

# Articulations in Berlin's independent art scene: on new collective actors in the art field

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the formation of two artist-led collective actors, Koalition der Freien Szene (KFS) and Haben und Brauchen (H&B), and their differing strategies of political critique towards Berlin's cultural policy-making complex. The paper seeks to contribute to the lack of empirical case studies on Berlin's cultural governance and cultural policy stakeholders by creating a self-designed framework for analysis of artist-led organizations' formulation of political claims and how their articulations find entrance into policy-making.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper's theoretical framework is situated at the intersection between new social movement studies, post-positivist policy analysis and discursive institutionalism. Methodologically, the paper is based on qualitative interviews with members of KFS, H&B and relevant cultural stakeholders from Berlin's contemporary arts scene.

**Findings** – The paper identifies five differentiating axes of political critique through a self-designed framework. These include: political or constitution-like program, personnel infrastructures determining decision-making, approach to cultural administration, strategic agenda and activity in a collective action framing scheme. Furthermore, the paper illustrates the (trans)formative potentialities for Berlin's future cultural policy due to complementarity of discursivity and operative action, of pragmatism and utopian thinking.

**Practical implications** – The practical implications of the paper provide guidance for cultural policymakers to better systematize modes of participatory policy-making.

**Originality/value** – This paper gives an overview of current developments and shifts in Berlin's cultural field through the emergence of new collective actors by providing unique stakeholder-centered perspective(s). Furthermore, through an empirically grounded, self-designed analytical framework, a systematic analysis of articulatory and communicative strategies and the practices of new cultural policy stakeholders is provided.

**Keywords** Artistic activism, Berlin cultural policy, Collective action frames, Cultural governance, New social movements, Political critique

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Understanding the emergence of new collective actors: research gap and relevance

After the fall of the Wall, in 2003, Berlin's image as the "creative city" was captured by mayor Klaus Wowereit's slogan, "Poor, but sexy!" (Spiegel Online, 2014). This rather gruff statement, typical of Wowereit, notably dates back more than a decade, but still lingers in Berlin's cultural political field today. The city has become established as one of the most vibrant places for contemporary artistic production worldwide with an estimated 40,000 independent cultural workers and artists, over 200 (commercial) contemporary art galleries (Wöbken and Landau, 2013), over 175 museums and collections, about 150–200 artist-run project spaces and a remarkably grown start-up scene, including co-working and other collaborative production spaces (Schmidt *et al.*, 2014; Merkel, 2015). Even though artists have largely embodied Berlin's image as a



“creative city” and contributed to discourses on “global cities” (Kratke, 2001), respectively, they are increasingly facing precarious living and working conditions, for example, rising rent and studio prices, no consistent payment of artist fees and potential spatial displacement to the city’s periphery (Rieger, 2015).

In the context of urban struggles such as housing and rent-related crises or refugee politics, artists have joined grass-roots social movements (Novy and Colomb, 2013). The current developments of Berlin’s cultural political ecology have brought forth several artist-led movements, actors and associations: most outspokenly, *Haben and Brauchen* (H&B) (to have and to need), a (visual) arts action group established in 2011, and the transdisciplinary *Koalition der Freien Szene* (KFS) (coalition of the independent scene), founded in early 2012, have stimulated Berlin’s cultural political discourse. Furthermore, initiatives like *AG Zeitstipendien*, a group which advocates for time grants for Berlin’s visual arts community, launched in 2015, *Allianz bedrohter Berliner Atelierhäuser* (Alliance of Berlin’s Endangered Studio Houses), established in 2014 to fight for secure artistic production space for visual artists and studio houses, as well as other genre-specific associations such as *IG Jazz* (interest representation jazz), founded in 2012, and *Netzwerk freier Berliner Projekträume und – initiative* (NBPI) (Network of Berlin Independent Project Spaces and Initiatives)[1], active since 2009. All of these initiatives are recently formed.

Due to their remarkable interventions in Berlin’s cultural political discourses and their ongoing public presence and direct communication with *Senatskanzlei für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten* (SKA) (Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs), H&B and KFS have been selected for a detailed empirical investigation. This contribution analyzes the two organizations as contemporary arrangements of political organization and critique among Berlin-based artists. Additionally, as both organizations seek to discuss the (working) conditions of artists beyond disciplinary specificities or concerns[2], they constitute striking cases for analysis.

These new collective actors in the arts field are actively requesting more participation, transparency and inclusion of stakeholders’ specific knowledges and expertise for cultural political decision-making. While trying to gain a voice in the cultural policy-making of the city, these new cultural protagonists seek to secure their working and production contexts, which means sustaining the place, value and visibility of art in the city. City governments and cultural administrations, who largely capitalize on the discourses of “creative cities” (Landry, 2008) and the vibrancy of the “creative class” (Florida, 2003) need to pay attention to these newly emergent forms of political agency, association and critique. This is especially true with regards to an increased interest in culture-led urban development policies and strategies (Miles and Paddison, 2005; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010) and urban cultural governance (Anheier and Isar, 2012; Grodach and Silver, 2013; Bell and Oakley, 2015). New agents in collaborative governance processes play a great and decisive role in shaping meanings and practices of contemporary urban cultural politics.

