1.4 A cross-sectoral approach in cultural management

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This chapter reviews the possible options for a cross-sectoral approach in culture, paying particular attention to its deployment in local public administration in Spain, considering it a new form governance that is closely related to proximity. It analyses the most important strengths and weaknesses, and concludes with an overview of ways to assess its impact.

1. A cross-sectoral approach, proximity and governance

Together with proximity, a cross-sectoral approach constitutes one of the fundamental dimensions of what could be considered the new governance in culture. According to Wikipedia, the term governance acquired general currency in the 1990s to designate the efficacy, quality and good orientation of any intervention by the state, endowing this with much of its legitimacy in what is sometimes defined as “a new form of government” in the context of globalisation immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Despite their apparently obvious meanings, the definitions of a cross-sectoral approach and proximity are somewhat complex.

A good approach to the phenomenon of the new governance in culture is to consider an analogy with a cube-shaped polyhedron.

Imagining that the following strategies are located on each of the three vectors generated by the planes of its faces, we have:

- **Multilevel governance**: a cultural policy, programme or project will be more stable (and, ultimately, governable) the more its management incorporates different levels of government (from state, regional and provincial to local, and possibly including the European Union). This is where the principle of subsidiarity acquires significance (according to Wikipedia, the principle that legal, political and economic issues should be dealt with at the most immediate or local level). One of the general principles of the European Union, subsidiarity forms one of the multiple meanings of proximity, considered as government at the most local level possible.
- **Cross-sectoral governance**: today, culture is both a specialisation or sector of activity in itself and a cross-sectoral element that should be taken into consideration by practically all sectors traditionally involved in public action, indicating a degree of complexity that entails difficulties and problems. We will return to this subject later.
• Collaborative governance, especially public-private partnerships. Any cultural policy, programme or project will be more stable the more it manages incorporates a diversity of actors. However, this entails increased complexity in decision-making and implementation. The traditional distinction between public, private and community has become outdated. The traditional evident triangle now coexists alongside a latent triangle composed of new actors (public enterprises, halfway between public and private, private foundations, halfway between private and social, and service associations, halfway between social and public) that are often the drivers behind the most interesting cultural initiatives.

The concepts of proximity and a cross-sectoral approach have unquestionably gained increasing acceptance. These days, everything must be local: food, justice, transport, police, services and democracy, and culture is no exception. Proximity means ensuring things are local. However, in this case, proximity also refers to grassroots and the relatively active participation of people in the production of policies, services and culture. Nonetheless, proximity is not intrinsically positive. In Gobemar los nuevos espacios: entre lo local y lo global [Governing new spaces: between local and global] (Barcelona Metrópolis Mediterránea no. 71, spring 2008), Daniel Innerarity states that historically, the requirement of an explicit, relatively short distance — the English principle of an arm’s length — between the authorities and society constituted a challenge for Enlightenment revolutions.

In the context of cultural policies, the notion of proximity consciously or unconsciously establishes a dialectical tension with the notion of excellence. Excellence is a concept with its origins in the English-speaking world, and concerns the tradition of considering the arts as belonging to the personal domain, in the practice of which the best possible results are pursued. This is the opposite of the Latin or continental tradition, in which culture, understood more as a process than as a product, forms part of the community or group. When the Arts Council of Great Britain was founded in 1946, one of its missions was the pursuit of excellence in artistic sectors. This mission remained unchanged until the Glory of the Garden report was published in 1984 (the title is an ironic nod to a poem by Rudyard Kipling), which questioned the very notion of excellence as the goal of an artistic policy and launched the transformation of the Arts Council.

The dialectic between proximity and excellence stems from the fact that contradictory cultural policies often coexist within the same region or institution. Thus, policies aimed at achieving international visibility, impact and image associated with a city or regional brand, based on presumed excellence but with a precarious social base, may coexist alongside policies aimed at proximity, with relatively strong support from local residents and based on what was formally termed social culture, but with little or no visibility or impact. Consequently, achieving a balance between proximity and excellence constitutes one of the most important unresolved issues in public cultural policies. This will entail ensuring that actions in peripheral regions have as much value, in terms of excellence, as those in central locations, that cultural proposals targeting wider areas enjoy solid social support, and that balance is achieved between these two goals.
Returning to a cross-sectoral approach, the efficacy of this strategy of good governance beyond good intentions often involves many difficulties. The dynamic between a cross-sectoral approach and proximity generates a field of action that allows multiple positions in a highly dynamic relationship. Correlating the vector compartmentalisation/a cross-sectoral approach with the vector excellence/proximity often yields interesting information, and also indicates a key task for the future, given that compartmentalisation (i.e. A low cross-sectoral approach) usually correlates with excellence. In addition, a cross-sectoral approach is usually possible in environments with greater proximity. Establishing new and better correlations between excellence and a cross-sectoral approach therefore constitutes a truly pending project.

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2. A cross-sectoral approach in culture: opportunities and dangers

- First, in terms of a project cycle, a cross-sectoral approach is a recurrent concept both in policy definition (referring to policy in the broadest possible sense, not only in relation to public administrations; when addressing its strategic position, a partnership or a company is also defining its policy) and in the design of organisational structures and the development of programmes, projects, services and infrastructures.

