

Creativity at Work:

Who's Last? Challenges and Advantages for Late Adopters in the International Film Festival Field

By

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Abstract

Film festivals are claimed to be leading events establishing the reputation of directors and producers in the film industry and they constitute a well-established field in itself. Film festivals have become a widespread phenomenon over the last fifty years with specialization as an emerging feature, profiling festivals on the basis of the participating genre and quality of movies, directors and actors. Such a structured field constitutes an interesting domain to analyze challenges and advantages of late adopters in an institutionalized field. This paper is concerned with the strategic responses and efforts made by two late adopters film festivals – Copenhagen international film festival (CIFF), launched in 2003, and Festa del Cinema di Roma (FCR) launched in 2006 – in order to establish themselves as international film festivals within the international film festival field. The comparative study of two film festivals is based on qualitative data and thrives on business ethnographical methods. The paper investigates how the two festivals have positioned themselves and how they face the inclusion-exclusion dilemma (Brewer, 1991; Alvarez et al., 2005) establishing themselves within the institutionalised field of international film festivals. Combining the classical work by Tolbert and Zucker (1983) on early and late adopters in the diffusion of management ideas and practices with Suchman's (1995) forms of legitimacy and Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) notion of institutional work, we analyze how imitation and innovation pressures have shaped the frames used to position and legitimate the film festivals and their relation with the industry.

Keyword

Film festivals, field configuring events, legitimacy, institutional work

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Who's Last? Challenges and Advantages for Late Adopters in the International Film Festival Field¹

Introduction

Why film festivals? In general, events and awards ceremonies seem to have become an increasingly fashionable and widespread phenomenon appearing across industries in the form of trade fairs, professional conferences, technology contests and so forth (Anand and Watson, 2004; Lampel and Meyer, 2008). Well-established and broadly publicized events and awards in culture industries, including for example the Oscar (motion pictures), Grammy (music), Tony (theatre) and Emmy (television) events and awards, have become global cultural icons, signifying popular and critical success (Caves, 2000; Anand and Watson, 2004). Events and award ceremonies are occasions for the industry to meet and celebrate themselves, their products, building identity and creating distinctions and classifications (DiMaggio, 1987; Strandgaard Pedersen and Dobbin, 1997; Mezias et al, 2008) through nominations and awards giving. Film festivals are seen as a specific type of events and award ceremonies, operating as a meeting place for art and business and identity building. Film festivals are acclaimed leading events establishing the reputation of directors and producers in the film industry. At the same time, film festivals appear to be a well-established field in itself with a quite crystallized structure. In the countries with a tradition in the film industry, film festivals have been present for the last 5 decades or more (e.g. Venice, Cannes, Berlin, Moscow) and specialization is an emerging feature profiling festivals on the basis of the participating movies, directors and actors. Such a structured field is an interesting domain and, provides an excellent opportunity to analyze challenges and advantages of late adopters in an institutionalized field. Consistently, this paper is concerned with the strategic responses and efforts made by two late adopter film festivals – Copenhagen international film festival (CIFF), launched in 2003, and Festa del Cinema di Roma (FCR) launched in 2006 – in order to establish themselves as legitimate international film festivals within the international film festival field.

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First we present the theoretical framework and contributions to frame the issue of late adopters and in particular the strategic responses' dilemmas they face within an institutionalised field. Then we present an account of the emergence and development of film festival field and its institutionalization. Third, we present and discuss the two cases of late adopters within this field and, in line with existing literature on the diffusion of management practices, we aim at analyzing how imitation and innovation pressures have shaped the frames used to position the festivals and their relation with the industry, which we then conclude on.

Theoretical framework

The institutionalization and diffusion of organizational forms and practices has been a significant object of analysis for many institutional theorists for the last two decades from several theoretical perspectives. Instrumental (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975), social and cognitive (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; 1991; Scott, 1995; 2008; Czarniawska et al., 2005, Greenwood et al., 2008) arguments have been developed to understand why certain forms and practices are adopted by organizations. Greenwood, Hinings and Suddaby, (2002) have made an attempt to define the several stages leading towards institutionalization and diffusion of practices. All these theoretical contributions end up emphasizing the role of the external environment and of social norms in enhancing the diffusion within the organizational fields by means of isomorphic pressures.

Institutionalization and diffusion have been largely investigated by looking at them from a "practice perspective". In this approach, the research agenda is concerned with understanding how given practices – such as, among others, TQM (Westphal, Gulati and Shortell, 1997), health care procedures (Scott *et al.*, 2000), caesarean birth (Goodrick and Salancik, 1996), multidivisional forms (Davis, Diekmann and Tinsley, 1994) – become widely adopted within a certain organizational field. Within this impressive array of research, differences existing among the adopters and the time profile of the adoption have received only a scant attention. A significant exception is provided by Tolbert and Zucker (1983) whose seminal paper on the adoption of Civil Service reforms in US cities in the early 20th century, first raised the issue the presence of different logics behind the adoption of institutionalized practices.

In particular, Tolbert and Zucker (1983) outline how timing affects the rationale of adoption. By envisioning a two-stage model, the authors distinguished early adopters, their decision depending on "the degree to which the change improves internal process" (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983: 26), from late adopters, which adopt certain practices "because of their societal legitimacy" (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983: 26). Hence, this two-stage model brought legitimacy and history back as main determinants of diffusion patterns. In a similar vein, Mazza, Sahlin-Andersson and Strandgaard Pedersen (2005) have provided further descriptions of the different rationales inspiring early and late adopters

of management practices by studying the diffusion of MBA educations in Europe from two early adopting and two late adopting institutions respectively located in southern (Spain and Italy) and northern Europe (Sweden and Denmark).

Late adopters are seen to be inclined to conform to institutionalized labels so displaying symbolic alignment to taken for granted practices paying less attention to substantial impacts on effectiveness and overall performance. In this sense, late adopters can be seen as prone to conservative strategic responses (Oliver, 1991) in order to minimize the potential conflicts with the external environment. This argument resonates with other highly investigated upon arguments like liability of newness and power dependence. Liability of newness would suggest that late adopters choose a conformity profile since acquiescence may reduce the risk of sanctions. Power dependence would suggest that alignment with the external environment could help attracting the needed resources by reproducing the existing dependency patterns with suppliers. In both cases, late adopters' rationales are driven by symbolic and rhetoric (Green, 2004) alignment rather than by the expectation of performance improvement.

In spite of the impressive body of literature on institutionalization and diffusion of practices (for overviews see Scott, 2008 and Greenwood et al. 2008), we suggest that the late adopters rationales for change still deserve a more careful academic scrutiny. In particular, the specific case where late adopters are also new comers in a given organizational field has been largely neglected. It is the case where an organization enters in a new field by (late) adopting given practices. Existing research have so far neglected to investigate how pressure to conformity for organizations already acting in a field and deciding to (late) adopt institutionalized practices may differ from how pressure acts upon organizations which are entering in a new field.

