In the last three decades, libraries, archives and museums have engaged in a wide range of collaborations and fusions. A central argument behind these new collaborations is more value for money: Is it possible for the cultural institutions to facilitate more and better cultural experiences for their users while saving money on administrative tasks, maintenance of buildings etc.? Will pooling together resources lead to an increased local, national and international impact on the institutions involved (Warren & Matthews 2019:28–29, Robinson 2019:98)?

The academic literature on LAM convergence has highlighted benefits in terms of user engagement, professional development and cultural impact. Theoretical perspectives and policies have dominated the discussion, while studies based on employee perspectives have been scarce (though not entirely absent, which we shall return to shortly (Cannon 2013, Warren & Matthews 2019:26–27, Klimaszewski 2013)).

Abstract: Hybrid cultural institutions have emerged in the last decades. LAM (libraries, archives and museums) convergences are a particularly complex hybrid, as they combine different jurisdictions, professions and ideas on how to collect, preserve and communicate cultural heritage.

This article explores the LAM convergence of BMA-Maltfabrikken in a former malting house in the Danish town of Ebeltoft. The article presents the findings of a research project into the impact that the process of LAM convergence had on the employees’ disciplinary development.

The authors point to three key factors that may engender a sustainable LAM convergence process: LAM convergence as a process of professional development for museum professionals; LAM convergence as sustained by a series of Communities of Practice; and increased awareness of professional identity as a matter of flexible leadership and a loosely coupled organization.

Keywords: Hybrid institution, LAM convergence, Communities of Practice, professional identities, loosely coupled organization.
fruitful environment for collaboration and knowledge exchange across the silos while not impinging on the core tasks of the individual institutions (Wellington 2013, 296). Robinson's 2019 study of three hybrid institutions in New Zealand and Australia supports Wellington's findings that cross-entity teams working on focused tasks are conducive for the development of dissemination (Robinson 2019, 100, 106). Robinson, moreover, indicates that the role of leadership is central to a successful merger; lack of clearly articulated institutionally founded visions (as opposed to e.g. purely economic incentives) is detrimental to convergence. Likewise, a top-down leadership style appears to be badly suited for LAM convergences. Robinson's examples show how a lack of understanding of the professional competencies of the employees results in them being asked to fill new roles they did not feel equipped to take on. This led to feelings of stress and inadequacy for the employees. Robinson argues that it is pivotal that leaders understand hybridization processes as professional development. Finally, institutional and professional protectionism from the leaders was detrimental to collaboration (Robinson 2019:102, 108–109).

During the autumn of 2019, we conducted a qualitative study among employees and leaders of BMA-Maltfabrikken: A collaboration between library (in Danish: ‘bibliotek’, hence the B in BMA), museum and archive in a former malting house (in Danish: ‘maltfabrik’) in the town of Ebeltoft. In this article we will present our findings, adding to a more nuanced understanding of the impact that LAM convergence has on the employees in the institutions. Based on the questions raised in Wellington's and Robinson's work, we will focus on two aspects of convergence: How does the multi-institutional collaboration affect the
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initiated by a private foundation to promote active citizenship and attracting tourists, local creatives, and international artists. The Malting House is thus a commercial foundation but supported by Syddjurs Municipality on the condition of housing BMA-Maltfabrikken side-by-side with a music venue, various shops, an artist in residency programme, and a restaurant. BMA-Maltfabrikken opened to the public in June 2020.

BMA-Maltfabrikken is not a formal fusion of three cultural institutions but an attempt to supplement the existing cultural institutions. For example, the employees of the library, museum and archive continue to refer to the leaders of their individual institutions, and they do not use the same IT solutions for emails or calendars and digital journalising. Indeed, some of the employees involved refer to BMA-Maltfabrikken as “the shared third place” (in Danish: “det fælles tredje”) (EI 4, EI 8, LI 2). BMA-Maltfabrikken as a concept has a history going almost ten years back before the process of establishing the collaboration began in earnest in 2015.

