3.1 Cultural management

By Antonio Javier González Rueda and Luis Ben Andrés

The concept of cultural management is indisputably the pivotal theme of this textbook on cultural management. Its importance resides in the fact that today, cultural management is both a socially accepted profession and a tool for applying public and private cultural policies. Here, we describe different approaches to the concept, in order to finally propose a simple, comprehensible and operational definition.

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It seems that the Greeks had no word for culture. They had good architects, good sculptors, good poets, just as they had good craftsmen and good statesmen. They knew that their way of life was a good way of life, and they were willing if necessary to fight to defend it. But it would never have occurred to them that they had a separate commodity, culture. Something to be given a trade-mark by their academicians, something to be acquired by superior people with sufficient time and money, something to be exported to foreign countries along with figs and olives.

Herbert Read. To hell with culture

If the thought-provoking libertarian, Herbert Read, is to be believed, culture should not be narrowed down, defined and constrained, and much less so in today’s society: one that Read did not live to see, but did envisage. However, we live in the world we live in, and face the facts that surround us. In today’s world, we do have something called culture, a phenomenon that includes people, their activities, the exchange of objects and ideas, actors and spectators, sellers and buyers, those who take decisions and those who put these into practice, those who lead and those who follow, those who create and those who admire, and so on and so forth. How lucky the Greeks were to have lived in an apparently simpler world. We are greatly in their debt for their amazing legacy, but we live in another world: one in which something called culture does exist, and is furthermore thought to require the best possible management and administration. Consequently, we have cultural management, but what is it? For starters, it is a challenge and a task that is difficult to define. The arts, creativity, leisure, free time; these terms are sometimes used as synonyms of culture but often refer to other aspects that are rarely the concern of cultural management.

Cultural management (CM) is the conceptual pivot of this textbook. The concept is of great importance for a variety of reasons: its increasingly wider social acceptance, the considerable number of people who work professionally in this field, the policies that this sector must implement, the economic and social impact that culture and cultural management undeniably generate, and culture itself, which is at the heart of our societies. However, it is curious that years after it was accepted as a term referring to an activity and a profession, we still do not have a clear, accepted and effective definition of cultural management. No definition has elicited broad consensus or has been accepted by the majority. Moreover, any consensus that does exist is probably tacit and unspoken, whereby we all believe we know what CM is, but nobody questions or comments on it aloud. This could be called a negative or perhaps an inferred paradigm.

An exhaustive search yields very few definitions or interpretations of the concept of CM. Interestingly, cultural managers and CM scholars prefer talking and writing about the concept of culture, and cultural policies, than about the discipline or occupation they are engaged in, think about or study, CM. This circumstance leads to
indirect interpretations of the concept of CM based on diverse approaches. The figure below lists five of these approaches, shows who or what are the main drivers of each approach, and gives the main advantages and disadvantages of each approach to the concept of CM.

Towards a concept of cultural management

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- **Professionalisation.** A first model for defining the concept of CM is that formulated by the professionals who play a leading role in the same. Normally, this is based on professional concerns such as education and training, professional profiles, the social acceptance of managers and similar topics; hence, it can be considered indirect. Since this is a recent profession in historical terms, its professionals are concerned by its lack of definition and attempt to narrow this down based on their own professional profiles in order to legitimise their occupation and expertise. This approach undoubtedly reinforces the professionalism of managers and probably increases their visibility; nevertheless, it runs the risk of being insular.

- Another approach consists of defining CM by specifying its fields of action (political, social, cultural, etc.). Thus, CM may refer to region, facilities, services, cultural industries, public provision, etc. In this case, CM is goal-driven and management targets the region, the facilities, the provision of services or the commercial production of cultural services and products. Specialisation as a source of effectiveness is one potential advantage of this approach, but fragmentation of professional practice is its counterpart, the disadvantage of this approach.

- **Instruments.** Defining CM according to the tools and instruments used is an interesting conceptual approach. A clear example of this possible model is given by Martinell and López (2008). In their *Organum sobre conceptos claves sobre la práctica profesional* [Map of key concepts in professional practice], which has already been discussed in the chapter on Cultural Policies, an attempt is made to define the concept of CM in accordance with the tools used in professional practice. Thus, it encompasses production, programming, project management, human resources management, communication, economics, monitoring, evaluation and strategic management. This is a very effective and pragmatic approach that favours good methodological practice but which nevertheless can be overly technocratic. A similar approach can be found in Zubiría, Abello and Tabares (2001), who define the professional capacities of the manager, such as context analysis, empathy, creativity,
communication, etc., which basically correspond to professional tools (diagnosis/evaluation, human resources management, project design, communication, etc.).

