



Institutional Hybridity in Networked Cultural Organizations through Boundary Work¹

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ABSTRACT

The article studies the impacts of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus on cultural festival organizations in Finland. Festivals have been institutionalized as network organizations, which presumes boundary work with partner organizations from different institutional fields. The organizational pattern of cultural festivals is studied qualitatively by applying institutional theory and particularly the perspective of hybridity due to the network pattern of festival organization. The institutionalization of cultural festivals promoted stability and guaranteed economic support during the pandemic, although the organizations had to run down most of their events. The small-scale impacts were the changes in the network structures and related reshaping of the programs.

KEYWORDS

boundary work / COVID-19 pandemic / cultural work / festivalization / institutional theory / network organization

Introduction

Cultural festivals form a growing industry in Europe, and in Finland, festival audiences have increased since the 1980s (Luonila 2016). Despite their temporality, cultural festivals have been rooted in the provision of cultural services, which makes one to ask how their continuity is organized. A concept of festivalization defines the phenomenon as a pattern that provides cultural experiences that promote tourism with catering services by organizing different industries, organizations, and individuals into

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local events (Arcodia & Whitford 2008; Bennett *et al.* 2014), but does not contribute to the work of organizing the continuity related to the temporality.

Festivals have been promoted by the cultural policy in Western countries, as it is an efficient and economical way to organize and provide cultural services and their related benefits (Negrier 2015), such as employment and immaterial capital. The economical and efficient way is related to low permanent costs, for a small group of personnel, the focal organization of festival, carries out the tasks of management, planning, coordinating, applying funding and PR and the content provision of a festival relates to the festival's economic aspect (Luonila 2016).

In continental Europe, including the Nordic countries, festivals' funding pattern is engaged to the state's cultural and funding policy (Radermecker 2021). In Finland, cultural policy is based on legislative regulation and institutional continuity, and in an international comparison, Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands resembled each other with respect to their cultural policy and funding patterns. Funding is allotted to cultural and artistic institutions and regional authorities in order to maintain and develop cultural services for citizens. However, such funding only covers a concise group of actors in the cultural field, and due to that, non-profit private organizations' proportion of the funding has been increasing. The funding from for-profit, private firms has traditionally been small (Saukkonen 2014, p. 45).

These characteristics of Finnish cultural policy and funding have enabled professional artists and their organizations to have a relatively strong and influential position in cultural governance (Häyrynen 2018; Kangas 2003). However, this situation has recently been challenged by several factors: 1) the creative economy discourse in cultural policy emphasizing the economic importance of culture; 2) the entrepreneurialization of cultural work and its subjects; 3) institutional arrangements diminishing the autonomy of arts councils and increasing emphasis on strategic cultural policy; 4) the crisis management of the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the entrepreneurial and business side of cultural work (Jakonen & Pyykkönen 2023). All in all, based on these factors, it can be claimed that the power relations of different institutions in the field of culture are in the constant flux, and the 'economization' of culture seems to be strong tide at the moment (e.g., Hylland *et al.* 2024; Jakonen & Pyykkönen 2023; Luonila *et al.* 2022).

The funding of cultural festivals is a combination of public and private contribution in varied ways. Ticket sales, sponsorship, and grants and support from local, regional, and state-level authorities are related to the profile of the festival, and for example, high culture events tend to receive grants or support from authorities and non-profit private organizations, whereas popular culture festivals mainly base their economy on ticket sales, sponsorship, and other commercial activities (Luonila 2016). Sponsors and other commercial actors tend to target their support for regular cultural festivals with an appropriate profile in respect to their business area and customer profile.

For cultural festivals, content and locality shape their 'brand'. They are engaged to particular cultural subfields, with their social networks, patterns audience (Radermecker 2021). A cultural festival is usually embedded in a certain locality, city, or countryside village, and the locality is embedded in the cultural content of the festival. The locality also provides the infrastructure, technologies, room for the events, and the services for the audience.

The pattern of a festival has been organized as a network of partner organizations from different institutional fields, each with their own logic, which is coordinated by the

focal organization of festival. Despite this, cultural festivals vary with respect to their cultural profile, audience, locality, and economic situation, which implies variation in the networking pattern.

The cultural festivals organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the subject of our study, are organized with the networking pattern in varied ways. This variety leads us to ponder the permanency of the network pattern, for the variety may be due to profound differences between festivals, which may lead to rethinking the prevalence of the networking pattern of cultural festivals. For gaining a more fine-grained understanding of the relationship between permanency and variation in cultural festival organizations, we examine four different cases using COVID-19 as a test for the permanency of the network pattern, as the crisis is assumed to reveal ruptures in the permanency.

We approach the research problem of permanency of the networking pattern by applying institutional theory and because of that, we replace ‘permanency’ with the theoretical concept of institutionalization. Due to the particular networking pattern of cultural festivals, we apply a stream related to hybridity in institutionalization. This stream provides a theoretical basis for studying the variations related to changes in society and organizations. We apply the methodological approach of practice theory for studying how the networking pattern is reproduced and changed with work practices of the focal festival organizations.