BMA-Maltfabrikken consists of three institutions with very different organizational backgrounds: Syddjurs Libraries (Syddjurs Bibliotek) and East Jutland Museum (Museum Østjylland), which includes the local archives of Ebeltoft. The museum partner in the collaboration is a recent merger of three museums located at various addresses in the municipalities of Randers, Norddjurs and Syddjurs. Since 2013, the municipal archives of Randers were also included in the organization, and recently the Ebeltoft town archives joined the municipal archives. The public library of Ebeltoft is part of a united organization of all public libraries in Syddjurs Municipality with locations in the towns of Rønde, Kolind and Hornslet.

development of professional competencies of the employees? What is required from the organization behind a LAM convergence to ensure professional development, impact and job satisfaction of each employee? Our point in doing that is to explore how the findings of Wellington and Robinson may be developed beyond an Anglo-Saxon context and enable us to reflect on characteristics of LAM convergences across national and regional lines.

In our analysis of the LAM collaboration at BMA-Maltfabrikken, we will apply organizational and learning theory to develop a concept for successful convergences and based on our case we will point to some of the mechanisms crucial to a constructive and conductive LAM convergence.

BMA-MALTFAKRIKKEN AS A CASE OF LAM CONVERGENCE

As indicated earlier, LAM convergence as a concept covers a broad range of collaborative constellations between libraries, archives and museums and a consensus on how to define LAM convergence as a concept does not exist in academic literature (Warren & Matthews 2019:1123, Rasmussen 2019:1260). Rather, each collaboration represents a unique convergence between institutions. Some convergences may take place as temporary collaborations, while others are permanent fusions between institutions. Some involve only aspects of institutional practice, i.e. management or digitization of collections, while others entail full integrations of formerly separate institutions into one.¹

Accordingly, the case of BMA-Maltfabrikken offers a unique version of LAM convergence: It is located on a territory that is at once public and private, as the Malting House is

1 According to the text, the case of BMA-Maltfabrikken offers a unique version of LAM convergence: It is located on a territory that is at once public and private, as the Malting House is.
Although the malting house is located in Syddjurs Municipality, the collaboration not only includes employees from the Syddjurs departments of East Jutland Museum and Syddjurs Libraries but also employees based at museums in Randers and Norddjurs Municipalities and the libraries in Rønde, Kolind and Hornslet. Both museum, archive and library will remain present in many other locations, and nobody expects neither the libraries of Syddjurs Municipality nor East Jutland Museum to carry out all their tasks within the framework of BMA-Maltfabrikken. Finally, as East Jutland Museum refers to three municipalities while the local libraries of Syddjurs Municipality refer to just one municipality, the institutions involved in BMA-Maltfabrikken do not share the same economical organization either.

Instead, BMA-Maltfabrikken is an organisation of distinct and continuously extended complexity as it is organized as an organic group of employees with differing and alternating roles in the process of convergence. Its ambition is to create “an entirely new form of multi professional dissemination and public education while providing [its users] with a brand new experience of literature and local history”, as the website of BMA-Maltfabrikken announces.² The management of BMA-Maltfabrikken is shared between the directors of East Jutland Museum and Syddjurs Libraries as well as two project managers: a curator with responsibility for public outreach and an exhibition architect, both employees of East Jutland Museum.

**Questioning a LAM convergence**

We conducted our research over a four-month period during which the employees of the three institutions were in the final stage of preparing for their physical amalgamation in the former malting house.³ When we started, the employees all knew each other and many of them had collaborated for several years on the project. At this point, the focus of the collaboration was the final stages of the organization of the shared physical space at the malting house and the programming of themes for the dissemination and outreach activities of the first year.

Our research contributed to the collaboration by documenting the process. Based on our data, we questioned tendencies in procedures and sustained reflection and dialogue among the leaders and employees in the crucial months before the physical union, highlighting and solving issues as they arose in the course of a development project through intervention. Our data was collected through 12 qualitative interviews with employees and leaders⁴ as well as observations of seven meetings, both internal meetings in the working groups and meetings between BMA-Maltfabrikken and external partners. We regularly presented and discussed our findings with the leadership team and provided immediate feedback on our observations after all the internal meetings. Finally, we presented our findings to the entire staff of BMA-Maltfabrikken at a staff meeting.

Our engagement with the process of LAM convergence within BMA-Maltfabrikken took place at a time when employees and leaders were ready to look back and reflect on their collaboration and individual contributions to it. Knowing that the next part of the convergence – moving to their new location – was just about to happen, they generally welcomed the opportunity to do so.

