



## CULTURAL MANAGEMENT REFLECTED FROM A CRITICAL THEORETICAL POINT OF VIEW

### GESTÃO CULTURAL REFLEXIONADA A PARTIR DE UM PONTO DE VISTA TEÓRICO CRÍTICO

### LA GESTIÓN CULTURAL REFLEJADA DESDE UN PUNTO DE VISTA TEÓRICO CRÍTICO



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#### ABSTRACT

This article aims to critically reflect on Cultural Management and its actors and their roles in society. Based on Critical Theory as a theoretical premise, it brings to the discussion researchers who corroborate a critical analysis and reflections of culture and society, such as Botelho (2016), Bourdieu (1989), Bordieu; Passeron (2018), Bourdieu; Darbel (2018), Cauquelin (2005), Chauí (2021; 2024), Gaulejac (2023), Gutierrez (1988), Peixoto (2003), Rubim (2022) and Wu (2006). This reflection is justified because discussing cultural management is discussing society and its socio-political-cultural aspects, fundamental issues for reflecting on postmodernity, bringing light to issues that until now have been submerged in the obscurity caused by traditions of the elites who hold economic and symbolic power. Thus, beyond cultural management and its dimensions and implications, the article discusses the role of cultural managers in society, emphasizing their commitment to society and the legitimate democratization of culture, as agents representing popular power, acting with integrity and always guided by ethics. It emphasizes the importance of fostering awareness within society that when discussing culture, its complexity must be considered, just as speaking about culture is also about cultures, communities, audiences, etc. In conclusion, this article raises humanist reflections against any form of neoliberal utilitarianism and any form of symbolic violence.

**Keywords:** Cultural Management. Symbolic Power. Symbolic Violence.

#### RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo a reflexão crítica sobre a Gestão Cultural e seus atores e seus papéis na sociedade. Partindo da Teoria Crítica como pressuposto teórico, traz a discussão pesquisadores que corroboram para com uma análise e reflexões críticas da cultura e da sociedade, como Botelho (2016), Bourdieu (1989), Bordieu; Passeron (2018), Bourdieu; Darbel (2018), Cauquelin (2005), Chauí (2021;2024), Gaulejac (2023), Gutierrez (1988), Peixoto (2003), Rubim (2022) e Wu (2006). Esta reflexão justifica-se em função de que ao

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se discutir a gestão cultural é discutir sobre a sociedade e seus aspectos sócio-políticos-culturais, questões fundamentais para se refletir a pós-modernidade, trazendo luz a questões que até então apresentam-se submersas na obscuridade causada por tradições das elites que detêm poder econômico e poder simbólico. Assim, discute-se além da gestão cultural e suas dimensões e implicações, o papel do gestor cultural na sociedade, enfatizando a necessidade de seu comprometimento para com a sociedade e para com a democratização legítima da cultura, como agente representante do poder popular atuando idoneamente sempre se pautando pela ética. Salienta-se a importância de desenvolver na sociedade a consciência de que ao se falar em cultura deve-se considerar a sua complexidade, assim como falar em cultura é falar sobre culturas, coletividades, públicos, etc. Conclui-se que este artigo suscita reflexões humanistas contra qualquer forma de utilitarismo neoliberal e contra qualquer forma de violência simbólica.

**Palavras-chave:** Gestão Cultural. Poder Simbólico. Violência Simbólica.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar críticamente sobre la Gestión Cultural, sus actores y sus roles en la sociedad. Basado en la Teoría Crítica como premisa teórica, trae a la discusión investigadores que corroboran un análisis crítico y reflexiones de cultura y sociedad, como Botelho (2016), Bourdieu (1989), Bordieu; Passeron (2018), Bourdieu; Darbel (2018), Cauquelin (2005), Chauí (2021; 2024), Gaulejac (2023), Gutierrez (1988), Peixoto (2003), Rubim (2022) y Wu (2006). Esta reflexión se justifica porque discutir la gestión cultural es discutir la sociedad y sus aspectos sociopolítico-culturales, cuestiones fundamentales para reflexionar sobre la posmodernidad, arrojando luz sobre cuestiones que hasta ahora han estado sumergidas en la oscuridad causada por las tradiciones de las élites que detentan el poder económico y simbólico. Así, más allá de la gestión cultural y sus dimensiones e implicaciones, el artículo analiza el papel de los gestores culturales en la sociedad, enfatizando su compromiso con la sociedad y la legítima democratización de la cultura, como agentes que representan el poder popular, actuando con integridad y siempre guiados por la ética. Se destaca la importancia de fomentar en la sociedad la conciencia de que, al hablar de cultura, debe considerarse su complejidad, así como hablar de cultura también se refiere a culturas, comunidades, públicos, etc. En conclusión, este artículo plantea reflexiones humanistas contra cualquier forma de utilitarismo neoliberal y cualquier forma de violencia simbólica.

