

Håkon Larsen

10 The Public Sphere as an Arena for Legitimation Work: The Case of Cultural Organizations

The institution of art is surrounded by constant legitimation work, as many artists and organizations are in need of financial support in order to continue their work. This is especially true in Scandinavia, where most of the culture sector is funded by the state or by municipalities. In addition, the institution of license-financed public service broadcasting is in need of legitimation work, as it cannot be taken for granted that we need publicly funded media organizations. Although Scandinavia in general and Norway in particular, are relatively stable societies characterized by neo-corporatism and reformism (Engelstad & Hagelund, 2015), cultural organizations need to intensify their public performances of legitimacy in times of change, as the citizens needs to be reminded of why these organizations are important and need to be preserved.

Where changes in the surroundings of organizations lead to articulation work (Strauss, 1985b) internally, in terms of the various actors of the organization articulating to each other in an implicit way what the organization is doing, changes also lead to an intensification of legitimation work externally, as being visible and perceived as legitimate in the public sphere is crucial for the survival of cultural organizations as publicly funded organizations. Due to the processes of digitalization, cultural omnivorousness, and cultural and economic globalization, the public will not take these organizations as given. These profound changes in the social surroundings of publicly funded arts and media organizations lead to an intensification of their legitimation work. As will become evident in the analysis, defining and emphasizing a societal mission has become important for cultural organizations performing legitimacy in the public sphere. Through this emphasis, both the state and the organization get to explain to the citizens why the organization deserves public funding. Although the core activities of the organization may remain quite similar, the public display of legitimacy is changing, and the public sphere is becoming an important arena for the organization's legitimation work.

10.1 Legitimacy and Sociology

Legitimation is a concept widely used in the social science literature, especially in political science and organizational studies. In fact, from the mid-1990s one of the most important questions in organization studies became 'How do organizations acquire, manage and use legitimacy?' (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008, p. 17). The foundations for such a turn towards the study of legitimacy was, nevertheless, already laid in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the hugely influential articles

by John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977), and Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1983), who laid the groundwork for the neo-institutional approach in sociology. According to this approach, ‘organizations are influenced by their institutional and network contexts [...] and they are isomorphic with their institutional context in order to secure social approval (*legitimacy*), which provides survival benefits’ (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 6). Although this school has been important for theorizing how institutions are ‘macrolevel abstractions, [...] independent of any particular entity to which allegiance might be owed’ (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 15), it is weak when it comes to agency (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Jepperson, 1991; Larsen, 2016b; Schmidt, 2008) and social change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Schmidt, 2008).

Another strand of sociological theory concerned with legitimacy is French pragmatic sociology (Bénatouïl, 1999; Guggenheim & Potthast, 2012). With their sociology of critical capacities, Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1999) have developed a theory of legitimation. When engaging in public deliberation and trying to reach an agreement on how to define a situation, to legitimate one’s own arguments and to critique those of others, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) argue that we relate to one of six common worlds and that each world corresponds to an order of worth, with its own grammar, structure and tools that actors can use when engaging in legitimation work.

‘Work’ is a term that has been employed in important ways by a range of sociologists engaging in cultural analysis. In addition to studies of legitimation work (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Larsen, 2014b), sociologists have studied such cultural work as boundary work (Lamont & Molnár, 2002), adaptation work (Hegnes, 2015), relational work (Zelizer, Bandelj, & Wherry, 2012), medical work (Strauss, 1985a), articulation work (Strauss, 1985b), emotional work (Hochschild, 1979) and face-work (Goffman, 2005 [1967]). Work has proven to be a helpful concept to be employed when seeking to capture the meanings of actions and social processes. Legitimation is one of the most important processes for contemporary cultural organizations, and actors from different social spheres participate in this work.

10.2 Legitimation Work in the Culture Sector

In this chapter, I analyse how legitimacy is enacted through interaction in a discussion of the legitimation work of specific arts and media organizations in Scandinavia. I am concerned with the cultural work involved in the process of maintaining support for these organizations and in particular how legitimacy is performed in the public sphere. The discussion is grounded in empirical studies of the public service broadcasters in Scandinavia (Larsen, 2010, 2016a), the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet (NNOB) and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (OPO) (Larsen, 2014b), in addition to other examples from cultural policy debates. The contemporary legitimation of arts and media organizations depends on several performers and audiences

engaging in legitimation work; the organizations are being legitimated through a dialogue between the organizations, the state, the art world and the citizens. As the organizations themselves, the state and the art world all have an interest in successful legitimation work, a key player is the general public in that whether the legitimation work is successful depends on the citizenry perceiving the work of the organizations as worthy of public support. As a consequence, much of the legitimation work occurs in the public sphere, which in its most basic definition ‘refers to [...] the practice of open discussion about matters of common public concern’ (Jacobs, 2000, p. 2). Actors from the art world, the organizations and the state all communicate in the public sphere through mass media and social media.

In arts and media organizations, the major players engaging in legitimation work are the CEOs, the directors of communication, and the leaders of the artistic departments. The major players in the political field, in the case of the culture sector, are – in addition to the government and the parliament – the Minister of Culture and his/her political advisors. In the art world, the major players are the leaders of the artists’ organizations, editors of art and culture magazines and influential individual artists who participate in public debate. In addition to these players, researchers, intellectuals, and think tanks are important actors. In Scandinavia, it is common that researchers are used as experts by the ministries. They also give talks at seminars, discussing cultural policy and the culture sector, and voice their opinions in public debates.