The interviews and observations revealed a strong focus among the employees on their future users as well as a significant focus on professional integrity:
Additionally, our interviews with the leaders identified an understanding of the convergence as a learning process which encourages personal and professional development among the employees:

“We are situated there [in the process of converging BMA-Maltfabrikken] to sustain an interdisciplinarity, and that is: to try to push people away from a fixed image of themselves as professionals” (LI 1).

Based on this observation, we focused on exploring how clashes between professional identities and various understandings of shared concepts constituted a space for professional development and awareness. To this end, Lave and Wenger’s pragmatist approach to learning has proved itself particularly useful in pinpointing the mechanisms at play in the convergence of BMA-Maltfabrikken, in particular their concept Communities of Practice (CoPs). We choose this framework to be able to highlight how the convergence presents an extraordinary quantitative and professional expansion of the customary working communities of the employees. This challenge was acknowledged by both organizations as a precondition for the convergence process and, as we will show, CoPs were developed and encouraged to support cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The LAM convergence of BMA-Maltfabrikken as a Community of Practice

Lave and Wenger define a CoP as “a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger 1991: 40) and as “a group of professionals informally bound to one another through exposure to a common class
of problems and common pursuit of solutions and thereby themselves embodying a store of knowledge” (Manville & Foote 1996:10). These phrasings define the processes at BMA-Maltfabrikken quite accurately.

In Lave and Wenger’s CoPs, the participants engage in social learning as a group. The participants’ status in the CoP is dependent on their authority and seniority; e.g. their level of knowledge and skillset and how long they have participated in the community. We see this expressed very clearly when one of the leaders at BMA-Maltfabrikken points out the importance of being the one who “remembers the history” as previously quoted. Lave and Wenger conceptualize learning as an apprenticeship, where the apprentice starts as a peripheral figure in the community of practice until his or her experience and skill set make him or her a full member. Lave and Wenger do not see learning as a finite process, but as a continuous development throughout the life of the community: An evolving form of membership based on the development of competencies (Lave & Wenger 1991:55).

We found that this approach to convergence was an integral part of the process. As one of the leaders at BMA-Maltfabrikken expressed, when asked what he expected the employees to obtain from their involvement in BMA-Maltfabrikken:

“Well, my feelings about competency development are that I think it’s a good thing. People need to take courses and so on, but the best competency development is really a matter of doing developmental tasks as part of your work […]. I think there’ll be a lot of competency development in this [project] all the time” (LI 4).

If we view any convergence as a learning process and a LAM convergence as a potential learning environment, the role of the leader(s) may necessarily also be that of a facilitator. This notion was confirmed in an interview with another member of the leader team (LI 1), who expressed that an important task for any leader at BMA-Maltfabrikken is to facilitate a process that contributes to the self-understanding of each employee, corresponding to Lave and Wenger’s holistic approach to learning (Lave & Wenger 1991:31, 53).

This understanding of learning is recognized by some of the employees: One employee expressed that she has usually considered herself “a quiet person in meeting situations” and has now experienced how the collaboration with the other institutions has forced her to stand up for her opinions (EI 7). Another employee describes how she is no longer “just the one to pass on the ball but also the one who has to prepare the ground for it” and has found it “very exciting to experience that I might actually be capable of that.” (EI 4). This notion corresponds very well with Lave and Wenger’s point about learning being an apprenticeship where one starts as a peripheral figure and eventually becomes a full member as his or her level of experience grows.

Furthermore, participating in CoPs within BMA-Maltfabrikken has generally emphasized the professional identity of the employees. For instance, the notion of cultural heritage has become a marker of identifying differences among the employees as shown in this statement from one of the librarians:

“I understand it [cultural heritage] as something very far from what the museums see. I think we have organized our cultural heritage functions in an entirely different way at the libraries” (IE 3).

As concluded in various studies, the understanding of collections is a typical area of
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disparity between museums, archives and libraries (Wellington 2013, Duff et al. 2013, Dupont 2007). In our research at BMA-Maltfabrikken, we found that the museum and archive employees view collection maintenance as an important job function, indicating a clear sense of professional core tasks (EI 4, EI 1). Indeed, working with the collections requires various roles among the employees of the library and the museum and archive, respectively. We found that the meaning attached to the collections ranged from “inventory management” (EI 6) to raison d'être (EI 1, EI 4), corresponding to the differences cited in the literature between the conceptualizations of collections at libraries, archives and museums (Warren & Matthews 2020:4–5). Our research confirms Wellington’s argument that convergence succeeds best when focused on front-end activities and thus respects the professional institutional integrities.