We selected four festivals for the study. Our study approach is qualitative and based on interview data collected in 2021, and the consequences of the pandemic also concern the year 2021.

Before presenting the theory, data and methods and going to the analysis, we present the basic information of cultural festivals in the era of pandemic in Europe and particularly in Finland. A literature review on cultural festivals during pandemic will be embedded in the section of results.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 closed most festival events down across nation states in Europe in 2020 and 2021 (Radermecker 2021). In Finland, statistics by Finland Festivals—a non-profit private organization representing the collective interests of festivals (<https://festivals.fi/en/about-us/>)—illustrate this trend (see Table 1).

Table 1 Visits in the festivals of the members of Finland Festivals and their ticket sales.

Year	Visits	Sold tickets
2021	346,000	155,000
2020	767,000	93,000
2019	2,006,000	689,000

Source: Finland Festivals 2022.

With the pandemic, the authorities in Europe allotted economic support to the cultural sector, which was mostly targeted to institutionalized actors, such as festival organizations, whereas artists and professionals in the cultural sector with an atypical employment pattern were scarcely recognized in the support systems (Radermecker 2021). In Finland, the state addressed economic support for the institutional actors in the cultural sector by allocating funding via municipalities and full-time wage earners in the cultural



sector received unemployment benefits. In addition, there was also support measures for firms and certain artists and related culture actors could benefit from those. As a result, the focal festival organizations survived the pandemic, but to a large extent, festival activities and services were run down. This leads us to ask how did the institutionalized network-based pattern change during a state of emergency.

Networking and institutionalization—the theoretical framework

Our theoretical framework is based on two theoretical concepts, those of networking and institutionalization. The two are interrelated in that the hybrid version of institutionalization comes close to the conceptualization of a network. Cultural policy studies have been interested in institutions (e.g., see Kangas & Vesteheim 2011), but the hybridization lays a new layer on that debate.

Network embeddedness is typical for festivals, and respectively, one of our key arguments is that culture festivals are organized and take place at the crossroads of different institutional logics of the organizations in the network. As physical events, festivals are bound to certain locations, and the local organizations, particularly local and regional authorities, are crucial in the networks. Dicken and Thrift (1992) call this territorial embeddedness, the ‘anchoring’ of the actors in question, in particular territories or places (see, e.g., Dicken & Thrift 1992). Hess (2004) regards embeddedness as both a hybrid and economic, as it signifies the social relationships between both economic and non-economic actors. He argues that there are two key dimensions to *economic embeddedness*. First, *societal embeddedness* signifies the importance of the societal background, which influences and shapes actors’ behavior and leads to the particular institutional logics of different actor groups. Second, *network embeddedness* refers to the structure and nature of relationships among actors (e.g., the ‘architecture’, durability, and stability of these relations). Hess (2004) further points out that ‘network embeddedness can be regarded as the product of a process of trust building between network agents, which is important for successful relationships’. As an intermediary between hierarchies, markets, and citizen society, the network organization is a distinct form (Podolny & Page 1998). It entails different qualities of relations—governance, ownership, and control—which shape alliances, economic change, and/or collaboration (Gereffi, Humphrey & Sturgeon 2005).

Institutionalization reinforces the legitimacy of organizations or functions and decreases any uncertainties related to the environment (Scott 2008). With institutionalization, organizational patterns, practices, and meanings and their mediators (such as symbols) tend to be homogenized (Scott 2008). Homogenization is the basis for organization and action because it provides a mediating link between the institution and human action with meanings, norms, and practices (Meyer & Rowan 1983). According to Friedland and Alfording (1991, pp. 232–255), institutions are supra-organizational patterns, which are embedded into material and immaterial systems, and individuals and organizations interpret them to organize their lives. Institutional logic provides continuity and also directs and limits the agency of organizations and individuals.

The similarity of organizations in the institutional field has been interpreted as following from internal and external pressures. Interdependency between organizations,

their environment, and participation in professional networks and associations promote homogenization (Powell & DiMaggio 1991). However, the stage of homogeneity varies and diversity in institutional logic is typical for mature and large institutional fields (Reay & Hinings 2005). Organizations apply institutional meanings for their own special purposes, which may lead to deviating from the institutionalized patterns (Czarniavska & Joerges 1996), and changes in the environment may have a similar impact (Meyer & Rowan 1983).

Recent studies on institutional theory have focused on the hybridization of institutions (Greenwood et al. 2017). Battilana et al. (2017) claim that hybridity may come out in three ways: one focuses on hybrid organizational identities, the second on hybrids as a distinct form, and the third conceptualizes hybridity as a combination of multiple societal-level logics. As festival organizations are based on networking with organizations from different institutional fields, each with its own particular logic, the third way provides an approach for studying the adjustment of logics and relationships with different institutional fields.

