

TEZĂ DE ABILITARE

Cost, preț și valoare: evaluare în artele spectacolului

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Summary

I have studied for ten years in the academic environment of the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theater and Cinematography – Bucharest (Bachelor's degree – 1999; Advanced studies, majoring in Theater History – 2000; Doctoral school – 2009).

My doctoral thesis, entitled *Performance art. Artistic beliefs, social implications, historical roots. The Western experience and the Romanian elements*, was not published in its entirety, but I separately edited (for the *Cercetări teatrale* academic journal, published by the University of Arts in Târgu-Mureș, within the Institute of Theater and Multimedia Research) a few articles about some of the artists and theoreticians' work that I have documented myself and wrote about in the paper: Walt Disney, Tadeusz Kantor and Giovanni Sartori.

After obtaining the scientific title of Doctor in the field of theater, my career developed both in the academic/research environment (courses and seminars at UNATC – Bucharest and UAT – Târgu-Mureș, publications, conferences/workshops, in the country and abroad), and at a managerial level, predominantly, within the Romanian Cultural Institute, through projects and programs promoting Romanian culture. I have also obtained new certifications (artistic impresario, project evaluator, project manager and trainer) and language skills (French and Italian).

In 2018, I published (in Romanian) the book *Project management and marketing elements in the performing arts* (Bucharest: EIKON Publishing House, 2018). The second volume I published (also in Romanian) is entitled *Marketing in the performing arts* (Bucharest: EIKON Publishing House, 2020).

Throughout the years I have coordinated extracurricular projects, dedicated to students such as: participations in international festivals, especially in Prague and Chișinău.

I am a member of the International Association of Theater Critics – AICT and of UNITER – the Romanian Theater Union. I was also Curator of the International Section at the Undercloud Independent Theater Festival (2014 and 2015), offering expertise in performing arts and (inter)cultural management.

Over the years, I have formally evaluated artistic productions, the level of performance achieved by performing/cultural institutions (annual evaluations) and management projects (theatres).

In the last 25 years, I have been a constant – and, I like to think, attentive – spectator of the Romanian theater scene. I have seen hundreds of performances and have been present both at the great events and at the attempts/successes of my generation colleagues. Currently, I am mainly interested in the field of cultural policies.

For the elaboration of the habilitation thesis, I have researched my topic of interest a lot in the online environment, for up-to-date/consolidated information, but I have found many very well-articulated theories (extremely penetratingly expressed) in the volume signed by David Bell and Kate Oakley – *Cultural Policy* (Routledge, 2015), which became my main citation source. The structure of my paper includes, in addition to the presentation of my academic and professional career, parts specifically dedicated to existing cultural policies at the local, national and international level and, of course, the research themes for the future.

It is more than necessary to discuss cost, price and value (who pays and for what?) – how public money is spent in the area of the performing arts and what they really do for the community. The massive subsidization of the cultural sector needs to be permanently accompanied by a very well-articulated discourse about the value brought by the performing arts to society.

Theatres are part of a logic contained in the existing cultural policies¹ at the local, national, even international level and for this reason have the obligation to observe these policies, in order to fulfill the objectives for which they are financed.

¹ Cultural policies are a form of public policies and consequently depend on political changes, financial difficulties, global tensions. (David Bell and Kate Oakley – *Cultural Policy*, Routledge, 2015: 6) They are public goods, along with health, education, public transport, and must be supported by the state, both in terms of production and consumption (the final beneficiaries are the cultural operators and the individual consumers; thus they move from a common focus to transactional/commercial success on the free market).

The resources invested for production should always be sized – rationally (according to some concepts, values, strategies) –, in line with an estimated/planned financial profit (economic agenda), but above all in consonance with the social and cultural values of the performing arts.

In practice, measuring the effects produced (access and participation, quantitative and qualitative data), following the amounts of money invested, must become a norm. Some funds in the cultural field are not used properly, targeting exclusively production, but hardly any access/participation campaigns for vulnerable (financially)/disadvantaged categories.

Cultural policies are used by the government, like any policy – from which something is expected, directly or indirectly – as a tool for improving the status quo or eradicating problems, such as anti-social behavior or social exclusion.

Thus, they are primarily concerned with access (participation), with consumers' behaviour and with the value of culture (economic development and quality of life). It is important that they stimulate, provide the conditions and support the initiatives of cultural operators.

Culture must not be defended from the market, but it might need to be supported within the market² (Bell 2015: 28), perfectly understanding the mechanisms that make the market work. It needs to be aware of the competitive factor and growth potential, the infrastructure it uses and the economic development it can produce – remaining in a critical position in relation to market forces, which grants counterattack and undermine. Any intervention is important to take into account the way the market works, the rules of the market. Also the context and the local specifics.

The cultural life of cities is given primarily by their identity. Performance venues, bookstores, museums, galleries, parks, outdoor event spaces, schools, universities, cafes/clubs frequented by students and the cultural/artistic elite/bohemian – all form the cultural sector, the ecosystem, seen – at political level – also as a source that ensures an important number of jobs and economic growth.

Culture (way of life and barometer for a high living standard) can make a city more attractive to investors, to the workforce (seasonal/temporary/permanent) and to tourists. It increases living standards, improves quality of life and social sustainability, if coupled with educational, communication/transportation, migration policies. At stake are urban

² The market cannot be ignored. It is the natural way of organizing economic activity.

regeneration/community development (reconversion of industrial spaces, inevitably followed by gentrification), city image and – ultimately – tourism. Eventually, in the happiest cases, foreign investors, too. Culture is no longer funded and supported to develop only for its intrinsic value, but also because it allows an immediate, tangible and quantifiable return of its investment.

