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7 Institutional Convergence and Divergence in Norwegian Cultural Policy: Central Government LAM Organization 1999–2019

Introduction

> [T]he advent of electronic sources of information and their ever-increasing volume and variety will require a major redefinition and integration of the role of archives, museums, and research libraries. It is my point of view that the distinction between all of these apparently different types of institutions will eventually make little sense. (Rayward 1998, 207).

Rayward's prediction describes expectations in the LAM (libraries, archives, and museums) field that technological change and digitalization would produce coordination gains and institutional mergers over time. In Norway, *The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority* (*ABM–utvikling – Statens senter for arkiv, bibliotek og museum*), from here on referred to as *ABM–u*, was established in 2003. The digitization of documents such as books, journals, archival material and museum objects, and with this increasing similarity in working methods between the sectors was an essential argument in the process leading up to the creation of ABM–u:

> The commonality between the three sectors is even stronger through the growing use of information and communication technology (ICT) both in the organization and management of collections and materials and in the dissemination work towards the public. In addition, the three types of institutions increasingly handle digital material, either in the form of digitized representation of other original material, or material that already exists in digital form. This may lead to the working methods becoming more similar, and it is natural to consider how closely the coordination potential can develop so that users can have the easiest possible access to combined services. (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 2).[1]

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[1] The quotations from Norwegian public documents have been translated by the authors of this chapter.

Note: The chapter builds on and develops material previously published by the authors (Skare, Stokstad and Vårheim 2019; Vårheim, Skare and Lenstra 2019), and is partly a translation of one of the articles (Skare, Stokstad and Vårheim 2019).

In 2007, ABM-u was reorganized on the basis of an evaluation carried out by *Statskonsult*.[2] The evaluation was to "assess the appropriateness of the current organization of ABM–u and outline possible alternatives" (Statskonsult 2006, foreword). In 2010, the central government administration of the LAM (libraries, archives, and museums) sector was reorganized and ABM–u was discontinued (St.meld. nr. 20 (2009–2010)). This should lead to "a better and more focused work on the digital challenges of the future in the archives, libraries and museums" (St.meld. nr. 20 (2009–2010), 3).

ABM–u's short-lived existence appears as a long-drawn-out reorganization process. In short, ABM–u was created, evaluated, reorganized, re-evaluated, re-organized, and discontinued within seven years. In the years before, during, and after ABM–u, the LAM task portfolio was distributed within different institutional frameworks. It is noteworthy that a central governmental agency was closed seemingly painlessly in just under eleven months.

This article raises the question of why ABM–u was not continued as a cultural policy instrument for the LAM sector. The question provides a basis for elucidating conditions for state governance in the cultural heritage area, contributing to the academic and professional discussion of organizational and governance models in the public sector and reorganization processes in Norwegian public administration. Also, the chapter is a contribution to the international literature on institutional convergence in the LAM field. Convergence in the LAM sector concerns co-location, forms of collaboration, and digitalization. The article describes the process from the establishment of ABM–u in 2003 to reorganization and closure in 2010. An underlying and central issue in the process was the importance of digitizing cultural heritage and whether a separate coordination body was appropriate to achieve this.

The concepts of digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation are often confused. Warner and Wäger (2019, 328) provide an overview of definitions of the three concepts ranging from the change in technology and changing socio-technical systems to the transformation of the business models and institutions. Digitization means "[t]he encoding of analog information into digital format. Digitization makes physical products [e.g., artifacts] programmable, addressable, sensible, communicable, memorable, traceable and associable" (Yoo, Henfridsson, and Lyytinen 2010, 725). Digitalization is defined as "[a] sociotechnical process of applying digitizing techniques to broader social and institutional contexts that render digital technologies infrastructural" (Tilson, Lyytinen, and

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2 Statskonsult was until 2008 the Norwegian government directorate for administrative development, and then merged into a larger agency; see note 5.

Sørensen 2010, 749). Digital transformation involves "the changes digital technologies can bring about in a company's business model, which result in changed products or organizational structures or in the automation of processes" (Hess, Matt, Benlian, and Wiesböck 2016, 124).

We analyze and discuss the change processes in the central government LAM organization engaging historical institutional theory and a policy studies approach and primarily examine public documents such as annual reports, White Papers, consultation statements, budget proposals, letters of assignment, and evaluation reports. The 20 years of digital and institutional development since 1999 is in focus.

Theory: Institutional Convergence

LAM: Organizational Focus

In a comprehensive two-part review article on different models for library-museum collaboration, Warren and Matthews conclude that the literature in the field is limited in scope and that the findings to a small extent provide a basis for saying what factors influence whether collaborative measures in the cultural organizational field are successful (Warren and Matthews 2018a; 2018b). The main focus of the article is what the authors call physical convergence between libraries and museums, that is, merging and co-location, but also weaker forms of collaboration such as partnerships, integration in the sector, and project collaboration are described and discussed.

Since the 1990', within information science and media studies, it is the digital revolution, where different types of documents are given digital representations that makes the concept of convergence relevant. The extent to which the concept of convergence is equally fruitful in the study of organizational change in the LAM sector, in the study of organizational change in general, or as a basis for institutional development in the public sector, is unclear.

Studies of organizational change in the LAM sector, including the change process ABM−u underwent, are interesting for the LAM sector with a view to future policy formulation processes. The lack of studies of organizational change in the LAM sector as such makes the case study of the change processes in ABM−u interesting as a basis for generating hypotheses and as part of theory development processes about organizational change and policy change in information and cultural heritage institutions.

LAM Convergence

In this article, we focus on institutional convergence. Convergence means that phenomena are moving towards each other, approaching each other, and becoming more similar to each other. The term existed in the analog world, but in the twenty-first century it is increasingly used by researchers and in public documents, also in the LAM field. This increase is most evident regarding the emergence of electronic and digital media and digitalization. Digitization would cause – it was expected – that all the documents we surround ourselves with will eventually be retrievable in the same digital format, and that the differences between formats and media will, therefore, disappear: "Digitization makes the signals themselves equal, regardless of what kind of information or communication they represent. As a result, it was assumed that convergence would take place." (Fagerjord and Storsul 2007, 19).

The merging of institutions, co-location, and collaboration are often used as synonymous terms for convergence when LAM institutions are in focus. As mentioned at the outset, it is envisaged that digitization will lead to more similarities between the various institutions and that this would increase cooperation on technological solutions. An example is an article "From coexistence to convergence" (Duff et al. 2013), which is based on interviews with employees of five "converging" LAM institutions in Canada and New Zealand. The concept of convergence is not used in the research questions of the project, but collaboration. Warren and Matthews (2018a; 2018b) highlight other concepts that signal collaboration between institutions such as "cooperation, partnership and integration" (Warren and Matthews 2018a, 1). The authors point out that physical convergence has been seen as "an innovative answer to the increasing challenges and demands faced by cultural heritage institutions" (Warren and Matthews 2018a, 1), while digital convergence is cited as a starting point for initiatives that have led to collaboration in the LAM sector (Warren and Matthews 2018a, 2).