Hybrid organizations are often related to changes in the resource environment as follows: non-profit private sector with decreasing public funding results in increasing commercial activities to add revenue streams (Galaskiewicz et al. 2006). Institutional hybridity often implies coping with many intra-organizational logics and the examples often come from organizations providing health services in public sector (Battilana et al. 2017). Based on previous studies (see Luonila 2016; Hermes et al. 2017), the network form of cultural festivals suggests hybridity in respect to the partner organizations from different institutional fields and related logics.

The economic dimensions of cultural festivals often intertwine with the concept of hybridity, as it relates to the festival program's profile. Thus, it is assumed that profitable services have become important for economic reasons also in Finland and Sweden (Hermes et al. 2017). Applying different logics (such as high-status program with commercial activities) has to be shaped in a way that is legitimate in the eyes of the audiences (Smith & Besharov 2018), which presumes interaction practices that adjust the different institutional logics (Thornton & Occasion 2012).

Institutional logic consists of three dimensions: the cultural-cognitive, social and normative, and regulative dimensions. According to Scott (2008), the *cultural-cognitive dimension* refers to meanings and their symbolic representations. The *social and normative dimension* includes the prescriptive and obligatory dimensions of social life. The *regulative dimension* stresses formal and informal rule-setting and sanctioning activities (Scott 2008). The three dimensions of institutional logic are interwoven (Thornton & Occasion 2012), but they may also be conflicting.

On the basis of previous studies, we interpret the dimensions of the logic in the following way. The institutionalized cultural field provides festivals with meanings (the cultural-cognitive dimension), and the local community supplies the social sphere for a festival (the social dimension) and contributes to the meanings with the history embedded in the locality (Luonila 2016). With respect to the regulative dimension, we emphasize economic necessities that are of primary importance for cultural festivals (see Radermecker 2021). The regulative and economic necessities are bound to certain conditions or terms, such as the size of audience and the funding terms.

In this article, the hybridity of institutional logics is defined in the following way. The organizations in a festival's network represent different institutional logics with

respect to the festival. Each of the organizations has its own internal logic, consisting of different dimensions, but in this article, we only study the logic of the focal organization of festivals.

The point of departure: Research questions and methodological approach

In Finland, cultural festivals get resources from the public funding for long-term service provision for citizens, but most of them have to source additional funding with services or grants. In addition, popular culture events are usually ignored in the public allocation of funds. The aim is to study the continuity of the festival organizations over the time of the pandemic by applying institutional theory, in particular, the stream of theory related to hybridity. The hybridity is related to the network pattern of festival organizations. Institutional theory assumes that institutional patterns and practices guarantee continuity over hard times, which provides the approach for studying the changes or assumed continuity related to the pandemic.

First, before studying the survival of the festival organizations over the pandemic, we study the institutionalized pattern of cultural festivals in the pre-pandemic time, which represent ‘normal’ time, and the variety of the profiles of the festivals by applying the concept of institutional logic. The study is carried out to enable comparison with the era of the pandemic. Second, we ask, how did the institutionalized network-based festival form adjust to a state of emergency.

The research themes and related questions are:

Institutionalization

- How are networked festival organizations institutionalized, with respect to the relationship between permanency and variations?

Maintaining and changing the networking pattern with work practices

- How have the focal organizations adjusted the different logics of the organizations from different institutional fields?

A test for the institutionalization

- How have institutional relations and institutional logics changed with the pandemic?

For studying the institutionalization of festival organizations, the work related to networking with institutional fields is studied. Institutional theory applies to structures in society and organizations, but it does not contribute to how institutions are maintained and changed. Practice theory is applied for this purpose because it provides a method with which to study activities which relate to meanings. The idea is to understand social, shared practice as a synthesis of knowledge, organizing, and action (Gherardi 2015). Knowing is practical, collective action that is interwoven with meanings. Practices are realized with connections to activities (Gherardi 2015); in other words, they follow a certain order and recur over time and space. With practice theory, it is assumed that

practices related to materiality are framed with knowledge, and the analysis focuses on them as collective, situation-specific, and knowledge-based actions. Practice theory assumes a social community that shares practices and knowledge (Gherardi 2015). In this study, we assume that networking and applying different institutional logics are both carried out in everyday practices, securing continuity and also providing a possibility for change.

Data and methods

We study four festival organizations and focus on popular music festivals and performing arts festivals that were substantially hit by the pandemic. All are NGOs and are funded by public sector organizations and other sources. The names of the festivals are kept anonym to retain the privacy of the interviewees from the focal organizations. All these festivals have a history of several decades and they take place in the same location regularly. They represent the festival tradition with local embeddedness while being nationwide in their profiles.