In this paper, we deal with two late adopter/new comer cases in the already institutionalized field of film festival that is the international film festivals in Copenhagen (CIFF) and Roma (FCR). We argue that late adopters face inclusion - exclusion dilemma when trying to establish themselves within an institutionalised field. This dilemma has also been framed as 'optimal distinctiveness' (Brewer, 1991) and studied, among others, by Alvarez et al. 2005b and Svejenova, Mazza and Planellas, 2007. These cases are of great potential interests since they couple the selection of forms and practice to adopt (i.e. the diffusion issue) with the creation of the legitimacy of late adopters in the field. The latter dynamic provides an additional rationale for the late adopters' decision. Besides liability of newness and resource dependency, we argue that legitimization play a major role in framing the strategic response to environmental pressures by late adopters.

Legitimacy makes certain forms and practices desirable as they are congruent with existing social norms and values (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975). Legitimacy also makes organizations themselves understandable as their

existence is explained by established cultural accounts. Finally, legitimacy makes organizations themselves taken for granted so that deviance from socially constructed patterns – such as economic profitability and performance – can go unnoticed and survival ensured despite economic failures (Meyer and Zucker, 1988). Legitimacy is “a perception or assumption in that it represents a reaction of observers to organization as they see it” (Suchman, 1995: 574). In this sense, it can be sustained that legitimacy, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Legitimacy is therefore a key element for late adopters/new comers’ rationalization and theorization of their courses of action in an organizational field.

Building on Suchman (1995), we mainly refer to the institutional approach to legitimacy, assuming that legitimacy is the outcome of the *percolation* of external environment in the organizations rather than a resource they acquire from the external environment. However, we acknowledge how what *percolates* from the environment is shaped by the same organizations that concur in framing cultural norms and beliefs in the same vein Habermas (1981) described the formation of collective worldviews. If late adopters are still entering into a *to-be-institutionalized* field, the degree of support they provide to the field legitimization is a key element of interpretation of the case studies. When the field is already institutionalized, the entries of late adopters, in any case affect the institutionalization of the field as well as shape the field transformation pattern underway (Jepperson, 1991).

According to this approach, late adopters such as the two film festivals in Copenhagen (CIFF) and Roma (FCR) have to adapt to the existing conventions and isomorphic pressures and resemble the other organizations existing in the field. In this way, they can be accepted as legitimate players and attract resources. The construction of these two festivals allows us to attempt the operationalization of the concept of legitimacy, building upon Suchman (1995) taxonomy. This author describes three types of legitimacy organizations fight for: a) *pragmatic*, resting “on the self-interested calculations of an organization’s most immediate audiences” (1995: 578), b) *moral*, resting “not on judgements about whether a given activity benefits the evaluator, but rather of judgements about whether the activity is “the right thing to do” (1995: 579) and c) *cognitive*, resting not on evaluation but rather on taken for granted ness; as Jepperson argued, one may subject a pattern to positive, negative, or no evaluation, and in each case (differently) take it for granted” (1991: 147).

In this paper we also focus on some specific features of legitimacy that we believe are significant in the case of new film festivals. First, within pragmatic legitimacy we investigate how the film festivals in Copenhagen and Roma aim to attract support of main constituencies by appearing as “responsive to their larger interests” (Suchman, 1995: 578). In this sense they had to be constructed

providing ex post rationalizations and ad hoc justification of their existence² as tools to improve city marketing and increase reputation as host of large media events as well as tourist inflows. Second, within moral legitimacy, we focus on how the two film festivals had to profile themselves in an original way in order to distinguish from the existing festivals and so create a distinct identity within the field. By creating an identity of their own, these festivals aim at gaining the status of regular events within the city cultural landscape. From a legitimacy perspective, this means to become unchallenged givens, things that is literally unthinkable to be otherwise (Zucker, 1983). Interestingly, this coincides with the aim of many brand new events to *invent a tradition* (Ranger and Hobsbawm, 1983), that is to be performed regularly like they have been always existing in the same vein as the F1 World Championship (launched in 1950) and World Football Championship (launched in 1930) or, more recently, the Rugby World Cup (launched just in 1987). Film festivals in Copenhagen and Roma would like to have the same ambition though they have been only running for few years (respectively since 2003 and 2006). Finally, we assume a strategic action and agency perspective within the institutional view (DiMaggio, 1988) of diffusion of practices and forms in order to investigate how these festivals have been constructed by the work of the key actors involved. This kind of work has been the object of analysis in several fields by many scholars (DiMaggio, 1988; Fligstein, 1997; Rao, Morrill and Zald, 2000; Seo and Creed, 2002; Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004; Boxenbaum and Battiliana, 2005; Meyer and Hammerschmid, 2006; Strandgaard Pedersen, Svejnova and Jones, 2006) outlining the role and relevance of institutional entrepreneurs.

From a more general perspective, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) illustrated how actors may pursue different, sometimes competing, institutional strategies to legitimize organizations. Institutional strategies are defined as “patterns of organizational action concerned with the formation and transformation of institutions, fields and the rules and standards that control those structures” (Lawrence, 1999, quoted in Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 218). The kind of institutional work undertaken by the actors involved is categorized, following Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), as a) creating institutions, b) maintaining institutions and c) disrupting institutions. These authors provide a rich theoretical taxonomy of the institutional works that can be undertaken by actors in the different operational contexts. The case studies of the two film festivals in Copenhagen and Roma allow us to investigate how the different forms of institutional work associated with creating and maintaining institutions are actually undertaken by the several actors – i.e. public administration, local government, private investors, other constituencies – involved in the festivals. In particular, following Lawrence and Suddaby (2006)

² While the paper is written, the new Mayor of Roma has announced a redefinition of FCR arguing it is not an effective tool to promote Roma but only to promote “Hollywood stars” (many of them supposedly supporting the old Mayor Walter Veltroni during the campaign). In this way, the rationale for FCR existence is at stake.

taxonomy, we focus on the forms of institutional work reported in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: The forms of organizational work analysed by the two festival cases

Forms of institutional work	Definition (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006)
<i>Creating institutions</i>	
Defining	The construction of rule systems that confer status or identity, define boundaries of membership or create status hierarchy within a field
Constructing identities	Defining the relationship between an actor and the field in which the actor operates
Mimicry	Associating new practices with existing sets of taken-for-granted practices, technologies and rules in order to ease adoption
Theorizing	The development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect
<i>Maintaining institutions</i>	
Enabling work	The creation of rules that facilitate, supplement and support institutions, such as the creation of authorizing agents or diverting resources
Mythologizing	Preserving the normative underpinnings of an institution by creating and sustaining myths regarding the history
Embedding and routinizing	Actively infusing the normative foundations of an institution into the participants' day to day routines and organizational practices

In the next sections we will present the methodology and the case studies and, discuss the main findings regarding the following three objects analysis. First, we outline the emergence, development, institutionalization and dynamics of the international film festival field. Second, we describe the peculiarities of the two festivals as late adopters and newcomers in the European film festival field and the kind of legitimization process they have undertaken. Third, we will analyze the forms of institutional work the main actors involved in the creation and maintenance of the festivals have undertaken.

