Patrick S. Foehl

The Cultural Manager:
Marginal Notes on a Discussion of Roles and Values
Translation: Jayne Obst

1. New Cultural Managers between Art and Economy

The balancing act between art/culture and economy, just as much as the connection between the two, has been especially critically discussed ever since cultural managment emerged as an occupation. Among the many postulates are the following: "Commercialisation of Art and Culture" or the "Business-ization of Artistic Processes". In this context, the "New Cultural Manager between Art and Economy" was the title of a forum within the 53rd Loccum Cultural Policy Colloquium "After us: the cultural economy? ... And what about cultural policy?" in which the "young/new cultural manager" had to deal with this subject area in the context of his work in a differentiated way.[1] The role of the cultural manager within this tense relationship was to be discussed, especially since the words "culture" and "manager" are united in the name of this occupation.

After the introductory statements of the referees and moderators, it soon became clear that this subject would not basically dominate the forum. For example, the participants quickly agreed that the cultural and artistic contents did not have to yield or adapt to economic necessities or demands. Moreover, it became clear that the original self-image of the protagonists consists of protecting artistic and cultural content in the face of increasing economic constraints, and (helping) to enable cultural and artistic projects to take place. On that basis, it was investigated how cultural managers can succeed in initiating or supporting cultural/artistic processes and on the other hand be economically successful, both for the project and for himself. In the analysis of the answers, it could be that this "pressure" and the resulting balancing act can be understood as an opportunity, but also as a challenge for cultural managers.

Thus, there was a basic consensus that cultural managers – in the context of the changes of the entire society[2] - work at the interface between art and economy and that this mediating role is a significant "function" of the manager for cultural work. Therefore, the interface-management described is one of the central existential and legitimising bases for cultural managers. However it also became clear that beyond this general consensus on the function of a cultural manager, there were slightly differentiating understandings among the participants in regard to the finely differentiated discussion of

---

[1] This was one of three forums offered under the main headline "New cultural managers between the creative industry and the public sector". Both of the other forums had invited participants to discuss the subjects "Entrepreneurial thinking and acting in a cultural business" and "Entrepreneurial thinking – political actions".

[2] See the detailed description of these current challenges in Kulturbetrieb Klein 2007 (German).

roles.[3] Furthermore, it was possible to identify – and that was again a connecting link between the participants – that the facilitation and mediation of, and especially the passion for art and culture is the protagonists' main motivation to work in this area. Synoptically it was possible to register that the empathetic way of dealing with the subjects of art and economy is based on a broad bundle of competences and the engagement of the forum participants. These include culture-managerial and usually category-specific – or more encompassing – culturally educated knowledge on the one hand, and enthusiasm but also participation in artistic processes on the other hand. These connections ensure the careful treatment of artistic products and processes, without neglecting the careful scrutiny of their feasibility, particularly in regard to their financing and marketing.

On the other side, and this is the negative connotation, it became clear that this "interface-existence" often means dramatic personal sacrifices. The recognition of a cultural manager between the "margins" of culture and administration, of culture and marketing, of culture and economy and many more is often extremely sparse. In the meantime, there is a consensus that cultural managers are necessary, but often, they are supposed to perform their tasks "for nothing" – and that applies to cultural institutions and projects of all sizes, categories and sectors. Thus, qualified cultural managers often accept salaries or fees that are substantially lower than the otherwise typical salaries for university graduates or project managers. The respective job or practicum postings are – in addition to the described impressions of the forum referees – only an indicator of this situation analysis. What remains, from the personal perspective, is the good feeling of having participated in something worthwhile. With that, the cultural managers are often in the same boat with those whose art and projects they have fostered, but without experiencing the comparative public – and usually also internal – recognition. Thus, the economic success is solely based on the realisation of a cultural project. In regard to the financial support of the participants, a significant amount of current cultural projects would probably have to be declared a failure for all or a large number of the protagonists.[4]

That is, a further ability of many cultural managers seems to be keeping their heads "above water" in spite of this. This takes place in the form of a second job, continued support by parents or the government, and usually a very modest lifestyle.[5] As this is no future option – e.g. poverty of the aged being a real threat – two main points are to be mentioned that were discussed during the forum, a continuation of which could likely become an important contribution to a further establishment and "valuation" of the "discipline of cultural management":