To date, however, there have been few (empirical) accounts of Berlin’s developments of new collective actors in the art and cultural field (exceptions are Merkel, 2009; Jakob, 2009, 2013; Novy and Colomb, 2013). As Berlin’s cultural political climate has changed, a better understanding of these new forms of political expression and their influence on cultural policy-making is desirable. Hence, both an empirical and an analytical assessment of organizations that articulate political critique is needed. In order to address this multi-layered research gap of urban cultural political developments (Merkel, 2015, p. 127), consisting both in a lack of data-driven investigations as well as

theoretical categorizations, the purpose of this paper is to introduce a framework, developed from qualitative interviews conducted with relevant cultural protagonists in Berlin, which tentatively classifies five axes of differentiating political critique, which are to be found in the two studied organizations. This framework seeks to help us understand how and with what strategies artist-led organizations formulate their claims and concerns. Situated in the locale of Berlin, the framework yet exceeds its geographical particularity and suggests these lines of differentiation as dimensions of and for the analysis of political critique.

The paper proceeds as follows: after shortly outlining the imbalance or unevenness of Berlin's cultural funding landscape (I), relevant research literatures of new social movement studies, organizational theories and new institutionalisms are reviewed (II). After introducing the methodological approach of qualitative interviews with the engaged actors (III), the central discussion follows to discuss the formation of two artist-led collective entities of Berlin-based artists and their differing strategies of political critique toward Berlin's cultural policy-making complex (IV). In a tentative framework, five axes for differentiating the mechanisms of political critique are suggested (V): These axes include the organizations' political program, personnel infrastructures, their approach to the administration, their strategic agendas and, finally, their collective action framing activity. The paper closes by drawing conclusions that result from the respective organizational modes of the groups and their forms of critique and gives an outlook (VI) on the practical implications on Berlin's future cultural policy and governance, which can be gathered from the current mobilizations of the city's diverse artistic communities.

## 2. Imbalance in Berlin's cultural funding structure

Berlin is both Germany's federal capital and a city state with its own province-like and municipal finance and governance tasks and responsibilities. Due to this multi-layered status, the sources for cultural funding in Berlin stem from various governmental levels. This makes it difficult to determine the exact overall budget spent on arts and culture in the city. Cultural funding streams are available from various European Union Institutions (*European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, Creative Europe, etc.*), as well as from German federal initiatives (*Hauptstadtkulturfonds, Kulturstiftung des Bundes, etc.*). Federal funding institutions provide support for arts projects between institutions and independent cultural actors, arts education programs and capital investments. Furthermore, models of matching equity capital from the state of Berlin with federal funds increase the generally available funding volume for artistic production in Berlin. Apart from the SKA, there are several other Senate Departments which provide funds for arts-related projects such as cultural education and art in the public sphere.

Exact figures aside, the crass imbalance between funding for art institutions, i.e., operas, state theaters or public libraries, and individual and project funding, mostly relevant for the independent scene[3] becomes apparent: out of SKA's budget of around 400 million Euros annually, about 95 percent are spent on institutional funding, e.g., Berlin's three operas and their operational structures, theaters or public libraries, and 5 percent, respectively, are invested into project-based or production grants (Senatskanzlei Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, 2015). KFS, as will be shown later, has been directly addressing this funding imbalance since 2012. As five out of seven reasons to visit Berlin are said to be culture related (Senatskanzlei Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, 2015), the independent art scene advocated to (re)direct available

“fresh money” generated through the newly introduced City Tax to improve funding opportunities for Berlin’s independent artist communities. This non-confrontational advocacy proceeded without creating a zero-sum-game discourse against the immense sums spent on institutional funding. The discussion of KFS’s activist approach will be taken up in Chapter V.3.

### 3. Literature reviews

In order to clarify what is being looked at in this context, this literature review draws on critical organizational theories and new institutionalisms (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Schmidt, 2008; Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011), literatures on new social movements (Melucci, 1996; Haunss, 2004; Baumgarten *et al.*, 2014) and collective action (Flesher Fominaya, 2010), including framing analysis (Benford and Snow, 2000; Benford and Hunt, 2004; Benford *et al.*, 2014) as well as conflict theoretical contributions of political philosophy (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Mouffe, 2005). These multiple strands of literature are considered in order to describe H&B’s and KFS’s oscillating forms of organization, moving between being the new collective identities of Berlin’s artist communities, forms of social movements, artist-led organizations, or constituting a network or institution.