I now turn to the empirical cases and discuss what characterizes legitimation work as it appears in the Scandinavian culture sector, where most of the funding for the major organizations comes from the state.²⁶ These organizations are therefore dependent on being perceived as legitimate among large sections of the public (as opposed to only the private funders, as is the case in countries such as the US, where the state acts as a facilitator in art policy),²⁷ as this helps the state in justifying the continuation of financial support of the organizations. The state is thus also dependent on the organizations’ legitimation work to help legitimate spending public money to uphold them (granted that the government in power and/or the majority of the parliament find this to be a good idea). In addition, the content producers not employed by these organizations are dependent on the legitimation work of the organizations, as they

26 As with the cases discussed in this paper, in 2011, 77 percent of the NNOB’s income and 87 percent of the OPO’s income came from the state (Larsen, 2014b, p. 457). The public service broadcasters are funded through a license fee initially paid by everyone in possession of a radio receiver and later a television set and now in some countries everyone in possession of a computer or hand-held devices capable of receiving audio-visual content. They are thus publicly funded, although not directly by the state, as the national parliaments only decide the size of the fee. The income from the license fee ‘... accounts for 92–98 percent of the revenues’ (Roppen, Lund, & Nord, 2010, p. 136).

27 ‘The Facilitator State funds the fine arts through foregone taxes – so-called tax expenditures – provided according to the wishes of individual and corporate donors; that is, donations are tax deductible’ (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989, p. 48).

need organizations that will buy and perform their work. In the case of opera, ballet and symphonic music, the content producers are of course mainly composers, librettists, directors and choreographers but also all the other specialists involved in the production of such high-cost art forms (Becker, 1974; Peterson, 1976) (although most of them will already be employed by the organization). In the case of broadcasters, much of the content production is in-house, but they also buy and order productions, such as drama series, from external production units. Participants in the freelance television and movie business therefore have an interest in maintaining such a broadcaster (the Norwegian public broadcasting organization *Norsk rikskringkasting* (NRK) is the largest media organization in Norway). I will start the discussion by looking into what characterizes the communication between the state and the organizations.

10.3 Communication Between the Organizations and the State

As cultural organizations receiving public funding have to apply to the Ministry of Culture for funding, a formal and direct communication between the organizations and the state is the yearly funding application. After the money has been allocated to the organization, they receive a letter from the government that states what the Ministry of Culture expects in return. The Ministry of Culture started the practice with allocation letters in the 1990s, and it has become one of the most important tools for governing cultural organizations (NOU 2013:4, p. 299).

The details in these letters have spurred some controversy in Norway in the 2010s, as the government stated in 2011 and 2012 that they expected the performing arts organizations receiving public funding to start planning special performances celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Norwegian constitution in 2014. Several theatres and the NNOB protested loudly in the public sphere,²⁸ as they perceived this as an undue government interference in their artistic work, thus limiting their artistic freedom and breaching the Arm's Length Principle. This is a crucial element of cultural policy (Mangset, 2013), especially in countries where the state acts as a patron in arts policy (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989).²⁹ This means that the government provides finance while the specialists maintain and develop the professional standards of the art world. Even though the NNOB is funded directly through the Ministry of Culture and thus is in line with the Architect State, where funding decisions concerning arts organizations are made by politicians and bureaucrats and the state tends to support

²⁸ Scenekunst.no (2012): 'Spesielle forutsetninger for tilskudd', 11.1., Klassekampen (2012): 'Protest mot innblanding', 3.5., Haakon Flemmen.

²⁹ 'The Patron State funds fine arts through arm's length arts councils. The government determines how much aggregate support to provide, but not which organizations or artists should receive support' (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989, p. 49).

the arts as part of its social welfare objectives (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989, p. 50), this controversy nevertheless shows that the Arm's Length Principle is crucial for arts organizations, no matter the funding source. According to the Norwegian cultural policy scholar Per Mangset (2013), most countries in Europe today, including Norway, are somewhere between the Patron State and the Architect State.

For state-funded arts organizations to have artistic credibility, it is of the utmost importance that the money from the state does not come with demands regarding what content the organizations should produce. Simultaneously, the trustworthiness of the government's cultural policy is dependent on its service to the arts and society and not the state. Both are achievable if the government operates at an arm's length distance from these organizations.

One of the harshest critics of the allocation letter from the Ministry of Culture was the CEO of the NNOB, Tom Remlov. He nevertheless said in an interview (with the author) that they had planned a 200th anniversary performance on their own initiative before the controversy with the Ministry of Culture. This shows a commitment to serving one's own nation as an integral part of being a national arts organization. At the same time, it signals agency on the part of the organization in that they refuse to take directions from the government. That the interests of the organization and the government coincide is portrayed as a coincidence. By stating that they wanted to put on a performance celebrating the 200th anniversary, the NNOB was able to express both a commitment to society and to artistic freedom.

In the 2013 letter from the government to the performing arts organizations, it is only specified that organizations that plan to put on special performances in 2014 are encouraged to report this to the Ministry when applying for funding for 2014. Even though it was the same government, a coalition between the Social Democratic Party, The Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party, who provided funding in 2011, 2012 and 2013, there was a new Minister of Culture providing the money for 2013 and signing the allocation letter. Through this minor adjustment of the content of these letters, the government was able to uphold its policy; at the same time the new Minister of Culture was able to re-establish good relations with the organization and the art world.

This is an example of cooperative legitimation work between an organization and the state. Both the organization and the government were able to save face with these slight adjustments in the communication. Through engaging in legitimacy repair, the new Minister of Culture was able to obtain the goodwill of the performing arts organizations just by making minor adjustments, and the organizations got their way without the government having to abandon their policy altogether. Through witnessing this co-operative work being played out in the public sphere, the art world will probably also be relieved, as the arm's length distance between the state and the arts organizations is kept intact. An important element of the initial critique by the organizations was exactly that the state did not respect the Arm's Length Principle.

