

26th EGOS Colloquium Lisbon 2010

“Waves of Globalization”

Sub-theme 20: Creative Industries – Paradoxes and Tensions between Local Formats and
Global Standards

**Backstage:
Organizing Field-Configuring Events in the German
Music Industry**

Leonhard Dobusch

leonhard.dobusch@fu-berlin.de

Elke Schüßler

elke.schuessler@fu-berlin.de

Lauri Wessel

lauri.wessel@fu-berlin.de

Freie Universitaet Berlin

School of Business & Economics – Department of Management

Backstage: Organizing Field-Configuring Events in the German Music Industry

Abstract

While the role of events such as conferences, award ceremonies and trade fairs for the configuration of nascent fields has been recognized, only few studies deal with the importance of such field configuring events (FCEs) for institutional change within mature fields. In this paper we therefore compare the impact of three competing series of events on the development of the German music industry as an example of a mature but changing field. Conceptualizing such events as collective action processes, we focus how the event organizers try to deliberately influence field development by setting the stage for the subsequent interaction of attendees.

Keywords: *Field-Configuring Events – Institutional Change– Music Industry*

1 Introduction

Recent work on institutionalization processes in organizational fields increasingly recognizes the importance of events such as conferences (Garud 2008), award ceremonies (Anand and Watson 2004) or contests (Rao 1994) as focal settings where actors with diverse motivations and backgrounds collide. Lampel and Meyer (2008: 1025) call these *field configuring events* (FCEs) “an important and understudied mechanism shaping the emergence and developmental trajectories of technologies, markets, industries and professions.”

Most existing studies on FCEs, including the ones mentioned above, have two things in common: First, they investigate FCEs in nascent fields, describing how singular (McInerny 2008) or series of (Rao 1994) events led to the development of one institutional path instead of another. Second, FCEs are conceptualized as the “loci” or “stage” where institutional entrepreneurs (DiMaggio 1988; Battilana et al. 2009) and/or conflicting groups of actors pursue their goals, thereby creating a legitimate institutional order and the same time re-shaping the functioning of FCEs as well.

In this paper we build upon these works but apply a different perspective, departing from these two commonalities. On the one hand, we are looking at the German music industry as a *mature* field with established actors and business models. These incumbents and the legiti-

macy of existing institutional logics, however, are challenged by new actors proposing different business models in the course of digitalization (Dolata 2008; 2009). This conjuncture of industry incumbents and challengers makes the music industry a promising field for studying the role FCE's in processes of institutional change in mature organizational fields. On the other, we do not take FCEs as given arenas for institutionalization but rather focus on the processes that lead to the *formation* and *legitimation* of different events whose organizers have "an eye towards influencing field evolution" (Lampel and Meyer 2008: 1026). In this regard, the German music industry is a particularly interesting case, as the traditional main industry event, the "Popkomm" sponsored predominantly by the major record companies, has been cancelled in 2009 with reference to the crisis in the music industry and now faces competition by a number of alternative events rooted in the independent scene such as the already established "c/o pop" in Cologne and the newly created "all2gethernow" in Berlin.

In comparing these competing endeavours of intentionally influencing field configuration by organizing events we investigate the question of: *who organizes field configuring events, how and why?* We draw on concepts from the institutional change and social movement literature and treat the organization of FCEs as an institutionalization process, targeting the legitimacy of an event as a precondition for its influence on field configuration. We argue that organizing FCEs is best understood as the deliberate attempt of directing or channelling collective action processes in a particular organizational field (Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006). It is thereby a highly political process on both the organizational and the field level (see also Hinings et al. 2004: 318).

2 Theory: Defining and Refining Institutional Fields

Capturing classic notions of industries or sectors, DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148f.) define organizational fields as "sets of organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute an area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products." Departing from DiMaggio and Powell's definition, Hoffman (1999) developed the concept of "issue fields" forming around issues rather than markets or technologies, which allows accounting for both field evolution and the related dissolution of sectors (Huberty 2008). This more dynamic perspective on fields raises the question of field formation and change, thereby emphasizing the role of single or series of so-called field configuring events (FCEs, see Lampel and Meyer 2008).

While FCEs are generally viewed as venues for “achieving institutional closure” (Garud 2008: 1080), we are looking at FCEs primarily as instruments for breaking up “institutional lock-in” (Marty 2009), thereby trying to generate at least temporary institutional openness. In spite of this shift in perspective, we follow Garud (2008: 1081) in describing FCEs as “meta-races”. In such meta-races “criteria for victory are being negotiated even as the tournament is unfolding, thereby generating ambiguity endogenously” while actors try to “‘generate certainty’ through ‘dramaturgical presentations’.”

FCEs are often conceptualized as “political opportunity structures” (Fligstein 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), where institutional entrepreneurs induce and enact institutional change processes (see, for example, Garud 2008; McInerney 2008). We contend that FCE’s are not neutral stages for institutionalization processes, but regularly favor one set of actors over the other. In this sense, organizing FCEs means preparing the stage, both literally and metaphorically, by discursive agenda-setting (McCombs and Shaw 1972) for institutionalization processes. Conflicting “orders of worth” (McInerney 2008: 1092) and incompatible interpretations of reality are already at play when FCEs are set-up. While most existing research analyzes how FCEs function as loci of either conflictive (e.g. Anand and Watson 2004) or consensual (e.g. Oliver and Montgomery 2008) institutionalization, it ignores how fundamental orientations may long be forestalled by the organizers of the FCE.

The character of an FCE as an opportunity structure depends on how it is institutionalized itself, posing the question of how field configuring events are themselves configured. Who is organizing field-configuring events and why? How do organizers of competing FCEs strive for legitimacy? What are the opportunity structures the organizers of an FCE relate to? For addressing these questions we draw on literature explaining institutional change as a process of organizing collective action that emerged in recent attempts of combining theories from the realm of organization studies and social movement research (Hargrave and Van de Ven, 2006; Den Hond and De Bakker, 2007; Davis et al. 2005; 2008).

In this context, Hargrave and Van de Ven (2006: 865) claim that new institutional policies and structures emerge dialectically “from conflict and contestation among colliding groups espousing opposing theses and antithesis”, thereby seldom representing “what institutional entrepreneurs initially anticipate or desire” – a stance that holds for FCEs as well (Lampel and Meyer 2008). Their “collective action model of institutional change” analytically distinguishes four intertwined dimensions of institutional change processes (Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006: 869): in (1) “*framing contests*” actors fight battles over meaning as “signifying

agents” (Benford and Snow 2000); the (2) “*construction of networks*” refers to “mobilizing structures” (Tilly 1978; McAdam and Scott 2005) or alliance building in standard battles (Cusumano et al. 1992); the (3) “*enactment of institutional arrangements*” includes concepts like “political opportunity structures” (Fligstein 1996; Campbell 2004) or complementary institutional infrastructure for technological innovation (Ingram and Rao 2004); and (4) “*collective action processes*” cover deliberate influence on institutions by groups of actors as in disruptive political events (Braithwaite and Drahos 2000) or technological “path creation” (Garud and Karnøe 2001; 2003).

