Are We Voluntarily Blinded?

Successions in Cultural Organizations: An Empirical Investigation in Québec

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INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, there has been tangible interest in the issue of succession in the cultural sector. Several professional studies carried out for Québec or Canadian granting agencies (Colbert, Gainer and Roux, 2001; Hardy, 2002; Étude Économique Conseil, 2003; MacSkimming and d'Entremont, 2005; DeGros Marsh, 2006; Cultural Human Resources Council, 2010) lead us to state that there is a genuine concern over succession issues (expected knowledge and skills, knowledge and skills transfer, difficulties attracting and retaining personnel, differences in the new generation's relationship with work, etc.). Disciplinary associations are also interested in the topic, and succession now figures in master plans and among the concerns addressed at annual meetings.[1] Organizations hire consultants to help them through these periods of transition. Concerns over succession are part of the larger context of the general aging of the population and the development of Québec's cultural sector. Operating in a relatively young sector, cultural players are questioning the sustainability of organizations, the handing over of organizations to the next generation of artists, and the ability of organizations to adapt to the needs of a new generation of artists and audiences. But what do we know about succession? What is the status of succession in the cultural sector? How is it perceived by those in management positions? What are the practices and issues specific to the cultural sector?

The literature on succession reveals that it is a vast and fragmented field of research, one which has existed for more than 50 years and which continues to arouse the interest of many researchers, professionals and practitioners. One of the reasons for this interest is that succession is often considered a crucial event for organizations (Haveman, 1993; Le Breton-Miller, Miller and Steier, 2004), one that is difficult and sometimes painful for the people working within them (Bah, 2009; Balser and Carmin, 2009). Succession represents a pivotal moment in the life of an organization, often raising issues of organizational identity (Albert and Whetten, 1985). Succession is also associated with a high rate of organization mortality. In the 1980s, one third of family firms did not survive their first succession (Le Breton-Miller, Miller and Steier, 2004), and among French SMEs, one out of five successions fail (OSEO BDPME, 2005). More recently, research studies carried out in this field have addressed the issue of succession in one way or another and for various reasons. These studies justify the importance of succession by the fact that it represents an opportunity for renewal or revitalization for the organization (Bégin, Chabaud and Hannachi, 2011; Deschamps and Simon, 2011). It is an opportunity for change — change that can prove beneficial.

Regardless of how it is approached, it appears that although succession is a field of research that is heavily documented in some sectors of activity, there are very few studies on succession in non-profit organizations (NPOs) (Carman, Leland and Wilson, 2010), in the social economy

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[1] While this is not an exhaustive list, succession issues were addressed at the conference of the Conseil québécois du théâtre (2011), in the *Master Plan for Professional Dance in Quebec 2011-2021*, at professional meetings held during the Bourse RIDEAU (2012), in the theatre magazine *JEU* (2011) and in *Spirale* magazine (2013), at Orchestras Canada's National Meeting, and at the annual meeting of the Conseil québécois des ressources humaines en culture (2013), and it is the focus of a study being carried out by the association Théâtres Unis Enfance Jeunesse (2012).

sector (Godói-de-Sousa and Fischer, 2012), or in the arts and culture sector (Carrier, 2011; Landry, 2011a). In Québec, beyond a statistical portrait of the directors of cultural and communications organizations (Landry, 2011b), we have little information on directors in the cultural sector in Québec. And although the studies on human resources in the cultural sector contain high-quality information (CHRC, 2010), they are fragmented and incomplete, making it difficult to determine the status of succession in cultural organizations and to identify the key issues at hand.

In 2011, we received a grant from the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (Québec Ministry of Culture and Communications) to carry out a study that would allow us to establish a more accurate portrait of the succession situation in cultural NPOs in Québec. This study seeks to answer the following research questions: What are the demographic characteristics of directors (executive and artistic) of cultural NPOs? What are the challenges of leadership succession (executive and artistic directors) in cultural NPOs and how are they taken into account? What are the differences when the director (executive or artistic) is the organization's founder?

To answer these questions, we surveyed 1,133 cultural organizations in Québec, with a participation rate of 38.7%. This paper presents the results of this survey so as to establish a portrait of succession in Québec's cultural organizations. This study sheds a first light on succession practices and the challenges perceived by the directors of organizations.