Given and McTavish find that "libraries, museums, and archives could overlap in terms of political function and physical space" (2010, 8) in the nineteenth century, while today's motivation for increased collaboration and convergence may differ. The authors mention the various educational programs in the LAM sector and state that as long as they do not overcome the boundaries between disciplines, "real boundaries to collection, management, preservation, and access of materials remain" (Given and McTavish 2010, 23). Duff et al. find four factors that motivate LAM convergence processes: better user services; better scholarly support; better use of new technology; and cost savings (Duff et al. 2013, 6).

The motivation for the establishment of ABM–u was first and foremost characterized by the first factor, the ability to give users better and easier access. Digitalization was the main tool in this process.

Institutional Theory Perspectives and LAM Convergence

How can we understand and explain the LAM institutional change processes in relation to technological change and digitalization? The standard explanation has been that convergence in digital technology leads to convergence at the institutional level. Given that digitalization causes convergence of document forms, simply put, that everything in analog format is transformed into a digital file format, this means that LAM institutions and LAM policies will also necessarily converge. As we have seen above, this is a widespread view among researchers and policy actors. However, whether and how institutional convergence results from convergence in technology is a comprehensive and complex empirical research question and requires analysis from a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches. To gain further knowledge, future studies of change processes in LAM governance require a comparison between countries and cultural policy regimes. This chapter hopes to inspire such an effort by examining institutional change processes in the LAM field in the Norwegian central government.

In the Norwegian context, attempts were made to merge the LAM institutions, but it was a short-term affair. Institutions diverged in spite of digital convergence. Convergence as a consequence of digitalization was central when ABM–u was established, but both changing international institutional environments and central government institutional relationships need to be considered as important drivers. It remains to describe how and why the institutional change process that involved ABM–u's rise and fall took place.

Transformative Institutional Change

Institutional theories, whether rational, sociological, or historical, have all been better at explaining stability than change (Thelen and Conran 2016). One leading theory within historical institutionalism views institutional development as path-dependent with long stretches of stability (equilibria) interrupted by sudden exogenous shocks (punctuations) (Krasner 1988). These external shocks mean a wholesale change of institutional structures unrelated to former institutional regimes. This theory of punctuated equilibria originated in paleontology and evolutionary biology. Thus, the dramatic events in the history of the earth could be read from the fossil record (Eldredge and Gould 1972; Gould and Eldredge 1977).

Path-dependent institutional development theories allow actors little leeway for variation, particularly in change processes. Gradual change happens in the form of routine adaptations. The main task of institutions becomes reproducing stable equilibria in the long periods between punctuations caused by exogenous shocks, also known as critical junctures (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). In crises, actor choice can turn development trajectories. The paradox is that "real" institutional change is caused by circumstances external to actors and is not itself institutionally constricted (Thelen and Conran 2016), while social actors more or less relate to rules and are constricted by rules (Ostrom 1990). This implies that critical junctures do not involve social actors.

However, if we stick to the simple notion that institutional change in most cases is initiated by social actors that to some extent are bound by rules and institutions, this makes institutional change more of an ongoing process rather than a rare revolutionary event and paves the ground for a range of gradualist change perspectives. Also, real-world examples, as the AMB–u change process, seem to indicate that gradualist change beyond path-dependence occurs, even significant structural change, without a general understanding of paradigmatic change. The changes in the Norwegian LAM field are examples of transformative change – major change, but over time.

From a gradualist perspective of historical institutionalism, it is reasonable to surmise that institutions converge and diverge and can show relative stability over long stretches of time. If we want to explain institutional change, we need to adapt the theoretical toolbox according to the phenomena and processes we observe, and not the other way around. This simple reasoning is the basis for most historical institutionalists: institutions vary, they structure politics, but they do not by themselves determine outcomes or the path of history (Steinmo 2008; Thelen 1999). Actors follow rules, and they can be more or less rational, altruistic, and habitual (rule-following) in their behavior. This openness to variation also applies to institutional change processes and outcomes.

Institutions are socially created and, as such, not perfect. Creators of institutions are faced with the usual limitations on rational decision making. A gap between the expectations of institutional designers of what can be achieved through institutional design and reorganization and the actual results achieved through implementation on the ground is almost necessarily present (Pressman and Wildavsky 1984).

As is known from the classics of organizational theory, actors cannot have an overview of all alternative outcomes of policies due to limited access to information and limited cognitive capacity (Simon 1947). Actors are subject to bounded rationality (Simon 1947), and therefore follow standard operating procedures (i.e. rules) (March and Simon 1958). Furthermore, different groups that are affected

by institutional change have different interests that inspire unclear compromises and blocking strategies (Cyert and March 1963). Actors play with or against existing rules, and this transpires over time, throughout the life of organizations. Institutions have built-in structural conflicts and may owe their existence to lines of conflict, as do most political institutions.

Institutions allocate resources and exercise power. Losers come back and find ways to use institutions that serve their cause. Over time, the "terrain" may change (e.g. new technology), and the impact of institutional rules and policies may be quite different than initially thought (Pierson 2004). A particularly relevant approach for understanding policy change and institutional change in government organizations is based on the theory that "policies make politics" (Schattschneider 1935; see also Hacker and Pierson 2014). Political decisions and policies have different outcomes for different actors – interest groups – some are winners, and others lose. New policies can change the terrain in the form of new rules and instructions. One strategy among stakeholders, therefore, is to try to influence policymakers before new policies are adopted, or try to mobilize for changing policies/rules after adoption or try to influence or block implementation.

This description of processes of institutional change shows that the period between revolutionary changes can be dramatic enough. Hacker, Thelen, and others have shown how gradual changes can have transformative effects through special institutional mechanisms (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Hacker 2004; Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Thelen and Mahoney 2015; see also Vårheim 2001; Vårheim 2007; Vårheim, Skare and Lenstra 2019). This perspective is quite different from the theory of sudden exogenous shocks and path dependence where change comes from the outside and is abrupt, with actors having little agency. In a gradualist perspective, on the other hand, change can come from within, change can be gradual, and internal actors have agency in shaping the impact of change processes. The understanding of how gradual institutional change adds up to the transformation of institutions is the basis for the transformative model of institutional change.

