

Management benchmarks of cultural policy¹

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A*bstract:* As public policy, cultural policy focuses on providing conditions for free and undisturbed exercise of cultural rights: right to culture and information, right to cultural identity, right of intellectual property protection, right of participation in cultural life, etc.

Cultural rights are specified as a distinct class in the catalogue of international principles regarding culture created by The Cultural Diversity Network, consisting of ministers in charge from many countries such as: cultural heritage preservation, free movement of works and creators, dialogue between cultures, diversity promotion, etc.

In this respect, it defines also “the intervention areas” along with actions to be taken, so that each stage of cultural policy, understood as a process of continuous construction, should gain more value.

Therefore, as public policy, cultural policy has an undisputed impact on urban/rural areas/territories, at least according to the authorities’ intention to correct some discrepancies as regards the number and location of cultural services in the community area, their equipping, easy access of inhabitants to cultural institutions, the density and representativity of the cultural life itself.

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1. A few general aspects

The notion of culture covers the assembly of spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group and as it was mentioned in *The Declaration on Cultural Policies* (Mexico, 1995), culture includes “not only arts and literature, but also ways of living, systems of values, traditions and beliefs”. A first conclusion derived from these opinions – very useful to those who establish and assess cultural policies – is that *cultural experience* is not a juxtaposition of independent, isolated fields of the social sphere (e.g. arts, technology, religion, etc.) but rather a dynamic interaction of its varied components (Zaman, Gh.; Vasile, V.; Pârvu, R.; Dărășteanu, C., *The Economic Contribution of Copyright-Based Industries in Romania*, http://www.wipo.int/ip-development/en/creative_industry/pdf/ecostudy_romania.pdf, 2010).

While *policy* is defined as a set of general and coherent orientations for developing the culture field on medium and long term, strategy is a system of interrelational actions for fulfilling the objectives of cultural policy. In fact, strategy designs specific actions to effectively manage and fund cultural organisations.

The UNESCO World Conference (Stockholm, 1998) dedicated to cultural policies for development reiterated the *basic principles* of the cultural policies accepted by the Council of Europe such as:

- respecting cultural identity and diversity;
- stimulating individuals' creativity and participation in cultural life;
- considering culture a factor of sustainable development;
- promoting the dialogue between cultures as a necessary condition for peaceful co-existence;
- considering cultural policy as a component of the social development policy and assuming the idea that development policies should be “profoundly sensitive” to cultural matters, etc.

In Stockholm the main objectives of cultural policies were also discussed in the context of cultural globalisation and promotion of diversity (in opposition to globalisation), since it is well known that in spite of the opportunities offered to culture by integrated markets, international trade and investments, globalisation causes *culture homogenisation*, thus threatening local cultures in several respects.

As public policy, cultural policy focuses on providing conditions for free and undisturbed exercise of cultural rights: right to culture and information, right to cultural identity, right of intellectual property protection, right of participation in cultural life, etc.

Cultural rights are specified as a distinct class in the catalogue of international principles regarding culture created by *The Cultural Diversity Network*, consisting of ministers in charge from many countries such as: cultural heritage preservation, free movement of works and creators, dialogue between cultures, diversity promotion, etc.

Also several *tactical objectives* were set in order to attain targets on medium and long term. Related to the idea that the culture field is one of the factors of sustainable development and social cohesion, not only a resource consumer that tactical objectives refer to:

- coordination (coherence) of the strategic targets with practical action for implementing cultural projects;
- development of human capital through programmes of continuous training of cultural managers and valuation of the creative potential of human resources;
- development of the culture market, also by stimulating the commercial sector of culture (culture industries) and effective communication of values;
- diminishing dependence of scientific institutions on government subsidies in the context of decentralisation and accountability of local authorities and communities.

The tactical objectives and strategic targets of the cultural policy are fulfilled through actions included in the Concise Action Plan, a tool containing a list of “works to be done”, ranging from the analysis of the present state, as well as of the structures and competences by level of (national, regional, local) governance to the outcome assessment.

In this respect, it defines also “the intervention areas” along with actions to be taken, so that each stage of cultural policy, understood as a process of continuous construction, should gain more value.

Therefore, as public policy, cultural policy has an undisputed impact on urban/rural areas/territories, at least according to the authorities’ intention to correct some discrepancies as regards the number and location of cultural services in the community area, their equipping, easy access of inhabitants to cultural institutions, the density and representativity of the cultural life itself.

A few examples

According to the research done by J.P. Collin et al. on *Canada’s experience* in territory development policies, it results that in practice “the territorial context of each urban entity studied seems to determine the public policies”. Similarly to

their innovative capability to adapt national public policies to realities, aiming – in cooperation with cultural, humanitarian, charity, religious associations and those combating social exclusion – to counteract social inequality in their area.

A comparative analysis of some urban areas in North America and Western Europe, as well as a comparative research on French and Italian localities, shows that these entities are able to establish effective public policies and provide a new vision concerning the sustainable development, the quality of life as well as the cultural creativity – although there are authors that question the relevance of such studies made in some of the most developed urban areas, that is, their conclusions cannot be extended.

A common conclusion to the research made in France, Canada or the United Kingdom (see 3) is that the culture sector is a fertile land for setting national and local public policies and the redefinition of administrative entities and the institutional reconstruction – in accordance with the requirements for community solidarity and diminution of existing disparities between areas and localities may influence the cultural policy targets, the typology and content of artistic activities.

As for culture, territorial communities promote public-private partnerships as well. In a field with most of its consumption and production in the private sector, the direction of the public intervention is a difficult matter.

2. Management benchmarks of the cultural policy in Romania

The economic indicators play a leading role in establishing cultural strategies at the national and local level, including cultural public and commercial organisations.

Data on the cost of cultural creation and production, on the price of goods and services, on the regulation of markets and population's incomes, on the income of cultural units, on their funding sources – subsidies, taxes, charges, donations –, on the cultural industries, etc. are strictly necessary for managers in the culture field to establish policies and strategies, to make decisions, to set priorities and work out cultural programmes, to manage their implementation.

Besides the economic benchmarks, the priorities are also based on ideas got from various surveys, analyses (Zaman, Gh.; Vasile, V., Economic Contribution Of Copyright-Based Industries And Impact On Employment And Performance Indicators In Knowledge-Based Society Developing In Romania, <http://ideas.repec.org/a/ine/journal/v1y2009i37p27-53.html>, 2009) and case studies regarding the population's cultural needs and expectations and the cultural life of the communities.

The government's role is to provide conditions that markets function efficiently. If a local market cannot support alone the activity of a cultural institution, such as a museum of painted glass icons (e.g., Sibiel) or a cultural centre in a rural locality (e.g., the Mihai Eminescu Cultural Centre at Ipotești), then, by public intervention, the material support for their functioning is ensured or, by cultural policy measures, these units can be included in various tourist circuits, established as locations wanted for cultural training, for international seminars and conferences, for creation camps or contests and festivals (e.g., literature, music, nonconventional art, etc.), by other actions for expanding the cultural market and attracting sponsors from the business area. Besides some private structures operating in the cultural area (e.g. NGOs, press trusts, art schools, performance companies, etc.), culture interferes with the business world also for funding some cultural events of organisations that cannot survive only by public funding.

Considering a series of economic and cultural indicators, the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony (MCNP) assumed *priority targets* deriving from its mission as a structure of the central public administration – the *establishment and management of policies in the culture sector*. These targets are:

- Developing and diversifying cultural programmes in relation to consumers' needs and their social utility;
- Improving the access to and stimulating the participation in culture of all social categories, especially the youth;
- Promoting and protecting the diversity of artistic contents and expressions;
- Intensifying the international, regional and European cultural exchanges and cooperation;
- Valuing the cultural patrimony and traditions of local communities.

The actions for fulfilling these objectives were focused on the following:

- Carrying on the regulation programme (passing new laws and modifying the existing ones);
- Improving the funding of cultural programmes and projects by supporting the partnerships with economic agents or other institutions, by gaining access to European funds and stimulating sponsorship;
- Carrying on the organisational reform;

- Implementing priority programmes and projects for libraries, the cultural patrimony, and the development of the local communities by initiating events of international importance, such as *Sibiu, The European Capital of Culture – 2007* and *The George Enescu International Festival*.

*A Programme with Two Million Onlookers:
“Sibiu, The European Capital of Culture - 2007”
- A case study –*

A programme consisting of over 220 projects implemented in 11 months and funded with 40 million euros by the Government through the MCNP and other investments made by the Sibiu 2007 Association. About 50 percent of the cultural projects were supported by public cultural institutions and 50 percent by independent artists.

It was the most discussed event by the press. Due to the international TV campaign, over 55 million people from about 20 countries received artistic messages from the Festival stages.

The Sibiu community made considerable image and material gains. Most of the City and District infrastructure was rehabilitated. So was the cultural infrastructure.

The financial impact on tourism was unprecedented. In Sibiu and other localities of the District there were 500000 tourists officially registered. Most of the Sibiu hotels and boarding houses witnessed a financial boom.

In order to preserve the intangible cultural patrimony, the programme included also a contest festival of Romanian folk music.

For three days of the Sibiu cultural spring, the most famous folklore pieces were performed and the most beautiful national costumes from the great ethno-folklore areas of Romania were presented to the public.

A large audience watched the recitals given of the 2007 and previous laureates. The participation of the “Lăutarii” Orchestra from Kishinev, directed by Nicolae Botgros, was a great success of the organizers: “We wanted so much to invite this orchestra and we are happy that we succeeded on this occasion, when Sibiu was the European Cultural Capital” said one of the organizers.

The assessment of such programmes is meant, among others, to find the effect/impact of cultural actions on individuals and communities. The assessment is also meant to improve the development and implementation of future programmes.

Some think that the assessment of programmes and projects reveals the objectives of the cultural policy on which the management options and decisions are made. For others, the purpose of the assessment is to demonstrate the need to make decisions and to justify the resource utilisation. Specialists in assessment – researchers, experts, study authors – refer to their major purposes of the ongoing process:

1. *Formulation of policies/main purposes* of a programme starting with the presentation of the problem/problems to be solved; designing strategic objectives and tactical targets, identifying resources, estimating the chances to achieve the target.
2. *Implementation of policies, strategies and programmes* prepared in accordance with the sequence of stages, expenditure control and human resource utilisation.
3. *Assessment of the effectiveness of cultural policies and programmes* by input-output analyses, and research on expected and unexpected effects, of the need to carry on or replace with other programmes for attaining the objectives.

Statistical data as well as sociological surveys often show differences (non-compliance, gap) between objectives and the real situation of the cultural system. As mentioned above, one of the MCNP's priorities is "improving the access to and stimulating the participation in culture", as well as programmes for "re-inventing libraries" and projects such as that one called "By reading to culture".

But the statistical research on "The activity of cultural-artistic units", carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, shows that, in 2009, when the economic crisis actually began, the number of libraries diminished by 130 units as against 2008, of which 11 were public libraries (i.e., those that facilitate the access of all population categories to information and culture and are included in the MCNP's intervention area). Also, the number of volumes (books, booklets, collections of newspapers and magazines) acquired by libraries, especially, town and village ones, diminished by 1,276,000 pieces. At the same time there was a decrease in number of rural and urban readers and the number of volumes borrowed, although the price of the books rose along with the diminution in the population's incomes, which should have stimulated the increase in the number of readers in libraries, and in the public reading indexes. Nor did the book sales reach the estimated targets.

Under these circumstances, a perpetual question is asked: Are culture buyers/consumers a sure source for the production of culture?

Can the book industry or other culture industry (e.g., movies, programmes, performances, etc.) base on market forces or, as David Melo writes, does market allow an efficient allocation of financial resources to meet the social demand for culture? How large in number is the public willing to invest in restoring historical monuments, in archaeological sites, in publishing scientific treatises or art albums?

What is the certainty of the economic agent in the cultural area (editors, CD and DVD producers, organizers of music and theatre shows, etc.) that their offer is accepted? Most of them believe that there are not enough customers for their products that embed art creations in order to carry on cultural production and adjacent economic flows.

Idealists hope. Others run experiments.

*The Only 100 Percent Publicly Supported Festival
– The Arts Festival Bucharest 2010 –
- A Case Study -*

At its second production, The Arts Festival Bucharest 2010 was a unique event in the capital's cultural life not only because it is "the only 100 percent publicly supported" but also because of the stake of this action: the presence of high-rank cultural personalities.

"In a public space increasingly "affected" by the rise of subcultural and anticultural phenomena", as somebody said during the festival, to think that "life is embellished by arts" is an example of trust in the perfectibility of this world.

The diversity of art genres and the participation of culture celebrities ensured the addressability of the festival.

For five days, the cultural stages of the Capital – The Palace Hall, The I.L. Caragiale National Theatre, The National Palace of Children, The Bucharest Municipality Museum at The Şuţu Palace, The Jewish State Theatre – presented plays, classical music concerts, instrument recitals, conferences, book launchings (e.g., La taifas cu Tudor Gheorghe by Mircea Pospai) relaunching, in the presence of Mr Radu Beligan, of the Moftul Român magazine after 98 years.

The events started with an exceptional concert, Tango Simfonico, by Lothar Hensel, performer and composer, a master of bandoneon, who was

accompanied by 70 players from The European Royal Orchestra.

Also with deep emotion, the public watched the concert of Tudor Gheorghe – Cavalerii Felinarelor Târzii – a magnificent music show including the most appreciated interwar pieces performed by Zavaidoc and Jean Moscopol, whose songs have been until recently performed by Gică Petrescu.

In the “Balade din Carpați” show, Felicia Filip, The Arkadia Orchestra and The Amadeus Choir completed the music show of the Festival.

A less common art genre attended by a heterogeneous public – as cultural preference and social structure – is that of conferences of and about art. For the second edition of The Arts Festival Ion Caramitru and Dan Puric delivered lectures on Expectation Limits and On Christian Love and Martyrs. The performance of a complex personality like Ion Caramitru – theatre and film actor, director and head of a cultural association – was a unique travel into the belief world, into the theatre and culture world, in general, the world of art ideas and images, which, in hard times, offer opportunities for survival.

In another way and using other metaphors with other tools that are only his own, Dan Puric, “a confessing Orthodox”, had a spiritual dialogue, within “The Conference on Christian Love and Martyrs” with Bucharesters, whom he then invited to the “Dream” Show – a fascinating travel of initiation in “the mystery of the telling gestures”, of the “bodiless word”, of dreams collected by himself, of a reality “spiritualized” in mind.

The Bucharest public who paid the tickets for the Festival to watch directly the show of unexpected interference of art genres could choose between several theatre shows.

Some of them were attracted by “Helea, my love” by Leonid Zorin, performed by the Jewish State Theatre, a reflection on love, freedom, failing and sense of life... Others watched “Întoarcerea zidarului” by Dan Tărchiță, who proposes a personal vision of the legend of Master Manole. The leading actors – Alexandru Hasnaș, Cristina Moldoveanu and Marin Ciupan – managed to convey the complex message of this play about passion and forgiveness and about redemption and mysterious sacrifice, but also the certainty that this work demonstrates, like the legend that inspired it, the undoubted value of the Romanian culture, as part of the world’s creative work.

Essentially, the Arts Festival 2010 was a great show of ideas and artistic metaphors.

The public paid for it.

Of course, market is a funding source of cultural activities, but not the only one. It could be a benchmark in planning the economic resources required by culture,

but not the only one. Therefore, each cultural organisation, project manager or decision maker at the national or local level seeks to diversify the funding sources. The MCNP itself adopted as direction of action the fulfilment of the strategic objectives, i.e. *improving funding*, by increasing the public budget for culture, its share in GDP, but especially by supporting cultural organisations for obtaining non-reimbursable funds and attracting non-budgetary resources.

The Ministry included among the management assessment at all levels the involvement in programmes and actions to obtain funding for supporting activities and implementing the cultural policy.

In this respect, the activity reports of the public institutions of national interest refer explicitly to partnerships with mayors and District Departments of Culture, banks and ministries, embassies and professional associations, economic agents and cultural foundations, etc. in order to attract additional funds, besides allocations from the budget, and achieve their objectives.

Example: The 2010-2011 Cantemir Programme refers to cultural actions and projects developed abroad. The Cantemir Programme was launched in 2006, as a non-reimbursable funding programme of the Romanian Cultural Institute (RCI) subordinated to the MCNP for cultural projects implemented abroad.

The 2010 edition follows the directions of the Statute of the RCI, a public institution of national interest, set up (by Law 356/2003) for promoting Romania's cultural values and including them in the international cultural circuit. In this respect, it seeks "to develop strong and long-lasting partnerships between Romanian and foreign, public and private operators".

The main objectives of the Cantemir Programme are the following:

- Increasing the visibility and accessibility of the Romanian culture on international markets;
- Stimulating the cooperation between Romanian and foreign artists.

Another criterion for assessing cultural organisations and their programmes refers to the place held by these organisations within the communities, not so much by relations with other structures or partnership, but by the quality of services and their public image.

Thus, *the professionalisation of promotion actions* is a priority for management teams. For example, in 2009, the National Village Museum diversified its image strategies through actions of public relations achieved with support from young teams, coordinated by the new PR office of the institution.

Due to the present serious lack of cultural staff, these “stimulators” are “agents” for links with the social environment, who establish multiple contacts with institutions and local leaders; they are “spokesmen” of the organisation, convey messages to the target groups, but also provide the feedback. They collect information on the cultural needs and an expectation of the devoted priority segment of the cultural projects is represented by the youth.

Jacques Charpentreau, who coordinated the research on “cultural animation” and “popular culture in France” writes in his book Pour une politique culturelle the following: “A policy is appreciated by outcome”. If over 50 percent of the readers of a library, of the visitors of an art museum, of the spectators of a theatre or of the customers of a bookshop are under 30 years, it means that the management teams worked out a strategy in accordance with the interests of the target public (i.e., the young generation).

The R&D department of the cultural policies and actions service of the European Council published several methodological works (e.g., La communication interculturelle, Vers une question culturelle intégrée: pratiques et politiques, L’emploi culturel en Europe), among which Ken Robinson’s study Une politique gouvernementale en faveur de la culture, de la créativité et des jeunes. The author shows that in our days the young persons are confronted with a very complex world, still getting more complicated every day, that they evolve in an extremely unstable environment, undergoing changes faster than ever both in the economic area and in the social and cultural area. Therefore it is essential that the governmental structures draw up coherent policies and programmes for supporting the young persons’ cultural development and creativity. K. Robinson thinks that the youths’ involvement in formulating cultural policies is useful for themselves and for the consistency of the strategic objectives. Preliminary research conducted in EU member countries focused on an issue regarding the artistic education of the youths, aiming to identify factors that influence the youths’ creativity, participation in artistic programme and in the cultural life of their countries.

The 2009 NIS study scarcely refer to the artistic activity of the specialized organisations, to the creation and production of artistic goods.

But it presents art museums that hold, restore and display for the public original paintings, sculptures, graphic works and art photographs, etc.

In 2009, the 157 Romanian art museums organized 220 basic exhibitions and 564 itinerant ones, hosted 60 exhibitions and participated in 52 exhibitions organized by other museums in Romania and abroad. Besides exhibitions, the art museums issued, in 2009, 348 publications in 192,760 copies.

Some art goods (e.g., popular art creations – naive painting, painted glass icons, etc.) are in the patrimony of ethnographic museums, which are included in NIS statistics, in the same category of anthropological museums, but this situation hinders the evaluation of the patrimony held by such museums on the basis of available data.

“Statistics – writes Christopher Maden – plays a major role in cultural and art policy”. Statistical indicators contain in equal amount descriptive and assessing information. The indicators themselves are defined as statistical tools required for understanding, monitoring and assessing certain cultural domains (e.g., arts) but also for the political analysis of cultural programmes.

Used equally to design strategic targets and to assess performance, cultural indicators are essential for assessing the consistency of objectives and the practice for achieving the targets, namely:

- Development on the basis of relevant theories and practices;
- Longitudinal comparability for clearly defined periods of time;
- Horizontal comparability (by indicators related to other socio-cultural areas).

According to C. Maden, the improvement of cultural indicators depends not only on improving statistical methods but especially on better understanding the nature of cultural actions, the complex relations between culture and the other components of the social system.

Therefore, the indicators used to assess cultural policy are relevant if they facilitate the comparison with other socio-cultural areas, with other categories of organisations – in accordance with the investment level, the market size, the number of specialists and their training, the awards at various contests, the donations included in the patrimony of such organisations.

In conditions of institutional autonomy, the independence of artists and associative structures, there are no available data on auction houses, on price evaluation in the art works market, on the price of certain goods in artists' workshops or on the market share of a creator at a certain time. That is why the benchmarks for identifying management strategies in the art world as a whole are not relevant.

The NIS statistical survey includes a short chapter about “The network and the activity of institutions and companies providing shows and concerts”.

In 2009 there were 161 units, five more as against the previous year, since new cultural centres were created. Also the number of shows rose (by about 50) as well as the number of onlookers at concerts and theatre performances by about 100,000.

Except for the Bucharest-Ilfov Region and the Centre Region, where the number on onlookers decreased, in the other regions the art performance institutions managed to attract more consumers in 2009.

The severe and arbitrary decrease in number of artists and technical staff of these units will diminish, in our opinion, the performance of the entertainment institutions, just as in the last years the activity of the film industry has diminished especially in small urban localities and rural communities throughout the country.

It is not our intention to analyse in this context the TV competition and other causes of the decreasing number of movie theatres (especially in the countryside) as well as the diminishing number of motion picture projections, but the transformation of movie theatres in many localities into ugly commercial spaces completes the sad landscape of the localities – i.e. less libraries, theatres, bookshops, art galleries and other cultural institutions.

As regards the film industry, out of 51 Romanian films for the big screen, 23 are Romanian productions, to which we should add 7 coproductions.

Keeping in the foreground of the cultural life debates on the Romanian films is due, in our opinion, to the awards granted to young cinema workers (actors, directors, script writers) at many international festivals and contests.

In relation to film actors, as well to other artists and creators, the cultural management should follow an active policy: to care about the living conditions, to promote laws to ensure social protection and freedom of speech, to stimulate creation and creators’ free movement, to recognize their merits and reward them for their success.

Among all management tasks, as Rensis Likert writes in *The Human Organisation*, “human resources management is of great importance, since everything else depends on how it is fulfilled. Investments in cultural infrastructure are improved only by human performance. In this respect, the expenditures on upgrading and modernizing some art institutions (theatres, concert halls, etc.) are properly allotted if also the artists of these organisations are paid in accordance with their skills and performance and are valued by their qualities.

The wage of the artists working in cultural institutions is not only a means to meet their material needs, but – as specialists in organisational management say – “it is the basic way to assess the appreciation they receive” (Nancy K. Napier).

The strategic objectives of the local cultural policy are naturally linked to the huge potential of traditions, of talents and art personalities, and of cultural managers’ creativity. Constantin Donea places at the top strategic targets such as the protection of the historical and artistic patrimony and the capitalisation of the cultural heritage. For him, it is mandatory to revive spiritually the Romanian villages, with their tradition and experience, and also to develop and modernize the network of rural institutions: museums, cultural houses, folklore groups, popular art centres, etc.

Considering the role of the books in continuous learning, in improving the level of the rural civilisation C. Donea thinks that village libraries should be a priority target of the local cultural policy.

Generally, the development of the material base of the library system, the acquisition of books and their provision with cultural practice equipment are projects achievable by partnerships between public structures and private companies.

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Romania’s integration into the EU requires new strategic objectives for the cultural management and is an opportunity for managers and other cultural operators to give up mentalities and practices such as: the helplessness mentality, the fatalistic attitude, the fear of experiment, non-involvement in decision making, bureaucracy, etc., but also a challenge to find new things in the fields of funding, sponsoring, staff training, and value recognition in the present condition of marginalisation of the cultural institutions and imbalances in the society.

In the context of European multiculturalism, the identity promotion by dialogue and cultural exchanges is an excellent exercise relating to the dignity and assertion of the Romanian creativity.

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