**Palabras clave:** Gestión Cultural. Poder Simbólico. Violencia Simbólica.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

This article aims to incite potential readers to a critical reflection on Cultural Management, but mainly to reflect on cultural managers and the roles they play and may play in society. The theoretical assumptions that guide the reflections that follow are mainly in Critical Theory, which constitutes an important orientation to thought. They also corroborate the reflections that follow important researchers such as Botelho (2016), Bourdieu (1989), Bordieu; Passeron (2018), Bourdieu; Darbel (2018), Cauquelin (2005), Chauí (2021; 2024), Gaulejac (2023), Gutierrez (1988), Peixoto (2003), Rubim (2022) and Wu (2006).

The **methodological design** is characterized by a bibliographic research, in which the author of this article reflects from the selected references due to the reflective potential they present, as well as due to the notorious and recognized intellectual authority of their authors.

This reflection **is justified**, therefore, in Postmodernity, when thinking about cultural management it is essential to consider the way society is organized, considering its socio-political-cultural aspects. The managers who dedicate themselves to this task need to recognize that there can be no neutrality in their practice, well, either one is on the side of the owners of power, those who value and care for what they consider erudite and who when they talk about the democratization of knowledge think of the formation of the people to recognize and appreciate what was instituted as erudite culture, or if it is on the side of the people and their organic intellectuals who fight for popular culture and the emancipation of individuals. In this sense, managers committed to the popular cause need to position themselves as engaged intellectuals, not as other intellectuals who avoid acting in the field of politics because they believe that they would be distorting the function of the intellectual and, for this reason, many end up closing themselves in their offices and/or militating solely and exclusively on social networks, in the latter case, Their ideas circulate within "bubbles" created by the algorithm.

## 2 DISCUSSION

Critical theory corroborates to think about the approximation between theory and practice, and in this way, philosophy needs to collaborate with practical life, so it is considered that the manager must commit himself to the construction of knowledge, as well as the example of intellectual action of Paulo Freire and Marilene Chauí, among other intellectuals who were managers and who serve as an example of the intellectual as part of popular power strategies, in the opposite direction of bourgeois managerialist thinking.

In addition to the set of management techniques, it is necessary to consider that "behind the instruments, procedures, information and communication devices, there is a



certain vision of the world and a system of beliefs at work" (GAULEJAC, 2007, p.69), in this sense, technicism as a dominant ideology presents itself as a system of rational thought that

[...] it maintains an illusion and conceals a project of domination; the illusion of omnipotence, absolute domination, the neutrality of techniques and the modeling of human conduct; domination of an economic system that legitimizes profit as an end. This project appears clearly through mechanisms of power, of which training and research in management are the object. At the time of globalization, they are increasingly dominated by an American model that imposes its norms on the whole world (GAULEJAC, 2007, p.69).

This issue is exemplified by the influence of neoliberal thought on economic policies in Brazil, such as the idea of the minimal State, outsourcing, privatization of state-owned companies, including the privatization of culture, as Wu (2006, p. 30) argues that "contemporary art, along with other cultural products, functions as a currency of symbolic and material value for corporations" and, "for top executives in the Western capitalist democracies of the late twentieth century" and, we can still add that this remains in the twenty-first century.

According to Gaulejac (2007, p.70),

At the service of managerialist power, managerialist ideology is based on a certain number of assumptions, postulates, beliefs, hypotheses and methods, of which it is necessary to verify the validity. The objectivist paradigm gives a veneer of scientificity to "managerial science". It is based on four principles that describe the company as a functional universe, based on procedures built on the experimental model, dominated by a utilitarian conception of action and an economistic view of the human.