The notion of collective identity defined as “[...] an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 285), engages primarily with the individual activists’ perceptions and identifications of what it means to be part of the group or movement. Following a constructivist and agency-centered approach to new social movement formation, focusing particularly on the processes of construction of collective actors or identities an understanding of new social movements’ emergence, longevity or failure is sought after (Haunss, 2004, p. 56). Identified as bridging a gap between resource mobilization approaches (Gamson, 1975; Jenkins, 1983; Tilly, 1978), and political process models (Tarrow, 1989; McAdam, 1999), research on collective identities has sought to explain “[...] why collective actors come into being when they do” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 284). As the process of identification of a collective identity is at the center of this discussion, as opposed to the (individual) identification with a collective entity (Benford and Hunt, 2004, p. 439), this analysis looks at the product of the collective identity, i.e., the emergence of a new collective actor (Flesher Fominaya, 2010, p. 397).

Furthermore, the concept of partial organization, exceeding purely formalized, hierarchical understandings of “organizations,” affords to investigate modes of organization outside of formal arrangements (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011, p. 88) which are to be found in H&B and KFS. In order to distinguish these two partial organizations, differentiating between networks and institutions proves helpful. A network, defined by the absence of organizational elements, informality and little or lack of boundaries, seems an adequate organizational state to grasp H&B’s form of organization (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011, p. 88). An institution can be defined as a stable pattern of behavior, (re)produced by routines, combined with norms and conceptions that are taken for granted by larger or smaller groups of people. KFS could be considered such an institution, or at least, more so than H&B.

### 4. Methodology

Aware of the fact that bodies of collective action cannot be grasped as unified, fixed or monolithic objects (Melucci, 1996, p. 55), the analysis of the formation of KFS and H&B follows a multi-perspectivist approach[4]. The empirical body of this work consists of

over 20 semi-structured individual and group interviews with members of the KFS *Sprecher\*innenkreis* (Round of Spokespeople; SK) as well as with members from H&B and other relevant cultural stakeholders. The aggregation of these various viewpoints regarding the organizational structures and relations with other cultural protagonists serves to unpack different layers and concatenations of meaning. Furthermore, it seeks to trace the processes of gaining legitimacy which aided in the organizations' persistence.

As KFS is the primary empirical case study of my ongoing dissertation project, this present analysis between KFS and H&B is not to be understood as a multi-case or systematic comparative study, attempting to offer a holistic discussion of the organizations in any assumed totality. Regarding a case study as "[...] empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18), the material is treated as an embedded case study with KFS and H&B as units of analysis within a singular context, i.e., Berlin's cultural political field. The goal of this embedded case study is to derive theoretical replications, anticipating differing results from the two organizations. Through this process of extrapolation, the intent of this paper is to operationalize dimensions of political critique, which seek to serve a broader academic discussion on interactions between artist-led (partial) organizations and cultural policymakers.

The actor-centric approach is complemented by document analysis of the groups' written statements, like H&B's *Manifest* (Haben and Brauchen, 2012) or *Konzept für einen längerfristigen Dialogprozess zwischen freien und institutionellen Akteuren der zeitgenössischen Kunst und dem Senat* (Concept for a Long-term Dialogue Between Independent and Institutional Contemporary Art Actors and the Senate; Concept; Haben and Brauchen, 2014b) or KFS' *Ten-Point-Plan* (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2012) as well as participatory observations of KFS plenary sessions and H&B meetings, panel discussions and other events hosted by H&B, KFS, SKA or other relevant stakeholders in the field.

## 5. H&B

H&B made its first public appearance with an *Open Letter* to the mayor and Senator for Culture Klaus Wowereit in early 2011: outraged by the plan for hosting a so-called *Leistungsschau junger Kunst aus Berlin* (Competitive Exhibition of Young Art in Berlin), over 2,000 artists publicly criticized the exhibition's neoliberal rhetoric of efficiency and performance as well as the instrumentalization of artistic work for purposes of city marketing and the economization of art (Haben and Brauchen, 2011; Jakob, 2013). The exhibition also triggered a feeling of injustice among precarious Berlin-based artists (Marguin, 2014, p. 10). The artists, curators and cultural workers requested the initiation of a public discussion around the long-term effects of the temporary exhibition project in the vicinity of Berlin's train station, an area which has been and still is subject to elaborate construction. The letter directly related Berlin's development toward the privatization of public space and critically requested transparency and dialogue. After the first *Open Letter*, H&B published the *Manifest* in early 2012 (Haben and Brauchen, 2012), which has constantly been referenced and used by various cultural protagonists from Berlin and beyond, including KFS. Members from H&B have been invited to national and international conversations about concerns of self-organized artist organizations.

As a response to the growing politicization and dissatisfaction of (visual) artists in Berlin, SKA organized a cultural summit, K2, in November 2012. Secretary of state for



culture at the time, André Schmitz (who was impeached in 2014 due to tax fraud), invited about 100 selected artists, art critics and representatives from cultural institutions to a two-day workshop discussing the city's cultural political future in eight workshops. Prior to the event, sharp criticism regarding the politics of the invitation and the general organization of K2 had been voiced[5].