- The next approach focuses on the **artistic sector and responsibilities**. In this case, CM can be divided into subsystems that encompass management of heritage, the performing arts, the visual arts, cultural tourism, etc. Further specificity is possible if we consider theatrical management, contemporary art management, music production and many other fields of specialisation. This approach is driven by the creative or artistic sector, rendering it very difficult to establish a paradigm common to the entire profession or specify the elements that unify the bases and practice of CM. However, it should be noted that depending on the individual circumstances, this approach offers a high level of social recognition and prestige. An opera house director who uses the title cultural manager raises the status of the profession, as does, for example, a reputed art gallery owner or the manager of a contemporary art museum or a foundation. However, this is a sectoral and fragmented approach that has little chance of generating an overarching concept common to the entire profession and to CM itself.

- Recent times have witnessed the emergence of the **economic approach**, also known by some as the economism approach. This is unquestionably one of the last but very powerful barbarian invasions that CM is periodically subject to. The vast majority agree that this interest in culture evidenced by the economic sciences emerged in the 1960s, and that the publication of Performing Arts. The Economic Dilemma (Baumol & Bowen, 1966) marked the inception of this movement. The English-speaking world has clearly been at the forefront of this school, and for years the Australian David Throsby has been its leading light. In Spain, Lluís Bonet, Ramón Zallo and Pau Rausell, among others, have produced important studies on the economics of culture. Renowned experts in France include Xavier Greffe and Xavier Dupuis, while Ernesto Piedras and George Yudice are two of the most reputed experts in Latin America. It is clear that the relationship between economics and culture has aroused substantial interest, giving rise first to quantitative studies on its economic and public impact and later diversifying into other areas, such as the influence and role of the cultural sector in national economies. The recent trend in culture satellite accounts in statistical systems is well known. However, it should be noted that the economy has incorporated some valuable tools for CM, above all in aspects such as organisation management, planning and evaluation models and marketing techniques. Among the advantages of the incursion of economics into CM is that it motivates or enhances reflection on development as another field in which culture plays an important role. The economic approach is driven, at least in Spain, by what are termed the cultural industries, a controversial and contentious concept that is rejected by a large segment of the cultural sector. In our opinion, the greatest danger inherent to this approach is the possibility of losing sight of some apparently unproductive creative, aesthetic and social values (Ordine, 2013).

Another way to approach a definition of the concept of CM is to determine how it is seen and defined in other nations or languages. Due to its historical role as a benchmark worthy of imitation, the first country to examine should be France, a nation that for centuries has exerted a strong influence on Spanish culture and other aspects of Spanish life. Wikipedia has an extensive entry in French (not Spanish) on CM, with a fairly specific definition at the beginning, as follows:

*Cultural management encompasses the body of management knowledge and practice in relation to the field of arts and culture. As a science, management refers to a corpus of theories, knowledge and methods borrowed from economics, the humanities, the social sciences, marketing, administrative science, finances, etc. The specificity of cultural management in the broadest sense refers to the specificity of a field (or a system of activities), products (tangible and intangible) and services that comprise merchandise or services unlike any others (UNESCO).*
Due to space constraints, only some issues raised here can be discussed. First, it is notable that CM is termed a science, and this forms the heart of intense debate: is CM a science, a professional activity or an occupation? It is also noteworthy that CM constructs its theoretical corpus from contributions in other sciences and their tools, a fact which underlines the relative youth of CM and its need to borrow from other scientific or professional fields, as well as its nature as a social science or methodology. In sum, we can conclude that France and the French-speaking world offers us an interesting and developed conceptual alternative, as is to be expected from the homeland of rationalism.

Contrasting with the French perspective, the English-speaking world offers a different view. First, the term cultural management is eschewed in favour of arts administration or arts management, which refers primarily to the world of arts and a more limited occupational sphere than that generally envisaged in France, Spain and Latin America. Once again, Wikipedia serves as a source of information. The associated entry defines arts administration as:

The field that concerns business operations around an arts organisation. Arts administrators are responsible for facilitating the day-to-day operations of the organisation and fulfilling its mission. Arts organisations include professional non-profit entities (e.g. theatres, museums, symphonies, jazz organisations, opera houses, and ballet companies) and many smaller professional and non-professional for-profit arts-related organisations (e.g. auction houses, art galleries, music companies, etc.). The duties of an arts administrator can include staff management, marketing, budget management, public relations, fundraising, programme development and evaluation, and board relations.