Hints to the importance of these dimensions for FCEs to be effective can already be found in the existing literature: for Anand and Watson (2004: 67), rituals at FCEs such as the award ceremony under study provide a “‘focusing lens’ or a ‘frame’ enabling the communication of a particular symbolic message to participants and observers.” Rao’s description of how success in automobile races created “cognitive legitimacy” for the claims of winning corporations literally deals with “framing *contests*” (1). Garud (2008), in turn, describes how actors in the field of cochlear implants used conferences for building alliances (2), thereby collectively creating a new technological path (4). Finally, McInerney (2008) demonstrates the potential impact of a single event – in his case the “Showdown at Kykuit” – as a political opportunity structure (3).

As we want to explain how actors organize FCEs to depart from existing institutionalized structures and practices in a mature field, the following empirical investigation of FCEs in the German music industry compares how organizers of both incumbent and challenging events mindfully deviate (Garud and Karnøe 2001) from previous practices in the field. Table 1 lists the questions that guided both our data collection and analysis, both of which are explained in more detail in the subsequent method section.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Questions</i>
(1) Construction of networks	(a) What allies do the organizers bond with? Which constituents do the organizers (not) want to attend? (b) Which resources do organizers draw on?
(2) Enactment of institutional arrangements	Which opportunity structures do organizers refer to?
(3) Framing contests	(a) Which “orders of worth” (McInerney 2008) do organizers refer to for (de-)legitimizing their own/other events? (b) Which discursive strategies do organizers use to set issues and manipulate meanings?
(4) Collective action processes	Which intended and unintended areas of contestation transcend the event itself?

Table 1: Theoretically derived questions guiding the empirical research process

3 Methodology

3.1 Embedded, Comparative Case Study

To address our research questions, we have selected the field of commercial pop music as a critical case for our analysis (Flyvberg 2005) and within this case we analyze a number of theoretically sampled FCEs as sub-cases (Yin 2005). The field revolves around the issue of creating and distributing popular music content (Passman 2009) and has changed significantly since the emergence of digital technology in the late 1990s. These changes touch not only business models and strategies, but affect broader societal institutions such as the regulation of copyright and the value of culture (Dolata 2009). Whilst industry incumbents, the so-called major labels and established industry institutions, still tend to resist the pressure to adapt, challengers such as filesharing networks, netlabels, digital retailers and external actors have been innovative in presenting new business models. Artists and collecting societies are somewhat stuck in the middle with some protecting the “old” business model and some embracing new opportunities. This process is by no means finished as it is still unclear where exactly some of the sources of new revenues might lie, especially since strategic change is so deeply entangled with socioeconomic and institutional change processes, both on a national and a transnational level.

Within the music industry, events and event organizers have always played an important role. First, live performances at concerts or festivals are an essential part of distributing popular music. Their importance has risen diametrically opposed to the declining record sales as revenues shifted to live performances and merchandising (see, for example, Page and Carey 2009). Second, trade fairs play an important role in bringing together the different actor groups within the music and entertainment industries and are opportunities where business models are discussed and deals are struck. These events can thus be seen as (at least potential) FCEs. In the European music industry, the major industry event since the 1990s has been the *Popkomm* taking place in Cologne and later in Berlin. The *Popkomm* has been closely linked with the dominant players in the industry and has been cancelled in 2009 with reference to the industry crisis. An alternative event, the *all2gethernow*, has quickly been established to fill the gap, an impromptu collective act of the independent players in the industry. In parallel, when the *Popkomm* moved to Berlin in 2004, the *c/o pop* has been founded in Cologne as a festival for electronic pop music and has quickly become an established event geared towards

“music 2.0”. Each of these events can be seen as a collective action process with different agendas that, on the one hand, reflect the transformation period of the industry on a global level and, on the other, actively tries to shape the direction the industry is going on the national level. The time period we consider as critical for the evolution of the event landscape along with changes in the field are the years between 2003, the year when Popkomm decided to move to Berlin, and 2009, the year the Popkomm was cancelled and the all2gethernow founded.

The German music landscape is, however, not limited to these three events. The *Reeperbahnfestival* in Hamburg and the *Pop Up* in Leipzig have also started to host panels and discussions on the future of the music industry. We excluded the Pop Up from our sample as the *c/o pop*, the all2gethernow and the Reeperbahnfestival were publicly deemed to be the most promising candidates for being *the* future German music industry event besides the Popkomm. We further excluded the Reeperbahnfestival from our sample because its organizers repeatedly stressed that the Reeperbahnfestival is mainly a music festival and will remain so. Panels, discussions and workshops on business-related issues are seen more as a by-product of the Reeperbahnfestival.

Regarding our research questions about field-reconfiguration by FCEs, we thus consider the Popkomm, the *c/o pop* and the all2gethernow as the theoretically most relevant cases for our analysis within this time period. The Popkomm represents the traditionally dominant industry players and their agendas and has disrupted the field twice: once by changing its location, and once by its explicit cancellation, allowing us to study the impact of events *not* taking place. The *c/o pop* represents the “new economy” players of the industry and has quickly moved from an outsider position to a central industry event by networking and collective organizing. The all2gethernow was a quick and improvised reaction and hence stands for the mobilization potential present in the field. Together with the Popkomm cancellation, the all2gethernow has triggered an industry-wide event reconfiguration process with respect to the year 2010.

3.2 Data Collection

We collected mostly qualitative data and our data collection consisted of four parts: participant observation at the 2009 *c/o pop* and all2gethernow events, a set of interviews conducted with the event organizers and other industry experts, the collection of event documentation over the 5 year period, and a content analysis of press documents before and after the events to track field-level developments. Using the combination of participant observation, inter-

views and texts allowed us to triangulate the qualitative data and to enrich the insights into the cases (Jick 1979). Most of our data thus zooms in on the year 2009 and the ensuing debates and collective action processes resulting from the Popkomm cancelation, but these developments are looked at in the context of the event histories and industry developments in the previous years.

We conducted 13 interviews, six with event organizers and seven with industry experts. The interviews lasted approximately between 30 and 90 minutes and were attended by at least one researcher. We have selected the core organizing team including the founders of each event as interviewees to get a broad range of perspectives. On the field level, we have interviewed knowledgeable field experts, mainly panellists and speakers attending several of the events, showing their central role in the field. All interviews were semi-structured and guided by an interview protocol comprising five elements: a reflection of the events in 2009, the development history of each event, the events' vision for the future of the industry, the organizing team and participants over time, and the role of specific topics such as digital distribution. All interviews were recorded and conducted and transcribed in German.

	c/o pop	all2gethernow	Popkomm	Field
Interviews	I 1: Founder/CEO I 2: Head of Convention I 3: Head of Strategy I 4: Head of Finance	I 12: Founder/CEO	I 13: Head of Convention	I 5: Industry consultant I 6: Cluster Manager Cologne/ex-c/o pop I 7: Former Popkomm CEO/CEO Multimedia Agency Cologne I 8: Cologne City Cultural Office I 9: Cologne City Cultural Office/CEO Media and Event Association I 10: Industry consultant/ex-Sony I 11: Music Manager
Participant Observation	Panel discussions	Panel discussions		
Documents	Programs 2005-2009	Program 2009	Programs 2003-2008	
Newspapers	Industry magazine: Musikwoche National Newspapers: Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Regional Newspapers: Berliner Zeitung, Rheinische Post			

Table 2: Case study database

As participants of the c/o pop and all2gethernow events in 2009 we attended and recorded the panel discussions, collected leaflets and other documents distributed at the event, and engaged in informal conversations with the participants and exhibitors. At least one researcher was present on each day of the event. We further followed a number of media outlets throughout

the time period in focus and searched explicitly for references to each of the three events. We studied both regional (Berliner Zeitung, Rheinische Post Düsseldorf) and supra-regional newspapers (Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ) and the major music industry outlet “Musikwoche” (German for “MusicWeek”). We have included quantitative data on event and industry development where possible. A summary of the collected data can be seen in Table 2.