In 2014, the NNOB staged two new performances: a ballet version of Henrik Ibsen's play *Gengangere* (Ghosts), and an opera version of Ibsen's play *Peer Gynt*. The

artistic directors at the NNOB stated that '[a] critical attitude to the heritage we carry with us is a way to honor the tradition. To preserve the tradition, we must challenge it'.³⁰ By relating to major works in the Norwegian literary canon as part of its 2014 schedule, the NNOB showed a commitment to society, and by relating to the works in innovative ways it also showed a commitment to the art world (although the artistic acclaim for the productions was modest). And by staging these performances the NNOB was able to satisfy the government's wishes.

10.4 Societal Mission

Another example of cooperative legitimation work, where the organizations and the state pull in the same direction is through defining and emphasizing the organizations' societal mission (*samfunnsoppdrag*) as a rhetorical element in their legitimation work. Most state cultural organizations in the 21st century define a societal mission that guides their activity. It is portrayed as a contract they have with the public regarding their contribution to society, legitimating these organizations with reference to the civic world (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) and making them serve a higher purpose than the organization itself. The CEO of the NNOB has written an article in a Norwegian cultural journal, arguing that cultural organizations throughout Europe emphasize serving society by fulfilling a societal mission and that this is a new way of legitimating such institutions as opera houses, symphony orchestras and theatres in the 21st century (Remlov, 2012). He is right that this has become an important concept in summing up the role of these organizations in society. In this concept lies a commitment to serving not only the art world but also society at large.

In Norway, it has been emphasized as part of state cultural policy that all cultural organizations receiving funding should define a societal mission that should guide their organizational work (NOU, 2013:4, p. 301). The latest major report on overall cultural policy delivered to the Norwegian Ministry of Culture has a separate chapter dedicated to the societal mission of cultural organizations. The committee behind the report suggests that organizations funded through the state budget shall formulate a societal mission in 'dialogue and negotiation with the funding authority [...]' (NOU, 2013:4, p. 302) and that this 'must be a public affair, and something that is subject to continuous debate in the public sphere [...] It must be a contract that is agreed upon by the cultural institution, its political subsidiaries and the interested public' (NOU, 2013:4, pp. 298–299). According to the report (NOU, 2013:4, p. 300), the notion of a

³⁰ http://www.osloby.no/oslopuls/kunst_og_scene/Ibsen-blir-ballett-og-opera-7514615.html (last accessed, November 10 2014).

societal mission has been important in the museum sector since the 1990s, although it has not been clear what it means for a museum to have a societal mission.

The NNOB, the OPO, the Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design (The National Museum) and the Norwegian public service broadcaster, *Norsk rikskringkasting* (NRK), all emphasize their societal mission as part of their legitimation work (Larsen, 2014b). For the NNOB, a societal mission entails presenting

[...] opera, ballet and concerts of high artistic standards, representing a broad spectrum of expression and being available for as broad an audience as possible. We shall, as the only national and nationwide institution in our art form, contribute to the development of the nation's opera and ballet productions (NNOB, 2010, p. 2).

And for the OPO, the fact that they are trying to make classical music relevant for the common people is their societal mission,³¹ in addition to their 'function as a greenhouse for Norwegian music, Norwegian composers, conductors, and soloists'.³² The director of The National Museum, Audun Eckhoff, states in the foreword of the strategy document for 2011–2016 that

[t]he museum's societal mission defines its basis for existence and the responsibility that lies in collecting, maintaining, exploring, and passing on collections within the Norwegian and foreign art history from the middle ages until today. The mission is also about how we create and organize the meeting between human beings and art.³³

When it comes to the NRK, it launched 'societal mission' as a key term in its strategy document for the period from 2007–2012. It was given the following definition by former CEO John G. Bernander in the document's foreword: '... "samfunnsoppdrag" points to NRK's special responsibility as a public service broadcaster and the special task we have in the Norwegian media environment. NRK is expected to deliver content with a quality and breadth that no other media enterprise in Norway can or will match' (NRK, 2007, p. 2). The notion of *samfunnsoppdrag* has in many ways replaced the word *folkeopplysning* ('enlightenment [of the people]'),³⁴ which was considered an impor-

31 <http://oslofilharmonien.no/kunder/oslofil/oslofil.nsf/pages/publikumsdissing-eller-samfunnsoppdrag> (last accessed June 12 2015).

32 <http://oslofilharmonien.no/kunder/oslofil/oslofil.nsf/pages/kulturens-samfunnsansvar> (last accessed May 24 2013).

33 http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/no/nasjonalmuseet/om_museet/strategi_2011-2016/ (last accessed June 12 2015).

34 "Enlightenment (of the people)" is a direct translation of the Norwegian word *folkeopplysning*; the "of the people" is intended to distinguish the term enlightenment from its broader notion, related to the age of enlightenment and enlightenment philosophy, and the use of parentheses to not distance it too far from the definition of enlightenment provided by such philosophers – the phrase "popular education" might give more meaning to an English audience' (Larsen, 2011b, p. 45).

tant part of NRK's mission in its earlier days, especially when it still had monopoly on television in Norway (Larsen, 2010).³⁵

That these organizations are formulating and emphasizing societal missions can be seen as a result of pressure from its surroundings, especially the political sphere. Such pressures can in the language of neo-institutionalism (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) be labelled isomorphism. This particular case can be seen as coercive isomorphism, which 'results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150).

