organizations are registered charities, and thus eligible to receive a gift aid in the amount of 25%. The donors are simultaneously eligible for tax exemptions.

In Britain, the arm's length principle has been important in the development of their cultural policy. While France established a Ministry of Culture back in 1959, which was headed by a strong, charismatic minister promoting his personal cultural ambitions (ref.), political decisions concerning art and culture in Britain were delegated to an independent Arts Council. The British scholar Anthony Beck explains this decision as such:

The British government has always resisted the establishment of a Ministry of Culture. There is a fundamental conviction that art and politics must never mix. It is disastrous for both. Artists must be autonomous to produce true art, but government cannot resist the temptation to control art and ultimately transform it into a monolithic «state art», with Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin always cited as examples. Thus British government, because it is liberal and democratic government, should never have a cultural policy. (Beck, A. 1992:139)

Even though Beck aims to describe a political ideology, the description does not necessarily fit well with reality. Several scholars have claimed that the arm in the British arm's length system is relatively short (Bertelli et al. 2013, Quinn 1997, Ridley 1987, Williams 1989). This is also one of the main findings in this thesis, presented in the article, "The autonomous world reversed". The same year Beck published his text, England founded/created the new Department of National Heritage. Five years later, this department changed its name to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and suddenly the United Kingdom had their own ministry for culture. Even so, England still mainly organizes its support for the arts through the Arts Council England.<sup>11</sup> The Arts Council funds libraries, museums and cultural education, and also provides grants for

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<sup>11</sup> Arts Council of Great Britain was broken up in 1994 into Arts Council England, Scottish Arts Council and Arts Council of Wales.

art projects. Hence, the most important support they provide, which is also the most relevant in terms of theatres, is the support for National Portfolio Organizations (NPOs): “Organizations of strategic importance with which the Arts Council has long term, multi-year funding agreements” (ACE 2016:72). All the large subsidized theatres in England receive their support through the NPO scheme. The support is provided based on applications, and the support is provided for a three-year period. In 2015, 159 theatre organizations received support through the NPO scheme. The largest theatres (the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company) received, respectively, 17.2 and 15.4 million pounds in 2015, with the average support being £ 610,000. As opposed to Norwegian theatres, theatres in Britain gain far less of their income from public funding. According to the annual report for NPOs presented by Arts Council England, public subsidies amounted for only 26% of their total income in 2013. The earned income, primarily box-office income, accounted for 61% of their total income.

Large theatres in England, especially the regional theatres, provide a combination of their own productions and touring guest productions. The large theatres in England contain one or several stages and a staff of administrative and technical crew. However, with a few exceptions,<sup>12</sup> theatres in England temporarily hire most of their artistic personnel for each performance.

The cultural policy of the Netherlands has several similarities with Norwegian cultural policy. Public support is provided by both the government and by *The Performing Arts Fund NL*, a semi-independent fund providing support on behalf of the government. Public support in the Netherlands is provided by all three levels of government. Hence, the municipalities in the Netherlands provide the largest share (almost 60%<sup>13</sup>).

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<sup>12</sup> For example, The Royal Shakespeare Company.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/netherlands.php?aid=622>

The theatre policy, and the way in which theatres are organized, is somewhat different in the Netherlands (and Flanders) compared to most European countries. The most obvious difference is the absence of large (institutionalized) theatres in the Netherlands. This comes with a historical explanation worth mentioning here. In 1969, art students revolted during a performance at the theatre *Nederlandse Comedie*, throwing tomatoes at the stage. The students claimed that Dutch repertory theatre was “rotten” in the sense that the theatres and theatre policy were limited to *bourgeois* performances presented for a bourgeois audience. The students therefore demanded that theatres should become more socially committed, as well as artistically innovative. The view was shared by politicians who recognized the necessity for change (van Hamersveld 2009), and after a few years the old repertory theatres were replaced by smaller independent theatre groups touring from one venue to another.<sup>14</sup> Even though some of these groups today have become more “institutionalized”, none of them perform plays on a stage owned by the theatre group.<sup>15</sup> Every time a play is to be performed, they need to make an arrangement with one of the several programming theatres around the country. On the other hand, the programming stages are theatre halls that present a variety of plays performed by various touring theatre groups, both domestic and international. This division of labour is further reflected in cultural policy. While presenting theatres, receive most of their support comes from the municipality where they are located, performing art groups mainly receive support from the state level.

As already mentioned, there are two alternative ways to receive support for theatre groups, either directly from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, or from the Performing Arts Fund NL. The largest amount of support is provided by the ministry

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<sup>14</sup> A similar wave of innovative theatres went through most European countries in the late 1960s. In Norway, however, the Institutional theaters included new theatrical styles and aimed at reaching new audience groups. Simultaneously, several regional theatres were established around the country. The need for a revolt was thus avoided (Gran 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Currently, two of the largest theatre companies in the Netherlands are merging with their home stage. This makes Dutch theatres more similar to other European theatres.

through the so-called Basic National Infrastructure (BIS). This is a scheme providing support for the organizations considered to be of a particularly high quality and relevance in the country. In the case of the theatre, nine theatre groups are included in this scheme. In the statutes for the Basic National Infrastructure, the ministry defines the number of theatres to be included in the scheme in each region of the country, e.g. in the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, one theatre is included in the BIS). However, no theatres are given this position permanently, as every four years, all theatre groups (and other art organizations) compete for being part of this infrastructure for culture.

The income distribution for large theatres in the Netherlands is not very different from the income distribution in Norway, as nine theatres received state support through the so-called basic infrastructure for culture (BIS - culturele basisinfrastructuur). On average, these theatre groups received 73% of their income from public support, 21% from box office receipts and 6% from other income sources such as sponsorships in 2012 (OCW 2012). Approximately one-third of all public support is supplied by the local and regional governments.

One additional consequence of the *tomato revolution* was the division between commercial and independent fringe theatre groups. While Norwegian subsidized theatres and English regional theatres perform a wide range of children's plays and musicals, Dutch theatres primarily perform plays with a more narrow artistic ambition. Plays with an obvious commercial potential are performed in private theatres, whereas children's theatre is performed by certain groups specializing in this target group. Considering employment policy, we find a combination of permanent employment and temporary employment within Dutch theatres.

### 3. What is autonomy?

The key concept in this thesis is autonomy, particularly artistic autonomy. In this chapter, I will introduce this term and discuss how autonomy can be understood and analysed on different levels in both the art sector and society, from personal autonomy to institutional autonomy, as well as field-specific and political autonomy. By emphasizing these different levels, I further emphasize the relational role between them, i.e. how autonomy at one level may interfere with autonomy at another.

I will also present two ways of analysing artistic autonomy: a commonly applied methodology based on Bourdieu's field theory and the theory of justification developed by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot. I consider the latter approach to artistic autonomy to be my main theoretical contribution in this thesis.

#### 3.1. Personal autonomy

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Etymologically, autonomy is derived from the Greek *auto*, "self", and *nomos*, "law", meaning "one who gives oneself one's own law". In Kant's definition of the term, autonomy is "the property of the will by which it is a law to itself (independent of any property of the objects of volition)" (Kant [1785] 2002:58). As Kant describes it, autonomy is a precondition for the freedom of choice. Such freedom is both the "person's ability to select and pursue his own ends independently of domination by other persons" (Guyer 2003:72), as well as "a person's ability to determine his ends independently of domination by his own inclinations and desires" (ibid.). These two forms of freedom are essential in the way in which I apply the term autonomy in this thesis. The freedom to make choices independently of others is essential in my analytical approach towards the subject of autonomy in arts management and cultural policy. The second form of freedom, concerning the internal autonomy, will be treated at a theoretical level, in which different approaches to *agency* may result in different, yet interesting, insights in the empirical material.

There are significant differences between Kant's conception of moral autonomy and the conceptions of personal autonomy developed within the past 30 years, which attempt to articulate how social and cultural influences can be compatible with autonomous decision-making. Furthermore, the majority of contemporary theories of personal autonomy are content-neutral accounts of autonomy unconcerned with whether or not a person is acting according to moral laws; rather, they focus more on determining whether or not a person is acting for his or her own reasons than on putting any restrictions on autonomous action.

Traditional liberal theories of autonomy have been criticized for their "hyper-individualism". According to critics, instead of referring to the desires of the isolated subject, one needs to see persons as irreducibly relational and socially constituted (Christman 2004, Nedelsky 1989, Oshana 1998). Such social factors are in fact conceptually necessary for autonomy:

It is certainly true that any plausible philosophical or political theory must take into account the various ways in which humans are socially embedded, intimately related to other people, groups, institutions, and histories, that they experience themselves and their values as part of ongoing narratives and long traditions, and that they are motivated by interests and reasons that can only be fully defined with reference to other people and things. (Christman 2004:144)

In this thesis, I intend to pursue a *relational* approach to autonomy. When studying artistic autonomy on different levels in the theatre, I am able to see how the autonomy of one social actor affects others, particularly the relationships between artists and administrative professionals, and between directors and actors.

Feminist writers like Nedelsky and Oshana have stressed that the importance of relationships necessary for developing healthy personalities is often ignored due to a devaluation of traditional feminine roles such as teachers, mothers and caretakers. According to Nedelsky, this has caused a "misunderstanding" in the realm of the political, in which the characteristic problem of autonomy is to "shield individuals from the collective". This brings us closer to political approaches to autonomy.

### 3.2. Autonomy and policy

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In political contexts, personal autonomy is the foundation for all forms of liberal policy.

The fundamental principle of liberalism implies that:

- 1) A person is under no standing obligation to justify his action.
- 2) Interference with, or restriction of, other's action requires justification; unjustified interference or restriction is unjust, and so morally wrong (Gaus 2005:274).

In politics, this implies that any laws or restrictions introduced by a government that affect the citizens need to be justified in some way or another.

All liberal democracies share this principle. Nevertheless, there are large variations between different welfare states (as well as political ideologies) with regard to what extent they wish to interfere with the actions of the citizens.

One of the main differences in political philosophy and approaches to the safeguarding of autonomy may be summarized in what Isaiah Berlin described as *negative* and *positive* notions of liberty (1969). The negative notion of liberty is to be found in the classical liberal philosophy of Tocqueville, Locke and Mill. Through such an approach, liberty is understood as an *absence* of interference from others. Being autonomous in that sense means that no other external bodies, whether persons or governments, restricts your actions. Mill summarized this philosophy in his famous sentence: "The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way" (Mill 1981 [1824]:226). Such an approach to liberty entails a policy where the state only interferes with the citizens when their fundamental freedom is threatened. The most exaggerated policy based on negative liberty would be the "laissez-faire" or "night watchman state", in which the only legitimate function of the state is the maintenance of law and order.

Simultaneously, several theorists highlight how personal autonomy requires resources. In order to facilitate personal autonomy, it is not sufficient to avoid unnecessary

interference, as one actually needs to interfere in order to facilitate personal autonomy. Such a *positive* notion of liberal rights also includes socio-economic rights, which leaves much more responsibility to the surroundings and the welfare state than traditional hard-edged individualism:

It adds significant content to the concept of autonomy by underscoring some of the social conditions for the possibility of autonomy, including the need for education, adequate food and shelter, real opportunities for participating in one's (minority) culture, and so on. (Anderson and Honneth 2005:129)

One example that Anderson and Honneth emphasize is the autonomy of people with mobility-limiting disabilities. Unless physical accommodations such as wheelchair ramps, accessible vehicles, etc. are made available to them, their ability to exercise basic capabilities will be restricted. Their autonomy more or less relies on "the material and institutional circumstances of autonomy" (ibid.:129).

When introducing this positive notion, one realizes that personal autonomy, and as we shall return to, artistic autonomy, may be facilitated in several different ways. The first article in this thesis particularly focuses on the relationship between welfare regimes and artistic autonomy. In Chapter 3.5, I will elaborate on this relationship.

### **3.3. Institutional autonomy**

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In addition to personal autonomy, institutional autonomy is also a relevant analytical term in this thesis. Institutional autonomy refers to the "right of institutions to function according to their own normative and organisational principles and behavioural logics, and a similar right for specific groups (estates, corporations, guilds, professions) (Olsen 2009:441). Universities and hospitals are examples of institutions that claim institutional autonomy based on scientific arguments. Doctors claim their rights to work in accordance with medical reasoning, whereas professors emphasize academic freedom. Churches and religious groups also claim institutional autonomy, primarily emphasizing normative principles based on religious texts.



In recent years, institutionalized autonomy has also been promoted through both New Public Management and neo-liberal economic theory. Through the outsourcing of public services to autonomous organizations, governments try to avoid micro-managing and detailed regulations for the benefit of providing services, managing resources efficiently and securing a return on public investment (Olsen 2009:442). This outsourcing, however, is based on a different rationale. Through the promotion of autonomous organizations, governments are able to delegate economic risk taking to organizations, while simultaneously facilitating competitiveness as an important element of neo-liberal policy. The actual impact of new public management on institutional autonomy and cultural policy has been questioned. For instance, Røyseng (2003) claimed that new public management leads to bureaucratization, marketization, uniformity and increased state interference.

In cultural policy, the principles of institutional autonomy are also highly relevant (Blomgren 2012, Vestheim 2009b). According to Blomgren, it refers to how “institutions or organizations implementing cultural policy should have the power to autonomously decide the content of what is to be produced” (2012:522). Such decisions may be done “based on its own laws, rules, norms and ideals, etc. immune from the arbitrary exercise of authority by external power holder” (Vestheim 2009b:37).

### 3.3.1. The arm’s length principle

In cultural policy, institutional autonomy is institutionalized through the arm’s length principle. A principle which, within cultural policy, states that “the selection and allocation of artists and artistic projects for public funding should be carried out primarily according to artistic quality criteria” (Mangset 2009:273). Moreover, this selection should be done by others than politicians, i.e. by artistic experts. The arm’s length principle has served as a line of defence against non-artistic intervention in artistic decision-making since the Second World War. The way in which art and culture were used in fascist (as well as communist) propaganda is considered an important reason for why this principle gained recognition, and the reason why arm’s length bodies

such as *arts councils* were established.<sup>16</sup> Today, arts councils, or similar arm's length bodies are to be found in several countries, including America, Europe, Asia and Africa.<sup>17</sup> The way in which this principle is understood and practiced in cultural policy therefore varies between different national and cultural contexts. Mangset emphasizes that the principle is "interpreted differently by cultural politicians, cultural workers and cultural policy researchers in different national and cultural contexts" (2009:274). The main variations concern the length of the arm, e.g. the council's autonomy towards the government, the area of cultural policy which the principle shall cover (whether it shall include only "high art") and what is considered to be a political actor. Mangset claims that there are large variations on whether "political influence" is strictly formal, including only public authorities, or whether it also includes influence by policy actors such as artists unions and cultural employers' associations. In addition to the principle concerning arts councils, the arm's length principle may also apply to the public authorities' relationships to arts organizations. According to the principle, politicians may decide and develop general guidelines for cultural policy. Even so, they shall refrain from imposing *explicit* performance indicators, and make *explicit* demands concerning their artistic work and decisions (ibid.).

### **3.4. Autonomy and risk**

As we have seen, independence is a key word in describing personal autonomy, meaning independence from domination by others and independence from domination by one's own inclinations and desires. Being independent may also imply bearing one's own risk, both economically and artistically.

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<sup>16</sup> The Arts Council of Great Britain, established in 1946, is usually considered the prototype of an arm's length-based cultural policy (Hillman-Chartrand and Mccaughey 1989).

<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts\\_council#List\\_of\\_arts\\_councils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_council#List_of_arts_councils)

The German sociologist Ulrich Beck has been especially occupied with labour conditions and risk in late modernity (1992, 2000). His main thesis is that work society has become a risk society: The “securities, certainties and clearly defined boundaries of the first modernity”, he states, have been replaced by “the insecurities, uncertainties and loss of boundaries in the second modernity” (Beck 2000:67ff). According to Beck, there was a relatively uniform philosophy of growth in industrial (work) societies, in which the cultural and political targets were citizens with full-time employment, with expectations of rising living standards and job security (ibid.: 69). Today, in the risk society, “people are expected to make their own life plans, to be mobile and to provide for themselves in various ways” (ibid.:70); thus, it is an *individualization* of work. This individualization is not necessarily an autonomous choice. In the neo-liberal labour market, as “[i]ndividuals are condemned to take personal responsibility entirely for themselves, whether they like it or not” (McGuigan 2016:42). Beck further claims that the loss of security for workers is politically accelerated in late modernity. Labour market flexibility has become a political mantra, meaning that employers should be able to fire employees with less difficulty. This process, where risk is transmitted from the state and the economy, towards the individual, is what Beck describes as the “Brazilianization” of the West. In such societies, full-time work only represents a minority of the economically active population, while the majority of the workforce earn their money in more precarious conditions (Beck 2000). Standing (2011) analyses the precariat’s paradoxical relationship to autonomy. On the one hand, he claims that, “The gospel of flexibility tells people that the enemy of flexibility is rigidity”, while on the other, “The precariat is told that it must answer to market forces and be infinitely adaptable” (ibid.: 24).

*The creative turn*, which I referred to in the introduction, has been interpreted as a turn towards a Brazilianization and individualization of artistic work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, McGuigan 2004, 2005, 2016, McRobbie 2016, Menger 2006). The sociologist Pierre Michel Menger claims that:

Artistic labor markets have now evolved to approximate the spot-market model of textbook economics; employment relationships on an unfixed-term basis have largely vanished, and short-term hirings and self-employment strongly dominate. (2006:767)

Several empirical studies have shown how this transfer of risk to the individual wage earner is easily applied in the creative sector (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2014, McRobbie 2002, McRobbie 2016, Menger 2006, Oakley and O'Brien 2016). The art sector is characterized by competition for work, and a general oversupply of creative labour (see e.g. Menger 2006). It is further characterized by what the cultural economist David Throsby calls, "The work-preference model of artistic behaviour", a situation where work is not primarily motivated through income, but rather through their commitment to making art (Throsby 1994).

This has caused a labour market characterized by a hazardous travel towards a career quite few are fortunate to achieve:

Young entrants to the creative sector are taken on typically first as unpaid interns. The "opportunity" of interning in a cool outfit is greatly appreciated. And, indeed, it is often the already privileged, suitable types, with the right contacts and sufficient family funding, for whom such chances are available.[...] For the lucky few, when wages are eventually paid, they are now usually much lower than unions in the past would have negotiated. (McGuigan 2016:40ff)

Economic risk may be considered a present danger in artistic work. Nevertheless, risk-taking is also considered something positive and essential, not least within the arts. In the art world, risk-taking is embedded in artistic production as an imperative calling for constant (risky) innovation (Bourdieu 1993b, Moulin 1992, Sveen 1995).

Ulrich Beck refers to the French choreographer Maurice Béjart, who once said that, "Dancing on the edge of a volcano is the finest metaphor I know for risk. And finding the courage to risk is the most wonderful motive of all for dancing" (2000:71). There are several examples of how such attitudes are valued within the art world. In particular, I will emphasize the relationship between artistic and economic risk-taking in the third article.

### 3.5. Risk, autonomy and welfare state policy

When comparing how states, through their cultural policy, threaten artistic autonomy, I find it analytically interesting comparing this to the way these states relate to autonomy in their general welfare policy. It is also relevant to examine how different countries approach risk and risk management. One of the primary differences between welfare states is the degree of state interference, and the way in which risk is managed. In his pivotal typology, Esping-Andersen highlights three main approaches to welfare state policy: the liberal, the conservative and the social democratic. In this context, it is important to emphasize that these three models all have a liberal approach in common, as they all seek to protect the autonomy of the citizen.

The liberal approach, found in countries like Australia, Canada and the US, but also to some extent in the UK, primarily promotes a *negative* liberty, in which state interference is considered to limit the citizens' autonomy in an undesirable way. With such a starting point, a general attitude implies that both persons and institutions should not rely too heavily on the state. Citizens are supposed to be autonomous to make personal decisions, including decisions concerning their own welfare and their preferred way of managing risk. In liberal states, the citizens are relegated to the market in order to manage risk (Esping-Andersen 1990 [2012], 1999). Institutions, such as universities and higher education, hospitals, religious communities and culture organizations, have intentionally been kept at an arm's length distance from the government in liberal countries, mainly through privatization (Gellert 1985, Pritchard 1998).

Conservative regimes, such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy, have developed an earlier corporatist-statist legacy to new "post-industrial" class structures (Esping-Andersen 1990 [2012]:27). Even though the political structure of state corporatism, in which corporate groups form the basis of society in the state, has been abandoned, corporatist elements still exist in the form of status differences separating classes. The rights, and hence the autonomy of citizens, are connected to their social status. In addition to this, traditional familyhood and family values, shaped historically by the

church, have been preserved in the conservative states. Typically, the state “will only interfere when the family’s capacity to service its members is exhausted” (ibid.: 27). For example, a non-working wife will not receive social insurance. In terms of autonomy, the autonomous entity will therefore be the family (and the head of the family), and not its single members. In terms of risk management, one relies on the family and other corporatist structures.

Concerning institutional autonomy, the corporatist elements imply that in conservative countries like Germany, employees in state institutions have privileged rights within the state. Professors at German universities are civil servants (*beamte*), with a special duty of loyalty towards the Constitution (Pritchard 1998:101). This relationship to the state is also evident through the scheme *staatsexamen*. Teachers, jurists, psychotherapists and pharmacists all need to pass this exam, which is organized by the government examination agencies, and which are under the authority of the responsible ministry.<sup>18</sup> This strong relationship between the state and the professionals in institutions somewhat limits the autonomy of institutions. The title *beamter* makes it impossible for the institution to dismiss its employees.

Social democratic states, primarily dominated by the Nordic countries, promote a positive liberalism, in which state interference is high in order to secure the rights of all citizens, regardless of class affiliation. Such a policy is based on a belief that “full autonomy – the real and effective capacity to develop and pursue one’s own conception of a worthwhile life – is achievable only under socially supportive conditions” (Anderson and Honneth 2005:130). Another, though still related approach to understanding autonomy in social democratic regimes is through what the Swedish historian Lars Trägårdh defines as *statist individualism* (Trägårdh 1997). Opposite to the liberalistic approach, the state-driven, social democratic Nordic model “redeemed” the citizens from market dependence through social security and other social benefits (Vike

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<sup>18</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staatsexamen>

2012:130). And further in opposition to conservative regimes, the state liberates the citizens from dependency on “others”, such as family, social or religious groups (Trägårdh 2008, Vike 2012). Social democratic states are further characterized with a great state dependency on risk management. Full social security for all citizens including pension schemes, free health care and unemployment benefits, help minimize the risk for the citizens.

In cultural policy research, the categorization of Esping-Andersen has been applied by Zimmer and Toepler (1996). However, their conclusion, based on a study of Sweden, Germany and the United States, was that differences in welfare models are more to be found diachronically than geographically. In their opinion, we are experiencing a worldwide change from a social democratically inspired cultural policy in the 1980s, towards a liberal cultural policy at the end of the century (ibid.: 184). Yet, my empirical findings in this thesis do not support such a simplified conclusion.

### 3.6. Artistic autonomy

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In the Introduction, I referred to Kant’s work from the late 18th century and his introduction of artistic autonomy. Even though there are examples of philosophers arguing for pure aesthetics before Kant (such as Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten), “the *Critique of Judgement* eventually came to be viewed as *the* sourcebook of Art for Art’s Sake” (Bell-Villada 1996:20).<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the 19th century, artists gained autonomy, particularly from the church and the state, and from the moral imperatives often associated with these. Artistic judgement went from a judgement of how artwork was fitted to perform a given function (often towards the state or the church), to a judgement of the artworks *sui*

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<sup>19</sup> Bell-Vida, however, emphasizes how this was often based on a misunderstanding of Kant’s work.

*generis*, e.g. how it addressed itself and being sensitive to nothing but aesthetic values (Hulatt 2013:5). In the Anglo-American countries, art for art's sake is most aptly summed up in Oscar Wilde's provocative statement, "No artist has ethical sympathies" (1992 [1890]:preface).

In the 20th century, several scholars expressed a general concern for the rationalizing nature of modernity. This rationalization promoted instrumentalism, and suppressed intrinsic values of, e.g. art. Max Weber claimed that mysticism has lost its force to the modernized, bureaucratic Western society, in which scientific understanding is valued more highly than belief (Weber 1958:282). This "disenchantment" was particularly evident, not only in the secularization of religion, but also within the arts. Weber's ambivalent appraisal of this process was taken up by the Frankfurt School, especially by Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002 [1947]). Instrumentalism is the rationality of enlightenment, and all human relationships are subordinated to this, they claimed. This particularly includes art production, in which art becomes industry in a capitalist society, thereby losing all of its potential for critical thinking. Also worth mentioning is Habermas and his concern for the colonization of the lifeworld. According to Habermas, the lifeworld is developed through face-to-face contact over time, characterized by aesthetic and ethic spheres embedded in language and inter-subjectivity. The system world, with its rational character of administrative and economic logics colonizes it, through calculation, objectification and purpose rationality (Bourdieu 2003, Habermas 1984).

After introducing the history and philosophical ideas behind the concept, the question still remains what artistic autonomy implies in practice. "The question of autonomy is always a question of someone's autonomy *in relation to* that of someone else", the Norwegian cultural policy researcher Geir Vestheim states (2009b:35). This makes a good starting point for understanding artistic autonomy. Artistic autonomy primarily deals with art producers/distributors, their relationship to the political and economic system, and to what extent they are free from their influence. Simultaneously, the



question of autonomy may also be relevant in the relationship between art producers/distributors and publics/consumers. The consumers may well use their market force to push art production in a certain direction, a direction based on the taste of the consumers. In the latter case, the political system may have “redeemed” art producers from market dependence, through a positive freedom to autonomous decisions and behaviour (ibid.).

When claiming that the citizens as consumers “force” their taste upon art producers, one might as well turn this upside down and claim that art producers, with the help of public policy-makers, force their taste upon the citizens. Roger Blomgren emphasizes this when he claims that:

Some liberal political philosophers discuss the fact that culture and arts policy involve moments that can interfere with the individual’s ability to make autonomous decisions about what they consider to be “good taste”. (2012:522)

This phenomena, closely related to paternalism (Hylland 2014), is seldom emphasized in the research literature on artistic autonomy and cultural policy. As I will return to, I find this approach to autonomy highly relevant, not least in the way in which traditional liberal policy approaches autonomy.

By specifically focusing on the relational aspects of autonomy, I aim to show how the autonomy of one social actor affects the autonomy of another. This approach also allows me to discuss the *subject* of autonomy, that is, which social actor(s) enjoys such artistic autonomy. I will pay special attention to the latter in my concluding chapters.

### **3.7. Analysing artistic autonomy**

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My main ambition in this thesis is to compare and analyse artistic autonomy. How is this possible, and how do I intend to do so? In cultural sociology, which is my theoretical approach to an empirical analysis of this relationship, several theories have been applied to analyse artistic production in general, and artistic autonomy in particular. In the previous chapter, I introduced the institutionalist, pragmatic approach to study the art

world, introduced by Howard Becker (1984). Becker's book is a thorough introduction to the social actors involved in the art world; nevertheless, he provides no theoretical framework except for his claim that the art world has to be studied from a symbolic interactionist point of view. He further devotes little attention to the concept of autonomy. Pierre Bourdieu has developed different theoretical approaches to analyse artistic autonomy. In his article, *The Field of Cultural Production*, (1993a) and later in his book, *The rules of art* (1996), he describes the field of art and how it may be considered as an autonomous field.

### 3.7.1. Bourdieu's autonomy

The main thesis in Bourdieu's analysis of artistic autonomy is that throughout history the field of art has been singled out as a special autonomous field, in which certain values and rules define the position, and thus the power, of the social actors within this specific field. Bourdieu also emphasizes that the autonomy of such a field is relative, and that an analysis of a field may reveal the positions actors are given relative to this autonomy.

The starting point for Bourdieu's analysis of autonomy is that social interaction takes place within a field, defined as "a separate social universe having its own laws" (Bourdieu 1993a:162). Within this social universe, there are several actors who are assigned subordinate and superior positions. These actors, the relationship between them, and the position they occupy within the field, also determine the structure of the field. The position actors occupy in a certain field depends on their *symbolic capital*. This form of capital is field-specific and varies from one field to another. In short, symbolic capital is about social valuation (Røyseng 2007:42). The social actors within a field further compete for interests and resources, which are also field-specific. In the cultural field, "competition often concerns the authority inherent in recognition, consecration and prestige" (Johnson 1993:7).

In the theory by Bourdieu, *fields* are more or less autonomous. This autonomy may be measured through *refraction*. That is, the way in which a problem produced in another

field (e.g. the political, economic or religious fields) will be transferred according to the logics of the given field (Bourdieu 1996). According to Bourdieu, the field of culture has gained autonomy from the field of power and the field of class relations. While economic and political profits provide recognition in the field of power, such values are suspended and reversed in the field of culture:

The more autonomous the field of culture becomes, the more favourable the symbolic power balance is to the most autonomous producers and the more clear-cut is the division between the field of restricted production, in which the producers produce for other producers, and the field of large-scale production, which is symbolically excluded and discredited. (Bourdieu 1993a:39)

According to Bourdieu, there is a constant struggle within the field of culture between the heteronomous principle, which is favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically, and the autonomous principle advocating “art for art’s sake” (which, as previously mentioned, is the *nomos* in the field of culture) (Bourdieu 1993a:40). When analysing artistic autonomy through the theory of Bourdieu, this struggle between an autonomous and heteronomous pole seems crucial. Some actors will favour heteronomous values, those concerning economy and policy (which may be translated to instrumental values), while others will favour autonomous values, e.g. the intrinsic values of the art. This analytical framework has been applied to both structural macro analyses of the field of culture and cultural policy (Neelands et al. 2006, Røyseng 2007), as well as studies with a more limited scope, such as studies of arts management (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007, Røyseng 2008) and artists’ self-representation (Heian and Hjellbrekke 2017a, 2017b).

With the words of Bourdieu, one may claim that actors, whether politicians, arts managers or artists favouring the intrinsic values of art, help to preserve the field of culture as an autonomous field. Actors favouring instrumental values weaken the field, thus making artistic work subject to the ordinary prevailing laws in the field of power (Bourdieu 1993a:38). In the latter case, artistic production will serve the same goals as other types of production: gaining economic profit or contributing to political goals and societal needs.