When the new Secretary of State for Culture Tim Renner took office in April 2014, H&B had already been invited to create a *Konzept für einen längerfristigen Dialogprozess zwischen freien und institutionellen Akteuren der zeitgenössischen Kunst und dem Senat* (Concept for a Long-term Dialogue Between Independent and Institutional Contemporary Art Actors and the Senate; 2014) (Haben and Brauchen, 2014a) in the context of the Jour Fixe Bildende Kunst, first taking place in late 2013, when André Schmitz was still in office. The dialogue paper was created with incremental funding of 30,000 Euros from SKA. The Concept suggested three lines of action: AG Arbeit (artistic work/labor), AG Stadt/Raum (city/space) and AG Kunstbegriff (definition/notion of art). Situating itself in broader discourses of the right to the city and urban commons, H&B drew explicit connections to other current urban struggles such as rising rents, gentrification and displacement (Haben and Brauchen, 2014a, p. 12).

At the public presentation of the Concept in October 2014, the new secretary of state for culture clearly identified the provision and acquisition of space(s) for art production as the most urgent cultural political priority. Discussing a contemporary notion of art itself and contemporary modes of artistic production, respectively, was not considered a primary concern for SKA. This fixation brought forth by Renner barred a discussion on how the underlying normative understanding of art and its "function" or "purpose" translate into funding mechanisms and priorities, or how definitions of what art is (supposed to be) and how it may be influenced by juries' decisions. Furthermore, by relegating the discussion about artistic work/labor to the artist communities themselves, framing it only as part of their internal discourse, the discussion about improving artists' working conditions, e.g., through the legally binding establishment of minimum payment obligations such as artist fees[6], was slowed.

The aftermath of discussing the Concept introduced by H&B was sobering: after being offered a sum of 10,000 Euros for the execution of the whole dialogue process, basically excluding the topics of AG Arbeit and AG Kunstbegriff, H&B has decided not to continue a formalized dialogue with SKA (interview H&B, 2015). Internal controversies between the involved stakeholders – besides H&B as main steering partner and collective author of the Concept, NBPI and *berufsverband bildender künstler berlin* (bbk) (association of Berlin-based artists) were initially participating – as well as concerns of representation and inclusion had disenchanted members of the working groups.

Regardless, one form of continuous exchange between the diverse stakeholders of the visual arts field has been established as an outcome of K2: Jour Fixe Bildende Kunst, Beginning in 2013, visual arts stakeholders meet on a quarterly basis to discuss visual arts-specific concerns with SKA. Besides H&B, this dialogue format is attended by members of NBPI, as well as the associations *neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst*, *neuer berliner kunstverein*, *Deutscher Künstlerbund*, *Rat für die Künste*, communal art galleries, and, on an irregular basis, representatives from the workers' Union *ver.di*.

## 6. KFS

Founded in early 2012, KFS released a *Ten-Point-Plan* requesting a total sum of 18.1 million Euros to be invested in both the increase of existing cultural funding mechanisms as well as the creation of new funding instruments. Their claims include

instruments such as a *Forschungs- und Recherechefonds* (fund for artistic research) and claims for the re-structuring of the usage of city-owned properties for artistic and cultural purposes (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2012, p. 4)[7]. In the context of the budgetary negotiations for the Budget 2016/2017, this catalogue of demands has been updated (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015a). The *Sprecher\*innenkreis* (SK) (Round of Spokespeople) consists of about 15 spokespeople from all artistic genres[8]. Some spokespersons come from institutionalized, union-like associations such as bbk or *Landesverband freie darstellende Künste Berlin e. V.* (LAFT), others are recently founded genre-specific associations like *IG Jazz*, or even individual cultural producers. In the context of the introduction of the so-called City Tax, a levy on tourists overnight stays (see below), the transdisciplinary group KFS had organized a campaign in August and September 2013 advocating for the re-directing of incoming funds to increase funding for independent cultural production (Landau, 2015). Despite attracting great (media) attention for their concerns and claims, KFS did not manage to secure the increase in funding they had advocated for in the Budget 2014/2015 (Wulff, 2013; Wildermann, 2013). Nonetheless, two out of KFS's ten demands have been directly translated into policies since 2013: first, the *Eigenmittelfonds* (matching fund), and second, the so-called *Wiederaufnahmefonds* (resumption fund), both stress the necessity of unbureaucratic, flexible and adaptable funds for independent cultural production. This is in-line with the first request of the *Ten-Point-Plan*, i.e., to reform cultural funding from the perspective of cultural production, drawing on artists' expertise which is directly derived from their artistic practice[9]. The proposal for a resumption fund was taken up in the Budget of 2014/2015. In the Budget of 2016/2017, the resumption fund will be continued with a budget of 300,000 Euros. In the updated version of the *Ten-Point-Plan* from August 2015, just in time for the first plenary reading of the SKA's Budget draft in the *Kulturausschuss* (Committee for Cultural Affairs), KFS had reformulated their request to increase both funds, requesting 500,000 Euros annually for the resumption fund, and 1,000,000 Euros for the matching fund, now called co-financing fund (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015a, p. 4).

