

CULTURAL POLICY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF ARTS

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Abstract

The invention of cultural policy in France has many consequences in the sociological field. In this paper, we are interested in presenting the implications of this invention on the sociology of art(s), which has a recent, but complicated history. In order to understand the conditions under which the sociology of art becomes autonomous and develops new research subjects, and enriches its methodological tools, we must see what happens with this discipline in France, mainly after the Second World War. In this article we want to focus on a less discussed influence in the studies on the evolution of the sociology of arts, that is the contribution of cultural policy.

Keywords: *cultural policy, sociology of arts, cultural factors, cultural practices*

A central role in the cultural history of France after the war, with significant consequences on the financing of studies on various aspects of culture, was played by the invention and implementation of the so-called “cultural policy”. Despite the fact that until that time the state interventions in the field of culture have not impeded the development of a philosophy of action, the elaboration of operations, the intensity of the political will and the longevity of the measures that were taken determine the specialists speak of a true “invention”. The birth of “cultural policy” is the creation, on July 24, 1959, of the Department of Cultural Affairs, managed by André Malraux. In the founding decree, its goals are defined as such:

“the ministry in charge of cultural affairs has the role of making available capital works from humanity, and initially from France, to the greatest possible number of French people, of ensuring the largest audience for our cultural heritage, and of supporting the creation of the spirit and works of art which enrich it.”

The subject of democratization and cultural decentralization is at the heart of the ideology of cultural policy. From the beginning, the new ministry was concerned to build his own identity, to distinguish itself from the former Fine Arts Secretariat (which dealt with of the funding of arts activities and was abolished when the emergence of the new department), from the Popular Education, depend

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on both of the High Directorate for Youth and Sports, an administrative structure, a complementary and competing one, as well as national Education. For the new department, the cultural policy represented more than just funding. Then, for the dissemination of culture there was no need for teaching resources (which are used by grassroots organizations to cultivate the common people at leisure). The simple exposure of the work of art would suffice, because it has the force to communicate directly with an innate sensitivity of every man towards art.

This happens on a “lyric-magical” background, according to the irony of John Caune [1999]. Finally, the third point of demarcation: the culture is something else than knowledge. Philippe Urfalino [1996] also speaks of a social and political project based on the power of art and the exclusion of any awareness concerning the pedagogical aspects or for recreation. Through this vision, the ministry managed by Malraux does not appraise the large number of sociological researches on leisure realized until that date and will not fund projects in that direction. Moreover, while this is the moment of the invention of cultural policy, it is not by any means the best time for research in the field of culture.

The attention of the Ministry was focused on building, throughout the country, the areas of meeting between art / artists and the public, that is to say, “houses of culture”. The purpose of these houses of culture is both the fight against social inequity and decentralization, and the democratization. A dense network of houses of culture that would allow whatever important activity happening in Paris also happen in the provinces and the low entrance fees equalized the access of social classes to culture.

The cultural democratization does not mean the stimulation of demand through education, but the increased number of cultural products of high quality and the facilitation of their accessibility. The notion of access to culture has an almost physical meaning and it is closely related to the establishment of houses. But only time has established its validity, the low price of the tickets didn't bring masses of people, and for those who still attended the cultural event, the mere encounter with a work of art, without prior knowledge and without a mediation effort, didn't produce any instant enlightenment. The Ministry managed by Andre Malraux lasted until 1968, when its policy was strongly contested. Yet, beyond the invention of a policy, after its start, a “cultural facility/equipment” has remained substantially in place.

If until 1968 the cultural action was designed as a pragmatic program of social change, after this date, on the background of the debates on the cultural crisis, the administration pays a special importance to the means that could be used to implement its initiatives, assess its effects and develop new ways of cultural development. This is when sociologists began to be increasingly required, and the funding of the research in the field of culture became a relatively common practice. The philosophy of “cultural development” promoted by Jacques Duhamel replaced the “cultural action”, designed by André Malraux. It is a philosophy that can be

hardly concentrated in a few words, given its composite character. Its unity is given rather by the fact that it must solve a problem, that of the cultural crisis and the collapse of an action model, than by a coherent theoretical construct. It must provide a counterweight to the failure of the houses of culture, to the idea of democratization through the simple access to artworks, and to the failure of the idea of promoting a French universality. While the cultural action affirms the impact of the works of art on the public and the reduction of cultural democratization to a simple diffusion, the philosophy of cultural development starts from the observation of a schism between the creators and the public. It finds the solution in the concept of “cultural pluralism”, borrowed from Michel de Certeau. It is an anthropological interpretation of culture, based on the idea of the existence of many cultures in the same society, the cultures corresponding to the various social groups.

This concept solves the problem of the “dominant culture” whose universality is contested, without discrediting the already existing works or the creation of professional artists, and designating by “dominated” all those who have no access to legitimate culture, without devaluing their own culture. We reserve the latter the right to free expression and encounter with other cultures. Through the philosophy of “cultural development”, the triad “creation” (professional artists), “expression” (the social groups, helped forward by the facilitators) and “confrontation” (between the two, encouraged by the facilitators and the local politicians) replaces the triad “high culture”, “public” and “access to culture” of Malraux period.