### 3.7.2. Functional differentiation

Several studies of arts management identifies how the struggles between an autonomous and a heteronomous pole may be found within one certain art organization. This struggle is somewhat “institutionalized” through a practice of *functional differentiation* between artistic considerations and economical, practical or societal considerations (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007, Kuesters 2010, Røyseng 2008, Wennes 2002). In order to keep artistic considerations “clean” from heteronomous interference, one makes a clear division of responsibilities which also limits who is eligible to make certain decisions. Such functional differentiation is visible in organizational structures as all artistic personnel reports to an artistic director, whilst administrative and technical personnel reports to an executive director.

### 3.7.3. Autonomous justification

Several cultural sociologists have criticized Bourdieu for being too deterministic, and further for his desire to uncover “objective” relationships within the field of art (van Maanen 2009:83). The “new generation” of cultural sociologists hence ventured to include the *agency* of social actors to a larger extent when analysing both cultural production and art consumption (Alexander 1995, Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, 2006, Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999], Gielen 2009, Heinich 1996, Lamont 1992, Lamont and Thévenot 2000, Menger 1989).

In this thesis, and particularly in the article, *Managing autonomy*, I found the theory of justification to be an important supplement to the theory by Bourdieu. When I began my empirical investigations, I deliberately had chosen not to approach the theatre field based on any specific theoretical standpoint. During my fieldwork, and not least during the analysis of my fieldwork, I found the dualistic Bourdieusian division between autonomy and heteronomy insufficient to grasp the plurality of considerations being made when artistic decisions were to be made. Perhaps most importantly, the term *heteronomy* concealed several important distinctions in the way decisions were made and justified, especially those between market and civil society considerations. I also

found the way Bourdieu understands artistic autonomy to be insufficient when facing my comparative data.

Simultaneously, the theory of justification not only supplements Bourdieu by extending the analytical framework, but when analysing artistic autonomy, this approach also challenges what may be considered autonomous decisions addressing art for art's sake. In the recent book, *The problem of theatrical autonomy* (Edelman et al. 2017), the authors suggest to supplement Bourdieu's field theory with the theory of justification. I share this suggestion, but also encourage challenging Bourdieu's concept of autonomy through the theory of justification.

Boltanski and Thévenot present a large set of possible justifications to which the social actors may refer. This theory has been successfully applied in several studies of art production and arts management (Daigle and Rouleau 2010, Edelman et al. 2017, Giulianotti and Langseth 2016, Kann-Rasmussen 2016, Larsen 2010, 2013, Nijzink et al. 2015). Still, in studies of artistic autonomy, their theory has been less applied.<sup>20</sup> I will therefore first introduce their theory of justification, and thereafter introduce how I think this may be applied in studies of artistic autonomy.

According to Boltanski and Thévenot, social actors always need to justify their actions and arguments in accordance with a set of higher common principles (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). When questioning a person's actions through the phrase "why?", only children and dictators may limit their answer to "because". Even though no person is legally obligated to justify his action (as discussed in Chapter 3.2), it is expected in order to gain respect, and not least power, in any society. In the case of theatres, this is particularly interesting in arts management. When creating a repertoire, making artistic decisions and balancing artistic, financial and

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<sup>20</sup> An important exception here is the recently published , *The Problem of Theatrical Autonomy* (Edelman et al 2017), which make use of Boltanski and Thévenot in an analysis of theatres and autonomy.

societal considerations, the directors in the theatres need to *justify* their decisions. When doing so, Boltanski and Thévenot claim that they need to raise persons and things involved in those decisions to “commonness” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Commonness is interwoven in every social system. However, social actors are still not free to act independently of them, thus making *justification* a relevant term for analysing social behaviour. Boltanski and Thévenot further claim that justification must be done according to a set of *common worlds*, and that these worlds limit the social actor when he or she wishes to claim universality in their reasoning (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). The common worlds each inherit specific mind-sets that may be applied as the justification of a certain viewpoint. This makes the methodology highly relevant when analysing decision-making, legitimization processes, strategic planning or political debates, what may be described as *critical moments* (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:359).

Justification relates to the logics of certain worlds or regimes consisting of historical and universal categories that exist simultaneously. In their book, *On Justification*, they present these six common worlds:

*The inspired world* values creation and inspiration, and thus people and objects related to this. The inspired world has some similarities with the nomos of the field of cultural production in the sense of Bourdieu. Autonomy, creativity, sensitivity and imagination are core values of the inspired world.

*The domestic world* values tradition, lineage and family. In the domestic world, the persons rank, honour, age and hierarchal position as important. In the field of art, one may interpret the tradition of peer evaluations as a domestic value (Becker 1984).

*The opinion world* is slightly limited to the recognition of others. The measurement of peoples’ worth depends on conventional signs of public esteem. In the field of art, famous and renowned artists, and the recognition of those, implies justification within the world of opinion.

*The civic world* values collective goods and equality. In opposition to the two latter worlds, persons are small if seen as individuals, but relevant and worthy if seen as members of the disembodied sovereign. In justification of arts organizations, the civic world is typically referred to in cultural policy documents (Larsen 2013).

*The market world* values profit and the principles related to the law of the market. The connection to customers, deploying competitive advantages and offering the best price are highly important in the market world. In the field of art, the market world and its forms of legitimation are evident in the recent year's political focus on creative industries and entrepreneurship.

*The industrial world* values productivity, rationality and competencies. This is the world of enlightenment, in which science, technology and experts are valued. In the field of art, professionalization, specialization and strategic plans and management by objectives are central to this world.

Boltanski and Thévenot advocate a pragmatic sociology. This methodology is therefore flexible, and permits development and adjustments. Subsequently, they introduced a *project-oriented world* (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999]) and a *green world* (Thévenot *et al.* 2000)

The borders of the common worlds will always be flexible. Nonetheless, they attempt to find a middle ground between formal universalism and unlimited pluralism. The borders may change over time, and the methodology allows for adjustments based on empirical data (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999], Thévenot *et al.* 2000).

In analysing artistic autonomy using this theory, I am particularly interested in the *inspired world*. "Reference to this world is made [...] each time people attain worth without bothering about opinions of others", Boltanski and Thévenot claim (1999:370). It arises in the personal body prepared by asceticism through emotions. Whether inspiration may arise in the personal body is of course an existentialistic question.

However, since this theory is limited to justification, and that the common worlds are “collective conventions of equivalence” (ibid.: 362), they do exist as social constructs.

Since the notion of an inspired world is socially recognized, the intrinsic nature of this world may therefore be understood as the outermost form of personal autonomy. It comes from within the single person, and is further legitimated as something that comes from within this person. While all other forms of justification refer to an external source, the inspired world refers to the autonomous individual:

“The principle of grace sets inspired worth apart from the other forms of worth – which are denounced as worldly interests that lead to folly and discord when they are pursued” (2006:86). When applying this theory to the analysis of artistic autonomy, my claim is that justification in accordance with the inspired world may be understood as autonomous, while all other form of justifications are somewhat instrumental, or heteronomous.

### **3.8. Application of theory in this study**

The three articles in this study all approach autonomy differently. As I will return to in the next chapter, my methodological approach may be an important reason for this. Through an inductive approach, my analysis has been developed empirically rather than theoretically. At the same time, I aim to show how autonomy may be interpreted in several ways, and that these different interpretations may provide different analytical approaches, which further provide different insights in order to better understand artistic autonomy.

In the article, *The Autonomous World Reversed*, I analyse artistic autonomy in light of comparative welfare theory, particularly the theories of Esping-Andersen. I pay special attention to liberal policy, liberalist theory and the distinction between *positive* and negative liberalism.



In the article *Managing Autonomy*, I apply both Bourdieu and his theories of social field and differentiation, as well as the theory of justification developed by Boltanski and Thévenot. Through the introduction of the latter theory on a micro-sociological analysis of social interaction in theatre management, I supply, but also aim to challenge the field theory of Bourdieu. In this article, I specifically address the relational characteristics of autonomy.

The last article, *Theatres as risk societies*, discusses the potential risks of being autonomous in relation to artistic work. Theoretically, I draw on the ideas of risk developed by Ulrich Beck, in addition to descriptions of artistic work developed by both sociologists and economists. The individual experience of risk is further discussed in relation to risk management as part of cultural policy and welfare policy.

Table 2: Schematic display of the theoretical approach to three articles in this thesis

Title	Theoretical approach
The autonomous world reversed. Comparing liberal policy and autonomy in the performing arts.	Artistic autonomy Welfare policy and liberalism Institutional autonomy Consumer autonomy and paternalism
Managing autonomy. Analysing arts management and artistic autonomy through the theory of justification.	Functional differentiation Bourdieu's autonomy Theory of justification
Theatres as risk societies. Performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk.	Theory of risk Welfare policy and risk management Personal autonomy and liberalism

## 4. Exploratory case studies

In this study, my objective has been to explore the way in which artistic autonomy is understood in various national and local contexts, and the consequences of this for cultural policy, arts management and the working life of theatres. I take a special interest in understanding how stakeholders in the field of theatre understand this relationship. My consistent assertion in this study is that autonomy is at stake at many levels in the world of theatre, externally from the side of economics and politics, but not least also internally between the different levels associated with theatre. To capture the latter phenomenon, I have chosen a qualitative case study approach, in which I have sought to examine understandings of this concept and the issues at stake in each case. By choosing case studies as my method, I am able to explore social processes in which artistic autonomy is negotiated from a number of different angles, through the perspectives of a number of different stakeholders. In this way, a holistic perspective on the object of study can be maintained:

The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, [and] organizational and managerial processes. (Yin 1994:4)

To provide a more systematic description of this type of methodology, case studies involve focusing on a few units while investigating a multitude of variables and relationships in their social and historic context (Andersen 1997:19). On the one hand, this means that case studies do not relate to representativeness in a strictly statistical sense, so to draw valid general conclusions from them is therefore impossible, especially in terms of causal relationships. On the other hand, case studies will not be restricted to a set of variables that form the interpretative framework of the study.

According to Andersen (1997), case studies are useful in two ways. One can generate new knowledge, or at least hypotheses and assertions, or one can test existing knowledge and theory of an empirical field. The former, in which the objective tends to be conceptual development and the generation of hypotheses, shares a number of features with so-called “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967) or “thick

descriptions" (Geertz 1993 [1973]). Such studies are motivated by concerns for a phenomenon, in which the ideal is to let the properties of the phenomenon guide the investigation. As noted by Yin in the quotation above, the phenomenon to be studied may also be a form of organizational context. In such cases, we would prefer a rich and detailed strategy that permits the study of behavioural meaning-making in light of institutional conditions.

The second approach to case studies involves the testing of various theories in the encounter with a broad empirical field. These may include field-specific theories associated with a particular area, sometimes derived from previous empirical studies, but which may also include general sociological theories. Burawoy (1991) argues that ethnographic field studies can be used to test, specify and reformulate macro-sociological theories. In an anthology that he issued with his students, he presented a number of case studies whose objective was to test Habermas' assertions about the colonization of the lifeworld by the systems world.

However, the Norwegian philosopher Knut Ågotnes asks whether comparative studies could best be understood as a journey of exploration, rather than as a method (1989). He emphasize how case studies may be approached inductively through exploration, and that every new encounter with additional empirical evidence may add new impressions to the researcher, in which former and future observations will be analysed in terms of their relevance. As the title and structure of this chapter indicate, I share his experience and encouragement to how one may approach comparative studies.

Drawing on comparative welfare policy, Bourdieu's theories of social fields and the theory of justification, my empirical and epistemological approach to case studies aims at combining and testing Esping-Andersen's macro-sociological theory through ethnographic field studies. Esping-Andersen developed his theory based on a large amount of international quantitative data. The question is therefore whether his

theories may be applied on a qualitative case study of three single arts institutions. Bourdieu's field theory, developed based on both qualitative and quantitative studies, also poses some characteristics of being a macro-sociological theory. Even so, Bourdieu's theory may be considered an analytical apparatus, rather than a hypothesis made for testing. However, Boltanski and Thévenot encourage the researcher to refrain from preconceptions and a critical stance, at least temporarily, "in order to recognize the normative principles which underline the critical activity of ordinary persons" (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:364).

Epistemologically, I have somewhat followed the encouragement of Boltanski and Thévenot to refrain from preconceptions and critical activity during the fieldwork. When I first started my case journey, I had not decided my exact theoretical approach. Nevertheless, as the journey took shape, I continuously search for ways of interpreting and analysing my findings. This allowed me to be able to face my informants with an open and curious attitude.

My approach to comparative case studies hence draws on inspiration from both recent comparative sociology and an anthropological approach. Fredrik Barth made several important contributions to comparative anthropology. He suggested to focus "comparison on the way in which social interaction is constituted and channelled in different systems rather than on the institutional features of different societies" (Barth 1972:216). Barth further stresses the importance of analysing the potential repertoires of persons in societies. We also find such an approach in recent cultural sociology, in which scholars are encouraged to consider systems, both political and organizational, as a framework for the potential repertoires of social actors, which limits and enables the actors' agency (Alexander and Smith 2003, Lamont and Thévenot 2000, Swidler 1986, Thévenot et al. 2000). When analysing theatre production and social interaction within these theatres, I consider cultural policy and organizational structures as a framework for the repertoire of theatre professionals. Cultural policy and organizational structures have therefore been important factors when selecting the cases in this study.

## 4.1. Selection of cases

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Flyvbjerg describes different strategies for selecting cases (2006). The first choice that needs to be made is whether to establish a random sample or a sample based on existing information about the different units, from among which the case is to be selected. In this study, I wanted to examine a particular type of art institution with a specific character. Consequently, I chose to make a selection on the basis of available information. Flyvbjerg splits this category into four types of choices: 1) extreme cases, 2) cases with large variations, 3) critical cases and 4) paradigmatic cases (ibid.: 230). The purpose of choosing type 2, cases with large variations, is to generate knowledge about variations along one or more axes.

The objective of this study has been to compare cases in which most of the variables are similar, except in those areas that are the topic of the study: theatre policy, theatre organization and working conditions.

In line with Flyvbjerg's ideals, it would be appropriate to choose a case design that distinguishes between dependent variables that are as similar as possible, as well as causal variables that show a large amount of variability. In comparative politics studies, this strategy is commonly referred to as the Most Different System Design or Mill's Method of Similarity (Mill 1843). When choosing cases for this study, I did not apply this perspective deliberately to the selection of cases. Nonetheless, such a notion of case choice and comparison has been implicit in the choices that I made.

The research design behind this study was based on a former comparative study I conducted in 2008, together with my two supervisors, Sigrid Røyseng and Per Mangset (Kleppe et al. 2010, Mangset et al. 2012). This study compared working conditions in one large theatre and one large orchestra in Norway, primarily based on qualitative interviews. The interviews from the Norwegian theatre were analysed in terms of charismatic leadership in an article published in the *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* in 2012. The interviews, however, contained several other interesting

descriptions of work life in theatres, not least related to artistic autonomy. I therefore found the material suitable for additional comparative studies. Since this empirical material constitutes the Norwegian case, I should say some few words about it.

The Norwegian case study was conducted in one of the largest theatres in Norway in 2008. Having a specific focus on management practices, decision-making, functional differentiation and artistic autonomy, both in that study and this study, we chose to interview artistic and administrative leaders, as well as artistic personnel (mainly actors). In the selection of actors, we included men and women, young and old actors, actors playing both leading and supporting roles, and actors with a different type of employment. In total, we carried out interviews with 13 professionals, of whom eight were actors, two were artistic employees and three were technical/administrative employees. The interviews were conducted on-site at the Norwegian Theatre by Sigrid Røyseng, whereas the transcription of the recordings and much of the analysis of the interviews were made by me (in collaboration with Mangset and Røyseng).

Our former study has provided me with empirical material representing the Norwegian case. The study has also served as a framework for the selection of the other cases. While the intention of the former study was to compare two different art institutions working with two different art forms within a common cultural policy, my ambition with this study was to explore the theatre sector in detail by undertaking comparisons of theatres across various nations and systems of cultural policy. The common denominator for my cases was thus *one particular* art form. Since my interest was linked to theatre policy, which is largely played out at the national level, I wished to study theatres in different European countries. In light of previous studies, we know that there are clear differences between the models of cultural policy applied in the Nordic countries, Central Europe and the UK. I therefore chose one country from each of these three regions. The different nations also have varying models for how theatres can be organized. To some extent, these follow the same lines as cultural policy, but the

Netherlands stands out as an interesting country with a form of organization that differs from those of Norway and Britain.

In these countries, we also find a diverse range of theatres, in terms of their size, funding, artistic profile, locations and objectives. Because I was very interested in cultural-political and national differences, I wished to study theatres that occupied a similar position in their respective countries. We conducted the existing Norwegian case study in a large, professional theatre with a substantial staff. Here, we found numerous stakeholders who had a professional approach to their work. Since cultural policy was a major element of the research question, I wished to study theatres in the subsidized sector, preferably those theatres that received the largest amount of funding in their respective countries. This also applied to the Norwegian case study. Nor did I want the artistic profile and quality to differ too much from the existing case.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, I chose to study theatres recognized for their high artistic quality within a text-based theatre tradition. All these choices and variables can be understood as independent variables that I wanted to keep from interfering with my findings to the greatest possible degree.

My consistent use of the term “wished” in this paragraph reflects the fact that in case studies, one is not free to choose the cases that appear optimal in relation to the criteria defined for the study. Most likely, such optimal cases do not exist. Any study must relate to prevailing empirical restrictions. In a qualitative study, in which the empirical material includes living, independent individuals, the researcher is at the mercy of their goodwill. As a result, the optimal choice of cases, and also the case design, must yield to more pragmatic choices that concern for the feasibility of the study. In this study, I largely succeeded in gaining access to my theatres of choice in the three countries. As we will see in the next section, I succeeded in gaining access to the Dutch theatre that I deemed most relevant and in line with the criteria described above. In the UK, on the other hand,

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<sup>21</sup> Comparison across different forms of theatres may be found in, e.g. Hylland and Mangset 2017.

after nearly a year of correspondence back and forth I had to accept that I would not be permitted access to the theatre that I deemed optimal in light of my criteria. The solution was therefore to contact a theatre that was smaller than the one I had originally wished to study. Here, however, I was well received and given access to a number of informants. In his methodology manual, Yin describes such unforeseen changes to the case study. These are conditions that need to be considered, and that may even prove fruitful. This notwithstanding, it is essential to adapt the research design to any changes that occur (Yin 1994:70ff). In my case, the new theatre had a number of similarities to the existing one, so I found little reason to make any major changes to the research design. The new case turned out to be both interesting and fruitful. The fact that this theatre was somewhat smaller than my original choice may also have made it easier to gain access to informants in its senior management.

## **4.2. Mapping theatres and cultural policy**

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Before conducting my fieldwork, I attempted to map the theatre world in these countries through document studies and analysis of statistics. In addition to serving as a backdrop for my further investigations, the document studies also provided me with empirical data that I particularly applied in my first article. In order to make good a comparison of the theatres in these three countries, I gathered statistical data on the largest subsidized theatres in all three countries. In the case of the Norwegian statistics, I gained access to a database developed by Knut Løyland and Vidar Ringstad, providing information on income distribution, number of employees, performances and audience in all Norwegian repertory theatres from 1972 until 2000.<sup>22</sup> I then updated this database with numbers from the last 15 years for Norway, England and the Netherlands. The English data was collected based on reports to Arts Council England by the National

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<sup>22</sup> This database was used in a cultural economic study of theatres (Løyland and Ringstad 2002, Løyland and Ringstad 2007).



Portfolio organizations, while the Dutch data was collected from the annual statistics from the organizations included in the Basic National Infrastructure (Cultuur in Cijfers/Culturr in Beld provide by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science). This data gave me a brief overview of the core elements in the theatre world in these three countries. It also gave me empirical “hard evidence” on the actual prioritization in theatre policy. In the first article, I specifically emphasize changing grants when I analyse state interference, and thus the theatres autonomy towards the funding bodies.

In addition to the numbers, I also made use of the documents outlining the theatre policy of the three countries. Early in the work, I realized the impossibility of studying a fixed selection of policy papers in order to grasp the theatre policy of these three countries. The reason for this is that there is quite a difference as to which documents are considered relevant when searching for the political arguments underpinning the public support, both on a general level and concerning a single theatre. In all three countries, public support comes with a funding agreement outlining the preconditions for the support provided. Hence, this is an essential document. In the Netherlands, the Council for Culture evaluates every theatre and makes recommendations for further public support. These recommendations are then passed on to the ministry, which makes the final decision. These evaluations are thus highly relevant. In Norway, funding decisions are outlined in the state budget, while the general theatre policy is outlined in several white papers.

In cultural policy, and therefore in cultural policy research, documents are important manifestations of a political opinion. Nevertheless, even though every document has an author, they also have a life of their own, or a certain agency (Prior 2000). This is highly evident regarding policy papers, which also vary regarding the degree of politicization. Some policy papers are based on research aiming to describe a certain situation in cultural policy development, which also includes many descriptive statistics. Others pose political considerations reflecting a certain political view of the present government. When analysing political documents, this is important to bear in mind.

### 4.3. My case study journey

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As several anthropologists before me have experienced, comparative case studies may appear as a journey, rather than as a systematic review of three different cases. Since I have now described my choice of methods and cases, I will in the following describe my methodological plan as a journey according to the ideals of Ågotnes (1989). In this way, I wish not only to describe my methodological choices, but also to discuss my preconceptions and subject position as a researcher.

#### 4.3.1. To the Netherlands

Three days before Christmas 2013, I received the following email:

Dear Bård, I'm very sorry I didn't respond until now. If you still want to spend a week in The Netherlands; please contact me with your schedule and specific questions; I'll try to arrange the possibility to do your research here. And I'll promise to respond more quickly then.

Six weeks prior to this, I sent an email to the general manager of one of the largest theatre companies in the Netherlands, asking for permission to undertake fieldwork in their theatre and interview the staff. Christmas was therefore saved when I finally received confirmation that the theatre world lay at my feet and the journey could start.

When Christmas was over, nearly six months passed before we could find a week when the theatre could receive me. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, I boarded KLM flight KL1218 from Sandefjord to Amsterdam. The journey had begun. On the flight to Amsterdam, I tried to imagine what to expect when I arrived there. I was to visit one of the country's largest theatre companies and follow the rehearsals of one Europe's most famous stage directors. I had read up on the Dutch theatre model and studied Dutch theatre policy, but what kind of culture (in a broad sense) would I encounter? Would it be a reflection of Dutch culture in general, and if so, what would it consist of? To me, the Netherlands appears as the stronghold of liberalism. This does not mean liberalism in the economic sense, but a value-based liberalism, in which ethical norms allow for a variety of

lifestyles (even though recent political right-wing development aims to demolish this). My image of the Netherlands is of a country in which the inhabitants are permitted to smoke and drink whatever they want, and where personal matters such as sexual orientation and sexual practices are largely exempted from moral judgement. I also imagined that the art world might be characterized by such an attitude, and that the Dutch would be more open to unfamiliar art forms and have a greater acceptance of a diversity of narratives and artistic devices. My ideas about the Netherlands had little academic foundation, but they were nevertheless part of my *preconceptions*.

### *A small note on preconceptions and reflexivity*

Before the fieldwork, my goal was to face the field with a fresh look, as is often called for in grounded theory. This methodological tradition emphasizes induction and hypothesis generation on the basis of empirical material, and to build theory on this foundation (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Even though I tried to keep my outlook as fresh as possible throughout the fieldwork, we can see how some ideas during a flight can quickly generate hypotheses:

- Dutch people are more liberal than Norwegians.
- In the Netherlands, there is a higher acceptance of experimental aesthetics.
- In the Netherlands, there is more room for cultivating a unique individuality.

These hypotheses were not included in my project description; they were in fact not recorded anywhere. Yet, I brought them with me from this flight into my encounter with this foreign land. They were to some extent a part of my academic curiosity, but primarily a part of my general wonderment. Consequently, I was forced to seek answers to these assertions.

After 50 years of critique of positivism, we now have far more nuanced attitudes to notions of truth in the social sciences. Research implies interpretation, and this interpretation involves the possibility that the interpreter will have an impact on his or her material. Here, I do not intend to lecture on this long and important debate, I would rather describe my attempts to navigate through these murky epistemological waters.

In ethnographic studies, the researcher will inevitably be the key instrument. Therefore, the researcher will also be the potentially weakest link when reality is to be interpreted and converted into text (Madden 2010). Reflexivity is thus a core concept. According to Babcock, reflexivity means “a reflex action or process linking self and other, subject and object” (1980:2). The inclusion of reflexivity in research is a recognition of the fact that the researcher invariably remains part of the studied object, implying that to a certain extent, the study of others is also a study of oneself (Ehn and Klein 1994:10).

Methodologically speaking, there are numerous ways to approach reflexivity. George Marcus identifies four such ways (1998). The first of these is, *the basic*, in which the researcher is personal, subjective and experimenting, Marcus treats this with scepticism, since ethnography ends up by focusing on the researcher, and not on the persons that the researcher purports to study. Nor is such an approach to reflexivity one that I wanted to use in this study. Marcus goes on to describe *anthropological* and *feminist* types of reflexivity. The key to these approaches is to include and discuss the researcher’s personal and political background. For this reason, it is necessary to discuss those elements of the researcher’s personal history and political perspectives that might colour the analyses to be undertaken. The challenge here is to be able to identify those elements of personal history that might be relevant for the analyses, as well as those political viewpoints that might sway the research in one direction or another.

A fourth form of reflexivity referred to by Marcus is the one he terms Bourdieu’s *sociological* reflexivity. This form of reflexivity has been greatly discussed in two seminars in Paris and Chicago, respectively: *Objectives of reflective sociology* and *The practice of reflexive sociology* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995). As in anthropological reflexivity, Bourdieu is concerned with the researcher’s history, and his habitus in particular. Sociological categories such as gender, class and ethnicity are essential in the researcher’s preconceptions, Bourdieu claims. Moreover, Bourdieu is also concerned with how the academic field within which the researcher operates sets the framework for the interpretation: theories, methods and analytical instruments. What should be

kept under constant surveillance and neutralized in the very act of constructing the object is “the collective academic subconscious which is inscribed in the theories, problems [and] categories of scholarly forms of understanding” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995:45-46). With the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, we may refer to this collectively academic sub-conscious as epistemological obstacles (Bachelard 1976), meaning established and naturalized notions about the world being studied. Bourdieu goes far in indicating that such notions are less epistemological than social in nature, since self-reflection upsets “the sacred meaning of individuality and the charismatic notion that intellectuals have of themselves as being free of all social constraints” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1995:47). To Bourdieu, self-reflection is a precondition for the ability to shed such illusions and thus reach down to the social aspects of individuality, the impersonal aspects of intimacy and the universal within the particular (ibid.). Marcus is also sceptical of this form of reflexivity, since it aims for a kind of objectivity; according to Marcus, this restricts reflexivity to no more than a methodological concern.

Even so, I believe that for the purposes of this thesis, Bourdieu’s approach to reflexivity is appropriate. My objective is to discuss artistic autonomy in theatres in a way which is as “truthful” as possible. I use a reflexive approach not to write myself into the research,<sup>23</sup> but to write myself out of it. The thesis should not be concerned with me, but with theatre policy, the theatres and their staff. Will it for this reason be “truthful”? Here, I will lean on the classical anthropologist Clifford Geertz and the way in which he distances himself from positivism. Although a surgeon will never be able to create a perfectly aseptic environment, he will never conduct surgery in a sewer, Geertz states (1993 [1973]:30) Similarly, the *goal* of ethnographic studies will be to generate some form of objective knowledge. The degree to which this can be achieved will be a matter for debate.

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<sup>23</sup>I used this approach in my master’s thesis, which focused on rural museums. At the time, I was working in the museum and was therefore a part of my own empirical material (Kleppe 2007).

I therefore had some preconceptions, you may even call them prejudices, that were of a distinctly non-academic character with regard to the Netherlands. In addition, I have some preconceptions about theatre that are both of a personal and academic nature. My personal relationship to theatre is not significant, but nevertheless worth mentioning. In cultural studies, there are a number of examples of how persons with a particular interest in various art forms choose to also write about these in a sociological or economic context. Famous scholars in cultural policy such as Hans Abbing or Howard Becker have both been professional artists. In Norway as well, there are numerous examples of researchers who have a strong affiliation with their field of study. Some of our contemporary cultural sociologists and researchers of cultural policy have a background as musicians. As for myself, I have no such affiliation with the performing arts. Instead, I perceive myself as a moderate theatre visitor who occasionally goes to see a play. I have never stood on a stage, nor do I have any desire to do so. My practical experience from the world of art is primarily associated with a previous job as a promoter of popular music concerts. In this job, I booked artists representing various genres, marketed them and staged the concert. This background may have had a certain effect on my views of the art world, and thus deserves to be mentioned here. My job as a concert promoter was motivated by a strong artistic interest in various forms of popular music that were not very popular. I had a genuine desire to present artists that I felt were outstanding, but who had failed to achieve any particular commercial success. I wanted to present them to the largest audience possible. Since the field of popular music benefits little from public support schemes (at least at that time), the revenues were restricted to what the audience was willing to pay to see these performers, which was not all that much. My own salary was at the minimum subsistence level, while the payments to the musicians were low. Work went on under an economic rationale that aimed to economize at all levels. Since then, I have worked in museums, research institutions and lately at a university college. As a result, I have reconciled myself to completely different economic realities. Still, I maintain the attitude that the objective of art dissemination is to create the best and largest amount of art for the largest possible audience within a given economic framework.

My academic preconceptions are coloured by studies that I have previously undertaken of the Norwegian art world in general, and the theatre world in particular. Against this background, I have formed an opinion of what I deem to be the positive and negative aspects of various sections of the Norwegian art world. I will return to this, but first, we shall return to the Netherlands and my first encounter with a field of which I had *no* prior knowledge.

When I arrived in the Netherlands, the theatre ensemble had already been rehearsing for three weeks in the ensemble's own studio. The rehearsals were now entering a new phase that included the full scenography and all technical equipment. The rehearsals were therefore moved to an external studio that the group rented when needed, which was located 10 kilometres outside of the city centre. The preferred means of transport in the Netherlands is the bicycle, so every morning I and the other collaborators would cycle the 10 kilometres from the city centre to the studio. In the beginning I rode alone, but as I got to know the others I kept meeting familiar faces on the cycle path to join. The warm May sun made this a fine start to the day for me, and surely for the others as well.

Studio One was located on an industrial estate and did not differ much from the other buildings. The studio consisted of a large, windowless industrial building with approximately 10 metres of headroom and a concrete floor. On the ground level there was a large loading bay where props could be unloaded directly from trucks. In addition, the studio was furnished with dressing rooms, a make-up room, several sitting rooms and a cafeteria, where the theatre group's own cook served everybody a daily hot lunch.