Mechanisms of Transformative Institutional Change

This transformative change perspective within historical institutionalist theory considers mechanisms by which institutions change over time. These mechanisms include the following.

Conflicting institutional logics and time of origin. Institutions are children of their time and display different vulnerabilities. Public libraries and opera houses were established during different historical epochs and subjected to different cultural policy regimes. In the digital age, both institutions are challenged by the

new media. Still, when it comes to government funding, it is comparatively easier to advocate the cause of libraries because of the legitimacy created by the democratization of culture that has taken place since the era of princely benefactors.

Institutional reproduction and change. The factors that make institutions durable are also their Achilles heel. For example, stable public funding of LAMs is easier to sustain in social democratic regimes until neoliberal agendas appear. The effects of austerity become more difficult to endure than in liberal regimes, where existing systems of private donations and patronage could alleviate unwanted state budget cuts.

Conversion. Conversion means that institutions, rules, or policies change through the processes of applying, using, interpreting, or implementing rules or frameworks over time. Supreme court decisions are prime examples. Another example could be a possible outcome resulting from the implementation of the Norwegian Public Libraries Act describing public libraries in the role of "independent meeting-places and arenas for public conversation and debate" (Ministry of Culture 2014). For public libraries, one strategy of adapting to this new statute could be to hold on to and redefine the traditional programs of book circles and author meetings so they fit the categories of the new policy, rather than venture into the more unfamiliar territory of facilitating debate arenas or structuring events for, say, groups focused on recreational pursuits like music, fitness, or crocheting.

Layering and drift. Layering and drift are strategies for institutional or policy change intentionally employed by actors, and both mechanisms have been extensively studied. Drift describes a situation when rules and policies are kept the same (change is blocked e.g. by the opposition), while contextual change makes outcomes different (Hacker 2004). One example is when universal welfare benefits are paid to clients staying in another country with a lower cost of living, as from Norway to Eastern and Central European countries. Another example involves technological change, e.g. when Norwegian library users cannot access library e-books on the most popular digital devices – Kindle e-readers – and thus are constricted from universal access. Relating to the present study, during ABM–u's tenure and the following years, digitization processes are becoming increasingly important, and this could mean that the National Library as the most prolific "digitizer" becomes an even more central player in the LAM field.

Layering means that new institutional structures, rules, or policies are put on top of existing structures, rules, or policies (Schickler 2001). Layering is much used when a change of existing structures, rules, or policies is opposed and cannot be achieved outright. Over time, layering can produce the intended outcomes. The Norwegian central government institution for the LAM sector was established

while not including the National Library and the National Archives in ABM–u and letting them go about their business as usual. This institutional configuration can be interpreted as a government layering strategy focused on gradual integration of the National Library and the National Archives into ABM–u over time (Vårheim, Skare, and Lenstra 2019), but one that ultimately failed, with the dissolution of the central government LAM institution.

ABM–u in an International Perspective

The creation of ABM–u was proposed at a time when major technological changes were taking place. It was envisaged that the similarities between the LAM institutions would be greater because of digitalization, and give users easier and increased access to information and knowledge. This line of thinking did not arise unaffected by developments in other countries. The establishment of ABM–u in Norway appears to be in close connection with international trends. Around the turn of the millennium, several European countries created similar constellations (which the LAM White Paper devotes an entire chapter to): "Particularly worth noting is that many countries, but in various ways, have worked on issues or taken organizational steps crossing the traditional dividing lines between archive, library and museum" (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 9).

The LAM White Paper highlights the Nordic countries and the developments in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Sweden had already from 1991 a collaborative group for archives, libraries, and museums, while in 1996, Denmark was the first country to establish a network of cultural institutions as a gateway to shared internet-based information. In 2002, Denmark established *Kulturarvstyrelsen* (the National Heritage Board), which was responsible for administering the legislation and taking care of government tasks within cultural preservation and museums. In 2012, *Kulturarvstyrelsen* was merged with the *Kunststyrelsen* (Danish Arts Agency) and *Styrelsen for Bibliotek og Medier* (Danish Agency for Library and Media) to *Kulturstyrelsen* (Danish Agency for Culture) (Nielsen 2019).

The United Kingdom planned "to establish a new body for archives, libraries and museums, called the *Museums, Libraries and Archives Council* (MLAC)" (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 145). In the United Kingdom, too, the emphasis is placed on "how the use of ICT leads to challenges and potential that are increasingly the same for the three sectors" (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 146). The MLAC existed from 2000 to 2011 when libraries and museums were transferred to the Arts Council ("Museums and libraries formally transfer to Arts Council England," 2011; "Museums, Libraries and Archives Council," 2019).

In Canada, ever since the National Library *of Canada* was established in 1953, it has worked closely with the National Archives. Since 1967, the institutions had been partially co-located with common technical and administrative functions (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 146).

Both co-locations of LAM institutions with shared functions and the creation of new bodies appear to be a trend around the turn of the millennium. We also see this in countries not mentioned in the LAM White Paper, such as the US and Australia. Institutions such as the *Institute of Museum and Library Service* (IMLS)[3] in the United States (established 1996) and the *Collection Council* in Australia (2004–2010) (cf. Warren and Matthews 2018a, 6) were established in these countries to coordinate activities in the LAM area and to encourage collaboration through grants. Although the concept of "convergence" is not always found, an important reason for this trend of establishing national LAM institutions is that technological advances lead to more and more similarities between the institutions and that they want to take this into account in the organization of LAM services, and also because of the possible efficiency gains:

> International developments, particularly in Australia, the USA, and Canada, demonstrate a trend for cultural legislative frameworks that promote cross-sector collaboration, potentially driven by a need to make efficiency savings alongside recognition of the common ground shared by libraries, archives, and museums. (Warren and Matthews 2018a, 6)

This LAM trend was reflected in research efforts related to LAM institutions, for example, in the publishing of theme numbers of three leading journals in each of their disciplines, *Archival Science*, *Library Quarterly*, and *Museum Management and Curatorship* in 2008. Based on a common "call for papers," 14 articles were published (Marty 2008).

ABM–u: Creation, Evaluation, Reorganization, Liquidation

The Creation of ABM–u

In St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000) *Sources of Knowledge and Experience – About Archives, Libraries, and Museums* (the LAM White Paper), it was proposed to initiate research work with the aim of forming a new joint professional body for the three sectors of archive, library, and museum (cf. Section 8 of the White Paper).

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3 IMLS purpose is to "advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development" (https://www.imls.gov/about/mission).