Two of the cultural festivals had a popular music profile and two of them were performing arts festivals. The two popular music festivals, Pop A and Pop B, collected at least 40,000 visitors per festival per year. The high culture festivals' profiles were built around dance and theatre. Both of these, Perf A and Perf B were nationwide and attracted both professional and laymen audiences. The numbers of visitors were 3000–4000 for Perf A and 70,000–90,000 for Perf B.

The data consist of interviews with the personnel of the focal organizations of festivals, the local authorities, and mediating organizations and additional data from available statistics on the cultural festivals provided by Finland Festivals 2022.

First, we interviewed the staff of the focal organizations, including the artistic leaders of the performing arts festivals, the designers of the programs of the popular music festivals, and the personnel in management and PR and the chairs of boards. Second, we interviewed the upper civil servants in charge of cultural services in those municipalities and the professional staff of mediating organizations that are specialized in festival promotion, agencies, and so on. The municipalities, and in some cases regional authorities, have to provide cultural services for the citizens by law with allocated funding. Thus, the relationship with local authorities shapes the organizing of festivals directly and indirectly. In Finland, the institutionalized and national festivals usually take place in the same locality.

Third, we interviewed the professional staff of mediating organizations that are specialized in festival promoting cultural services and/or representing artists and performers. They provided data within a broad framework of festivals in Finland. The qualitative method with interview data was appropriate as the research purpose—studying complex festival organizations—required detailed data from the agents in the field. The personnel of focal festival organizations provided the primary data of each festival; the authorities supplied the perspective of important stakeholder organizations in the network of the festival organization and the mediating organizations provided meta-level information of festivals in Finland.

**Table 2** Interviewees displayed by task, gender, and age (N = 19)

Task	The number of interviewed persons
Artistic leaders and the designers of programs	4
Managers, board chairs, and PR staff	6
The civil servant responsible for the cultural services in a municipality	4
Managers in mediating organizations (festival promotion organizations, agencies, etc.)	5
Gender	
Women/men	11
Men	8
Age	
30–45	3
46–55	10
56–70	6

The interview themes for the focal organizations of festivals, for both management producers and artistic leadership/content producers, were following: the profile of the festival, the organization and network of the festival, the relations and practices conducted with the local community, the relationship between the authorities and the focal organizations of festivals; the artistic/cultural framework and practices for shaping the program, the funding structure, sources, and related terms; and the means for coping with the pandemic. The themes for the semi-structured interview themes were defined on the basis of literature review, which revealed the established position of cultural festivals during the pandemic despite their decentralized organizational pattern. The interview themes for the mediating organizations dealt with the position of cultural festivals in cultural policy particularly in respect to funding, and the terms and conditions for organizing cultural festivals in respect to economy, program, local circumstances of festivals, the significance of agencies and stakeholders and surviving the pandemic. For the local authorities, the themes were as follows: the cultural policy and related practices in the municipality; the funding principles for events; the support for events during the pandemic; and experiences and expectations regarding the festival. Each of the four festivals were case studies based on the interviews from the staff of the focal organization and the local authorities of the municipality. The mediating organizations provided views and conceptions with a broad framework of festivals.

The data were analyzed by applying content analysis (Silverman 2006). The coding of the interviews was based on themes rising from the answers to the interview questions and on themes that emerged freely from the interviews. The data were analyzed first to understand pre-pandemic times to study survival from the pandemic and for describing continuities and changes related to the pandemic. The theoretical approach, institutional theory, was applied in the phase of analysis.

The interview data of the staff of the focal organizations were the core of the analysis. The first main category was institutionalized festival organization based on

networking with organizations representing different institutional fields, which collected subcategories of small focal festival organization with the tasks of project management of interaction, coordination, planning, and operational activities. In addition, the subcategories were a networking pattern for collecting funding, recruiting performers and artists, and acquiring and negotiating services, and the adjustment patterns and practices of the different logics of the network organizations.

The analysis of the interviews from the authorities of the municipalities supplied the categories of the local cultural policy and the relationship with the cultural organizations in the municipality, including the festivals. The cultural policy varied from active and supportive pattern with a close relationship with the local cultural organizations to passive with scarce economic support and remote relationship with the focal organization. The analysis of the interviews of the representatives of mediating organizations resulted in the categories of festivals in cultural policy, funding patterns in relation to festival profile, the position of artists, professionals, and festivals.

The data analysis on the pre-pandemic times provided a conception of the networked and institutional pattern of festival organization with the related variations and the changes due to the pandemic and the coping methods used. The analysis starts with an investigation of each festival organization in pre-pandemic times, and after that studies the question on the continuity and changes related to the pandemic.