### 6.1 *The City Tax Debate: only Cake Crumbs*

In early June 2015, *Finanzgericht Berlin-Brandenburg* officially attributed an amount of 4.1 million Euros (called "excessive income"), generated through the City Tax in 2014, to sports-, tourism- and culture-related initiatives (Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen, 2015). Beforehand, the funds had been blocked by the *Senate Department for Finances*, as the hotel lobby organization *Deutscher Hotel und Gaststättenverband* (German Association of Hotels and Restaurants) had filed a lawsuit against the introduction of the City Tax. For KFS, this "un-locking" of the City Tax revenue meant that 1.3 million Euros would be going to be distributed to the independent cultural scene. Since early 2015, the detailed distribution of potential City Tax income had been worked out in a deliberative process between SKA and KFS (Landau, 2016, forthcoming). After long conversations and negotiations, aiming to find a common ground for the one-time distribution, the establishment of *Arbeits- und Recherchestipendien* (working and research grants) was agreed upon[10]. The first working and research grants were given out in July 2015. The maximum funding volume per scholarship was 8,000 Euros. The performing arts handed out 35 scholarships, visual arts distributed up to 43 scholarships (including up to nine curatorial scholarships), up to 31 scholarships for independent writers and poets, a minimum of 12 scholarships for jazz musicians and ensembles, and 19 scholarships for Ernste Musik (serious music) (LAFT, 2015).

The Budget 2016/2017 currently in the process of being drafted is planned to posit the first 25 million Euros of City Tax revenue for general budgetary consolidation purposes, and posits merely 3.5 million Euros for funding the independent cultural scenes (Regierende/r Bürgermeister/in, 2015, p. 80). As the grants model described above was only practiced for the distribution of City Tax income from 2014, ideas and concepts about the distributive mechanisms for 2016 onwards are hotly debated at the point of the writing of this paper. The points of controversy range from the form of distribution (SKA's priority is on scholarships, individual working or research grants as well as on prizes due to a low bureaucratic effort) to questions concerning who will distribute City Tax funds (suggestions range from self-administered juries to SKA-curated and/or "interdisciplinary" juries, also including experts from creative industries and cultural tourism).

## 7. Discussion: five axes of differentiating political critique

Five analytical axes characterizing the organizational and conceptual specificities of the two organizations are suggested: the groups' political program or constitution-like document, the personnel infrastructures determining their activities and decision-making, their approach and relationship to the cultural administration, embodied by SKA, their strategic agenda, and their activity in a collective action framing scheme. These categories have been developed on the basis of empirical investigations from interviews conducted since December 2013. Empirical observations were matched with existing theoretical concepts from social movement studies and political theory in order to anchor the acquired material in ongoing discussions concerning political critique and political framing processes. The designed categories by no means claim to be exhaustive or fully reflective of the ever-changing dynamics of the two organizations. Rather, it is to be understood as a proposition for a cursory systematization which affords to gain a deeper understanding of current developments in Berlin's contemporary art field. Analyzing the differing impacts of these organizational structures on Berlin's institutional political arena, and investigating the "causes and consequences of collective identity" constitute desiderata for future research (Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 298).

### 7.1 Political Program

Both organizations have published significantly different foundational documents manifesting their main goals. H&B's key text, the wide-spread *Manifest* is much like an ideological piece in that it criticizes the structural discrepancies of Berlin's cultural policy. Based on an understanding of ideology as "both a cognitive map of sets of expectations and a scale of values in which standards and imperatives are proclaimed" (Oliver and Johnston, 2000, p. 6), H&B puts forth a vision against the "expropriation of the common good" (Haben and Brauchen, 2012, p. 2) in Berlin's art world. Their self-understanding as radical critics of Berlin's somewhat "self-righteous cultural policy of the last 15 years" (H&B interview, 2014), H&B clearly makes normative judgments about SKA's current policies.

In contrast, KFS's *Ten-Point-Plan* does not narrate a specific normative stance, but rather delineates a detailed catalogue of concretely operational, budgetary claims. One spokesperson has described KFS's concern as a "humble agenda" (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015b). According to a member from H&B, KFS's activities respond to those of a classic "[...] lobby organization which collects numbers, facts and



figures and works out compromises that *quasi-reflect* what you once requested, while we have taken the freedom to be more radical” (H&B Interview, 2015). Even though this characterization might seem simplistic, the tasks between KFS and H&B reveal themselves as functionally differentiated: while KFS pursues cultural politics in the narrow sense, H&B sets out for a paradigmatic shift, establishing a discussion about the conditions of Berlin’s contemporary art scene on a broader level of discourse.