3.3 Data Analysis

We began by generating a narrative account of each event, focusing in its founding history as well as on the developments between 2003 and 2009. This enabled us to provide a holistic understanding of each sub-case and thereby to contextualize the following in-depth analysis based on theoretically derived coding categories (Miles and Huberman 1994). We coded the data for each key event along four dimensions of institutional change processes, inspired by but not equal to the ones described by Hargrave and Van de Ven (2006): networks and resources, orders of worth, themes, and opportunity structures.

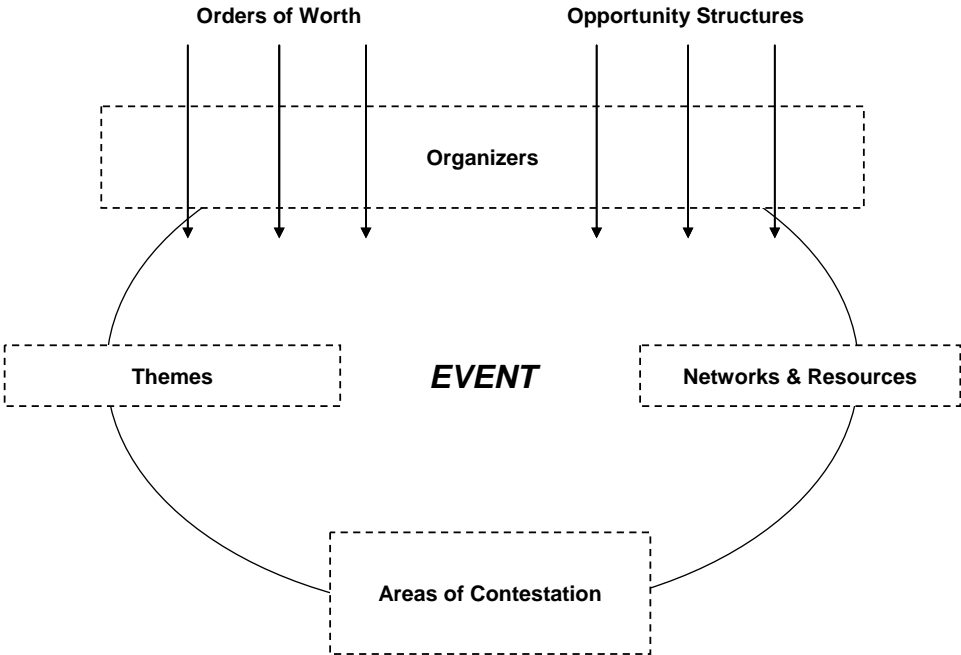


Figure 1: Explanatory model

A detailed description with coding examples of these dimensions can be seen in Table 3 below. Our aim was to focus on existing structures in the field and the way these are incorporated at the events, the strategies and organizing efforts channeled through the FCEs to bring about change, and the ensuing change processes. Our model of how the four dimensions are linked to field-level outcomes via organizers and events is depicted in Figure 1.

Dimension Coding Category	Frequency (T / I / M)*	Definition Examples (source)
<i>Networks & Resources</i>	234 / 62 / 178	<i>Actors organizers (do not) bond with and resources organizers raise and draw on</i>
allies/ non-allies	102 / 31 / 71	"MySpace engages at a2n as well as the German Telekom, which welcome the organizers' efforts ,to initiate the event as a new platform..." (Musikwoche, a2n)
participants resources	70 / 15 / 55 62 / 16 / 46	"The subsidies [for c/o pop] by municipal and regional governments remain stable." (Rheinische Post, c/o pop)
<i>Opportunity Structures</i>	428 / 80 / 348	<i>Institutional arrangements, political elites, industry architectures constraining/enabling agency</i>
cultural event landscape	22 / 3 / 19 187 / 21 / 166	"The cancelation of the Popkomm sets the event calendar in motion" (Musikwoche, all three events)
industry structure	89 / 18 / 71	"The term 'digital crisis', this was a central momentum" (interview a2n)
legal location & infrastructure	8 / 2 / 6 34 / 17 / 17	"I think that is great for the scene in Berlin [...] and it is the right thing to do for the city of Berlin's creative industry." (interview Popkomm)
political technology	30 / 8 / 22 52 / 9 / 43	"Revolution is in the net" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, a2n & Popkomm)
other	6 / 2 / 4	
<i>Frames (I): Orders of Worth</i>	285 / 84 / 201	<i>'Moral anchors' organizers use to justify their behavior and to de-legitimize the behavior of others</i>
conservation	50 / 12 / 38	"The core question is: how is copyright enforced in the digital space, as well?" (interview Popkomm)
cultural variety exclusivity	20 / 8 / 12 32 / 6 / 26	"A Festival for all tastes" (Rheinische Post, c/o pop) "The real Popkomm, if good, need the experts, but this is defined by the ticket pricing." (interview Popkomm)
innovation	60 / 13 / 47	"Music Inside: The 'c/o pop' searches and finds answers to the structural crisis of the creative sector" (FAZ, c/o pop)
openness	61 / 17 / 44	"A mash-up of total transparency, open formats, and town hall meetings with up to 80 people" (interview a2n)
professionalism	54 / 24 / 30	"In the meantime, we are organizing this with the help of competence teams" (interview c/o pop)
other	8 / 4 / 4	
<i>Frames (II): Themes</i>	317 / 56 / 261	<i>Discursive activities to set issues and manipulate meanings</i>
business models	86 / 18 / 68	"Yes, we are for freedom on the net, but we think about other, new models of compensation." (interview a2n)
copyright	78 / 4 / 74	"The end of Popkomm: How the record industry is making profit with copyright now" (Berliner Zeitung, Popkomm)
creative industries	37 / 8 / 29	"These questions not only affect the music industry, but the creative industries as a whole" (Musikwoche, c/o pop)
cultural & societal issues online	19 / 5 / 14 72 / 12 / 60	"Digitalization in general [...] affects the core of cultural diversity. That's why this issue was more and more dominant at the Popkomm." (interview popkomm)
other industries	21 / 8 / 13	"We want to think outside the box and integrate new sectors" (Musikwoche, c/o pop)
social security of artists	4 / 1 / 3	

* T = Totals / I = Interviews / M = Media

Table 3: Codes and themes

In analyzing the data we developed a number of coding categories for each dimension (see again Table 3) and applied them selectively to three different data categories: (1) interviews, (2) media coverage, and (3) programs. As the core of our analysis lies in comparing the field-configuring impact of three events in the year 2009, we only fine-coded the interviews with event organizers and the media data with all coding categories. The conference programs were coded only with our theme-codes and are not included in Table 3. Our participant obser-

vation notes as well as the field-level interviews were not coded, but integrated as background information.

4 Findings

4.1 People and History behind Each Event

Popkomm

Founded in 1989, the Popkomm quickly became Europe's leading music industry event aimed at bringing together important actors from the music and other media-related industries. Until 2003, the event was hosted in Cologne, for a long time considered to be Germany's media capital since the city and the area surrounding it were home to EMI, the music TV station Viva, certain publishing houses, and a number of relevant music magazines. In 2004, however, Popkomm moved to Berlin and stayed there until 2008 with relatively constant trade visitor figures. It was cancelled in 2009 due to the ongoing crisis of the music industry. Popkomm director Katja Gross explained that the 2009 bookings were almost 50% less than in the previous year and that the organizers were afraid not to meet financial targets.