- It is essential to consider a cross-sectoral approach at the intermediate level, i.e. in the design of organisational structure. At policy level, top-down cross-sectoral approaches often go no further than discourse, while conversely, relatively successful cross-sectoral initiatives and actions often lack any moderately integrated design in terms of programme or organisation. Despite the best intentions and considerable effort, cultural organisations remain compartmentalised, particularly in public administration. Like parallel straight lines, departments and services operate vertically, rarely interacting or meeting with related departments or services. The design of structures that encourage interdepartmental relations thus constitutes one of the biggest challenges with respect to the subject.

- A cross-sectoral approach also plays an important role with regard to addressing supply and demand, two important but complex categories from the perspective of public cultural service. One might posit that cross-sectoral policies, organisations and interventions are best placed to satisfy demand in the short or medium term, while in the long term, they are best at satisfying need. In fact, demand is usually short-term and specific, whereas from the perspective of the expert, detected need is often global and medium- or long-term. An eloquent example is that of socio-cultural or grassroots facilities in relation to the variable of user age (segmentation by age is a common question in a cross-sectoral approach). Demand usually arises in segmented terms (spaces and programmes for children, women or older adults), and there is usually wide popular consensus as regards satisfying it. However, if the aim is to achieve intergenerationality in the medium to long term, multipurpose facilities with shared spaces and programmes will be more effective, even though they are less popular and elicit less acceptance.

- Something similar occurs when considering the relationship between a cross-sectoral approach, efficiency and effectiveness. Cross-sectoral initiatives are often more effective than efficient. In other words, they are better at achieving predetermined goals than at saving resources or generating economies of scale, for example.
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- Consequently, a cross-sectoral approach should be understood as a policy option which is not necessarily immediate or more cost-effective; rather, its potential is associated with the ideas of social change and transformation.
- The dynamic between a cross-sectoral approach and territory (similar to that seen earlier between a cross-sectoral approach and proximity) also arises in terms of inverse proportionality. Deploying a cross-sectoral approach requires defined boundaries, whereas sectoral or departmental interventions can encompass a wider territory.
- Lastly, an observation related strictly to culture: sectoral and corporate tradition is often a matter of great importance in cross-sectoral initiatives. In comparative terms, culture and its policies and professionals have had unequal access to a cross-sectoral approach with respect to other, more consolidated policies with greater resources and other professions with a greater corporate tradition as regards training and professional organisation (professional associations, guilds, etc.). Hence, culture usually requires positive discrimination measures to achieve a cross-sectoral approach. It is all very well being invited to live in the house of others, but when one’s own home is insecure or even non-existent, it is not usually satisfactory.

3. A cross-sectoral approach in culture: four basic modalities

Personal services and amalgamation

With what other departments, sectors, programmes and services can culture establish a cross-sectoral approach? Probably the longest-standing modality is that established in Spain, especially in the context of local administration in the mid-1980s, with the emergence of personal service (also commonly known as personal welfare) departments, in which policies, programmes and services related to the public were amalgamated in line with a strong push towards decentralisation (municipal districts, community action programmes) and citizen participation, which at that time was being promoted through policies related to education, culture, health, sport, tourism and actions aimed at specific segments of the population such as children, young people, older adults or women. This context generated some successful experiments, and interesting initiatives proliferated. Examples include the work carried out as part of the KALEIDOS.RED initiative, promoted by different town councils such as Getafe, Gijón, Girona, Vitoria and Zaragoza (kaleidosred.org). Another decisive factor at the time was the launch of various types of multipurpose facilities (civic centres, municipal centres, etc.) designed as places to experiment with service amalgamation deploying a cross-sectoral approach and targeting the region in question. However, as the new millennium dawned, many places witnessed a marked
return, whether explicit or not, to traditional departmental and sectoral policies, probably in response to demand and the need for efficiency. Regardless, the fashion, so to speak, for personal services has faded over time and a retrospective assessment of the gains achieved and the difficulties faced in Spain is still pending.

**Culture as a factor in urban, economic and social development: its relationship with structural policies**

The old idea of *cultural development* as a manifestation of the possible relationship between development and culture, whose most quintessential expression is probably the final declaration of the *Mondiacult* Intergovernmental Conference on Culture and Development held in Mexico City in 1982, has evolved since the turn of the century towards a consideration of culture as a *factor in development* capable of exerting a decisive influence on three basic structural policies: urban development, economic development and social development. The *Stockholm Agenda*, the result of the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, the 1998 publication of the UNESCO report, *Our Creative Diversity*, which compiles the contributions of the World Decade of Cultural Development, and the *UNDP 2004 report* entitled *Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World* all constitute good maps of this new, unquestionably cross-sectoral and increasingly decisive role that culture plays not only in neighbouring sectoral policies but also in major structural policies. Nonetheless, the use and abuse of culture transformed into a catalyst or magic wand for urban, economic and social change (a paradigmatic example being the so-called “Guggenheim effect”, referring to the cultural space inaugurated in Bilbao in 1997 and its impact on the surrounding region) has created several undesirable effects. The first and perhaps most fundamental of these is that this is a tremendously unequal relationship in which culture is subordinated to the demands of macro policies. Thus, implementation of cultural actions is often the responsibility of those who do not always act in accordance with a genuinely cultural logic. In addition, what George Yúdice termed the *expediency of culture* in his book of the same name published in 2003, has become a legitimising factor capable of laundering, so to speak, blatantly speculative operations that are not always legitimate or justifiable in terms of development.