Data and Methods

The study is a comparative case study of two film festivals – Copenhagen International film festival (CIFF) established in 2003 and Festa del Cinema di Roma (FCR) established in 2006. Both cases are late adopters and newcomers to the field of international film festivals. The two cases are studied thriving on a

business ethnographical approach (Moeran, 2005) and build on data collected from archival sources and generated through field observations and interviews.

For the Festa del Cinema di Roma (FCR) we have collected data about 2006 and 2007 FCR festival from the website (www.romacinemafest.org) which extensively reported information both on the festival and the preparatory stages. We also reviewed all the official publications concerning the festival, directly issued by festival organizations. We also collected articles on the festival published by the two main Italian newspapers (in terms of circulation) – Il Corriere della Sera and La Repubblica – and the related daily supplements on Roma. We also conducted four open interviews with festival managers in charge of strategy and planning, human resource management, film selection and procurement. Interviews were used to integrate archival data and provide further information on the festival mission and operational procedures. In particular, the interviews were useful to trace the evolution of the festival organization related to the refinement of strategy and positioning. Finally, we visited the Festival in 2007 in order to have a “live” view and first hand experience of the operations and the different elements of the festival.

For the Copenhagen International Film Festival (CIFF) data about the festivals from 2003-2006 were collected from the website (www.copenhagenfilmfestival.com) for information about the festival organization, program, rules and regulations, awards, key-figures from previous festivals and so forth. Official publications (festival programs, festival news papers etc.) issued by the festival organization were also gathered and analyzed. Newspaper articles on the festival were collected by an extensive database search on the Info media database including all Danish newspapers. This search resulted in 139 articles covering the years (2002-2007), which provided background information on the founding context, history, changes and critical incidents in the life of the festival. Two interviews have been conducted with festival experts and participants on the perceived role and profile of the CIFF film festival. In 2007, we visited the festival in order to have a first hand experience of the festival, its operations and physical presence.

Film Festivals and the Film Festival Field³

Europe appears to be the cradle of the film festival phenomenon (de Valck, 2006) born in the context of the particular geopolitical situation in Europe the 1930s leading up to World War II and the new political order in Europe, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, in the wake of World War II. It took, thus, almost forty years from the first public screening in December 1895 by the Lumiere brothers to the worlds first major film festival was founded.

³ When we in the following use the concept film festivals we base our definition and data on The International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) 2008.

The world's first major film festival was founded in Italy under the Fascist government and held in Venice in 1932. The way the Venice festival was run soon gave rise to criticism that films from Italy and Germany was favoured even though the first editions have hosted films from several countries. According to Turan (2002) and supported by Mazdon (2007),

“In 1937, Jean Renoir’s ‘La Grande Illusion’ was denied the top prize because of its pacifist sentiments, and the French decided if you wanted something done right you had to do it yourself” (Turan, 2002:18).

This became the birth of what we today know as the Cannes film festival. Cannes won out as the preferred site for the film festival after a competition with Biarritz on the Atlantic coast (Turan, 2002; Mazdon, 2007). The film festival in Cannes was originally scheduled to take place for the first three weeks of September 1939, but the festival was cancelled, because of the German invasion of Poland, September 1 1939 and the Cannes film festival did not start up again until 1946 (Turan, 2002:18-19).

Another early adaptor or ‘first mover’ within the film festival field is the Moscow International film festival (MIFF) that was founded in 1935 and, thus, is the second oldest film festival in the world, after the Venice film festival. MIFF was, however, not continued until 1959, and has been redesigned several times – in 1959, 1969 and 1989 – and from 1959 to 1995 it was held every second year in July alternating between Karlovy Vary and Moscow. Since 1995 it has been held annually. This means that up to World War II only three film festivals were established, respectively Venice (1932), Moscow (1935) and Cannes (1939). The other major international film festivals - like Locarno, Karlovy Vary, and Berlin and so forth - are a post-war phenomenon dating back to the late 1940s and 1950s (for an overview of early adopters of film festivals see table 2.).

Table 2. Overview of early adopters of film festivals⁴

- 1932 Venice International Film Festival (Italy)
- 1935 Moscow International Film Festival (Russia)
- 1939 Cannes International Film Festival (France)
- 1946 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (Czech)
- Locarno International Film Festival (Switzerland)
- 1951 Berlin International Film Festival – Berlinale (Germany)
- 1952 The International Film Festival of India (India)
- 1953 Donostia – San Sebastian International Film Festival (Spain)
- 1954 International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (Germany),
- Sydney Film Festival (Australia)
- Mar del Plata International Film Festival (Argentina)
- 1956 The Times BFI London Film Festival (England)
- 1958 Bilbao International Festival of Documentary and Short Films
- (Spain)

Harbord (2002) links the creation of European film festivals (as well as other post-war festivals) to European post-war regeneration and rebuilding and she has argued that the origins of such major film festivals are marked by two different discourses:

'One is a broad historical project of rebuilding Europe, a rebuilding of the social infrastructure ravaged by the Second World War, and a consolidation of Europe as a significant player in a global economy. Importantly, by the post-war period, culture has become a means of representing the status of place and facilitating local economies through cultural events. The other discourse, from film societies and guilds, is concerned with the definition of film as a form, with the aim of broadening categories of definition in contrast to the studio format of Hollywood film. Here, the opposition of national cultures, and of aesthetics practices, align in opposition to a mainstream American film product. The festival then presents an attempt to separate out national cultures, to distinguish certain practices, and in so doing, places a critical emphasis on the value of the text'. (Harbord, 2002:64).

Film festivals, thus, started out as a European phenomenon, but soon proliferated and diffused to other parts of the world (India-Asia, 1952; Sydney-Australia, 1954; Argentina-South America, 1954 cf. table 2.). The first North American film festival is claimed to be the Columbus International Film &

⁴ This list is based on film festivals accredited by FIAPF (2008). This means, for example, that The Edinburgh International Film Festival in Scotland, established in 1947 and the longest continually running film festival in the world, is not included as it is not accredited by FIAPF.

Video Festival, also known as 'The Chris Awards', held in 1953. According to the Film Arts Foundation in San Francisco,

"The Chris Awards (is) one of the most prestigious documentary, educational, business and informational competitions in the U.S; (it is) the oldest of its kind in North America and celebrating its 54th year."

The Chris Awards was followed shortly thereafter by the San Francisco International Film Festival held in March 1957 whose emphasis was on feature-length dramatic films. The festival played a major role in introducing foreign films to American audiences. Among the films shown in its founding year were Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* and Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*.