Despite its move to Berlin, the people behind the Popkomm largely remained the same. The organizers of the Popkomm were highly professionalized organizations. During the 1990s, the Popkomm was organized by the Musikkomm GmbH in Cologne, a firm specialized in organizing events like award ceremonies and trade fairs. In 2003, organizing duties were taken over by the Viva Media Enterprises GmbH, at that time a subsidy of the Viva Media AG, which owned the German music TV station Viva. The move to Berlin led to the formation of the Popkomm GmbH, a professional organization oriented at the event's three building blocks: the trade fair, the conference, and the festival.

c/o pop

Whilst the Popkomm was mainly a business meeting, the c/o pop – short for Cologne on pop – was founded as a “festival for urban pop culture” and focused on developing a musical and cultural profile. Deeply rooted in Cologne's lively electronic music scene and a strong local network of event managers, venues, and the city cultural office, the c/o pop targets to the independent players in the music scene rather than to the producers and consumers of mainstream music. In the course of its six year long history, the c/o pop has developed from a

small electronic music festival lasting 17 days into a well-known five-day music and industry event associated with the future of the industry rather than with its glorious but declining past.

The organizers consist of a more or less fixed core team of about five people, supported by a number of freelancers called upon on demand. Over time, the Cologne on Pop GmbH, the company behind the festival, has developed a more formal organizational structure with separate functions. While in the founding years “everybody was doing a bit of everything”, now there is a Head of Finance, a Head of Strategy, and so on. In 2008, the *c/o pop* was publicly considered by some as “the better Popkomm”. In 2009, the festival received a further boost in media attention because it so clearly filled the gap the Popkomm had left after its cancellation. The festival was opened by the federal minister of economics who stressed the importance of the creative industries for the former heavy industry region of North Rhine-Westphalia and who promised continuing political support.

all2gethernow

The a2n has so far only happened once, but its history is nonetheless noteworthy. The idea to host a radically new event to discuss new business models in the music industry was triggered by the cancellation of the Popkomm and the public reasoning by its founder, Dieter Gorny, that this was due to music piracy. Opposing this view, the organizers of the a2n consider the internet as the central source of new opportunities rather than as a threat to the industry, which is why they set out to organize an alternative event promoting this perspective.

Since the entire organization of the a2n took place within only nine weeks, much of the event was not planned in detail, but rather emerged as the organizing process went on. The new-thinking GmbH, a consultancy firm specialized in media, IT and political consulting, initiated the a2n. Its CEO, Andreas Gebhard, took the cancellation of the Popkomm as a reason to bond with Tim Renner, former CEO of Universal Music Germany but now owner of the independent firm “Motor”, to form an entirely new event. These two then allied with Radialsystem V, an arts complex in Berlin, to jointly organize the a2n. During this process, ideas and concepts emerged from the dialogue between the agents; even fans and other interested parties were publicly invited to participate in the development of ideas via so-called “Townhall Meetings” devoted to discussing and planning the new event.

4.2 Opportunity Structures

Despite the differences in the histories, target groups, and organizing teams of each event, all three organizers referred to the changes in the overall music industry as an important opportunity structure. The way this opportunity was framed, however, particularly in respect to the digitalization of the industry, differed greatly between the organizers of the different events.

The Popkomm organizers perceived the digitalization as a threat to both industry and artists. Their focus was on securing the established industry setup against the growing share of illegally traded songs on the Internet because, as the Popkomm founder stated in an interview, “This uncontrolled growth of downloads eats up your revenue”, leading him to coin the term “digital crisis”. Consequently, both organizers and media coverage mainly referred to the (technologically induced) re-organization of music production and distribution as an opportunity to challenge the position of existing industry players. One of the main goals was to offer presentations of how players could re-organize their distributional channels and re-embed these modified channels into their existing value chains: “It is ultimately important to talk about the re-organization of the distribution channels of music” in a manner that “a company like EMI finds a way to generate sustainable revenue and to build an economic perspective in the long run” (interview Popkomm). Thus, the Popkomm organizers referred to ‘industry structure’ in quite a straightforward manner by emphasizing that the change of the organization of music distribution would be a central mechanism to secure the position of the established players in the industry. Perceiving the Internet as a threat, however, the Internet was not considered as an important distribution channel: “Digital distribution might bear some possibilities. But I believe that solely relying on it will expose the industry to great dangers.”

The c/o pop organizers in contrast referred to ‘industry structure’ quite differently. They openly doubt whether the existing industry structure can be secured: “The c/o pop was founded in time of decline. I do not want to judge anybody, but the event evolved during a downfall. The music economy was on the way to its end, especially the labels.” The organizers saw the need for events looking for entirely new answers for the music industry, but also admitted that they themselves “would not say that we know *the* answer to the pressing question of the music industry. However, we do have an idea of how to find to find these answers”. This “how” lies in enabling a more open dialogue about new business opportunities at the event itself. While the Popkomm organizers referred to distribution as *the* mechanism to respond to a changing industry structure, the c/o pop organizers took, metaphorically, one step back and aimed at allowing to find certain solutions via dialogue at the event.

The a2n organizers refer to existing industry structures in the most radical way. They condone the term “digital crisis”, stating in that “calling the developments in the digital realm a crisis is the confession that the Popkomm organizers and the major players of the music industry have overslept the major technological advancements of the last years.” By bringing together the changing industry structure with technological opportunity structures, they strive to “allude to the fact that the existing events in the music industry have, as of yet, not treated the Internet adequately.” This referral to the Internet indicates the antithetical stance the a2n organizers took compared to the Popkomm organizers. For the former, the Internet predominantly provides new entrepreneurial opportunities, not least by exactly the same shake-up of existing industry structures the Popkomm organizers bemoan: “In my eyes, all the future possibilities for generating revenue cannot be realized without the Internet.” This strong stance also shows subtle differences to the c/o pop, where the Internet was only one, but not the dominant opportunity structure referred to.

Even more important as an opportunity structure than the overall industry dynamics were other events in the same field, something we called ‘event landscape’. In all three cases, both organizers and media observers discussed an event’s identity and positioning mostly with respect to other events in the field. Repeatedly referring to the Popkomm as a very strong brand, its founder dissociated it from other events that “scream ‘we are the future’ while they aren’t”. The c/o pop organizers in turn referred to the Popkomm’s move from Cologne to Berlin as a major opportunity: “We needed to react and we aimed to take the place of the Popkomm” in Cologne. Lastly, the Popkomm’s cancelation in 2009 was referred to by the a2n organizers as the major opportunity to create meaning for their own event: “We needed to host our own event on the dates the Popkomm would have taken place to show that ‘we are here but where are you’?”

Generally, event organizers derived different missions from similar opportunity structures (see Figure 1), most importantly the event landscape (43% on average), the pressure on or changes of industry structures (20.79% on average), and technology (12.15% on average). Popkomm organizers and, accordingly, the media-coverage of the Popkomm referred to gaming and music on mobile phones as potentially new channels for music distribution. Popkomm’s mission can thus be summarized as an attempt to secure the existing industry structures via exploiting broadened music distribution channels. The a2n organizers and a2n-media-coverage similarly underlined technological advancements as central to the event, but talk about change in terms of both cultural production and business models. The c/o pop

mainly draws on local political support and network-building, both locally and beyond, to foster innovation in the cultural industries.