Rehearsals started at 11 a.m. Before that, the technicians and the scenographer's team had been busy for hours with the preparations for that day's rehearsal. The actors had learned their lines, changed into their costumes and had a microphone attached to them. When the rehearsals were to start, everything needed to be in place to make the best possible use of the next five hours. With two other foreign guests (a director and

an actor, both from Canada), I was seated at one of the eight tables placed in front of the stage.

As the clock ticked towards 11, the studio quieted down. People spoke quietly and no phones rang, and everybody did their jobs, with no noise or bustle. This near-reverential atmosphere in the room had an effect on me, the researcher, as well. I had been welcomed by the director as a guest, but nevertheless felt that my presence was no more than tolerated. Outside the sun was shining, but in the darkness inside everybody was busy creating magic. Each and every one had been handpicked by the director to assist in this endeavour. The theatre director himself, the chief magician, was a quiet man in his 50s, well dressed and with a pleasant voice that he never raised unnecessarily. At first glance, his appearance was that of a business manager, an attorney or some kind of civil servant in a responsible position, though he most definitely was not. In the interviews conducted later, it was confirmed that the actors held him in great esteem as an outstanding artist, as did the other staff members. I sat there quietly and respectfully, suppressing all sneezes and coughs, checked that my phone had been set to silent mode and pulled my feet in when he walked by. Like a 1950s schoolboy, I attempted to look as orderly and proper as I could. My two Canadian friends had exactly the same experience. Robert, the Canadian director, had attended the rehearsals for two weeks, but the director did not greet or speak to him even one time.

The Dutch director was definitively a charismatic leader in the Weberian sense. I will discuss this in more detail in the second article. In a methodological perspective, it is relevant to ask how such a charismatic leader leaves an imprint on ethnographic research. If we claim that a person is a charismatic figure, he will necessarily leave an imprint in the researcher as well.

### *A small note on researchers and charismatic figures*

Ethnographic studies in the tradition established by Malinowski have largely studied foreign cultures, and thus their exotic aspects. The Dutch theatre director was definitively an exotic figure, but not in the same sense as Malinowski's informants, nor



was the culture especially foreign. In the early 1970s, the American anthropologist Laura Nadar called for studies to be directed upwards, i.e. studies of persons wielding power and influence. Nadar argued that ethnographic studies should also focus on “the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty” (Nader 1972:289). According to Nadar, this would cause the power relationship between the researcher and the objects of study to be turned upside down. In traditional ethnographic studies, the power relationship has tended to be in favour of the researcher. The researcher has been superior to the object of study in terms of economic, cultural and social capital. Moreover, the Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim has taught us how the objectivizing eye of the researcher constitutes a power relationship, since the researcher does not recognize the other as a subject (Skjervheim 1996). When studies are directed upwards, some of these power relationships change. For example, in a study of the World Bank, the anthropologist Jon Harald Sande Lie experienced how some of his informants, who were generally more highly educated than himself, commented on him and his work by giving him advice regarding both the academic and social aspects of his fieldwork (2012). Not only did the informants have more capital than the researcher, but by giving him advice they turned Skjervheim’s dichotomy of participant and spectator on its head.

In cultural policy research, studying upwards is not uncommon. The art world is characterized by occasionally strong distinctions between different degrees of symbolic capital. This applies to different genres (cf. Stavrum 2014), as well as to different people and positions (cf. Menger 2006). A number of artists in leading positions wield a lot of symbolic power, and the researcher and the person in question are both aware of this (See e.g. Stavrum and Røyseng 2010 for a discussion of this).

The Dutch director enjoyed huge respect, and was regarded as one of the foremost artists in the Netherlands. The informants in the theatre constantly referred to him as one of the world’s best directors. Internally in the theatre, as well as externally in the Dutch theatre world, he embodied an extremely high level of symbolic capital. In

addition, his leadership was also characterized by his charisma. The actors and the other staff members displayed “an affectual devotion to the ruler’s person and his talents (charisma)” (Weber 1971:98). According to Weber, it is from the devotees that the charismatic leader derives his power. I will nonetheless claim that as a researcher, it is impossible to stand next to such leaders and study them without being personally affected. I would claim that this entails two main consequences: the researcher may develop an abhorrence towards this person, in the realization of the power that they wield and the inherent potential for the abuse of this power. Alternatively, the researcher, who is only human, could be attracted to the charismatic leader to the same extent as his devotees. In my case, I experienced the latter. I let myself be fascinated by this person, and felt an immense respect for him. So what are the implications of this in terms of methodology? According to ethnographic methodology books, there is a constant interplay between personal experiences and emotions on the one hand, and purely intellectual activity on the other. It is therefore crucial that the “private response should be transformed, by reflection and analysis, into potential public knowledge” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:151). This ought to be done on the basis of field notes, according to the authors. This type of reflection did most definitely take place. Although the research subject, meaning myself, was supposed to occupy little space in this study, it became obvious how this person required a special focus on exactly such a reflection. In my analysis of the Dutch theatre, I have been particularly aware of the interpretations I have made of this person. They may continue to be coloured by my fascination for this charismatic figure, although I have attempted to reflect on my own reflections.

The days in Studio One were rewarding, but busy, for both the actors and myself. I observed and took notes all day, from the time I arrived in the studio, throughout lunch, through the second half of the rehearsals and until the actors went home at 4:30 p.m. When I stayed after 4, I could see how the technicians kept working through the evening to set up equipment to be used the next day, or how changes to the scenography were implemented.

My objective for the fieldwork was to interview the actors and other staff members on the set. This proved to be more difficult than I had imagined. My contact person, who was the assistant director, was extremely busy taking notes and facilitating the director's decisions. This was her first assignment for this director, and like everybody else she was keen on doing the best possible job. She also wished to receive me as best she could, but it became obvious that this task was not easy to combine with her job as assistant director. After some days, I tried to spend more time in the cafeteria. The actors came there for coffee, and I would take the opportunity to approach them with a request for an interview. The interviews, however, had to be conducted at times when the actors knew that they were not expected on stage, as none of them wanted to risk not being ready when they were called to rehearsals. During the week, I was able to talk to five of the actors. The interviews lasted from 15 minutes to an hour and a half. I had my interview guide with me, but the conversation quickly took on a more open, dialogue-based form.

On my last day, I also visited the theatre ensemble's permanent premises. Here, I interviewed my contact person in the administration, and was given a tour of the theatre. The week concluded with a performance on the main stage, which provided me with useful insight into the ensemble's encounter with its audience.

#### 4.3.2. To England

In September 2013, my journey of exploration continued. After attending a conference in Germany, I continued directly to the UK where I was to visit another theatre for one week. I arrived in the city on a Friday, but my meeting with my contact person in the theatre was not scheduled until Monday. During the intervening days I had the opportunity to ponder what I might encounter in a British theatre.

The UK's cultural policy has perhaps been subjected to more analysis than most other countries (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2014, Looseley 2011, Ridley 1987). British cultural policies are also different from those of most other European countries, for example

due to its conventional arm's length principle, the moderate level of public support and the significant element of privately funded art institutions. In terms of theatre, the West End is the typical example. Moreover, British actors, films and stage productions have gained acclaim far beyond the confines of the UK. As in the US, they have succeeded in reaching out to a large international audience. In contrast to my notions about the Netherlands, I assumed that the British theatre world would be more characterized by market adaptation, and that economic realities would play a greater role in their everyday activities.

On Monday at 10 a.m., I was welcomed by my contact in the British theatre. I was given my own key card and my own desk in an open office landscape where most of the administration was housed. However, the artistic director, the executive director and the general manager had their own separate offices. I was then given a tour of the theatre and introduced to a number of different people. Thereafter, I was free to walk around and make appointments with whomever I wanted to interview. I had excellent access to all staff members, and during my first day I made appointments with all those I wanted to interview. Even so, my access to the actors and the artistic activities would turn out to be more restricted. That week, the artistic director would have her first meeting with the actors who were to perform in the next production. She was therefore disinclined to have external persons attending the rehearsals. In the Netherlands I had the impression that the director had hardly noticed my presence, but in the UK I was barred from attending the rehearsals. This was also due to the fact that the actors were new to this theatre, and the director was apprehensive that my presence might conflict with their performance.

Although I was barred from attending the rehearsals, I was gradually able to establish contact with some of the actors. In this British theatre there was no cook who prepared lunch, and I soon discovered that the actors were easily "bribed" into being interviewed by an invitation for lunch. In anthropological literature in particular, this type of gift economy has been discussed as a methodological challenge (cf. Ryen and Silverman

2000). Financial compensation to informants could give rise to bias in the material, since less financially solvent persons will be more inclined to volunteer for an interview. Moreover, problems of partiality towards informants may also occur. This notwithstanding, I do not consider this to be a relevant methodological challenge in this study. My gifts to the informants were well within what can be considered common courtesy when asking for 30 minutes of their time. Seen in light of the actors' working conditions, it was still interesting to note that a good lunch was sufficient to persuade the actors to sit for an interview. I interviewed three actors who played in the stage production in question. In addition, I interviewed two actors who lived in the area and with whom the theatre provided contact, including one who had been engaged in trade union activities for many years. Among the staff members, I primarily interviewed managers, including two who were responsible for reporting to the board. The artistic director was extremely busy during my fieldwork period, and this interview was therefore undertaken later by phone.

With my own key card and office desk, I blended into the working environment at the theatre as a temporary employee. The desk next to mine was occupied by a stage manager who had been hired for this particular production. Among those to whom I had been introduced, there were probably some who believed that I too had this kind of job, as my presence was not regarded as anything unusual. My presence in the office landscape in the UK and at the rehearsals in the Netherlands was also part of my ethnographic work. It may therefore be relevant to discuss participant observation as a method, and also the way in which my fieldwork fits into this kind of methodological tradition.

#### 4.3.3. Back at the office

Back in the office in Norway, I listened through the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. After a review of the interviews and field notes, I started making the first analyses. Although my attempts to take an open approach to the analyses had already been stranded on my flight to the Netherlands, the fieldwork and the resulting empirical

material had led me in a somewhat different direction than the one I had foreseen. After having spent a lot of time with the administration and interviewed a number of British managers, several relevant and interesting questions associated with their work in came up. Not least, these were linked to the artistic choices that were constantly made and all the concerns related to these. To be able to pursue these research questions, I was in need of supplementary interviews with the management from the Dutch theatre.

On 28 April 2015, I was therefore back outside the stage door of the Dutch theatre asking for my contact person. I had made appointments in advance with a number of administrative employees whom I wanted to interview. In the large studio at the theatre, rehearsals were going on for a new play under the leadership of the same artistic director. Again, I was seated in front of the rehearsal stage, feeling the presence of the charismatic director. Because the rehearsals were taking place on the theatre's own premises, it was easier to combine observations and interviews with the management. I was permitted to walk freely around the building and come and go as I liked to the rehearsals. In the course of a week, I interviewed seven persons in the theatre management, including the artistic director.

### *A small note on the unfamiliar*

What effect does such a journey of exploration have on me as a researcher? What does it mean to travel to an unfamiliar location and approach creative people who are intensely enthusiastic about what they are doing? How does this affect my research? In light of the reflexive consciousness, I believe that it is equally relevant to reflect on how the journey of exploration that I described affected me and my research. Such journeys of exploration are nothing new in a research context; for more than 100 years, ethnographers have sought out unfamiliar cultures and described them. In anthropology, there are several examples of how scholars in a certain community experience the ethnographic view of a foreign scholar as imprecise and even wrong. When the Indian anthropologist Prakash Reddy described Nordic societies in the 1990s, he was criticized by Nordic scholars for being too pessimistic (Vike 1996)

In my case, my attitude was maybe the opposite. Having worked with commissioned research in the Norwegian cultural sector for eight years, this has become a familiar object of study. The field is small, the various persons and positions involved are known to you, and one can largely predict what arguments will be used, the practices involved and the type of rhetoric that will gain political acceptance. One may quite simply risk becoming fatigued with the field of study. When travelling to study an equivalent field in another country, it is easy to imagine that the grass is greener on the other side of the border.

One element of this is that exactly what is new is often perceived as more exciting. I would claim that another element is inherent in the nature of case studies. In those instances, in which the study sets out to compare what is familiar with something unfamiliar, there is an expectation that this unfamiliar setting will teach us something, and that it may shed new light on the familiar.

How did I relate to all this? During the study, and during my fieldwork in particular, I permitted myself to become fascinated. I believe that this was crucial in provoking my curiosity and inquisitiveness, which in turn helped improve the empirical material. I took a special interest in- and asked for detailed information about practices and attitudes previously unfamiliar to me. Consequently, I hopefully assembled a greater wealth of empirical data than would have resulted from a less curious and inquisitive stance. In the processing and analysis of the material, I reflected on my position by attempting to assume a more critical attitude to the new practices that I observed. This has been necessary to counterbalance my fascination for the unfamiliar.

#### **4.4. Qualitative interviews**

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The primary source of empirical material for this project has been qualitative interviews with theatre staff members. It is thus reasonable to discuss the applicability of this method and briefly present my use of it.

The case study that I conducted with my colleagues and supervisors at a Norwegian theatre in 2008 was mostly based on qualitative interviews. At the time, this provided us with a wealth of good empirical material that constituted a suitable basis for analysing elements of practice in Norwegian theatres. The comparative applicability of this empirical material was confirmed in our subsequent analyses and publications (Kleppe et al. 2010, Mangset et al. 2012). The interviewing conducted for the present study was therefore based on the design chosen in 2008.

Qualitative interviewing is perhaps the most important method used in qualitative empirical research. When seeking to obtain a rich, qualitative material that paves the way for new insights and new research questions as the process unfolds, qualitative interviewing can hardly be dispensed with. Qualitative interviews provide access to the informants' opinions and attitudes in a way that other methods generally cannot ensure. This reflection of opinions and attitudes in the interview information is the essential element in this context. This is the strength of the method, but also its weakness; we do not gain access to what the informants are really doing, only what they report doing. Nor do we gain access to what they really mean, only to what they say that they mean. In this study, I have attempted to compensate for this by also including other methodologies. Nevertheless, in light of the research question for this study, it was essential to gain access to the informants' opinions.

The methodology literature describes various approaches to qualitative interviewing (Kvale et al. 2009, Ryen 2002, Silverman 1985). In his classic methodology manual, Silverman describes four different approaches. The starting point for Silverman's discussion is the positivist interview, which is widely used in sociology. The objective of such interviews is to obtain information which is as "truthful" as possible, and describes the studied object in the best possible way. Through the interview, the researcher wants to access facts, including biographical facts, the informants' opinion about these facts and their emotions, motivations and potential actions. In this tradition, the ideal is that the best access to facts is provided when the interview situation is "uncontaminated"



by external influences, including distractions in the surroundings and influence by the researcher. The positivist ideal hence emphasizes that the interview should follow a set structure, in which all informants are asked the same questions and the interviewer assumes a neutral stance to all answers. Furthermore, Silverman describes two forms of interviewing that focus to a greater degree on the internal positions in the interview: *symbolic interactionism* and *ethnomethodology*. These two forms share the feature of focusing analytical interest on the interview process. I do not intend to describe this method in detail here (many have done so before me); instead I prefer to take a lead from Silverman and bring with me from these methods some insights that are also applicable in a fourth approach to qualitative interviewing: the *realist* method. This is the methodological description that best fits the methodology I have chosen for these interviews.

The realist method largely reflects a pragmatic approach, in which the objective is to obtain some form of generalized truth, but where a recognition of the relational character of the interview must be included in the analyses (Silverman 1985:170). An obvious objection would be that such an exercise is impossible in principle, but Silverman nevertheless claims that in empirical, qualitative work, these methods may be complementary, rather than contradictory. Because, as Silverman writes: “In studying accounts, we are studying displays of cultural particulars as well as displays of members’ artful practices in assembling these particulars” (ibid.: 172). My choice of combining participant observation and qualitative interviewing was based on exactly such a recognition of the relational character of interviews. By meeting the informants in their workplace, their daily context, I wished to include knowledge of this context in the empirical material. As I have already noted, I brought with me my own experiences from previous interviews and previous fieldwork into the interview situation, and this fed back into this situation. All of these factors had an effect on the interview, but in light of Silverman’s realist method I will still claim that the information provided to me through the interviews can be treated epistemologically as “displays of perspectives and moral forms” (ibid.: 171).

The different approaches to qualitative interviewing tend to determine the degree of structure in the practical interview process, as structured interviews with pre-defined response categories were widely used in the middle of the last century. Such interviews will have a virtually quantitative form that permits the statistical analysis of a representative sample. However, they will have little flexibility, and are unable to capture viewpoints that have not been defined by the researcher in advance. At the other end of the scale we find the unstructured interview, which will take the form of a conversation. Such interviews are known from therapy sessions as being used by social workers and psychologists, but examples can also be found in classic ethnographic interviewing.

In qualitative social science, we tend to encounter semi-structured interviews. These make use of an interview guide with pre-defined questions or topics that serve as the basis for the interview. In addition, it is possible to introduce new questions or topics if the interviewee's responses should so indicate. In this study, I chose the latter approach. The interviews were based on a structured interview guide, with open-ended questions and topics based on the questions from the fieldwork that had been undertaken in Norway. My first interview guides were structured and detailed, but during the fieldwork I noted that the interviews deviated considerably from the guide. In some cases, the guide was not used at all, and the interview gradually developed into a conversation in which I followed up the topics that the informants brought up. Some questions were also added, since they had proven useful in previous interviews. The final interview guides functioned more as memory joggers listing the topics to be addressed in the next interview.

Most of the interviews were planned and prepared, whereas some of the interviews were scheduled so quickly that I did not have time to pull out the interview guide. In these cases, I immediately addressed certain basic issues and followed up from there. The shortest interviews had a duration of 10–15 minutes, with the longest ones lasting more than 90 minutes, though most of the interviews lasted approximately 45–60

minutes. The interview settings also varied; in some cases I would sit with the informant in his or her office or in some other closed room where we had ample time and few distractions. In such cases, I could ask more questions and spend more time on formulating them well. I could also pause for thought so as to better follow up the informant's responses. Similarly, the respondent could stop to think before providing a detailed answer. Such interviewing also resulted in an optimal technical quality of the recording. On some occasions, however, this was unfeasible. In certain cases there was no suitable room available, and the interview was therefore conducted in a café or cafeteria, or sometimes even outside on a park bench. One interview was even conducted on the stage immediately after completion of a rehearsal. As a result, the empirical material that came out of the interviews varied in quality. The long interviews provided a wealth of information, while also containing assessments, opinions, discussions and analyses of the way in which the informants perceived their work in the theatre. The short interviews were less comprehensive in this sense, but tended to include a number of formulations that aptly summarized the informants' opinions in a few words. Many of these were well suited for use as quotes.

The selection of interviewees was made according to the same criteria as the selection of interviewees in the Norwegian case (see p. 53). Overall, the interview data consists of 39 interviews, 13 per theatre. In addition to the three artistic directors in each theatre, I interviewed 19 actors and 17 other professionals, of whom 15 were part of the management team or head of their department. This included company managers, executive directors, executive producers, finance directors and casting coordinators. In total, 18 women and 21 men were interviewed. All the interviews were recorded, fully transcribed and marked with keywords with the aid of the NVivo analysis programme.

Table 3: Survey of interviewees in this thesis

	Women	Men
<b>Dutch Theatre Group</b>		
Actor	3	2
Artistic Director		1
Head	2	5
<b>British Regional Theatre</b>		
Actor	1	4
Other professionals	2	
Artistic Director	1	
Head	3	2
<b>Norwegian Theatre</b>		
Actor	4	5
Artistic Director		1
Head	2	1

## 4.5. Participant observation

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In addition to qualitative interviews, my case study journey has also included participant observation. In their classic article, Becker and Geer (1957) argue in favour of supplementing qualitative interviewing with participant observation. This idea has been adapted by the pragmatically oriented sociology of culture, “where scholars pursued interpretation and explanation with whatever type of data [that] was deemed useful” (Lamont and Swidler 2014:154). By undertaking participant observation on a comparative case material, one also encounters what Marcus terms *Multi-Sited Ethnography* (1995). This “new” form of ethnographic studies departs from traditional ethnography in not delving deeply into a particular location or specific culture to describe it, but by investigating “the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time and space” (ibid.: 96).

The Norwegian sociologist, Katrine Fangen, writes that participant observation entails accompanying the participants in the arenas that they frequent in everyday situations, or being present while they perform certain activities typical of the environment or organization of which they are part (2004:9). This description fits well with the fieldwork that I undertook in the theatres in the UK and the Netherlands. In both cases, the fieldwork was restricted to typical activities that took place within an area that was

delimited geographically, socially and in terms of the profession involved. It was delimited geographically to the physical theatre building or rehearsal studio, it was delimited socially in that the participants' interaction encompassed professional relationships in their workplace, whereas the professional aspects were restricted to interaction focused on theatrical productions.<sup>24</sup> These restrictions meant that my material primarily provided me with access to the professional elements of the participants' lives.

The term *participant observation* is well established in the social sciences, and encompasses a number of different forms of both participation and observation. Because of the debate over positivism referred to above, only a few researchers today would claim to undertake pure observation. This kind of method, i.e. pure observation, was portrayed in a comical light in the film *Kitchen Stories*,<sup>25</sup> in which a Swedish "household researcher" sits on a tall chair to observe people's kitchen habits. The object of study changes his daily habits, since there is a stranger sitting in his kitchen.<sup>26</sup> This is one extreme of participant observation, in which the objective is purely to observe. The other extreme involves what anthropologists refer to as "going native", meaning that the researcher interacts so closely with his or her informants as to end up becoming one of them. There is thus a risk that the research dimension of the researcher's presence will be virtually absent.

In the Netherlands, my presence at the rehearsals was agreed upon with the management. I do not know whether all the actors had been informed about this. Was I mainly a participant or was I an observer? One can argue in favour of both positions. Like the Swedish kitchen researcher, I sat on a chair all day making observations without

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<sup>24</sup> The exception was one afternoon when I was invited to a pub by a small group of actors.

<sup>25</sup> A 2003 movie by the Norwegian director Bent Hammer.

<sup>26</sup> We should nevertheless be cautious in ridiculing this kind of research. After all, some of the world's largest manufacturers of kitchen furnishings are found in Sweden.

talking to the participants, meaning that I was a typical positivist observer. On the other hand, my role as observer was one that already existed in the social interaction; I was only one of a number of observers who attended the rehearsals. In this sense I was a participant, and my participation involved making observations. To what extent could my presence have influenced the informants? To what extent could my presence have caused changes in the behaviour of those whom I observed? Both the British and the Dutch theatre were used to having outsiders present. Hence, there were few, if any, who showed any particular reactions to my presence. One exception could perhaps be the British theatre director, who did not permit me to attend the rehearsals. She was apprehensive that my presence could disturb the artistic work that she was to undertake, but neither was I permitted to participate. I believe that my primary influence on my informants is associated with the fact that through my presence I presented them with a topic that they would not otherwise have given much thought to. After my informants learned about my project, many of them contacted me to discuss it. They were curious about the way in which Norwegian theatres were organized and about Norwegian cultural policy. They were also interested in my analyses, preliminary findings and my interpretations of their modes of work. This may have helped the informants to reflect more on these issues than they might otherwise have done.

In classic ethnographic anthropology, the acquisition of language skills has been a key element. When an anthropologist sets out to study a society, it was based on him or her spending a sufficient amount of time to master the language, thereby being able to converse with the informants in their mother tongue. This was often taken for granted, and referred to with statements such as “I spent the first four months in the field gaining some proficiency in the language” (Madden 2010:60). In my Dutch fieldwork, my comprehension of the language formed a barrier. I do not speak Dutch, and my fieldwork was too short to learn the language. Since my primary empirical material was to consist of interviews, and the informants spoke English well, I did not give any priority to learning Dutch. Because of their good English skills, the language did not seem to be

a huge barrier during the interviews. However, my participant observation was of course limited by this fact, and thereby mostly restricted to what I could see.

One strength of participant observation is that this method also permits the study of non-verbal communication. Normally, this will be combined with verbal communication, but I will argue that the observations I made without any comprehension of the spoken language have an empirical value, especially when combined with the qualitative interviews. In my analyses of interactions during the rehearsals at the Dutch theatre, I applied the microsociological perspective of dramaturgy developed by Erving Goffman in his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1969). His assumption is that human activity consists of various forms of role play dependent on time and place, as well as on the persons present at the given time. Goffman's conceptual framework is borrowed from the theatre and dramaturgy, as my interest was focused on the staging of the production. How did the various stakeholders interact in the rehearsal studio, what social roles were allocated to them and what roles did they act out? By studying how the various stakeholders placed themselves in the room, how they moved around and what they expressed through body language, I could describe mechanisms in the social interaction in the theatre. Since I could not understand what they were saying, there is obviously a possibility that I misunderstood or misinterpreted what I saw. Therefore, this empirical material did not have sufficient strength to be used by itself, so I used it to supplement the interviews.

#### **4.6. Generalization and representativeness**

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After having now described my theatre journey and the places I have visited, what remains is the discussion of what these cases represent, or in the words of Ragin and Becker: "What is this a case of?" (1992:6). What do these cases represent, and what do they not represent. That is, how much can we extrapolate from the findings of each case?

The use of case studies is constantly met with the criticism that this method is unscientific, in the sense that they do not permit any generally valid conclusions to be drawn (Flyvbjerg 2006, Ragin and Becker 1992, Stake 1995, Yin 1994). This viewpoint is often voiced by social scientists who draw inspiration from the natural sciences. Flyvbjerg counters this criticism, for example by referring to how some major scientific breakthroughs have been based on single individual experiments, i.e. on case studies. On some occasions, a single observation has sufficed to falsify existing scientific paradigms. With reference to Popper, he refers to case studies as “black swans” (Flyvbjerg 2006:224). Flyvbjerg also draws attention to the value of case studies in scientific discourse as a whole: “A purely descriptive, phenomenological case study without any attempt to generalize can certainly be of value in this process and has often helped cut a path toward scientific innovation” (ibid.: 227). Fredrik Barth in particular emphasizes the way in which comparative analyses may contribute to an understanding of both the macro-level of social institutions and the micro-level of interaction. Through a micro-level case study, one might be able to:

depict the essential duality of social organisation as a simultaneous ordering of activity both in *relations* and *tasks*, and the great differences in how such ordering is achieved in different social systems. (Barth 1972)

In this case study of theatre production, such social systems may refer to the organizational structure, the theatre history and traditions and cultural policy, as well as national culture and welfare policy. All of this affects the repertory of choices for the persons involved.

My selection of case was based on an assumption of what these cases might represent. This notwithstanding, and as pointed out by Ragin, familiarity with the case will develop during the fieldwork and through the analyses. Questions concerning the validity of the cases and their potential for generalization will continuously be subject to reassessment, by myself as a researcher and by my academic peers.



Based on this deduction, I might have chosen to leave this assessment to my readers or other academic peers. Against the backdrop of their experience or empirical studies, they may decide whether my cases are amenable to generalization or whether they reflect realities found only in the theatres I have studied. However, such an approach will be a passive one, since the researcher who undertakes the study will most likely be more familiar with the field than the reader is. Findings from one case study may also be strengthened by findings from similar studies; hence, the scope of such similar studies is important in order to make generalizations. In conclusion, I will therefore present the three cases and discuss the extent to which I believe they are amenable to generalization.

This case study encompasses three academic areas: cultural policy, arts management and working conditions for professionals in art organizations. I wish to describe and analyse these three areas through my three cases. I also wish to generalize my findings to the greatest degree possible, but I will argue that the degree and level of generalization will change according to the academic perspective adopted, and that the opportunities for generalization will also vary between the three cases. Since I have selected three cases from three different countries, geography will play a crucial role. When interpreting my results, the question is whether my analysis is transmittable to all theatres in that particular country, alternatively for all theatres in that part of the world (the Nordic countries, the UK and Central Europe). In the following, I will thus present the three theatres and discuss their positions within their respective countries. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the three theatres as The Norwegian Theatre (abbreviated as NT), The British Regional Theatre (abbreviated as BRT) and The Dutch Theatre Group (abbreviated as DTG).

### **The Norwegian Theatre**

The Norwegian Theatre shares a number of similarities with other Norwegian theatres of equal size, i.e. the six or seven largest theatres in the country. From annual reports and statistics, we can see that the theatres have similarities in terms of their

organizational structures, number of employees and artistic profiles. Moreover, through their umbrella organization NTO, the theatres share a common framework of agreements in a number of key areas. The Norwegian theatre world has also been described in a relatively large number of studies that highlight these similarities (Frisvold 1980, Gladsø 2004, Hylland and Mangset 2017, Røyseng 2007, Wennes 2002). In recent years, such theatres have also been subject to evaluation, pointing to a number of striking resemblances between the Norwegian institutional theatres (Brantzeg et al. 2014, Bø et al. 2013). Lastly, our own empirical findings also indicate the degree of representativeness. Many of our informants had worked in other theatres and are familiar with the similarities and dissimilarities between them, and referred to them frequently in the interviews.

Although Norwegian institutional theatres share a number of similarities, we know from other empirical studies that there are marked differences among these, the private theatres and the independent theatre groups (Bergsgard and Røyseng 2001, Hylland et al. 2010, Hylland and Mangset 2017). The observations made at the Norwegian Theatre will therefore not be representative of the entire Norwegian theatre sector. What about other Nordic and European institutional theatres? Studies have shown that there are clear parallels between Norwegian, Swedish and Danish institutional theatres (Duelund 2003, Jørgensen and Melander 1999, Sirnes 2001). Additionally, there is also a more general European model that has many similarities with the Norwegian institutional theatres; these are often referred to as “repertoire theatres” (Klaic 2013).

### **The British Regional Theatre**

British cultural policy does not distinguish between large and small performing art groups, or between independent and institutional theatres. All performing arts receive their grants directly from the Arts Council, primarily as National Portfolio Organizations (NPOs). At the same time, there are certain clear distinctions that can help us determine the “category” to which the British Regional Theatre belongs. An obvious distinction can be drawn between the private and the subsidized sector. The private theatre sector has

a prominent place in the UK, and although the private and public sectors cooperate widely, they have different goals and frameworks. Another key distinction in British cultural life and cultural policy is the geographic differentiation between London and the rest of the country, often referred to as “the regions”. While the London theatres tend to engage in a greater variety of artistic forms of expression and objectives, the regional theatres have a long tradition as important, decentralized institutions of the performing arts performing a wide range of different genres. In theatre history, British regional theatres are described as a movement (Rowell and Jackson 1984, Turnbull 2008). The British Regional Theatre is typical of the largest theatres belonging to this tradition, and thus representative as an example of regional British theatres. Such similarities with other regional theatres are confirmed by several of our informants.