In addition to the 'pressure' from the funders, the society at large also exerts pressure on these organizations in terms of important values in society being projected onto the organizations. Social scientists have concluded that cultural hierarchies are less prevalent than in previous decades (Featherstone, 2007; Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996), particularly in Norway (Skarpenes, 2007; Ytreberg, 2004). Scandinavian countries have a long tradition of egalitarianism (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Sejersted, 2011), and it is expected that even high-culture organizations like opera houses and symphony orchestras should seek to be inclusive and not only communicate with the elite. By not seeking to be an inclusive arena with active strategies for recruiting new audience members, the traditional high-cost arts organizations would make it hard for themselves to maintain legitimacy amongst the citizens. It is therefore in their self-interest to communicate that they are an arena for the whole population, serving the society at large rather than just the art world. An effective way of communicating this rhetorically in the 21st century is by defining a societal mission.

Although the inclusive ambitions are made more explicit when the organizations are performing legitimacy, it is not as if these inclusive ambitions are a new construct. Ever since its creation, the NNOB has been an inclusive opera house for the whole country. It was created in 1958 as a national touring opera with its base being the largest theater in Norway at the time, *Folketeatret* (the People's Theatre). This was an Oslo theatre for the working class established on the initiative of the Norwegian Labour Party (Dahl & Helseth, 2006, p. 164). And when the discussion on whether to build a new opera house began in the 1990s, it was important that the facility should be a multi-purpose one (Røyseng, 2000), meaning that it should not be a facility only for opera, ballet and classical music but also for concerts with other musical expressions and for a whole range of other events. And broadcasters in the public's service have, of course, always had a societal mission. Even though public service broadcasters had a more paternalistic attitude towards its audiences in its earlier phase, it has

³⁵ Commercial broadcasting was introduced in Norway in 1987, with TV3 transmitting via satellite from London. NRK's biggest competitor, the commercial public service broadcaster TV2, was established in 1992.

since day one had a threefold mission of ‘informing, educating, and entertaining’ its audience (Larsen, 2011a; Syvertsen, 1999).

That societal missions are made important when arts and media organizations, as well as cultural policy actors, perform legitimacy in the 21st century can be seen as a gradual institutional change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010), motivated by both external and internal factors (Alasuutari, 2015; Goodstein, Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2009; Schmidt, 2008). These inclusive ambitions are made part of organizations’ legitimation work not only out of strategic interests to satisfy funders. Organizational actors are also passionate about their work and want as many people as possible to experience the art and culture they represent out of a belief that it will enrich their lives (Larsen, 2016b). In fact, organizational actors who are motivated by passion just as much as strategic interests are better equipped for achieving success when performing legitimacy in the public sphere (Alexander, 2011; Schmidt, 2008).³⁶

Among the inclusive strategies of the NNOB and the OPO, one is to bring young audiences from multicultural parts of Oslo to attend performances. The OPO also has ‘adopted’ a school orchestra in the multi-ethnic working class neighbourhood of Tøyen in Oslo, with the musicians mentoring the pupils. As a sign of how important the societal mission is for these organizations, the NNOB actually formulated the goal that the opera house audiences should reflect the demography of modern Norway (NNOB, 2010). The management of the NNOB knows as well as the rest of us that this is highly unrealistic, but it nevertheless signals an attitude that is beneficial in satisfying the public and the politicians through its legitimation work. The NNOB writes in its annual report for 2011 that the goal of representing the demography of modern Norway ‘has lowered the threshold for a broader audience and given us a reputation as an open, diverse and inclusive institution’ (NNOB, 2011, p. 11). Such a demystification of high culture has been a driving force in the legitimation work of state-funded organizations in the 21st century (Larsen, 2014b). The most important feature of such inclusive legitimation work is that audiences feel that entering the opera house or the symphony hall is a real alternative when they want to engage in leisure activities. This does not mean that the actual organizations have to emphasize this in everything they do internally. Neither does it mean that they have to make this a central issue in their communication with the art world. To the contrary, practicing double talk (Brunsson, 2002) in their emphasis on being inclusive is probably the best way to go about it. In this way, they can maintain the focus on artistic quality in their internal articulation work and can keep on with the inclusive legitimation work externally.

³⁶ According to Alexander (2011, p. 85), ‘[m]eaning must seem to come from the actor if it is to seem authentic, not from scripts, props, power, or audience’. Jon Elster (1989) has argued along similar lines when discussing wage-bargaining. For references to norms of justice to have an effect, Elster argues, they must be credible to the bargaining parties. If they were only hollow statements, no effect would follow.

To avoid loud public protests and de-legitimation, it is beneficial for organizations to be perceived as both relevant and sympathetic by a large proportion of the population. An important part of the legitimation work is therefore to make sure that one is visible in the public sphere in a way that corresponds to the dominant values of society. As Norway is an egalitarian country where cultural hierarchies are not considered legitimate (Haarr & Krogstad, 2011; Skarpenes, 2007; Skarpenes & Sakslind, 2010), being inclusive is considered important for these organizations. That the actual audiences are still recruited from the segments of the population with high economic and cultural capital (Bjørnsen, Lind, & Hauge, 2012; Mangset, 2012; Storey, 2003) does not lead to the conclusion championed by the Norwegian editor and writer Kristian Meisingset (2013) that the organizations should give up their inclusive strategies. Rather, keeping up the inclusive work is crucial, as it signals a commitment towards society at large. The organizations might nevertheless have trouble satisfying the art world with this inclusive legitimation work, as we can assume that the art world is more interested in the artistic quality of the productions than in the organizations' ability to communicate with the common man.