The official United Kingdom website on occupations and education provides a more comprehensive and detailed description, but evidences the same approach as in Wikipedia. What is of interest here is the different perspective of the English-speaking world. The artistic disciplines and their management assume greater centrality; however, in practice, the community also exerts a strong influence. In line with such a pragmatic vision, the article focuses more on describing the functions, competences and tools involved than on the search for a conceptual definition. We shall have to leave the debate on what is non-profit in art and culture for another time.

This brief overview of how CM is defined in other languages indicates the need for a definition specific to the Spanish-speaking world. The I Seminar on Trainer Training in the Field of Cultural Management, organised by the Organisation of Ibero-American States (Spanish initials: OEI) and held in Mexico in 2003, highlighted the need to define CM, its practices and its theoretical foundations. It was noted that CM is a professional practice based on multi-disciplinary knowledge, linked to socio-political contexts and communities, to events and action, but at the same time supported by theoretical and analytical training provided in academic contexts. CM was viewed as a professional but also socio-political activity with a growing need, as in any other professional field, for a theoretical corpus based on reflection and research. It was stated that elucidating a definition of cultural management today will require reflection on and determination of the key aspects of its relationship with other disciplines that have contributed to cultural management. This would include both its theoretical foundations (philosophy, sociology, anthropology, administrative theories, economics, psychology) and its instruments for intervention. These views are coherent with an aspect—manager training— which is closely related to the process of professionalisation and legitimisation of the exercise of the profession. It is logical that it should be trainers who have identified the need for a definition of CM, its tools and the sources that have nurtured it.

From the educational context of the University of Guadalajara in Mexico, Mariscal Orozco offers another perspective that considers CM to be a knowledge management process, in the sense that it implies:
• That knowledge is a social construct.
• The importance of focusing on the processes that generate learning communities (the author is describing a university curriculum).
• The application of knowledge to social transformation.

In this respect, professionals, and by extension the profession of CM itself, must possess the capacity to diagnose, design and implement cultural projects, manage and administer resources, design participation strategies, communicate, direct and evaluate, among other things. Orozco’s perspective corresponds to the university’s need to systematise and order access to knowledge. It certainly provides a solid foundation from which to develop a clear and rigorous concept of CM. A similar approach from the same perspective, training for managers, is described by Alfonso Martinell in a document entitled La formación en gestión cultural en Iberoamérica: reflexiones y situación [Cultural management training in Latin America: reflections and situation], in which he gives a clear and detailed proposal for what cultural management training should include. In his opinion, this should be:

1. Theoretical contributions to socio-cultural reflection (anthropology, sociology, psychology, social communication, etc.)
2. Tools for analysing the situation (statistics, marketing)
3. Law and economics related to the socio-cultural field
4. Knowledge of socio-cultural policy
5. Planning, programming and management
6. Human resources management
7. Knowledge of the disciplinary field (this refers to the artistic or cultural sector in which the manager intends to work)
8. Specific technical knowledge (oral and written expression, languages, computer skills, graphic design, protocol, etc.)

These capacities also serve to define CM as a professional and academic discipline that combines extensive contributions from the social sciences (e.g. economics, anthropology, law and psychology), technical tools (marketing, statistics, planning, etc.) and personal skills (e.g. linguistic expression, public relations). Hence, an initial definition of CM could be an extensive field of knowledge composed of aspects from other fields of knowledge. This capacity- and training-based approach indicates that CM is an extremely complex discipline, field of knowledge or instrument that has been constructed from contributions that have been borrowed (or appropriated) from elsewhere.

At this point, it is time to stop circling around the concept of CM and examine some of the few definitions that actually exist of CM.

In 2010, BCF Consultants produced a sectoral report on CM for the City of Barcelona in reference to the Barcelona Activa project, which states that cultural management is an activity destined to promote, design and implement cultural projects in any field. Cultural management professionals are primarily responsible for mediating between cultural creation, participation and consumption, helping to develop artistic work, insert it into a social, regional or marketing strategy and render cultural projects economically, socially, artistically and politically feasible. Notable here is the French idea of mediation rather than management or administration, a concept that appears in numerous books and articles on CM, highlighting the work of consensus and intermediation between the different agents involved in cultural processes.
Very recently, in 2013, the Colombian Ministry of Culture published a textbook entitled *Herramientas para la gestión cultural pública* [Tools for public cultural management] that brought together the work of several authors. This bold and committed textbook defines CM as the *set of management, coordination, planning, evaluation, follow-up and implementation actions aimed at facilitating, promoting, stimulating, conserving and disseminating different cultural activities and expressions freely and equitably, in order to foster people’s exercise of rights and access to opportunities and enhance their well-being*. Noteworthy in this proposal is its vision of culture as a human right, specifying free and equitable access to culture, which is more a statement of intent than practice and typical of an institutional proposal issued by a public agency. This is not to say that such statements are redundant, but that as in previous examples, this proposal from the Colombian Ministry to some extent neglects instrumental aspects in favour of public policies. It should be added that the document is extensive and that elements of this definition of CM are later qualified.