It is possible to consider that the managerialist paradigm has been inhumane, as it considers individuals as parts within a kind of "machine", thus, there is a process of dehumanization. Now

In the world of formal rationality, all non-measurable variables are at first set aside, and then in fact eliminated. We refer to a *homo economicus*, an individual with rational behavior, who offers researchers greater convenience: we can predict their behavior, optimize their options, submit them to calculation, and program their existence. In this logic of thought, we exclude from analysis everything that is considered irrational, because it is not objectionable, not measurable, not calculable. The affective, emotional, imaginary and subjective registers are considered unreliable and not pertinent. In the limit, they do not exist because we do not know how to achieve them, analyze them or translate them into numbers. *Homo economicus* can be assimilated to an "anthropological monster inhabited by a supposed rationality that reduces all the problems of human existence to a calculation" (Bourdieu, 2000) (GAULEJAC, 2007, p.71).



Gaulejac (2007, p.79) adds that "management has become the science of capitalism, implied by a will to domination that presents itself as fundamentally rational. This domain is not only aimed at the field of the economy, but at society as a whole." In the meantime, it is considered of paramount importance that cultural managers be critical intellectuals, attentive to the desires and needs of society and especially sensitive to issues that concern those who are still marginalized by the hegemonic system.

The cultural manager cannot behave as an agent of the neoliberal economic system, as a rationalist enthusiastic about a utilitarian paradigm that "transforms society into a machine of production and man into an agent at the service of production. The economy becomes the exclusive purpose of society, participating in the transformation of the human into a "resource"" (GAULEJAC, 2007, p.79).

Considering the importance of the human being and the role of the cultural manager in society, it is appropriate to consider that according to the anthropological dimension,

[...] Culture is produced by the social interaction of individuals, who elaborate their ways of thinking and feeling, produce their values and find space for the construction of their identities and differences. On this level, it can be said that culture is everything that the human being elaborates and produces at both a symbolic and a material level. It is also the essential space for quality of life and the exercise of citizenship (BOTELHO, 2016, p.41).

Another fundamental issue of the anthropological dimension of culture is that this dimension

[...] It is present in all aspects of human life, it cannot be the exclusive responsibility of the cultural sector in the government apparatus. The specific sector of culture has a role to play, but many of the decisions that directly affect the cultural area are made in other instances of government. In other words, culture, in this dimension, should be a guideline of the government as a whole, not just a concern of the sector responsible for it. This statement applies to the three levels of government: municipal, state, and federal (BOTELHO, 2016, p.42).

Botelho (2016, p.42) points out that in addition to the anthropological dimension of culture, there is a second dimension that is no less important, which he considers to be a more restricted dimension, "in which the arts are inserted". According to the author,

[...] Here we see a production elaborated with the explicit intention of constructing certain meanings and reaching some type of audience, through specific languages, such as dance, theater, cinema, music or the visual arts, for example. We are talking about artistic manifestations, which depend on the existence and support of institutions. In this sense, it is an organization of the field of cultural production that



allows the training or improvement of those who intend to enter specific production circuits; that creates spaces or means that enable the presentation of its results (or works) to the public; that develops programs or projects to stimulate it; to create financing bodies for producers; that establishes protection and incentive legislation. In other words, we consider here an organizational circuit that stimulates, by various means, the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods, in particular the arts (BOTELHO, 2016, p.42).

Thus, in view of the complexity of the field of culture, its dimensions and specificities, the cultural manager cannot be a commissioned intermediary, such as a broker or a dispatcher who, knowledgeable about bureaucratic procedures, is paid for the simple dispatch of processes and documents, just as he should not be a political advisor exercising a function in the "counter policy".<sup>3</sup> The manager needs to have autonomy and be committed to society and culture.

Botelho (2016) states that culture is more than a collective good, it is a tradition to be preserved, it is also a collective production that incorporates the new, that is, culture is dynamic. Like this

[...] When we talk about providing access to it, we are talking about something complex, which involves what comes closer (local production) and what comes from further away (national and international production) in space and time, geography and history. At the limit, all the cultural heritage produced by humanity so far is at stake, a repertoire from which we extract our choices and which provides us with the development of cultural life and the continuous exercise of creation. This heritage, while enriching us, reworks this same heritage that is opened, always incorporating new creations. The big bet is to achieve an interaction with this heritage, bringing the contribution from what has local roots in constant dialogue with what is more or less distant. And then we come to an important aspect of cultural management (BOTELHO, p.43).