### **The Dutch Theatre Group**

A typical characteristic of Dutch theatre is the organizational division between the theatre companies that produce the plays and the theatres venues where the plays are performed. The Dutch Theatre Group and other theatre groups in The Netherlands have no stage of their own. This type of organization has prevailed in the country since the 1970s, so the Dutch theatre world is more fragmented than is the case in Norway and the UK. The Netherlands has no theatres with long-standing traditions, nor any models for theatre organization used as a basis for new establishments (Ejgod Hansen 2004, Hamersveld 2009, van Maanen 2002). In recent years, however, there seems to be an institutionalization of Dutch theatres. Public funding has become more predictable, and many theatre companies have established strong bonds to particular (presenting) theatres.<sup>27</sup> DTG is one of the theatre groups that has experienced steady support over the last years as part of the Basic National Infrastructure (BIS). Consequently, the theatre has been able to develop a professional organization with several permanent

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<sup>27</sup> Recent news from Dutch theatres includes two merging processes between two large theatre groups and two large theatre venues.

employees, both artistic and administrative. Today, DTG is one of the most professionalized theatres in the country.

In the Netherlands, a marked distinction also separates private theatres from public theatres. The large private sector caters to all forms of “entertainment theatre”, while the subsidized sector stages more serious or avant-garde plays. Separate theatre groups also specialize in children’s theatre. Even though Dutch theatres have developed independently from different artistic initiatives, and that they do not share any common agreements on employment policies, etc., the frameworks, goals and forms of organization today are quite similar for most theatres receiving grants directly from the Dutch Ministry of Culture. For this reason, the DTG may be representative of the principal large theatres in a country that has chosen a distinctly different approach to theatre policy.

The preconditions for generalization also vary between the three areas of study that comprise the topic of this thesis: cultural policy, arts management and working life in the cultural sector. In most countries, including the countries encompassed by this study, theatre policy is primarily organized at a national level. Although the theatres receive some support from regional authorities, the policy premises are largely defined by the national government. When the informants in this study discuss their views on the cultural policy within which the theatres operate, these are reactions to a national cultural policy that tends to encompass multiple theatres, as well as multiple sectors of the performing arts. In our Norwegian study, which encompassed an institutional theatre and an institutional orchestra, we could see that the policy frameworks were largely similar (Kleppe et al. 2010). In the UK and the Netherlands, we also find common policies and similarly worded grant schemes for the performing arts. We may therefore assume that the empirical descriptions of cultural policy provided by my informants in a specific theatre may also be valid to some degree for other theatres in the same country, and to some extent even for other institutions of performing arts.

As regards arts management, the situation is slightly different. To a certain extent, cultural policy will set the framework for theatre management. Organizational traditions, both formal and informal ones, will have the same effect. In Norway in particular, we find that the organization of theatres shares certain features that recur in most institutional theatres, and may thus be regarded as a sort of Norwegian tradition. In this area, it might be equally interesting to study the various approaches to theatre management across national contexts. As I claim in the second article, the three cases also represent various approaches to arts management. These approaches are interesting beyond the confines of the national context, even beyond the fact that these are cultural institutions. The cases are also interesting as examples of distinctive approaches to management more generally.

## 5. Summary of the articles

My overall research question for this study is how theatre professionals experience and safeguard their artistic autonomy in relation to various political, economic and organizational frameworks. I have analysed this on three different levels in performing arts organizations through a comparison in three different countries. Through a qualitative, inductive approach, I have been particularly interested in how social actors working within these organizations *experience* this.

The three articles presented in this thesis discuss artistic autonomy on three different levels. The first article entitled, *The autonomous world reversed*, emphasizes how artistic autonomy is treated at a political level. The second article, entitled *Managing autonomy*, describes and discusses struggles for artistic autonomy on a managerial level, whereas the last article focuses upon artistic autonomy and artistic individualism on a personal level. Theoretically, the first and third articles make use of welfare state theory and theories of political liberalism. The third article also makes use of the theoretical concepts of risk, as it specifically discusses the relationship between personal autonomy and personal risk-taking. In all three articles, and the second one in particular, I make use of cultural sociological descriptions of the arts field. Most prominent, the Bourdieusian field analysis of cultural production. In the second article, I also make use of the theory of justification, developed by Boltanski and Thévenot. My ambition in the second article is to develop a supplemental or alternative sociological approach to Bourdieusian studies of artistic autonomy. In the following, I will give a brief presentation of the three articles.

### 5.1. The autonomous world reversed: Comparing liberal policy and autonomy in the performing arts

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The first article approaches artistic autonomy from a political level, discussing the preconditions for artistic production in the three countries presented in this study. The article especially focuses on the relationship between the government as a funding body

and the performing arts organizations receiving state support. The main ambition of the article is to criticize former comparative studies within cultural policy, claiming that liberal states promote autonomy, whereas social democratic states promote more external instrumental values, such as solidarity, universalism and equality. Based on the typology of Esping Andersen, Norway and Britain appear as two distinct examples of these two forms of government. In both general and cultural policy, Britain has been categorized as a liberal state. Within cultural policy, the UK is very well known for its arm's length model, outsourcing support for the arts to an independent arts council. In contrast, the Ministry of Culture in Norway directly supports large arts institutions by assigning them a single budget. Scholars have further claimed that Nordic cultural policy emanates from the Nordic welfare policy in which universalism, cultural democracy and equality are heavily emphasized.

My assertion in this article is that in actual cultural policy-making, it is in fact the other way around. Based on an empirical investigation of policy papers, funding agreements and interviews with the executives in theatres, I find that the focus towards artistic autonomy is surprisingly absent in the liberal state of England. Instead, the theatres focus on the community and its obligation towards the citizens. On the other hand, in the social democratic state of Norway, both artists and politicians consider instrumental goals, such as working for the betterment of society, to be a threat to artistic autonomy.

In the Netherlands, where recent developments in general policy have headed in a liberal direction, artistic autonomy appears to be increasingly challenged.

I venture to explain this inversed autonomy through the use of welfare state theory. Several scholars have claimed that the main ambition of the extremely active Nordic state is to promote and strengthen individual freedom (e.g. Lars Trägårdh uses the term *Statist individualism* to describe the Nordic countries). In Britain, however, several scholars have claimed that the neo-liberal British cultural policy emphasizes social benefits through cultural policy, and that public support for the arts has always been in need of some instrumental justification. Simultaneously, promoting autonomy for the

single citizen has been emphasized. This is somewhat of a contradiction to a cultural policy safeguarding eligible autonomous cultural producers insofar as deciding what artistic expressions they shall present the citizens.

## **5.2. Managing autonomy: Analysing arts management and artistic autonomy through the theory of justification**

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The second article focuses on arts management and the negotiations for artistic autonomy taking place within theatres. In this article, I present and analyse how artistic directors in the three case theatres make both long-term and short-term decisions, how they justify these decisions and how they manage and justify their positions as leaders.

Theoretically, the article draws on a Bourdieusian notion of autonomy and heteronomy, as well as the theory of justification developed by Boltanski and Thévenot. The Bourdieusian approach to autonomous fields, in addition to theories of differentiation and de-differentiation, has been commonly applied in studies of arts management. This was therefore my analytical starting point after my Norwegian fieldwork. Nevertheless, my encounter with the management practice in The Dutch Theatre Group and the British Regional Theatre made me aware of how the theory of Bourdieu seemed insufficient in order to analyse decision-making in all three theatres. When introducing the theory of justification, I was able to make more nuanced comparisons that adapted the multiple reasoning made by these artistic directors.

In the article, I claim that decisions in The Norwegian Theatre are based on, e.g. traditions (the domestic world) and decisions made by the artistic director in the British Regional Theatre emphasizing community (civic world), while the artistic director at The Dutch Theatre Group justifies his decisions according to a combination of artistic excellency (inspired world) and efficiency (industrial world). Such a conclusion would not be possible through a Bourdieusian analysis of autonomy and heteronomy.

As a result, this article becomes a contribution to comparative arts management studies, challenging established views of arts management practices, as well as a contribution to



the analysis of artistic autonomy through the introduction of an alternative theoretical approach.

### **5.3. Theatres as risk societies: Performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk**

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The third and last article brings the discussion of artistic autonomy down to an individual level, specifically focusing on the working conditions of the actors working in performing arts organizations. This article explores the darker sides of artistic autonomy, namely the risks associated with being autonomous.

Risk-taking is closely related to artistic work and creative processes: The autonomous risk-taking artist relates to the unknown, crossing boundaries or breaking taboos. The artistic ideal includes immediacy, spontaneity, contemporarily, scarification and irrationality. Simultaneously, the artist is also an economic risk-taker placing his bet on an unsure and unpredictable future. Artists, almost as a law of nature, suffer from low income, casual employment and insecure labour conditions.

Based on qualitative interviews with several actors, the article compares how artists manage economic and artistic risk in the Norwegian, British and Dutch theatre. I further discuss how different ways of organizing theatres and different theatre policies represent different systems of *risk managing* in these three countries. I also discuss how theatre policy and theatre organization helps to facilitate artistic risk-taking.

Theoretically, this article rests upon Ulrich Beck's concept of the risk society, Richard Sennett's *corrosion of character* and Angela McRobbie's descriptions of creative labour. Ulrich Beck claims that work society has become a risk society, and that recent work life is characterized by insecurity, uncertainties and a loss of borders. Several scholars claim that artists and creative workers are located in front of this transformation and in the political discourse on creative industries, with risk-taking artists highlighted as the ideal work force of the future.

However, the article concludes that there is no obvious relationship between economic and artistic risk, but rather the opposite. Working collectively, sharing economic risk allows for more artistic risk-taking. Working individually and autonomously as an actor often implies not only having a combination of high economic risk, but also a limited possibility to take artistic risks. The autonomous, independent artist becomes a self-employed worker in a Marxist sense, selling his labour to those who pay the most.

## 6. Conclusion

“The question of autonomy is always a question of someone’s autonomy *in relation to* that of someone else.” This quote from Geir Vestheim (2009b:35) makes a good entrance to my final conclusions. When approaching the autonomy of the art through a study on three different levels, the relational role of artistic autonomy becomes evident. The autonomy of an independent arts council depends on its relationship to the politicians at the Ministry of Culture. The autonomy of a theatre manager depends on his relations to the politicians, the market or civil society. The autonomy of the single artist depends on his or her relationship to the superior.

Initially, I defined *individual autonomy* through a Kantian approach as a “person’s ability to select and pursue his own ends independently of domination by other persons” (Guyer 2003:72). I further introduced the term *institutional autonomy* as the “right of institutions to function according to their own normative and organizational principles” (Olsen 2009:441). Finally I presented Bourdieu’s analysis of *autonomous fields* as “a separate social universe having its own laws” (Bourdieu 1993a:162). One might argue that individuals, institutions and fields may be considered the *subject* of autonomy. When summarizing my findings from each country, I will particularly focus on this subject of autonomy, as well as on the relational role between these autonomous subjects. I will also discuss how these and other theoretical approaches may be suitable in analysing autonomy in each case.

### 6.1. Norway

At the centre of Norwegian theatre production, we find the omnipotent artistic director. When examining artistic autonomy on three different levels, I found that the principle of artistic autonomy in Norway is safeguarded in several ways through the protection and promotion of this position and this single individual. The production cycle in Norwegian repertory (institutional) theatres starts when the new artistic director is appointed. He prepares *his* programme, *his* vision and *his* ideas for years to come, a

vision that all employees need to adapt to. The artistic director is in charge of both artistic and economic decisions, guided by a principle that arts comes first. Nonetheless, given the fact that *he* is provided with the power of defining art, this is somewhat of a self-referential logic, in which his decisions appear to be artistically based for as long as he made them.

The recognition of the artistic director as a personification of artistic autonomy is essential in Norwegian theatre policy. While some part of Norwegian art funding is delegated to an arm's length body, i.e. Arts Council Norway, funding for large repertory theatres is provided directly from the state budget. One might assume that this practice implies a heavy state interference in artistic decisions. However, the actual outcome is the opposite. As is claimed in the article, *The autonomous world reversed*, Norwegian theatres are highly autonomous in relation to state interference. In order to promote this principle of artistic autonomy, the Ministry of Culture maintains an arm's length towards these theatres by providing them with a stable amount of support each year. They do not interfere with their work, nor does anyone else such as an expert body.<sup>28</sup> To a large extent, this makes the principle of artistic autonomy a principle of the autonomy of the artistic director.

Even though I venture to claim that the artistic director may be considered the subject of autonomy in Norwegian theatres, it does not necessarily mean that all other social actors in the theatre lack artistic autonomy. Quite the opposite, as the head of a large institution, the autonomy of the artistic director also implies a wide institutional autonomy benefitting also the employees. As I claim in the article, *Theatres as Risk Societies*, several of the artists enjoys this artistic autonomy as part of an organization sheltered from unwanted interference.

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<sup>28</sup> The art field may still have an indirect impact on the autonomy of the artistic director. In our former Norwegian study, we identified how artistic directors were quite sensitive towards feedback from peers (Mangset et al 2012).

Theoretically, one may approach the analysis of artistic autonomy in Norway through individual autonomy, institutional autonomy and a Bourdieusian field approach. In several former studies, cultural production and artistic autonomy in Norway have been analysed through a Bourdieusian perspective. Even though Bourdieu developed many of his theories based on a French context, and even though much criticism has been addressed to this, his theories seems highly applicable in a Norwegian context. As Røyseng stated, “The autonomy of art still works as a constitutive category” in theatre policy, theatre management and artistic work. As presented in his famous essay from 1983, *The field of cultural production*, Bourdieu’s analysis of cultural production seems to capture Norwegian art production in a comprehensive way.

## 6.2. England

In describing political approaches to artistic autonomy, Britain has been commonly referred to in most writings on culture policy. Ever since 1946 and the birth of Arts Council Great Britain, the British way of supporting arts and culture has been promoted as a role model for how politicians may promote an arm’s length distance to the art, thereby providing artistic autonomy. Paradoxically, when comparing theatre policy and theatre organizations across these three countries, the concept of artistic autonomy seems least visible in England. This is one of my key findings, which is summarized in the article, *The autonomous world reversed*.

If one is to answer the question, “Who is the autonomous subject in the English theatre field?”, it is attempting to answer *the citizen*. With reference to Samuel Black and John Rawls, Roger Blomgren reminds us how autonomy in cultural policy may also be interpreted through the glance of the citizen, and his or her right to make autonomous decisions about what they consider good art. This principle of neutrality, central in most liberal theory, seems to permeate current British cultural policy to a greater degree than the preservation of autonomous cultural producers.

This practice was not only evident in cultural policy, but also in the considerations made by the artistic director and the management team of the theatre. Even though they put out a great effort in producing performances of high quality, they had a genuine concern for their audience. In everything they did, the local citizens and their different needs guided the work. This did not primarily imply a commercialization of their work (a statement, however, there might be several opinions of); rather, they made a programme of plays that they thought could suit different groups of citizens, taking into account that different people have different theatrical preferences and different interests in what stories can be told.

Quite opposite to the Norwegian practice, in which the artistic director was highly influential, British theatre production is characterized by a demand-based logic. The demands of the citizen, the consumer, the society or the politicians guided the production. This demand-based logic of production was also transferred to the employment of actors in Britain. While repertory planning in both Norway and the Netherlands takes into account the qualities of the present actors in the ensemble, the chosen play was always the starting point for casting in England. Once the need for artists and actors (e.g. the demand) was identified, the casting coordinator went on to search for someone who could fill these demands. This eventually placed the actors at the bottom of the supply chain, thus fulfilling the needs of the theatre and the audience.

Such a conclusion and analysis was made available partly through the use of the theory of justification. Whereas a Bourdieusian analysis would limit the scope to heteronomous reasoning and large-scale production, Boltanski and Thévenot's approach also identifies the artistic director's concern for the citizen.

### **6.3. The Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, artistic autonomy has been approached more collectively than in Norway. While my assertion was that the artistic director is the autonomous subject in Norwegian theatres, the autonomous subject in the Netherlands seems to be the

collective art world, or maybe more limited, the field of theatrical production. In the Netherlands, there is a historical consensus that political authorities shall formulate a cultural policy and provide allocations. The decisions on how these allocations are to be used shall be made by artists and other representatives from the art world. Politically, this task is being divided by the Performing Arts Fund NL, which themselves allocate a certain amount of support for a certain number of artists and performing art groups, and the Council for Culture, which provides advice for the Ministry of Culture on the allocation of direct support provided thorough the Basic National Infrastructure (BIS). Both the advisors and the counsels making these decisions represent the art world, and give advice based on artistic considerations. One obvious example of this policy is how cultural politicians in the Netherlands have only decided how many theatre groups each region and city shall inherit, but not which specific group shall inherent this position.

In Theatre management, I further identify this collective approach, at least in the Dutch Theatre Group. Even though the artistic director definitely possesses a charismatic personality, he invites all employees to share their opinion. In opposition to Norway, there were no mechanisms of exclusion rendering who is eligible to participate in artistic decisions.

Lastly, I also identified this collectivity in risk management and artistic work. In the Dutch Theatre Group, the ensemble model forms the basis of their work. When planning the future repertory for the theatre, the strengths and weaknesses of the ensemble are the most important prerequisite. Furthermore, ensemble maintenance is considered a crucial task in the theatre. The artistic, economic and social aspects of being an actor are considered a collective responsibility in the DTG. This collective ensemble approach also includes administrative and technical personnel. The artistic director includes them in decision-making, but maybe most importantly, he requires that all the employees share a common goal for the theatre. The collective approach therefore does not necessarily imply democratic decision-making. Quite similar to Norway, it is the vision of the artistic director that guides the direction of the theatre. Nevertheless, in order to maintain the

position of the theatre and public support, the artistic director needs to provide for the entire organization.

When analysing autonomy in Dutch Theatres, Bourdieu's field-term describes Dutch cultural policy in a comprehensive way. The field of theatrical production has been given an autonomous position in making decisions on the distribution of support. This is very much in line with the traditional arm's length principle.

In arts management, however, the work of Bourdieu seemed less applicable. As I discussed in the article, *Managing autonomy*, theories of differentiation did not seem to be a fruitful analytical tool in order to understand the management practice at the DTG.

Hans Van Maanen (2002) suggests a network approach to help analyse Dutch theatre policy, thereby making Howard Becker's concept of the art world (1984) a starting point. He further suggests a network model developed by Miranda Boorsma (2001). Such a network approach, maybe also accompanied by Actor-Network theory, seems to be relevant in order to study "theatre worlds", particularly in the Netherlands. Yet, I will leave this ambition for future research.

I consider the theory of justification, which I introduced in my second article, as an alternative approach for studying artistic autonomy and artistic decision-making. Such an analysis makes one able to uncover a wide range of considerations that take into account the decision-making processes, and not only the contradiction between autonomy and heteronomy.

#### **6.4. Limitations, implications and further research**

I will dedicate the last pages of this thesis to the implications of my study and recommendations for further research. What is my contribution to comparative cultural policy research, what is my contribution to how the concept of autonomy may be understood, and what are the implications of my study to the field of cultural production



and cultural policy? Before I do so, I will also clarify some of the limitations of my research.

### Limitations

This case study has primarily aimed at generating new knowledge on autonomy through an inductive approach. This knowledge is generally case-specific, and therefore needs to be further investigated in order to make conclusions that are more generalizable. Neither of the articles published under this thesis aims at testing hypotheses or making generalized conclusions, as they all develop claims and assertions that need further testing. In Chapter 4.6, I discussed in what way the three case-theatres were representative of other theatres in their respective country. My conclusion to this is generally that my knowledge of the Norwegian case, Norwegian art production and Norwegian cultural policy is more developed than my knowledge on England and the Netherlands. In these two cases, I run the risk of being criticized for a lack of comprehensive knowledge. My analysis of these two countries is based on this single case study, as well as the literature review evident in the reference list. This imbalance of knowledge may also cause some bias in my comparison. For example, when claiming that artists in England cared less about artistic autonomy than was the case in Norway, this might be due to such bias.

The methodological design of this study may further cause bias in other ways. In the Netherlands I followed the rehearsals of two plays, and thus made important observations concerning the social interaction during rehearsals. In England, such participatory observation was limited to administration and work life in the offices. In the Norwegian case, my empirical material is primarily limited to interviews, in which there may also exist some bias due to selections. Even though I conducted interviews with actors, artistic directors and administrative personnel in chair positions, I did not get to interview persons in the exact similar positions in all three countries. The actors I interviewed in England were freelancers, and maybe not at a similar professional level as the ensemble actors in Norway and the Netherlands.

Nevertheless, drawing on a significant comparative material from three important art institutions, I boldly claim that this thesis makes an important contribution to comparative studies of cultural policy, art production and arts management. When suggesting implications and further research based on this thesis, I do so both proudly aware of the contribution I have made, but simultaneously humble in terms of the limitations of my study.

### Comparative studies of cultural production

Generally speaking, there is a lack of cross-national comparative studies of cultural production and cultural policy. When different approaches to cultural policy are being described, the typology Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey made in 1989 is still commonly referred to. As I aimed to show in one of my articles, these models seem both outdated, yet may also be heavily doubted based on empirical research. There is hence a need for additional empirical and comparative research of cultural policy models. When comparing welfare policies, Esping-Andersen's typology has a similar position. I consider these typologies to also be an interesting approach to further comparative research in cultural policy and cultural production, not least in studies of creative labour market policy.

However, the most important paradox when applying these models concerns the political term *liberal*. Liberal welfare policy (as described by Esping-Andersen) implies a negative liberalism in which state interference is limited. It further implies liberty and thus autonomy for the single *citizen*. In liberal welfare policy, the autonomy to *choose* has primarily been dedicated to the citizens. They may choose and prioritize which hospitals, schools or church they will use. Instead of providing a supply of welfare services, liberal policy provides tax deductions in order to facilitate autonomous choice by the citizens as consumers.

This fundamental liberal principle is something I also identify in British cultural policy. In all levels of theatre production, an emphasis was placed on the demands of the citizens, rather than on the artistic ideas and visions of the cultural producers. When emphasizing

the autonomy of the citizen, this simultaneously reduced the autonomy of the cultural producers, thereby demanding them to produce plays based on the preference of the citizens.

In social democracies such as Norway, the welfare policy implies the production of general services for all citizens with less of an emphasis on their individual needs. In cultural policy, this has led to a greater emphasis on paternalism, in which the state considered them capable of defining what constitutes the citizens' own good. Nevertheless, as a liberal democratic country, the politicians outsource the task of defining the citizens' good to experts, mostly to artists or the artistic field. In practical politics, not least in Norwegian theatres, such a policy implies a steady support for theatres, leaving them to autonomously decide what production they would like to present to the citizens.

Even though this summary makes crude generalizations, I find the two terms *demand-based* and *supply-based* cultural policy to be analytically relevant for comparative studies. Politically, one may emphasize supply (or production) or demand (or consumption). The term *demand-based cultural policy* has similarities with the term *market-driven cultural policy* (Häyrynen 2013, Potschka 2013). However, my empirical investigations from England, and the application of the theory of justification, show how demand-based cultural production is not solely about producing art for those most willing to pay (e.g. the market). Such production emphasize all citizens, which implies a much more democratic and diverse approach. Nonetheless, artistic autonomy seems generally higher in supply-based policy.

The advantages of a comparative study are not only its ability to analyse different approaches to one concept, as comparative studies also permit challenging the concept itself. In this case, this is the concept of artistic autonomy.

### Analysing artistic autonomy

According to Bourdieu, the autonomy of the art is relative. Equally important, the autonomy of the art is relational. The autonomy of one social actor affects the autonomy of another. As I have discussed in the former chapters, these characteristics becomes particularly evident when analysing various stages of cultural policy and art production. This observation is further evident across all countries.

However, the struggle for autonomy seems to vary between the countries, both in terms of strength and in terms of the social actors involved. This makes the struggle for autonomy also a struggle for power. The Bourdieusian field approach is specifically concerned with power, defining a continuous struggle for autonomy within the field of cultural production, as well as between subordinate and superior fields. This Bourdieusian approach was analytically suited for some of my cases, but not for all. In both England and the Netherlands, I experienced less such power struggles, at least it did not permeate the organizations as seems to be the case in Norway. This divergence may be caused by my empirical bias and my lack of comprehensive knowledge on the British and Dutch cases. Yet, it implied that I searched for alternative theoretical approaches other than the Bourdieusian in order to grasp the negotiations taking place. In this, I benefited from the theories developed by Boltanski and his companions.

Using Bourdieu, the theory of justification as well as welfare studies and theories from political science, I have approached autonomy from several different angles, including personal, institutional and field-oriented. I have found this to be useful, almost necessary, to understand how artistic autonomy is negotiated within these three countries. It also led me to the conclusion that each country inherits different “subjects” of autonomy.

Lastly, I found it necessary to examine the downsides of autonomy. Every expression providing discursive positive connotations (as autonomy obviously does) deserves to be twisted analytically. I therefore found the term *risk* useful in order to contrast autonomy.

I found this to be particularly relevant for times in which autonomy and risk-taking are promoted as the new wine of creative labour. I will thus end this thesis where I started, by making some statements about the political relevance of my findings, which are closely connected to the neoliberal creative labour discourse.

### **Individualization of artistic labour**

The classic work of Baumol and Bowen showed us how performing art organizations lack the possibility to rationalize production. In order to face this challenge, British theatre production was reformed in the 1980s, hence liberating theaters from their employers' liability.<sup>29</sup> Today, this has become the standard employment for British actors and most other creative workers. Artists and creative workers seem more likely to accept such an employment policy because they derive satisfaction from artistic work itself. One of the constants over the recruitment of artistic labour is to keep filling the pool of potential employees, with a corresponding increase in the competition for artistic work. This has led to an individualization of labour, in which the large majority of British artists are underemployed. They live in a constant hand-to-mouth economy, not knowing whether they will have work for the next few months.

Such precarious labour conditions have been addressed as a serious issue in general welfare policy (Standing 2011). In cultural policy, however, independent artists working under such poor conditions have been promoted as the entrepreneurs of the creative industries and the future of work. In her recent book, *Be Creative*, Angela McRobbie (2016) questions how the creative discourse have managed to turn a problem of poor working conditions into an optimistic story of free and independent workers.

When addressing artistic labour and questions of autonomy, I find this political development to be highly relevant. Without making normative or political statements

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<sup>29</sup> In British Repertory Theatre, this was primarily limited to one- or two-year contracts.

on how labour conditions *shall be*, and what labour conditions contribute to best practice in art production, I find it appropriate to address some of the paradoxes in this development. McRobbie questions if the creative sector has become a laboratory for testing out new employment practices for general work life. Artists generally accept poor working conditions. The work preference theory is one reason for this. In addition to this, as I claim in the article, *Theatres as risk societies*, artistic autonomy and artistic risk-taking have quite easily been adapted to economic risk-taking and autonomous labour in the creative discourse, thus making this two sides of the same coin, when it may actually be two opposites. Furthermore, the fact that the employer appears as a great artist and a charismatic leader, rather than a profit-hunting capitalist, has made it more difficult for the creative workers to claim their labour rights. Still, this is not a reason for not questioning why the artists have to be placed at the bottom of the food chain, encumbered with most of the risk associated with artistic production.

In this comparative case study, the individualization of risk is only evident in the British theater. Nonetheless, in Norway, the Netherlands and several other countries, freelance work has become increasingly common for creative workers. Though precarious, freelance work may further reduce the costs of public art organizations, thereby reducing their need for public support.

When Stanislavsky created a successful model for ensemble-based repertory theatres at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he did this by emphasizing collectivity rather than individuality. The artistic subject was the ensemble rather than the individual artist. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Theatre Group has had some success based on a similar formula. They have a collective awareness towards the actors providing them with stable working conditions, challenging artistic work and artistic development. The actors (more or less) share the same benefits, regardless of whether they are “famous” or not. Simultaneously, The Dutch Theatre Group is obliged to produce theatre of high quality in order to maintain the interest of both the audience and funding governments. Consequently, they have a collective responsibility for making the most of their work and their funding. As opposed to how Røyseng (2003) describes art organizations and

new public management, the DTG has combined a focus on cost-effectiveness, while simultaneously creating a space for artistic autonomy, all within a system based on new public management.

Even though the Norwegian Theatre also manages risk on an organizational level, I find the Dutch case to be particularly interesting. The motivation for a collective approach is most of all artistic. The entire organization focuses on this common goal, and they put much effort in maintaining their employees. The traditional collective ensemble model fits their ambition of making great art. In such a case, this may be a good example of how art production and artistic excellence may be possible without turning artists into precarious workers.

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## **Article 1:**

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## The autonomous world reversed: comparing liberal policy and autonomy in the performing arts

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Comparative studies of cultural policy commonly emphasize the way in which states treat the autonomy of the arts. Such studies often claim that liberal states promote autonomy, while social democratic states promote more external, instrumental values, such as solidarity, universalism and equality. This article challenges this conception by claiming that in actual cultural policy-making it is in fact the other way around. Based on a comparative study of theater policy in England, Norway and the Netherlands, I find that the focus on artistic autonomy is surprisingly absent in the liberal state of England, compared to what it is in the social democratic state of Norway. Conversely, English theaters are more obliged to work for, and with, the citizens and the community than theaters in Norway are. In the Netherlands, where recent development in general policy has headed in a liberal direction, artistic autonomy actually appears to be increasingly challenged.

**Keywords:** cultural policy; liberal democracy; autonomy; theaters; performing arts

### Introduction

When studying governance in the field of cultural policy, the typology of Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey (1989) is commonly referred to. They present four models representing various roles that governments can play in supporting the arts, i.e. the Facilitator, the Patron, the Architect and the Engineer. The way in which cultural policy relates to artistic autonomy is central to these models. Several scholars have criticized this model for being insufficient as an analytical approach (e.g. Mangset 1995). However, few have questioned their overall assumptions concerning autonomy.

English cultural policy, characterized by its arm's length principle, has been described as the liberal British approach to cultural policy where artistic autonomy is emphasized (Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989, Mangset 2009). On the other hand, when describing Nordic cultural policy, several scholars have emphasized the close relationship between policymakers and cultural institutions promoting universalism, cultural democracy and equality (Mulcahy 2001, Duelund 2008, Mangset *et al.* 2008). As social democratic countries, their policy has therefore

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often been described by promoting societal values and solidarity rather than artistic autonomy.