TARGETED LITERATURE REVIEW

Succession is a process of leadership change that takes place in a cultural organization when one of the key directors is replaced, whether it be the artistic director, the executive director, or the general manager. This change may have been planned or not. It may be desired or imposed. The objective of succession, which is more than a simple human resources management operation, is to foster the accomplishment of the artistic mission and achievement of the organization's strategic objectives, with a view to ensuring its artistic vitality and long-term survival.[2]

The literature on succession allows us to identify the main issues related to leadership succession. First, as in the general active population, the cultural sector is experiencing an aging of its workforce. In fact, "with respect to cultural directors specifically, both in Canada and in Québec, the statistics show an increase in the presence of older groups. While in 1996, 42% of cultural directors in Canada were over 45 years of age, in 2006, this percentage has climbed to 49%. Québec has followed a similar trend (38% in 1996 and 49% in 2006)." (Landry, 2011b: 14 [free translation])

In this context of an aging workforce, the issue of succession becomes particularly acute (CHRC, 2010; Étude Économique Conseil, 2003; Landry, 2011b). In Canada, although no study has

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[2] This definition is largely based on those proposed by MacSkimming and d'Entremont (2005) and by Merianne Liteman (2003).

specifically documented the question of succession and anticipated departure of directors in the cultural sector, several studies show that human resources could become a major challenge in the coming years. For example, an extensive study on cultural human resources shows that in Canada, 32% of cultural workers estimate that they will leave the job they currently hold in either the short term (less than five years) or the medium term (between five and fifteen years) (CHRC, 2010). Moreover, this same study revealed that 26% of respondents were founders of organizations and that, incidentally, since the baby-boomer generation is the one in which a large number of organizations were founded, a substantial number of founders can be expected to retire. The authors of the Cultural Human Resources Council survey conclude, "it therefore seems inevitable that a significant part of the active population will need to be replaced soon; otherwise, employers will face a serious shortage of competencies, expertise and talent" (2010: 26 [free translation]). Moreover, another professional study, which surveyed cultural managers (DeGros Marsh, 2006), indicates that a greater number of cultural workers between the age of 25 and 34 expect to leave the culture sector than other workers (65.4% compared to 56.7% for respondents as a whole). It would appear that attracting and retaining cultural workers is a significant challenge for the cultural sector and that generational and socio-demographic changes have already had a negative impact (Hardy, 2002; Marsland, 2005).

In terms of attracting and retaining leaders of cultural organizations, not everyone anticipates the retirement of the baby-boomers with fear; many suggest that organizations should spend more energy trying to understand what elements act as forces of attraction and retention and to reduce the irritants in managers' working conditions (Kunreutheur and Corvington, 2007). Results of surveys show that the main sources of job satisfaction for directors of cultural organizations are the organization's mission, the works produced, and engagement in the community (Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation, 2005). Workers in cultural organizations find motivation primarily in a job that matches their personal talents. In addition, the job must be enriching, satisfying, and correspond to a personal interest (CHRC, 2010). This does not tell us if other aspects of the work have a negative impact. In Canada, a survey shows that when managers who graduated from cultural management programs think of leaving the cultural sector, the reasons given are in fact often linked to working conditions: low salaries, few social benefits, little room for advancement, heavy workload, stress and risk of professional burnout (DeGros Marsh, 2006). It should also be noted that more than one third of respondents (35.5%) in the survey carried out by the consulting firm DeGros Marsh felt their job did not make full use of their capacities.

In terms of planning for succession and anticipating departure, a review of the literature shows there is a basic premise as to the positive impacts of succession planning. Succession planning is a key focus in the research on leadership and property transfer (Hytti, Stenholm and Peura, 2011) and is often considered as the determining factor for success (Cadieux and Lorrain, 2002; Dyck et al., 2002; Giambatista, Rowe and Riaz, 2005; Le Breton-Miller, Miller and Steier, 2004). However, without denying that planning has positive impacts, other factors have been identified as necessary to accomplish a succession. Thus, some research (Morris, Williams and Nel, 1996)

suggests that communication is the primary factor for success. Other studies (Sharma, Chrisman and Chua, 2003) show that, more than planning, it is the departing leader's agreement to withdraw, as well as the presence of an identified successor, that ensure a smooth transition. Ip and Jacob (2006), meanwhile, state that there is no golden rule or single way to carry out a succession. What emerges, therefore, despite the value granted to succession planning, especially in the professional literature, is that there is no consensus on the best way to carry out a succession nor any studies proving in a striking way that succession planning is the key to all successes. Several factors come into play during a succession, and the causal relationships are not easy to establish. Furthermore, several studies indicate that planning, even though it is often considered a good practice and a guarantee for success, is not a widespread practice (St-Cyr and Richer, 2003; Cornelius, Moyers and Bell, 2011; Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation, 2005).