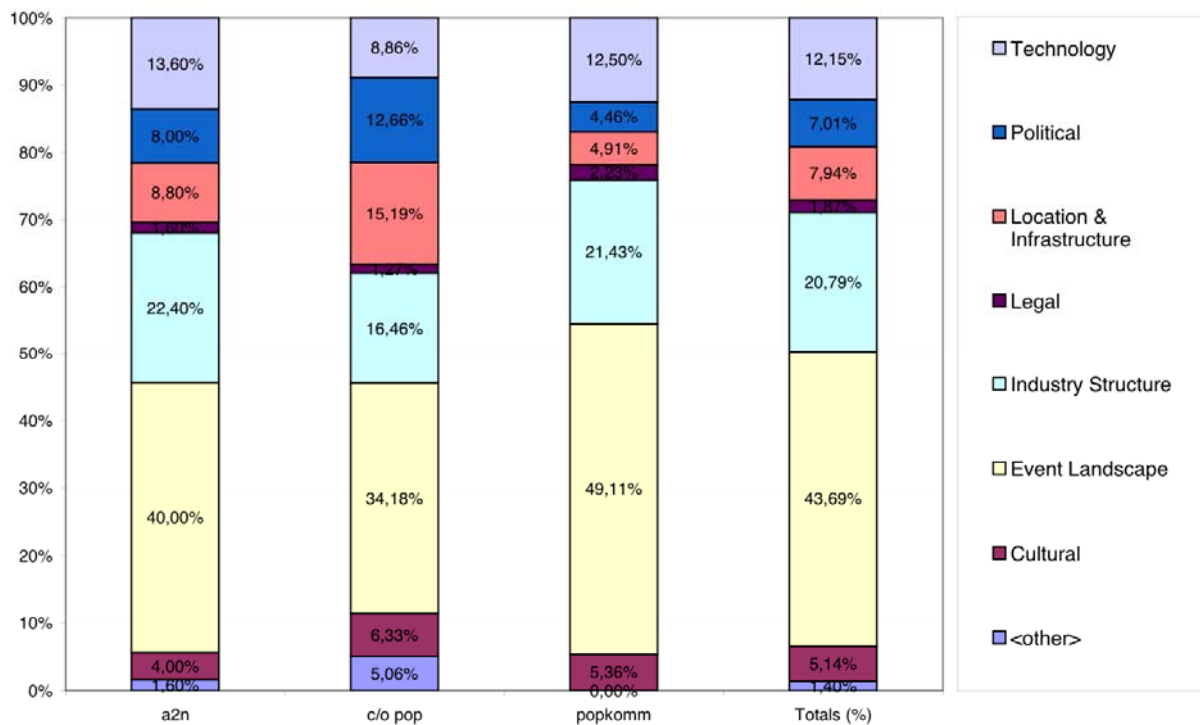


Figure 2: Opportunity structures as coded in interviews and media articles on the respective events

4.3 Networks, Participants, Resources

These different missions can partially explain why the three events drew on quite different networks and resources. The networks built by Popkomm include prominent representatives of the music, gaming, and telecommunication industries: “It is important to get people such as René Obermann [CEO of Deutsche Telekom AG] to the event “ and “I remember that Jean Marie Messier [that time CEO of Universal-Vivendi] would have participated, if you offered him other high-ranking industry officials” (Popkomm Interview). Not least as a funding source, these industry representatives were crucial: “You are attractive to high-ranking industrials when you charge them accordingly” (Popkomm interview).

The c/o pop organizers, in turn, aimed at creating “not only a meeting for the music industry, but to widen our focus to other creative industries”. Their network-building activities were less connected to specific industries (as was the case with Popkomm), and its financing as a relatively young event is still depended to one third on public grants. Participants at the c/o pop included major labels, collecting societies, industry associations, artists, independent la-

bels, internet service providers, and even representatives of the German Pirate Party. The event thus aimed to legitimize its vision that a variety of actors, and not only industrial actors, should contribute to finding answers to the changing industry structure.

The a2n organizers were even more radical in compiling the participants of their event by inviting everybody to join not just the event itself as participants, but even in the pre-event organizing process. Besides labels and actors from the field they explicitly invited internet-users and consumers to participate and allowed them to host panels spontaneously. The organizers were hereby not successful in including established players into the debate, however, as the major labels ignored the invitation to participate despite the strong involvement of industry-insider Tim Renner.

4.4 Orders of Worth

While similar opportunity structures led to different, in the case of a2n and Popkomm even antagonistic, event missions and self-conceptions, these in turn corresponded with different ‘orders of worth’. We define orders of worth as “moral anchors” organizers use to justify their behavior and to de-legitimize the behavior of others (Table 3). In the context of event organizing, orders of worth are thus used to explain and propagate the overall conference design, invitation, and participation policies as well as agenda setting.

The organizers of Popkomm repeatedly referred to offering a platform for the established industry players to discuss virulent subjects by “bringing together important players of the music business through giving them a reason to meet”. Also, the organizers repeatedly emphasized the exclusive character of the event, depicting barriers to entry as a strength; visitors should “feel like VIPs” (Popkomm interview). The occasional admittance of public visitors to the event were not referred to as important or even as an asset. This exclusive appeal of the “Popkomm brand” perfectly corresponded with the goal of attracting a professional audience, thereby distinguishing the fair from all the other events: “You have to remember that the Popkomm attracted between 12,000 and 15,000 visitors, while c/o pop makes up for 900 to 1,000.”

The c/o pop organizers took a different stance towards the c/o pop as a brand. While also addressing a professional audience, they acknowledge that a clear event profile is still emerging and repeatedly referred to the networking with other, not necessarily profit-driven, cultural sectors as important for the c/o pop. With regard to future events, the organizers “think of

opening it more and more towards other cultural industries”, since “networking is less a goal of the c/o pop than a straightforward mechanism to [...] shape the c/o pop brand”.

If one places the c/o pop in the middle of a continuum between exclusivity and openness, the a2n organizers clearly positioned their event at the latter end of it: they repeatedly referred to their central claim “reducing the distance between artist and fan”, because, in their eyes, “do-it-yourself solutions will be important in the future”. With 50% of all a2n interview-codes in the dimension ‘orders of worth’ relating to openness, the organizers not only strove to realize cultural variety (about 20% of the codes) but even more to invite new and innovative ideas (nearly 30%, see Figure 3).