However, we found that the collaboration processes between the museum, archive and library inspired new reflections on practices and concepts. While managing cultural heritage was a focal point for the museum and archive’s practice, the employees of the library openly admitted that cultural heritage was not part of their daily vocabulary. As one of the employees at the library replied when we first asked him about his associations with cultural heritage: “Then it’s about dust on exhibition cases!” (EI 2). When interviewed again a month later, the same employee reflected on immaterial cultural heritage and the role of the libraries in terms of shaping and communicating it (EI 6). The library employees engaged with the concept as something they could see themselves redefining and communicating, both in their purely library-related functions and at BMA-Maltfabrikken, thus opening for adaptions of new conceptualizations of their institutional tasks. Our findings thus support Wellington’s findings that LAM convergence can contribute to strengthening the personal and professional integrity of the individual employee. The employees of BMA-Maltfabrikken felt that the process supported them in reflecting on their disciplinary characteristics, increasing their awareness of what tasks they felt comfortable performing but also emboldening them to try new things.

**Loosely Coupled Systems and the Necessity of Change Agents**

Indeed, the process of converging at BMA-Maltfabrikken has proved to be highly dependent on mutual trust between leaders and employees. The question is then how to structure a convergence to facilitate dynamic and constructive CoPs? Our data provided relevant perspectives on how organizational structures affect convergences as learning processes. An important aspect of the collaboration at BMA-Maltfabrikken is that not all employees have started from the same point or at the same time. Rather, the employees have been involved gradually as more and more teams have been formed to solve a wide range of specified tasks. For instance, a steering committee was formed early in the process to define the main course of public outreach at BMA-Maltfabrikken. This group defined three main themes and created a catalogue of ideas on how to implement the themes. Then the implementation of the ideas was assigned to other teams where some of the same employees were present. Thus, the employees had different positions and their positions changed along the way, as some of the employees were more apprentices than others, and they moved from peripheral to full members of
the CoPs at different speeds. Consequently, the development of BMA-Maltfabrikken was structured with multiple CoPs which worked alongside each other, often overlapping. This structure ensured transmission of learning from one team to another, a form of viral effect within the organization.

Such a viral effect is only constructive in an organization that is a “loosely coupled system” as defined by Weick in 1976 and elaborated on through the following decades (Weick 1976, Weick and Orton 1990). According to Weick, changes will occur organically in a decentralized manner, if the organization has a loose structure, which underpins localized adaptions to new situations without necessarily engaging the whole organization. Changes in one area will spread laterally through intrapersonal links across the institution. The opposite is the case of the tightly coupled system where all parts are interlinked and closely managed. These types of organizations have a top-down leadership style where the leaders make the decisions and ensure that the decisions are effectuated by the members of the organization in a vertical structure of communication.

We observed that BMA-Maltfabrikken primarily functioned as a loosely coupled system, where the employees were part of several groups simultaneously which organically absorbed and encouraged changes: One employee would get an idea, which then spread to the other employees in the team, thus infecting other teams as they shared a member or two with the first team. For instance, various employees mentioned the difference in pace and actuality in terms of creating displays:

“I actually think that we are beginning to see things a LITTLE different. […] You know, we are kind of the snails in this [collaboration]. And it's great with profundity and thoroughness and all that. But I think that eventually we will be inspired by the library's slightly more 'grab on to something a little sooner and process it QUICKLY'. And I actually think that there's some receptiveness to that” (LI 2).  

Obviously, this form of organic idea-generating and collaborative development of concepts fully relies on a trustful team spirit, which ensures that the inevitable frustrations of any collaboration do not overshadow the initial enthusiasm among the employees. How do we ensure that the learning processes taking place within the CoPs lead to constructive solutions?