Succession planning may be considered in at least four different ways:[3]

1) Document organization: when the organization has formal, accessible and catalogued documentation (processes, policies, manuals, guides, lists, schedules, etc.) that gives the new director access to information to facilitate his or her integration;

2) Planning of the succession process itself: phases, timetables, terms and conditions, communication of intentions, forming of a committee or delegation of responsibilities, identification of an interim director;

3) Planning of the successor: identification of the type of candidate desired in order to achieve the artistic mission, identification of talents (internal or external), talent development (internal);

4) Succession as part of a strategic exercise: integration of succession planning within a broader strategy of development and/or strategic renewal,[4] that is, for the achievement of artistic, organizational and financial objectives.

In terms of the involvement of the board of directors and the various stakeholders in NPOs, the literature shows that the hiring of senior management in an NPO is the duty of the board of directors (Allison, 2002; François Colbert, 2003; Reid and Karambayya, 2009; Turbide and Morgenstern, 1998).[5] It is, in fact, one of the board's most important responsibilities (François Colbert, 2003). And yet, despite this responsibility, boards of directors generally pay little attention to succession planning and have little knowledge of this subject (Allison, 2002; Santora, 2009). More than one quarter (29%) of leaders discuss succession with their board of directors (Bell, Moyers and Wilfred, 2006). In some cases, turnover of personnel within boards of directors makes succession more complicated, because it leads to a lack of knowledge about the organization (Zeigler, 1991). As well, while relationships between boards of directors and

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[3] Thesis by Pascale Landry on the succession of artistic directors in cultural organizations in Québec (thesis in development).

[4] Strategic renewal: efforts within an organization that result in significant changes to its strategy or organizational structure (Sharma and Chrisman, 1999).

[5] The situation is different when the leader is the founder of the organization. In such a case, this person creates his or her own position, just like the founder of a commercial business.

leaders are often positive (Cornelius, Moyers and Bell, 2011), they can also be fraught with tension and dissatisfaction. When asked to identify one negative element that the organization does not seem able to improve, nearly one quarter of respondents spontaneously replied, "a better board of directors" (Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation, 2005). In another U.S. survey on NPOs, while 65% of leaders said they felt supported by their board of directors, the majority of them did not see it as a "strong strategic partnership" (Bell, Moyers and Wilfred, 2006). In cases where perceptions toward the board of directors are negative, the board of directors becomes a factor of dissatisfaction and is associated with leaders leaving the organization, or with the appearance of symptoms tied to professional burnout.

Succession may also be emotionally charged; in fact, it is associated with processes similar to those of a bereavement (Bah, 2009) and may lead to forms of resistance (Handler and Kram, 1988). Knowing that the relationship between boards of directors and leaders of cultural organizations is often quite complex, one that involves both trust and control (Reid and Turbide, 2011), succession may be a sensitive topic that is difficult to broach between parties.

Succession in cultural organizations must take all stakeholders into account. Its planning and implementation are not an individual process. A succession may call for decisions and actions by a number of parties: the board of directors, the leader in place, the latter's successor and, because cultural organizations often have dual leadership,[6] the other leader. In some cases, members of the organization, peers, consultants or lending agencies may be involved at various stages of the process. These successions are part of a complex network of intertwining social, economic and political connections (Santora, Clemens and Sarros, 1997).