One of the aspects of cultural management concerns the democratization of culture, about which it is important to emphasize that democratizing is not the simplistic idea of providing access to what is considered erudite culture, the realization of a small cultural elite and, which is generally constituted mostly by members of the economic elites, in other words, Cultural management cannot be at the service of heirs. And, on this issue, two works by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu are important for us to know who are the heirs and who are the museum-goers in Europe, they are: The heirs: the students and culture (BOURDIEU;

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<sup>3</sup> A model of political management marked by agreements dealt with outside the official State bureaucracy, that is, they are characterized by informality and lack of transparency. Complaints and investigations by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF), the Office of the Comptroller General of the Union (CGU), the Federal Police (PF), among other institutions, point out that the "over-the-counter policy" also favors corruption. (Authors' note)



PASSERON, 2018) and Love for Art: art museums in Europe and their audience (BOURDIEU; DARBEL, 2018).

In this sense,

How to think about the articulation of near and far? How to think about open management and aware of the value of tradition within the scope of municipalities that have, in their cultural life, an intense network of manifestations of popular culture? To think of a policy and management of culture that is effective, it is necessary to know what happens in its surroundings and to set goals for the development of the repertoire of cultural information of a given community without elitist or populist prejudices. In these two directions, that is, the one that goes from popular culture to the expansion of the national and international scene, and the one that goes from the universal repertoire to its incorporation by larger contingents of the population, the issue of cultural democracy and the exercise of citizenship is on the agenda (BOTELHO, p.43).

Therefore, when talking about the democratization of culture, cultural managers need to be aware that political strategies in the field of culture often do not corroborate for the marginalized population to access cultural apparatuses, as shown by some research that has pointed out that often,

[...] the high investments in the construction of cultural spaces focused on this Culture and the lowering of the prices of shows had not changed the picture of inequality of access of the population to legitimate production. In fact, such policies privilege those who are already consumers of these practices, individuals who, due to the subsidies given by the public authorities, go to the theater more, buy more books, attend more concerts and so on (BOTELHO, p.45).

Another very important issue, fundamental to this discussion, is that "[...] there are cultures in the plural and that erudite culture is only one among the many possible expressions", as well as "[...] There is no single public, a uniform public. They are as diverse as the different cultural expressions" (BOTELHO, p.45), and thus, today one of the objectives of this discussion is the replacement of the paradigm of cultural democratization, because

[...] These are policies that focus on cultural democracy, which have as a principle to favor the expression of cultural diversity. Instead of concentrating all the effort on leading everyone to the same sources (museums, concerts, for example), it should provide the various segments of the population with the means to develop expressions that, whether or not they dialogue with traditional culture, are in tune with their own needs and requirements. Cultural democracy presupposes the existence of various publics, in the plural, with their needs, their own aspirations and their particular modes of consumption and enjoyment, both in local culture and in that which belongs to a broader universe, national or international. From this new perspective, the challenge is greater and, I believe, more legitimate. We left a unidirectional field, full of certainties,



which indicated which culture should be privileged, to the universe of cultural diversity, both in the doing and in the reception of this doing (BOTELHO, p.45).

And, unfortunately, a large number of institutions and cultural agents (managers, producers, curators, etc.) present themselves as conservative, that is, they work for the maintenance of the elitist system, corroborating the preservation of erudition and classism. Now, this is a set of aspects on which Cauquelin (2005) warns that there are complex relationships in the field of art (we can extend the most general reflections on the field of culture), relationships that function as mechanisms that validate and contribute to the circulation, propagation and effectiveness of images and artists, that is, there is a system and actors responsible for the aura of the work of art. And this aura conditions both aesthetic judgments and influences the economic plan and, therefore, it is possible to verify the work of art as a commodity.

The same can be observed in the field of cultural production, values distorted due to an inhumane system, where the established system works in favor of those who hold economic and symbolic power. And, as far as symbolic power is concerned,

[...] it is necessary to know how to discover it where it allows itself to be seen less, where it is more completely ignored, therefore recognized: symbolic power is, in fact, that invisible power which can only be exercised with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they exercise it (BOURDIEU, 1989, p.7).