In the late '70s, a new idea appears: the development of cultural industries (cinema, books, records and television) can help in the process of culture democratization, as decentralization does. Jack Lang is the one who will assume and enhance this idea, thus inaugurating a third era of cultural policy. He develops a concept that is both “entrepreneurial” and “inspirational”, that Philip Urfalino called “the cultural vitalism”. “Culture and Economy” replaces the former “Culture and Politics”. The idea that investments made in culture can have positive economic effects at national level has, in Lang's speech, two levels. The first refers to cultural industries.

In the cinema industry, design, fashion, the production of books and records or in television, the greatest part of the activity is artistic, but at the same time they are considered as being industries with an economic purpose. The strength of these industries is not without effect on the national economy, especially on the trade balance. The State support in case of such industries may be a dimension of the economic and industrial policy. This is the “entrepreneurial” dimension of his theory. Let us now consider the “mobilization”, which is the second reason and which has psychological implications.

In Lang's opinion, the process of creation has a reviving value. It excites, it makes energy circulate. Culture is also an economic weapon because it can change attitudes. The crisis is not only economical; it is also a crisis of spirit. Creation

releases energies, energies that are transformed into work, agitation, movement. The implementation of this vision has many consequences. First of all, the houses of culture and the whole cultural policy promoted until then become totally obsolete. Professional artists are no longer concerned with the issue of social inequity and focus exclusively on success.

At the same time, the definition of art is really widened, as cultural industries receive a higher status, which they had not had before. The Ministry of Culture becomes a ministry of artists and its organization takes into account the various industries and professional structures in the various fields of activity. The justification of public financial support with economic criteria increases the rigor in its management and the attention paid to the expenses deficit. The concept of evaluation becomes increasingly important at the local, as well as central administration.

The growth of cultural industries formally considered by the ministry, and the increased need for experts and instruments for evaluation resulted in an increase of the number of researches, of different types, on the sociology of art. On the other hand, the development of cultural industries, under the impulse of the state financial support, causes a growth of the need for statistics and studies on the public that, again, represents an important progress for the humanities specialists.

The effects of Jack Lang's vision lead to, according to Philippe Urfalino and other experts, the dissolution of the idea of "cultural policy" and to the triumph of the "public policies in the field of culture". His entrepreneurial speech makes the public policies supporting the art institutions and professions come out from the umbrella of a unitary cultural policy and multiply in a way that is difficult to reduce to one concept. The cultural policy was defined as a point of convergence and coherence between, on the one hand, the representations of the role that the State has in the commitment of art and culture in social life and, secondly, the organization of a public action. We are talking about dissolution of the cultural policy while a conceptualization of all public policies in the culture is no longer possible, while a set of goals can no longer guide and justify, convincingly and effectively, all actions of the Ministry of Culture. From Andre Malraux to Jack Lang, we can talk about the invention and the dissolution of the concept of cultural policy.

If we have a brief look at what is happening, in parallel with the windings of cultural policy, with the production of data on culture. According to Augustin Girard [1997], one of the architects of cultural statistics in France, the initiative to gather this type of data appeared in the '60s and it is not attached, as we are tempted to believe, to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, but to the Directorate for planning. Pierre Massé, economist and Commissioner General in planning, actually requires, in 1961, the establishment of "Cultural Statistics" (an iconoclastic formula at that time) to allocate more carefully the results of economic growth.

They must understand the social structure of the personnel of various institutions, the public and private funding, and the staff employed.

Jaques Delors, Massé' advisor, forces the young minister's hand to create a department for study and research in order to conduct surveys for better planning. The foundations of this department are posed in 1963 by taking over certain prerogatives of INSEE but they will be formally established in 1968, in a moment of crisis, as the Department of Research and Study (DRS). In 1986, it will be transformed in the Department of Prospective Studies (DPS). The first statistical yearbook of the culture was published in 1977; it comprises five volumes and refers to the period 1960-1970. The research department within the Ministry has produced four major national surveys on cultural practices of the French: 1973, 1981, 1989 and 1997.

It funded, through bidding, several studies in various fields of culture, among which some have become classics: the investigation of the European museums attendance, coordinated by Pierre Bourdieu (1966), that of Raymond Mill on the public of contemporary art (1971), that of Michel de Certeau on everyday cultural policies (1980), the survey of Nathalie Heinich on the hostile reactions of certain categories of public concerning contemporary art (1995) or those of Pierre-Michel Menger on stage actors (1999).

According to Augustin Girard [1997], the research department within the Ministry undertakes progressively, based on requests from local authorities, five types of surveys:

- a. The study of some public institutions: the Musée d'art de Lille, the Festival d'Avignon, the Biennale of Contemporary Art in Paris or the public of Louvre.
- b. The study of cultural practices of a certain sector: cinema, theater, museum, having in view the number of entries (through the number, in absolute figures, tickets), the behaviors, attitudes and representations of the public, according to various socio-professional categories.
- c. The study of practices of a particular class of people: workers, students etc. Sometimes they were about category with a specific practice: Children and TV consumption, youth and reading, young people and music etc.
- d. The study of how people respond to the cultural offerings of a city, neighborhood or region.
- e. Researches on cultural practices of France population, from a probability sample of 2000 and 5000 individuals.

All these researches are performed by institutions, and not universities. Therefore they do not cover all dimensions of what is now called, in general, "cultural life", but only the practices that match the supply of institutions legitimated as "cultural" and that are financed by public authorities. There is a limit which shows precisely how they are designed and for what purposes. These

researches should help in the allocation of investments, in terms of cultural equipment, geographical position and funding. They have rather an instrumental, social and political function, than a scientific function. Although the majority of studies on cultural practices are conducted by the research department of the Ministry of Culture, this is neither the first, nor the only institution that performs it. The National Institute of Statistics, research institutes, laboratories or marketing departments of the cultural industry make their own contributions.

An interesting and complex case, due to the context, is the investigation of the practice of reading. The interest in reading at first comes from the activists of the movement for People Education, who affirm the right of all professional categories and age to education, along the line of Condorcet. Sure, they argue primarily the access of the working classes to culture, the most disadvantaged ones. Joffre Dumazedier is one of the notable representatives trying to support this movement with the tools of the sociologist. He is the co-founder of the organization "People and Culture", as well as, in the field of science, the creator of the group to study the sociology of leisure of CNRS (1953). In the '60s, he developed a theory of the "civilization of leisure", which is closely linked to its militants' ideals.

According to Dumazedier, in the context of technological and industrial development, of the reduction of the working time and strengthening the purchasing power of French, a profound change occurs at the level of civilization, which moves its center of gravity on leisure consumption. Increased leisure time allows more rest, recreation or entertainment, but also the development of personal skills, and self-study. The freedom that was gained may be used as a means for their education. This is possible through the use of leisure for cultural purposes, especially for reading. His theory will not inspire the research done under Malraux Ministry, on a relatively small number and too insensitive to the theme of leisure, because of the competition between institutions, but it founded the national survey on leisure conducted by INSEE in 1967 and again in 1987-1988. Only in 1973, during the first national survey conducted by the specialists within the Ministry of Culture, when, guided by the idea of "cultural development", the cultural policy already changes its position, the problem of leisure becomes part of the department's concerns.

Joffre Dumazedier has some collaborators with whom, regardless of the options of the Ministry of Culture, he conducts considerable research on reading. One of these collaborators is J. Hassendorf, a researcher at the National Pedagogical Institute, a promoter of reading and of an increased number of libraries. The other is R. Escarpit, professor at the Faculty of Letters in Bordeaux and the creator, in 1960, of a center of the sociology of literature, which later became the Institute for Literature and mass artistic technique (ILTAM). The two institutions where the two colleagues work are among the few that in the '50s, '60s conducted independent researches.

At first, there are used the results of the survey conducted by IRES in 1955 and the French Institute for Public Opinion (FIFG) for the National Union of

Publishers (NIS) in 1960, and then the results of national surveys conducted by INSEE and SER. The '70s, with the exception of some new national surveys, are quite poor in studies on reading. This is because the militants of People's Education are moving toward the broader theme of cultural democracy and their research has as object the culture facilitators and associations, thus approaching the policy of “cultural development”. The 80s are characterized by a revival of researches on reading. These are the years of “cultural vitality”, when cultural industries are encouraged. At the same time, on the background of the television consumption growth, we talk about a crisis of publishing houses and especially in the media, because “the French do not read”. Many reviews and statistics reports on reading until now are published and there are performed many researches, required by magazines, publishing houses, associations of publishers. In the 90s, things follow the same rhythm. But the researches focus mainly on populations that we know that they are not present in national surveys (the youth under 15 years), an alarm signal being taken as far as they are concerned: the students, the student or youth in general.

They are required by various Ministries (of Education, Culture, Higher Education and Research), by groups of publishers or distributors (France - Loisir). In general, the responsibility for such research is carried out by researchers from the CNRS, who design and analyze them, but data collection is done by institutes of public opinion. A typical search from this period is coordinated by François de Singly on young people under 12 years.

Whether these are concerned with cultural practices in general, or the are about a specific practice, for example that of reading, it is interesting to analyze how the number of researches, their subject and the institutions that require them or those that realize them are linked to the evolution of cultural policy in France. Still, before the “invention” of these, this type of studies did not lack, their number increased after 1959. The reinforcement of cultural industries and the transformation of cultural policy in the public policies in the field of culture increased and diversified the studies performed, as they hadn't been before in France. Nowadays, we can hardly find a label under which they can be grouped in an operational and conclusive way. Maybe it is the generic concept of “sociology of arts and culture” only that can always have an incontestable legitimacy.

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