### 7.2 Personnel infrastructures

Even though membership and responsibilities within KFS are not institutionalized, the group shows a comparatively stable and continuous personnel structure in the shape of SK. They meet on a bi-weekly basis and pre-structure most strategic and operative decisions before discussing them in plenary sessions held every three to four months. Despite the large consortium of spokespeople, main speaker Christophe Knoch, an arts organizer without further organizational affiliation, represents a high degree of personal addressability of KFS. Being “the face” of the group, much of KFS’s activity is associated with Knoch.

H&B organizes meetings on an irregular basis[11]. Additionally, some of H&B’s founding members have (recently) resigned permanently because of the high time investment the work requires, as well as frustrating encounters such as the cancellation of the Concept process mentioned above (H&B Interview, 2015). Currently, there are no particular identifiable artists “representing” H&B, a practice which follows their general understanding of a leaderless organization: “H&B always constitutes itself anew, there is no head figure” (H&B Interview, 2014). Interestingly, currently active members of H&B have articulated a need for more structure, continuity and professionalization of their group: “We need a more professional culture of debate” (H&B Interview, 2015).

Besides the internal dynamics, members from both organizations ascribe great importance to the dynamics of inter-organizational personal relations between cultural policy makers, from both parliament and the administration, and spokespersons or members of the respective other organizations. Some of these personal constellations seem to be fairly recent and thus unprejudiced, others are more long-standing and consequently sometimes more complicated. Especially within KFS, which assembles and brings together already existing associations, but has also introduced new individuals like Christophe Knoch to Berlin’s cultural political stage, novel personnel constellations have opened up new spaces for dialogue. As KFS fulfills a function of being a new collective actor (even though is it not substantially new, but rather a new combination of existing players), it may have the potential to overwrite old controversies and create new forms of communication and trust between SKA and the independent scene. H&B’s unclearly personalized appearance, on the other hand, has led to a more diffused understanding of what H&B is and who to talk to for developing concrete policy solutions. This lack of clarity might have also contributed to the final rupture over the course of development regarding Concept.

### 7.3 Approach to administration

With regards to their relationship to SKA, KFS employs a pragmatic and proactive approach. *The Ten-Point-Plan* suggests direct and operational measures to re-structure existing funding instruments and create new ones. In KFS’s case, it seems accurate to

say that “tactical and organizational identities often coincide, as organizations embody forms of action” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001, p. 293). In relation to their self-description as “open action platform” (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015b), KFS’s form of organization is congruent with its form of action.

In contrast, H&B employs a more confrontational approach in the communication with SKA. Skeptical about the general purpose of talking to politics, some artists from H&B think that “[...] it is not worth getting your hands dirty with politics because it will not lead anywhere in the end” (H&B Interview, 2015). So, while KFS actively negotiates compromises with SKA, partaking in the budgetary negotiations for 2016/2017, H&B see their task in critiquing that very compromise, often pointing to more fundamental problems. In Chantal Mouffe’s terminology, KFS pursues the strategy of “engaging with institutions” (Mouffe, 2008), actively challenging the given structures by suggesting new distributions of funding. Appropriating political vocabulary for their argumentation, they seem to have taken up to “talk the talk of government” (Scullion and García, 2005). KFS, thus, contributes to the dis- or re-articulation of the existing hegemony. H&B is more characteristic of a “withdrawal from institutions”, as is manifest in their refusal to continue the dialogue process with SKA.

#### 7.4 Strategic agenda

KFS has been repeatedly self-described as “open action platform” and legitimizes itself through action rather than through institutionalized, democratic legitimacy or elections. Their actions encompass both public actions such as the campaign in 2013 (Landau, 2015), but also in a more non-public form, such as having spoken directly to more than two thirds of Berlin’s members of parliament to explain their claims. Thus, KFS employs an action-oriented approach, working with political vocabulary to expand their arguments for alternative forms of cultural funding. H&B, on the other hand, explicitly self-describes as “discursive space” (H&B Interview, 2014). Even though they have also organized and supported protest initiatives and actions, and actively advocate for signing petitions, etc., they prioritize a stimulation of the discourse rather than taking operative measures to re-shape the conditions of Berlin’s artists.

Besides physical collective action, another difference between KFS’s and H&B’s profiles is the fact that KFS focuses on the very concrete, but single-issue claim of reforming funding structures for Berlin’s independent scenes. H&B pursues more intangible goals and thus offers a meta-criticism on the role of the arts in Berlin’s general urban and cultural development. Furthermore, KFS operates with a specific strategic approach regarding the temporality of their concerns: speaking toward a tripartite audience – legislative, executive and culturally interested and informed public – KFS shifts their communicative and advocacy focus according to the dramaturgy of the budgetary negotiations. Consequently, it matters when to talk to the executive and when to talk to the legislative, depending on which political entity is currently working on the budget. In contrast, H&B’s communication seems to position its discursive intervention beyond the day-to-day temporality of political agendas and budgets.