Finally, the literature on succession, whether professional or scientific, emphasizes the difference between the succession of a founding person and following successions. In the first case, there is a high rate of organization mortality (Le Breton-Miller, Miller and Steier, 2004). This type of succession is recognized as being more difficult (Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation, 2005; Liteman, 2003; Zeigler, 1991), often because of the founding person's attachment to the organization (CFB-HSG, 2009). In cultural organizations, the founding person often embodies the "creative competence" (Carrier, 2011) on which the organization is based: he or she is its *raison d'être*, its linchpin (Cappetta and Gioia, 2006). According to some, "Founding executive directors of arts organizations often have a greater personal attachment to the organization — almost a sense of ownership — than executive directors who are hired by the board to head an existing organization" (Liteman, 2003: 5). Cultural organizations are often built around the artistic competencies of a founding person. It is therefore not uncommon that this person "is" the organization, its heart and soul, that which holds it together. For this reason, the departure of a founding person often entails a reflection on the organization's mission, its pertinence, and its place in the community. "If succession is handled well, an organization can maintain or ever

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[6] Dual leadership is when the leadership is assumed by two people. Here, dual leadership refers to a division of roles, responsibilities and rationalities, between a director with administrative duties and a director with artistic duties (Chiapello, 1998: 161-162). Dual leadership as defined here does not include the notion of equality or hierarchy between two positions, but is based on the principle of a specialization of positions.

enhance its standing in the arts community. If it is mishandled, the organization may struggle or fail" (Liteman, 2003: 3). For these reasons, first successions are considered to be more complex, and the question of whether to continue or to end the cultural organization's activities becomes more insistent.

METHODOLOGY

To develop our data collection tool, and to analyze some of the challenges faced by Québec cultural NPOs with respect to the succession of executive or artistic directors, we were inspired by a number of American surveys of NPOs in recent years (Arts Alliance Foundation, 2003; Bell, Jeanne, Moyers and Wilfred, 2006). In order to be as representative as possible, this survey by questionnaire was carried out among 1,175 artistic and cultural NPOs in Québec. Our population is made up of organizations whose operations and projects were supported in 2008-2009 by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles (SODEC), and the Canada Council for the Arts. The survey also included organizations supported by these same agencies and by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications (MCC) in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011.

The primary functions of the organizations surveyed were to train professional artists; to create, produce, present or broadcast professional cultural activities; and to offer services or group together professional organizations in the following sectors: performing arts, visual and media arts, film and audiovisual,[7] literature and periodicals, artistic trades, museology, heritage and archives, and others.

The data collection tool used was a closed questionnaire, self-administered by the respondent, that is, respondents were invited by email to answer an online questionnaire. In addition to a preamble and a notice about the confidentiality of the data provided by respondents, the questionnaire contained 36 quantitative and qualitative questions.

In June 2012, emails were sent to 1,175 potential survey respondents[8] inviting them to participate in the survey electronically, using the online survey application Survey Monkey[TM]. The survey took place between June 12 and July 3, 2012; during this period, potential respondents who had not completed the survey were sent a maximum of two reminders. At the end of the survey administration period, the population comprised 1,133 potential respondents, and 439 recipients had answered the survey, for a response rate of 38.7%.

SURVEY RESULTS

Main characteristics of respondents and organizations represented

Survey respondents included more women than men (56% vs. 44%). More than half of respondents held executive director positions (56%), and nearly one quarter of respondents held positions carrying the duties of both executive and artistic director (24%). Only 5% of

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[7] Category includes film production and broadcasting, but also community radio and television funded by the MCC.
[8] A potential survey respondent is the person occupying the highest management position within an organization (executive director, artistic director, or coordinator) and who reports directly to the organization's board of directors.

director positions were exclusively artistic. For 53% of respondents, it was their first job in a director position. Nearly one half of respondents had occupied this position for more than eight years (49%), and 24% of these respondents had occupied the position for more than 15 years. In addition, nearly one third of executive directors (31%) also sat on the board of directors of the organization as a voting member, and nearly half (48%) of artistic directors carried out these two functions (director and voting member of the board).

A large portion of respondents worked in small organizations, with an annual budget of less than $250,000 (43%). Organizations with annual budgets between $250,000 and $499,999 made up one quarter of the sample (25%), while those with an annual budget between $500,000 and $999,999 and those with an annual budget of $1 million or more each accounted for 16% of the sample. Thus, one third of respondents (32%) came from organizations with an annual budget of $500,000 or more.