- The role(s) of cultural managers
- The value of the work of cultural managers

Within the scope of this article however, only a few indications, trends and questions can be outlined. In addition, it is important to note: As necessary as the discussion of future perspectives of cultural managers is, which has been begun and carried on for quite some time by individual protagonists, it is just as necessary to recognize what has been

---

[3] See the following chapter 2, which is exemplary of the various traits of culture managerial types.
[4] For more in-depth information on the situation of cultural managers, see Voesgen 2005a.
[5] For the cultural and creative business, see Bunz 2006.

accomplished up until now in critically dealing with the images, roles, attitudes, functions and working realities of cultural managers.[6]

In addition, it is important to point out that it is not meant to portray the cultural manager or his assumed "non-recognition" as a fatalistic picture. There is – and that is the other, positive side of the coin – an increasing number of institutions and initiatives that afford cultural managers sufficient value. Furthermore, the specialist area of cultural management has been able to increasingly establish itself during the past years.[7] The area of "cultural entrepreneurs" makes clear that increasing numbers of cultural managers have found their place being self-employed and have been successful.[8] However, the picture portrayed above is living and working reality for many cultural managers. Thus a large part of the income of cultural managers remains below taxation levels.[9] In regard to the large number of cultural management study programmes that have emerged during the past few years and in regard to the protagonists who enter this field from other areas, we can assume that the situation will become more dramatic in the future. In addition, an intensive discussion of roles and values is also helpful for those who already have a secure position, but must repeatedly answer the – often negatively posed – question as to what cultural management[10] actually is, or how they see their profession.

2. Role models of a cultural manager: outline and approach

In a recent listing of the Deutsche Bühnenverein of all occupations that can be found at the theatre, the occupation of the cultural manager is described, "to ensure freedom and quality of art, not by simply applying management rules to a cultural institution, but by serving as a mediator between art and business."[11] That is a definition that is strongly oriented to the motto of the forum mentioned above and the attitude of the established cultural management institutes. Klein and Heinrichs understand "cultural management as the term for all controls towards the creation and security of tasks in working cultural businesses that take place in a complex and changeable world, and are oriented towards the exchange of relations between suppliers and users."[12] Thus it becomes clear that the cultural manager not only builds bridges between art and economy, but also, for example, acts as a mediator and designer within cultural institutions or projects, between suppliers and users, between internal and external, between cultural producers and cultural policy and many others. Often he is referred to as the one who "made it possible", from the "border crosser" or for example the "translator" or the "mediator between art and commerce".

There is, however, no precise description of the "prototype" of a cultural manager. The attitudes, tasks, fields and origins of cultural managers are too diverse. Besides, the cultural manager must "reinvent" himself over and over, and search for interdisciplinary

---

[6] See exemplary chosen recent publications by Bendixen 2006; Glogner 2006; Heinze 2002; Mandel 2002 and 2007; Klein 2006, 2007 und 2008a; Kleine 2007; Konrad 2006; Siebenhaar 2003a; van den Berg 2007; Voesgen 2005a und b. Also the many articles on "Occupation/Career" at kulturmanagement.net are worth mentioning as a valuable and central source.
[7] On the development of the specialist area cultural management see Klein 2008b and Siebenhaar 2003c.
[8] For more detail, see Mandel 2007.
[9] See Kleine 2007: 58.
[10] It is necessary to "mitigate" here by pointing out that the variety of meanings and associations in regard to the term "cultural management" – understandably enough – can basically lead to imprecision and misunderstandings. See Siebenhaar 2003b: 10.
[11] Deutscher Bühnenverein 2007: 28 f.
[12] Heinrichs/Klein 2001: 193.

approaches in order to achieve the best possible access and results for the new challenges in the cultural area. Thus, a search for a unified description of this occupation is not only impossible, but would be contra-productive at that. Thus, the apparently "ideal type" of cultural manager lives as a mediator, enabler and marketer of culture by utilising his adaptability and versatility, with which he keeps an eye on current trends and integrates this new knowledge into his work.