Analysis: Similarities and differences

The network pattern and relationship with municipality

The festivals were networked with the cultural field, the business field including for example sponsors and ticket sales, the municipality authorities and the authorities of the state and NGOs providing funding for cultural festivals. The festivals sourced the content for the program from particular cultural subfields. All the festival organizations were based on the network pattern, but the relations and boundary work with the organizations representing different institutional fields varied due to the profile and characteristics of the festival and the relationship with the municipality authorities. The concept of boundary work includes the practices how the focal organizations engage with the external stakeholders by adjusting the differences between the organizations in the network (Bocken et al. 2019). The adjusting is carried out with the practices of using boundary spanners (such as organizations, people, and objects) and boundary management, such as communication (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Boundary work may contribute transactions, power exercising, resources, capabilities and knowledge, and maintenance of organizational self-definition (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005). An example of boundary work is negotiating with funding bodies on their interests and terms regarding the festival while simultaneously maintaining the profile of the program and the quality of service of service providers.

In the performing arts festivals, the network with the cultural field originated from the artistic leaders' strong ties to the institutional subfield of culture. They sourced from their own artistic work and knowledge on the cultural field. The boundary work in respect to the funding was emphasized with the funding authorities of the public sector and NGOs, instead of business.



In the popular music festivals, the funding was based on ticket sales, sponsorship, some sponsorship-like funding from the local authorities, and some other commercial activities. Project management was emphasized when planning and carrying out the festival, which came out as negotiating practices with agencies and service providers for topical trends and performers. Thus, their boundary work was less bound to the cultural content in comparison with the artistic leaders of the performing arts festivals and more engaged to project management scheme.

The municipality authorities were particularly important in the network of festival organizations. The festivals were permanently embedded in localities with their citizen communities, which recognized the benefits related to the annual festivals, the image value for the municipality, and the income gained through local services related to the festivals. A manager in a mediating organization described the impact of the festival Pop A for the municipality as follows: ‘The festival reinforces the local identity, even among those who don’t visit the events, which is due to the long history of the festival’. However, the relationship with the municipality authorities varied, which resulted in differences in the boundary work with the organizations in the network. The variations in boundary work will be presented later in the detailed analysis of the focal organizations.

In addition to the boundary work, the practice of balancing between the funding and the profile was a regular method for all the festivals. The festivals carried out balancing, for the staff of focal organizations were all aware of the fact that the economic and the cultural logic may result in conflict, such as resulting in an ambitious program with insufficient funding. The balancing practice is due to the expected audience because the funding is mostly based on ticket sales or other funding sources, with the terms related to the expected audience. An interviewed manager of a mediating organization described the balancing practice with the following numbers: ‘The principle is as follows: 70% of the program should have a guaranteed audience and 30% of the program may attract festival visitors’.

The institutional logic of the organizations providing funding, whether business-based or non-profit-based was related to the expectations of the revenue for funding, and the logic for designing the program was related to the cultural field with the values of the discipline. With deepening institutionalization, the balancing is broadly in use.

The focal organizations carried out the balancing of the funding and the profile of the program in the following ways. They planned the program of popular events for large audiences with related expected high income but also provided minor high-profile events that came with a risk of a small audience and low income. This was the way in which the festivals could keep audiences interested in the profile of the festival while also keeping their budgets in balance.

With the pandemic, the festivals had to run the events down to varied extents. Despite that, the boundary work with the authorities providing economic support was emphasized, for the focal organization continued their work of planning forthcoming events. The performing arts festivals provided minor events of high quality, which aimed to promote continuity and contact with the audiences, and the funding sources that emphasize high culture’s provision. Social interaction with the local community may strengthen the funding sourcing and business partnership in the future. The popular music festivals could not provide any events due to the heavy structure of costs, although they continued the planning of the next year’s festival program.

The following, detailed analysis of the festivals deals with the adjusting practices during pre-pandemic times and the pandemic and studies them from the perspective of institutional logic.

The Performing arts festivals

The performing arts festivals were similar with respect to designing the festival on the basis of the high culture profile of the program and the economic resources. The grants and other funding from the state and other funding sources for high culture mutually reinforced each other and legitimized the value of these arts festivals. The artistic leaders of the performing arts festivals carried out the boundary work with the cultural institution as they sourced the content for the festival by utilizing their expertise and relationships in the field. They designed the profile of the festival in everyday practices and planned the program on the basis of the performances submitted for the festival, instead of working on a particular artistic vision.

However, the performing arts festivals were different with respect to their relations with local authorities, which had an impact on sourcing the funding for the festival. Perf A had a loose connection to the municipality authorities, although the festival had been carried out in a small municipality for decades. The cultural policy of the small municipality was incoherent, for there were conflicting levels of support for cultural festivals from different political actors regarding the support for cultural festivals. This incoherence resulted in uncertainty regarding funding and a loose relationship with the local authorities. However, the festival received a mixture of grant-based funding and public funding. During the festival, the organization received pandemic-related economic support from the Ministry of Education and Culture and regional authorities, but at the same time, the support from the local authorities in the municipality was cut. The artistic leader describes below the terms of funding: the regional authorities address the obligation to provide cultural services for the local population:

[Our profile is based on arts and the performers come from the arts niche.] However, we also have to consider the wishes of the local population when shaping the program. It may be that the performances are too difficult for the locals and the municipality authorities may say ‘That’s not what we give money for.’ (artistic leader, performing arts festival)

The focal organization shaped the program by including various types of performances so that at least some of them were considered down-to-earth which could be ‘digested’ by the assumedly less cultivated locals, as requested by the regional authority. Thus, the different categories of funding had an indirect impact on the program, although the festival was less dependent on ticket sales than the popular music festivals. The balancing of funding and the terms related to the local community and the profile of the festival program were coherent enough for the festival to survive the pandemic. First, the economic necessities were tackled with alternative funding sources; second, continuity was guaranteed by shaping the provision of events and by interaction with the local community; and third, the profile of the festival was maintained but also diversified with new methods, such as small spin-off events. The boundary work with the organizations in the network was slightly different during the pandemic. The change was increasing

interaction with the state and regional authorities supplying the funding, and slightly decreasing interaction with the municipality authorities.

As to our second case of performing arts festivals, Perf B had a long and close relationship with the municipality authorities and community. The municipality had sufficient economic and political resources and a sufficiently sized population to have a coherent cultural policy and provision of cultural services. In addition, the cultural institutions in the local community supplied the necessary infrastructure for the festivals, which resulted in a cumulated increase in audiences and PR. The economic support from the local authorities was completed with grants from funding sources specialized in high culture events. The festival provided a minor program during the pandemic, and the focal organization survived the lockdown with economic support from the municipality and the state. Despite the reduced activities, there were no structural changes in the organization and network of the festival and the adjusting of the boundary work with the organizations was similar to the pre-pandemic times.

The festival is significant in our municipality and also nationwide, and to some extent, it is international. In our substantial cultural festival provision, it is one of our anchor events. The municipality was involved when it was founded decades ago, and we want it to be in the core of the provision of culture in the municipality. (upper civil servant, municipality)

The performing arts festivals applied the institutional logic of a festival in the following way. The cognitive-cultural dimension came out in the values of traditional and ambitious experimental artistic performances. The profiles of the programs originated from the artistic leaders' strong engagement in the cultural institution. The cognitive-cultural dimension was related to the dimension of regulatory and economic necessities: the focal organizations applied the practice of balancing the program and the funding. The adjusting of the boundary work emphasized the cultural institution and the public sector institution allocating funding and less the institutional field of business.

In sum, the performing arts festivals survived the pandemic due to their institutionalized position, which guaranteed them the economic support allocated to high culture events in addition to the pandemic-related economic support. Perf B could continue in approximately the same way as in normal conditions despite running down most of their events. Perf A had to search for new sources of income and slightly (not radically) change the profile of the festival program. Thus, its cultural-cognitive dimension was slightly differently related to the economic and regulative dimension compared with the pre-pandemic era. The boundary work was also slightly reshaped as the relationship to the regional authorities was enhanced and, respectively, the relationship with municipal authorities weakened.

The Popular music festivals

The two popular music festivals shared some similarities but also differed from one another in terms of their boundary work. For Pop A, the balancing of funding and program of the popular music festivals was firstly based on popular concerts with mass audiences and related income from ticket sales and, secondly, it was based on a more ambitious program with the risk of a small audience and minor income from ticket sales.

The boundary work of Pop A was based on loose relationship with the municipality authorities and a particular network pattern. Interviews with the staff of the focal organization implied scarce interaction with the municipality authorities and dissatisfaction toward the municipality regarding the economic support provided particularly during the pandemic and the significance of the festival for the image value for the municipality. The Pop A was less networked in comparison with the other festivals as the core organization was a part of a consortium consisting of NGOs and firms, which provided cultural and catering services:

You could assume that the municipality had an interest in supporting our significant, nationwide festival. However, the support is minor, and, in return, the municipality expects free tickets for the events. In addition, they get visibility for the municipality. In other words, it is a sponsorship contract. We have to get additional funding from commercial sources. (manager, Pop A)

The municipal authorities' criteria for supporting cultural events imply a legal obligation to guarantee provision of cultural services for the population, but also an emphasis on culture as 'effective and sustainable business', which was typical for this municipality and the focus organization. In respect to institutional theory, the view represents the economic and regulative necessities.

In Pop A, the cultural-cognitive dimension came out as a devotion to popular music, and the program was planned in interaction with the institutional field of popular music. The interest in music was framed in economic terms and conditions, which promoted interaction with the sponsors, ticket sales, marketing, etc., in other words, with the business field, and also with the municipal authorities to a minor extent.

Despite the loose connection to the municipal authorities, the location was important for the festival with its long history, community, and services. The cultural-cognitive dimension, i.o. meanings and their symbolic representations, was tied to the social sphere of the festival as the 'brand' of the festival is embedded in the location. Faced with the challenges posed by the pandemic for the survival of the festival, Pop A received some economic support from the municipality authorities.