Based on new information technology and digitalization (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 20–22), and with this potential for increased cooperation to the benefit of the users, the new body should exploit the opportunities for coordination and collaboration, but also develop the particularities of the sectors:

> The aim of the White Paper is thus to create conditions that can give rise to the full use of the potential for coordination and collaboration that lies between archives, libraries and museums […] Collectively, they should be able to provide better services to society (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 2).

The body was supposed to take care of sector-specific and cross-sectoral tasks and become a cross-sectoral entity, and in the process, it also became a cross-ministerial agency. The original proposal in the LAM White Paper was to merge the *Museumsutvikling* (Norwegian Museum Authority) with the *Statens bibliotek-tilsyn* (National Library Inspection agency). The new, merged agency should also have sufficient competence to handle tasks in the archive area and should be placed under the Ministry of Culture. When processing the Church, Education, and Research Ministry's White Paper *Do your duty – Claim your right* (St.meld. nr. 27 (2000–2001)) in the Standing Committee of the *Storting* (the legislative assembly) for Church, Education, and Research matters, the committee "expected" (decided) that the National Libraries Service (*Riksbibliotekstjeneste*n) for research libraries should be included in the new body (Innst. S. nr. 46 (2000–2001), 14).

In the state budget for 2002, the *Storting* endorsed the proposal to establish ABM–u. In addition to the already mentioned White Papers and committee reports, other key documents were the evaluation of the National Library Inspection agency and the Norwegian Museum Authority (see Ministry of Culture 2001a), and the report *TverrsAMBand* (Ministry of Culture 2001b) from the ministerial working group for IT and other cross-sectoral issues within libraries, archives, museums, and comments on this report from LAM sector bodies and organizations. Both the availability and dissemination of digitized material are mentioned in the report as important arguments for the establishment of ABM–u:

> Digitalization makes it possible not only to reach new user groups but also to compile the material in ways that provide new knowledge and experience. Both facilitation and use require competence in several areas. Effective access to material that is distributed among archives, libraries, and museums, respectively, also demands organizational and professional collaboration (Ministry of Culture 2001b, 17).

Many of the comments on the report are positive, but point out areas that are not mentioned in the report or that require increased financial resources. However, it is worth noting that some key players saw little benefit from the establishment of a joint LAM body. While the National Library points out its competences and that

it is "a 'mini-LAM' in itself" (Brev fra Nasjonalbiblioteket til Kulturdepartementet av 16.11.01), the National Archives considers "that the measures and recommendations promoted by the working group on institutionalized measures, or which can be interpreted as recommendations on such measures across the LAM sectors, is not convincingly justified" (Brev fra Riksarkivaren til Kulturdepartementet av 10.07.01, ref. 01/3593 A. 008 JH). The National Archives also believes "that the similarities between the institutions in the LAM sector, in general, are overstated in the report, and some proposed measures seem unnecessary" and that "no new national superstructures are needed."

ABM−u appears to be a body wanted by the ministry and received with somewhat limited enthusiasm from the sectors concerned. At the same time, according to the project description, ABM−u was not only obliged to establish good forms of cooperation with the sectors but was given "the main responsibility for quickly establishing the necessary dialogue" (DIFI[4]-rapport 8 2008, appendix 5[5]). In the statutes for ABM−u, laid down by the Ministry of Culture on March 6, 2003, this is further specified in Section 3: "ABM−u shall cooperate professionally with the National Archives and the National Library and adapt its activities in accordance with the competence and functions that these institutions have." (DIFI-rapport 2008, appendix 4). The Director of ABM−u shall "facilitate the good cooperation of ABM−u with all actors involved with the institution" (DIFI-rapport 2008, appendix 4).

Organization of ABM−u in 2003

Cross-sectoral thinking is underscored in the original description of ABM−us organizational model:

> It is assumed that ABM−u […] is organized according to functional and not sector-specific criteria, so that a real joint body is created, and not just a loose superstructure over three relatively independent specialist departments for each of the sub-sectors (DIFI-rapport 2008, appendix 3).

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4 The Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (*DIFI*) is "the specialized body for the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization; and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries in the fields of management, organization, public procurement and digitalisation in the public sector" (https://www.difi.no/om-difi). From 2008 Statskonsult was included in DIFI.

5 The report has seven attachments: 1) Overview of the interviewees; 2) Interview guide; 3) Project description from 2002; 4) Statutes for ABM−u; 5) Mandate for ABM−u in the interim year 2002; 6) Statutes of the Board of Directors; 7) Graphic representation of the LAM sectors.

Here we see that the idea of one joint organization of tasks that applies across sectors was strong. It reflects the expectations of convergence not only in terms of technological solutions but also in the organization. As a result, ABM−u was organized with three departments: administration, information, and development departments. The department for development was divided into three professional groups for archives, libraries, and museums, respectively, with "three managers placed on the same hierarchical level, where the managers had the responsibility of personnel management for the employees in their own professional group, while the priorities and issues that applied to the entire department had to be decided jointly" (DIFI-rapport 2008, 15).

At the same time as ABM−u was to meet the sector-specific needs, the institution also had to work with developing strategies and activities across the three sectors. Besides, the ABM White Paper "saw a need for a package of initiatives that will address tasks that are common to archives, libraries, and museums and thus encourage closer cooperation between the sectors" (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000), 168).

ABM−u was assigned responsibility for a strategy that, on the one hand, should be cross-sectoral, but on the other hand should not come at the expense of the three sectors' professional domains. The creation of a new body, rather than collaboration between the existing agencies, should ensure the necessary coordination. It was emphasized by the Standing Committee for Church, Education, and Research matters that it was important to look at experiences from other countries and that all three LAM sectors were "equated in terms of professional competence" (Innst. S. nr. 46 (2000–2001), 16).

Evaluation and Reorganization in 2006

In 2006, ABM−u's organization was evaluated (Statskonsult 2006). The report concludes that the LAM organizational model of the ABM-u had not impaired the sector-specific tasks, while the development of sector-wide tasks had received less attention. This indicates that little convergence had taken place so far. The report also states that "the board has a weak position, among other things because the ministry has the direct management responsibility for the activity" (Statskonsult 2006, 1). The report states about collaborative relations:

> The establishment of a new cross-sectoral body meant that ABM−u touched on the areas of expertise and responsibilities of the existing institutions – the National Archives and the National Library. The new body had a challenge in clarifying the division of roles, initiating professional collaboration, operating in gray zones, establishing territory, etc. (Statskonsult 2006, 25).