10.5 Satisfying the Art World

In order not to lose too much legitimacy in the art world, it is important for the organizations to protest when they perceive that the arm's length distance is threatened, as the previous example of the allocation letters illustrated. Nevertheless, both the NNOB and the OPO have received criticism from the art world regarding their season programming, among other things for not putting enough emphasis on contemporary music in general and on contemporary Norwegian music in particular. In 2011, the NNOB received criticism from several opera professionals for not prioritizing newly written Norwegian operas in their repertoire,³⁷ and a music critic in the daily newspaper *Aftenposten* criticized the OPO for trying too hard to reach young audiences with the 2012–2013 season programme. This led the CEO to respond in a blog post on the orchestra's website, arguing that the main responsibility of the orchestra is 'to satisfy its core audience, but that it is also dedicated in trying to reach new audience groups, including those who are not familiar with the codes of the Concert Hall and do not know all the terms of the music insiders'.³⁸ This work to reach new

³⁷ Dagens Næringsliv (2011): 'Knappt med kommers-kroner', 9.6., *Aftenposten* (2011): 'Hardt ut mot operasjefen', 22.6., Ann Christiansen. Klassekampen (2011): 'Feit dame står for fall', 25.6., Ida Karine Gullvik. Klassekampen (2011): 'Vil eksperimentere mer', 6.7., Ida Karine Gullvik.

³⁸ Oslo-Filharmonien (2011): 'Den vanskelige påminnelsen', Odd S. Gullberg. Available from: <http://oslofilharmonien.no/internet/oslofil.nsf/pages/den-vanskelige-paminnelsen> (Accessed 19 February 2013).

audiences is an important part of the orchestra's societal mission, according to the CEO (Larsen, 2014b).

Also the NRK has the most difficult audience to please among content producers, television and film professionals who deliver out-of-house content. On several occasions, the NRK has been criticized for producing too many of its drama productions in-house and thus not helping to stimulate a vibrant national television industry.³⁹ It is argued that as a public service broadcaster NRK has a responsibility to ensure it is possible to make a living of working in television drama in Norway as part of its accountability as a publicly funded organization. This is about to change, as Thorhild Widvey, the current Minister of Culture representing the Conservative Party (*Høyre*), presented a white paper on public service broadcasting in June 2015 in which one of the policy goals is that 35 percent of the NRK's production should come from out-of-house sources in 2016 and 2017, with an increase to 40 percent in the years to follow (St.meld., nr. 38 (2014-2015), p. 121).

A common aspect of the legitimation work of the NNOB, the OPO and the NRK, in addition to Trondheim Symphony Orchestra (Larsen, 2014b), is to be inclusive and have the goal of reaching as many people as possible with (parts of) its content. This helps legitimate the relevance of the state-funded organizations to broad segments of the audience. But as this section has shown, both the content producers and the intellectuals express difficulty with this attitude. Because the rhetorical skills and professional affiliations of these groups give them easy access to the edited public sphere, their voices get heard. These groups possess hermeneutic power and can use it to solicit co-operation from the organizations in their display of authoritative power (Alexander, 2011). This is important in that it helps balance the legitimation work between the inclusive and the exclusive, which is essential in simultaneously satisfying all the publics.

10.6 The Public Sphere as a Key Arena for Legitimation Work

Although the organizational actors and actors from the state and the art world have formal and informal channels for direct communication with each other, a crucial part of the communication is that which occurs in the sphere where private people

³⁹ Dagbladet (2012): 'Krever avklaring NRK-debatt', 30.11., Anders Fjellberg. Dagens Næringsliv (2012): 'Krever Rossiné's avgang', 3.12., Bjørn Eckblad. Dagbladet (2012): 'Tristessen NRK drama', 7.12., Øystein Karlsen. Aftenposten (2012): 'Filmregissører krever avtale med NRK', 7.12., Jan Gunnar Furuly. Dagens Næringsliv (2012): 'Skaperstorm', 4.12., Dagens Næringsliv (2012): 'Ingen jobb for gamle menn', 8.12., Hans Petter Sjølie. Aftenposten (2012): 'Vi har for lav tillit', 8.12., Jan Gunnar Furuly. Dagens Næringsliv (2012): 'Hvorfor legge ned NRK Drama', 27.12., Terje Gaustad. Aftenposten (2013): 'Ny dramasejef til ha originalt innhold', 18.6., Kjersti Nipen.

come together as a public (Habermas, 1989, p. 27). In addition to showing a presence and maintaining an awareness of organizational' relevance, this also gives the opportunity for an interested public to gain insight into the process of content production and the financing of these organizations. Then we as members of the public can watch how our tax money is spent. But our role is not merely as spectators. In addition to participating in the debates ourselves, we can also protest or support development in these organizations by attending/not attending the performances taking place in these arenas and/or by consuming the media content they produce, in addition to making cultural policy a priority when we cast our votes in the next political election.

When the art world is dissatisfied with the content performed by these organizations or these organizations are dissatisfied with the cultural policy of the government, they voice their criticism in the public sphere, as it forces the government or the organizations to participate in discussions to defend their policies or to promote new initiatives. In order to uphold legitimacy for the particular organization and the specific art world it represents, it is crucial that parts of the legitimation work take place in the national edited public sphere, as this helps in gaining sympathy from large audiences, which all players are dependent on (even though the art world might be reluctant).