One aspect of converging is the role of culture-bearers. Not only leaders with a clear focus on the original idea and the shared narrative are important. Converging might also include an element of conflict – and of managing to maintain the collaboration and move on. As one of the employees phrases it:

“I at least think that if we want to get as much out of this as possible once we're at it, then it's important that the persons who work with it are situated there at the same time. […] Where for example I get to say something super-dumb, that some archivist just finds extremely provocative because I just manage to reduce their professionalism to something. And the other way around: ‘Can't we just hang that painting out there?’ And then some conservator goes nuts, right? ‘There's light everywhere. We can't leave anything hanging there.’ And I'm like: 'Can't we just use a copy of the original' and then [makes explosion-sound]. […] You need to be curious about the others and about 'What can we do here together?'” (EI 2)

As one of the employees noticed, “culture is also the people present at the place” (EI 6). This indicates that the number of hours the individual employees get to spend on-site is
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import important when it comes to the employee's options for gaining authority and seniority within the CoP. All employees involved are used to navigating between two workplaces or more. But as this particular employee remarks, his influence on the general practice at BMA-Maltfabrikken might not only be a matter of temporal flexibility but just as much of his ability to “speak the language of an archaeologist or a conservator” and “read the room and understand its mechanisms” (EI 6). To him, this is not only a matter of reading your surroundings but also a matter of being present for a sufficient amount of time to adapt to the manners, language and mindsets in question. This realization is pertinent since the working groups formed in the merger process are not permanent but will shut down gradually as they complete their tasks. It is thus up to the employees who will be part of the core staff at BMA-Maltfabrikken to continue a culture of collaboration, forming new groups around future projects.

As one of the leaders pointed out, the employees at BMA-Maltfabrikken are to a wide extent self-managing. Accordingly, the role of the leader in the loosely coupled, experimental collaboration at BMA-Maltfabrikken appears to be not so much a matter of power to make decisions, but more what Zorich et al. would identify as a “change agent” (Zorich et al. 2008:24): a culture bearer with the responsibility of keeping the vision alive and providing the participants with the necessary tools and infrastructure to sustain the common effort.6

This definition of the change agent corresponds well with the notions of the leaders, who understand their roles as holding on to the original idea and the project history and as pushing the employees’ idea of themselves as professionals. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of convergence means that leaders also needs to be flexible and share the development with the employees, making the entire organization less vulnerable to substantial changes in the staff (Duff et al. 2013, Yarrow et al. 2008, Allen & Bishoff 2001:66).

This aspect of holding on to something is even more important as the definition of ‘the shared third place’ is continuously developed:

“And we keep talking about this ’shared third place’, which you might also have heard from some of the others, and which we still don’t completely … we have an idea of it, and we have also experienced it more concretely. You know, we’ve been making some events together during the last few years, where we have been doing something interprofessional, and where we could say ’Hey, there was something there that actually made sense!’” (EI 5)

**Making a safe space for learning**

Developing and challenging the ‘professional persona’ and identity of the individual employee, however, is also a task that demands special attention and inter-collegial care. A member of the middle management group addresses the question of insecurity:

“It is this thing about creating ownership for everybody. And actually, I find it very important that this process feels as comfortable as possible too […] I really hope that if something occurs where one might feel uncertain […] that there can be an openness towards that – talking about what’s difficult” (LI 2).

As this manager puts it, there seems to be a close link between feeling ownership of the process and feeling confident about one's role in it. We interpret that as a matter of balancing between tasks that seem familiar and tasks that
are new to the employees. Thus, dissemination seems like the obvious place to start, as this is an area in which all employees are used to navigating. Furthermore, all three institutions have a long history of dissemination and a legislative obligation to reach out to the public. As one of the leaders puts it:

“It might also be so that dissemination [...] is not as dangerous. [...] I mean, if we had just started out by saying: ‘The way we collect objects [at the museum] – that has to be cleared with the library. It needs to be interdisciplinary’ – then I think we might have experienced a sort of ‘OK? Seriously?’ response. [...] So, I think that if we had started from that position, then we would have been met with a very different reaction” (LI 2).

As one employee replied when asked if she could imagine a collaboration focusing on other tasks than public outreach:

“I think dissemination has been decided on [as a starting point for the convergence] because it’s something that we all do to some extent, and sometimes you’re just better off picking the low-hanging fruit” (EI 4).

Dissemination also seems to be the one thing that all employees value as equally important. Almost all our interviewees mention the importance of offering something extra to the public. As one employee phrases it:

“We’ve got this thing in common that we want to give people more than what they expect. And that’s definitely our hope to do that” (EI 5).