The funding was for the purpose of developing the festival profile, but the organization could not provide any events during the lockdown. Even the small-scale events and services would have been too expensive to produce, considering the risk of having to cancel them. The boundary work of Pop A was based on a stronger relationship with the business institution in the networking pattern compared with the performing arts festivals. The relationship with the business institutions was weakened with the pandemic as the festival was cancelled in 2020 and 2021.

In contrast to Pop A, Pop B was strongly embedded in the locality both territorially and economically. This popular music festival was specialized in a particular music genre, but the festival also provided more popular music performances for economic reasons to attract a broader audience. The local perspective of the festival was highly emphasized, not only because of the municipal authorities' funding that was allotted to the festival but also because of the extensively recognized cultural value for the local community. For all the festivals, the social sphere of the locality was important, but for Pop B, the boundary work with the local community and the authorities was tight and with the business sector loose in comparison with the other popular music festival. The

authorities of the municipality were engaged in the management of the festival in many ways, such as having a representative on the board.

Pop B was different from the other festivals in respect to its wavering institutionalization. First, although the focal organization applied the practice of balancing the funding and the profile of the program, not everyone agreed on the methods. The views of the persons in charge of production and management differed regarding the reshaping of the festival program and the related economic terms during the pandemic. Although they agreed about the need to increase the number of visitors and the amount of income in order to enhance the poor economic situation, the authorities of the municipality demanded the festival to have a more popular profile and more catering services, whereas the producer insisted on maintaining the traditional, distinguished profile of the festival. Thus, these different views and related practices cast doubts about the maturity of the institutionalization as shared practices, beliefs, and knowledge are important for collective agency.

Second, the person in charge of production pursued unpaid, charity-minded events, alongside the core festival, supplied by the staff and the artists. Interviewees across the festivals also referred to charity-minded activities in regard to enhancing the economic situation of the festivals, but as a narrative in history and not as an institutionalized practice. In other words, the unpaid charity work provided shared cultural meanings but with institutionalization, the charity-minded events were no longer applied. Third, practices related to business roles and positions did not follow institutionalized norms. In contracting practices, the same person sometimes occupied both the position of the buyer (the producer) and the seller (the manager, the representative of the artists).

During the pandemic, the pressures to reinforce the management and professionalism of the focal organization and to popularize the program increased. The local authorities reinforced the economic situation of the festival with extra funding, in addition to the funding from the state. At the same time, they strengthened their influence in the management of the focal organization, which is expressed in the following quote: ‘The festival will not be closed, but we have to consider the economy as continuity presumes more consumption by event visitors’ (upper civil servant, municipality).

With the strengthening management role of the local authorities, the focal organization started to follow the institutionalized practices typical for festivals in a more profound way. In addition, the reorganized festival management searched for new ways of providing cultural services and reinforcing the funding base during the lockdown. The relationship of the cultural-cognitive dimensions with economic and regulatory necessities was reshaped with an emphasis on economic terms. The local authorities required strengthening of the relations and collaboration with business, such as virtually mediated performances with commercial media and catering side-products. Thus, with the pandemic, the minor structural changes in the network were related to the boundary work. First, the institutional field of authorities approached the institutional field of business as a consequence of the municipality authorities promoting collaboration with business. Second, the relationship with the cultural institution was reshaped with a weakened emphasis on the original musical genre of the festival.

The results: Institutional logic and the pandemic

For the festivals, the following patterns and practices were typical, leading to hybridity of the institutional logics. The network pattern of organizing festival promoted hybridity in institutional logics, which was coped with the boundary work. Because the organizations of the networks came from different institutional fields, the focal organizations had to adjust their different logics. The organizations in the network represented different societal-level logics, such as the value of culture and the necessity of economy (see Battilana et al. 2017).

The boundary work applied to all the organizations in the networks, but a particular emphasis was on the relationship with the municipality authorities due to the economic support and the importance of locality. With the perspective of institutional logic, the relations between the dimensions of the logic were particular in the following way: the dimension of economic and regulative necessities (funding with special terms and sources), the cultural-cognitive dimension (the content of the festival, providing meanings), and social sphere (locality as the site for social activities and relations) were related. They were dependent and related mutually.

The festivals applied the pattern of balancing the funding and program regularly. The funding came from the authorities of municipalities and the public sector organizations or NGOs or business and the program was sourced from the cultural subfield related to the profile of the festival. From the perspective of institutional theory, the cultural-cognitive dimension was related to the dimension of economic and regulatory necessities in a stable, but flexible way. The flexibility was applied particularly during the pandemic.