Regulation, accreditation and coordination of film festivals

Film festivals are accredited as International Film Festivals by The International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF)⁵ founded in 1933. FIAPF is a global organization representing the interests of the film production communities worldwide with 26 national producers' organizations in 23 of the world's leading audiovisual-producing countries (FIAPF, 2008:3). According to FIAPF (2008),

'The FIAPF international film festivals' accreditation system was created as a response to demands from the film industry that a Minimum Standard of quality and reliability be defined for international film festivals: one which international festival organizers must pledge to uphold and apply when they become FIAPF-accredited' (FIAPF, 2008:3), (for more information on FIAPF see below).

According to de Valck (2006:19) FIAPF 'decided during the Berlin film festival of 1951 that the boom in national and regional film festivals had to be channelled to prevent festival (award) inflation'. Cannes and Venice received immediate FIAPF accreditation (in 1951) and, Berlin followed in 1956 (Jacobsen, 2000:18).

According to FIAPF (2008:4) *'by international film festival, FIAPF, understands an event:*

- *bringing together films of the world, many of which originate from countries other than the organising country, that are being screened in front of audiences including a significant number of accredited international industry, press and media representatives as well as general public,*
- *taking place for a limited duration of time, once a year or every second year, in a prior defined city.'*

⁵ <http://www.fiapf.org>

FIAPF began their accreditation and classification system with 'Competitive Film Festivals' like Cannes, Venice and Berlin. Over the years the FIAPF classification system was expanded to include more festivals and different categories like 'Competitive Specialised Film Festivals', 'Non-Competitive Film Festivals' and 'Documentary and Short Film Festivals'. In their 2008 catalogue of accredited international feature film festivals FIAPF lists the following 12 film festivals in the category of 'Competitive Film Festivals':

- Berlin International Film Festival – Berlinale,
- Mar del Plata International Film Festival,
- Cannes Film Festival,
- Shanghai International Film Festival,
- Moscow International Film Festival,
- Karlovy Vary International Film Festival,
- Locarno International Film Festival,
- Montreal World Film Festival,
- Venice International Film Festival,
- Donostia San Sebastian International Film Festival,
- Tokyo International Film Festival, and
- Cairo International Film Festival (FIAPF, 2008).

Apart from the category of 'Competitive Film Festivals', as mentioned previously, FIAPF also operates with a distinction between 'Competitive Specialised Film Festivals' (26 festivals and among these for example Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Film); 'Non-Competitive Film Festivals' (6 festivals and among these for example Sydney Film Festival); and 'Documentary and Short Film Festivals' (5 festivals and among these for example Tampere International Short Film Festival).

In order for a film festival to apply for and to be considered for accreditation by FIAPF a festival has to comply with 'the FIAPF Festivals' Minimum Standard'. FIAPF describes its accreditation this way:

"The accreditation delivered by FIAPF gives the producers, distributors and sales agents, the guarantee that they will commit to festivals with a true international dimension, endowed with a strong and structured organization, involving industry professionals. FIAPF regulations stipulate a framework of protection between rights holders and festivals for the presentation of screened films. For example, a maximum number of screenings, the obligation to request any additional screenings, the obligation to ask for the permission of the rights holders in case of cuts required by the censorship authorities, the right of withdrawal of the film in this case, the return of the print within 15 days after the event."... "To guarantee an optimal level of services, accredited festivals are visited by FIAPF on a regular basis." (FIAPF 2006, p. 4)

FIAPF, thus, has been and still is a very central actor and 'authorizing agent' (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) concerning the field of international film festivals. Following Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), FIAPF has been active in *creating institutions* via construction of the rule system, defining the boundaries of membership through accreditation and the FIAPF 'Minimum Standard', hereby defining the relationship between an actor and the field of international film festivals. FIAPF has also been active in the creation and specification of categories of types of film festivals. In the role as the important 'authorizing agent' FIAPF, thus, has now a central role in *maintaining institutions* and the international film festival circuit and, Jacobsen (2000) claims that FIAPF has had a quasi monopoly on international film festivals for many years (Jacobsen, 2000:18).

Late Adopters in the Field - Two Case Studies

La Festa del Cinema di Roma (FCR)

"The festival is the proof that out of so many cities, Roma really is 'the cinema'. And not just because of its marvellous legacy of history and culture, or its incomparable blend of architecture and space, or harmony and time, but because it is capable of linking this tradition to projects for the future, and turning its strengths and universal appeal into economic investment." (Walter Veltroni, Mayor of Roma 2001-2008)

The words by the Mayor of Roma give an overall view of the main rationale behind the Festa del Cinema. Roma is one of most mentioned city in the film history. Nevertheless, Roma had no film festival and no real event besides some premiere of movies taken in the city. Moreover, Roma was the stage of Italian film masterpieces (among others, Roma città aperta by Rossellini). By the initiative of Walter Veltroni – who, as editor of L'Unità, the newspaper of the former Italian Communist Party, made the decision of putting films as supplement of the newspaper, starting a fad in the whole Italian press – Roma filled this gap in 2006 within a wave of cultural initiatives located in the same pole: the big Auditorium, owned by the local government, designed by Renzo Piano and opened for the Millennium jubilee.

The decision to launch FCR is therefore part of a city marketing strategy promoted by the local government and supported by Roman politicians. It has to be underlined how most of the main cultural spaces in Roma are owned by the local government and related institutions are led by politicians directly appointed by the local government. This is also the case of the Foundation "Musica per Roma" managing all the Auditorium events. Today 2007 FCR is run by an ad-hoc foundations "Fondazione Cinema per Roma". The mission of this Foundation is "to create, promote and exploit cinema and audiovisual

culture in general in harmony with the needs and demands of cultural, social and economic development in the metropolitan area of Roma, the Lazio region and the whole country". The Foundation's logo was designed by Renzo Piano as a gift to the institution running the Auditorium. The decision to form an ad-hoc foundation followed to the 2006 success and the confirmation of Walter Veltroni as Mayor of Roma. In 2006, FCR was organized by a division of the foundation "Fondazione Musica per Roma" running the Auditorium. The Fondazione Cinema per Roma has about 25 employees, almost all of them coming from the Fondazione Musica per Roma.

FCR was the film event Roma had never hosted in the past. However FCR was, at the same time, the opportunity to challenge one of the major criticisms for the centre-left coalition governing Roma since 1993: to neglect the periphery and concentrate all the events in the central area of Roma. For this reason, FCR main events were located at the Auditorium (which is not close to the central area) but FCR hosted many events with the goal of bringing films and stars in the periphery. From this perspective, FCR aimed at being a popular event, addressing common people, different from star-based events such as Cannes or Venice with its rituals at *la croisette* or at the *Lido*. In the words of Goffredo Bettini, (President of the Cinema per Roma Foundation) "*(the event) is designed for the public at large and quality cinema in one, the perfect forum for dialogues and exchanges between film lovers, film experts and trade professionals*". In this sense, FCR is thought as a Festa (Feast) rather than a Festival in order to underline an event for the public at large rather than a competition for a prestigious award. This mission of FCR is enhanced by the decision about the jury; it consists of 50 normal cinema-goers, selected during the year, and guided by a well known director.