Based on a comparative study of performing arts in Norway, England and the Netherlands, I will examine in what way differences in governance, as described in schematic studies of both cultural policy (Cummings and Katz 1987, Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989) and general welfare policy (Esping-Andersen [1990] 2012) affect the actual cultural policy being made. Moreover, based on a case study in theaters in these three countries, I will examine how cultural producers relate and respond to this policy.

My assertion in this article is that there exists a great and interesting gap between autonomy as a political principle and the way in which autonomy is reflected in practical policy-making in the fields of the performing arts in these three countries. Furthermore, the artist's experience of their autonomy also differs quite a bit from the assumptions of how political systems facilitate autonomy. Paradoxically, in the social democratic country of Norway, autonomy and individualism seem to be much more emphasized by policymakers than social responsibility and cultural democracy. In the liberal country of England, the birthplace of the arm's length principle, cultural policy focuses on social responsibility and local community at the expense of artistic autonomy. In the Netherlands, the general welfare policy has headed in a liberal direction, while the theater's autonomy has decreased in favor of increased political influence.

### **Autonomy – the nomos of the artistic field**

The concept of 'the autonomy of the arts' lies at the heart of the process of assigning artistic value in modern society. The tautological sentence 'art for art's sake' puts the self-referential logic of artistic valuation into relief. This sentence is the essential statement of the implicit 'nomos' of the artistic field according to, for example Bourdieu (1993). From an esthetic perspective, the 'pure' work of art is considered to have an ahistorical quality that is above both time and space.

This nomos is of course not completely ahistorical. From a philosophical perspective, the concept is most often traced back to the Kantian work, *The Critique of Judgement*, in which Kant states that the fine arts are 'purposiveness without purpose' (Kant 1914, p. 77). In public debates, ideas of the autonomy of the artistic sphere developed in the 18th and 19th centuries in England and France. Even though there has been a consensus in valuating autonomy in the arts ever since, there has been different ways of defining the opposite of autonomy. 'The question of autonomy is always a question of someone's autonomy in relation to that of someone else. It is a question of power, influence, dependence and its opposite', Vestheim states (2009, p. 35).

Historically, ethics, or moral considerations, have been some sort of counterpart to esthetic judgment. In the Middle Ages, religion, and thus morality, was the framework of most esthetic expression. In the work of Kant, esthetic judgments were recognized as their own faculty independent of moral considerations.<sup>1</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the dichotomy of arts and morality became further emphasized. Art and morality came to be viewed as not only separate, but also incompatible. Oscar Wilde's famous citation, 'No artist has ethical sympathies', shows his clear stance in favor of artistic autonomy towards the moral imperative (Bell-Villada 1996).

In the twentieth century, the idea of artistic autonomy as consisting of ‘uselessness’ was evident. In 1951, the English novelist E.M. Foster wrote that a work of art is a unique product:

... not because it is clever or noble or beautiful or enlightened or original or sincere or idealistic or useful or educational. [...] The work of art stands up for itself and nothing else does. (Forster [1951] 1965, p. 99)

According to Belfiore and Bennett (2008, p. 186), Forster is representative of the twentieth century’s version of being for art’s sake, in which the autonomy of the art should be protected from any encroachment, whether or not they are for moral, epistemological or political reasons. This leads us further to the present discussion on *instrumentality*. Since the late 1980s, this has been a predominant trend in cultural policy, and may be the most prominent antithesis to autonomy (Vestheim 1994, Belfiore 2002, Røyseng 2008). The core of instrumental cultural policy ‘lies in emphasising culture and cultural venture as a means, not as an end in itself (Vestheim 1994, p. 65)’. This statement from Vestheim clearly marks how instrumentalism may be understood as the opposite of artistic autonomy. From his Scandinavian perspective, Vestheim highlights economic profit and regional development, strengthening the creative ability of society and attracting skilled labor as examples of such instrumentality. When addressing instrumental cultural policy from a British perspective some 10 years later, Belfiore highlights social inclusion and neighborhood renewal through health, crime, employment and education (Belfiore 2002). When we add these up, we find a rhetoric that believes culture to be the solution to most societal problems.

In a Bourdieuan sense, one might speak of heteronomy as the opposite of autonomy. According to him, there will always be a struggle between these two principles of hierarchization: The autonomous principle in which those within the artistic field define value, and the heteronomous principle favouring those who dominate the field economically and politically (Bourdieu 1993, p. 40). In this article, I will primarily discuss the autonomy in relation to the political field.

### **Autonomy and policy**

A Bourdieuan approach to autonomy may also be applied to other fields in society, including fields of politics, economics, religion or higher education. All such fields protect their own values from external or heteronomous pressures. Institutions within these fields, such as churches or universities exert a similar struggle, protecting the ‘right of institutions to function according to their own normative and organisational principles and behavioral logics (Olsen 2009, p. 441).<sup>2</sup> In cultural policy, the principles of autonomy most commonly refer to the institutional setting (Vestheim 2009, Blomgren 2012) meaning that ‘institutions or organisations implementing cultural policy should have the power to autonomously decide the content of what is to be produced’ (Blomgren 2012, p. 522). However, as Blomgren state, within cultural policy there is a great difference between institutional autonomy (including the artists) and individual autonomy (including the citizens), a difference that is seldom emphasized in cultural policy research. As I will return to, the lack of such distinction may also be an explanation for the gap between former studies and my empirical findings.



In the political field, autonomy is also a key concept closely linked to different versions of liberal policy. Liberalism as a political concept is grounded in personal autonomy (Christman and Anderson 2005, p. 16). The main principle of liberalism is that any restriction to personal autonomy requires justification.

Ever since the birth of political philosophy and the work of John Locke in the 1600s, there has been a tension between personal autonomy and state power. This becomes evident in the book, *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah 1985), in which the consensus is that throughout the rise of the modern state, individual freedom may only be bred in civil society separately from the state. In liberalism, the influence of the state must be limited to what citizens can acknowledge, while still considering themselves as autonomous and equal.

The rationale behind institutional autonomy may be understood slightly different. Liberalistic countries has promoted institutional autonomy through private ownership, relatively low amount of state subsidy and thus a low degree of state dependency (Gellert 1985, Pritchard 1998). Nevertheless, does state dependency necessarily imply state intervention? I will return to this question later.

Although most western countries are described as liberal democracies the level of state interference varies quite a bit between different welfare states (Esping-Andersen [1990] 2012). In his commonly cited survey, Esping-Andersen differentiate between *liberal welfare states, corporatist welfare states and social democratic welfare states*. England is characterized as a typical liberal country, while Norway is characterized as an archetypical social democratic regime. Esping Andersen also characterizes the Netherlands as being social democratic. However, in an audit of several welfare model studies, Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser characterize the Netherlands as a hybrid state with liberal, conservative and social democratic characteristics (2011). The Dutch sociologist Win van Oorschot claims that the Netherlands has shifted towards a more liberal welfare policy within recent years (2006).

Based on a general assumption on autonomy and liberalism, as well as several comparative studies in cultural policy, it is reasonable to expect that state interference in the cultural policy objectives is more widespread in social democratic countries, whereas institutional autonomy is more widespread in liberal countries.

### **Comparing autonomy within cultural policy**

Kawashima (1995) suggests a methodology for comparing cultural policy through a division of cultural policy on four levels: (1) identification of issues and choice of scope, (2) policy objectives, (3) policy measures and (4) policy results. This framework seems fruitful for this study. When comparing autonomy in these three countries, I will emphasize the policy-making, the actual results and experience of the executives in the theaters. Following the model of Kawashima, I will first compare the political system with its issues and choices (1). I will also look at the guidelines following the public support for the theaters, and analyze to what degree these limit the artistic autonomy, and further, to what degree they include 'instrumental' objectives. I will then look into the objectives of the cultural policy (2), and analyze how cultural policymakers create their priorities. I will then discuss to what extent the government conducts some sort of control, or implements some type of sanctions if the theaters do not achieve their ambitions (3). Lastly, I will analyze the policy results (4) through statements and opinions made by the executives and the

artists working at the theater. How do they experience their artistic freedom, and hence their autonomy to make decisions based on their own considerations?

The methodology of Kawashima requires a plural set of empirical sources. I have chosen to study the choices of scopes, the policy objectives and the policy measures through an analysis of political documents. In the analysis of the policy results, I use data from a case study in three theaters in the different countries.

The analysis of document studies includes a critical review of white papers, annual reports, funding agreements, evaluations and diachronical data on the level of allocation for the largest subsidized theaters in the three countries.

The case study included fieldwork in one large theater in each of the three countries, including both participation observation and qualitative interviews. The British case study was conducted in a typical regional theater in one of the large cities outside of London; the Dutch fieldwork was conducted at one of the top theater groups in the country, while the Norwegian case study was conducted at one of the largest theaters outside the capital.<sup>3</sup> The fieldwork in both England and the Netherlands was conducted in 2014/2015, whereas the Norwegian fieldwork was conducted in 2008.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, the fieldwork included 40 interviews of both artistic and administrative workers in the theaters, including executive and artistic directors.

Methodologically speaking, it is a big step from analyzing one theater to making general assumptions on theaters in this given country (Yin 1994). It is also a big step to make generalizations about cultural policy in general. The assertions I make in this article must, thus, be investigated through further empirical studies. Nevertheless, an analyze of policy implementation and the way in which cultural workers experience such implementation allows for a deeper investigation of political principles in cultural policy than an analysis based solely on rhetoric.

### **The social democratic state of Norway**

Like other Nordic countries, the cultural policy of Norway combines elements from the French model of direct governmental support for large institutions and an arm's length principle funding artists and artistic projects. The main theaters in Norway receive public support directly from the Ministry of Culture, with additional funding from the regional level.<sup>5</sup> Every year, the current political priorities are outlined in the state budget, including which theater shall receive such support, as well as the amount of support for each theater. This budgetary practice of annual allocations for theaters leaves the government with considerable potential power and influence, thereby allowing them to raise or cut the funding from one year to the next. From a structural point of view, this political system poses a constant threat towards the autonomy of the single theater.

Inspired by the new public management regime, the funding agreement made by the government contains the aims and goals for the theater in the year to come. In this document, the Ministry highlights the social, artistic and economic assignment for the theater. Even so, in taking a closer look at these agreements, we find that the goals and instructions for the theater are not particularly specific. They highlight the importance of diversity, social inclusion and accessibility; they also expect financial accountability and decent resource management from the theaters. Still, the vague formulation of goals leaves the Ministry with few possibilities to make accurate measurements of the theaters' accomplishments at the end of a given financial period.

In the state budget, in which the Ministry announces its annual support, there are few or no comments on the level of satisfaction with the work of each theater. The budget contains some statistical data and some comments on theaters experiencing a shift in their funding. This comment primarily concerns new tasks for the theater such as youth campaigns or building maintenance. Consequently, there are hardly any comments concerning recent year achievements, nor are there any comments on their fulfillment of the topics addressed in the supplementary letters.

It is obvious that the Norwegian government does not exploit its influential potential. One piece of evidence of such is looking at the amount of support given to theaters over several years. Figure 1 displays the total public support for the six largest theaters in Norway from 2003 to 2013. As this figure shows, all theaters have experienced a steady growth in public support during this period. Looking at all 17 theaters receiving state funding, this picture is more or less the same, as this tendency also seems more or less unaffected by political leadership. In 2013, the Norwegian government changed from a left/centre coalition to a conservative/progressive coalition. So far, the support for the large theaters has not changed in any considerable way:

When studying the policy implementation on a historical basis, the autonomy of Norwegian theaters appears quite different from what one might assume based on the political and structural system. As a social democratic country, where a wide range of welfare areas is subject to political interference, politicians still keep the theaters at an outstretched arm's length distance.

Public support for large theaters is generous in Norway compared to most other European countries. The three largest theaters receive approximately €17 million each. In addition to the local support, this public support accounts for approximately 80% of the theater's annual income. Nevertheless, they still need to earn more than €4 million in box office income. This implies that Norwegian theaters need to stage plays with considerable audience potential, first and foremost popular

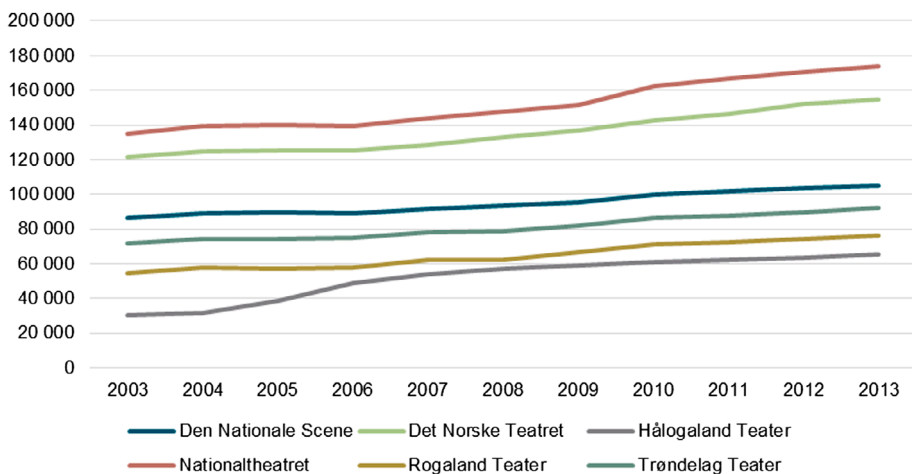


Figure 1. State support to the six largest theaters in Norway 2003–2013; figures in 2013 1000 NOK.

Source: Norwegian Ministry of Culture.

children's plays. Even in Norway, the market influences the artistic decisions, and thus the autonomy of the theater.

How do the theaters experience their autonomy? Do the executives and employees at the theater experience a threat towards their artistic freedom in any other way? Our Norwegian informants, including both actors and managers, did not feel that the cultural policy limited their work. The artistic director stated:

I experience (...) that we're allowed to do what we want really, within reason. That is, we're allowed to keep control with what we do except for the economic aspects. I experience that we really have a huge freedom of action.<sup>6</sup>

The artistic director obviously did not feel that the public funders threatened his artistic autonomy. The economic concerns seemed to be the only limitation and only object of governmental control in the relationship between the government and the theaters. An actor who has worked in the Norwegian Theater for many years, and who was previously a board member in the theater, confirms this view:

There is indeed no other public regulation than the economic [regulation, i.e. support]. The theatre is absolutely free to do whatever it wishes. It's like this: 'Here you have 85 million if you please. You have to tell us what you do with it [the money], and you must provide a report.' But there are no other restrictions than this. There are no artistic restrictions whatsoever. There is nothing except for the economic aspect of it.

The actor is even more convincing in his claim. The government is absent in their governance towards the theater, as the theater receives their support and may do whatever they want (within reason) with the money.

How about the management objectives outlined in the funding agreement? How do they relate to goals and instructions outlined in those documents? 'We try to "dress up nicely" for the government', the artistic director replies. Large numbers of audience members, nice reviews, exciting initiatives and co-productions all look nice in the reports, he claims, but it does not seem as if this is decisive.

The responsibility towards the government seems surprisingly relaxed. However, the responsibility towards civil society is still present in Norwegian theaters. Sigrid Røyseng emphasizes this when she claims that most theaters in Norway, and particularly the large institutions, have been awarded an assignment to work for 'the betterment of society' (Røyseng 2009). Besides the artistic mission, civil society expects the theaters to maintain their historic buildings. Moreover, there is an expectation from civil society that these theaters shall serve both regional and language policy goals. There are also expectations that theaters shall enlighten, educate and enrich people. Røyseng describes general, discursive expectations made by civil society towards the theaters. This seems to have a disciplinary effect that regulates the autonomy of theaters.

### **The liberal kingdom of England**

In the categorization by Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey (1989), English cultural policy is referred to as the typical example of The Patron State, in which the arts are funded through the arm's length principle. In England, the arts councils make their grant decisions through a system of peer evaluation. According to Chartrand and McCaughey, this implies that 'the Patron State tends to be evolutionary,

responding to changing forms and styles of art as expressed by the artistic community' (Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989, p. 50). According to the authors, the negative effect of this policy is that the 'Support of artistic excellence may thus result in art that is not accessible to, or appreciated by, the general public, or by its democratically elected representatives' (Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989, p. 50). In other words, the Patron State model facilitates a cultural policy promoting autonomy, probably at the expense of the wishes and needs of society.

In opposition to the Norwegian and Dutch systems, in which support for the large theaters is provided through direct governmental support, all funding in England is provided by the Arts Council of England (ACE). This leaves the politician with no *direct* responsibility for the funding decisions. As a system of cultural policy, the Patron State model is designed to promote autonomy for the arts through a liberal political philosophy. However, the key question is whether this is reflected in political practice? Does this system indeed promote autonomy?

As several scholars have claimed, the Arts Council is not totally independent from the government (Ridley 1987, Quinn 1997, Bertelli *et al.* 2013). According to Quinn, the distance between the government and the ACE has been gradually reduced from its beginning in 1946<sup>7</sup> towards the end of last century. Several scholars have also claimed that there has been a close connection between the bourgeois elite, the government and the Arts Council (Ridley 1987, Williams 1989, Beck 1992). Today, this lack of distance may be most evident in the funding agreement between the Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) and the ACE. In a personal letter sent from the Secretary of State to the Chair of the ACE, he or she outlines this agreement. In the current agreement made in 2012, the ACE makes some clear-cut priorities: a 50% cuts in administration costs and a contribution to the national growth agenda, music and cultural education, thereby supporting an international cultural exchange and more. The ACE forwards these prioritizations to those organizations receiving support, with the organizations required to report on those issues.<sup>8</sup>

The instrumental rhetoric is prominent in the English public support system. Hence, support is not the term frequently used in most documents published by the DCMS and the ACE, as one speaks of *investment* in the culture-sector instead of support (ACE 2010, p. 6). When applying such rhetoric, the ACE signals expectations of a return on investments.

Large theaters in England get their support for a four-year-period based on applications from the theaters. The main document in these applications is a strategic plan outlining the goals that each organization sets for themselves. Goals outlined in these documents are of a general character, but they also tend to be more specific. For example, the goals target the size of the audience, the number of plays, the number of participants in youth activities, etc. In the funding agreement, the ACE states that '[t]he Organization acknowledges that the grant is paid on trust to the Organization for the sole purpose of delivering the Agreed Programme'. At the end of a four-year-period, the ACE evaluates the institutions based on their accomplishments toward these goals, and therefore their return on investments. The system appears as a typical New Public Management regime (Hood 1991).

The ACE primarily supports theaters through the system of National Portfolio Organizations (NPO). The allocation designated for the NPOs is provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This leaves the size of the total support for theaters as a matter of political decisions. The total support for theaters

funded by the ACE was 140 million euros in 2010/2011. In addition to this, several regional theaters also receive support from their respective city council. Both the level and total amount of theater subsidies is lower in England than in both Norway and the Netherlands, while the box office income is also remarkably higher.<sup>9</sup> Private funding and philanthropy is also more common in the UK, and looking at the developments in the funding since the millennium, there has been an increase in support up until 2007/2008. After that, the sector experienced a decrease in funding, particularly from 2011 to 2012. Looking at public support for single theaters (Figure 2), we find that to a large extent the financial situations of the theaters follow the same trend as the overall ACE budgets. That is, when the ACE has experienced budget cuts, so do the single theaters.

Two large theaters, the *Royal Shakespeare Company* and the *Royal National Theatre*, both receive approximately £15 million each, whereas the rest of the theaters receive less than £2.5 million. Looking at the development of ACE support for the largest English theaters (Figure 2), we find that some theaters have had stable support, following the trends of the financial framework of the ACE while other theaters have experienced a year-to-year shift in support:

In addition to the ACE support, many English theaters also receive local or regional support. Such governments also set targets for their ‘investments’, and in general, the ACE addresses clear and measurable goals for the theaters. The ACE also monitors these goals, and the amount of allocations reflects the accomplishments of the theaters.

Looking at the big picture, the most obvious characteristic of England is the relatively low level of public support for theaters compared to Norway, the Netherlands and most other countries in Western Europe. This leaves the theater much more dependent on the market. Because they are dependent on all three sources of income, the market, the ACE and the local government, all these bodies

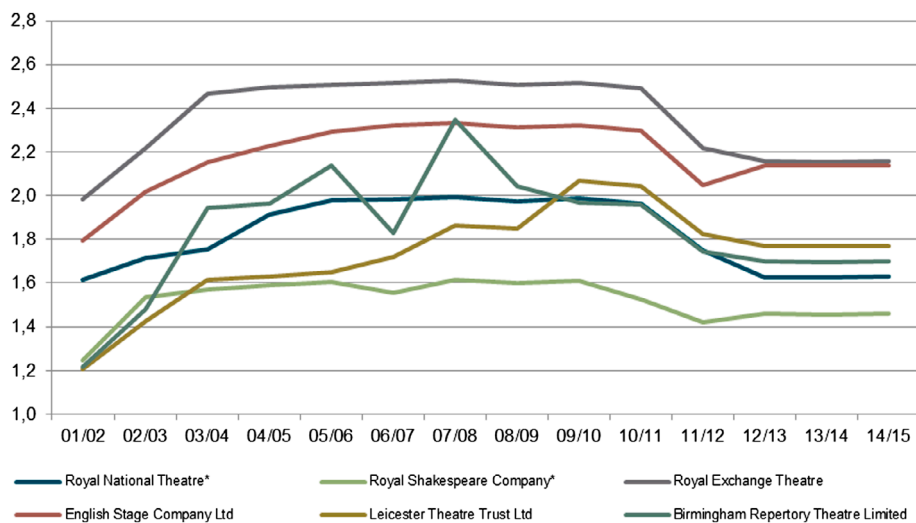


Figure 2. Selected theaters – RFO/NPO investments; in million 2010-£; (\*In 10 million 2010-£).

Source: ACE.

put pressure on artistic autonomy. How do managers of the theaters experience this situation? Do they feel a constant pressure from everywhere?

The artistic director of the English theater was familiar with this situation. Yet, she does not interpret it as a pressure towards artistic autonomy, as her experience with the British system is surprisingly positive:

One of the successes of British theatres is the relationship between the commercial and the subsidised. My experience would say that theatres in the Netherlands are very, very heavily subsidised, and therefore it doesn't need to attract an audience. And often theatre in the Netherlands is attracting [only] people who work in theatre in the Netherlands. And then, if you go to America where there are no subsidies, all theatre has to ... it's basically a business, and it has to attract a certain type of audience that will pay a lot of money to go, and so it can only do a certain type of thing.

The low level of support entails a focus towards society and the audience that the artistic director claimed to be a positive thing. She expressed concerns about how independence and autonomy might result in an introverted attitude among theaters, which has limited the audience to those of a like-minded number of people. On the other hand, she also feared a total adaption to the market, like the American model, in which the audience was limited to those few who could afford it. Even if she has been satisfied with the amount of support up until now, she experiences that the later budget cuts have implied that her ability to take artistic risk has become somewhat limited.

What about the autonomy towards the arts council? To what extent do the theater managers fear punishment if they do not follow up on the targets presented in the supplementary letter? The Executive Director explains how this system works:

Their first decision is, 'Do we like the look of their three-year-plan and their targets?' And if they like it, they will get the money. Then they are just monitoring that you are not varying enormously from what you said you'd do. And yes, I mean every three years there are some people who lose their funding for various reasons.

Based on the informant's experience, there are certainly some risks related to the fulfillment of the targets from the ACE. Both the artistic director and the executive director relate to the targets they have set for themselves in the application to the ACE. However, they do not fear that the ACE will remove all funding for their own organization:

Most of the ones who lose their funding tend not to be linked to a building, because it is obviously easier. They tend not to be building-based like we are. Because it is easier to cut a company that doesn't have a building. It would be much harder for the Arts Council to say to [us], we don't think you are doing your job, we will take away your funding, because this massive building will be left empty in the city.

As a building-based company, funding cuts would create remarkable consequences. If the ACE was not pleased with the English Theater's effort, the executive director suggests that they would rather be lobbying along with the board to dismiss the chief executive: 'There are examples of building-based theatres I can think of where the management has not been funded. And the funding has been returned when there is new management'.



The tight financial situation in the theater also calls for more co-productions. Most English theaters co-produce with other theaters or with the commercial producers who want the show transferred to the private theaters in the West End. Co-producing might involve exciting partnerships, but it also implies a delegation of power and artistic decisions. Co-producing with commercial producers often means limitations in the casting because the co-producers wish to involve star actors. It also means taking a step back as an artistic director, leaving much responsibility in the hands of others.

The autonomy of an artistic director in English theater is limited in several ways. The Arts Council considers your results, and might decrease their funding if they are not satisfied. The funding agreement with the Arts Council also involves minimum numbers of attendance. If the audience is not satisfied and does not show up, the Arts Council will not be satisfied. Being relevant for the audience is hence crucial to all funding, both directly and indirectly.

One might assume that this would terminate any artistic ambitions of the theater or the artistic director, though apparently this does not seem to be the situation. The artistic director in the English theater is widely concerned with artistic excellence, although she does not necessarily connect this to artistic autonomy. Her ambition is primarily not towards art itself, but art in relation to the community. 'My vision for the programme for this theater is that it should reflect the city', the artistic director stated. 'I would like everybody to have one or two things a year that they would like to come to', she says. To what degree such a statement represents a general attitude in England could be a question for further empirical investigation.

### **The world of independence in the Netherlands**

Dutch theaters are also highly dependent on public support. Nonetheless, they do earn a larger share of their income from box office sales than Norwegian theaters. In 2012, the largest theater groups in the Netherlands received an average of 73% of their income from public support (OCW 2012). The central government provides approximately two-thirds of the public support, while the local and regional governments provide approximately one-third. In addition to this, the regional and local governments also provide support for the theater venues (receiving houses).

Looking at the development in the overall state support for the performing arts (including music, opera, dance and ballet), we find that there has been a real increase of 1% annually during the period from 2002 until 2011 (adjusted for CPI). However, the state support has varied quite a bit from one year to another. From 2013, the funding situation has been quite different. In the recent Art Plan for 2013–2016, the government has cut approximately 25% of both the total art budget and the performing arts.

The income distribution for the large theaters in the Netherlands is not very different from the situation in Norway. Large theaters receive support directly from the Ministry, while smaller theaters receive support from an arm's length body (Performing Arts Fund NL). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science allocates their funding through the *Basic Infrastructure for Culture* (BIS – culturele basisinfrastructuur). This is a grant given for a four-year-period based on the current Dutch culture plan (Cuulturnota). In this plan, the Ministry of Culture defines clear terms for institutions that may be included in the Basic Infrastructure, such as the maximum numbers of groups included, a minimum of earned income, a



minimum of productions and the geographic location of the theaters. However, unlike the Norwegian system, it is not specified as to which institutions shall be included in the Basic Infrastructure. Every four years, the State Secretary of Culture Affairs determines which theater group will be offered such a position based on recommendations given by the Council for Culture (Raad vor Cultuur).

For the period from 2013 to 2016, these recommendations were presented in a detailed report compiled by the Council for Culture, evaluating every organization receiving Basic Infrastructure support (Raad Voor Cultuur 2013). In the assignment given to the council, they were asked to evaluate every organization and recommend whether they were to receive a large- (€2.5 million) or small amount of support (€1.5 million). The basis for these recommendations were evaluations of the theaters, in which artistic quality, audience development, cultural entrepreneurship, education, national and international relevance and talent development were all taken into consideration. Unlike the Norwegian allocations presented in the state budget, the Dutch report *Slagen in Cultuur* (Raad Voor Cultuur 2013) underpins the funding by describing in detail the last four years of accomplishments. They give their judgment of their work, and the Ministry of Culture allocates funds based on this judgment. Opposite to the Norwegian government, the Dutch government does exploit their influential potential when setting goals for the theaters. Furthermore, they also introduce a technocratic scheme of standardization.

Throughout the years, Dutch theater groups have experienced changing budgets because of changing governments, but the amount of money allocated has also changed between each theater group (Figure 3). In opposition to what we saw in the Norwegian case, support for Dutch theaters has shifted quite dramatically from one funding period to the next. If the government claims that the theater has not accomplished their ambitions, they are likely to be ‘punished’ through funding cuts:

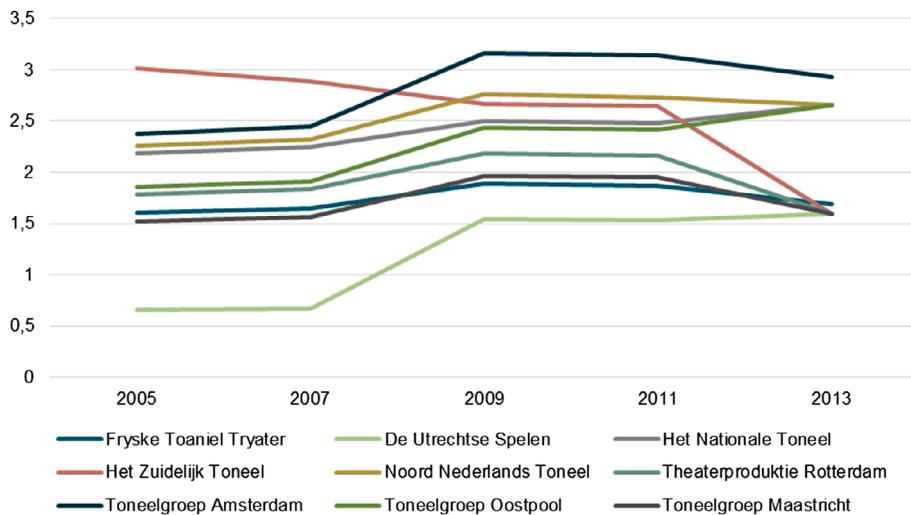


Figure 3. State support for theaters receiving direct support from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2005–2013; in million 2010 Euro.

Source: Ministerie va Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap.

The Dutch theater system has sometimes been referred to as, *A world of independence* (Van Maanen 2002). This may be understood through the history of Dutch theaters, since up until 1969, the theater landscape of the Netherlands consisted of several municipal repertory companies. This system collapsed during the so-called Action Tomato<sup>10</sup> in 1969, transforming the landscape from large repertory-based theaters into several small independent theater groups.

This collapse represented a shift in Dutch cultural policy, thereby creating room for a completely new way of organizing theaters, for which the Netherlands and Flemish parts of Belgium are renowned. While independent, fringe groups have developed in the shadows of repertoire companies in most other European countries, such independent groups have defined the Dutch system. Dutch theaters were supposed to produce theater for art's sake, and not for the betterment of society.