The performing arts festivals survived the pandemic with their institutionalized position, which guaranteed them the economic support allotted to high culture events in addition to the pandemic-related economic support. The grants and other funding from the state and other funding sources for high culture mutually reinforced each other and legitimized the value of the performance arts festivals. While Perf B could almost continue their work in the same way as before, Perf A had to search for new sources of income and slightly change the profile of the festival program. For Perf A, the relation of the cultural-cognitive dimension and the dimension of economic and regulatory necessities was changed to a minor extent.

In the popular music festivals, the cognitive-cultural dimension was more tightly related to the economic necessities, as the focal organizations had to put more emphasis on economic terms compared with the high culture festivals. The two popular music festivals were different as regards to their stage of institutionalization and relationship with the local authorities. Pop A was firmly institutionalized with less connections to external partners in the network and its loose relationship with the local authorities. The pandemic did not profoundly change the relations with the institutional fields and institutional logic, although the relations to business institutions weakened due to the lockdown of the events.

Pop B was less firmly institutionalized, and, with the pandemic, the focal organization was more indebted to the local authorities. The local authorities, being more involved with the management, required close relations with business, and thus, the institutional fields of authorities and business approached each other, which also had an impact on the profile of the program, giving it a more popular emphasis. The relation to



the cultural institution was reshaped with a weakened emphasis on the original subfield of the festival. The relation of the cultural-cognitive dimension and the dimension of economic and regulatory necessities was changed to some extent with the new economic terms.

A literature review on festivals during the pandemic reinforces the significance of the institutionalization as firmly established, but flexible in respect to the challenges related to the lockdown (Ali & Balme 2022; Burnside et al. 2024; Dragin-Jensen et al. 2022; Moore & Quinn 2023; Ricci & Agogué 2023). During and after the pandemic, new innovations were developed, which were, however, tightly adjusted to the institutionalized pre-pandemic profile and role and the networking pattern. First, new innovations had been developed due to the restrictions related to the pandemic (Dragin-Jensen 2022; Moore & Quinn 2023), but the festivals had restored the pre-pandemic formats and profiles after the lockdown (Ali & Balme 2022; Ricci & Agogué 2023). This is due to the embeddedness to the role and purpose of festivals (Ricci & Agogué 2023). In addition, the slow pace of institutional change even during the pandemic and the partners' (stakeholders') resistance to changes due to related high costs (Ali & Balme 2022) are the reasons for maintaining the pre-pandemic festival formats and profiles. The networking pattern has been maintained during the pandemic, even with new practices and tasks related to health regulated during the pandemic (Burnside et al. 2024). The sustainability during the pandemic was supported by authorities with pandemic-related funding (Dragin-Jensen et al. 2022; Moore & Quinn 2023).

Conclusion and discussion

The cultural festival organizations based their activities on networking with organizations from different institutional fields that represent particular institutional logics with respect to their role in the network. The institutionalized network pattern was applied to performing arts and popular music festivals with the variations related to the profile of festival and to the festival-specific characteristics. The relation with the cultural field was direct in the performing arts festivals, whereas for the popular music festivals, the relationship was mediated by agencies. The relationship with business was emphasized in the popular music festivals, whereas the performing arts festivals were less dependent on business and more dependent on the funding from the state and municipality authorities and NGOs. The nature of the festivals' relationship with the local authorities varied, which shaped the boundary work.

Our theoretical approach was based on institutional theory and particularly on the concept of hybridity in institutional logic and we applied practice theory for analyzing the focal organizations' practices of coping with the organizations from different institutional fields. The most common practices were the boundary work with the organizations from different institutional fields for adjusting their different logics and the balancing of the funding and program.

On the basis of the analysis, survival over hard times was based on the institutionalization of the festival organizations, which provided economic support during the pandemic. They all had to run down events to varied extents, but the small focal organizations continued their work with forthcoming events. With the pandemic, the changes of the provision of cultural events were usually due to balancing economic terms and

the profile of the program. Two of the focal organizations had to reshape their network relations in economic terms, which had an impact on their programs, but did not destroy the profiles.

However, the most significant result of our study is related to the hybridity in institutionalization, as the networking pattern is mainstreamed with flexible and changing practices on boundary work and balancing the funding and program. In post-pandemic Nordic countries, the hybridity is assumed to be intensified: the cultural sector is assumed to grow with an intensifying trend of public-private partnership, which does not promise increasing funding but rather increasingly market-based and tightly collaborated production patterns, with the expectation of increasing accessibility of cultural services for citizens (Kultursektorns återhämtning och förändring efter covid-19-pandemin 2023). The practice of balancing the funding and program is expected to become more complex with a multiplicity of elements and the boundary work is assumed to require increasingly professional competence with a variety of interrelations. These notions echo the current trends of economization of culture policy and culture activities in general.

Limitations of the study

Data relating to the research were limited to four case studies. The subject of research has not been focused on in working life studies, which limits the opportunities for comparison and enhances the validity of research.

Data protecting and processing personal data

The data protection and processing personal data follows the regulations and practices of the University, in compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, EU 2016/679) and other applicable regulations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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