As much of the cultural policy debates take place in a national public sphere, how one discusses these issues is influenced by the cultural traditions of each respective country, as actors relate to national cultural repertoires of evaluation (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) in their legitimation work. How much criticism is generated due to changes in the organization's work or in cultural policy is also subject to national variation. In a study of public service broadcasting (Larsen, 2008), I found that the Swedish broadcaster *Sveriges Television* (SVT) and Swedish cultural policy are criticized and corrected in the Swedish national public sphere to a much larger degree than is the case with NRK and Norwegian cultural policy in the Norwegian national public sphere. Although NRK seems more obsessed with ratings as the foundation of its legitimacy than is the case in Sweden (Larsen, 2008, 2010), when SVT applied a commercial logic in communicating with the public in terms of it thinking of target groups in its programming, this triggered massive criticism in the Swedish public sphere, among other things in terms of the petition 'No soap operas instead of news'. The petition was signed by 17,000 young citizens protesting SVT's strategy to reach young audiences and in doing so prioritizing entertainment instead of educational programming in its content offerings (Larsen, 2008; TT, 2006).⁴⁰ This is correlated with the fact that both the managers at SVT (Larsen, 2010) and Swedish cultural politicians (Larsen, 2011b) focus upon the idea of public service broadcasting and its

⁴⁰ This was the biggest protest against SVT's programming in the history of the media organization. The protest resulted in the News- and Society editor promising to develop at least one new magazine on foreign news and several new programs on societal issues in 2007 (Larsen, 2008; TT, 2006).

contribution to democracy in their legitimation rhetoric. As they draw on a deliberative model of democracy (Larsen, 2014a) infused with Habermasian normative ideas (Habermas, 1996) in justifying the role of public broadcasting in society, it is hard to legitimate a focus on target groups and ratings as part of the programme strategy of the public service broadcasters. The citizens want SVT to anchor its activity in the civic world and not the market world or the world of fame (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006).⁴¹

Due to the massive protests, SVT actually withdrew the strategy targeted at reaching young audiences. One of the first things the newly appointed CEO of SVT, Eva Hamilton, did after she entered the position was to state that SVT should serve the whole population and not put a special emphasis on specific segments of the audience. In other words, its activity should be anchored in the civic world rather than in the world of fame (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). She repaired the legitimacy damage that her predecessor Christina Jutterström created and thereby seized an opportunity to show vigour. The legitimacy damage became an opportunity for Hamilton to engage in legitimacy repair, as was also the case with the Norwegian Minister of Culture in adjusting the formulation in the allocation letter to the performing arts organizations. Legitimacy repair is important for organizations at the same time as it represents an opportunity for the individual leaders of organizations to come off as vigorous. Legitimacy repair as part of legitimation work is important for organizations, governments or ministries in that it is an opportunity in times of crisis to show vigor. It is especially helpful for individuals who are newcomers in position of power in organizational hierarchies.

Another example of legitimacy repair occurred in the transition of ministers of culture within a political process of suggesting and eventually deciding on whether Norway should pass a law on fixed book prices. Anniken Huitfeldt, the Minister of Culture (2009–2012) in the Centre-Left coalition government, started the process by initiating an externally produced report on the Norwegian book industry. There were two applicants for this mission; one was a group of university researchers (of which I was a member) and the other was a consulting company consisting of economists working on competition issues. The mission was assigned to the latter. This spurred criticism from the book industry,⁴² as they were certain that the conclusion would be that free book prices would be beneficial. A large part of the industry supports a law on fixed prices, as they perceive this as an important cultural policy tool to uphold a broad production of Norwegian language publications. As a consequence of this criticism, the minister decided on a second report. This was to look into the situa-

⁴¹ Dividing an audience into target groups is in line with the logic of the world of fame, according to Boltanski and Thévenot (2006, p. 183).

⁴² *Morgenbladet* (2012): 'En betenkning om bokbransjen', 6.-12. 1., Håkon Gundersen. *Bok og samfunn* (2011): 'eller elfenbeinstårnet enn Adam Smith', 8.9., Dag H. Nestegard.

tion in Europe, analysing how countries with fixed and free book prices compared on specific policy goals. The mission was assigned to the group of university researchers. After we delivered our report (Rønning, Slaatta, Torvund, Larsen, & Colbjørnsen, 2012), the minister was still uncertain about how to proceed. To avoid making a decision, she wanted to initiate a third report that was to specifically look into the e-book market, as this was not an explicit part of the mission of the two initial reports.

On 21st September 2012, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg made some changes in his government and appointed the 29-year-old political talent Hadia Tajik as Minister of Culture, relocating Huitfeldt to be Minister of Labour. One of the first things Tajik did was to state that she would not have a third report and would move forward as fast as possible with the process of creating the law. This was an opportunity for her to come off as a vigorous minister, while simultaneously helping repair legitimacy among the major players in the book industry.

In September 2013, there was a general election in Norway. As the Stoltenberg government was not re-elected, the newly appointed Minister of Culture in Erna Solberg's conservative coalition government, Thorhild Widvey, early on promised that the law would not be realized, which made her come off as a strong defender of liberal values and as demonstrating a clear alternative to the former government. As can be seen from these examples, showing vigor shortly after taking political office is important for the individual politician, particularly if it is in line with what the majority of the actors affected by the particular policies argue for (Tajik) or the core values of the political ideology to which one's party adheres (Widvey).

10.7 Conclusion

Organizations dedicated to such high-cost art forms as classical music, the visual and performing arts in a society where there is a tradition for the state to support most parts of institutionalized culture are in need of broad public support in order to exist. If not perceived as relevant by a large number of the audience their future is threatened. In an age (Featherstone, 2007; Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996) and country (Haarr & Krogstad, 2011; Skarpenes, 2007; Skarpenes & Sakslind, 2010; Ytreberg, 2004) where cultural hierarchies are not salient, these arenas are not worthy of support if they are primarily seen as sacred institutions of high culture (DiMaggio, 1982). Nevertheless, the fact that they produce and maintain cultural expressions that are deemed qualitatively good by experts makes them worthy of maintaining, as it helps uphold not only the quantity in cultural expression but also the quality in the cultural magnitude on offer to the public. It is not their position on top of the cultural hierarchy that makes them worthy of support; it is rather their contribution to the expansion of high-quality cultural expressions available to the citizens for consumption. That they deliver high-quality cultural products follows from the fact that they

have been defined so by experts, such as members of grant commissions and editors, in line with the Arm's Length Principle. State subsidies are legitimized in that the organizations are dedicated to expensive cultural expressions that would not exist without public support. Processes of digitalization, omnivorousness and globalization are leading the policy actors to change the communicative discourse (Schmidt, 2008) employed when performing legitimacy in the public sphere. But this does not necessarily lead to a decline in state support for the arts. The state now acts more as a market corrective than a guarantor of high culture. It seeks to uphold a plurality in high quality cultural expressions, rather than securing the future of those on top of a cultural hierarchy.