Furthermore, the report says about the three-tier leadership of the Development Department:

> It is not unexpected that such a constellation with three leaders is problematic and encounters dissatisfaction. However, this should not be seen as a criticism of the three department heads, but of the organizational structure, they form part of. The three directors are recruited from each sector, they are set to lead their respective professional groups, and their portfolio is more or less dominated by sector-specific tasks, while at the same time they form one joint management structure. By others, they will easily be perceived primarily as sector representatives, and they will meet with similar role expectations. In our opinion, this is not a structure that promotes cross-sectoral initiatives, but a structure that is used for territorial defense (Statskonsult 2006, 29).

The report, therefore, proposes two alternative models for organizing ABM–u, the first according to sector and the second according to function (cf. Statskonsult 2006, 37–40). The strengths and weaknesses of the two models are discussed, but Statskonsult does not recommend a specific model:

> The question must be assessed in particular based on the potential for and interest in increased application of the cross-sectoral perspective vs. the need for a multi-sectoral approach to remain dominant (cf. Section 5.1). The issue can also be considered in a temporal perspective, for example, that it is currently considered most realistic to organize with sector as the main structure, but that in the longer term it may be relevant to switch to function as the main structure if the cross-sectoral perspective becomes more prominent and widespread in the LAM sector (Statskonsult 2006, 40).

The organizational model that was chosen is sector-based, but a department for digital LAM issues is also established, a unit working across the sectors:

> [the] three-headed leadership of the Development Department […] dissolved, and the department was divided into three units: the departments for archive development, library development, and museum development. The information department was split into two units: the digital LAM department and a smaller information department. (ABM–utvikling årsmelding 2007, 44).

Thus, convergence was still relevant in the field of digitalization. The increased focus on digitalization issues by establishing a separate department can seem as a significant change. According to information from Lars Egeland (Head of the Information Department from 2003–2006), the former Information Department was already working primarily on tasks related to the development of digital solutions such as kulturnett.no and *Norsk digitalt bibliotek* (NDB: the Norwegian Digital Library) (Egeland 2019). The Digitalization Working Group was established within ABM–u in 2004 as part of the project "Norwegian Digital Library" and de-

livered the report *Kulturarven til alle* (Cultural Heritage to All, ABM-skrift 32)[6] in July 2006. The creation of the digital department in ABM−u can, therefore, be seen as a follow-up of already existing work tasks and methods but increased the visibility of digitalization issues. Still, the cross-sectoral digitalization initiative was overshadowed by an increased organizational focus on the sectors. In 2007, ABM−u received NOK 3 million for digitization purposes earmarked for the museum sector, while the same amount went directly to the National Library and the National Archives and their digitization work.

New Evaluation in 2008

Already in the year following the 2007 reorganization, the Ministry of Culture commissioned another evaluation of ABM−u to be conducted by the Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (DIFI). The mandate for the evaluation was to

> analyze how ABM−u has implemented the cultural policy and the LAM sectors' professional intentions that formed the basis for the institution put forward in the ALM White Paper, and in the corresponding proposal from the Storting and the statutes of the institution. Based on the analysis, the evaluation will present proposals for possible changes and further development of ABM−u as the state agency for archives, libraries, and museums (DIFI-rapport 2008, 2).

The DIFI survey was to form the basis for
– an assessment of the strategic and organizational choices made when ABM−u was established and how the work has evolved in relation to the intentions that formed the basis for the establishment
– an overall assessment of ABM−u's interface with other relevant institutions, in particular with regard to the adequate assignment of tasks and possible reassignment of tasks (DIFI-rapport 2008, 3).

Since the transfer of library tasks to the National Library the following year means that ABM−u will be discontinued, it is worth noting that the DIFI evaluation should map the division of the LAM areas of responsibility and possible transfer of responsibilities. The report provides a thorough review of ABM−u's administrative tasks and development activities (DIFI-rapport 2008, 22–38), and presents the views of the informants.

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6 In this series, ABM−u published a large number of documents directed at the LAM sector, and for educational purposes. (https://www.kulturradet.no/sok?addsearch=ABM).

Many informants regarded the development of digital content and services as an important focus area where ABM−u could have done a better job than the previous institutions (DIFI-rapport 2008, 9, 64). The report also points out that ABM−u does not have formal authority "neither to order the LAM institutions to digitize collections, to develop good digital services, or to follow ABM−u's recommendations on how this should be done" (DIFI-rapport 2008, 37).

In the report, DIFI concludes that it is "broad support among users and partners that a common development agency for the LAM sector is appropriate" (DIFI-rapport 2008, 1). DIFI further believes that "[…] ABM−u balances well between administrative tasks and development work but points out that the administrative tasks should be made more visible. To move forward with the digitization work, it becomes vital to make the actors interact" (DIFI-rapport 2008, 1).

On the question of the interfaces between actors, and whether tasks can be transferred from ABM−u to other actors, most of the informants answer that it is not "tasks that should be taken over by others" (DIFI-rapport 2008, 63). Only the National Library does not consider it to be useful with a joint body for the LAM sector, while the informants from the National Archives are more positive now than they were at the establishment in 2003 (DIFI-rapport 2008, 40).

New LAM Policy Signals: ABM−u – a Dead End?

The White Papers on the digitalization of cultural heritage and on library policy both signal that the discontinuation of ABM−u is in the making (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009); St.meld. nr. 24 (2008–2009)).

The Digitalization Council Replaces ABM−u as a Coordination Body

Both the White Papers highlight "the digital perspective" in the LAM policy. The White Paper on libraries assumes that "*[a] digital perspective* […] will characterize all future development of library services" (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 19) and that:

> The potential for collaboration and coordination across the archive, library and museum sectors is great, and digitalization is a force that more than anything else draws the sectors together, and which makes it necessary and natural with close collaboration (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 118).

However, ABM−u have had an unclear mandate and had been too ambitious so that the significance of ABM−u for the LAM field has also been unclear (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 118). A future organization of the LAM field must, therefore,

emphasize measures and activities that motivate implementing bodies to offer better user services (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 119). The recognition that digitalization is the major change "agent" in the LAM context means that there was a need for a unifying LAM body to be able to take out the overall synergy effects for the LAM field believed to be created by digitalization. Such a body composed of key LAM players would be set up through the establishment of a new council for coordination of the digitalization activities in the LAM area (St.meld. nr. 24 (2008–2009), 103; St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009)). The Council will "continually assess the overall strategies for digitalization with a view to making proposals that contribute to healthy digital collection management" (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 119). In the report *Cultural Heritage for All* (2006), the Working Group on digitalization had proposed the establishment of a governing body for digitalization efforts in the LAM field in the form of a Digitalization Council with representatives from the sectors and the various levels of government to anchor the initiative across the sectors (Gausdal 2006, 52), as well as a national digitalization program for the LAM sectors. The central role of the National Library as a digitalization agent is highlighted in the report (Gausdal 2006, 64), and in particular, that the National Library from 2006 had implemented a large-scale digitization program for the entire collection (27, 64). The report gives ABM–u a coordinating role in most of the digitalization measures proposed.