Despite this, in the mid-90s theater audiences decreased. In debates, this was interpreted as a difference in proficiency in the language of art between the professions and the audience (Van Maanen 2002). The independence from society made theaters irrelevant for a large part of the Dutch people (Van Maanen 2002). The recent shift in Dutch theater policy and the establishment of the Basic Infrastructure may be understood as an answer to this challenge and as a step towards (local) society. In the selection of theaters to be included in the Basic Infrastructure, the Ministry prioritized theaters located in different parts of the country. They also emphasized partnerships with city venues. What about the independence from the funding government? The nature of theater groups working separately from theater buildings makes it much easier for the government to reprioritize their resources. If one theater group in a certain city has to shut down due to a lack of funding, the programming city theater might find other theater groups to step in. For example, in 2001 the Ministry of Culture chose not to continue the support of the famous theater group, Maatschappij Discordia.

The history of Dutch theater is a history of a decreasing autonomy and an increasing emphasis on societal relevance, audience development governed through technocracy and new public management. Today, Dutch theater groups need to be of local, national and international relevance. If not, other theater groups are knocking on the funding doors.

### **The inversed autonomy**

This study draws a quite different picture of autonomy than the picture presented in theoretical descriptions of this concept, both in cultural policy and in general welfare policy. The liberalistic country of England has always promoted the arm's length principle. The policy researcher Anthony Beck noted that the British government, as a liberal and democratic government, will never have a cultural policy. 'There is a fundamental conviction that art and politics must never mix', he stated (Beck 1992, p. 139). On both a rhetorical and political level, English cultural policy highlights artistic autonomy as a fundamental principle. Nevertheless, looking at the results of their policy, the artistic autonomy is surprisingly absent. Instead, the theater focuses on the community and its obligation towards the citizens. Paradoxically, liberty is more or less replaced by social responsibility.

Deeply rooted in a social democratic policy, the Norwegian cultural policy consists of a system in which theaters receive their support directly from the Ministry, and where each theater is assigned a single line in the state budget. Economically,

theaters are solely dependent on the state and the local governments. Even so, despite this close relationship with the government, Norwegian theaters emphasize artistic autonomy as a core value. In their work, the executives in the theaters also experience their autonomy to be widespread, and not at all threatened by a close relationship to the state. Working for the betterment of society, which one might claim to be crucial in a social democratic country, is considered a threat to artistic autonomy. Making theater for society implies a lack of integrity. This autonomy, and thus liberty, seems far more important than social responsibility in Norwegian theaters.

In the Netherlands, liberty and artistic autonomy has been the trademark in their cultural policy since the 1970s. By favouring small independent fringe groups, Dutch theater was supposed to develop on its own terms. In the last 10 years, this prioritization has changed in favor of larger theater groups, with a special focus on a city or geographical area. There has been a shift from artistic autonomy and independence towards social responsibility and local affiliation. Looking at the general policy in the Netherlands, a shift has taken place simultaneously from a social democratic policy towards a more liberal welfare policy: ‘a shift from inclusive solidarity towards exclusive selectivity, from collective responsibility towards individual responsibility’ (Oorschot 2006, p. 72).

Social scientists who have studied welfare state policy from a comparative angle have often distinguished the ‘social democratic’ welfare regime from the ‘liberal’ welfare regime (Esping-Andersen [1990] 2012). They describe the social democratic, Nordic model with words such as solidarity, universalism and equality. Liberty and individualism are key words when describing a ‘liberal’ welfare regime. In descriptions of Nordic cultural policy, universalism and equality are concepts that continue to recur (Mulcahy 2001, Duelund 2008, Mangset *et al.* 2008). In the special issue on Nordic cultural policy published in this journal in 2008, the editors emphasize social welfare goals, egalitarianism, homogeneity and socio-culture decentralization, though not artistic autonomy, when describing the Nordic cultural policy (Mangset *et al.* 2008).

However, when discussing the Nordic model in terms of general welfare policy, several scholars have emphasized the liberal and individualistic characteristics. The historian Lars Trägårdh introduces the term *Statist individualism* (Trägårdh 1997). Paradoxically, such individualism is made possible through a strong state intervention in civil society:

In the Nordic countries, the extremely active state is the main instrument to strengthen individual freedom. The population does not seem to experience that the freedom they achieve through public services undermines their autonomy, and thus needs to be limited. An exceptionally large part of the population is ‘redeemed’ from market dependence through social security and other social benefits. (Vike 2012, p. 130)

It may be reasonable to interpret the cultural policy in such terms as well. Even though the cultural policy emphasizes societal needs, all Norwegian cultural policy documents highlight the autonomy of the arts and intrinsic values, and discusses how the state may most effectively promote such values (Bakke 2003, Hylland 2009). In Tobias Hardings interpretations of the development of social democratic cultural policy in Sweden, he also emphasizes how the concept of *Bildning* included the development of institutions promoting professionalism and artistic quality (Harding 2015).

Nordic artist policy, including direct support for artists, may also be interpreted as a form of *Statist individualism*. To a large extent, direct support for artists has been looked upon as a part of the Nordic welfare policy, hence securing predictable income conditions for artists (Moulin 1992, Mangset 1995). In England, there exists no direct support schemes for artists, whereas in the Netherlands such schemes have been phased out in recent years (Hamersveld 2009). Nonetheless, one may also consider direct support for artists as the ultimate form of autonomy within cultural policy. A committee consisting of a majority of representatives from artist organizations appropriates and distributes such grants. They make their judgment based on the applicant's artistic achievements, with the allocation implying few or no guidelines for the artists. When comparing Finnish and Norwegian artist policy, Merja Heikkinen also emphasizes the focus on artistic autonomy. Toward the end of the last century, she finds an increased focus on the intrinsic value of the arts, rather than arguments based on welfare and income policy, when studying Norwegian governmental reports on artist policy (Heikkinen 2003, p. 302).

Looking at the liberal state of England, one might assume that individualism and autonomy were highly valued. In political rhetoric, the 'neo-liberal globalization' has been described with buzzwords such as freedom, individualism and authenticity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001, McGuigan 2005). Still, when describing neo-liberal cultural policy, McGuigan describes this as a shift away from culture as a core rationale towards economic and social goals: 'The predominant rationale for cultural policy today is economic, in terms of competitiveness and regeneration, and, to a lesser extent, social, as an implausible palliative to exclusion and poverty' (McGuigan 2005, p. 238). Unsurprisingly, the economic rationales are present in the liberal cultural policy. However, social goals also constitute an important rationale in neo-liberal policy. When discussing the New Labor Policy that has influenced British cultural policy at the beginning of this century, Hesmondhalgh *et al.* (2014) claim that cultural policymakers not only pushed in the direction of economic benefits, they also emphasized social benefits through cultural policy. In Belfiore and Bennett's book, *The Social impacts of the arts* (2008), they discuss this policy more closely. With special reference to the former Minister of Culture Chris Smith and his New Labor government, they show how their policy documents emphasized the arts' potential contribution to neighborhood renewal and improving communities in the areas of health, crime, employment and education. My empirical findings reflecting present British cultural policy may thus not be surprising. Since Chartrand and McCaughey made their typology back in the 80s, one might assume that British cultural policy have gone through an instrumental turn.

Lee (2008), however, claims that the history of British theater policy is more or less a history of civilizing claims. In the liberalistic British policy, public support for the arts needed to be justified by some sort of instrumental or external claims. However, she does not interpret this as an instrumentalization of the arts, but rather the opposite: '[it] was a part of making of "culture" in its modern sense and developing the idea of autonomous arts' (Lee 2008, p. 297).

One could also question whether the liberal British policy emphasizes personal autonomy rather than institutional autonomy. As Blomgren claims, promoting personal autonomy in cultural policy may imply that the state should 'stand neutral to the individual's choice of the good life' (2012, p. 523).

Taking a glance towards the Netherlands, their cultural policy has shifted quite dramatically. In the 1970s, when social democratic elements characterized the

policy model of the Netherlands, the autonomy of the theater groups was substantial. In recent decades, when the introduction of liberal elements in their welfare system has been substantial (according to Oorschot 2006), the autonomy of theater groups has decreased. The Netherlands is no longer a world of independence in terms of their theater policy. Political goals and societal needs permeate their decision-making and allocations.

## Conclusion

In the field of cultural policy research, studies of autonomy often emphasize how different policy systems relate to artistic autonomy. Such studies have focused on the political system, with its issues and choices. In this article, I have included an empirical case study that underscores how art institutions experience the policy. Through such a perspective, I have revealed an interesting insight that could help to shed new light on the notion of how a different approach to cultural policy entails differences in the autonomy of the arts.

The empirical basis of this work is not sufficiently comprehensive for making general conclusions. Yet, one might derive some interesting hypotheses based on these findings. The cultural policy of social democratic countries, often described with keywords such as solidarity, universalism and equality, puts much effort in giving artists artistic freedom. Based on the concept of Lars Trägårdh, one may claim that the social democratic state warrants artistic autonomy by protecting the arts from the market. However, by defining the citizens as the market, they simultaneously undermine the desires and influence of those citizens, and hence a cultural democracy.<sup>11</sup> Opposite to this, in the liberal cultural policy of England both politicians and artists put a higher emphasis on the citizens, not only as consumers, but also as members of society. Their wishes and needs are highly valued, and they appreciate their opinion as something more than merely market influence.

Even though the typology of Hilman-Chartrand and McCaughey (1989) was developed thirty years ago, and has been subject to much criticism, their general assumption concerning the autonomy of the art has to a lesser extent been challenged. It is further a common understanding that the promotion of personal autonomy entails the promotion of artistic autonomy. Through my comparative study, I have instead discovered the opposite. Liberal policy does not necessarily entail liberty and autonomy within arts policy. Moreover, a social democratic policy does not necessarily entail social responsibility and a democratic approach to culture policy. Bourdieu describes the field of cultural production as the Economic World Reversed. My claim in this article is that cultural policy may be described as the autonomous world reversed.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes

1. Several scholars have claimed that for Kant, esthetic experience and practical reasons are two aspects of the moral (Scruton 1982, p. 91).
2. Mangset (2009) also discuss this in his article on the arm's length principle.

3. In this article, the theaters are referred to as The Norwegian Theater, The English Theater and The Dutch Theater.
4. The Norwegian case study was done some years ago as part of another research project (Kleppe *et al.* 2010) and (Mangset *et al.* 2012).
5. Smaller fringe theaters receive support from Arts Council Norway. Additionally, there are also some private theaters in Norway that do not receive public support.
6. All Norwegian citations are translated by the author.
7. In 1994, The Arts Council of Great Britain was divided to form the Arts Council of England (now Arts Council England), the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales.
8. [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/DCMS\\_funding\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/DCMS_funding_agreement.pdf) (7 January 2014).
9. According to the annual survey of National Portfolio Organisations 2012/2013, 32% of the theaters' total income were subsidies, 58% was earned income, while 10% was contributed income.
10. 'In October 1969, students at the Amsterdam Drama School interrupted a performance by the prestigious Nederlandse Comedie by hurling seven tomatoes. The rising generation of theatre makers was airing the view that Dutch repertory theatre was "rotten" and needed to become more socially committed and artistically innovative. The protesters, calling themselves the "Tomato Action Group", believed that theatre, which attracted hardly any audience from the lower classes, had become a bourgeois institution' (Hamersveld 2009, p. 183).
11. In line with Blomgrens assertions (2012), one might also question whether the autonomy of the citizens is weakened by the autonomy of the artists in the Nordic countries.

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## **Article 2:**

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# **Managing autonomy: Analysing arts management and artistic autonomy through the theory of justification**

## **Abstract**

Arts management has commonly been analysed as a microcosm of the art field, in which struggles between artistic, economic, administrative and societal considerations are constantly being fought. Using the field theory of Bourdieu, scholars have attempted to uncover levels of functional differentiation within arts organizations, and interpreted differentiation between artistic considerations and economic and administrative considerations as a core element in defining the artistic autonomy of such organizations.

In this article, I present an alternative approach to the interpretation of artistic autonomy in arts management. Through the stories of three artistic directors and the way in which they run their theatres, I aim to show how the *theory of justification* (developed by Boltanski and Thévenot) and shed new light on the interpretation of arts management, as well as on the understanding of artistic autonomy more generally.

Keywords: arts management, autonomy of art, differentiation, theory of justification

Word count: 7814

## **Introduction**

One of the main topics in studies of arts management, cultural policy research and studies in cultural sociology concern artistic autonomy. In recurring arts management questions, who is eligible to make artistic decisions in arts organizations, and which arguments are plausible when artistic and strategic plans are to be made, are commonly discussed. In this paper, I wish to present and analyse how three different artistic directors in three different countries make their artistic decisions, how they justify these decisions, and how they manage and justify their positions as leaders.

This is not a new topic in the academic field of arts management and cultural sociology. In both organizational theory and cultural sociology, artistic autonomy has been analysed through *functional differentiation* (Wennes 2002, Maitlis and Lawrence 2003, Eikhof and Haunschild 2007, Røyseng 2008, van Maanen 2008, Daigle and Rouleau 2010, Kuesters 2010, Järvinen *et al.* 2015). In arts management, functional differentiation typically occurs when organizations distinguish between artistic personnel and considerations on the one hand, and economic, administrative and technical personal and considerations on the other. In studies of artistic autonomy in arts management, such practices have been interpreted as a strategy to keep artistic production clean from the interference of other “instrumental” and heteronomous logics, including the pure “art for art’s sake”.

In several such studies, the field theory of Bourdieu (1993, 1996) has been applied. According to Bourdieu, the autonomy of the art, manifested in the tautological sentence, “Art for art sake”, defines and separates the field of cultural production from other social fields.

Theories developed by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann make similar distinctions when claiming that social systems, such as the system of art, which needs to

define borders to other social systems in order to be maintained (Luhmann 2000). Several empirical studies of the art field in general, and arts management in particular, have applied these theories, and shown how these processes still occur today as a way to keep artistic decisions “unpolluted” by other rationalities (DiMaggio 1988, Chiapello 1998, Wennes 2002, Maitlis and Lawrence 2003, Eikhof and Haunschild 2007, Røyseng 2007, Røyseng 2008, Mangset *et al.* 2012). Simultaneously, recent studies in arts management also describe the process of *de-differentiation*. These studies describe a management practice in which art and economy are not separate fields within the organization (Kuesters 2010, Heywood *et al.* 2014, Järvinen *et al.* 2015).

However, all of these studies are primarily concerned with the levels of differentiation, and to what extent autonomous or heteronomous principles underlie decisions being made within the organizations. What I found to be interesting in my comparative study of theatre management was the plenitude of *heteronomous* reasoning. While the ideal of “art for art’s sake” pervades decisions and activities in the three theatres to a varying degree, the three theatre directors also related to several other logics. I found the content of these logics to be particularly interesting. In this paper, I will therefore present these logics, and further analyse how these logics interacted with artistic autonomy.

In order to theoretically approach this plenitude of heteronomous reasoning, I found the theory of justification, developed by Boltanski and Thévenot, to be applicable. This theory has been successfully applied in recent studies of arts management (Daigle and Rouleau 2010, Larsen 2013, Nijzink *et al.* 2015, Kann-Rasmussen 2016). However, few studies have attempted to link this theory directly to

discussions of artistic autonomy and functional differentiation.<sup>1</sup> Applying this theory further represents an attempt to challenge the epistemology of Bourdieu and Luhman. Their somewhat structural approach to understanding autonomy has been criticized by the new generation of cultural sociologists (Lamont 1992, Lamont and Thévenot 2000, Alexander and Smith 2001, Alexander and Smith 2006, Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). These scholars call for a more grounded approach in which an analysis emphasizes the agency of the social actor by not only categorizing them through theories and categories a priori, but also by emphasizing their decisions and their justifications of these decisions.

Before explaining my theoretical approach any further, I find it necessary to provide a short introduction of the empirical approach to the three artistic directors.

### **Three approaches to arts management**

Gerrit, Henrik and Sarah<sup>2</sup> run three of the largest subsidized theatres in the Netherlands, Norway and England. *Gerrit* is the head of the Dutch Theatre Group (DTG), where he replaced the former artistic director 13 years ago. Since that time, he has developed the company to become one of the leading theatre groups in Europe. His artistic ensemble includes 25 actors, and the total theatre group employs approximately 90 people. As with most Dutch theatres, the DTG has no stage of their own, but rather a close cooperation with the city theatre, touring both domestically and globally with their

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<sup>1</sup> One exception, however, is the recent book, *The Problem of Theatrical Autonomy* (Edelman *et al.* 2017), which combines the theory of justification with Bourdieusian field theory

<sup>2</sup> Both persons and theatres in this paper are given fictitious names due to privacy considerations.

performances.

*Henrik* is the artistic director of one of the largest theatres in Norway. He has more than 40 actors and 100 other employees under his control, and runs a large theatre with three stages established more than 100 years ago. Henrik has recently been appointed as an artistic director, taking over from the former artistic director who had worked there for six years.

*Sarah* has been working as an artistic director in one of the largest regional theatres in England for three years. As with Henrik, she also runs a large theatre building with three stages and many employees. However, in contrast to both Henrik and Gerrit, she has no permanent ensemble of actors, and does not control the theatre organization entirely by herself. She shares the position as a chief executive with William, the executive director.

In addition to their job as artistic directors, Gerrit, Henrik and Sarah all direct plays. Artistic decisions are therefore being made at several levels, concerning both long-term programming and artistic decisions related to individual plays.

### **Differentiation in arts management**

Bourdieu encourages us to study artistic autonomy as a continuous struggle through communicative action (1993, 1996). Several scholars have claimed that such a struggle for autonomy in arts management explicitly occurs within the art's organization (DiMaggio 1988, Chiapello 1998, Wennes 2002, Maitlis and Lawrence 2003, Eikhof and Haunschild 2007, Røyseng 2007, Røyseng 2008, Mangset *et al.* 2012).

Richard Peterson claims that a remarkable change in arts management took place in the late 1960s. From a praxis where an artistic director, commonly holding little or no administrative education, led the entire arts organization to the entrance of the



professional arts administrator, trained to serve external actors and manage administrative tasks. “For performing arts managers, it meant compromising the interests of the chief donors with those of the artistic director and personnel – conductors, choreographers, actors, singers, players or dancers”, Robertson claims. (1986:164).

In a former case study of a Norwegian theatre, Sigrid Røyseng finds that the division of labour between the artistic domain and the financial and administrative domains of the theatre further seems to reflect different objectives: “Art and the business world [in Norwegian theatres] appear to have fundamentally different perspectives”, she states (2008:47), “From the artistic perspective, the business perspective is seen as a danger. It is seen as an alien force that should not be given too much space” (ibid.).

By differentiating the artistic practice from the financial and administrative practice, one is able to preserve the autonomy of the art as a constitutive category, she claims. Studies of arts management in Norway have described this functional differentiation as a battle between the *beauty and the beast* (Wennes 2002, Røyseng 2008).

Such descriptions, however, are challenged by recent empirical studies of arts management and cultural policy (Ellmeier 2003, Kuesters 2010, Järvinen *et al.* 2015), as well as the contributions of cultural studies and post-modern theories (Chambers 1986, Lash and Urry 1994). In a study of arts managers in German performing music organizations, Ivonne Kuester finds few signs of a functional differentiation (2010).

Järvinen *et al.* (2015) also provide an interesting description of Finnish theatres, in which the practice of dual leadership has recently emerged. They present several forms of dual leadership consisting of two artistic directors, as well as one artistic

director and one cooperating CEO. In general, these pairs cooperate quite well without any significant struggles between artistic and non-artistic considerations.

My empirical findings also deviate from the descriptions of differentiation, at least those from England and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, I found it insufficient to limit my analyses by solely defining the artistic directors on a scale of differentiation. What I found to be interesting about the three artistic directors and their associates was the different ways they justified their artistic decisions. They all interpreted artistic autonomy differently, and thus developed different strategies to make space for their artistic ambitions. In order to make such an analysis, I applied the theory of justification.

### **Justification in arts management**

According to Boltanski and Thévenot, social actors always need to justify their actions and arguments. In creating a repertoire, and making artistic decisions and balancing artistic, financial and societal considerations, artistic directors need to *justify* these decisions in one way or another. Yet, such a justification must be made according to a (limited) set of higher common principles or common worlds (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999, Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). This set of *common worlds* ties the social actor when he or she wishes to claim universality in his/her reasoning (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). The common worlds each inherit specific mind-sets that may be applied as the justification of a certain viewpoint. This makes the methodology particularly relevant when analysing decision-making, legitimization processes, strategic planning or political debates (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:359). In their book, *On Justification*, Boltanski and Thévenot present six common worlds: 1) *The inspired world*, which values creation and inspiration; 2) *The domestic world*, which values

tradition, lineage and family; 3) *The opinion world*, which is limited to the recognition of others; 4) *The civic world*, which values collective goods and equality; 5) *The market world*, which values profit and the law of the market; and 6) *The industrial world*, which values productivity, rationality and competencies. When justifying an action, social actors refers more or less to one or several of these worlds.<sup>3</sup>

When analysing artistic autonomy, the *inspired world* seems to be of particular interest. “Reference to this world is made [...] each time people attain worth without bothering about opinions of others” (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:370). They claim that it arises in the personal body prepared by asceticism through emotions. The self-referential logic of the inspired world has much in common with Bourdieu’s description of the “nomos” of the artistic field in “art for art’s sake”. “The principle of grace sets inspired worth apart from the other forms of worth – which are denounced as worldly interests that lead to folly and discord when they are pursued”, they state (2006:86). This brings the association further to the Weberian concept of charismatic leaders, in which a person’s authority is provided through a “certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (Weber 1992:48). Within the theory of justification, the inspired world may therefore be understood as the outermost form of artistic autonomy.

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<sup>3</sup> Boltanski and Thévenot present six common worlds in their book, *On Justification*. However, their methodology does not exclude other common worlds. Subsequently, they introduced a *project-oriented world* (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007 [1999]) and a *green world* (Thévenot *et al.* 2000)

## **Methodology**

Previous empirical studies on functional differentiation within arts management indicate that there may be different practices in different countries (Røyseng 2008, Kuesters 2010). Inspired by the work of Ann Swidler and Michell Lamont, one might also assume that there exists different (national) cultural repertoires affecting the actions and choices of the artistic directors (Swidler 1986, Lamont 1992). From an empirical perspective, this study investigates theatres in three different countries with remarkable differences in cultural policy and theatre organization: The Netherlands, Norway and England. This international comparison allows me to be able to discover different repertoires of justification that may be related to institutional differences such as cultural policy and arts management, as well as various management cultures.

Methodologically, this case study includes participant observation and qualitative interviews, supplemented by document studies.<sup>4</sup> The British case study was conducted in a typical regional theatre in one of the large cities outside of London. The Dutch fieldwork was conducted at one of the top theatre groups in the country, while the Norwegian case study was conducted in one of the largest theatres outside the capital. The fieldwork in both England and the Netherlands was conducted in 2014/2015, whereas the Norwegian fieldwork was conducted in 2008. In England, I spent one week in the theatre following several of the administrative and artistic employees in their work. I also conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with actors and administrative employees in key positions, including the artistic director, the executive director and the general manager. In the Netherlands, I spent one week in May 2014 and

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<sup>4</sup> The study is part of a larger PhD project analysing differences in theatre policy and theatre organization in these three countries.

one week in May 2015. In both my field stays, I followed the rehearsals of two different plays directed by the artistic director, and also conducted 12 interviews with actors and executives, including the artistic director. The Norwegian case study was conducted by Per Mangset, Sigrid Røyseng and I in 2008 as part of another research project.<sup>5</sup> This study included 13 qualitative interviews with actors and administrative executives, including the artistic director, and all my informants have been anonymized. However, in cases in which the informants may be recognizable, they have been offered a citation check.

In all three countries, I studied large theatres within the subsidized sector, all of which work on a high artistic level, being among the most important organization in their respective countries. The three countries were selected both because of their differences in cultural policy, and because of their different traditions within theatre management. The degree of national representativeness hence varies among the three cases. Based on the information I attained from the interviewees, in addition to former empirical studies (Wennes 2002, Røyseng 2007, Røyseng 2008, Dorney and Merkin 2010, Mangset *et al.* 2012, Heywood *et al.* 2014), I venture to claim that both the Norwegian and British cases are somewhat representative of similar theatres in these countries. This is also the case, however to a smaller extent, for the Dutch case.

When analysing the relationship among cultural policy, organizational structures and justification, I will not make any claims about strict causal relationships. Nevertheless, inspired by Swidler and Lamout, I consider both cultural policy and organizational structures as part of the “tool kit” they may use in “varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems” (Swidler 1986:273). The national

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<sup>5</sup> Publications in this project include (Kleppe *et al.* 2010) and (Mangset *et al.* 2012).

structures and cultures are not defining ends of actions, but rather “providing cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action” (ibid.).

An important methodological prerequisite for using the theoretical framework of Boltanski and Thévenot is that the researcher must refrain from preconceptions:

A sociology which wants to study the critical operations performed by actors – a sociology of criticism taken as a specific object – must therefore give up (if only temporarily) the critical stance, in order to recognize the normative principles which underline the critical activity of ordinary persons. (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:364)

Throughout my fieldwork, I tried to approach the field in such an open-minded manner and temporarily give up the critical stance. Honestly, I find such an ideal hard to accomplish. The challenges, but also the privileges, of making a comparative study includes the fact that you make comparisons you either want or not. Nonetheless, I attempted to work inductively according to the ideals of Clifford Geertz, listening to the informants, trusting my ethnographic sensibility and interpreting the interviewees’ understanding of theatre life and arts management. Now, let us take a closer look at the stories of the three directors.

## **Henrik from Norway**

Henrik, the artistic director of The Norwegian Theatre, is both an artistic director and chief executive. As with any Norwegian theatre, Henrik is responsible for all decisions made at the theatre, and is therefore accountable to the theatre board (see Figure 1). The management of the theatre also consists of an executive director by the name of Hedda, who is subordinate to Henrik, but who has a wide range of responsibilities such as finance, marketing and production. These two branches constitute the differences between the artistic and non-artistic part of the organization, e.g. the functional

differentiation.

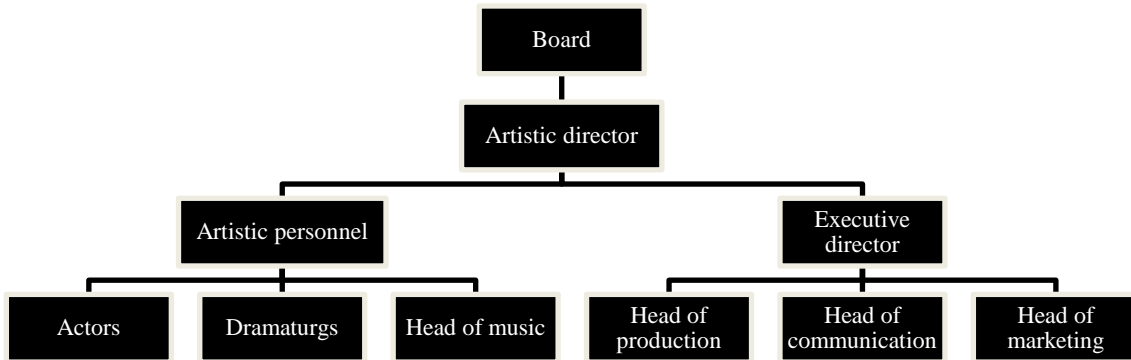


Figure 1: Organizational structure of The Norwegian Theatre

This division is not only a division of labour, it also distinguishes which part of the organization is “allowed” to take part in the artistic decision-making. Artistic decisions are reserved for artistic personnel only, as the administrative staff is more or less excluded. When we interviewed the head of communication and the head of marketing in The Norwegian Theatre, this became evident. They felt both excluded from decisions concerning the programming of the theatre, and commented on how this practice sometimes resulted in some unfortunate situations:

When we shall have a focus on a young audience in secondary schools, it is not good for us when [the plays] are staged in December. If they had asked us, we could then say: You have to stage that in September or October.

The sales and marketing personnel find such practices frustrating, since they realize that their task is not to make artistic decisions. Nonetheless, they think that their knowledge of marketing and sales could be included more wisely in the planning. The actors we interviewed also touch upon this principle of functional differentiation. Some of them explicitly stress that the executive director, with her financial thinking, shall not influence artistic decisions whatsoever.

Regarding differentiation, my empirical findings from Norway back up the conclusion made by Røyseng: “The autonomy of the art still works as a constitutive category” (2008:47). It is likely to conclude in the same way: Henrik’s autonomy is considerable, and is protected by both systems and traditions.

Henrik is not the only artistic director in Norway who holds such an autonomous position. This way of managing theatres has a long tradition within the Norwegian performing arts sector. The history of Norwegian repertory theatre includes several descriptions of artistic directors who have made supreme decisions, some of which have threatened to ruin the theatre (Ringdal 2000, Røyseng 2007, Fidjestøl 2013). This strong tradition of supreme directors became evident in 2013, when the board of one the largest theatres in Norway decided to appoint the general manager as chief executive of the theatre. This resulted in a massive resistance from all artistic directors in Norway. In a common statement, they wrote:

This is a violation against a principle that has dominated Norwegian theatre for more than 100 years; namely that art comes first, and that the artistic director shall have full responsibility for the theatre, artistically and financially.<sup>6</sup>

This citation stems from a *critical moment*, as described by Boltanski and Thévenot. An important decision is about to be made which may threaten the autonomy of the artistic director as such. In their aim to justify the autonomous position of the artistic director, reference is made to the *domestic world*, in which tradition is the core value. The artistic director has always been in charge, and it should continue like that. References to the *domestic world* are also being made by several of my informants at the theatre when discussing forms of leadership. One of the dramaturgs who has worked at the theatre for

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.scenekunst.no/pub/scenekunst/main/?aid=3473> (my translation)



several years under several artistic directors explains how she needs to adjust every time a new artistic leader is appointed:

In this fresh collaboration I have to listen, and find out where his [the artistic director] heart is. It takes some time, but it's something I just have to figure out [...] It's quite hierarchical this theatre, it's a bit feudal.

The reference to a feudal principle is made by several of the actors as well:

There's no reason to hide the fact that it's not democratic. I can't go [to the artistic director] and say that, "I absolutely think that" . . . . No. You're not allowed to do that. So it's a pyramid. It always has been, and you can't get away from that fact either—with the king at the top and all us others beneath him. But if you play ball with the king, then it works

In a former study, we interpreted this approach as a sign of charismatic leadership in the Weberian sense (Mangset *et al.* 2012). Yet, it is also reasonable to interpret this through how Boltanski and Thévenot describe the *domestic world*.