The largest proportion of organizations represented were those that had been in existence for more than 30 years (38%). Nearly one third of responding organizations were between 20 and 29 years old (30%), and 22% were between 10 and 19 years old. The youngest organizations, that is, those that were less than 10 years old, made up the smallest cohort (10%). The large majority (81%) of organizations that were less than 10 years old were small organizations, that is, with an annual revenue of less than $250,000. The largest proportion (32%) of organizations with annual revenues between $250,000 and $499,999 were between 20 and 29 years old, while organizations with annual revenues between $500,000 and $999,999 were generally over 30 years old (22%). This was also the case for organizations with annual revenues of $1 million or more (24%).

The organizations were located both in the urban areas of Montréal and Québec City (48%) and in other regions of Quebec (52%). A large proportion of respondents were directors of organizations in the performing arts sector (48%) that were more than 30 years old (38%).

Leadership succession challenges (executive and artistic) for cultural NPOs

The results show that 67% of respondents received a salary for a full-time[9] position and nearly all of them received it on an annual basis (62%). However, slightly more than one quarter of respondents were in precarious employment situations: 11% of respondents were self-employed, 6% were paid on an occasional basis (5% full time and 1% part time) and 9% worked on a voluntary basis.

The results indicate that current directors are relatively old. In fact, 67% of respondents were 46 or older. This rate is higher than that of the Statistics Canada data (Landry, 2011b) on cultural directors for this same age group (49%). In addition, 18% of respondents who expected to leave their position were considering retirement.

The study shows that a significant number of directors are planning on leaving their position and not continuing their career in a cultural NPO. Nearly half of respondents (45%) expected to leave

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[9] 30 hours of work or more per week

their job within less than six years. Only 30% of directors planning to leave said they would prefer a job in a cultural NPO. Many respondents stated that the remuneration offered did not correspond to the demands of the job or to the competencies and training required. The lack of social benefits and pension plans were also considered as elements detracting from job retention and attraction. Respondents of small organizations drew attention to the difficulty of identifying and developing successors within the organization, as well as a lack of interested or qualified candidates. These concerns were not as prevalent in the Montréal and Québec City areas.

Nearly one third of respondents (27%) were founders (4%) or co-founders (23%) of the organization. These results match those of a recent Canadian study (CHRC, 2010) in which 26% of directors were also founders of the organization. Moreover, 79% of directors who were involved in the founding of the organization were over 46 years old. These data allow us to conclude that the presence of founding individuals in cultural NPOs is significant.

The qualitative data also show that directors perceive the organizations they manage as durable. Overall, 83% of respondents believe their departure would not cause the organization to cease its activities. Founding individuals, however, are less certain about the permanence of the organization, with only 60% of the opinion that, following their departure, the organization would continue its activities.

This study also suggests that there is a gap between the perception of directors and the perception of boards of directors when it comes to succession. Respondents were of the opinion that they were more concerned with their succession than the boards of directors of the organizations they managed. Thus, 54% of directors said they were concerned, while 39% said their board of directors was as concerned as they were about succession. Although boards of directors are largely responsible for hiring (for 70% of respondents, the board was in charge of deciding on the executive or artistic director), directors considered that they had a responsibility toward succession and some were involved in the process of their own succession.

In addition, the data highlight that while a large portion of directors plan to relinquish their duties in less than six years, few cultural organizations have a succession plan. Three quarters (76%) of respondents stated that, to their knowledge, the organization did not have a succession plan. Several respondents specified that their organization is already subject to heavy constraints, leaving few resources (human or financial) for succession planning or for developing candidates internally, or for devoting resources to transitions from one director to another. It seems, therefore, that poor succession planning results from this lack of resources.

Finally, the results show that directors require support dedicated to succession planning. Half of respondents (51%) said they would need guidance to plan for succession. As well, directors have expectations toward granting agencies. They consider that financial support is essential, either to facilitate access to resources (mentoring, consulting, training), or to cover the costs incurred during periods of transition between two directors (remuneration).

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The results of the survey were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The comments collected from respondents supported the quantitative data. The data were analyzed in relation to the main issues of succession observed in the literature.

Aging of the workforce

To examine the aging of personnel in director positions, we need something to compare it to. Because this is the first survey focusing specifically on the succession of directors, we cannot make any direct comparisons. However, we do have a profile of directors of cultural and communications organizations, constructed using Statistics Canada census data (Landry, 2011b), which shows that, between 1996 and 2006, there was already an aging of personnel in director positions.