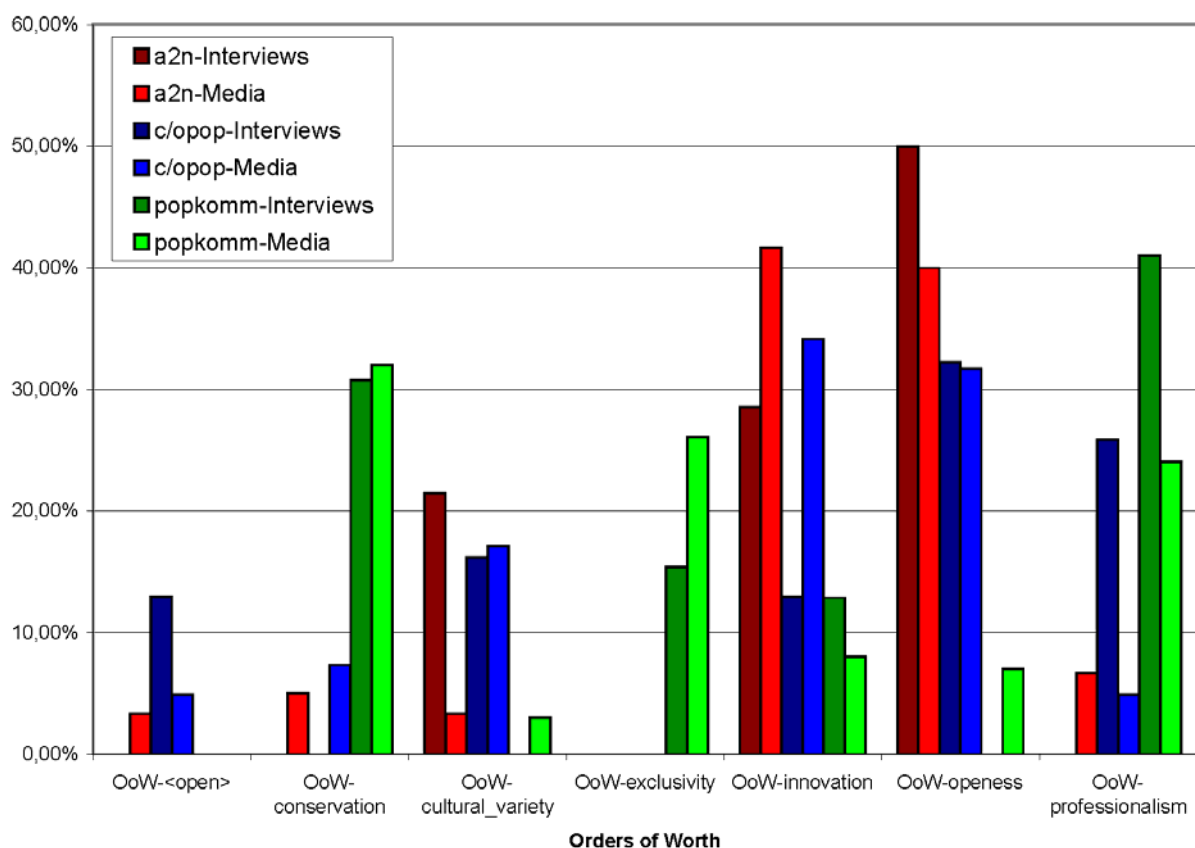


Figure 3: Orders of worth as coded, differentiated between data sources (interviews/media coverage)

To estimate the public impact of these frames the organizers drew on, Figure 3 allows us to compare the orders of worth mentioned by the organizers with the related media coverage. The 2009 press coverage of the Popkomm even seemed to overemphasize the event’s exclusiveness and its aim to secure the existing industry setup. This reporting, however, often thwarted the legitimizing intentions with headlines such as “Popkomm – stay away”, picking up on an article starting with “The Popkomm is canceled, so what?!” (Musikwoche). The rea-

sons given for judging Popkomm in this way were indeed its focus on industry representatives and its conservative stance towards new and innovative perspectives.

In contrast, the media coverage of the c/o pop repeatedly referred to the networking stimulated by the organizers and the open approach the event was built on. This stance was referred to as adequate and was attributed with a high degree of legitimacy, indicating that ‘cultural variety’ and ‘openness’ were effective frames. Accordingly, an article in the Musikwoche states that the entire business would prefer the c/o pop over the Popkomm in 2009, further building on the claimed irrelevance of the latter. What was not picked up by the media was the brand c/o pop – quite in contrast to the Popkomm, where the exclusiveness associated with the brand was frequently mentioned, but commented on in a rather negative way. The ‘professionalism’-frame used by the Popkomm organizers was thus only partially effective.

The media coverage of the a2n repeatedly referred to the diversity of actors at the event and stressed how the event attempted to break with the existing structures. Nonetheless, the media repeatedly represented the event as being rather IT-driven. The larger scope and mission of the event did thus not transcend to the media.

4.5 Themes

Aside from the orders of worth we considered the conference themes set by event organizers as an important framing strategy. The most prominent themes at the Popkomm related to business models and, more specifically, the issue of how distribution should be re-organized to secure these business models. The conference programs would repeatedly include topics such as “A & R forum: how to get to the top?” or, referring to the possibilities that mobile phones and video gaming hold for promoting music: “How to release your track to a mobile”, “Saved by the bell? The mobile as sound carrier: The mobile as salvation of the music industry?” While present, the panels on ‘copyright’ (such as: “Basic rights: what copyrights relate to the music industry?”) were not emphasized by the organizers as highly important.

At the c/o pop, themes and panels often touched quite basic questions in line with the event’s mission to enable dialogue on new solutions and to function as a networking platform in the Cologne area and in the creative industries. Panels on gaming, for instance, would refer to (social) phenomena around gaming in panels such as “The gamer: the unknown person”. When dealing with ‘business models’, the panels were framed in a more “dialogic” rather than solution-oriented fashion such as “Think different – do we need a cultural flat rate?” This

diverges from the Popkomm where usually specific technological solutions were promoted. Addressing the importance of networks, panels encouraged the cooperation of different (creative) industries for “Being successful together”.

According to the a2n mission of achieving change in the industry via a cultural change, the a2n program lists many panels discussing ethical questions such as “Re-evaluating today’s values” or “The day ownership died – why do we need to own music today?” In line with the mission, these panels did not stand alone, but were embedded in tracks on new business models (e.g. “New strategies of the music industry: distribution and marketing in the digital age”).