Turning to the African continent, the ARTerial Network made an interesting proposal in 2011. The document entitled *Guide pratique pour la gestion de projets artistiques el culturelles* [Practical guidelines for managing artistic and cultural projects] specifies what members of this network understand as management of cultural projects, defining it as *an undertaking in which novel use is made of human, material and financial resources in order to implement a single project in line with the circumstances and financial and time constraints, and achieve advantageous change by means of quantitative and qualitative objectives*. The first striking aspect of this proposal is the absence of the words art and culture; indeed, this proposal could serve to define any social intervention or management task. Nevertheless, it is clear throughout the rest of the guidelines that the document is aimed at artistic interventions, and this absence mainly reflects the desire to produce a practical guide that can be adapted to a variety of circumstances. This proposal focuses on technical aspects and on systematising management.

Our last definition comes from Andalusia and emerged in the context of the Culture and Development Andalusia/Morocco (CUDEMA) course organised in 2011 by the Three Cultures Foundation in Seville. One outcome of the course was an extensive guide containing the texts and proposals of its participant teachers. Here, the concept of CM is defined by Ignacio Trujillo Barraquero as the *set of strategies employed to facilitate adequate public access to cultural heritage. These strategies include adequate planning of economic and human resources, and the achievement of clear short- and long-term objectives to implement plans. Cultural management necessarily enhances general social progress, and priority principles include serving as a fundamental instrument for social distribution and regional balance*. Planning, accessibility and social goals are the three key concepts mentioned in this definition. Thus, according to Barraquero, planning is an essential tool of CM, public access to culture is a right, and social (and regional) goals are fundamental to all cultural actions. The chapter explores these aspects in greater depth, attempting to define CM from this triple perspective.

We cannot conclude this chapter on the concept of CM without citing Pedro A. Vives, who provides a long and referenced entry on the concept of CM in his *Glosario crítico de gestión cultural* [Critical glossary of cultural management]. Vives considers that CM operates on three different levels of social, political, economic and intellectual life, and is thus a vector in a structural understanding of culture itself. The first of these three levels is the *regional* level, which becomes more generalist as it becomes more local and can be identified with municipal management which is most closely involved with the demands of regions and residents. The second is the *sectoral* level (plastic arts, performing arts, heritage, dance, etc.), which involves the dynamics of promoting and producing culture and art. The third and final level is what Vives terms *infrastructural* management, which basically focuses on institutions and facilities. These three levels are complemented by two variables that influence the functional core of CM: economic management and *international* management. The former involves the challenges common to any type of management, profitability and efficiency, whereas Vives proposes the latter mainly in terms of international visibility of projects and regions. On this basis, he
believes that it is possible to define scales of responsibilities, internal relations and specific functions. Cultural management affects contemporary economic activity and socialisation processes, and is based on different knowledge and procedures to those of other sectors. Rather than providing a definition of CM in his glossary entry, Vives (rightly in our view) lays the conceptual bases that explain the role and functions of CM in contemporary societies, a necessary exercise in the difficult task of defining cultural management.

By way of conclusion

It would be unfair to end this chapter without at least trying not so much to define CM as to list the essential elements that should be included in a definition of the concept. From the foregoing, we can highlight the following essential elements of cultural management:

- CM requires a theoretical corpus that informs its actions and social purpose. As a science or social methodology, this corpus can be formulated in line with loans from other sciences that are subsequently tailored to the field of culture.
- CM must respond to more or less explicit regional demands, in this case obviously cultural demands.
- CM must also respond to the demands of creators and creative projects insofar as artistic creativity is the raw material of culture.
- The core function of CM is to mediate between region and artistic, cultural or creative projects. Contrasting, agreeing, coordinating and visibilising these are essential tasks of CM.
- CM works for society so that culture occupies public space and all kinds of social spaces (business, social, political, participatory, volunteering, etc.)
- In line with the above, CM is supported by professional tools and the personal abilities of professionals to accomplish the tasks that emerge from creative, social and regional contexts.

To paraphrase the title of the book by Herbert Read, we hope that this brief overview of the concept of cultural management does not prompt the reader to tell cultural management, and of course, the authors of this study, to go to hell.

For reflection

- As a profession that has gathered its content from different social sciences, cultural management has undergone what we have termed barbarian invasions. It reflects a chronology of social science or social methodology that has predominated or been fashionable in the profession since the turn of the 20th century.

References