In the domestic world, worth is not dependent on the creativity of persons, but rather on the position given in a line of nobility and tradition. The position Henrik has achieved is of course also a result of his artistic achievements. When Henrik acquired the position as artistic director, this was due to his artistic accomplishments, and thus his abilities to work within the *inspired world*. However, the powerful position he was given, making him the “king” of the theatre, seems to be grounded in a tradition going back more than 100 years in time. An artistic director does not need to earn respect, as being appointed as an artistic director provides him with this respect. However, if he preserves this respect over time is not definite. One of the actors describes the relationship to a new artistic director as such: “We are thrilled at the beginning, but as time passes we are not quite as enthusiastic anymore.”

As an artistic director, Henrik is given control of most decisions being made in The Norwegian Theatre, and also has extensive artistic autonomy that he may manage in several ways. And even though the people in charge of marketing and communication are somewhat excluded in the artistic choice being made, it does not necessary imply that financial thinking is excluded. When Henrik describes his vision for the theatre, he is absolutely familiar with money making: “I expressed very early on that I was keen to make broad, popular theatre, because I have a ‘commercial gene.’” I like it when there are a lot of people coming to my performances”, he says. He further states that: “I try to adapt the repertoire against various audience groups. [...] This city is a very complex city in the way that it has many groups that are large and very visible.”

When programming the theatre, Henrik makes references to both the *market world* and the *civic world*. Henrik focuses on plays with a commercial potential that will make money and maximize profits. Furthermore, his focus towards the audience, and particularly towards the diversity of the audience, seems to be justified with reference to the civic world where: “A sovereign is formed by the convergence of human wills, as citizens give up their particular interests and direct themselves exclusively towards the common good” (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999:371). References to the civic world were also evident in a similar study of Norwegian performing arts organisations (Larsen 2013).

## **Sarah from Britain**

Moving to England, we meet Sarah, who has worked as an artistic director in the British Regional Theatre (BRT) for three years. BRT is one of the largest regional theatres in England. Even though Sarah is in charge of the artistic work, she always relies on

William, the executive director, when making decisions. They are both *Chief Executives*, and therefore both responsible to the board.

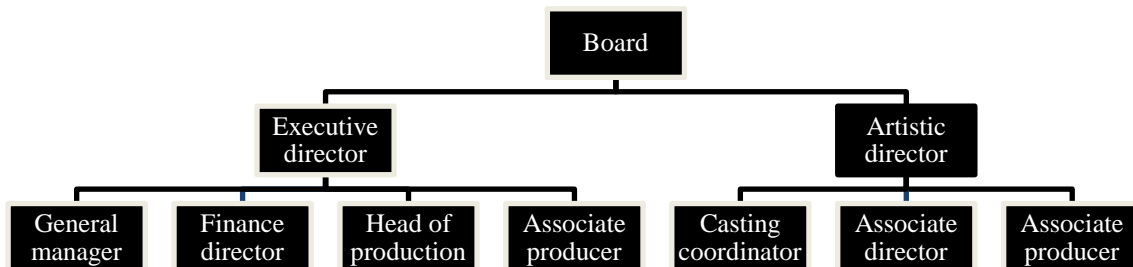


Figure 2: Organizational structure in The British Regional Theatre

In Norway, theatre managers have traditionally considered shared leadership as a violation against an ancient principle, while in Britain such a model of management is quite common.<sup>7</sup> When Sarah entered the BRT, she knew that she would share the role as Chief Executive with William. William took part in the employment process, and it was of great importance that they came along together. According to both Sarah and William, this was essential for making management work. “It is like a marriage”, Sarah says, and to make such a marriage work, “you have to fundamentally agree what direction the theatre needs to go in, and what your purpose of the theatre is”. William confirms this view, claiming that a good collaboration and a fundamental consensus are crucial to making the arrangement work. If such a cooperation works (as it truly did for Sarah and William), they both emphasize the positive aspects of it. Sarah says:

If you do have someone you get on with, it’s incredibly supportive because it’s a lonely job running something. And no one else has as much responsibility as you do. So having someone else who splits that responsibility with you, who you can

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<sup>7</sup> In England, some theatres are headed by the artistic director, and some by the executive director.

pick up from when they're down, and who can pick up from you when you're busy,

Potentially, the primary threat to artistic autonomy concerns artistic decisions and programming. BRT is both a producing theatre and a presenting theatre, and therefore has to make decisions on their own productions and in programming external productions.

When making artistic decisions, Sarah has established a working group involving most of her artistic staff. In addition to including the artistic staff in decision-making, she gladly involves persons from the administration when making decisions. In fact, even though the artistic director has a lot of artistic expertise available in this working group, she emphasizes the executive director and the general manager when I ask her to whom she listens to the most:

William and Brenda have a very good sense of what will make money and what won't make money. So obviously when I am balancing a season, if we put in something that is a bit risky, we know it won't make money, then I have to know that there are other things I can put in that will.

The relationship between the artistic and administrative staffs is very close at the BRT, which is also reflected in the organizational chart. Even though the responsibility is divided into two branches, the lines are somewhat blurred. One example of such blurring is that there are two associate producers, one subordinate to William and one subordinate to Sarah. In general, both Sarah and William are deeply involved in programming the theatre and in several artistic decisions. William has a wide range of contacts in the theatre world, and attracts several external productions and producers to the BRT. Even if William generally has a certain focus on the financial part of the theatre, they all have the same goal in mind, namely to "to bring people in the city and

the region in touch with theatre”.

Opposite to the management in The Norwegian theatre, the practice at the BRT seems egalitarian. Decisions are made collectively based on considerations made by several of the employees. When applying the methodology of Boltanski and Thévenot on the work of Sarah (and William), it becomes obvious that they primarily justify their artistic decisions with reference to the *civic world*. Sarah is primarily focused on her mission towards the community, largely sacrificing her own wishes and needs, and thus her artistic autonomy. She says:

My vision for the programme for this theatre is that it should reflect the city [...] I would like everybody to have one or two things a year that they would like to come to. And, I programme therefore quite eclectically.

When I ask Sarah what she enjoys the most about being an artistic director, she says: “My favourite time is when all three venues I have programmed are sold out, and the place is absolutely buzzing with people having a good time.”

Much of Sarah’s work was legitimized based on references to the civic world Sarah wanted to make theatre for, in addition to a dialog with the citizens and the local community. Sarah and William further relate to *the market world* when they attempt to maximize the profit of certain plays so that they may cross-subsidize plays they consider artistically interesting. Sarah says that: “I have pushed the main house into a more populist mainstream programme. I am pushing the [small stage] and the [medium stage] into a more avant-garde programme.” Working in a country with a relatively low amount of public support for theatre, they necessarily experience an economic pressure towards artistic autonomy (Kleppe 2016). Nevertheless, through a close cooperation with William, she is able to reduce this pressure, thereby allowing her to focus on plays she considers to be artistically interesting, so as to create space for the *inspired world*.

Returning to the question of functional differentiation, one might conclude that functional differentiation occurs in the BRT on a structural level. Even so, in everyday work, this distinction does not appear to be important, as Sarah seeks advice from several of her colleagues. Cooperation and co-decision-making between the artistic and executive director is also evident in other British theatres. In a recent study of the labour division at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Heywood et al.<sup>8</sup> (2014) describe a reshaping operation at the theatre after a crisis from 1999-2002 (Hewison *et al.* 2010:33). Central to this operation was the demolishing of hierarchical structures, including the division between the artistic and administrative staff.

When applying a traditional Bourdieusian analysis, one could argue that the autonomy of the artistic field in the BRT, and hence the autonomy of Sarah, is threatened by the fact that logics belonging to the administrative and financial field receive quite a bit of attention. Sarah admits that she also experiences such pressure due to budget cuts and strong demands for creating box-office income. However, this pressure is primarily *external*, put forth by a neoliberal cultural policy promoting instrumentality and private funding (see e.g. Kleppe 2016). The de-differentiation processes conducted at the RSC, as well as Sarah's close collaboration with William, may rather be understood as a counterattack towards such a policy aiming to optimize their artistic autonomy within relatively tight budget frames. Sarah is not forced to include the opinions of William. Instead, she chooses to do so, because this might give her a larger amount of elbow room for her artistic ambitions. Through de-differentiation, she strengthened her abilities to relate her work to the *inspired world*.

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<sup>8</sup> Vikki Heywood was Executive Director of the RSC from 2003 to 2012.

## Gerrit from the Netherlands

In the Dutch Theatre Group (DTG), Gerrit is the artistic director. He has been the head of this group for more than 10 years and has had huge artistic successes, both domestically and worldwide. During these years, Gerrit has built an organization he believes to be optimal for achieving his primary goal: “To make the best theatre in the world.”

In the DTG, there is no shared leadership. Gerrit is the chief executive and makes all decisions, whether it concerns artistic, economic or practical issues. He has no executive director in charge of finance and administration. Instead, he has a team of five persons responsible for various tasks in the theatre. Several of these persons also have a responsibility that includes both artistic and non-artistic activity. Moreover, the personal responsibility for the actors is delegated to one person:

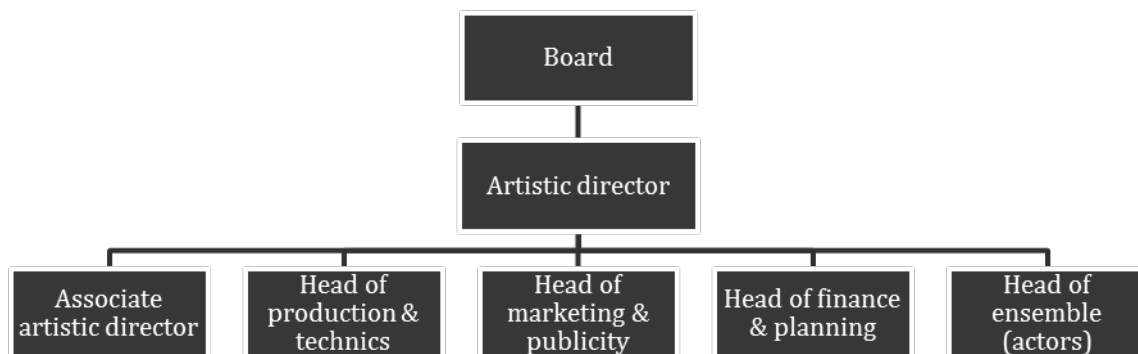


Figure 3: Organizational structure in the Dutch Theatre Group

In opposition to most theatres, including both the BRT and The Norwegian Theatre, Gerrit has developed an organizational structure without any strong functional differentiation between artistic and non-artistic tasks. All employees are subordinate to Gerrit, which leaves him with full responsibility, and therefore with a full autonomy within the organization.

Even though Gerrit makes all the decisions, he also involves several of his employees. Every third week, he meets with his associate director, the dramaturg and the head of stage design to discuss artistic projects. As is the case with Sarah, Gerrit also includes financially and administratively oriented staff when making decisions. He wants everyone involved in the theatre to focus on both artistic achievements and on financial and organizational concerns. His associate director claims that this is essential to their work, and also a key to their success:

I think that the specificity of our work is [that] we both [me and Gerrit] know a lot about artists, and a lot about what we want to do, but also how to translate that into technical matters or financial matters or... I think that's one basic thing that has been essential in developing the company... because we did some projects that no financial director would do. Because they were too big, but we did it balanced, so we didn't do it recklessly, but since we are mainly artistically driven, we want to make that project.

By systematically integrating financial and technical concerns in artistic decisions, both Gerrit and his associate director claim that they are able to focus the most on creating great theatre: "That means that all the money that we have, we really can spend it where it is necessary. So that the organization doesn't become an organization for itself", he says.

Opposite to Henrik, Gerrit's autonomy is not protected by lineage. The Dutch theatre system has undergone several changes over the last 50 years, and most theatre groups do not possess rich traditions (van Maanen 2002, Ejgod Hansen 2004, Hamersveld 2009). Still, Gerrit is deeply respected both inside and outside of his theatre. "When you go to theatre school, every student says, 'I want to work with Gerrit'", one of the actors says. Gerrit has earned his respect over time because of his artistic abilities, his creativity and the way in which he makes manuscripts and actors



turn to high art. When applying the theory of Boltanski and Thévenot, it is reasonable to claim that his artistic idea and ambitions are primarily justified through the *world of inspiration*. It is his artistic vision that guides the work of the theatre, with everything else subordinated to that. To some degree, Gerrit also relates to the *opinion world*. When declaring that his main ambition is to become the best theatre in the world, he simultaneously admits a competitive attitude behind his artistic ambitions.

Even so, visions alone are not sufficient to achieve his ambitions of becoming the best theatre in the world. The story of Gerrit is not only a story about a successful artist, it is also a story about a targeted leader. One of Gerrit's subordinates says that:

When he [Gerrit] came in here about 13 years ago, he had a very good business plan. [...] He was telling us in the management team where he wanted to be in 10 years with DTG, and that's where we are now.

As a leader, Gerrit demands a certain professionalism and loyalty towards the aims of the theatre: "I make sure every day that the goal is one thing. It's about the theatre. That's what everybody is working for. Also people in the offices, they should be aware of it", he says. Gerrit also demands efficiency. One of his employees describes the theatre as the equivalent to the French high-speed train TGV: "Gerrit says when you work with The Dutch Theatre Group, you get on a TGV. The TGV is moving fast, and if you don't get up fast, it says bye, bye." Ever since Gerrit joined the company, he has streamlined all levels of the organization. He expected all employees to work towards the same goal, namely to become the best theatre in the world.

This attitude is also reflected in his financial thinking. Since his long-term ambition is to become the best theatre in the world, he cannot gamble with the financial foundation of the organization:

I cannot of course create a huge deficit, because then I create my own problem next year. And then perhaps I have to fire people, and I don't want to do that. But that makes you much more aware of it. But also you can use the money in a better way, and in the most efficient way, for the arts.

The financial aspects and the relationship to the market are integrated into the work of the theatre. When creating an artistic repertoire, Gerrit takes a number of considerations into account. However, the main premise is that the production must be suited for a large audience. One of the subordinates to Gerrit explains the process in this way:

I think that Gerrit has proved over the years that it is possible to do a large-scale theatre for a large audience, both economically, and in terms of infrastructure. In a theatre landscape, we are of course mainstream, but in this mainstream framework that we are, we make theatre that is as challenging as possible. So, we think of audiences before we make a decision on which piece to do when, but as soon as Gerrit is in a rehearsal with his performers, with his actors, he is as artistic as he can be and he does not think about what audiences will think.

The consideration Gerrit uses when creating an artistic repertoire relates to the audience as individual consumers with certain preferences for their willingness to visit a theatre performance. Nonetheless, optimizing consumer preferences, which is the goal within the *market world*, is never a goal for Gerrit. The DTG never produces plays to make money, yet he has still managed to produce an organization able to maximize the output, and thus also the profit of the plays he has decided to put on.

This way of running a company is very much in line with the logic of the *industrial world*: “The ordering of the industrial world is based on the *efficiency* of beings, their *performance*, their *productivity* and their *capacity* to ensure *normal operations* and to respond usefully to *needs*” (1999:372). In his work, Gerrit efficiently creates a space for art production, in which every condition is optimized for making high art. Within this space, inspiration is all that counts.

The way in which Gerrit combines worth from both the inspired world and the industrial world makes it difficult, if not impossible, to interpret his autonomy through an analysis of either differentiation processes or field theory. In the DTG, there is hardly any functional differentiation, and Gerrit's idea is that all decisions and all persons working in the theatre shall take both financial and artistic considerations into account. By doing this, he believes that the staff will be able to focus solely on the one thing that really matters: making great theatre.

### **Understanding autonomy**

Through the story of our three theatre managers, we find that they justify their decisions and their positions as leaders differently, thereby managing their artistic autonomy differently.

Through a field analysis, one could conclude that differentiation still exists in The Norwegian Theatre, hence making the autonomy of the art an important constitutive category. In both the British Regional Theatre and the Dutch Theatre Group, there has been a process of de-differentiation. Even so, this does not necessarily imply that the autonomy of the art is weakened in these two countries, or that the artistic autonomy of the artistic director in Norway is greater. Neither does it capture the complexity of the different approaches to arts management in a comprehensive way.

When introducing the theory of Boltanski and Thévenot, we are able to understand management and artistic autonomy in an alternative way. The autonomy of the art is not necessarily predefined on a structural level, as much as it is through a Bourdieusian approach. By use of the theory of justification, one is more concerned with the autonomy of the social actor and how he or she makes (autonomous) decisions within the framework of some higher common principles:

Actors, in his [Boltanski] view, permanently prove their competences in everyday conflicts. These competences are not reducible to dispositions because actors can employ different forms of justifications over time, and because in one situation a plurality of forms of justifications may be at their disposal. (Guggenheim and Potthast 2012:160)

One of these principles is closely related to the pure “art for art sake”. This principle is described as the *world of inspiration*, in which “the state of worthiness has the attributes of *inspiration* itself, in the form of *illumination*, a gratuitous benefit that is at once external and internal” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006:157). In defining this common principle as the ultimate artistic autonomy, in which nothing but artistic criteria are taken into considerations, all other justifications may be considered instrumental and heteronomous. Either justification is made with reference to traditions, the market or through fame; therefore, it is about something else other than pure artistic inspiration (as shown in Figure 4).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> One might of course question whether there exists something like a pure artistic inspiration. In the theory of Boltanski and Thévenot, it exists as a social construction, and thus as a higher common principle.

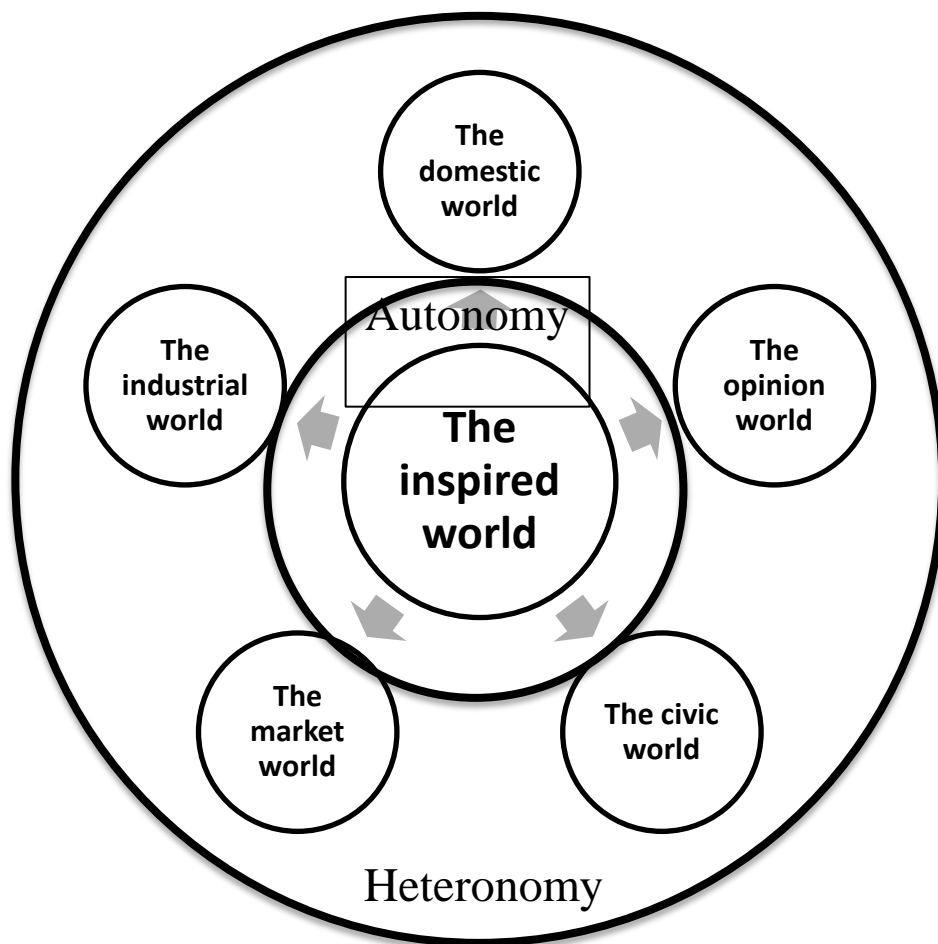


Figure 4: The common worlds of Boltanski and Thévenot analysed in terms of artistic autonomy

Henrik, Sarah and Gerrit all justified their work in relation to the inspired world, (though to various degrees). They all want to create theatre that they themselves consider to be of high quality. However, they all relate to different worlds in legitimating their work and their decisions.

In Norway, the supreme authority of Henrik seems to be legitimized through the domestic world. The power of the artistic director, and the guarantee for his artistic autonomy in most decision-making, is primarily justified through *traditions*. The practice of functional differentiations is legitimized based on traditions, as is the charismatic authority he is given as an artistic director towards the other actors.

One might claim that the process of decision-making in Norwegian theatres is bound in some ancient tradition, which, according to Bourdieu, may be considered autonomous. When applying the theory of Boltanski and Thévenot, however, justification through domestic values contrasts strongly with justification through the inspired world. “For [the creative person], the notions of *hierarchical* situations, established order, *respect due to rank* or *social position*, are dead letters” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006:237f). If one approaches artistic autonomy as “art for art’s sake”, in which nothing but artistic criteria are taken into consideration, worth in accordance to the inspired world “should not” be derived from titles, positions or traditions (ibid.).

The management practice in the British Regional Theatre has a democratic, egalitarian character, in which the opinion of most professionals is taken into account. At the BRT, there are no actors employed, and hence a small artistic staff. This may be one of the reasons why Sarah needs to justify her decisions according to more general, but also less field-specific logics. Her decision seems primarily justified through both the civic and market worlds. The aim of the theatre is to provide plays of a high quality that the *citizens* find interesting and relevant, a task that she, as the manager, intends to carry out.

In the Netherlands, Gerrit has accomplished great personal and artistic autonomy by running the complete organization without interference from anyone besides those he himself wishes to include. Everything Gerrit does is in line with an overriding artistic ambition, which all seems justified through the “inspired world”. Yet, in order to maintain such an ambition, Gerrit found it essential to adhere to the operating conditions for the theatre. In line with worth in the *industrial world*, Gerrit used the most means to make the organization as cost-effective as possible. Through a complete devotion to rational ideas, a streamlined organization, an efficient work practice and

cost efficiency thinking, he has been able to create a necessary space for his artistic ideas and developed performances that are recognized around the world.

The theory of Boltanski and Thévenot largely recognizes the social actor, in this case the artistic director, as an autonomous individual. He or she is capable, within reason, of making independent choices for the direction of his or her theatre. When Sarah cooperated closely with William and Brenda, and justified her work primarily through the civic world, this appears as her own (autonomous) choice. When Gerrit turned the DTG into a TGV, it was his decision and his strategy for the theatre. Even though the art is not autonomous in a Bourdieusian sense, the artist is left with the possibility to choose his or her way of fulfilling their artistic vision. In the case of Henrik, it is slightly different. His autonomy as an artistic director is “protected” by tradition and systems of differentiation. Paradoxically, this system also limits his autonomy. It further limits who he might cooperate with, it limits his management strategies and it limits his ability to reach his artistic ambition. While Gerrit and Sarah have liberated themselves from the structural captivity, Henrik is both protected and trapped in this ancient system.

The Bourdieusian approach to artistic autonomy and differentiation processes has dominated the understanding of artistic autonomy for a long time. In arts management, one could also claim that it has created some normative guidelines for artistic decision-making. In this comparative study, this becomes highly evident through the Norwegian case. By interpreting artistic autonomy through the theory of justification, an ancient tradition of protecting the autonomy of an artistic director appears mostly only as a tradition. Regardless of his mission for the theatre, the principle protected is mainly the authoritative principle of the artistic director.

## Conclusion

The autonomy of the art has been the subject of extensive research within cultural sociology, cultural policy and arts management, drawing particularly on the theoretical understanding of artistic autonomy developed by Pierre Bourdieu or Niklas Luhman. In this paper, I have criticized this approach for being too schematic and dualistic, and for not grasping the plural ways in which arts managers make their decisions.

Through this comparative study, I have approached decision-making and artistic autonomy in an inductive way led primarily by my empirical data. In search of applicable theory, I found the *theory of justification*, developed by Boltanski and Thévenot, useful in analysing this plurality of reasoning. In order to analyse autonomy through this somewhat descriptive theory, I have argued that the devotion to “art for art’s sake” may be understood through what Boltanski and Thévenot describe as the *inspired world*, and that all other justifications may therefore be understood as heteronomous and subordinate to other common principles. Simultaneously, the theory of justification helped in separating a wide range of instrumental, heteronomous reasoning artistic directors may use in their decision-making. When applying this theory to my comparative analysis, it further became evident how the three artistic directors made use of this repertoire of possible justifications.

However, my analysis is based on a limited amount of empirical material. Whether the theory of justification is well suited for analysing autonomy thus needs to be further empirically investigated.



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### **Article 3:**

**Kleppe, Bård (2017). Theatres as risk societies: Performing artists balancing between artistic and economic risk. Under review for Poetics**



## **Theatres as risk societies**

Performing artist balancing between artistic and economic risk

### **Abstract**

This paper examines how performing artists balance between economic and artistic risk-taking within the performing arts sector. The paper is based on a comparative study, including qualitative interviews with performing artists working in three different theatres in three different countries: England, Norway and the Netherlands. The paper discuss how different ways of organizing theatres and different theatre policy represent different systems of economic risk managing, and further how they facilitate artistic risk taking. The author identifies three different approaches to risk management in these three countries: a collectivization of risk, an institutionalization of risk and an individualization of risk. Theoretically, the paper makes use of the work sociology developed by Ulrich Becks and Richard Sennet, as well as welfare theory, including Esping-Andersen.

### **Highlights:**

- There are distinct similarities between risk management in the arts and welfare policies.
- Economic and artistic risk-taking stand in opposition to each other.
- It is easier to facilitate artistic risk-taking in safe working conditions
- A Nordic welfare approach to cultural policy leads to expanding cultural budgets
- British actors lacks important social employment benefits.

**Keywords:** performing artists, labour market, creative labour, risk, theatre

## **Introduction**

In his seminal work, *The Brave New World of Work*, Ulrich Beck claims that work society has become a risk society, as the “Securities, certainties and clearly defined boundaries of the first modernity” is being replaced by “the insecurities, uncertainties and loss of boundaries in the second modernity” (Beck, 2000:67ff). Several scholars have claimed that artists and creative workers are located in front of this transformation (Caves, 2000; David Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016; Menger, 2006).

In most writings on this new “risk society”, influential sociologists such as Ulrich Beck (1992, 2000) and Anthony Giddens (1990, 1994) describe a society in which individuals are living in fear and have a constant feeling of anxiety, vulnerability and uncertainty. People are seen to be highly aware of risk, and critical towards the institutions that produce them:

The emphasis in contemporary Western societies on the avoidance of risk is strongly associated with the ideal of the “civilised” body, an increasing desire to take control over one’s life, to rationalise and regulate the self and the body, to avoid the vicissitudes of fate. (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002:114)

In artistic work, the ideal is not to rationalize and regulate the self and the body. It is rather the opposite, artistic ideal includes immediacy, spontaneity, contemporality, scarification and irrationality (Heinich, 1996; Kris & Kurz, 1979 [1934]; Røyseng, Mangset, & Borgen, 2007). According to these scholars, true artists do not avoid risk, they seek it.

In today’s creative discourse, artistic and economic risk taking tend to be mixed up in a large pot commonly known as creative labour. The new creative worker is flexible, autonomous and independent. Risk taking thus becomes an ideal without necessarily defining what the definition of risk involves.

Risk is also a political concept and a key topic when analysing welfare policy. Esping-Andersen, in particular, has shown how different welfare states approach risk management differently (1990 [2012], 1999). Scholars theorizing on risk through a Foucauldian approach (1991) have been interested in the *governance* of risk and the diverse ways risk has been threatened, managed and conceptualized (Dean, 1998; Ewald, 1991).

Even though artistic and economic risk-taking has been commonly addressed in studies of artistic work, there are few comparative studies analysing how artists manage risk within different national and organizational contexts. In this paper, I will discuss the way in which different ways of organizing theatres and different theatre policies represent different approaches to risk management. I will then analyse how artists working in these theatres and these countries manage risk, both economically and artistically.

### **Managing economic risk**

Artistic work has often been associated with considerable economic risk (Mangset, Heian, Kleppe, & Løyland, 2016; McRobbie, 2016; Menger, 2006; Throsby, 2010). One reason for this is the work-preference theory of artist behaviour, which claims that artists derive satisfaction from work itself, and not strictly for the income they make (Throsby, 1994). Scholars have also claimed that the presence of a charismatic myth is evident among artists (Kris & Kurz, 1979 [1934]; Røyseng et al., 2007). This “myth” implies that artists claim that they are “obligated” to fulfil their artistic ambitions. Overall, this has caused a substantial recruitment, thereby causing a labour market in which the excess of artists is generally larger than the demand for artistic production (Abbing, 2002; Casacuberta & Gandelman, 2012; Mangset et al., 2016). Because of this, artists have developed several ways of managing economic risk. Baumol and



Bowen (1966) found that artists may improve their economic situation in three ways: Artists can be supported by private sources, public sources or they can hold multiple jobs. The latter has been the focus of many sociological studies, showing how artists are among those who most often hold an additional job (Menger, 2006). Menger further emphasizes how artists often work in cooperative-like organizations where they are pooling and sharing their income. Within the performing arts, small organizations, like dancing companies or theatre ensembles, are examples of this. Theatre organization, and therefore theatre policy, is not solely about creating an environment for creative processes, it is also about governing and managing economic risk for the persons involved.

In general social policy, risk management and the governance of risk have been central in the development of modern welfare states. A short glimpse at the history of risk management shows the diverse approaches to risk management. In traditional societies, families were essential in risk management. Through the development of an industrial society, the affiliation to a trade union or corporation were important communities for the management of risk. Alongside the development of measuring methods, insurance came to be crucial as a risk technology requiring only an abstract commitment to a community (Ewald, 1991). This technology made the market an important mechanism for managing risk. On the other hand, social insurance aims at including all members of a state in an abstract risk management community. It is deployed as a technology of solidarity “that renders accident, illness, unemployment and other ills associated with social life as insurable risks that are collectively borne and individually indemnified” (Dean, 1998:31).

According to Esping Andresen (1999:33), Western societies have developed different ways of managing social risk: Briefly summarized, conservative states have

relied on the corporative structures and the family, liberal states have relied on the market, while social democratic states have relied upon a strong nation-state governing risk for all the citizens.