The results of the current survey, in terms of the aging of directors, when placed in parallel with those of Statistics Canada, seem to indicate an accentuation of the predominance of the 46+ age group over younger groups. As hypothesized by Landry (2011b), it is possible that, in some cases, the professionalization of cultural management and the gradual institutionalization of organizations may have resulted in more director positions being entrusted to individuals who have more experience and who, by extension, are older. It is also possible that we are following the same cohort of directors identified by Landry in 2006 (2011b), who are continuing their career and getting older. The results of the current survey indicate that there are few young directors. However, it is also possible that the very subject of the survey attracted a greater number of older respondents, since this topic concerns them more directly.

Leadership deficit; attraction and retention of directors

The results of the survey show a high percentage of directors who plan, should they leave, to take a job that is not in a cultural NPO, or to retire. The question was not asked from the angle "Why do you no longer plan to work in a cultural NPO?" However, it is possible that, although the motivation for holding a director position lies in one's interest in the organization's mission and mandate, it may be hard to sustain this passion when working conditions are difficult (workload, stress, etc.) and financial constraints limit the organization's development. The results of the DeGros and Marsh (2006) survey on graduates of cultural management programs also point in this direction. In addition, generational changes (different work relationships and expectations) could lead to a widening of the gap between people's expectations and the realities of working in the cultural sector.

With respect to succession challenges, the analysis of the comments collected in the current survey highlights a predominance of issues related to human resources: lack of potential, interested, or qualified candidates. Working conditions that are fitting for a director position no doubt facilitate the recruitment of the best candidates and ensure that candidates will hold onto the position for a longer period of time.

These challenges are great, and the concern was expressed with particular intensity outside of the urban centres.

Succession planning

The results of the survey indicate that, although a large portion of directors expect to leave their position within less than six years, few cultural organizations in Québec have a succession plan. Moreover, a large share of the organizations do not have any successions in their history and, therefore, have little experience in this area. The situation of Québec cultural organizations is comparable to what we find in surveys of NPOs in the United States (Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation, 2005).

Succession planning is more than a formal document; it is an activity which, depending on the organization's situation, may take different forms or include different types of activities. The type of candidate and type of succession (e.g. internal candidate, trained gradually within the organization, or external candidate chosen for particular skills and expertise and who fills the position directly) will affect how succession planning is conceived, and may require very different succession practices.

One of the challenges of succession, noted directly or implicit, is tied to the financial situation of these organizations. Several respondents stated that their organization is already under substantial pressures, leaving few resources for succession planning, for developing candidates internally, or for transitions from one director to the next.

It is also possible that there is a disconnect between what is said (theories professed) and what is done (theories used) (Argyris and Schön, 1974) or that the succession planning model conveyed, particularly in the professional literature, does not apply to all organizations and is rejected by those working in cultural organizations (Landry, 2011a) as being a practice that is not appropriate for their reality.

Board of directors and multiple stakeholders

How are the various parties involved in the succession? Our survey indicates that boards of directors are involved in the hiring decisions, and these results are consistent with the literature on succession in NPOs, where the board of directors is the entity that chooses the director (François Colbert, 2003; Santora, Sarros and Cooper, 2011). The current survey shows, however, that the directors in place consider that they are more concerned about succession than their boards of directors. They consider they have a responsibility toward succession and are involved in the succession process. In terms of the selection of new directors, the literature presents the involvement of directors as having both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, directors getting ready to leave their position are not always the best judge of the organization's needs and may have a bias that causes them to favour a successor who is like them (Kesler, 2002). On the other hand, their knowledge of the organization and its needs can serve to identify and pinpoint the competencies required to manage it (Hurd and Buschbom, 2010).

Our analysis of the qualitative data shows that, in some organizations, there is tension between the director and the board of directors over the issue of succession. Some directors view the actions of the board of directors as a form of interference, and deplore the board's lack of knowledge of the organization, its practices and its mission.

The results of the survey also indicate that directors have expectations toward granting agencies. Some directors are of the opinion that financial support is necessary, either to facilitate access to external resources to obtain guidance (mentoring, consulting, training), or to cover the costs incurred by periods of transition between two directors (salaries).