In 2007, FCR hosted 14 films in competition, 22 premieres and 8 out of competition special events, the most important on India. FCR also hosted a business opportunity section ("The Business Street") centred on events taken place in the Via Veneto area (used by Fellini in "La dolce vita", perhaps his most famous film abroad) and a film market ("New Cinema Network"). In order to display FCR mission to involve the whole city in the event, a peculiar section "Alice nella città" presented films and exhibitions for children in different areas of Roma. In the first edition in 2006, FCR hosted about 480.000 festivalgoers, 170 movies from 33 countries, 102.000 tickets, 6.837 accredited professionals (including more than 2.000 journalists), and 447 participants in the Business Street. More significantly for FCR mission, 78 schools and more than 16.000 children and teen-agers have been involved in the "Alice nella città" events. Key figure of the two FCR editions are reported below.

TABLE 3. FESTA DEL CINEMA DI ROMA (2006-2007)⁶

	2006	2007
Number of films	117	102
Nationalities	33	46
No. of Screenings	650	670
- market screenings	130	142
No. of exhibitions	4	6
No. of concerts	3	5
Market Premieres	15	25
No. of Accredited	6.837	7.010
- journalists	2.462	2.631
- business	440	600
Visitors	480.000	600.000
Tickets	102.000	110.000
- Free access tickets	47.000	30.000
Sponsors&Partners	108	170

During the Festa, up to 150 people are mobilized. The strategy to involve people for the Festa days followed the idea of involving the whole Roma. Most of these people are volunteers contacted through the 3 Universities in Roma and through no-profit organizations. In this way, it is maintained the peculiarity of the foundation, grouping highly motivated, film-loving people. As said by an interviewee, *“Foundation is managed like a family. Though the Festa requires high professionalism, everything is in the hand of very young people. This is quite a unique case in Italy”*.

The budget is funded 50% by private investors (primarily banks) and 50% by public institutions, especially the local government of Roma, the Province, Lazio Region and the local Chamber of Commerce. This funding structure makes FCR tightly depending on the political balances in Roma. This is perceived as a potential weakness of the Festa that is not fully institutionalized to survive in case of deep political turmoil at the local government level. Actually, the Festa has been highly criticized since it is not needed effort of city marketing and does not solve any problem of the periphery.

Dates were a highly debated issue about FCR. They reflected the strategic positioning of FCR as e third film festival In Italy. The issue was raised by Venice in 2006 and Turin in 2007 (chaired by Moretti, one of the most internationally well known Italian director) The choice of mid-October (2007 edition took place Oct 18-27) was implicitly signalling a competition with Venice, traditionally scheduled at the end of August). However, the reason

⁶ Source: FCR website

behind the October choice was again related to city marketing. Due to the warm temperature in early fall, October is one of the month with the highest number of tourists in Roma. At the same time, Roma is full time working: schools are open, university courses started, etc. So the Festa takes place in a city full of tourists and young students. At the same time, October is far enough from the other big European events (Berlin and Cannes). So, FCR is able to host important commercial premieres pushing for media coverage.

From the strategic positioning perspective, FCR does not share all the issues characterizing the big European festivals. First, it is not a festival in the proper sense, since competition is not the main issue of the event. The award (called Marco Aurelio) is not the focus of the Festa that gained interests from the premieres, important guests and city-based events. This is reflected by the choice of a non-professional jury mentioned above.

Second, people involved in the selection of films for FCR are not working in exclusivity. Many of them come from similar experience with other festivals (especially Locarno and specific sections of Venice). This implied a kind of cross-fertilization among festivals even though organizing a film event is considered by one of our interviewees a “standardized enterprise”. FCR benefited from cross-fertilization due to its implicitly hybrid nature: a Festa and not a Festival, low relevance of competition, high relevance of commercial premieres and prestigious guests.

Finally, after two editions, FCR organization is still “under construction”. The first edition was organized around a task force model consistent with the idea that FCR was a specific event in the agenda of Musica per Roma Foundation. For the second edition, an ad-hoc foundation was set up, as it is mentioned above. In both cases, the single sections of the Festa (premiere, competition, special events, Alice nelle città) enjoyed high managerial and organizational autonomy. This is also encouraged by the role played by the President, whose political exposure (he was a member of the Senate and is currently among the leaders of the new Democratic Party) did not allow him to have any operational involvement. So managers could settle their own practices in line with their previous festival experience and the demands of the industry.

Copenhagen International Film Festival (CIFF)

The first edition of Copenhagen International Film Festival (CIFF) was launched in august 2003. However, the idea for the festival was conceived in 2002. One of the prime drivers behind the initiative was ‘Hovedstadens Udviklingsråd’ (The Development Council for the Wider Copenhagen Area), who in the wake of the international success for Danish film, decided to donate money for two purposes. First, they donated money (Euro 70.000) for a regional film commission for the ‘Öresund region’ to attract international production of film, TV and commercials to the Öresund region. Second, they donated money (Euro 70.000) to support the new CIFF and money (Euro 35.000) for a film festival for children’s films (‘Buster’) (Politiken, 20.12.2002). CIFF also received money

(Euro 65.000) from the Danish Film Institute (DFI) and were promised another Euro 70.000 on top of this amount of money. Apart from this financial support CIFF also received money from the municipality of Copenhagen (main contributor with Euro 500.000) and the Ministry of Culture (donating a yearly amount of Euro 150.000 for a four year period), so that the festival altogether received approximately Euro 900.000. On top of this financial support CIFF was also met with moral and political support from prominent politicians in Copenhagen (JP:19.21.2002).

Right from the beginning CIFF was, however, also met with some criticism. In particular a critical voice was raised by the Manager of the Odense Short and Documentary film festival, because CIFF had placed itself at the same time as the Odense Short and Documentary film festival was taking place and the festival manager was afraid that CIFF would take focus from the other Danish film festival (Politiken, 20.12.2002). Apart from this critical voice other voices in the film industry doubted if Denmark needed yet another film festival as Copenhagen already had Gay & Lesbian Film Festival (founded in 1985, the 'NatFilmfestival' (The Night Film Festival') founded in 1990, 'Buster' (Children's films) founded in 2000 and CPH:DOX (on documentary films) also founded in 2003 (Berlingske Tidende, 01.11.2004).