Another employee shares his hope for that while being aware that the LAM convergence of BMA-Maltfabrikken is also testing the needs and interests of the public:

“Hopefully, people will find out that ‘Wow! This is all sorts of stuff! It’s more than just a museum. It’s more than just a library. It’s more than just an archive!’” (EI 2)

Notions like these echo perceptions in the literature where the common denominator between LAMs is that they are “user-oriented”, working for and relying on users to sustain their relevance (Kelly 2018:3, Rasmussen 2019:1265, Wellington 2013). Employees involved in BMA-Maltfabrikken have certainly put an effort into establishing a mutual practice. Since all activities at BMA-Maltfabrikken are to take place within new and shared physical surroundings, the employees have had to approach the challenges of collaborative co-existence in a very concrete manner. Thus,
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the development of shared physical solutions has led to unique designs: One is the book loan machine Malthazar (whose name refers both to the malting house and to the children’s series Professor Balthazar about a creative inventor) (Fig. 1). Built from a compressor from the original malting house and extended with various buttons and handles to operate the machinery, Malthazar serves a basic library function, namely book loans, and additionally as an interactive communication tool which points back in time to the original malting house and the work procedures of the early 20th Century industry as the book in question is put into one slot, led through various processes via the actions of the library guest and finally released from another slot, thus miming assembly line work.

Malthazar serves a practical function in terms of combining solutions necessary for all three institutions involved in BMA-Maltfabrikken and holds a symbolic value as a physical manifestation of the convergence in the new hybrid institution. In that sense, it also serves as a form of material culture bearer that reminds everyone about the collaborative approach at BMA-Maltfabrikken.

Indeed, when asked about what makes the LAM convergence of BMA-Maltfabrikken so unique, one of the leaders hesitantly mentions
“this close, close collaboration between the museum, library, and archive” and characterizes Malthazar as “a very unique solution [...] where we’ve really taken advantage of each other’s competencies for dissemination and each other’s professional knowledge” (LI 4). Indeed, Malthazar may very well be the closest we get to a visual manifestation of the shared third place.

The shared third place as a common ground

As expressed by the leaders, the convergence of the institutions at BMA-Maltfabrikken is to a wide extent a matter of developing a shared narrative among the employees. Practically, this is done by agreeing on various values and strategies and by creating concrete manifestations of the joint effort.

Within BMA-Maltfabrikken, we have seen how some employees refer to the shared third place as a place where all tracks meet and eventually synthesize into a new and unique hybrid institution. Meanwhile, we have also experienced employees referring quite strongly to their ‘mother institutions’ of which they consider themselves ambassadors:

“I really need to remember my colleagues in this teamwork. [...] I’ve experienced a great openness from all participants in terms of embracing each other’s tasks. But our mindset is also of the professional area that we come from. So, we tend to picture differing scenarios. And we sometimes realize that we need to address that as well in order to somehow embrace all these different areas” (EI 5).

As this quote illustrates, great enthusiasm about defining the shared third place goes hand in hand with a strong sense of loyalty towards one’s ‘mother institution’. This corresponds well with the findings of Mitchell, Bishoff and Robinson, who address the risk of meeting resistance among the employees if the uniqueness of their respective professional identities is not acknowledged in the process of converging (Mitchell 2016:47, Bishoff 2004:35, Robinson 2019). The obvious question is then if the visitors at BMA-Maltfabrikken will sense an atmosphere which is at once library-like, archive-like and museum-like – and the employees will thus have succeeded in expressing all three institutions without actually being any of them.

In one of the meetings observed, various practicalities and functions of the spaces in BMA-Maltfabrikken were up for discussion. Eventually, an employee from the museum suggested using the empty walls of a staircase to put information on local history and portraits of the malting house’s founder and directors on display. Although this might seem like a minor contribution, it would still be a way of adding something ‘museum-like’ to the shared physical space.

Initiatives like this facilitate interference and the creation of the shared third place, which combines instead of dividing as clearly expressed with Malthazar. According to VanderBerg, LAM convergence often induces fear of identity loss and will often lead to isolated operations, where one of the institutions involved secretly operates separated from the others in the hope of maintaining its uniqueness (VanderBerg 2012:144). Duff et al. point to differences in professional values and identities as a source of conflict, particularly regarding approaches to users and cultural mandates (Duff et al. 2013). On that note, we may see the suggestion regarding the staircase as a matter of the museum fighting for its ‘museum-ness’.