**Culture and sustainability: towards a new paradigm**

In recent years, the foundations of a new paradigm have been laid, to a large extent in response to the consequences of the type of cross-sectoral approach described above. This new cultural paradigm is more oriented towards what, at least since the 1992 conference held in Rio de Janeiro, is known as *sustainable development*. The precise reference is the *Agenda 21 for Culture*, a route map for local governments worldwide adopted in Barcelona in 2004 and currently implemented by the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). In summary, this proposes that culture is not only a *factor* in development, but in itself also constitutes a cornerstone of sustainability in any initiative that seeks development: without cultural development, development is not sustainable. Hence, culture not only can and must generate *externalities* at the urban, economic and social level, but the question should also be raised of *returns*, in other words, capitalisation for the benefit of the cultural ecosystem of such gains. From this perspective, the most recent initiative has been to explore the role culture should play in relation to the process of revising the *Millennium Development Goals* that the United Nations is committed to implementing on a global scale from 2015. There have been various contributions and meetings in this regard, including the UNESCO conference on the role of culture in sustainable development held in Huangzhou, China, in May 2013. How can culture help eradicate poverty, achieve universal primary education, improve maternal health, ensure environmental sustainability and reduce infant mortality? In sum, how can it help reduce inequality and poverty? This a complex but exciting contemporary variation of a cross-sectoral approach.
An intra-cross-sectoral approach in culture as a pending issue

This approach to the fundamental modalities of cross-sectoral relations proposed in culture concludes with a no less important self-examination, underlining the importance of relations that could be termed intra-cross-sectoral. In essence, culture is not so much one sector as a group of sub-sectors whose inter-relationships are often complex. Besides the distinction based on the traditional muses, we should at least recognise the differences (which often constitute distances) that exist between what could be considered culture that is presented (e.g. tangible objects, whether heritage or not), culture that is represented (e.g. performances) and culture that is communicated via media and channels (e.g. books, the media and the internet) of different technological dimensions. It is also strategic to explore the relationship between these parts from a cross-sectoral logic. Something similar happens with the various value chain components of some cultural sectors. One example is the virtual absence of comprehensive policies on reading that span public management areas as diverse as education, libraries, promoting the publishing industry, support for writers, promoting bookshops and disseminating literature in the media, etc.

4. Is it possible to assess a cross-sectoral approach?

In 2005, the culture committee of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (Spanish initials: FEMP) set itself the task of preparing, in conjunction with a broad spectrum of collaborators, an instrument for evaluating implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture at local level, to satisfy the recommendation given in article 49 of the agenda, which calls for the construction of indicators that contribute to monitoring and comparability. The broad scope of the subject was divided into five key dimensions: development, access, participation, memory and innovation in the construction of local identity and the cross-sectoral nature of culture. The references to a cross-sectoral approach in Agenda 21 for Culture are in themselves cross-sectoral; in other words, there is no heading or specific article in the agenda devoted to the subject, but the cross-sectoral nature of culture in the context of local policies is present throughout the entire text.

The Guía para la Evaluación de las Políticas Culturales Locales en el marco de la Agenda 21 de la Cultura [Guidelines for evaluating local cultural policies in the context of Agenda 21 for Culture], published in 2009, proposes three complementary core areas in the subject: the presence of culture in the global policies of the institution analysed, culture as a cross-sectoral factor in other sectoral policies and the cross-sectoral approach existing within the area of culture. All three cases are aimed towards a qualitative assessment (basically what is said that is done) based on public documents, government programmes, strategic plans, etc., and a quantitative assessment (numerical evidence of what is actually done) based on budgetary, personnel and infrastructure resources, etc.

To ensure transferability to other situations and contexts, it is of interest to explore questions that shed light on some key issues in which the supposed cross-sectoral nature of culture at local level is particularly evident, such as:

- Initiatives in the cultural and creative industries sector
- Actions promoting cultural employment
- Public art programmes at local level
- Methods of designing public spaces, urban furniture, etc.
- Management, where necessary, of tourism initiatives
- The presence of large cultural or artistic events at local level.
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For reflection

- Explore the municipal cross-sectoral policies that exist for culture in the town where you live (whether you work on the council or not).
- Think about how culture could act cross-sectorally to promote one of the eight Millennium Development Goals in a given region.

Documents

1. Definition of governance in Wikipedia: es.wikipedia.org
2. Definition of subsidiarity in Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org
3. Website of the Kaleidos.red Foundation: kaleidosred.org
4. Website of the UCLG committee on culture: www.agenda21culture.net
5. Website of the Millennium Development Goals: www.un.org

References


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