#### 7.5 Collective action framing

Originally coined by Erving Goffman (1974), a great variety of categorization schemes of frame analysis and framing processes has arisen in social movement literatures (Benford *et al.*, 1986, 2014). For the purpose of this paper, frame alignment or framing disputes are less relevant, the primary focus here lies on the tripartite

scheme for collective action framing[12]: “Collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). As complex interactions between individuals, structures and their constant production of meaning, framing is understood as a dynamic and ongoing process (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 628). This scheme helps to analytically position the interviewed stakeholders’ experiences and rationalize their activities within the respective group, and sketch out mechanisms of inference regarding the internal organizing and articulatory principles. Understanding a frame as “inherently malleable and emergent mental construct” (Oliver and Johnston, 2000, p. 3), the concept of collective action frames is used to provide a cognitive orientation within KFS’s and H&B’s different approaches. Roughly, H&B focuses on diagnostic framing, i.e., the process of problem identification and attribution (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). H&B’s *Manifest* clearly identifies the structurally insufficient funding for independent cultural production in Berlin, and blames actors such as SKA and other political and economic players for that very insufficiency. KFS rather pursues prognostic framing: the articulation of proposed solutions can be found in the *Ten-Point-Plan* and their detailed suggestions of how to reform the distribution of resources for cultural funding. With regards to the third framing category, motivational framing – i.e., the call to action (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615) – KFS has decided to not run a second public campaign, the first one having elicited great attention. Due to internal discordances about its strategic direction, KFS is now “actively engaging with the press” (Interview KFS, 2015), i.e., hosting press conferences, etc., instead of launching another public campaign which engages artist communities in protest marches and other events (Landau, 2015).

### 8. Conclusions and outlook (Table I)

Summing up, H&B and KFS display different forms of political critique: with a more ideological stance, H&B performs a meta-critique toward SKA’s policies, having resulted in a withdrawal from day-to-day policy-making. Their priority is the intervention on a discursive level. KFS, on the other hand, operates with a more

Differentiating category	Haben and Brauchen (H&B)	Koalition der Freien Szene (KFS)
1. Political program	Ideological (general critique)	Technocratic (operational critique)
2. Personnel infrastructures	High degree of personnel fluctuation, visual arts-dominated, controversial debate culture (both internal and with SKA)	Low degree of personnel fluctuation, “umbrella organization” of various genre-specific interest representation groups, controversial debate culture (internal), but constructive, yet output-producing debate culture with SKA
3. Approach to administration	Withdrawal from institutions (Mouffe)	Engagement with institutions (Mouffe)
4. Strategic agenda	Focus on discourse, theoretical/rhetorical intervention, critiquing compromises, meta-level critique	Focus on action, pragmatism, operationalizability, negotiating compromises, single-issue claims
5. Collective action framing	Diagnostic framing (Benford/Snow)	Prognostic framing (Benford/Snow)

Source: Own creation

**Table I.**  
Five axes of differentiating political critique

pragmatic approach, working on concrete policy change and implementation. In this context, KFS has established a remarkably continuous negotiation with SKA, and has gained political and symbolical legitimacy. With regards to the respective futures of the organizations, KFS finds itself in a privileged position of attention: KFS has officially been “appointed” the main addressee of Tim Renner’s efforts to discuss issues related to the independent scene. Throughout the process of the budgetary planning for 2016/2017, KFS was frequently (informally) consulted in the formulation of singular budgetary positions. Even though KFS never explicitly claimed to “represent” the totality of the independent scene, it has gained (in)direct validation and (informal) legitimacy by SKA. Notably, the successes to translate KFS’s requests into concrete, material policy solutions need to be assessed independent of symbolical attributions. The shift from symbolic toward material impact and legitimacy is closely connected to the question what form of organization KFS will take in the future. In the spring of 2015, KFS asked an external academic consultant to investigate and introduce potential models of institutionalizing KFS, ranging from a registered association to a charity. KFS’s internal discussions about the degree of its own institutionalization seem to have stagnated due to insurmountable internal differences between members of SK. Some members are strongly opposed to creating a more formal organization like the above, others consider it utterly important in order to remain capable of acting. Depending on the resolution of these internal dissonances, and the materialized form of organization resulting from this debate, KFS’s activity and credibility are at stake. Without the capability to receive and self-administer funds, KFS remains in the status of a non-institutionalized, yet highly (informally) regarded and recognized policy stakeholder. While on the one hand this enables KFS to remain the open action platform it aspires to be, i.e., being independent of and uncorrupted by politics and not running the danger of becoming a “state-run lobby organization” (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015b), however, without structural and/or financial support, the involved people may not be able to continue to do the unpaid work of writing concepts, participating in parliamentary meetings, hearings, etc[13]. Finally, coming back to the developed axes of political critique, the personnel infrastructures which have opened new spaces for negotiation and dialogue (V.2) and the engagement with institutions (V.3) will play a decisive role for future investigations of and approaches to Berlin’s cultural governance, both for research and practice.