Another aspect pointed out by Bourdieu (1989, p.10) concerns the reflections presented by the Marxist tradition on political functions, or in other words, "symbolic productions as an instrument of domination". For the author,

[...] Ideologies, as opposed to myth, a collective and collectively appropriated product, serve particular interests that they tend to present as universal interests, common to the group as a whole. The dominant culture contributes to the real integration of the ruling class (by ensuring immediate communication between all its members and distinguishing them from other classes); to the fictitious integration of society as a whole, therefore, to the demobilization (false consciousness) of the dominated classes; for the legitimation of the established order through the establishment of distinctions (hierarchies) and for the legitimation of these distinctions. This ideological effect is produced by the dominant culture by disguising the function of division in the function of communication: a culture that unites (intermediary of communication) is also a culture that separates (an instrument of distinction) and that legitimizes distinctions by compelling all cultures (designated as subcultures) to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture (BOURDIEU, 1989, p.10).

And yet,







[...] the "symbolic systems" fulfill their political function as instruments of imposition or legitimation of domination, which contribute to ensuring the domination of one class over another (symbolic violence) by reinforcing their own strength to the relations of force that underlie them and thus contributing, according to Weber's expression, to the "domestication of the dominated" (BOURDIEU, 1989, p.11).

Therefore, when considering that there is a power relationship in the field of culture and that this relationship can be called "symbolic violence", it raises the role of cultural managers in social contexts, as previously stated, the cultural manager should not behave as a dispatcher, broker, or lawyer of the ideas of the dominant elites, and also, it is necessary to be aware of the influences exerted by the economic system, which in post-modernity is marked by neoliberal principles and which is dehumanized and depersonalized, because large corporations no longer represent the old oligarchies, but rather the speculative capital represented by the Stock Exchanges around the world, highlighting in this conjuncture a small elite made up of directors and presidents of those publicly traded companies, who also emerge in the field of culture as actors, as WU (2006, p.33) points out, who

[...] Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital offers a useful analytical tool, especially when associated with Max Weber's notion of *status* group and the contemporary texts of the American sociologist Paul DiMaggio and other intellectuals who have dedicated themselves to the theme of corporate elites in relation to the political economy of capitalism. These powerful men dressed in gray suits – to paraphrase DiMaggio's description of cultural capitalists – are "the capitalist cultural managers".

Wu (2006, p.34) also points out that these executives

[...] They divide among themselves the most important boards of directors of various corporations; They are active not only in business associations and exclusive clubs, but also in curated charities and cultural institutions in the country. In other words, like the old entrepreneurs, these corporate elites struggle to maintain and consolidate their dominant position and *status* in corporate and social life through an intricate network of economic and social relations. Engaging the companies that run the arts and cultural activities is part of this strategy.

Now, capitalism exerts a pernicious influence on the field of art and culture, making human beings and their achievements nothing more than commodities. And, in the meantime, the dominant elites reject any form of reaction, of

[...] intellectual or artistic manifestation – that is, an essentially human manifestation that, as such, one wishes to maintain – that does not submit, uncontested, to the capitalist mode of production; that, in one way or another, refuses to serve it as a commodity for the production of profit (PEIXOTO, 2003, p.23).

### 3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Thus, from the reflections made, it is reaffirmed that the role of cultural managers in society, whether exercising cultural management in any scope, or planning, executing, monitoring, researching, preserving, promoting, administering or advising, must be guided by ethics, as well as they must think about the field of culture in its complexity, considering the complexity and diversity of human beings and cultures, contributing to cultural promotion for society and by society. But if the former prefer to choose to maintain the bourgeois *status quo*, voluntarily renouncing freedom, exchanging it for monetary values or social *status*, or for both, we will only regret it and, perhaps, denounce it as enemies of the people.

Chauí (2021) states that ethics and politics are in the field of the possible. Thus, imbued with ethics, make politics, because it is in political action that enlightened cultural managers committed to society will contribute so that the field of culture ceases to be an "elitist club" and becomes a means of great transformations of social realities. Now, as Gutierrez (1988, p.12) states that "political participation is a right that every citizen can and should exercise. Doing politics is inherent to man's very being, it is essential to his activities because it is a dimension of personal and social life", and the author (1988, p.13) also states that "restricting political action is to make man an automaton at the service of other people's interests".

In this way, how can the cultural manager act politically in defense of the interests of society, without presenting the symptom of an automaton? It is possible to find excellent reflections that can answer these and other questions in Mata-Machado (2023), Botelho (2016), Chauí (2024), Rubim (2022) among others.

Against any form of neoliberal utilitarianism and against any form of symbolic violence... Ubuntu!

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