For the 2007 fiscal year, the National Library, the National Archives and the ABM–u, as mentioned, were each awarded an extra NOK 3 million for digitization programs, and the Ministry writes that ABM–u should concentrate its digitization efforts on the museum sector (St. prp. No. 1 (2006–2007), 47). In the Digitalization in LAM field White Paper, this is followed up by specifying that the responsibility for the implementation of the digitization effort must be clearly linked to the sectors: the National Library will be responsible for the library area, the National Archives for archives, and ABM–u for the museums (St.meld. nr. 24 (2008–2009), 102). For the National Library and the National Archives, this meant responsibility for the direct digitization work, while ABM–u is assigned coordination tasks for the museum sector, but not for the operational digitization activities (St.meld. nr. 24 (2008–2009), 102–103).

From ABM–u to the National Library

The Library White Paper outlines a possible future transfer of responsibility for the development of the state library policy and for administrative tasks from ABM–u to the National Library (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 119). The purpose of such a reform is to delineate the boundaries between ABM–u and the collections managing institutions within the field, probably primarily in relation to the National

Library, as the National Archives' tasks are not included in the ABM–u portfolio. The detailed argumentation for a reorganization is not easily found in the White Paper, but we can read that "clear and robust national frameworks" must be established, and digitalization, in particular, is highlighted (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 118). Furthermore, the ABM–u has spread its business on too many tasks, thus giving unclear policy signals to the sector. Additionally, it is referred to comments from the National Library and the Librarians' Association (Bibliotekarforbundet) to the DIFI 2008 evaluation report on ABM–u in which both argue that ABM–u negatively influences the library field. Troms county municipality proposes that ABM–u is given the status of a directorate, or that ABM–u is abolished, and its portfolio is transferred to the county municipalities. The DIFI evaluation of ABM–u concluded that ABM–u largely had worked well in relation to the cultural policy expectations and professional expectations in the sectors, expressed at the time of its creation.

Reorganization and Liquidation

The Ministry of Culture's assessments in the White Papers on Digitalization in the LAM field (St.meld. nr. 24 (2008–2009)), and on Library policy (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009)), are followed up one year later when a new reorganization of the LAM central government administration is proposed, which means the end of ABM–u and with it the end of a state coordinating body for LAM policy.

In the White Paper *Omorganisering av ABM–utvikling* (Reorganization of ABM–u), the Ministry of Culture proposes "changes in the division of labor between the state institutions in the field of archives, libraries and museums" (Meld. St. 20 (2009–2010), 1). With reference to previous White Papers concerning the archive, library, and museum sectors, a reorganization is proposed in which "the National Library is given responsibility for the library tasks ABM–u has taken care of" (Meld. St. 20 (2009–2010), 3). The remaining part of ABM–u was to be co-organized with the Art Council Norway's administration. While 19 ABM–u positions were transferred to the National Library as of July 1, 2010, and six to the Norwegian Science Index (NVI), the remaining 40 full-time equivalents were transferred to the Arts Council Norway as of January 1, 2011.

The reorganization meant that ABM–u ceased to be an institution with effect from 1 January 2011. It is still emphasized that there will be a need for increased cooperation between the LAM sectors, not least to be able to target the cooperation on digitalization:

> In the future, therefore, the cross-cutting perspective will be clarified in the objectives of both the National Library, the National Archives, and the Museum sector. Not least, better and more targeted cooperation on digitization issues must be facilitated, as is also envisaged in the Digitalization White Paper (Meld. St. 20 (2009–2010), 4).

As part of the implementation process, on 15 February 2010, the Ministry of Culture sends a letter to the National Library asking it to "actively participate in the further process of designing a good and appropriate model for the government's efforts in the library field" (Brev fra Kulturdepartementet til Nasjonalbiblioteket av 15. februar 2010). On March 2, 2010, a similar letter is sent to the National Library and ABM–u in which the Ministry asks the two institutions to present their specific proposals for the transfer of tasks and resources (Brev fra Kulturdepartementet til ABM–utvikling og Nasjonalbiblioteket av 2. mars 2010). The proposal was to include a detailed and reasoned assessment of how joint resources and resources for development tasks and Digital LAM should be distributed.

While the Library White Paper and the processing of this in the Storting in the summer and autumn of 2009 considered a possible transfer of tasks, the letter from the Ministry in March 2010 states that "[all] pure library tasks *must* be moved out of ABM–u" (Brev fra Kulturdepartementet til ABM–utvikling og Nasjonalbiblioteket av 2. mars 2010, our italics). The White Paper on the reorganization of ABM–u refers to this process: "In the period following the Storting's processing of the ABM White Paper, there has been a dialogue between interested parties about the library tasks. Based on this process, the Ministry wants the library tasks to be gathered in the National Library" (Meld. St. 20 (2009–2010), 1).

We assume the dialogue referred to is an exchange of letters between the Ministry, the National Library, and ABM–u. The National Library replies in an undated letter with an attached note which was prepared following a request from the Ministry of 19 August, 2009 (Brev fra Nasjonalbiblioteket til Kulturdepartementet, undated). The letter shows a wish for the transfer of development tasks while saying no to taking over purely administrative tasks. It is problematized

> whether it is possible to establish a clear distinction between the tasks of ABM–u and the National Library according to the division suggested in the White Papers. If the distinction is not clear, the danger of unclear lines of responsibility increases, unclear communication with the library sector from the government and inappropriate distribution of resources and expertise.

ABM–u responds on March 10, 2010, and emphasizes the distribution of the number of person-years and funds. The following are suggested:
– Transfer of delegated measures with a total frame of NOK 57 million, calculated in relation to the 2010 budget framework.

– Transfer of project funds of an estimated NOK 14 million, calculated in relation to the 2010 budget framework.
– Transfer of all employees in the library department, as well as the former director of the National library inspection, a total of 19 person-years.
– Transfer of three full-time positions in support functions (Brev fra ABM–utvikling til Kulturdepartementet av 10.03.2010).

While the National Library had for several years and on several occasions expressed an intention to do something regarding the ABM–u library tasks, ABM–u adopts a passive role. It accepts the transfer and is most concerned about not losing more person-years than necessary.