Succession of founders

Nearly one third of respondents were people who had participated in the founding of the organizations they managed. Most of them were co-founders. While these directors expected the organization to survive their departure, they expressed uncertainty toward directors who had not been involved in the founding. While there may be several reasons underlying this uncertainty, two issues seem to be at the forefront. For one, replacing a founder who often performed a combination of tasks may mean hiring more than one person to take over these duties (splitting of positions). Whether the position is filled by one or two people, the departure of a founder is considered as having an impact on the total payroll.

But for some respondents, the departure of a founder raises the question of whether it is even pertinent to ensure the organization's survival. Can and should the organization carry on once its founder has left? Moreover, as one respondent put it, what makes an organization "worth it"? Answering that question is beyond the scope of the current study. However, it appears to be a very intense question, as demonstrated during a meeting organized by the Association des compagnies de Théâtre (ACT) on the succession of artistic directors:[10]

> "Should some [theatre companies] close their doors in order to give younger ones a chance to obtain better grants, or should they maintain their structures and hand over their directorship to younger people? How do you choose an heir apparent and decide which companies deserve to stay and which should disappear? Who should decide?"[11]

The analysis of the comments collected in the survey highlight the disconnect between the organizational realities (funding, management of a venue or major equipment) and the roles of organizations in their community (disciplinary or regional). These situational differences are just some of the elements that must be taken into account in analyzing the complex question of determining what makes an organization "worth it."

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[10] Meeting held at Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui (Montreal) on March 12, 2013, with about 145 people in attendance.
[11] From "La succession des directions artistiques au théâtre: l'héritage venimeux," by Elsa Pépin, March 21, 2103, Voir.ca (Free translation)

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study has some limitations. First, although the response rate was higher than that of previous surveys (Landry, 2008; Courchesne and Turbide, 2009), it was still limited. In addition, the small number of respondents in some fields (museology and heritage and archives) and some regions led us to group them together for analysis purposes. This grouping means that some results likely do not display all the nuances of certain sectors or regions as an analysis without these groupings might have done.

As well, the sample contains a high number of organizations with annual budgets below $250,000, which may have affected the results of the study. The more precarious employment conditions in these organizations may have a direct impact on succession practices or on the types of concerns of directors. In addition, the inability to distinguish between organizations that receive operational support and those that do not prevents us from specifically identifying the different realities of organizations.

Finally, while data collection by questionnaire allows for a bigger sample, it does not allow us to delve deeper into understanding the challenges. It would be desirable to enhance the interpretation of the results obtained through discussions with actors in the cultural milieu.

Future research on succession in cultural organizations should include roundtable discussions with actors in the field (senior directors, emerging directors, boards of directors, funding agencies, regional or disciplinary associations) in order to anchor the results, to ensure understanding of all of the issues, and to situate them within their context, whether disciplinary or regional.

In addition, leadership succession likely entails different practices and constraints depending on whether artistic or more administrative duties are involved. Future work should consider the challenges or practices specific to these two types of director positions.

Moreover, the current situation of arts funding, demographic changes, and feelings of intergenerational injustice could interfere with discussions on succession, which is already a complex issue. It is essential for future work to garner the participation of all stakeholders. It will be important to be able to take into account the different needs, contexts, and cultural and social norms. To do so, it is important to have a broad understanding of what succession entails.

As attested to by many of the comments from respondents, talking about succession in cultural organizations will not necessarily be easy. There is no denying the emotions stirred by a succession. As well, succession is part of an evolving social and economic context and it is possible that what we are experiencing in Québec, at this time, may have already been experienced elsewhere:

> "But usually these days, succession in the arts is not pleasant. Often it is ugly, and mean, and even vicious. The problems, politics, and challenges of providing for artistic and managerial change in the arts have become an issue of near-crisis proportions in recent years. [. . .] The most predominant of these changes are in

the nature of leadership, the new funding environment, a growing reliance on marketing, the changing composition of boards of trustees, an increased emphasis on institutionalization, and an obsession with permanence." (Zeigler, 1991)

This survey establishes the first portrait of directors of cultural NPOs and the issues raised by their succession. It offers relevant and current information, while keeping in mind the specific nature and wide diversity of cultural organizations in Québec. It opens the door for a discussion among actors and seeks to encourage deeper reflection on the multiple challenges, practices and expectations of the different stakeholders involved.

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