However, such detours from the concept of
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may well own its success to the fact that the employees and leaders have had dissemination as their shared point of departure.

Organizing the development of BMA-Maltfabrikken and its output as a multi-professional team structure serves the function of making everyone aware of professional competencies and key functions and how it differs from that of their colleagues. By understanding the process of convergence as an opportunity to learn and evolve, the leaders acknowledged insecurities, imperfections and conflicts among the employees. They also embraced the professional integrity of the employees and their need for being taken seriously as professional individuals with the potential to evolve.

Thus, our research confirms the conclusions of Robinson, who specifically points to a clear vision along with the ability to embrace the process of convergence as a way to professional development as the key prerequisites for successful hybridization. As Robinson concludes, top-down leadership and professional protectionism can be fatal to the collaboration between the respective institutions, because it may well lead to an experience of being professionally misplaced. These conclusions go hand in hand with our findings on the loosely coupled organization as a conducive environment for LAM-convergences.

Conclusions: LAM convergence as communities of practice

LAM convergence is a matter of uniting fellowship and functionality. At BMA-Maltfabrikken, we have experienced that the LAM convergence is a process characterized by a high degree of professional self-awareness. The employees have come close to establishing common ground and, affirmative to the findings of Wellington and Robinson, the so-far-successful convergence of BMA-Maltfabrikken
by Robinson and emphasized in Wellington’s research. Our study of BMA-Maltfabrikken
takes this recommendation a step further: In their procedure for the convergence, BMA-
Maltfabrikken had also included displacements in time, as each employee is frequently teaming
up with members of already existing teams as well as employees new to the process of
convergence. We have found that this approach sustained a focus on continuous learning and
development of competencies in the CoPs and prevented the process from being challenged
by all employees experiencing a high level of insecurity at the same time.

According to Lave and Wenger, joining a CoP is an infinite process. Converging the three
institutions into BMA-Maltfabrikken is thus a matter of remaining inclusive and tolerant
concerning new ideas and working methods continuously. Parts of the organization may take
a detour from time to time. As we argue, this calls for a loosely coupled organization, which
allows for an experience of co-management among the employees and requires high levels
of trust and loyalty among the leaders towards the employees, among the employees towards
the leaders and among all employees.

The loosely coupled system accommodates organic and continuous negotiations of profes-
sionalism within an organization and it is underpinned by narrative structures that are
constructed through consensus. Thus, the role of the leader is to hold on to the narrative
about a continuous learning process, so that LAM convergence does not turn into constant
competition, but expresses itself as a dynamic and shared third place.

**Notes**

1. Yarrow et al. 2008:25 have sought to define three
types of convergence based on types of activities.
Furthermore, Dornseif 2001 has contributed
with a conceptualization of convergence based
on the level of integration of the institutions
involved. Walker & Manjarrez 2003 have
described the complexity of LAM convergence
as particularly challenged by four risks related to
capacity, strategy, commitment and compatibility,
respectively.
2. Homepage of BMA-Maltfabrikken, March 1,
2021.
4. When referring to the interviews we will
identify them as either EI (Employee Interview)
or LI (Leader Interview) and a number. A list
of interviews with numbers and dates of each
interview can be found before the bibliography.
5. The need for a shared vision and a clear view of
the original idea is also described in Robinson
2016:153-155
6. Allen & Bishoff 2001:67 identify the leader or
central staff members as the most important
change agents and keys to a successful
convergence.

**Interviews**

**Employee interviews (EI)**
Archivist, Aug 13, 2019, 11 AM
Library employee, Aug 13, 2019, 1.15 PM
Library employee, Aug 13, 2019, 2.45 PM
Museum employee, Aug 8, 2019, 10 AM
Library employee, Sep 10, 2019, 10 AM
Library employee, Sep 13, 2019, 12.30 PM
Library employee, Oct 10, 2019, 11 AM
Museum employee, Oct 10, 2019, 10 AM

**Leader interviews (LI)**
Library leader, Sep 6, 2019, 1.15 PM
Communities of Practice within the hybrid cultural institution

Museum curator, Sep 16, 2019, 2.15 PM
Museum leader, Oct 7, 12 AM
Museum architect, Oct 11, 2019, 9 AM

**Literature**


Ifversen, Karsten R. S. 2020. “Seks hjerter:


