3.6 History of Cultural Management

by Jesús Cantero

A review of the general history of mankind is useful to find activities and people who worked on activities which can be called “cultural management activities”. The author deeply reviews the history highlighting such kinds of activities and professionals from the Classical Age to our days. Despite the contemporary professional phenomenon, cultural management has a tangible history that should be known.

Most articles, papers, and handbooks on cultural management start from the difficulty to define the concept. Different opinions on cultural managers are immediately provided, adding comments and disquisitions on their origin, their figure, and their development in Spain. It is generally considered that the concept first appeared from the second half of the eighties of the last century, having the Spring municipal elections of 1979 as a decisive landmark. This is partially true, especially regarding to the emergence of what could be called a new profession more or less massive and articulated all over the Spanish territory by creating cultural departments of local administrations as well as autonomous regions. However, some important clarifications are required. It can be observed that new activities launched or developed already existed in many cases, perhaps with other goals and perspectives, and with a level that could be called “professional” activities. What was new in the period started in 1979 was the fundamental relation between cultural management activities and the territory, probably due to the geographical area in which the work was going to be developed and to the institutions launching it. Such singularity was extended at the beginning of the century by the emergence of the concept of cultural globalisation and co-operation: it was expanded from the own territories, but in collaboration with other situations and further territories.

The etymological development of words is commonly analysed (it is usually a good start of topics) and then the concept. However, I am not going to analyse this aspect because it is developed by another contributor to this work. Only, I would like to mention María Moliner (who was, historically speaking, very closely linked to cultural management as her huge work was developed in the Pedagogical Missions) in her Diccionario del Uso del Español [Dictionary of Spanish Use], together with the concepts included by Ramón Tamames in his Diccionario de Economía [A Dictionary of Economics]. We include the “culture/cultural word”, which conceptualises our field of work either from various visions (anthropological, structure, cultural studies, and even economic studies) or from the possible idea of culture according to the sense given by the most used western languages, such as English, French, German, and of course Spanish.

As the objective of my contribution to this handbook is Cultural Management and its development in Spain and Andalusia, and after mentioning above the etymological part of management developed by Dr Ariño, I narrow down the word culture, taking as a reference a very common and quite accepted definition of culture provided by the Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies in the World Conference on Cultural Policies of UNESCO, held in Mexico D.F in the summer of 1982. By using such definition, we join the two words into the concept we are clarifying.
The Conference agreed as follows:

“that in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs”.

By literally joining this, we could make a first definition: cultural management is the set of operational rules, procedures, and methods to efficiently carry out activities which include not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.

Late the eighties, Eduard Delgado proposed the conceptualisation of cultural management as the set of methods which tend to harmonise the demands of creative projects with the requirements of comprehensive development of the territory. Almost ten years have passed since the elections of the democratic local administrations, and the autonomous regions from Article 151 were consolidated and those from the Article 143 received their cultural transfers.

The Chilean María Paz Soriano suggested that cultural management is about the contemporary response to the more and more complex and bigger space of culture in our society, thus demanding certain technical capacities to develop cultural artistic projects.

Etymologically, management is almost joint to administrate and even administration. I did not want to focus on this meaning, although it is the most similar to that of Tamames, because there are debates and articles published on the differences and the qualifications between administrating and managing, that is, administration and management. It is also logical that other essential concepts and figures, such as cultural manager, management, and manager are discussed in a longer development. It is also required to suggest in that hypothetical article the so-called cultural policies, which basically are the setting of the specific objectives mentioned by Tomares but including knowledge goals of the target groups of the cultural activity intended to be carried out, and as a last resort, “transparency and commitment” for citizens.

I agree with Pedro Vives in that cultural management is a social function to be developed, but I disagree—in a wide sense and with the content and technological variations of each historical moment—in that it does not come from the Western cultural tradition and heritage.

If we focus on the definition I mentioned above and analyse the possible activities, it is shown that some of them, their origins, come from ancient times, particularly those related to lifestyles, traditions, beliefs, or the different typologies of shows.

With all this I am not saying that there is a historical continuity with activities, as I am going to clarify later, but some knowledge developed along the time and that could be, or should be, known by those which are working, or are intending to work in this profession.