In conclusion, the described differences between H&B and KFS have shown particular modes of political critique in Berlin’s art field. Despite different approaches and achievements, ultimately, both organizations need to continue to exist. Both fulfill a unique function or role in narrating the creative city Berlin – H&B as the discursive spike to remind us of the structural tilts of the art world, and KFS as an eager and skilled contributor to the formulation of concrete concepts and solutions for securing spaces and minimum payment agreements for artist workers. It is precisely the complementarity of discursivity and operative action, of pragmatism and utopian thinking which will be (trans)formative for Berlin’s future cultural policy. It is thus important for policymakers and artist-activists alike to find ways and forms to maintain both modes of organization and communicative practices in cultural political decision-making processes – on the concrete, operational as well as on the discursive, abstract plane – as they cannot substitute, but only complement and enrich each other. Ultimately Finally, H&B and KFS both take up a “fluid, temporal set of negotiations” (Dillemath *et al.*, 2005, p. 3), aiming at a common goal: to create a public consciousness that Berlin’s independent artists need a different kind

of recognition and support in order to remain a part of what makes this creative city so culturally vibrant. And this goal will be continued to be fought for by both, with their respective strengths.

#### Notes

1. NBPI has achieved one of the most recent and concrete material changes in Berlin's cultural funding landscape, i.e., the introduction of the so-called *Auszeichnung künstlerischer Projekträume und –initiativen* (Project Space Prize). Since 2012, seven out of an estimated 150 project spaces have been awarded a sum of 30,000 Euros (Marguin, 2012). In 2015, due to additional income through the City Tax, 14 project spaces could be awarded. In addition, it is worth noting that one of NBPI spokespersons, Tiny Domingos, has joined the Round of Spokespeople of KFS in April 2015, and has since played a vital role in the negotiation processes within KFS, and in dialogue with SKA.
2. Even though H&B is more visibly anchored in the visual arts scene than KFS, the former will also be considered as transdisciplinary organization.
3. Prior to the formation of KFS, there had been no unitary definition of what the "Independent Scene" is or who belongs to this diverse and ever-changing entity. Neither producers nor politicians had a clear understanding of what a "free" or "independent" artistic mode of production means. I argue that one of the significant outputs of KFS's activism has been the very formulation and communication of a, however incomplete and temporary, definition of the "Independent Scene." Furthermore, the goal of KFS's 2013 campaign has been identified to be the "self-finding" or "self-clarification" of the scene (Koalition der Freien Szene, 2015b). The definition of "Independent Scene" summarizes as follows: "[...] the totality of all freely producing, Berlin-based artists, ensembles, facilities and structures in free sponsorship from the realms of architecture, visual arts, dance, drama, performance, new media, music – ranging from baroque, electro, jazz, classical music to new music – musical theater, children and youth theater, literature as well as all other inter- or transdisciplinary forms" (Kucher, 2013, p. 7; translation: FL).
4. Since individual motivations or affective identifications with a collective identity are not in the focus here, individual narratives from members of KFS or H&B are not included as sources of data.
5. The atmosphere at K2 was partially tense, partially vivid; controversial debates took place in the plenum, as many participants felt like the event was a token for pacifying the artist community and only siphoned off artists' expertise. In the workshop institutions, which I co-organized with Hergen Wöbken from *Institut für Strategieentwicklung*, many participants voiced discontent about the seeming short-term nature of the dialogue format of K2.
6. The long-standing claim for artist fees appears in the current budgetary proposal, proposing the introduction of an artist fee fund with 300,000 Euros available annually (Regierende/r Bürgermeister/in, 2015, p. 105).
7. In H&B's *Manifest*, the explicit request for a re-orientation of property and realty politics had already been formulated.
8. Over the course of KFS's activity, some spokespersons have "resigned" for personal or health-related reasons; some have found replacements; others have started to share their "mandate" with another expert from their respective genre.
9. Both KFS and H&B speak from the artist's perspective, thus explicitly addressing the rising precariousness of the social and working conditions of contemporary art workers, which is oftentimes personally experienced. This inside perspective constitutes an important source of information and knowledge in processes of re-formulating cultural funding instruments.



10. For example, the hosting of a festival for and from the independent scene, suggested by SKA, was rejected by KFS because of fear of eventification of the independent scene rather than addressing the actual necessities and goals of the group, i.e., to structurally, and not only temporarily secure the scene's visibility.
11. Both groups regularly communicate with one another and sometimes partake in each other's public meetings. This exchange results in shared networks of knowledge, information on political processes and contacts.
12. The concept of opportunity structures (McAdam *et al.*, 2001; Tarrow, 2011) is considered part of collective action frames and will not be explored further.
13. No member in either group is remunerated for their time-consuming work and advocacy. The only instances where concepts have received incremental funding are the Concept and *Workshopverfahren zur Entwicklung von Förderstrategien räumlicher Infrastruktur für künstlerische Arbeit* (workshop process for the development of funding strategies for spatial infrastructures for artistic production).

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