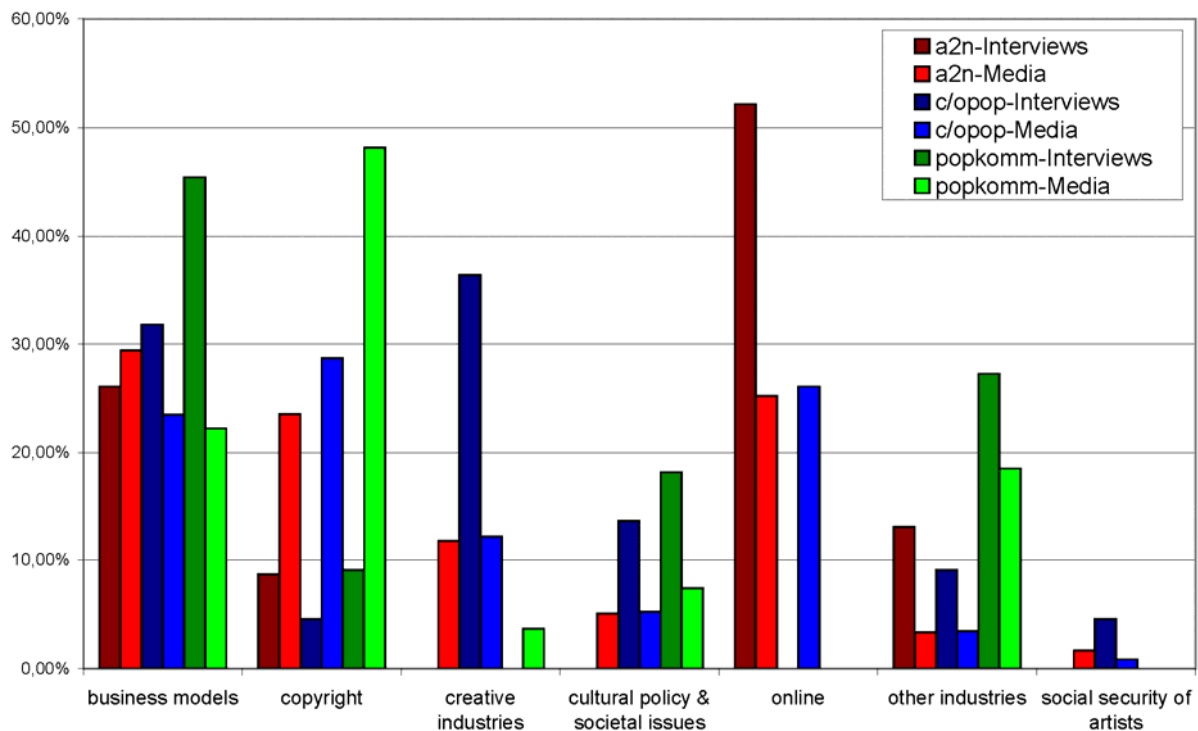


Figure 4: Themes as coded, differentiated between data sources (interviews/media coverage)

When comparing the organizers’ intentions with the media coverage of the events (see Figure 4), we do find some important differences. The media coverage of the a2n, for example, often mentioned the new business-related ideas discussed at the event. The quite radically new event structure and discursive space of the event was, however, sometimes described as “too grassroots”. Regarding the Popkomm and the c/o pop, the media coverage referred to the discussions on new business models much less than the organizers did. Instead, the issue of copyright was very prominent, indicating that it is considered as a question of higher interest to the general public than the discussion of specific business models. Lastly, the coverage of the c/o pop and the a2n repeatedly reported the various internet-related issues present at the event. While not specifically mentioned by the c/o pop organizers, “Popculture 2.0” was

nonetheless the overarching theme of the event and thus successfully transcended the event into the media. In contrast, the questions regarding the public stance towards the Internet as posed by the a2n organizers were not picked up by the media to the same degree. The issue-setting of the a2n was thus somewhat jeopardized by the event's radically new structure, as the media mainly focused on differences to the Popkomm rather than on the specific content discussed at the a2n.

5 Discussion: FCEs as Framing Opportunities

We find that FCEs are indeed areas for channeling collective action processes as they are arenas where conflict and contestation among colliding groups take place, both at individual events, but also, and maybe more importantly, between different events. Each event can hereby be considered as representing a specific "discourse coalition" (Hajer 1993, 2005). In our case in the field of the German music industry, the areas of contestation that transcended from (and were picked up by) the events we analyzed are: the question of whether the industry is in crisis or rather on a path to innovation, the question of which structures and spaces enable this innovation, and the underlying question of the adequate cultural and institutional basis for new business models.

Each event is associated with and actively promoted a different stance on these contested issues. FCEs can thus be considered as important opportunities for agenda-setting. The formation and cancelation of an event can thereby in itself be a powerful mechanism, shaping the discourse in a field. The organization of events is thus an important strategy of (collective) institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006), but, as such, is also a practice deeply embedded in field-level structures. Questions such as "who organizes FCEs, why, and with what effect" can only be answered when looking at the embeddedness of event organizers and events in the field. This recursive relationship between events and field has already been recognized (Meyer et al. 2005; Lampel and Meyer 2008), but has so far not been systematically analyzed.

As can be seen in our discussion of the perceived opportunity structures, for instance, event organizers took very different approaches to enact the same institutional environment, which, to a large extent, depended on their constituency, their allies, and their resources. The Popkomm, the incumbent event with its core music industry allies opted for a preservation and protection of existing industry structures; the c/o pop with its strong local network of independent players opted for a joint dialogue, and the a2n, formed as a counter movement, tar-

gets a radical, cultural change. This can be tied back to the argument found in institutional theory that central agents in a field can no longer trigger radical changes (Battilana 2006).

The impact – in this paper conceptualized as discursive impact – resulting from these events is, in turn, not unilateral. The Popkomm, by occupying the most central position in the field of the music industry, should have been able to exert the strongest influence on the field (Hoffman and Ocasio 2001; Krackhardt 2003). Its framing efforts were however delegitimized to a large extent by the alternative events in the field that only became a stronger voice through the cancelation of the Popkomm. The cancelation of the Popkomm thus opened up the central discursive space the event and its allies previously occupied and legitimized previously peripheral actors and events. The influence agents – here: organizers of potentially field configuring events – can exert on a field is thus mediated by their relative positions in the field.

Paradoxically, this impact may still depend on the participation of powerful established actors, who may try to push forward completely different agendas. As the a2n did not have this support, its agenda somewhat became thwarted in the public eye. As the a2n organizers proposed the most radical change by questioning both established industry and event organizing practices, the event in a way was particularly dependent on the support of established actors in order to gain legitimacy. As this was not granted in its first year, much of the media coverage revolved around the “radicalness” per se, and not on the content actually discussed at the event.

Events thus impact on the field not only via themes, but, more importantly, via networks that are not necessarily formed at the events themselves, but exist previously and are channeled through the organizers of an event. Each of our events addressed a different community in the field (big business versus cultural industries versus digital community), reflecting the heterogeneity of field structures. Linking back these insights to ongoing discussions around FCEs and institutional change, the case comparison furthers our understanding of FCEs not only by acknowledging their roles as “venues for exchanging information” or a stage for “institutional entrepreneurs” (see, for example, Garud 2008), but by being alert to the idea that *organizing* events for (influencing) field configuration is a powerful mechanism for institutional change. Nonetheless, the role of agency in this context is more subtle compared to the collective action processes taking place at the events themselves, which are focused by the extant literature on FCEs.

6 Conclusions

In this paper we tried to understand how three different music industry events, the Popkomm, the *c/o pop*, and the *all2gethernow*, are formed and legitimated in the field of commercial pop music and how they influenced field evolution. We looked at who organizes these FCEs, why, and by which means and strategies. We find that FCEs are a powerful discursive tool, not least due to the media attention they receive when held – and sometimes even more when being cancelled. We thus contribute to the literature on collective institutional strategies by developing further the notion of FCEs as a mechanism of change in organizational fields.

Our research setting indicates that events can be understood better when being alert to their reciprocal conditionality with other events and their embeddedness in the field: while new events call existing ones into question they still define their role – even justify their existence – with reference to those events. Subsequently, the organizing conditions of an FCE, i.e. the position of the organizers in the field and the field-level characteristics, become important parts of the debate on FCEs, as they enable us to not only understand how events shape the field, but also the shaping of the event by the organizers. Therefore, our study suggests conceptualizing FCEs in a co-evolutionary manner. When thinking about “institutional lock-in”, changes in the event landscape such as new events, changes in event locations, or cancellation of events have proven effective strategies of change. However, field-level processes are a lot less tangible and, in the long-term, the “crystalization” of such processes in an event can form a “critical juncture” or “jolt” (Meyer et al. 2005) in field development.

This is also of importance for theories of institutional change, which build upon social movement theories (e.g. Davis et al. 2005; 2008; Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006). While those regularly acknowledge the role of events, they mostly refer to public events displaying worthiness, unity, numbers and commitments (“WUNC displays,” see Tilly 2004). The events we are analyzing in this paper, however, follow a different logic: a major source of legitimacy for an event lies in the ability to congregate a huge variety of actors and interests – in other words: to involve opponents in the event, as well. More research on the embeddedness of FCEs could thus further the understanding of (dis-)enablers of institutional change and the degree of configuration a FCE might bring about.