When the Storting dealt with the Whitepaper on the reorganization of ABM–u in late November 2010 (Meld. St. (2009–2010)), the Cultural Affairs standing committee was divided. The members of the ruling coalition, the Labor Party, the Center Party, and the Socialist Left supported the reorganization, while the non-socialist opposition was sharply critical:

> These members believe it is striking that the government has done this without any thorough process with employees and with very little consultation with the relevant professional communities. […] These members would point out that the discontinuation of ABM–u was a very important decision that should have been the subject of wider treatment, where the concrete solutions had been better discussed than what these members believe is the case for the barely four pages long White Paper. […] These members have noted that the reasons for some solutions refer, among other things, to the processing of the Library White Paper, Meld. St. 23 (2008–2009) and the recommendations to the Digitalization White Paper from the Standing Committee for Family and Cultural Affairs (Innst. S. nr. 321 (2008–2009)). These members would emphasize that these documents were dealt with by the Storting without the discontinuation of ABM–u being considered relevant and that important issues related to this eventuality were therefore not discussed. (Inst. 91S (2010–2011) our italics).

This may indicate that the policy signals in the Library White Paper regarding ABM–u, in particular, were not perceived clearly by many politicians and this appears to be the case for most of the public as well. One comment by Odd Letnes in *Bok og bibliotek* – an independently edited library magazine funded by the government – indicates that also the library sector at large did not react:

> What will become of the innovation of ABM–u and especially in relation to the National Library, was the major theme in the Library White Paper that has been bypassed in silence in the library sector. The White Paper was, in reality, clear in its message. The Minister for Culture, Trond Giske, announced the split of ABM–u, but without concluding. By expressing himself in the future tense, he created an open situation. There was no serious objection to this in the public debate on the White Paper preceding the passage in the Storting before the summer (Letnes 2009).

Only in the fall of 2009 did some debate arise in the newspaper *Klassekampen* and in the *Bok og Bibliotek*,[7] where the National Library's digitalization project and the lack of transparency in the ALM change processes are discussed. For example, Jannicke Røgler, in *Bok og Bibliotek*, states that "the monopolizing of power by adding most of the state library tasks to the National Library is not necessarily the best solution for the library sector" (2009). On November 7, 2009, *Klassekampen* published an article by three library directors with the headline "Lack of transparency about important changes". The library directors miss a professional justification for the change and openness about the process. Finally, it is pointed out that "the reasoning must be based on something else than the fact that the National Library wants this result". In November of 2009, the County Librarians, in a statement printed in *Bok and Bibliotek*, ask that

> [t]he Storting's Standing Committee for Family and Cultural Affairs considers our views in the processing of the state budget and the proposal in the White Paper for the distribution of tasks between ABM–u and the National Library. A strengthening of the municipal public library system requires a central government institution independent of the National Library. (https://www.bokogbibliotek.no/aktuelt/aktuelt/stopp-nedbyggingen-av-ABM--utvikling)

The short existence of ABM–u is marked by the two reorganization processes following extensive evaluation processes shortly after one another. The responsibility for libraries was transferred to the National Library as is described in the Library White Paper, while the archive and museum tasks were transferred to the Arts Council Norway. As late as 2015, the responsibility for archive development was transferred to the National Archives. Thus, the pre-ABM–u-era institutional order was restored along sectoral lines, but not along the former institutional lines, the National Library had added the central government public library policy area to its weight – the question of resurrecting the National Library Inspection agency was never raised.

Discussion: Convergence and Divergence

In 1999 the LAM White Paper proposed to create a separate government agency for policy development and for coordinating the activities in the LAM sectors for archives, libraries, and museums (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000)). This institution, ABM–u (The Norwegian Archive, Library, and Museum Authority), was anchored

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7 An overview of all contributions in *Bok og bibliotek* can be found here: https://www.bokogbibliotek.no/aktuelt/aktuelt/bok-og-bibliotek-og-debatten-om-ABM-utvikling-og-nasjonalbiblioteket.

in the notion of synergies flowing from innovations in digital technology, primarily through the convergence and digitization of documents (St.meld. nr. 22 (1999–2000)).

Furthermore, it was held, almost as a law of nature, that the convergence of types of documents meant the complementary convergence of document institutions (institutions organized around different document types, e.g. libraries, archives, and museums). The ABM–u resulted from the merger of several LAM institutions, but with the National Library Inspection and Norwegian Museum Authority as the principal institutions. ABM–u was to develop one common LAM policy and coordinate its activities in the archive, library, and museum fields with the sector institutions – with the National Archives and the National Library as principals.

Resistance to ABM–u

At the first opportunity, during the consultation round of the report detailing the organizational structure of ABM–u before the establishment of the organization, ABM–u met strong opposition from the most central institutions in the LAM sector, the National Library and the National Archives (Ministry of Culture 2001b). Both agencies were under the remit of the Ministry of Culture and were to be included in LAM collaboration on the digitalization of cultural heritage. The very need for ABM–u was called into question: the National Library considered itself to be a mini-ABM–u, and the National Archives considered that the arguments for new national superstructures were weak.

Both the Digitalization White Paper and the Library White Paper, both from 2008, strongly indicate that the closure of ABM–u was imminent. The following year, the Ministry proposes the shutdown, and from the start of 2011 ABM–u is history. However, it is still emphasized that collaboration is much needed in the LAM field, especially when it comes to digitalization.

Especially the National Library's reluctance toward ABM–u is persistent through the timeline of ABM-u. In the end, The Ministry of Culture concluded with the National Library and discontinued ABM–u. What factors can best explain the winding-up of ABM–u, and thus the winding-up of the attempt at creating one coordinating LAM institution by the merger of the archive, library, and museum agencies in central government?

ABM–u Closure

The LAM White Paper involved an interweaving of two policy areas – digitalization policy and LAM policy. The digitalization policy was in large measure a policy for digitizing material from the three LAM sectors. The LAM policy for the central government administration was a policy for the institutional integration of the LAM sector bodies and policy areas subject to the Ministry of Culture, except for the National Archives and the National Library (and the Arts Council Norway), but including the National Library Service from the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. In the LAM White Paper, the digitalization of the three LAM sectors was considered almost a prerequisite and the main impetus for convergence between the LAM institutions. For the National Library, digitalization has been a focus area since the 1990s; it still is and will stay for years to come. The same probably goes for the National Archives, although the digitalization efforts have followed a different course.

ABM–u was intended to be the coordinator of the LAM sector while at the same time, the two key national players in the sector were outside the organization. In this lies a source of conflict of interest. Additionally, the digitization of documents was primarily the domain of the National Library and the National Archives. Overall, the probability of another outcome than the closure of ABM–u seems small, especially given the institutional configuration of the central government LAM policy area. ABM–u was never able to claim a dominant role in central government LAM policymaking. Finally, ABM–u was discontinued, and the National Library assumed the role of the state's body for the library sector. The National Library's "victory" could hardly have been more substantial. The National Library consolidated its role as the key player in digitalization in the LAM sector, but it also formally assumed the status as the dominant institution in the library field. From Schattschneider's theory, the most rewarding thing that can be achieved is the establishment of institutional structures that safeguard policy interests over time (Hacker and Pierson 2014). The National Library won not just one prize, but two: the control of the digitalization activity in the LAM field, and of the central government library sector.