Apart from some critical voices CIFF received a lot of support from various prominent stakeholders in the Danish film industry as well as industrialists and politicians (Politiken Weekly, 18.12.2002). CIFF was established as a foundation and hired festival director, Janne Giese, who had also been one of the prime drivers behind the initiative. With regard to positioning CIFF on one hand was 'inspired by the large international film festivals like Berlin, Cannes and Venice', but on the other did not want to compete with these festivals, but instead collaborate with the existing Danish film festivals (Ekstra Bladet, 17.12.2002). And in response to the criticism raised and the legitimation of yet another film festival CIFF argued that,

"..the Odense festival shows some films that different from the one we show. And NatFilmfestivalen is directed towards the audience, whereas our festival is rather a feast for both audience and filmmakers. CIFF is going to be a place where, in particular directors can meet and exchange ideas and meanings." (Festival director Valeria Richter in Ekstra Bladet, 17.12.2002).

Another argument for establishing CIFF came from the Mayor for Culture in the Municipality of Copenhagen (Martin Geertsen), stating that,

"When we are good at doing something, as we are in the case of filmmaking, we should not be afraid to boast and show it. The festival will create experiences and provide energy to the city and expand the international pulse already existing in Copenhagen. ... The goal is to make it the best Scandinavian film festival and a major international event" (Politiken, 17.12.2002).

With regard to the profile and positioning of the film festival, Henning Camre, former director of the Danish Film Institute, stated that he finds that,

“the new Danish film festival has a chance as they have decided to focus very strongly on European film. No other film festival has done that.” (Politiken, 17.12.2002).

The first edition of CIFF ran August 13-20, 2003 with 10 series and more than 150 film (from Spanish Western comedies to Dutch musicals), a large competition with 14 international film in competition and an international jury of five members, headed by the Greek film director Theo Angelopulos and together with film directors Jan Troell, Jutta Brückner, Marion Hänsel and Danish director Bille August⁷, awarding the ‘Golden Swan’ designed by Line Utzon⁸. Apart from the European focus a special series on African film was shown. The festival director, Janne Giese, commented the opening this way,

“Any major city with self respect ought to have a film festival. I cannot understand, why we have not already had one long time ago.” (Ritzau, 13.08.2003)

In the first edition no real film market was established (JP,30.06.2003). Apart from the public money CIFF was also to attract private money but failed in getting a main sponsor and had to cut down on some of the activities among other activities the film market (Fyens Stiftstidende, 01.07.2003). The Danish Film Institute had to come up with yet another Euro150.000 in support and guarantee in the case of a deficit (Berlingske Tidende, 04.08.2002).

CIFF started out with a goal of about 30.000 spectators, then adjusted it to 20.000, but finally ended up with only around 15-16.000 tickets of which approximately 5.000 were hand out for free. The blame for the lack of attention from audience was given to the weather. Janne Giese, festival director, estimates that the festival lost about 10-15.000 tickets because of the heat wave in August (JP: 27.09.2003). Concerning key figures for CIFF see table 3 below.

⁷ Bille August had to cancel last minute and was substituted by Danish film director Ole Roos.

⁸ Apart from the ‘Golden Swan’, a Lifetime Achievement Award was handed out to Liv Ullmann, and two Honorary awards to Theo Angelopulos and Lars Von Trier.

TABLE 4. Copenhagen International Film Festival (2003-2006)⁹

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of films	153	111	117	148
EU ratio	75%	74%	100%	93%
No. of Screenings	269	240	235	300
No. of features	no info	102	113	141
No. of documentaries	3	5	4	4
Series	no info	12	12	14
No. of Accredited	290	364	400	no info
Tickets	16.688	23.814	22.571	25.273

After the first edition, the festival was moved as to avoid the criticized overlap with Odense film festival (Berlingske Tidende, 05.08.2003). It was, however, not easy to agree on scheduling a new date for CIFF as several conflicting interests were raised. The festival program in general leaves little room in the busy calendar and the cinema theatre owners wanted to fill their theatres during the low summer season, whereas CIFF wanted to get away from the warm and low season (Ritzau, 18.08.2003; BT, 21.08.2003). Also changes occurred in the composition of the board of CIFF, where Peter Aalbæk Jensen, CEO of Zentropa and Kenneth Plummer, CEO of Nordisk Film entered the board of CIFF in order to strengthen the relation to the Danish film industry, but also to co-opt one of the strongest critics of CIFF, Peter Aalbæk Jensen. The head of the program was also changed several times. Since 2004, Jacob Neiiendam has been in charge of the program (Ritzau, 23.11.2004) and, in 2005 he strengthened the European profile of CIFF (Ritzau, 25.05.2005).

From very early on, and in particular articulated by CEO of Zentropa, Peter Aalbæk Jensen, it was suggested to merge CIFF and the NatFilmfestival (Berlingske Tidende, 28.01.2004). CIFF declare they are positive, whereas Natfilmfestival is more sceptical concerning this suggestion. Nothing happens, however, with regard to merging the two festivals and, CIFF and NatFilmfestival (as well as Buster and CPH: DOX) continue their business as usual. Every year the politicians bring up the suggestion about merging the two film festivals, but very little happens.

In spring 2005, CIFF, however, embarks on collaboration with 'Buster', in particular on the sponsoring and marketing of the two festivals (Berlingske Tidende, 28.10.2005). Another initiative, 'Copenhagen Screenings' is launched in July 2005. Copenhagen Screenings is an initiative that invites 170 foreign film buyers to Copenhagen, creating a kind of local film market, however promoting

⁹ Source: CIFF website

Danish films. The initiative is carried out in collaboration with The Danish Film Institute, Trust Film Sales and Nordisk Film International Sales (JP, 11.07.2005).

In 2006 CIFF changes its schedule and moves from August to September in the hope of attracting more festival-goers (Berlingske Tidende 30.11.2005). Apart from the weather, Janne Giese also argues that now when CIFF is placed after Venice, Toronto and San Sebastian better quality films are likely to be given free for CIFF and other festivals (Berlingske Tidende 30.11.2005). In 2006, CIFF also embarks on a new sponsor strategy and manages to attract three main sponsors (Irma, Café Noir and Nokia Nseries) together with a media partner (Politiken) (Markedsføring, 05.09.2006) and Lars Von Trier's film 'The Boss of Everything' is the opening film.