For a quick vision of the cultural activities along the time and an explanation of our first steps in history, prehistory, the best way is beginning by the concepts of beliefs and traditions included in the definition of culture in Mexico 1982, because they join us to terms such as religion—cultural universe—or religious behaviours. According to the sociologist G. Lenski, it is a shared system of associated beliefs and practices which are articulated around the nature of the forces configuring the fate of human beings. It is also joint to ideas of ritual, of transcendence, of the supernatural, which are related to practices such as magic, music,
dance, divination, and astrology, among others.

By trying to find important cultural activities with similar aspects of the activities held today—or with a huge amount of specialised professions required to carry out the activities—and by exemplifying in the Old Age and taking a leap in time, we will find another activity of the definition of Mexico, arts, performing arts, and particularly theatre arts of Greece and Rome, which need human infrastructures, materials, and important economic resources.

By analysing our classic culture, many activities held nowadays were found in that period, although with certain differences, and they were part of the activities of the current cultural management. Some examples are public libraries, archives, shows (handicrafts related to them and as by-products of the activities, crafts such as combs, brooches, bracelets, etc., were marketed in the amphitheatre), specific regulations, heritage goods, etc.

Given their complexity and greater persistence in time, in this chapter we focus on Roman spectacles and their variations to analyse an example of such period which was very important for the subsequent development of our western culture.

Roman spectacles were divided into five groups: ludis circenses et scaneici (music and dance were included), certamina athelaturum, numera gladiatorum, venationes (exhibition and fight between wild animals and men), and naumachiae. In turn, they were complemented by the ludi votui (votive games) celebrated because of the emperor’s health, or other votive games (ludi magni) celebrated because of a victory or the health of the republic (money for their organisation came from the booty or Senate).

Roman laws forced magistrates to annually organise ludis under the command of a publisher, the curule aedile (magistrates established in the Republic to organise celebrations), a position which could be occupied by patricians, plebeians, and those born to the image of plebeian aedile. Their tasks included, among others, the organisation of games, the supervision of weights and measures in markets and the resolution of minor disputes related to commerce, always under the supervision of the urban praetor. It was a level of the cursus honorum or political career. In the year 22 BC, praetors were in charge of their organisation (magistrature, whose function was the administration of justice) and then, in the period of Claudius, quaestors were those in charge (non-permanent magistrates which could be civil (for the public treasury), military (for army chests) and administrative quaestors, who were responsible for administering public funds.

On the other hand, there was the munus gladiatorium (munera in plural), both secular and private. They were irregularly celebrated when someone paid for them and emerged in relation to funeral rituals. This characteristic of secular ceremony distinguished them from any kind of religious spectacle (ludus), whether the circus or the theatre. As Tertullian stated, the name itself (munus) indicated that it was a duty to the deads, but we should not forget that munus also means present, a gift for the people. However, munera were part of the public spectacles in the 1st century BC. From that moment, aedile were in charge of their organisation, as well as of most of the other games.

Continuing with the policy of patronage state, Claudius offered singular spectacles outside the buildings and the most famous was the naumachia on the Fucine Lake (52 AD), 80 km away from Rome, in which 19,000 men fought in triremes and quadriremes divided into two fleets, Sicily and Rhodes. Nero, in the year 57 AD, also offered a naumachia—in the ancient amphitheatre of Tauro in Rome—where “sea monsters” could be seen swimming in the sea.
Games lead to many specific and specialised professions due to their needs related to the service of the spectacle and the maintenance of machinery and buildings. Also, other jobs were included, such as publishers, heralds (praecones), sand caretaker (harenaris), caretakers (menander), referees (grouped in an association), lanao (entrepreneur), etc.

Theatres officially started in Rome in the year 240 BC and was fully developed throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries, at least related to literary creation, and they undoubtedly declined in the first years of the 1st century BC. However, a permanent theatre was not built in Rome until the middle of the 1st century BC, when the theatre of Pompey was opened in the year 55. Big theatres were frequently built in the whole Empire during the 1st and 2nd centuries AC (Andrés Pociña Pérez).

The archaeologist Margarete Biebe stated in her book on Greek and Roman theatres that, before the existence of stone buildings, theatre performances were represented in acceptable scopes (usually in wooden or luck buildings) where other spectacles were also held. When stone buildings were built, tragedies, comedies, dance spectacles, debates, conferences, and circus representations (e.g., jugglers, acrobats, boxing, gladiators’ fights, wild animals’ fights and fights with wild animals) took place; these buildings were adapted to the different typologies of spectacles.