In culture policy, risk management for artists has also been crucial. However, the degree of state interference has varied. In some countries, such as the Nordic countries, an artist's labour conditions have been subject to an explicit cultural policy; in other countries, such as Britain, cultural policy has only caused some implicit effects on risk management for artists.

The three theatres I will present in this paper manage risk differently. My assertion is that they, in line with Esping-Andersen's descriptions of different welfare models, manage risk on three different levels. The social democratic country of Norway manages risk largely on a state level, in Britain risk is addressed to the market and the single artist, while in the Netherlands, or at least in the Dutch case, risk is managed by the artistic collective.

### **Artistic ensembles as risk management collectives**

The collective nature of theatre production makes this art form particularly interesting when discussing risk. Today, there exists several ways of organizing theatres and theatre production that represent important structural conditions for how artists manage risk. Even though the funding government rarely provides clear statements on how theatre shall be organized, their allocations of funding help in promoting and protecting certain forms of organizations. This also makes the theatre organization a part of cultural policy.

Dragan Klaic distinguishes between two primary models of public theatre production: repertory theatres and autonomous theatre groups (Klaic, 2013:37ff).

Repertory theatres have been the dominant model for theatres in Europe and the UK, ever since Konstantin Stanislavsky founded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898. Together with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, he developed a professional theatre company with an ensemble of actors and an ethos that encouraged collectivity (Klaic, 2013; Senelick, 2008). While private commercial theatres relied on some few star actors, the idea behind repertory theatres was an assumption that the company could sustain an ensemble of actors of different ages, capable of playing various roles, working and developing within the company for several years, maybe even for a lifetime. Throughout the 20th century, hundreds of repertory theatres were established based on these ideas, and still today, repertory theatre is to be found in most German-speaking countries, including the Nordic countries, as well as parts of eastern and central Europe (Klaic, 2013).

Due to the Baumol disease (1966) and various forms of institutional inefficacy (Løyland & Ringstad, 2007; Taalas, 1997), the maintenance cost of repertory theatres has increased; such theatres have therefore required substantial public support. In several countries, this has caused a reshaping of the theatre sector, in which the ensemble model has been abandoned in favour of theatres casting actors for one play only. In other countries, the ensemble consists of permanently employed actors, regardless of whether they share a common artistic idea or work under one artistic leader. This is commonly referred to as *false ensembles* (Sirnes, 2001) or *institutional theatres* (Cohen, 2011; Mangset, Kleppe, & Røyseng, 2012). The increased need for subsidies has nurtured several debates on the organization of theatres and the public funding of performing arts (e.g. Haselbach, Knüsel, Opitz, & Klein, 2012).

Autonomous theatre groups (fringe groups, *freie Szene*) are the second model of organizing theatres. Gaining ground since the 1960s, these rather small companies

emerged from students with a certain passion for theatre experimentation, or a general interest in politics, social criticism and anti-authoritarian protests (Klaic:44). In terms of both audience popularity and public subsidies, these groups have more or less always worked on the “fringe” of the large repertory companies. In terms of organizations, many of these groups work on a collective basis drawing on the ideas of Stanislavski.

Different cultural policy and different approaches to organizing theatres make up the most important differences between my three cases, which represents the structural framework for artistic work. In addition to this, one may further assume that there are cultural differences between the three countries affecting the way in which artists manage risk, both economically and artistically.

When analysing the relationship between these structural factors, the theatre culture within the single country and the single artist’s approach to risk management, I draw on the ideas of repertoire theory and Ann Swidler’s concept of *strategies of action* (1986). The strategies that an artist chooses in order to manage risk incorporate both organizational structures, habits, moods and the view of the world that exists in the local and national context in which the actors work. I intend not to claim a causal relationship between cultural policy, theatre organization and risk management. I rather see this as the available “tool kit” of possibilities and limitations that artists build their strategies upon. In comparative cultural sociology, national cultural repertoires have been particularly emphasized as: “cultural tools that are unevenly available across situations and national contexts” (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000:1). In this case, national cultural repertoires seem particularly relevant because models of theatre organization, labour conditions, cultural policy and general welfare policy are all shaped nationally.

The relationship between policy and risk management makes this paper politically relevant, as it analyses the strategies that artists make within the limitations and possibilities of organizational and national contexts.

### **Methodology**

My discussion of general welfare policy is based on a literature review, particularly on the work of Esping-Andersen (1990 [2012], 1999), while my analysis on cultural policy and theatre organization is based on literature, statistics and other written sources.<sup>1</sup>

Most important, however, is the qualitative data I have collected on the artist's experience of risk based on in-depth interviews with several artists of different ages and genders.

This paper is part of a larger comparative case study of theatres, with the interviews conducted in that regard. In this case study, I choose to study one large theatre in Norway, England and the Netherlands. The three theatres included are all among the most important subsidized theatres in these countries, and all three theatres receive a considerable amount of public support and work on a highly professional level. The British fieldwork was conducted in a typical regional theatre in one of the largest cities outside of London; the Dutch fieldwork was conducted at one of the top theatre groups in the country, while the Norwegian fieldwork was conducted in one of the largest theatres in Norway. The study included 38 interviews with both actors and executives. In England, I spent one week in the theatre in October 2015 following several of the administrative and artistic employees in their work. In the Netherlands, I spent one week in May 2014 and one week in May 2015. In both my field stays, I followed the

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed review of this material may be found in Kleppe (2016).

rehearsals of two different plays directed by the artistic director. The Norwegian case study was conducted by Per Mangset, Sigrid Røyseng and myself in 2009 as part of another research project.<sup>i</sup> This time gap between the empirical materials could cause some difficulties in the comparisons. However, concerning cultural policy and the way in which theatres are organized, there has been few or no changes since then (see e.g. Kleppe, 2016). This is also confirmed by recent studies of Norwegian theatres (Hylland & Mangset, 2017).

Even though I venture to claim that there exists some interesting national repertoires relevant for understanding how actors relate to risk-taking, the field of theatre is diverse. I thus find a short comment on representativeness to be necessary. The degree of national representativeness vary between the three cases. Based on the information I attained from the interviewees, as well as former empirical studies (Dorney & Merkin, 2010; Heywood, Bilton, & Cummings, 2014; Mangset et al., 2012; Røyseng, 2007, 2008; Wennes, 2002), I venture to claim that both the Norwegian and British cases are somewhat representative of the working life in similar theatres in these countries. This does, to a lesser extent, count for the Dutch case. In the Netherlands, theatre groups have chosen different forms of organizational structures and different ways of engaging artists, as some of them work with an ensemble whereas others primarily hire freelancers. Nevertheless, most Dutch theatres have adapted a collective approach to theatre productions (van Maanen, 2008:127). Even so, generalizations based on single cases are challenging. I therefore encourage further studies of these relationships and a critical reading of my results. Now, let us get to know these artists and their daily life as actors.

### **Individualization of risk in Britain**

First, we shall pay a visit to The British Regional Theatre (BRT), one of several subsidized theatres outside of London that perform a wide range of plays in different genres. In Britain, most theatres, including the BRT, hire actors for one play only. In the early 1980s, the BRT and most other British regional theatres used to work according to the Stanislavski repertory tradition, holding their own ensemble for one or two seasons, working on their own stage and presenting a repertory of plays. As a result, most British regional theatres experienced a financial crisis during that era. The politics of Thatcher entailed a reduction on state expenditures and increasing expenses, e.g. due to inflation, which led to the closure of several theatres (Turnbull, 2008:72). Theatres that survived had to make drastic cuts and changes, which included the disbanding of both ensembles and repertory planning.

Today the BRT, as with most other regional theatres in England, combines in-house productions, co-productions and guest productions. For each production, they hire a cast of actors for three or four weeks of rehearsal, and additionally two to four weeks of performance.

One of these actors, and one of my informants, is Hugh. His engagement at the British Regional Theatre started five months before rehearsals when the casting coordinator at the theatre called his agent and asked him to read for a part in a play. The play included some singing, so Hugh therefore had an advantage. Because of the large number of actors applying for jobs in the UK, casting directors may choose actors who are perfectly suited for a particular role, a practice commonly referred to as “typecasting”. Typecasting implies that actors are recruited based on their appearance, which causes an actor to repeatedly play the same character. When I asked Melissa, a female actor, if people often get typecast, she says:

I think you do. And more so with the loss of repertoire theatre where you could do a whole season, and you might have things that were out of your comfort zone that were challenging. You know, you might be a 20-year-old actress who plays an old lady, just because the nature of the season. Now you don't get that. And, you know, it used to just happen to be on the telly, but now it happens in the theatre. You walk through the door, how do I perceive you? And that's your type. [...] I constantly play eccentric middle-aged ladies.

According to Melissa, typecasting is one consequence of single part casting, while another consequence is a constant state of flux and unpredictable working conditions for the actor with a limited time scope. When Hugh got the message that he was being cast for his part, it was only three months in advance before rehearsals started. He then had to prepare to stay for two months away from his home and family in London. Before leaving, Hugh had to make arrangements with his wife, and then he had to find accommodations in the city where he was going to stay for the next six weeks. In addition to a fixed salary of approximately £500 a week, Hugh received £150 a week for accommodations.<sup>ii</sup> This left no space for any luxury such as a hotel room.

Towards the end of Hugh's two months at the BRT, he had to focus on getting his next job, phoning his agent and attempting to get auditions. Economically, he may have survived for two weeks without work, but then needed to get a new assignment. Working as an actor in the UK is therefore a risky proposition: "As an actor, my job is constantly getting my next job", Melissa told me. This attitude is also reflected when I asked Hugh what kind of job he preferred: "The fact is, if it was up to me to pick, that would be a luxury. That would be amazing." Most of my British informants expressed a similar attitude. There is little room for developing artistic skills and strategically developing an artistic career, as simply getting a paying job is enough of a goal.

In Britain, the agent is crucial for the career of an actor. Several of the actors emphasized how the agent takes some responsibility for the actor's career and are hence



capable of helping them making strategic choices: “Thankfully you have got an agent whose of another opinion, and you also decide from the beginning if something’s worth going for or not”, Hugh says. Simultaneously, the agent’s interest in not necessarily developing the artistic skills of an actor, but instead in providing a long-term well-paid job, is in his/her best interest:

In some respects, it’s only in their best interest. If they make a success of one of their clients, then they’re commission is huge. Some of them will get comfortable knowing that if you do musical theatre, or get a year’s employment, they got a year’s commission, and that they don’t need to work for you again for the next 11 months.

Although all the actors I interviewed at the BRT appreciated the social character of their work, they also emphasized the lack of confidence in working with people they do not know. Working with new people, both actors and directors, may be inspiring for the persons involved. Still, such ever-new encounters also made the artists somewhat artistically insecure. When I arrived at the BRT to conduct my fieldwork, I expressed the wish to take part in the rehearsals, as I had done at the Dutch Theatre Group. However, Sarah, the artistic director of the BRT, was anxious about having me in the rehearsal room. This was the first week of rehearsals and she was unsure whether she or the actors knew each other well. She explained how many of the actors might feel insecure in this part of the production, which corresponded well with how she explained the pros and cons of working with an ensemble during my interview:

It is also true that there is a certain depth in relationships that is very hard to get in four weeks, as there is a real trust that builds up between the actors [in an ensemble], which means that they are very supportive of each other, and therefore can go much further and take far more risks than they would if they were not in that ensemble.

According to Sarah, ensemble-based actors are much more willing to take artistic risks than freelancers. This may also be caused by a certain fear of not getting a new job.

When you do not know the director, you cannot be sure how he or she will respond to your involvement. John, one of the older actors, who has been in the business for almost 50 years, explains this precaution among actors:

People worry. If you ever become too difficult, this would soon be known. There are actors who are known as being difficult, and there would be directors who think: I have heard that he or she is difficult; I don't want to use them.

Being creative, exploring new approaches in acting and taking artistic risks may be risky for the career of the actor, as well as his or her economy. Being loyal, conscientious and easy to deal with seems to be a better strategy.

### **Collectivization of risk in the Netherlands**

Turning to the Netherlands, there are no large repertory theatres. The repertory tradition collapsed in 1969, when acting students interrupted a performance at the *Nederlandse Comedie* by hurling tomatoes at the actors. This was the start of a revolution within theatres, where the cultural policy shifted from supporting bourgeois theatre institutions to supporting independent, fringe theatre groups (Hamersveld, 2009:183; van Maanen, 2008). The most evident result of this shift today is the division between production and distribution. The theatre groups produce the performances, while the theatre stages programmes and presents them. The Dutch Theatre Group (DTG) is one of eight theatre groups receiving direct state support from the Dutch government. During the last decade, some theatre groups have gained a more dominant position in the Netherlands by being part of the *Culturele Basisinfrastructuur*. This implies that they receive funding for a four-year period based on evaluations of their artistic and financial

achievements made by an independent council. The DTG has received many positive evaluations, and has therefore received generous public support. Other theatre groups that receive poor evaluations may get quite dramatic funding cuts, a typical example of new public management (Olsen, 2009). The stability of theatre groups is also less evident in the Netherlands, as few or none of them maintain a long tradition.

In order to understand how life may be as an actor in the Netherlands, I will introduce you to Johan, one of the 20 actors working at the DTG. Fifteen years ago, Johan graduated from one of the three renowned Dutch theatre academies and then started working for one of the big theatre groups in the Netherlands. After gaining some success in that group, one of the leading Dutch directors invited him to join his ensemble. He then worked with this director within two different theatre groups before becoming a permanent member of the Dutch Theatre Group. The career pattern of Johan is similar to many other Dutch theatre actors, as they work with an artistic director as part of “his” or “her” ensemble for a certain period of time.

Within the DTG, there are several forms of contracts. Some last for one year, while others are more permanent. As we will see, while permanent contracts are highly valued in Norway, Johan and his associates whom I interviewed did not seem to care very much about the length of their contracts; what mattered to them was whether they were part of the ensemble or not. Once you belonged to the ensemble, you were also part of the future plans of the director and the theatre regardless of your contract. Affiliation to the artistic community seemed far more important than legal contracts. Nonetheless, being part of an ensemble also implied a safe economic condition that provided the actors with a decent salary every month.

As an ensemble actor, Johan’s possibilities to work outside the ensemble are limited. Because of the repertoire planning, the DTG has made plans for most of the

actors some years ahead. For this reason, they are more or less committed to this group. Because of this commitment, working as an ensemble actor in the DTG does limit one's flexibility and freedom to work outside your group. Because of this limitation, some Dutch actors prefer not to be part of an ensemble, preferring instead to work freelance in movies and private theatres. Sylvia, one of the actors who was hired for one play only, told me that she had turned down several offers for an ensemble affiliation:

I have a fear of being stuck, and that you must play roles that you are not so attached to. That's why I also chose my freedom, I can choose the project because I like the people or I like the director, and I also can play different roles.

Even though there may be some lack of freedom associated with being in an ensemble, there are certainly also some benefits concerning both personal financial predictability and artistic development. Thomas, one of the young actors I interviewed, emphasizes the latter when he argues why he joined the company. After making some great appearances on the screen as a young actor, he was cast in several movies that helped him to gain much recognition. Even so, he felt that the opportunities to develop as an actor were limited within this business. He was more or less always typecast playing the same "bad guy" character every time. When he got the chance to join the DTG ensemble, he really saw an opportunity to develop as an actor:

When you film you know you should film for like a month, maybe two months. And then you are free for like two months. And then you are doing nothing. As a young actor, the most important thing I think is to just keep acting, keep reading plays, keep seeing plays, keep playing. Because if you stop, then you won't develop.

This young actor finds it important to act constantly, to play different characters and to learn from all the actors around him. He really appreciates the artistic community made possible through an ensemble.

The artistic community of an ensemble also helped created the confidence needed for artistic development. Once the director and the actors knew each other, it was easier for the actors to improvise and to influence the artistic expression of the play. Anna, a female actor, describe how this close relationship to the artistic director unfolds in rehearsals:

I like to think about the whole show and not just my part. What are we doing? What are we saying to the world? Like this whole feeling of really trying to reflect the time and everything. And, I just feel with him [the artistic director], he doesn't even need to say what he wants, I already know what he wants.

The close relationship between the actors and the director, and the feeling of collectivity, does not appear out of nowhere. According to the Dutch actors, the maintenance of the ensemble is very important. At the DTG, there are no equity representatives to secure the right of the actors; instead, there is a position as the head of the ensemble who works closely with the actors. Throughout the year, the head of the ensemble meets with the actors two or three times, or whenever the actors need to discuss their career. Developing and maintaining artistic skills in the ensemble is considered crucial to maintaining the artistic quality of the individual actor, as well as the theatre group. If the company failed in doing so, their entire existence would be in danger, and the public support may be given to someone else.

### **Institutionalization of risk in Norway**

Lastly, we shall get to know The Norwegian Theatre, which is one of the largest of the 18 repertory theatres in Norway, and some of the 60 actors working there. The theatre was established in the late 19th century, and is considered one of the most important cultural institutions in Norway. Today, the theatre includes three stages and employs approximately 160 persons. The theatre has received steady public support for almost

50 years, and some of the actors have been part of the ensemble for almost the same period.

One of the actors working at the theatre is Erik, who graduated from acting school in 1992 and then started working at The Norwegian Theatre. Erik, as with many of his fellow actors, holds a permanent position at The Norwegian Theatre. Five of the eight actors we interviewed had a permanent contract, while three of them were hired for either one or two years. Being permanently employed protects the actors through Norwegian labour legislation, which makes it difficult for the executives to end such a contract. Among the actors holding a permanent contract, the risk of losing their job and thus having no income is more or less nonexistent. “They can’t fire us”, one of the actors states.

In opposition to the Dutch case, actors who are permanently employed in Norway occasionally perform in movies or in other theatres as well. As permanent employees, they have the right to an unpaid leave after a certain period. This makes such a position both safe and flexible.

The working conditions of the actors working at The Norwegian Theatre are more or less like other Norwegian civil servants. They earn about the same as a teacher, they have a decent public pension and receive benefits from several welfare schemes. Permanently employed actors are typically “insiders” in the labour economy (as described by Lindbeck & Snower, 2002). The Norwegian system therefore creates relatively strong borders between the insiders and the outsiders, between permanently employed actors and freelancers (Bergsgard & Vassenden, 2015; Mangset et al., 2016).

The Norwegian theatre is a typical institutionalized theatre in which the actors constitute the core of the artistic staff. While artistic directors come and go, the actors tend to remain. During the 15 years Erik has worked as an actor at The Norwegian

Theatre, he has worked under seven different artistic directors, some of them for six years, and others for only one. When a new artistic director is appointed, he has to adapt to the existing ensemble of actors, and the actors have to adapt to him, though this adaptation is not necessarily easy. The new artistic director cannot select actors based on his own wishes; he has to make use of the already employed actors. Consequently, how the different artistic directors approach this challenge differs. Nonetheless, this quite often results in excluding certain employees. Tom, one of the actors, says:

At this theatre, two or three actors get very few parts. This represents a great burden for them, because they are not able to perform and use their skills. And then, when some show-offs stroll around the building bragging about the character they are going to play, actors who are neglected feel very, very small.

This citation highlights two important aspects of Norwegian repertory theatre: 1) the fact that theatres keep actors employed, even though they are seldom cast, and 2) the importance of a healthy working environment within ensembles that entails the inclusion of all the actors. According to several of the actors, there is a great psychological burden attached to being an unemployed/employed actor in the theatre. To avoid this, it is of great importance that the artistic director “herds” his ensemble in a good way, thereby ensuring that all the actors get parts to play, and that they are able to develop their artistic skills.

In many institutionalized repertory theatres, several theatres suffer from a long-lasting lack of ensemble maintenance. According to cultural economists, this may be observed through the lack of efficiency in such organizations (Løyland & Ringstad, 2007; Taalas, 1997). As developed by Stanislavsky, the ensemble model underlies the organizational foundation of the theatre; however, the ethos of the ensemble thinking has largely been abandoned. When a new artistic director implements his artistic visions

for the theatre, the actors belonging to the ensemble do not necessarily fit his demands. Yet, building up an entire new ensemble that fits his artistic ambition is almost impossible due to the labour legislations of the permanently employed actors. Instead of adapting the programming to the actors of the ensemble, the artistic directors tend to neglect some of the ensemble actors for the benefit of freelance actors working on a piece-to-piece contract. Grete, one of the older actors explains this practice:

If the artistic director appreciated his ensemble and the people belonging to it, he gave them chances. In the old days one did that, because the ensemble was the only people they had available. When creating a repertoire you made it in relation to the strength and weakness of the ensemble. What one does now is: “Damn, we have no one for that part, ok, we just need to hire someone.”

The practice described by this actor is typical for what Sirnes has described as “false ensembles” (2001), i.e. ensembles unified only on a social and economic level, and not on a joint artistic idea.

### **Performing artists and economic risk**

Ulrich Beck describes a transition in modern societies, “from the system of standardized full employment to the system of flexible and pluralized underemployment” (1992:140).

The work situation in the three theatres may well be interpreted through such a description. Actors at The Norwegian Theatre and The Dutch Theatre Group benefit from standardized employment working primarily in a single location.<sup>iii</sup> Hugh, and the rest of the British actors, experienced a “risk-fraught system of flexible, pluralized, decentralized underemployment” (ibid:143). Hugh is hence a typical representative of the new underemployed creative worker (D. Hesmondhalgh, 2012; David Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016). As with most British actors, Hugh is not working as a full-time actor. He is always on the hunt for new jobs, whether in



theatre, television, radio or commercials. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss the personal consequences of artists working within this risk society of underemployment. Similar to Hugh, the everyday experiences of their informants included a constant worry about what job to do next. This led to “nervousness, anxiety and even panic [being] a regular part of their working lives (ibid:122).

The most obvious difference between the actors working in a British context, and the Dutch and Norwegian context, is the *individualization* of economic risk. The UK creative workers “are being expected to test out the water of working life without welfare or with substantially reduced welfare”, Angela McRobbie states (2016:58). While such risk is managed on a collective level in the Norwegian Theatre and in the Dutch Theatre Group, economic risk is addressed to the single artist in the British Regional Theatre.

### **Performing artists and artistic risk**

The independent creative entrepreneur has been promoted as the representative of the future economy and the idealistic form of labour market organization. The self-employed artist is his own boss, and has the flexibility and autonomy to develop his artistic and creative project. He is considered a true entrepreneur, both artistically and economically, placing all his bets on his artistic project. This “Romance of being creative”, as Angie McRobbie puts it, has penetrated much of recent policy debates on creative work. However, several empirical studies paint another picture of the actual experience of persons involved in creative labour (David Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Mangset et al., 2016; McRobbie, 1999, 2016; Oakley & O'Brien, 2016).

The scope and empirical data in this study do not allow me to judge which system of organization leads to the best performances. Nonetheless, the feedback given

from the artists provides some interesting insights into how this different system facilitates artistic development and artistic risk-taking.

First, let us focus on the creative potential in acting. Actors who belong to an ensemble, both in Norway and the Netherlands, have some influence over their work. At The Norwegian Theatre, Erik may take part in an artistic council that makes joint decisions on the repertoire of the theatre,<sup>2</sup> and he may also influence what role he might get. In The Dutch Theatre Group, the actors were not heavily involved in the programming. However, in rehearsals, their opinion was heavily emphasized when the artistic director was directing. In Britain, actors were engaged after most decisions were made, whereas in rehearsals they were cautious about expressing their opinion, instead considering themselves as “a cog in the wheel”, as Melissa said.

A striking difference between the ensemble actors and the freelance actors was the confidence in their work. Most of the actors in the DTG felt a confidence toward both the artistic director and their colleagues. This allowed them to be vulnerable, experimental and to challenge themselves without fear of risking their future career. Being part of an ensemble also implied that the actors were encouraged to play several different characters. Their cast was not limited to “bad boys” or innocent, pretty girls, as they were challenged to play a wide range of characters.

In Britain, the work of most actors is limited to playing characters that suit their appearance and their special skills; hence, the possibility to develop additional creative skills as an actor are limited. Because of the thousands of available actors, an artistic director can choose the exact character best suited for a specific role. This practice of

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<sup>2</sup> The actual influence actors may have in such an artistic council may, however, be limited (Mangset et al., 2012).

typecasting has also caused a situation in Britain where actors of certain social backgrounds are over-represented (Friedman, Laurison, & O'Brien, 2016). From the directors point of view, the absence of an ensemble may imply a flexible situation in which he may choose the exact actor best suited for a certain role. The flexibility of the actor, however, is limited to repeatedly playing the same character.

With reference to Teversky and Kahnmann, Richard Sennett claims, "being at risk is inherently more depressing than promising" (1998:83). The flux character of freelance acting and the everlasting hunt for auditions is similar to what Sennett refers to as *ambiguously lateral moves* (ibid:85). This characteristic within the network society implies that persons are moving sideways from one occupation to another, not knowing if this is considered a career step or not. "Inherent in all risk is the regression to the mean. Each particular role of the dice is random. Risk-taking lacks mathematically the qualitative of a narrative, in which one even leads to and conditions the next" (ibid:83). When my English informant describes auditioning, it is all about repeatedly throwing the dice:

Once you have done the audition, forget about it. Move on. If you get it, great, but if you don't, you are already prepared for that. But when you hold on to something so tight and you get your hopes up, it takes a long time to do that. I can say, 21 years in the business, and I am still just getting the hand of doing that kind of thing,

Based on my empirical findings, I venture to claim that artistic and social risk-taking are separate actions, maybe even opposites. While working in a collective ensemble reduces social risk, it may allow the artist to take more risks artistically. When the actors know their fellow actors as well as the director, they may feel more confident taking parts or challenges outside their comfort zone.

## **Risk management through theatre policy**

The organization of theatres is not solely a result of a certain cultural policy for theatres. However, the development of the various organizational systems presented in this paper seems closely connected to both the cultural- and welfare policy exercised by these countries. Esping-Andersen's three models of welfare state solidarity in the management of risk may also be traced to the three different approaches to cultural policy in these three countries.

British cultural policy hardly pays any attention to the social welfare and economic risk of artists (see e.g. Kleppe, 2016). In contrast, as McRobbie points to in her work on the politics of creative labour, the individualization of risk in the creative sector has been glorified as "a model for how various jobs and careers could shape up in the neoliberal era" (2016:70). The key factor of such policies in terms of governmentality, she claims, is the "presumed reduction in costs to the state or employer for these so-called young creatives who must be responsible for themselves [and thus] shoulder the burden of risk" (ibid). Through such a cultural policy, England has succeeded in maintaining the most cost-effective theatres in Europe. Simultaneously, such a policy has created an environment for the artists working in those theatres consisting of a combination of high economic risk-taking, but a limited possibility to take artistic risks. The creative worker of Britain is not primarily an entrepreneur, but rather a self-employed worker in a Marxist sense, selling their labour power to those who pay the most.

In the Netherlands, risk has largely been addressed to the collective theatre group receiving state support. Through an active cultural policy inspired by the logic of new public management,<sup>iv</sup> arts organizations have been granted support based on their achievements. In the case of The Dutch Theatre Group, this has resulted in an

organization that “invests” in all their employees, knowing that they are all important parts in the puzzle of making great art. This investment is crucial for the future work, stability and development of the theatre group. It further implies that the artists are given a space for taking artistic risks without risking too much of their economy. In line with Esping-Andersen’s description of a corporatist approach, risk management in the Dutch Theatre Group is “pooled” and shared by all members of the artistic ensemble.

In Norwegian repertory theatres, risk management has been institutionalized in covering the actors who (once upon a time) managed to get a permanent contract.<sup>3</sup> For those artists, economic risk is more or less absent. For some of the permanently employed artists, this situation may create a fertile ground for artistic creativity, including artistic risk-taking, artistic creativity and career development. For others, including those who have been repeatedly left out of the casting made by several shifting artistic directors, the possibility of artistic development has decreased, leaving them as actors with a salary, though with little work and limited careers.

Simultaneously, while England has maintained some of the most cost-effective theatres in Europe, theatres in Norway rely heavily on state support and occupy an increasing share of the culture budget (Kleppe, 2016; Løyland & Ringstad, 2007).

## **Conclusion**

Several studies have focused on the social and economic situation of artists, in addition to the uncertainties and risk associated with artistic and creative work (Abbing, 2002; Alper & Wassall, 2006; Gielen, 2009; Mangset et al., 2016; Menger, 2006; Santos,

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<sup>3</sup> In both Norway and the Netherlands, there are certainly many freelance actors carrying much of the risk themselves as the British actors do.

1976; Throsby, 1992). Nevertheless, few studies have made a national comparison based on empirical data. Through such an approach, I have been able to uncover vast national differences in theatre policy and the organisation of the theatre, and further analysed how these differences affect the persons working in these organizations regarding economic and social risks, as well as the preconditions for artistic risk-taking. My first finding is that there are distinct similarities between the welfare policy of these three countries and the way in which risk is governed and managed. Secondly, I find that economic and artistic risk-taking stand in opposition to each other rather than being similar. Artistic risk-taking seems to be much easier to facilitate in safe and predictable working conditions than in an individualized work life, thereby implying everyday economic risk-taking. Thirdly, while institutionalized repertory theatres and a Nordic welfare approach to cultural policy comes with a price that is evident in rising cultural budgets, as the price for the cost-effective neo-liberal British theatre policy is addressed to the single artist. He or she is situated at the bottom of the food chain without the benefits and protection that have been associated with employment.

As Abbing (2002) and several other scholar have stressed, artistic work is virtually synonymous with overcrowding, underemployment, low income and therefore risk. McRobbie's ingenious exposé on how the recent discourse on creative labour has redefined these as pros rather than cons. In this age of creative rhetoric, critical empirical investigations of the relationship between artistic creativity and artist economy are greatly required. In this paper, I have benefitted from comparative data, including three countries with a different policy and welfare approach to cultural production. However, my empirical material is limited, and calls for supplemental studies in order to make more general conclusions. The case study approach further limits the possibility of broad generalizations. Eventually, even though I have discussed

the creative potential made possible in these three countries, I have excluded any analysis of artistic quality. Still, as long as the neo-liberal celebration of creative labour continues, studies of artists and risk seem highly required.

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<sup>i</sup> Publications in this projects include (Kleppe, Mangset, & Røyseng, 2010) and (Mangset et al., 2012)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.uktheatre.org/Downloads/ratesofpay/UKTheatreEquitySubReprates20152016.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> It is worth noting that both Norwegian and Dutch actors tour as part of their job; nevertheless, this travel is organized and paid by the employer.

<sup>iv</sup> The way in which these evaluations have been done, and what measurements they emphasize, is part of another discussion.