The Cartesian Paradox in Norwegian Cultural Policy

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to discuss the Cartesian paradox in Norwegian cultural policy and its implications both for cultural policy and cultural policy research. On the one hand, Norwegian cultural policy has emphasised the cognitive capacities that are developed through people's experience of arts and culture. This emphasis reflects the Cartesian perspective, where the mind is seen as that which defines humans as social beings. On the other hand, the experience of arts and culture depends on our sensory apparatus, which is located in our body. I will argue that the Cartesian perspective represents a doxa – in the Bourdieusian sense – through which important structures and patterns in Norwegian cultural policy discourse are reproduced. The discussion of these implications will revolve around three examples: the valuation of different ways of appreciating art, the hierarchisation of art forms and some gender issues in cultural policy discourse.

Keywords
The body turn, Bildung, doxa, cultural participation, gender, dance

Introduction

The human body has been given little attention in cultural policy, as well as in cultural policy research. This might have delimited our understanding of the important dynamics and structures in our field of study. By neglecting the human body, important aspects of valuation and hierarchisation processes – in art forms, groups of artists and ways of appreciating art – might have been excluded from analyses. Moreover, this lack of attention towards the body can be seen as a paradox. On the one hand, Norwegian cultural policy seems to have emphasised the cognitive capacities developed through the experience of arts and culture. This emphasis reflects the Cartesian perspective, where the mind is seen as that which defines humans as social beings. On the other hand, the experience of arts and culture depends on our sensory apparatus, which is located in our bodies. Consequently, the human body has an absent presence in Norwegian cultural policy. On this backdrop, the aim of the current article is to discuss what could be called the Cartesian paradox in Norwegian cultural policy and its implications both for cultural policy and for cultural policy research.
More specifically, I will argue that the Cartesian perspective constitutes a doxa in Norwegian cultural policy. According to Bourdieu, doxa is what is taken for granted in a particular society. Doxa refers to how a given social order produces “the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Bourdieu 1977). This is a situation in which the natural and social world appears as self-evident. We do not reflect on the limits that have given rise to the unequal divisions in society, that is, when we accept a certain order as being self-evident.

In a similar vein, I will argue that the Cartesian perspective has been prominent in Norwegian cultural policy and represents a doxa. One of the most overarching and consistent objectives of cultural policy throughout history and across countries has been to make art and culture accessible to the whole population. In the dominant formulations of this objective and its importance, it appears as self-evident that people’s experience of arts and culture primarily has to do with their cognitive capacities. Hence, the current article will give special attention to the idea of “Bildung” (or dannelse/danning in Norwegian) as one of the main legitimations of the involvement of public authorities in cultural affairs (Belfiore & Bennett 2008; Bennett 1995; 1997; Bjørnsen 2012; Harding 2015).

Broadly, the human body has been an increasingly important topic in the social sciences and, more specifically, in many different disciplines and subfields over the past few decades. However, only to a limited extent has “the body turn” in the social sciences influenced cultural policy research. One important exception, however, is an argument put forward by MacNeill (2009), who problematises the way in which conceptualisations of the creative industries have emphasised intellectual property as constitutive. Consequently, she argues, the role of the body in artistic labour has been neglected. In the present article, I will expand the discussion of the role of the body in cultural policy, moving it to the ideas of access to artistic experience, cultural participation and Bildung. I will do this by exploring how the Cartesian perspective might have developed into a doxa in Norwegian cultural policy. A discussion of the potential implications of this doxa pertaining to valuation and hierarchisation processes in the policy field will also be included.

On this backdrop, the current article asks the following questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways have the human body been taken into account in the ideas of Bildung in Norwegian cultural policy?
2. What might be the implications of the way the human body has been understood in the ideas of Bildung in Norwegian cultural policy?

Cultural policy can be defined and studied in a number of ways. In this article, I build on an approach to cultural policy that focus on the importance of investigating how subjects, populations and other categories are constructed by cultural policy discourse (Bennett 1998; Gibson 2010; Schneider & Ingram 1993). More specifically, I investigate how Norwegian cultural policy constructs artistic experience and its subjects. I focus on how, and the degree to which the human body is acknowledged and thematised alongside cognitive and emotional aspects. In turn, I examine the implications of such a construction.