An important element in the organization's legitimation work is to get in contact with a large audience, for example by actively recruiting new audience members. Both the organizations themselves and the government providing support for the organizations benefit from such inclusive legitimation work. The main challenge is to uphold the legitimacy in the art world. If the organizations are no longer perceived as relevant by the content producers, it is hard to argue that the state should uphold its support of high-cost arts organizations that are not deemed as good by the experts. Furthermore, their legitimacy on the international arena may be weakened. Being perceived as high-quality arts organizations by an international audience is in the interest of both the organizations and the politicians as it makes both come off as culturally advanced, which enhances the organizations and the nation's cultural credibility. One way to achieve the inclusive ambitions and simultaneously uphold artistic credibility is to continue with the demystification of high cultural institutions as public spaces and arenas for experiencing art without compromising on the content being displayed or performed.

As identified in this chapter, a particular form of legitimation work is co-operative legitimation work, which points to actors engaged in the legitimation of particular organizations acting in concert in (re)negotiating what the ideas and practice of the organization should be. The CEOs of particular arts organizations and the Minister of Culture can, for example, engage in co-operative legitimation work by changing their minds slightly in public to provide for an opportunity for both to save face. As both parties benefit from keeping a friendly relationship, it is important to manage to voice one's opinion in public without abandoning the opportunity for the other part to save face when adjusting his or her original statement. They must cooperate in their face-work (Goffman, 2005 [1967]).

Another feature of legitimation work is legitimacy repair. When the art world perceives the authorities as approaching the policies related to their world in a way that harms the world, it is important for the people in charge of the policies to be able to restore the legitimacy. Shortly after taking office as Minister of Culture or CEO of a cultural organization is a particularly good time to engage in legitimacy repair, especially if the relationship with the key players in the art field has been damaged prior to entering the position.

An important aspect of legitimation work in the culture sector is for all the actors to negotiate an appropriate balance between the inclusive and exclusive ambitions in public communication about the organization's mission, so that the art world finds the work of the organization credible, the politicians find the organization worthy of support and the public find the organization relevant. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, the public sphere has become an important arena for engaging in such negotiations. For cultural organizations in the 21st century to remain important, they must perform legitimacy in the public sphere as part of their continuous legitimation work.

References

- Alasuutari, P. (2015). The discursive side of New Institutionalism. *Cultural Sociology*, 9(2), 162–184.
- Alexander, J.C. (2011). *Performance and Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Becker, H.S. (1974). Art as collective action. *American Sociological Review*, 39(6), 767–776.
- Bénatouïl, T. (1999). A tale of two sociologies: The critical and the pragmatic stance in contemporary French sociology. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), 379–396.
- Bjørnsen, E., Lind, E., & Hauge, E.S. (2012). *Kunstkonsument i storbyene. En studie av brukere og ikke-brukere av det offentlig finansierte kunsttilbudet i byene Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger og Kristiansand*. Kristiansand: Agderforskning.
- Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L. (1999). The sociology of critical capacity. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), 359–377.
- Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L. (2006). *On Justification: Economies of Worth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brunsson, N. (2002). *The Organization of Hypocrisy: Talk, Decisions and Actions in Organizations* (2nd ed.). Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.
- Dahl, H.F., & Helseth, T. (2006). *To knurrende løver: kulturpolitikens historie 1814–2014*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- DiMaggio, P.J. (1982). Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: the creation of an organizational base for high culture in America. *Media Culture and Society* 4, 33–50.
- DiMaggio, P.J., & Powell, W.W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Journal of Sociology*, 48(2), 147–160.
- DiMaggio, P.J., & Powell, W.W. (1991). Introduction. In W.W. Powell & P.J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (pp. 1–38). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elster, J. (1989). *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Engelstad, F., & Hagelund, A. (2015). Introduction: Institutional change in neo-corporatist society. In F. Engelstad & A. Hagelund (Eds.), *Cooperation and Conflict the Nordic Way: Work, Welfare, and Institutional Change in Scandinavia* (pp. 1–16). Warsaw: De Gruyter Open.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Featherstone, M. (2007). *Consumer Culture & Postmodernism* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Goffman, E. (2005 [1967]). On face-work. An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. In E. Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