Spectacles were generally free, and an edict was sometimes published for people to contribute, according to their possibilities, with a donation for a specific deity.

The many types of Roman spectacles were a way of “popular consolidation” of those organising them (publishers) or financing them with possible risks. So, measures to limit somehow such possible risks were adopted.

In the year 55 AC, Tacitus removed those ensuring the security in the theatre to provide the Roman people with a greater feeling of freedom. The result was an alarming increase of disturbances in the stands, even becoming pitched battles, so the measure was shortly removed.

Games were held in bank holidays. However, there were many bank holidays and Marcus Aurelius reduced them by 135 per year. Most solemnities corresponded to imperial celebrations related to events of the reigning house of the moment, such as anniversaries and victories.

As previously mentioned, games were paid by public patrons, but Nero ended the stage of state patronage. New emperors were no longer patrons, but owners of their state. As owners, they could use the public funds to offer games which were passed off as personal generosities; in other words, they were generous with public money.

Buildings for Roman spectacles were not only built for the inhabitants of the cities, but for their influence area. For this reason, we mention theatres having a capacity of an average of three or four thousand people, and amphitheatres of ten or fifteen thousand.
The concept of Roman spectacle declined in the 4th century, and the gradual implementation of Christianity in the Empire sped that process up. Isidore of Seville described in his Etymologies the feelings arose in the spectators: circus arose passion; the sand, cruelty; and the theatre, lust.

Regarding theatres, other places for management activities throughout different centuries, little can be said throughout a series of centuries as most studies mention a break lasting many centuries, between the Roman theatre and that very joint to medieval religious celebrations. Only in the minstrel activities —documents dated from the 7th century—we can find a relation with Roman mimes and stage actors. We should go back to the end of the 12th century to find El Auto de los Reyes Magos [Play of the Three Wise Kings]. Some components of the court theatre is found in the 15th century. At the end of this century, some authors appeared in the Spanish theatre (Fernando de Rojas, La celestina) who reflected the transition from medieval forms of theatre to the Renaissance theatre. Language playwrights also emerged in such historical evolution and they developed activities and ways of working which led to contemporary theatre forms, with simple but well-structured business structures. We then reach to the Golden Age Theatre, very important in literature, arts, business, legislations, etc. From that moment —with the amazing moments in the 9th and 10th centuries— theatres became one of the broadest resources of the current cultural management activities.

Another type of Pagan spectacle still developed is the carnival. According to some historians, it could be originated in Egyptian and Sumerian times 5,000 years ago. During the Empire’s magnificence, Roman people had celebrations for several days, sharing them with slaves who were considered equal, a fact taken place only in those celebrations which generally were held in Bacchus’ honour, the Roman God of Wine and Fertility. It is also a Christian tradition because the word comes from carnelevarium, which referred to the prohibition of eating meat during the Christian Lent.

Another landmark of the development of the management activity, which is required to be known from my historical perspective, was the planning which took root during the Enlightenment and was also shown in culture, understanding it as the theoretical precision of a general or sector plan methodically organised for certain objectives of everything the word “culture” involves. In 1743, Fray Martín Sarmiento published in the newspaper Semanario Erudito the so-called by the specialists El prematuro plan de bibliotecas de Sarmiento [Premature plan of Sarmiento libraries], a reflection on public libraries and their use to promote reading. He highlighted the need of creating libraries in all Spanish cities, first in those with a university and a cathedral. In 1774, the Discourse on the Promotion of Popular Industry by the Count of Floridablanca was published and quoted as “a plan” which led to the foundation of a huge number of Economic Societies and influenced the erudites from Guipúzcoa who, in 1763, named themselves as Friends of the Country. The bases of the Economic Societies of the Friends of the Country were established, being one of the pillars of the subsequent savings banks or friendly societies which led to social and cultural works, thus developing the management activity in the 20th century. The Plan de Reforma de los Teatros de Madrid [Reform plan of Madrid's theatres] was written by Santos Diez González and published in 1799. The aim was to reform the public theatres in Madrid to not have difficulties until being perfect. This plan was later launched by Leandro Fernández Moratín.