In spring 2007 the collaboration previously mentioned between CIFF and 'Buster' is extended in the way that CIFF takes over the responsibility for 'Buster' and it seems in reality to be a merger between the two festivals. (Børsen, 16.03.2007). The 2007 edition of CIFF looks now like one of the international film festivals with large posters in town, a big screen on square in front of the city hall, red carpet in front of the central festival theatre ('Imperial'), press, lots of films, sponsors, visiting filmmakers, local (Danish) stars, a permanent staff of around 25-30 people and around 80 volunteers. But still too few tickets sold and too little attention from the audience. Again this year, the yearly suggestion from politicians about merging the two major festivals is launched and, this time apparently with much more success than the previous years. During fall, 2007 it is announced that the politicians want to merge all four film festivals taking place in Copenhagen (CIFF, NatFilmfestival, Buster and CPH: DOX). The two foundations ('Natsværmerfonden' and 'Fonden Copenhagen International Film Festival') behind the two festivals are merged into a new foundation ('Fonden de Købehavnske filmfestivaler') responsible for three festivals. The four festivals are merged into three festivals - 'Buster' (Children's films) is taking place in September, CPH-DOX stays in its current position in November and CIFF and NatFilmfestival are going to be merged into one festival. Head of the Royal Danish Theatre, Michael Christiansen is appointed chairman of the foundation. A managing director is found, former head of actors at the Royal Danish Theatre, Mikkel Harder Munck-Hansen and his job is to lead the three festivals and create a new profile for the newly merged festival.

Discussion

A comparison between the two film festivals shows some similarities as well as differences (cf. table 5 below). First, *the size of the two festivals* (measured by the number of tickets and by their budgets) is very different (CIFF has around 7 per

cent of the budget of FCR and less than 25 per cent of the FCR tickets)¹⁰ partly due to the different size of Roma and Copenhagen. On the contrary, measured in terms of the number of films CIFF, with 148 films, is larger than FCR, with 117, but in terms of screenings FCR, with 650 screenings, has almost 100 per cent more screenings as CIFF with about 300 screenings. Apart from these numbers, we find that the two festivals are also comparable on other dimensions (cf. table 5 below). Both are categorized as *international film festivals (IFFs)* and they have been launched for rather similar reasons and in tight connection with the development projects of the *two capital cities*. Interestingly, the two cities have relevance and exposure vis-à-vis the film industry. Danish filmmakers are experiencing an unprecedented success in the film industry and Roma is still the core of the Italian film industry and a shooting location for European and US films. Both film festivals are publicly subsidized and about 50 per cent of their budgets consist of public money.

As latecomers in the field, the strategies of the two festivals for gaining legitimacy can also be compared. As for the two specific features of pragmatic and moral legitimacy the two cases are effective examples of how latecomers *attract main constituencies* by appearing responsive to their interests. FCR was launched as a response to claims of the periphery to host events formerly concentrated in the central area of the city. CIFF was an attempt to link city marketing with the increasing success of Danish film industry. In both cases, the main constituencies – the local administration, authorities, tourism bodies and film industry associations – are involved by representing CIFF and FCR as a feasible way of pursuing their interests. Of course, the extent to which these interests are actually pursued may later become the main argument *against* the legitimization of the festivals depending on how these interests are pursued and played out in the longer run.

¹⁰ And probably only one tenth or so measured in terms of visitors, but CIFF do not keep records of visitors, so it is an estimate based on the difference in size between Roma with 3,5 million inhabitants and Copenhagen with 1,2 million inhabitants.

Table 5: Overview of the two cases – FCR and CIFF.

	FCR	CIFF
Date of foundation	2006	2003
Status in the field	Late adopter	Late adopter
City inhabitants	Roma: 3,5 mio	CPH: 1,2 mio.
Size of festival:		
<i>Budget</i>	15 mio. Euro	1 mio. Euro
<i>No. of Films</i>	117 films	148 films
<i>No. of Screenings</i>	650	300
<i>No. of Visitors</i>	480.000	no figures
<i>No. of Tickets</i>	102.000	25.273
<i>No. of Accredited</i>	6.837	400 ¹¹
Public subsidies	app. 50 per cent	app. 50 per cent
Inst. entrepreneurs	Public authorities	Public authorities
Main motive	City branding	City branding
Identity	IFF	IFF
Significant others	A-film festivals and 'local competition' (Venice)	A-film festivals and 'local competition' (Natfilmfestival)
Main constituencies	Politicians, inhabitants of Roma, local administration, universities, non-profit organizations	Politicians, municipal administration, business and trade organizations, film industry associations

Interestingly, constituencies are profiled in a different way in the two cases. For FCR, constituencies are the local administration, local universities and non-profit organizations that take part in the festival by providing human resources and logistic support. In the FCR case, the final constituencies are the inhabitants of Roma, who are asked to be part of the "Festa". For CIFF, the main constituencies are the politicians and municipal administration, business and trade organizations together with some parts of the Danish film industry. In this sense, Copenhagen was seen as in need of an international film festival to provide Copenhagen as a city and Danish film with visibility and a market for ideas and exchanges among international filmmakers in the field and as less of an audience event.

From the moral legitimacy perspective, FCR has tried to attract as many visitors as possible in order to enter very quickly into the picture of the main

¹¹ For CIFF this is figures for 2005 as no figures exist for 2006.

events in Roma. A similar strategy has been pursued by CIFF in relation to the existing specialized festivals in Copenhagen. Interestingly, what the two latecomer festivals did was on the one side to build an identity positioning themselves in relation to existing festivals. On the other side, they tried to gain wide media coverage in order to quickly gain taken for grantedness. Even though criticism was raised on the necessity of the festivals no one really dared to put their existence at stake as they were already part of the city landscape. This is at the core of taken for grantedness, accomplished by size and promotion, in the FCR case, and by the involvement of various important stakeholders in relation to the film industry, in the CIFF case. The most recent outcome for CIFF, after pressure from the filmmakers in the film field to reduce the number of film festivals in Copenhagen, has been a merger (to be effective by 2008-2009) between existing film festivals (CIFF, Natfilmfestivalen, CPH:DOX and Buster) to remove the timing issue affecting the first editions. In the FCR case, the outcome of taken for grantedness is not yet established. During the recent campaign for the new Mayor of Rome – and after Veltroni ran for president in Italy but lost to Berlusconi - the issue of FCR has been posed in a local context. However, what seems to be also at stake is FCR's international relevance in order to secure its survival.

In both cases, we argue that being latecomers has shaped the strategy for legitimacy of the two festivals. First, the issue of timing has played a major role in the definition of the festival. The way they have been positioned within the overall EU film industry and IFF circuit has been an important object of reflection in the festivals' start-up. Second, the identity building process has been central since the latecomers need to enter the field with a well-defined communication policy. FCR and CIFF needed this well-defined identity in order to face criticism within the field (in the case of CIFF) and from potentially competing festivals (in the case of FCR). These challenges, and the related responses to field pressures, we would argue, are distinct for latecomers, supporting our theoretical argument of a distinction between early comers and latecomers in the strategies for legitimacy.

The case studies of the two film festivals in Copenhagen and Roma also allowed us to investigate how the different forms of institutional work associated with creating and maintaining institutions are actually undertaken by the several actors – i.e. public administration, local government, private investors, and other constituencies – involved in the festivals. Interestingly, being latecomers seems to create similarities also in the institutional work undertaken by festivals to establish in the field. Being latecomers in an institutionalized field both festivals benefited from the existence of pre-defined models for IFFs, which meant that the two festivals could be founded and constructed within a fairly short time span. This is in contrast to other types of festivals (and enterprises more generally) that are built up gradually over a time span of more than twenty years or so. The challenge, however, for this type of designed and top-down driven festival – created by politicians, local authorities and tourism bodies - seems to be to anchor and root the film festival

in the wider public – in order to be perceived as a legitimate player if not a taken for granted institution.