References

- Anand, N./Watson, Mary R. (2004): Tournament Rituals in the Evolution of Fields – The Case of the Grammy Awards. In: *Academy of Management Journal*, 47 (1), 59-80
- Battilana, J. (2006): Agency and Institutions: The Enabling Role of Individuals' Social Position." In: *Organization*, 13 (5), 653-676.
- Battilana, J./Leca, Bernard/Eva Boxenbaum, (2009): How Actors Change Institutions: Towards a Theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship. In: *The Academy of Management Annals*: 65-107
- Benford, Robert D./Snow, David A. (2000): Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-639.
- Braithwaite, John/Drahos, Peter. (2000): *Global Business Regulation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, John L. (2004): *Institutional Change and Globalization*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cusumano, Michael A./Mylonadis, Yiorgos/Rosenbloom, Richard S. (1992): Strategic Maneuvering and Mass-market Dynamics: The Triumph of VHS over Beta. In: *Business History Review*, 66 (Spring), 51-94.
- Davis, Gerald F./McAdam, Doug/Scott, Richard W./Zald, Mayer N. (eds./2005): *Social Movements and Organizational Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, Gerald F./Morill, Calvin/Rao, Hayagreeva/Soule, Sarah A. (2008): Introduction: Social Movements in Organizations and Markets. In: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53, 389-394.
- Den Hond, Frank/De Bakker, Frank G. A. (2007): Ideologically Motivated Activism: How Activist Groups Influence Corporate Social Change Activities. In: *Academy of Management Review*, 32, 901-924.
- DiMaggio, Paul J. (1988): Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory. In: Zucker, Lynne G. (ed.): *Institutional Patterns and Organizations*. Cambridge: Ballinger, 3-22.
- DiMaggio, Paul J./Powell, Walter W. (1983): The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. In: *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.
- Dolata, Ulrich (2009): Technological Innovations and Sectoral Change. Transformative Capacity, Adaptability, Patterns of Change. An Analytical Framework. In: *Research Policy* 38, 6, 1066-1076.
- Dolata, Ulrich (2008): Das Internet und die Transformation der Musikindustrie. Rekonstruktion und Erklärung eines unkontrollierten sektoralen Wandels. In: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 18, 3, 344-369.
- Fligstein, Neil (1996): Markets as Politics: A Political-Cultural Approach to Market Institutions. In: *American Sociological Review*, 61, 228-244.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent (2006): Five misunderstandings about case-study research. In: *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12 (2), 219-245.
- Garud, Raghu (2008): Conferences as Venues for the Configuration of Emerging Organizational Fields: the Case of Cochlear Implants. In: *Journal of Management Studies*, 45 (6), 1062-1088.

- Garud, Raghu/Karnøe, Peter (2001): Path Creation as a Process of Mindful Deviation. In: Garud/Karnøe (eds.): *Path Dependence and Creation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Mahwah, 1-38.
- Hajer, M.A. (1993): Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain. In: Fischer, F./Forester, J. (eds.): *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 43-76.
- Hajer, M.A. (2005): Coalitions, Practices, and Meaning in Environmental Politics: From Acid Rain to BSE. In: Howarth, D./Torfing, J. (eds.): *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 297-315.
- Hargrave, Timothy J./Van de Ven, Andrew H. (2006): A Collective Action Model of Institutional Innovation. In: *Academy of Management Review*, 31 (4), 864-888.
- Hinings, C.R./Greenwood, Royston/Reay, Trish/Suddaby, Roy (2004): Dynamics of Change in Organizational Fields. In: Poole, Marshall S./Van de Ven, Andrew H. (eds.): *Handbook of Organizational Change*. New York: Oxford University Press, 304-323.
- Hoffmann, Andrew J. (1999): Evolution and Change: Environmentalism and the U.S: Chemical Industry. In: *Academy of Management Journal*, 42(4), 351-371.
- Hoffmann, Andrew J./Ocasio, William (2001): Not All Events are Attended Equally: Toward a Middle-Range Theory of Industry Attention to External Events. In: *Organization Science*, 12(4), 414-434.
- Huberty, Mark (2008): The Dissolution of Sectors: Do Politics and Sectors Still Go Together? Working Paper presented at the BRIW – Sloan Conference, 10 October 2008.
- Ingram, Paul/Rao, Hayagreeva (2004): Store wars: The enactment and repeal of anti-chain store legislation in America. In: *American Journal of Sociology*, 110, 446-487.
- Jick, Todd D. (1979): Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: triangulation in action. In: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 602-611.
- Krackhardt, David (2003): The Strength of Strong Ties: The Importance of Philos in Organizations, In: Cross, R., Parker, A., Saxon, L. (Eds.): *Networks in the Knowledge Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 82-108.
- Lampel, Joseph/Meyer, Alan D. (2008): Field-Configuring Events as Structuring Mechanisms: How Conferences, Ceremonies, and Trade Shows Constitute New Technologies, Industries, and Markets. In: *Journal of Management Studies*, 45 (6), 1025-1035
- Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. 2006. Institutions and institutional work. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, W. R. Nord, & T. B. Lawrence (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organization Studies*: 215-254. London: Sage.
- Marty, Gérard (2009): Path Dependence in Merchant Institutions: The Case of French Public Timber Sales. In: Schreyögg, Georg/Sydow, Jörg (eds.): *The Hidden Dynamics of Path Dependence: Institutions and Organizations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 148-160.
- McAdam, Doug/Scott, Richard W. (2005): Organizations and Movements. In: Davis, Gerald F./McAdam, Doug/Scott, Richard W./Zald, Mayer N. (eds.): *Social Movements and Organizational Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 4-40.
- McAdam, Doug/Tarrow, Sidney/Tilly, Charles (2001): *Dynamics of contestation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McCombs, Maxwell E./Shaw, Donald L. (1972): Agenda-setting function of mass media. In: *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-184.

- Meyer, Alan D./Gaba, Vibha/Colwell, Kenneth A. (2005): Organizing Far From Equilibrium: Non-Linear Change in Organizational Fields. In: *Organization Science*, 16 (5), 456-473.
- McInerney, Paul-Brian (2008): Showdown at Kykuit: Field-Configuring Events as Loci for Conventionalizing Accounts. In: *Journal of Management Studies*, 45 (6), 1089-1116
- Oliver, Amalya L./Montgomery, Kathleen (2008): Using Field-Configuring Events for Sense-Making: A Cognitive Network Approach. In: *Journal of Management Studies*, 45 (6), 1147-1167
- Page, Will /Carey, Chris (2009): Adding up the music industry for 2008. In: *Economic Insight*, 15, Online: <http://www.prsformusic.com/economics> [02 January 2010]
- Passman, Donald (2009): *All You Need to Know About the Music Business*. New York: Free Press.
- Rao, Hayagreeva (1994): The Social Construction of Reputation: Certification Contests, Legitimation, and the Survival of Organizations in the American Automobile Industry: 1895-1912. In: *Strategic Management Journal*, 15, 29-44
- Tilly, Charles (1978): *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Tilly, Charles (2004): *Social Movements, 1768-2004*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers
- Yin, Robert K. (1994): *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.