However, it is interesting and helpful – in addition to the "basic functions and skills" attributed to cultural managers – to make the attempt to describe different types of cultural managers. On the search for these "types", van den Berg offers extraordinarily good assistance. In her article "Impresario, Künstler, Manager oder Fuzzi?" ("Impresario, Artist, Manager or Freak?") that was published last year, she distinguishes seven main types of cultural managers. A selection of these role models is outlined here. For more detail, please consult the article itself.[13]

- The cultural manager as a *commercializer*: He is responsible for culture marketing in the sense of communicating a cultural product to its potential user groups as well as possible, without "damaging" its primary functions.
- The cultural manager as a *translator*: He is a "border crosser" between different systems, that is, someone who wants to bridge over functional systems. Van den Berg quotes Heinrichs in this context, who speaks of the "mediating interpreter and interpreting mediator", who brings together "artists, audiences and cultural institutions" and of course other protagonists such as private industry,[14] with the goal of controlling the planning, conception and financing processes and to make a cultural product possible.
- The cultural manager as a *charismatic producer*: He convinces and mediates using his visible personal obsession for something. He wants to make something happen and is not just the neutral translator. The understanding of the conception, organization and planning of projects is influenced by the motivation to produce something meaningful and important. Thus, he is not an artist, but he contributes his own artistic interpretation to the project and lives from the inspiration for a cultural category.
- The cultural manager as an *enabler*: This type is closely related to the definition of the *Deutsche Bühnenverein* quoted above. He probably reflects the most constant idea of the cultural manager. He is a cultural manager who is equipped with techniques, instruments and contacts, is not conceptually oriented himself, but rather wants to use his infrastructure to realize the ideas and initiatives of others.
- The cultural manager as a *post-heroic artist*: In this type, management and artistic practice are united. The cultural manager becomes the enabler of his own artistic ideas. This constellation is virtually non-existent in the study of cultural management so far, as it is very far from the idea of the mediator and pure enabler. However, one should not neglect it entirely, as more and more artists now study cultural management (e.g. at the Study Centre for Cultural Management of the University of Basel), in order to follow exactly this path.

These descriptions of types offer an initial introduction to the multifarious fields and self-images of cultural managers. Whereby it is expressly emphasized that this kind of

---

[13] See van den Berg, 2007.
[14] See Heinrichs, 1999: 24.

collection can never be complete and that there are many combinations of the individual types.[15] That is, probably every cultural manager will identify completely or partly with at least two of these role models. In addition, there are many other typologies. Voesgen, for example, differentiates between cultural mediators and cultural marketers.[16] Siebenhaar, who understands cultural management as a "reflexive collage discipline", sees in the term "cultural manager" a "permanent hidden-image puzzle" that concentrates on the areas of networking and mediating.[17] In addition there are cultural managers who – primarily with the help of various disciplines of relationships – deal with the field of cultural management as researchers.[18]

As mentioned at the beginning, the goal is not the harmonisation of the types; moreover, the emphasis of the multifarious tasks, understandings, analogies, differences and especially achievements of cultural managers. In order to be conscious of the contexts in which cultural managers work and what contribution they make to the facilitation and creation of artistic as well as cultural products, it seems sensible – especially from the perspective of the practicing cultural manager – to foster an in-depth and continuous reflection on the roles of cultural managers in the cultural area and their value (see below) apart from normative terminologies. Often, outsiders are not aware of the explicit contribution cultural managers make, and it is only possible to make that clear when these achievements are made more transparent.

Furthermore, a broader and more open discussion (especially also outside of the "academic community") would help to overcome the not uncommon understanding of cultural management as being a "purely helping instrument". Because one thing must have become clear in the meantime: Cultural managers are often also intellectual, active co-designers of art and culture; they are critical observers of the "system of art and cultural business" and thus valuable experts for all cultural protagonists – next to their original function as facilitators, mediators and marketers of art and culture.

3.   Work Value of the Cultural Manager: Impulses for Discussion

In the sense of the importance of cultural managers in the culture and art business outlined above, in the face of an increasingly networked society[19] and in the advent of a creative industries boom[20], it is likely that the demand for the described (interfacing) competencies will increase. For that reason, and in particular because of the problematic often low valuation of the cultural managers' work, it becomes necessary to discuss the "work value" of cultural managers more intensely.

In this kind of discussion, two central perspectives open up at first glance: One is the process of increasing consciousness of the (possible) functions and roles of cultural managers mentioned above as well as the respective (potential) achievements. Kleine admits in this context and in the context of the "boom in culture and the cultural landscape" in an exemplary way, that "not only value added chains (...) (should)

---

[15] See also van den Berg 2007: 133, 145 ff.

[16] See Voesgen 2005a. For a discussion of the role model of a cultural manager, see also Keller 2001.

[17] See Siebenhaar 2003c: 11.

[18] See the exemplary van den Berg 2007: 143-145, the dissertation projects at the Institute for Cultural Management in Ludwigsburg and the activities of the research group "Regional Governance in the Cultural Area" in the study curriculum of Cultural Work of the FH Potsdam.

[19] Here we refer to the terms "cooperative/activating cultural policy" and governance/cooperation, for example.

[20] See for example Kulturpolitische Mitteilungen 2007.

determine cultural policy and practice, but the social core tasks that can be fulfilled by well-educated young academics".[21] On the other hand, the concrete question of the monetary value of work in cultural management must be posed.

In the previous passages, selected subject areas on the first point have been mentioned. Therefore, only a supplementary aspect is mentioned here. In order to foster the visualisation and valuation of cultural management, it is certainly also necessary to promote the establishment of the special area of cultural management. In practice, this could take place through a more intensive collaboration on application-oriented research projects, for example. In science, the improvement of research conditions and the self-confident establishment of the subject as the study of supply in the context of other real sciences seem to be especially important.[22]

Concerning the work value of cultural managers, the perceivable need for discussion and exchange between cultural managers and between the educational institutions needs to be mentioned here. Because the challenges are known[23] and a general increase of the value of cultural management[24] can only take place if one engages in a long-term discourse on common standards, even if it is probably not possible to conclude it because of the various educations, functions and attitudes of cultural managers. This discourse[25] would be sensible anyway in order to distance oneself from the freeloaders in practice and education, who are absolutely harmful to the "serious" cultural managers. This could be a long path, as is made clear by the foundation of occupational associations and the protection of professional names in other areas, for example (e.g. "architect" in the EU territory). Whether this kind of procedure is recommendable or realistic for the occupation of cultural management cannot be examined further here. At present, individually expressed quality standards or goals as they are found in cultural consultancy offices and cultural management study programmes would certainly be useful. However, much sooner, a direct discussion of the work value of cultural management should take place. In the context of a "work value theory discussion" not only Adam Smith, Karl Marx and other scholars and philosophers could be helpful sources for a basic debate, but also a survey of similar or comparable working areas. For example, it might be interesting for one's own cultural management consultancy work to find out what consultants in other areas earn. That does not mean that it would be easy to receive similar margins. But it could be an encouragement to demand more than before and would increase the sensibility for the estimation of one's own work. Especially since the cultural manager is often confronted with working the most for the least pay and every demand for more money is interpreted as an affront and politically incorrect in the cultural field.

Furthermore, cultural management needs a lobby, not the least among the current protagonists in cultural policy and administration as well as in cultural management education, to name only a few. Kleine admits: "The debate on cultural business[26] is carried out by the departments of business, work and culture. These work contexts must

[21] Kleine 2007; 59.
[22] See the exemplary Föhl/Glogner 2008.
[23] See for example Kleine 2007 and Voesgen 2005a.
[24] An increasing number of protagonists from the cultural management sector has been able to attain a considerable – also monetary – increase in the perceived value of cultural management by way of their personal achievements.
[25] A symposium of the Kulturrat (Cultural Council) in Austria under the title "State of the Art – Arbeit in Kunst, Kultur und Medien", which took place in March 2008 in Vienna is a positive example for this kind of discourse.
[26] In this article, this is contextual and exemplary for the entire cultural management field.

be used to develop strategies for ‚advancement'".[27] Furthermore, she explains, "The younger cultural protagonists are hardly present in cultural policy. [...] We must make room for the young [Rem. in order to state needs] and offer them the opportunity to speak".[28]

4.   Future Prospects

In conclusion, the question arises as to who can bring these discussions forwards, making them more precise and differentiated. In the previous chapters individual ideas were already stated. Here, they are summarized:

- First, the cultural managers themselves are required to make their needs better known and to become more involved in the existing platforms and associations or those yet to be founded.[29] Until now, cultural managers often remain in a "lonely fighter position" in everyday and competitive business. Thus, a sensible and productive exchange – even informally – with other cultural managers cannot develop sufficiently.
- Alumni-networks of cultural management graduates could engage more strongly in exploring the subject of "work value". It would be recommendable for the alumni-clubs to be networked, in order allow exchange nation-wide and to be heard more clearly.
- The founding of the Fachverbandes Kulturmanagement e.V. last year gives reason to hope that, next to the important establishment of the subject in the area of science, the concrete life realities and work demands of (future) graduates will be more intensively discussed and considered in the group of study programme leaders.
- In addition, it is necessary for the trainers[30] and the receivers as well as the mediators of cultural management achievements to become involved in and to exchange ideas about the income, insurance and working conditions of cultural managers more than ever before.

The ideas outlined above can hardly be the last word on this subject, however. Because apart from the indisputable and growing necessity of cultural managers, the question still arises out of the perspective described, as to how many cultural manager graduates are actually necessary? That is, that in the future it will be necessary to discuss how the chances and risks of this chosen occupation can be better communicated. At the same time, a fundamental discussion will be necessary, especially for the educational opportunities apart from the established cultural management institutes, how to do more justice to the specific and constantly changing demands on cultural management, for example from the different categories (e.g. by using specializations specific to one location, subject emphases and competencies explicitly designed for job qualification)? This way, the employability of some degree programmes or the success of young entrepreneurs could probably be fostered.

---

[27] Kleine 2007: 59.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Above all, kulturmanagment.net is worth naming here. In addition the initiative "Frei-Schaffen.de" is a positive example for an exchange platform for the self-employed.
[30] See the exemplary study by Kohl/Zembylas (2006) of the occupational area of the cultural manager in Austria and the current research project "Welche Kulturmanager braucht der Markt?"("Which Cultural Managers does the Market Demand?") by Prof. Dr. Armin Klein at the Institute for Cultural Management, Ludwigsburg.

Bibliography

Bendixen, Peter (2006): Einführung in das Kultur- und Kunstmanagement, 3rd printing, Wiesbaden

Bunz, Mercedes (2006): Meine Armut kotzt mich an. Kein Geld, aber tausend Ideen: Urbane Penner sind die unterschätzte, kreative Elite Berlins, in: zitty - Das Hauptstadtmagazin, Heft 4 (Februar 2006), pp.16–19

Deutscher Bühnenverein (2007): Berufe am Theater, 6th rev. printing, Cologne

Föhl, Patrick S.; Glogner, Patrick (2008): Kulturmanagement in Theorie und Praxis. Aktuelle Forschungen und Tendenzen, in: Kulturpolitische Mitteilungen, No. 120 (I/2008), pp. 60f.

Glogner, Patrick (2006): Kulturelle Einstellungen leitender Mitarbeiter kommunaler Kulturverwaltungen. Empirisch-kultursoziologische Untersuchungen, Wiesbaden

Heinrichs, Werner (1999): Kommunales Kulturmanagement. Rahmenbedingungen – Praxisfelder – Managementmethoden, Baden-Baden

Heinrichs, Werner; Klein, Armin (2001): Kulturmanagement von A – Z. Wegweiser für Kultur- und Medienberufe, 2nd printing, Munich

Heinze, Thomas (Hg.) (2002): Kultursponsoring, Museumsmarketing, Kulturtourismus. Ein Leitfaden für Kulturmanager, Wiesbaden

Keller, Rolf (2001): Leidenschaft und Professionalität zugleich - Gedanken zum Berufsbild der Kulturmanager, in: NZZ, No. 258 (6 November 2001)

Klein, Armin (2006): Wie denkt Kulturmanagement?, in: Konrad, Elmar D. (Hg.): Unternehmertum und Führungsverhalten im Kulturbereich, Münster a.o.loc., pp. 93–105

Klein, Armin (2007): Der exzellente Kulturbetrieb, Wiesbaden

Klein, Armin (Hg.) (2008a): Kompendium Kulturmanagement. Handbuch für Studium und Praxis, 2nd completely revised and supplemented printing, Munich

Klein, Armin (2008b): Kompendium Kulturmanagement – Eine Einführung, in: Klein, Armin (Hg.): Kompendium Kulturmanagement. Handbuch für Studium und Praxis, 2nd completely revised and supplemented printing, Munich, pp. 1–8

Kleine, Helene (2007): »Kulturarbeit als Beruf«. Beispiele aus der Praxis, in: Kulturpolitische Mitteilungen, No. 119 (IV/2007), pp. 58f.

Kohl, Manuela; Zembylas, Tasos (2006): Junge KulturmanagerInnen – Berufsfeld, Berufseinstieg, Berufsbedingungen, in: SWS-Rundschau, 46th year (IV/2006), pp. 458–476

Konrad, Elmar D. (Hg.): Unternehmertum und Führungsverhalten im Kulturbereich, Münster a.o.loc.

Kulturpolitische Mitteilungen (2007): Schwerpunktthema »KULTURwirtschaft – KulturPOLITIK«, No. 119 (IV/2007)

Mandel, Birgit (2002): Lust auf Kultur: Karrierewege in das Berufsfeld Kulturvermittlung, Nuremberg

Mandel, Birgit (2007): Die neuen Kulturunternehmer. Ihre Motive, Visionen und Erfolgsstrategien, Bielefeld

Siebenhaar, Klaus (Hg.) (2003a): Karriereziel Kulturmanagement. Studiengänge und Berufsbilder im Profil, 2nd printing, Nuremberg

Siebenhaar, Klaus (2003b): Begriff und Praxis in Stichworten, in: Siebenhaar, Klaus (ed.): Karriereziel Kulturmanagement. Studiengänge und Berufsbilder im Profil, 2nd printing, Nuremberg, pp. 9–11

Siebenhaar, Klaus (2003c): Erfolgsgeschichte eines Orchideenfaches, in: Siebenhaar, Klaus (ed.): Karriereziel Kulturmanagement. Studiengänge und Berufsbilder im Profil, 2nd printing, Nuremberg, pp. 13–16

van den Berg, Karin (2007): Impresario, Künstler, Manager oder Fuzzi? Rollenmodelle des Kulturmanagers, in: Markowski, Marc; Wöbken, Hergen (ed.): oeconomenta. Wechselspiele zwischen Kunst und Wirtschaft, Berlin, pp. 129–146

Voesgen, Hermann (2005a): »Vermittlungsprobleme«. Kulturmanager werden eigentlich gebraucht, aber schlecht bezahlt – Der Studiengang Kulturarbeit an der Fachhochschule Potsdam, in: Mandel, Birgit (ed.): Kulturvermittlung zwischen kultureller Bildung und Kulturmarketing. Eine Profession mit Zukunft, Bielefeld, pp. 172–179

Voesgen, Hermann (2005b): What makes sense? Cultural Management and the question of values in a shifting landscape, in: Voesgen, Hermann (ed.): What makes sense? Cultural Management and the question of values in a shifting landscape, Eigenverlag, ENCATC 2005, pp. 17–26

About the Author:

Patrick S. Foehl, graduate cultural worker. Founder, member and scholarly colleague of the research group "Regional Governance im Kulturbereich" in the degree programme Cultural Work at the FH Potsdam. In addition free-lance cultural consultant in the Network for Cultural Consulting. Working, publishing and research emphasis on "strategic cultural management" (emphasis on cooperations/fusions), "Cultural Marketing", "Exhibition Management" and "Cultural Financing". Since 1996, work in or consultancy for various cultural institutions (excerpt: Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin, Stiftung Schloss Neuhardenberg GmbH, Klassik Stiftung Weimar and Stiftung Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin). Doctorate studies at the institute for cultural management of the PH Ludwigsburg under Prof. Dr. Armin Klein. Together with Dr. Patrick Glogner, editor in the series "Current Tendencies in Cultural Management" in the *Kulturpolitische Mitteilungen*. Various national and international lecturing activities. Lecturer at various colleges and continued education facilities in Germany, Poland and Switzerland.

For further information, visit: http://regional-governance-kultur.de/Patrick-S-Foehl.52.0.html

Contact: patrick.foehl@regional-governance-kultur.de