Attracting talents, professionals, a middle class as numerous as possible should be the concern of cities, because such a pool of talents can lead to sustainable development.

The cultural policy of a city is made by official institutions, but equally important are independent organizations, private initiatives, the decisions of those who own certain spaces that can be made available for cultural events. Entrepreneurship in the field is essential for the development of cities, for changing attitudes and for mobilizing the public. Cultural activities have symbolic, aesthetic, but also economic value (Bell 2015: 96). Thus, it is very important that cultural activities and spaces become assets, widely known, while access becomes/remains democratic, for all audiences.

At the national level, the cultural policy is built starting from the constitutional rights, being intended to provide protection and promote, to position the state in the field of arts and culture, to outline the way in which it should intervene, to provide the necessary infrastructure for the functioning of the sector (legally and administrative) – all with the ultimate goal of enhancing the nation. Promoting culture reminds us of who we are – internally and tells the world the same – externally (Bell 2015: 111). It serves national pride very well, so it should be very well valued, through an essential cultural marketing for the domestic market, but also for what happens outside the country's borders.

Culture (production and consumption) consists of tangible and intangible heritage assets and other products and services that are special because they form the national identity – this being the reason for the special treatment of the sector. Thus, the national cultural policy is instrumental – it creates and reiterates with the help of culture the national identity. It defines the nation and gives a sense of belonging. It is a measure of national character which is reflected in the national culture. Culture tells the story of a nation, and its threads form the national identity (Bell 2015: 112-114).

In order to understand the national cultural policy it is essential to understand – primarily – the nation, its the specific character: traditions, tactical choices, economic assumptions and unique features, all in a legal and administrative framework.

Arts/culture cannot prioritize an economic agenda. It is essential to understand their social role (Bell 2015: 128). For this reason, a nation's education, as well as its history, matters a lot, along with how politics is made and understood at the national level.

The national cultural policy tells the nation who it is, what defines it – and this aspect is also important for the internal context, but it is also reflected in the external image/perception of our country.

National governments remain very important players in cultural policies, maintaining their role – even in the midst of globalization – in shaping the character of the nation. The national cultural policy is a form of nationalism, it defines and expresses the national character – it communicates this character internally (to the nation) and externally (to the world) and represents the "autobiography of the nation" (Bell 2015: 135-136).

As part of the European Union³, Romania complies with the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which provides for the Union's contribution to the flourishing of the cultures of the member states, respecting their national and regional diversity and highlighting, at the same time, the common cultural heritage.

The Romanian Cultural Institute is the national organization that, programmatically, promotes (through institutional and operational measures) as an initiator, facilitator/catalyst/promoter and partner/co-curator/co-organizer (partnerships⁴ being the hub of a viable cultural promotion strategy) the Romanian culture (including the arts, education, sciences and technology, all fields of human creativity) in the international context, in direct cooperation with public and private organizations in the country or outside the borders.

The network of Romanian cultural institutes promotes (strategically, but also in accordance with the foreign policy agenda) the dialogue and cultural relations (using of culture to maintain a good understanding among nations). The network of Romanian cultural institutes is a mediator between Romanian artists and European and international cultural markets. Most of the Romanian cultural institutes are part of EUNIC – the European network of national cultural institutes, supporting the presence of Romanian artists at the events organized in cooperation.

³ With the motto "United in diversity", used for the first time in 2000. The motto shows that Europeans have come together to promote peace and prosperity, while accepting very diverse continental cultures, traditions and languages. (https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/eu-motto_ro, accessed on 09.04.2023)

⁴ Partnerships and cooperation share human, financial and expertise resources that the Romanian Cultural Institute lacks or does not have in sufficient levels for the entire network of Romanian cultural institutes abroad.

At the international level, the state – through its empowered institutions – becomes an impresario of national culture, promoting for a certain public/market the internal values, while culture itself promotes the nation, too (Bell 2015: 128). Positive opinions and attitudes towards Romania can be shaped or influenced through cultural programs/cultural diplomacy.

Cultural products (elitist or very diverse) convey symbolic messages, beyond their commercial value, and are thus important for their social utility, for the expression of national identity – cultural protection/exception being necessary and guaranteed in the name of the public interest (Bell 2015: 145). Culture, in its diversity, must be viewed and treated differently from other free market forces.

Diversity (differing points of view and constant innovation, through a variety of resources, when cultures are not in isolation) in the cultural world is a concern of UNESCO – considering both anthropological/developmental and symbolic aspects. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) emphasize that cultural diversity is fundamental to humanity, democracy and human rights.

UNESCO constantly highlights the importance of diversity for maintaining a healthy cultural ecosystem, which is why it saves from extinction vulnerable cultural forms (that could no longer be recovered – if they are lost/destroyed), cultural expressions that are part of the heritage of humanity. The diversity of cultural expressions is the object of UNESCO's concerns, not only in the field of heritage protection (artifacts, works of art, sites – the usual understanding of the term protection), but also at the level of contemporary cultural production (Bell 2015: 150-151).

As a general trend, in international cultural relations, governed by respect and curiosity (knowing that getting close to other cultures is also a process that – paradoxically, at first glance – facilitates a better understanding of one's own culture), we can observe the shift from traditional cultural diplomacy to (strategically designed) cultural cooperation.

Cultural products, services and practices are consumed globally today, thanks to technology and international institutional/organizational networks of distribution, promotion and communication.

The understanding of the terms culture and cultural policy has evolved over time, our values have been redefined, and the role of culture in society must be re-discussed, along with the forms of intervention/investment in the cultural and creative sector.

My topics of interest and research for the future concern the process in which money (costs and prices) bring value in the performing arts, but also the legal mechanism allowing creativity and professionalism of the actors/performers/cultural workers to generate income, being protected by the legislative framework.