Concluding remarks

The paper is concerned with the inclusion-exclusion dilemma, that late adopters and new comers face when trying to establish themselves within an institutionalised field (e.g. Brewer, 1991; Alvarez et al. 2005; Mazza, Sahlin-Andersson and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2005). On one hand they have to adapt to the existing conventions and isomorphic pressures and resemble the other organizations existing in the field, in order to be classified, recognized and accepted as a legitimate player and hereby attract resources to the organization. On the other hand they also at the same time have to profile themselves and create a distinct identity within the field. This inclusion-exclusion dilemma has also been framed as ‘optimal distinctiveness’ by Brewer (1991) and, studied, for example by Alvarez et al. (2005) and, Svejenova, Mazza and Planellas, (2006). We have assumed a strategic action and agency perspective (DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991) within the institutional view of diffusion of practices and forms in order to investigate how these festivals have been constructed by the work of the key actors involved. The kind of institutional work undertaken by the actors involved is categorized, following Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), as a) creating institutions, b) maintaining institutions and c) disrupting institutions, however with the main focus on the first two.

It takes time to build an international film festival. Both FCR and CIFF are still in the process of positioning themselves, shaping their profile and, reconfiguring their festivals. Doing so we have focused on some specific features of legitimacy that we find are significant in the case of new film international festivals.

First, we showed that, at the field level of international film festivals, how early adopters, like the festivals of Venice, Cannes and Berlin, together with other field actors, like FIAPF, seemingly have managed over many years to invent a tradition (Ranger and Hobsbawn, 1983) and create and institutionalize a model for international film festivals that appears to have become an ‘unchallenged given’ (Zucker, 1983) and thus, provides a prominent example of institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

Second, we demonstrated that the film festivals in Copenhagen and Roma share an ambition of becoming significant players within the field of international film festivals, though they have been running just for a few years (respectively since 2003 and 2006). We saw how the film festivals in Copenhagen and Roma aimed to attract support of main constituencies by appearing as “responsive to their larger interests” (Suchman, 1995: 578). In both cases public authorities – city mayors, city councils, regional organizations, ministry of culture - seem to be central in relation to the founding of both festivals. The rationale by these authorities for establishing a film festival in

their cities were to a large extent driven by ambitions of branding the city - 'put it on the map' as a cool city and attract tourists and 'the creative class' (Florida, 2002) - and hereby in the longer run improve the economy of the city. We also saw that both festivals are heavily subsidized by public money in spite of the fact that the two festivals operate on very different budgets. CIFF operating on a budget of approximately 1 million Euro, whereas FCR operates on a more ambitious budget of about 15 million Euro. About 50% of the budgets for the festivals come from public money. In this sense the festival management as well as the political authorities have had to be constructed providing ex post rationalizations and ad hoc justification of their existence as tools to improve city marketing and increase reputation as hosts of large media events as well as tourist inflows.

Third, we investigated how the two film festivals had profiled themselves in order to distinguish themselves from the existing festivals and create a distinct identity within the field. In this process it seemed critical for the two late adopting film festivals to have a clear communication and identity strategy. By creating an identity of their own, these festivals aim at gaining the status of regular events within the city cultural landscape. From a legitimacy perspective, this means to become an unchallenged given that is literally unthinkable to be otherwise (Zucker, 1983). Here the issue of festival scheduling in both cases turned out to be very important. Huge and protracted debates and controversies took place before dates for the festivals were negotiated and decided. Much of this discussion was of a strategic nature, related to and directed towards other festivals, local as well as international, which thus could be identified as their 'significant others' - role models and prime competitors. In both cases the festivals were concerned about the so-called A-film festivals (Berlin, Cannes, Venice, Toronto etc.) and tried to place their festival away from them. In the case of FCR, 'local competition' with Venice was clearly a special concern. In the case of CIFF the matter on local level was a bit more complex as the city of Copenhagen already had three other film festivals ('NatFilmsfestivalen', 'Buster', 'CPH:DOX') and furthermore some other Danish film festivals to attend to (notably the Odense film festival where CIFF had a controversy over the dates).

Combining the concept of 'institutional work' by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) with the different forms of legitimacy by Suchman (1995), we argue that timing of adoption play a major role in the definition of legitimacy strategy and in the forms of institutional work to be undertaken. The two case studies of film festivals support the argument that analyses on the diffusion of practices and institutionalization should include time as a major descriptive factor. Following Tolbert and Zucker (1983) and their idea that the rationale behind the adoption of certain practice is different in the case of late and early adopters, we have focussed our study on late adopters and suggest also a distinction between late adopters. A step ahead in this direction, we suggest, is the attempt to

distinguish the adoption process of late adopters (*about to enter the field*) and late adopters (*already established in the field*). The two cases belong to the former category and seem to support the argument that this specific typology of late adopters may follow different strategies for legitimacy and involve different forms of institutional work.

Future research

This line of investigation opens a few research avenues worth pursuing. First, quantitative and qualitative analyses may provide stronger support and descriptions concerning the difference between early adopters and late adopters in the adoption of practices. This may shed light on aspects still partially ignored on the process of institutionalization; in particular the issue of the impact of institutionalized practices on organizations entering a field anew.

Second, the description of legitimacy strategies for late adopters deserves wider investigations. We suggest that Suchman's (1995) forms of legitimacy combined with the categories developed by Oliver (1991) could be deployed differently when time of adoption enters in the description. In particular, the interrelation between pragmatic and moral legitimacy strategies to enforce taken for grantedness could be thoroughly investigated in cases related to specific fields. In these cases, these aspects might shed light on the field transformation triggers and on the links between legitimacy and innovation in the direction outlined by Sherer and Lee (2002).

Finally, we suggest that studying in more detail the process of adoption of practices might be of help understand managerial implications of institutional entrepreneurship and institutional work. In particular, the question when and why institutional entrepreneurs and institutional workers conform to legitimized practices (or challenge them) deserves detailed investigations to provide entrepreneurial decision making processes with more meaningful guidelines.

We think these issues are at the crossroads of several important research topics concerning field transformations, entrepreneurship, legitimacy and institutionalization processes. The academic relevance as well as the practical implications of such issues makes them a fruitful field of investigation for the future. The domain of the cultural industry, and the festival field, may be of great interest for further advancement in theory.

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By: Brian Moeran
June 2007
- #2 **From Participant Observation to Observant Participation:
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By: Brian Moeran
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- #3 **Creative Encounters in the Film Industry:
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