Alternative Development Paths?

Explaining the outcomes of change in LAM policy and institutions is important for policy development and interesting for research, but perhaps more challenging and probably with even greater impact on learning is asking what policy change and institutional change did not happen, why it did not happen, and what could

have happened. Reviewing alternative trajectories of policies and institutional development and researching the conditions for alternative outcomes is important for future policymaking and for research and theory building within studies of institutional development and as a basis for comparative studies.

The establishment of ABM–u expressed expectations that the body would coordinate the state LAM sector. The National Library and the National Archives were still directly subject to the Ministry, and at the same level of the government hierarchy as was ABM–u. ABM–u's entry into the LAM sector and the cultural policy field meant the establishment of a new cultural policy government body for LAM policy development and coordination but without a clarification of the relationships with the most important state actors in the sector. ABM–u became a new institution, placed beside existing institutions, not on top of the existing structures in the sector. This meant that the formal organizational structure was kept unchanged except that a new horizontally placed entity was added to the existing institutions, the National Archives and the National Library. Thus, the National Library and the National Archives had to agree with ABM–u on how the LAM sector should be coordinated. Such a placement of ABM–u was an invitation to conflict or inaction. Given any resistance and use of blocking strategies from one or more of the actors, this set-up for cooperation becomes difficult to make work. Put differently, ABM–u's ability to coordinate measures in the LAM field, such as the digitalization policy and digitalization processes in the sector, was limited.

The creation of ABM–u meant that a new horizontally placed institution was added to the portfolio of the Ministry of culture. This is different from a strategy of layering where the new institution is added on top of the existing entities that hopefully would disintegrate as separate institutions and integrate with the new institution with time. The organizational placing of ABM–u makes a sectoral institution of the prospective integrative component, of the institution intended for coordination purposes, continues and increases specialization, and the number of central sectoral institutions from two to three. The structural placement of ABM–u does not signal its purpose as an institution for coordination. It signals that ABM–u is a sector institution as the National Archives and the National Library, and as such, becomes an institution with its specific sectoral interests, just the opposite of coordinating role intended for the organization. This means that a layering strategy would have been unworkable and impossible to implement. ABM–u was not placed on top of the National Library and the National Archives.

The structural organization of the state LAM sector was not the responsibility of ABM–u but belonged to the Ministry of Culture. In principle, the Ministry of Culture could have merged the National Library and the National Archives with ABM–u or have clarified the relationship between the bodies in another way. At the same

time, the National Library and the National Archives are actors with strong historical and national roots that make them nearly untouchable.

Alternatively, the Ministry could have implemented a strategy of policy drift – an approach implying that the strength of protests from the National Library and the National Archives would dampen over time and that demands for coordination of digitalization efforts in the LAM area would be pushed forward, for example, by the international wave of convergence between LAM institutions. However, internationally, after the 2000s, the expectations for the convergence of archives, libraries, and museums at both the state and local levels weakened, partly due to unclear and weak results (Vårheim, Skare, and Lenstra 2019).

Another factor regarding alternative outcomes is the role of ABM–u itself. Could ABM–u have been more proactive in its relationships with the Ministry, the National Library, and the National Archives? In addition to the awkward organization of the relationship with the Ministry and the two sector institutions, also in the position as a newcomer, it was, of course, challenging to fight, as we have seen, formidable opponents such as the National Library and the National Archives. Accommodating three professions and three different LAM sectors within ABM–u was difficult and weakened the ability to stand up against the opponents. Also, the persistent externally initiated organizational reviews and reorganization seem never to have allowed the institution to put its house in order. There seem to be very few alternative trajectories that could have produced an alternative outcome for the ABM–u. Still, institutional terrains can change. The future, even in the LAM area of the central government, is not carved in stone. New technology, international trends, and stubborn losers can bring forward expectations of new policies.

Epilogue: Libraries, Archives and Museums Post-ABM–u

Factors connected to digitalization processes were strong arguments both for the creation and the closure of ABM–u. The White Paper Reorganization *of ABM–u* emphasized increased future cooperation in the archive, library, and museum sectors and "a better and more targeted collaboration on digitization issues" (Meld. St. 20 (2009–2010), 4). The Digitalization Council, which was proposed the first time in 2006 (Gausdal 2006, 52) and repeated in the Library White Paper (St.meld. nr. 23 (2008–2009), 119) two years later, only became operational from 1 January 2016.

In 2017, the Office of the Auditor General presented an investigation of the digitization of cultural heritage (Dokument 3: 4 (2016–2017)). The report stated that a large part of the cultural heritage was still not digitized. The report emphasizes

that the National Archives and large parts of the museum sector, in particular, have not given sufficient priority to the digitization work. Also, much of the digitized material was not available to the public. The National Library's commitment to digitization is emphasized as successful and is the only central government LAM institution where progress was in line with the intent of the Digitalization White Paper. Thus, by 2017, the National Library had further consolidated its position as the leader in digitalization and digitization, the leader in the library sector, the leader in the LAM sector and a leader in the cultural sector. The development after 2017 does not weaken this impression.

The investigation by the Auditor General has led to a greater focus on the progress of digitization work in the archive and museum sector, and it appears to have enforced a higher degree of cooperation between the sectors, now with the National Library in the leading role. The White Paper *Diversity and Arm's Length. Media Politics in a New Era* describes the upcoming expansion of the National Library's digitization activities at its primary digitization plant in the city of Mo i Rana:

> Therefore, the government has assessed and concluded that parts of the financial savings by the closing down of the national broadcasting company's license collection department should be used to expand the activities of the National Library, which today has about 200 employees in the city of Mo i Rana. Here, new workplaces can be created that will make it possible to digitize a significant amount of cultural heritage material, and thus contribute to the realization of the cultural policy goal of preserving and disseminating cultural heritage (Meld. St. 17 (2018–2019), 54–55).

In an interview with the *Librarians' Association (Bibliotekarforbundet)* in June 2019, National Librarian Aslak Sira Myhre discusses how to use the 70 new positions: "The National Library hereby becomes responsible for not only its own collection but for digitization in the entire LAM sector. At the same time, a doubling of digitization capability enables us to develop even more efficient production lines for all types of materials." (Bergan 2019).

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