To explore how the human body has been understood in Norwegian cultural policy, I will draw on the Cartesian perspective and its mind–body dualism on the one hand and contrast it with the Bourdieusian perspective and the concept of habitus on the other. These perspectives play different roles in the article. The Cartesian perspective is outlined and discussed in order to specify the characteristics of a cognitivist approach. In turn, this specification is used in order to identify how the Cartesian perspective is manifested in cultural policy discourse. The Bourdieusian perspective on the other hand is introduced in order to
challenge the cognitivist approach of the Cartesian perspective. Furthermore, Bourdieu’s approach helps to shed light on the importance of the bodily aspects of several phenomena that is prominent in cultural policy.

The argument in the current article is primarily developed through a discussion of the existing research, but an analysis of how Bildung is understood and conceptualised in three Norwegian white papers on culture is also included.

The present article proceeds as follows: I will start by introducing how the human body is conceptualised in the Cartesian perspective and contrast it with the perspective of Bourdieu. Then, I will analyse how the body is understood in formulations of Bildung in Norwegian cultural policy by looking at three white papers on culture from 1991, 2003 and 2018. Thereafter, I will discuss some possible implications of the way in which the human body has been thematised and understood. More specifically, the discussion will revolve around three examples – the valuation of different ways of appreciating art, the hierarchisation of art forms and various gender issues in Norwegian cultural policy discourse. The discussion of these examples is included in order to illustrate the significance of the Cartesian perspective having become a doxa in cultural policy discourse.

The Cartesian Perspective

Although different philosophical traditions have conceptualised the human body in different ways (i.e., the Nietzschean tradition and the pragmatist tradition), it is fair to claim that the Cartesian perspective is the most dominant one in Western thinking. Descartes’ famous and immensely influential proposition “Cogito ergo sum” reflects the longstanding view of the mind and body as a dualism, where the mind is seen as that which defines humans as social beings (Descartes 2009). Consequently, the personhood is seen as distinct from the human body. This understanding of the self has three aspects. First, the mind and body are seen as distinct from each other. Second, the body is seen as subordinate to the mind; indeed, in the Cartesian perspective, the body resembles a machine or an object in which the self is located. Third, the self is seen as produced via cognitive rationalisation that goes on in the mind and through which we view the world as external to us. Nevertheless, vision is privileged as a sense because of the way it connects the self to the physical and material environment in which the self is located. In this way, bodily sensation is not seen as influencing or contaminating perception (Howson 2004).

According to Elias, the Cartesian idea of the “self in a case” is one of the recurrent themes of Western philosophy (Elias 1994:475); this view of the human being has also been called homo clausus (“closed individual”). As Elias claims, this model portrays people as “thinking statues”, isolated egos “who are devoid of concepts, symbols, bodily customs and habits handed down from previous generations” (Elias 1978:130). The idea that the body is acting as the container for the self is even experienced by people as something that is real (Shilling 2012). In his seminal work – The Civilizing Process – Elias (1994) also notes that the idea of the closed individual is so self-evident that it is rarely questioned. Elias maintains that this is no surprise, given the emphasis of self-control in contemporary society – it is a natural result of the “civilizing process”.

1. See, for example, Golden (2006) and Schusterman (2012) for discussions of how the body has been treated in these traditions.

2. It has been argued that Descartes was not as categorical in his reflections on the relationship between the body and the mind as he has been associated with (Turner 2012). Nevertheless, the statement has been at the core of Western thinking for a very long time.
Moreover, it has been well-documented within the field of philosophy and feminism that the mind has been culturally associated with masculinity and the body with femininity (Bordo 1986; Butler 2006; Spelman 1982). Butler (2006) has argued that a fundamental critique of these associations was implicated already in Beauvoir’s seminal work The Second Sex (Beauvoir 1994). Beauvoir’s main argument was that the masculine has been conflated with the universal while the feminine has been constructed as the “Other” outside universalizing norms of personhood. According to Butler the universal and masculine subject that has been constructed is “abstract to the extent that it disavows its socially marked embodiment and, further, projects that disavowed and disparaged embodiment on to the feminine sphere, effectively renaming the body as female” (Butler 2006:16). In a similar vein, Bordo (1986) has argued that the Cartesian perspective represents a masculinisation of thought. When Descartes refashioned the ontological orders of the human and the natural and defined them as opposites that should not be merged, this reflected and institutionalised a masculine cognitive style.

The idea that the human being is primarily defined by the mind can further be related to some dominant features of how the experience of art has been understood. In the domain of aesthetics, the philosophy of Kant has been immensely influential (Kant 2007). Kant’s influence both applies to the way aesthetic experience is understood and the way art is conceptualised. For Kant, the arts primarily have a cognitive function (Belfiore & Bennett 2008); here, aesthetic pleasure is understood as a constant attempt to move from imagination to understanding through the aesthetic experience. This is related to Kant’s idea of disinterested aesthetic experience, meaning that pleasure in something that is beautiful is not connected with desire. Aesthetic experience should not be based on desire, and aesthetic pleasure should not produce desire itself (Zangwill 2013). The aesthetic experience is, in this way, conceptualised as something that goes on in the mind and that should not be interfered with by the body.

Furthermore, Kantian aesthetics has had a major influence on the core idea of the field of art, or the idea of the autonomy of the arts. The motto of the field since the early nineteenth century – art for art’s sake – has many aspects. One aspect is that an artwork should be appreciated for what it is, not for what it does. On this backdrop, it could be claimed that the idea of autonomy is primarily associated with a cognitive approach towards art and the appreciation of art. Kantian aesthetics, however, has been criticised and contrasted by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Let us take a closer look at how the human body is accounted for within the Bourdieusian perspective.

The Bourdieusian Perspective

One of the most well-known ideas from the theoretical universe of Bourdieu is that of habitus, a concept that effectively captures how the social world is present in the human body. The roots of habitus, however, are found in the notion of hexis in the Nichomachean Ethics by Aristotle (Aristotle 2020). Before Bourdieu made the concept prominent in the social sciences, sociologists and philosophers such as Durkheim, Mauss, Weber, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty made use of it in their writings (Wacquant 2016). Here, I will draw attention especially to the way Merleau-Ponty treats the concept in line with his ideas of the “lived body” as a mute and yet intelligent source of social meaning and behaviour (Merleau-Ponty 2012).

In contrast to the Cartesian perspective, Merleau-Ponty does not view the body as a special kind of physical object separate from the mind, something that can be comprehended
only through rational thought. Rather, he views the body as the basis of our “being-in-the-world” in the sense that embodiment precedes and grounds reflexive thinking. This means that we are not outside of – but rather in – the world and that perception of the world begins from the body. This view of human perception has later been supported by contributions in neuroscience (Damasio 2006).

Bourdieu first developed the concept of habitus to capture the ways in which the body is in the social world and the social world is in the body. Bourdieu underlines that as social actors, we have developed a habitus that is inscribed in our bodies by virtue of our earlier experiences. Habitus is passed from “practice to practice without going through discourse or consciousness” (Bourdieu 1977:87); it is a system of embodied dispositions that orients the ways we perceive the social world and the ways we respond to it (Bourdieu 1977; 1984; 2000). Habitus, hence, captures the ways in which the sociosymbolic structures of society become deposited inside persons in the form of lasting dispositions, that is, trained capacities and patterned propensities (Wacquant 2016). In this sense, habitus is developed and reproduced unconsciously “without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, and objectively orchestrated, without any conscious concertation” (Bourdieu 1984:173). Habitus can be understood as a corporeal expression of the hierarchies of social power (Turner 2012). In this way, one of Bourdieu’s major contributions in developing the concept of habitus is the integration of the dimension of power and the attention towards the processes of hierarchisation, which is less prominent in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty.

I will now move on to discuss how artistic experience and its subjects are constructed by Norwegian cultural policy. More specifically, I will examine how Bildung – one of the most important legitimations of why public authorities should engage in art and culture – has been specified and understood in Norwegian cultural policy. I will do this by drawing on the existing research and analysing how the idea is manifested in three white papers on cultural policy that were published from 1991, 2003 and 2018.

**Bildung in Norwegian Cultural Policy**

The idea of Bildung has been deemed old-fashioned for quite some time. Nevertheless, the idea seems to be an important topic in Norwegian cultural policy. Bjørnsen (2012) that Bildung, or a “civilising mission”, can be defined as an ambition to give people guidance, pull them out of their ignorance, form their character and encourage an ordered mind; it is a concept that is said to still persist in Norwegian cultural policy. He further specifies that even if the 1970s were characterised by cultural democracy and an emphasis on a broader understanding of cultural participation, there has been a return towards a version of Bildung where superior value is granted to European high art, or what is often labelled “professional art”. Bjørnsen thus concludes that Bildung is a major feature in Norwegian cultural policy.

The concept of Bildung originates from the German context and refers to the ideal of human growth processes (Belfiore & Bennett 2008). Initially, the concept was understood from a religious perspective, highlighting that Bildung could restore humankind’s proximity to God (Varkøy 2010). In parallel with the gradual trend towards secularisation, Bildung began to be understood more as an inward process – a process in which the individual develops his or her unique self (Belfiore & Bennett 2008).

In addition to being closely related to the ideas of education, the role of art in fostering Bildung has been accentuated. In particular, in the writings of Friedrich Schiller, exploring the role of the arts in the process of Bildung has been influential. Indeed, Schiller argues
that artistic experiences can widen the intellectual horizon of the individual (Belfiore & Bennett 2008).

For the purposes of the current article, it is interesting that the Danish cultural policy researcher Henrik Kaare Nielsen offers a definition that specifies that Bildung should be understood as the following:

(…) human growth processes, which integrate the development of individuals’ sensuous, emotional and intellectual potentials and make them capable of reflecting on themselves in terms of their embeddedness in, and obligation toward, the social and cultural context (Nielsen 2006:152).

As we see, this definition includes an understanding of Bildung as a process related to the intellectual, emotional and sensuous. Here, Bildung has to do with the growth processes of the individual in his or her wholeness. Now, let us take a look at how Bildung is understood in the three most recent white papers on cultural policy from the Norwegian government and examine the degree to which and the ways in which the three aspects mentioned in the definition above are taken into account.

The term Bildung (or dannelse/danning in Norwegian) occurs to different extents in the three white papers. It is not used at all in 1991 and occurs only a few times in 2003. In 2018, on the contrary, the term is not only used quite often, but Bildung has been granted a whole chapter. However, even if the term Bildung is not mentioned at all or mentioned only a few times in the white papers from 1991 and 2003, the idea of arts and culture being important to educate people is very much present in all three white papers. In this way, the three white papers provide insight into how Bildung has been implicitly and explicitly conceptualised in Norwegian cultural policy in recent decades.

The most prominent conceptualisation of Bildung in the three white papers is related to the idea that participation in arts and culture builds people’s cognitive and intellectual capacities. This is done by raising an argument that is quite similar in all three documents: material access to arts and culture must be secured for all citizens so that they can be given the same opportunities in life, be full members of society and be prepared for ongoing societal changes. In the first two white papers, the concept of cultural capital is used to formulate this argument. As we shall see, Bourdieu interestingly defines cultural capital more or less than synonymous with Bildung (Bourdieu 2002). In 1991, the importance of an active cultural policy is stated as follows:

It is an overarching goal for the government that everyone should be full members of society and have the same opportunities in life. Much indicates that the social division of the future is not first and foremost determined by the individual’s economic capital, but by the cultural capital he or she has brought with him or her from his or her upbringing. People of today and tomorrow need to be prepared for far greater changes in life than previous generations. In the complicated reality of today, therefore, the individual’s ability to sort impressions and information to find new solutions will be crucial (Kulturdepartementet 1992:24–25).

In 2003, the same idea is emphasised in the presentation of the major dissemination scheme, “the Cultural Rucksack”, which is established to distribute arts and culture to all Norwegian school children: “The Cultural Rucksack is a major initiative in cultural policy. The goal is, first and foremost, to give children in elementary school cultural capital and cultural competence that will enable them to better meet the challenges in society” (Kulturdepartementet 2003:50). Here, we see that the experience of arts and culture is argued to be important for developing cultural capital among all children, thereby increasing the whole
population’s ability to cope with the challenges of living in a complex society. In 2018, the same idea is more explicitly related to the concept of Bildung as a way to develop a democratic society:

Everyone should have enough basic knowledge to make the choices that apply to their lives. Art and culture contribute to the individual’s Bildung and must therefore be accessible to everyone. The individual must have enough knowledge to be able to assess different expressions and explain why they like the one and not the other. Bildung is about enabling individuals to become active citizens in society, to express themselves and to make independent choices based on understanding and respect for others. This helps build democracy (Kulturdepartementet 2018:79).

In all three white papers, the idea is that cultural participation generates the Bildung processes that equip citizens with the knowledge they need both to lead their individual lives and develop the democratic qualities of society. Even if it is not specified, the cognitive aspect of knowledge is implicated and emphasised. Knowledge is seen as something that is stored in the mind and that can be used to analyse an increasingly complex society.

The emotional aspect of cultural participation is mentioned only once in the material. In the white paper from 2003, the emotional impact of artistic experience is emphasised. However, it is underlined that the cognitive capacities that might be fostered by the experience of art and culture are even more important:

A lot of art appeals to our emotions. Music can make us both moody and happy. We can be engulfed by the excitement of a novel or by the interaction between light and shadow in a sculpture. But, art is at the same time something to think about and discuss with others. Through many forms of art, we can learn something about humankind, society, history, religion, etc. Art appeals to commentary and debate, and for many, art creates a need to take a stand, i.e. because we, one way or the other, get provoked. The better a work of art is able to meet such expectations, the better the work can be said to be (Kulturdepartementet 2003:22).

Finally, there is only one reference to the sensuous aspect of cultural participation in the material. This appears in a chapter of the white paper from 1991 when discussing the cultural policy for children and youth. Here, it is argued that when art and culture are taught in a school setting, it is important to account for both the emotional and sensuous aspects, along with the cognitive aspect, of children’s natural urge for exploration: “In all learning processes, the natural curiosity of children must be safeguarded. It is essential that emotions, senses and wonder interact with the ability to systematise and organise knowledge” (Kulturdepartementet 1992:92). It is interesting that the sensuous aspect is mentioned only in relation to children and their learning processes and that it is not given any attention as a general feature of artistic experience.

Overall, the conceptualisations of Bildung in Norwegian cultural policy privilege the potential cognitive and intellectual impact that cultural participation has on citizens. In this way, the Bildung discourse in Norwegian cultural policy constructs its’ subjects as primarily and almost solely as cognitive beings. This resonates with the cognitivist theories of art. According to Freeland (cited in Belfiore and Bennett 2008:121), the central tenets of cognitivist theories can be summarised as follows:

(1) Artworks stimulate cognitive activity that might teach us about the world. […] (2) The cognitive activity they stimulate is part and parcel of their functioning as artworks. (3) as a result of this stimulation, we learn from artworks: we acquire fresh knowledge, our beliefs are refined, and our understanding is deepened. (4) What we learn in this manner constitutes one of the main reasons we enjoy and value artworks in the first place.
By applying such a view on art, the sensuous aspect of artistic experience is acknowledged but only to a small degree. Subsequently, the mind–body dualism is reproduced in the cultural policy discourse. The discourse on Bildung in Norwegian cultural policy is very much in line with the Cartesian perspective. This represents a paradox since art and culture cannot be experienced, internalized or acquired without the use of the senses. Furthermore, this could be seen as a doxa reflecting a view of the human being that has become so self-evident that it is not questioned. According to Bourdieu, however, doxa might lead to accepting a certain order in which unequal divisions are reproduced. Therefore, we need to ask what the implications of the cognitivist doxa in Norwegian cultural policy might be.

Appreciation of Art and Culture

The first implication I will discuss pertains to how the construction of artistic experience as primarily a cognitive process might have shaped and legitimised a hierarchy of different forms of appreciating art and culture. Since the public authorities in Norway (as well as in many other countries) started to engage systematically in the culture sector, the overarching objective of cultural policy has been to democratise culture, that is, to provide everyone access to culture, independent of their social background. To achieve this, several schemes and institutions for the production and distribution of culture were established, particularly following World War II (Mangset & Hylland 2017). With this, the objective has legitimised relatively large subsidies to certain parts of the field of art and culture.

The objective of the democratisation of culture has mainly been attempted to be achieved through making what has been valued as “good” culture materially available to people in all parts of the country and for all social groups – independent of their economic and educational resources (Mangset & Hylland 2017). The idea has been that material access will lead to actual participation. As has been extensively documented and discussed in previous research (Mangset 2012; 2018), the initiatives have turned out to have quite disappointing results. Even if people are given material access to “valuable” culture, the audiences, to a great extent, have been recruited from privileged groups in terms of their education and income; this pattern has been quite stable over time.

The phenomenon of social reproduction pertaining to cultural participation has been interpreted as a reflection of the unequal distribution of cultural capital. As we have seen, this is also reflected in the Norwegian white papers on culture. What has been less emphasised in cultural policy discourse is that the Bourdieusian concept of cultural capital exists in three forms – embodied, objectified and institutionalised. Indeed, cultural capital cannot be understood as isolated from the body. According to Bourdieu, “Most of the properties of cultural capital can be deduced from the fact that, in its fundamental state, it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment” (Bourdieu 2002:283). Furthermore, Bourdieu emphasises that the process of acquiring cultural capital takes time:

The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e., in the form that is called culture, cultivation, Bildung, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the inventor. Like the acquisition of muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done second hand (so that all effects of delegation are ruled out) (Bourdieu 2002:283).

In the Bourdieusian sense, cultural capital is something that needs to be incorporated over time. Unequal distribution of cultural capital, therefore, is not only reflected in different
cultural preferences, but also in different ways of appreciating art and culture. On the one hand, a disinterested and intellectual way of appreciation is typical for art and culture in the most legitimised part of the field. For example, sentimentality seems to be a taboo in certain parts of the field, such as the more avant-garde artistic movements (Røyseng & Stavrum 2020). In the most legitimised parts of the field, detachment is an ideal (Bourdieu 1984). On the other hand, more sensuous and spontaneous ways of appreciation are typical of the cultural forms that traditionally have been regarded as low culture, that is, popular cultural forms such as dance band music (Stavrum 2014). Following the Bourdieusian perspective, both forms of appreciation must be seen as embodied. However, it could be argued that the embodiment that the disinterested approach to art requires is mostly not acknowledged as having something to do with the body. Neither is it acknowledged that acquiring cultural capital requires time, at least not in cultural policy. The implication here is that the cognitivist idea of artistic experience must be seen as class biased (Hjarvard 2017). Above all, by neglecting the sensuous aspect of artistic experience and cultural participation, cultural policy contributes to a continuous reproduction of a hierarchy of different ways of appreciating art and culture.

When cultural policy privileges the cognitive aspect of artistic experience, this might also influence how different art forms are valued in cultural policy. This is the second implication the current article addresses.

Hierarchisation of Art Forms in Cultural Policy

According to Abbing (2002) it is – at least to a certain extent – possible to see the way public authorities treat different forms of art and culture as a reflection of the cultural status they have. From this point of view, the degree to which different art forms have been prioritised in the government’s budget for culture can be seen as a representation of the status of the art forms.

Compared with other art forms, dance has historically been relatively invisible in Norwegian cultural policy. The Norwegian National Ballet was not established until 1958 as a part of the Norwegian National Opera. In 1989, a national company for contemporary dance was established and awarded permanent support. Today, the Norwegian National Ballet and Carte Blanche are the only two dance institutions with permanent public support and permanent positions for dancers.3 At least from the viewpoint of those in the field of dance, this is a situation that illustrates that dance has not been the most valued art form (Røyseng 2014). This history is quite different from that of symphony orchestras, institutional theatres and art museums when it comes to how and when they made their way into the public budgets. Although 20 theatre institutions have a permanent position on the state budget and offer positions for actors and other theatre workers, only the two aforementioned dance companies share the same status.4 The relative neglect of dance in cultural policy has been acknowledged in recent white papers on culture. In 1991, the following statement is included:

The interest in dance has been growing in recent years. This has primarily been achieved through idealistic and committed efforts by the practitioners themselves and through the development of educational

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3. Even in countries where classical ballet has been institutionalised as an important part of the royal culture in the seventeenth century, dance has been called the Cinderella of the arts (Grau & Jordan 2000).
4. One of the most prominent features of the cultural policy for the performing arts in Norway has been the focus on institutions with permanent support and permanent positions for artists.
In light of the Cartesian paradox, the history of dance in cultural policy might have to do with the emphasis on the cognitive and intellectual aspects of arts and culture. Aslaksen (2004) claims that an important feature of the Norwegian field of dance is that there have been few actors besides the dancers and choreographers themselves who have shown interest in dance. Although art historians and art critics are important actors, for example, in the field of visual arts, there have been very few such actors in the field of dance. In this way, dance has been lacking the needed crucial actors to legitimise and authorise the art form. Furthermore, Aslaksen points out that one of the reasons why dance lacks these specialised actors may be that dance does not appear to be an intellectual activity (Aslaksen 2004). This argument can be related to the doxa that is constituted by the Cartesian perspective in cultural policy. This resonates with MacNeill’s argument that arts and culture are primarily defined and understood as intellectual activities in cultural policy discourse (MacNeill 2009). As we have seen in the discussion of the concept of Bildung, the political legitimacy of arts and culture seems to be associated with their intellectual characteristics and potential to foster the intellectual capacity of the population. However, in dance, the body is both the instrument and the materialisation of the work of art. The work of art does not exist outside of the body. Dance is an immediate presence of the body (MacNeill 2009). In this way, the cognitivist doxa of cultural policy might have contributed to the hierarchisation of art forms.

In addition to being a bodily art form, dance has also primarily been associated with women. This brings up a third implication I want to discuss. If Norwegian cultural policy has constructed its subjects in a cognitivist manner and such a construction represents a masculine ideal (cf. Bordo 1986), this sheds light on the gendered structures of the field of cultural production and how this is has been dealt with in the cultural policy discourse.

**Gendered Structures**

In the Norwegian field of cultural production, gender inequality seems to be more of a problem than in other professional fields (Heian 2018; Lorentzen & Kvalbein 2008; Lorentzen 2009). Interestingly, Heian finds that there is a greater income inequality between men and women within the artistic profession than in other professions in Norway (Heian 2018). In addition, the factors that usually seem to create income inequality between men and women – such as part-time work and parental leave – do not explain the income inequality in the artistic profession to the same extent as in other professions (Heian 2018). On this backdrop, Heian introduces the concept of the double equality paradox in the artistic field.

One possible explanation for this paradox, as suggested by Heian, is that the field of cultural production is characterised by gendered structures in which men to a greater extent than women are recognised for their artistic contributions, which is also true in subfields with a majority of female artists (Lorentzen & Kvalbein 2008; Solhjell & Øien 2012). This phenomenon could further be interpreted in light of how the Cartesian perspective is related to gender. While the body has been associated with femininity, the mind has been associated with masculinity and culture. These gendered structures might shed light on the different positions of male and female actors in the field of cultural production. For exam-
ple, several studies from the field of music have illustrated how certain gendered dichoto-
mies related to musical instruments, sounds and practices are at play (Abeles, Hafeli & Sears
2014; Lorentzen 2009): the voice and practice of singing has been associated with the body,
nature and femininity, while technologies and musical instruments have been associated
with culture, creativity and masculinity (Lysoff, Gay & Ross 2003). In addition, media
coverage and public debates on literature have revealed the idea that literature written by
women is understood as “female literature” while literature written by men is understood as
Literature with a capital L (Andersen 2009). In public debate, female literature has been
criticised for not being of general interest but as of being rather specific to the female expe-
rience, focusing on experiences such as pregnancy and childcare. This cultural pattern
largely reflects the gender roles and gender socialisation explained in the work of Beauvoir
(1994).

From time to time, gender issues, such as those discussed above, appear in the public
debates on cultural policy. In these debates, which often revolve around suggestions of
whether gender quotas might be a possible solution, “the quality argument” is used to illu-
strate that artistic quality should be prioritised over gender considerations. Ultimately, this
dynamic in cultural policy debate can be seen as a reflection of how Kantian aesthetics
rooted in the Cartesian perspective of the human being still dominates the discourse. When
Norwegian cultural policy constructs its subjects primarily as cognitive beings, this can in
turn contribute to the legitimization of gendered hierarchies where the artistic contributions
of women generally receive less recognition than the artistic contributions of men.

Concluding remarks
In the current article, I have argued that the Cartesian perspective of the human being has
been prominent formulations of Bildung in Norwegian cultural policy. Artistic experience,
as well as the subjects of it, are primarily constructed by the cognitivist approach associated
with the Cartesian perspective. Hence, the human body has been pushed out to the margins
of Norwegian cultural policy and, consequently, the human body represents an absent pres-
ence. Furthermore, I have argued that this represents a doxa – in the Bourdieusian sense –
through which important structures and patterns in Norwegian cultural policy discourse
and in cultural production and cultural participation might appear to be self-evident.
Indeed, this argument might imply that the reproduction of hierarchies of appreciation of
art and culture, of art forms and of male and female actors can be understood in light of the
Cartesian perspective, which cements itself as the primary view of the human being in this
policy field. This calls for an increased interest in the human body from researchers on cul-
tural policy in the future.

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