- Goodstein, J, Blair-Loy, M. & Wharton, A.S. (2009). Organization-based legitimacy: Core ideologies and moral action. In I. Reed & J. C. Alexander (Eds.), *Meaning and Method: The Cultural Approach to Sociology* (44–62). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Sahlin, K., & Suddaby, R. (2008). Introduction. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*. London: Sage.
- Guggenheim, M., & Potthast, J. (2012). Symmetrical twins: On the relationship between actor-network theory and the sociology of critical capacities. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 15(2), 157–178.
- Haarr, T.K., & Krogstad, A. (2011). Myten om den norske kultureliten. *Sosiologisk tidsskrift*, 19(1), 6–28.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between Facts and Norms*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Hall, P.A., & Taylor, R.C.R. (1996). Political science and the three new institutionalisms. *Political Studies*, XLIV, 936–957.
- Hegnes, A.W. (2015). Tilpasningsarbeid i norsk matkultur. In H. Larsen (Ed.), *Kultursosiologisk forskning* (pp. 228–243). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Hillman-Chartrand, H., & McCaughey, C. (1989). The arm's length principle and the arts. An international perspective – past, present and future. In M.C. Cummings & J.M.D. Schuster (Eds.), *Who's to Pay for the Arts? The International Search for Models of Arts Support*. New York, NY: American Council for the Arts.
- Hochschild, A.R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(3), 551–575.
- Jacobs, R.N. (2000). *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society: From Watts to Rodney King*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jepperson, R.L. (1991). Institutions, institutional effects, and institutionalism. In W.W. Powell & P.J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (pp. 143–163). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lamont, M., & Molnár, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 167–195.
- Lamont, M., & Thévenot, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larsen, H. (2008). I demokratiets tjeneste. Offentlig debatt om allmennkringkasting i Norge og Sverige. *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 49(3), 313–342.
- Larsen, H. (2010). Legitimation strategies of public service broadcasters: The divergent rhetoric in Norway and Sweden. *Media, Culture & Society*, 32(2), 267–283.
- Larsen, H. (2011a). *Legitimering av allmennkringkasting i Norge og Sverige*. (PhD), University of Oslo.
- Larsen, H. (2011b). Public service broadcasting as an object for cultural policy in Norway and Sweden. A policy tool and an end in itself. *Nordicom Review*, 32(2), 35–47.
- Larsen, H. (2014a). The legitimacy of public service broadcasting in the 21st century: The case of Scandinavia. *Nordicom Review*, 35(2), 65–76.
- Larsen, H. (2014b). Legitimation work in state cultural organizations: The case of Norway. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 20(4), 456–470.
- Larsen, H. (2016a). The crisis of public service broadcasting reconsidered: Commercialization and digitalization in Scandinavia. In J.C. Alexander, E.B. Breese, & M. Luengo (Eds.), *The Crisis of Journalism Reconsidered: Democratic Culture, Professional Codes, Digital Future* (pp. 43–58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larsen, H. (2016b). *Performing Legitimacy: Studies in High Culture and the Public Sphere*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2010). A theory of gradual institutional change. In M. James & T. Kathleen (Eds.), *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (pp. 1–37). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mangset, P. (2012). *Demokratisering av kulturen? Om sosial ulikhet i kulturbruk og -deltakelse*. Bø i Telemark: Telemarksforskning.
- Mangset, P. (2013). *En armlengdes avstand eller statens forlengede arm? Om armlengdesprinsippet i norsk og internasjonal kulturpolitikk*. Bø i Telemark: Telemarksforskning.
- Meisingset, K. (2013). *Kulturbølffen*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm.
- Meyer, J.W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340–363.
- NNOB. (2010). *Strategiplan for Den Norske Opera & Ballett 2010–2014. En årlig rullerende plan for perioden*. Oslo: Den norske opera og ballett.
- NNOB. (2011). *Årsrapport 2011*. Oslo: Den norske opera og ballett.
- NOU 2013:4. *Kulturutredningen 2014*. Oslo: Kulturdepartementet.
- NRK. (2007). *Noe for alle. Alltid. Overordnet strategi for NRK 2007–2012*. Oslo: NRK
- Peterson, R.A. (1976). The production of culture: A prolegomenon. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 19(6), 669–684.
- Peterson, R.A. (1992). Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore. *Poetics*, 21, 243–258.
- Peterson, R.A., & Kern, R.M. (1996). Changing highbrow taste: From snob to omnivore. *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), 900–907.
- Powell, W.W., & DiMaggio, P.J. (1991). *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Remlov, T. (2012). Å finne sin plass. En ny tid for europeiske kulturinstitusjoner. *Samtiden* (1), 92–99.
- Roppen, J., Lund, A.B., & Nord, L. (2010). Multimedia development of PSBs: A challenge for the Nordic media systems. *Central European Journal of Communication* 1, 131–146.
- Rønning, H., Slaatta, T., Torvund, O., Larsen, H., & Colbjørnsen, T. (2012). *Til bokas pris: utredning av litteraturpolitiske virkemidler i Europa*. Oslo: Kulturdepartementet.
- Røyseng, S. (2000). *Operadebatten: Kampen om kulturpolitisk legitimitet*. Oslo: Norsk kulturråd.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2008). Discursive institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 303–326.
- Sejersted, F. (2011). *The Age of Social Democracy: Norway and Sweden in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Skarpenes, O. (2007). Den “legitime kulturens” moralske forankring. *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 48(4), 531–563.
- Skarpenes, O., & Sakslind, R. (2010). Education and egalitarianism: The culture of the Norwegian middle class. *The Sociological Review*, 58(2), 219–243.
- St.meld. (nr. 38 (2014–2015)). *Open og opplyst. Allmennkringkasting og mediemangfold*. Oslo: Kulturdepartementet.
- Storey, J. (2003). The social life of opera. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6(5), 5–35.
- Strauss, A. (1985a). *Social Organization of Medical Work*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Strauss, A. (1985b). Work and the division of labor. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 26(1), 1–19.
- Syvrtsen, T. (1999). Hva kan 'public service' begrepet brukes til? In U. Carlsson (Ed.), *Public Service-TV. Nordiska medieforskare reflekterar*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- TT. (2006). Protestlister mot SVT gav resultat. *Expressen*. October 16. <http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/protestlister-mot-svt-gav-resultat/>
- Ytreberg, E. (2004). Norge: mektig middelkultur. *Samtiden* 4, 6–15.
- Zelizer, V.A., Bandelj, N., & Wherry, F. F. (2012). Talking about Relational work with Viviana Zelizer *Orgtheory.net*.