The 19th century is important in relation to a series of reforms and implementation of new concepts which are going to be fundamental for all cultural management activities of our period. Cultural Associations, Lyceums, and Artistic or Cultural Centres were created, the Free Teaching Institution emerged together with one of the deepest reflections on the role of education and culture for the Spanish people development. Almost at the end of the century, class syndicates were created, and they also changed the vision of the role of culture by founding the first university outreaches and popular universities.
The Constitution of 1812 sets out in the Article 370: “The Cortes, by means of special decrees and plans, shall regulate the important object of public education.” Bartolomé José Gallardo (1813) proposed a Plan Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas [National Plan of Public Libraries] aimed at creating a real network of provincial libraries related to the Cortes Library, which assumed to be the main library. Although such plan was never launched, the Spanish library structure is based on it. The various confiscations, taken place in this century, provided the state with many historical, literary, scientific, and artistic documents, and implied the creation of the Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros-Bibliotecarios [Special corp of archivists-librarians] in July 1858, to make the classification and conservation possible, as well as the dissemination of all archives of Spain. They were the first official cultural managers. The Preamble of the Royal Decree of 1847, in which a superior board of directors of archives under the Ministry of Grace and Justice was created, described the disastrous state of the documentary archives as they were kept in dark, humid, and decaying places. The Public Instruction Act by Ruiz Zorrilla (1869) suggested the creation of popular libraries in all Spain, depending on the centres of primary education. That year, the Ministry of Public Works forced to create two popular libraries in each university district. In 2008, because of the 150 anniversary of the establishment of the Cuerpo Facultativo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Arqueólogos [Special corp of archivists, librarians, and archaeologists], the Ministry of Culture held commemorate sessions to remember the development of one of the most consolidated bodies of the public administration. Such sessions paid tribute to cultural knowledge and contribution of their members, and they were in turn useful to discuss about the new challenges posed by the members of such bodies who are specialised in one of the variables of cultural management.

The 20th century—a convulsed century all over Europe and Spain—highly marked the evolution of the activities mentioned above as those making up the profession of cultural manager, but now from a more modern perspective and with all the variables included step by step, thus developing our job in the last quarter of this century.

In 1901, the Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts was established and lasted until the beginning of the Civil War. The Finance Act of 31 March 1900 authorised the Government to reorganise the Ministry of Public Works in two Ministry Departments, and the Royal Decree of 18 April 1900—Gaceta del 19—abolished such Ministry of Public Works by replacing it with two new Ministry Departments called Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts and Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, Commerce and Public Works, respectively. The Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts oversaw the public and private education and their different classes and degrees, the promotion of science and humanities, Fine Arts, Archives, Libraries, Museums, and the Directorate-General for the Geographical and Statistical Institute.

The Act of 7 of July was approved in 1911 and established the rules to which the artistic and scientific excavations were subject, as well as the preservation of ruins and antiques. The regulation to apply this act was approved by the Royal Decree of 1 March 1912.

With the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931, a short but intense period started, highly improving the education level and making culture available for huge groups of Spanish people, who were not considered until then. The Article 48 of the Constitution set out that culture was considered as a common good and right since the service of culture is mainly assigned to the state, and the state offers this service through educational institutions connected by the unified school system. One of the greatest efforts of the Republic was the reform of education and the dissemination of the different specialisations within culture. The Pedagogical Missions were established in May of 1931 (the People’s theatre, directed by Alejandro Casona, was included in their programmes and was similarly developed as La Barraca by García Lorca, also created in 1931, although it did not operate until 1932). Such programme was one of the greatest programmes for cultural dissemination and management launched by a state institution in Europe, together with another programme promoted by the
Soviet Union in its first years under the command of Lunacharski, Chief Inspector of the Public Education from 1917 to 1929 and one of the founders of Proletkult, a proletarian artistic movement.

The Act of 27 August 1932 replaced the Council of Public Education with the National Council on Culture, an advice body of the Ministry which was supported both by a technical and an administrative secretary. In 1933, by Royal Decree of 30 of November, the services of Fine arts and Preservation of monuments were transferred to the Generalitat, the Catalan Autonomous Government, which assumed the functions of the Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts on this matter inside Catalonia. The Act of 13 of May of 1933 regulated the Artistic Heritage by giving to the Directorate-General for Fine arts the competences of everything related to the defence, preservation, and cleaning of the national historical-artistic heritage. To fulfil this Act, the Superior Board of Artistic Treasure was established and divided into six sections: Historical-artistic monuments, Excavations, Export regulation, Museums, Catalogues and inventories, and Dissemination of the artistic culture.

The Ministry of National Education was established in 1938, and all the activities related to fine arts and music depended on it; the other activities were included in other Ministries, and mainly in the Deputy-secretary of Popular Education (1941-46) of the General Secretary of FET and of JONS. The Ministry of Information and Tourism was established in 1951 and assumed the competences on mass media and spectacles-press, theatre, film, and broadcasting.

Cultural Houses depended on the Ministry of Education as a tradition in Catalonia from the twenties and during the Second Republic. In 1956, the Directorate-General of Archives and Libraries of the Ministry of Education regulated the creation and operation of provincial Cultural Houses by decree. Cultural Houses were created as the result of the collaboration of the state (Directorate-General of Archives and Libraries), the Province (County Council), and the Town Council. Local Authorities and Cultural Associations of the Province were in charge of ruling the Cultural Houses by creating a foundation provided with the regulations published in the State Official Gazette (Spanish initials: BOE). Given the many town councils asking for the establishment of Cultural Houses, which were thought to be set up in capital cities of medium province, another Decree of the same Ministry was approved in 1957, in which the creation and operation of Municipal Cultural Houses were regulated. The public library of Almería, Francisco Villaespesa, was considered as the antecedent of Cultural Houses. This library was created by the ministerial order of March of 1947 and included reading rooms, administrative areas, assembly rooms, exhibition halls (technical provision: a piano and a film projector), and a quintet.

Another important programme related to cultural management are the festivals in Spain launched by the Ministry of Information and Tourism in 1954, except those from Granada and Santander which were established by another figure in 1952. According to the words by Fraga Iribarne in Valladolid in 1963 during a Festival Assembly, which was held because of the 25th anniversary of peace, the closest antecedents of the programme was the Weimar Court in the 18th century, and then festivals were expanded throughout Europe. There were other antecedents in Spain: the concerts celebrated in the Charles V Palace, Granada, in 1883 during the Corpus Christi; the presence of Margarita Xirgu in the Grec Theatre, Barcelona, in 1932; and in the Roman theatre in Mérida in 1933, among others. According to the journal Temas Españoles [Spanish Subjects], in the number 403 from 1961 focused on the Festivals of Spain in a monographic way, the number of Festivals in 1954 was 25, with 207 spectacles and 488,106 spectators. According to data of the newspaper El País from 1977, a total of 136 festivals were held in 1976 all over the Spanish geography, with 1,300 performances in charge of 36 Spanish and foreign companies, including drama, lyric, and folk performances, as well as performances for children, classical ballet, and recitals. Spectators were more than two million. It should be considered that those Festivals were mainly programmed by the Ministry under the concepts of tour and

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centralised publicity, although partially grouped in cities. The average of spectators was around 1,500; in stands, generally detachable, with all the requirements related to light, sound, dressing rooms, etc.

Following these management experiences, we reach to the implementation of student university theatres (Spanish initials: TEUs) and their annual festivals, and to their freedom since 1965 with the disappearance of the Spanish trade union (Spanish initials: SEU) and the implementation of Professional Associations for students (Spanish initials: APE). We finally reach to the incipient Independent Theatre at late the sixties and early the seventies.

Then, Cultural Works of Savings Banks developed activities over such years using good equipment and broad programmes which allowed culture to be disseminated and many people carrying out them to survive. We therefore finish this balance of activities and experiences which have provided many practical activities in the farthest and the nearest past, thus making “the profession of cultural management” not an activity arose in 1979, but an alive memory of those activities which, mid the seventies, led to the cultural mobilisation of society from the atalaya projects of cultural associations, neighbourhood clubs, clubs for young people, neighbour associations, unions, etc. Consequently, the municipal democracy was strengthened and citizens with great ideas for social changes and renewal were included in their lists.

For Reflection

1.- An interesting research can be carried out in any place with written and traditional means. The aim is to investigate the culture pages of 15, 10, 5 years ago and from today to find out the use of the expression “cultural manager”. To research when this expression approximately appeared and how it was used in each period. Also, this exercise can be made with a national written means.

2.- To write a short history of the cultural management in your village or town from the first democratic council halls to nowadays: when the first managers appeared, how they were called, who are in the public sector and who in the private sector, the first institutions in charge of cultural management, public and private managements, etc.

References


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