

# From “serving” public arts institutions to creating intercultural contexts: cultural management in Germany and new challenges for training

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## ABSTRACT

This essay describes the development of cultural management as a profession and as an academic subject in Germany and discusses new challenges for cultural management according to changes in the cultural sector, enforced by migration, internationalization, and digitalisation. It identifies new working fields and discusses how this is going to change role models of cultural managers. The way academic programmes for arts and cultural management react to these developments, and adapt their curricula and training methods, is described, based on an analysis of university programs in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

## Keywords:

Cultural management

Professionalization

Role models

German cultural policy

Arts management

Universities

## Development of cultural management in Germany and Western Europe

Cultural Management as a profession and as an academic training subject only started to develop in the beginning of the 1990s in Germany and most other European countries, as a result of diminishing public funding for arts institutions and growing competition between private culture providers. One of the main reasons why cultural management attracted attention at that time were the financial difficulties many European countries were facing – in Germany especially as a consequence of German reunification, which required a lot of extra public funding. For the first time, after a long period of very high, and continuously increasing, public cultural funding, arts institutions in Germany suffered from resources shortage and were asked to manage their institutions more efficiently by means of professional arts management. For example, artistic directors in theatres or museums became supported by business managers, assuming that an efficient management could lower the costs for public arts institutions and thus make up for shortages in budget (Look, 1991; Bendixen, 2002; Mandel, 2009). A further reason for the need of cultural management in the public arts sector was the growing competition between public cultural institutions and an increasing number of private culture providers, such as musical companies, since the end of the 1980s. New professional posts, for example in PR and Marketing, began to emerge also in public institutions (Mandel, 2012)

Accordingly, in the beginning of the 1990s, many professional training courses in arts management were established and so were the very first programmes for cultural management, based at universities. A current expert report counts approximately 75 training institutions for cultural management in Germany altogether – about 45 of them are courses of study at universities. Most cultural management courses are CPD/Master programmes<sup>1</sup>. In 1996, the first handbook of cultural management was published in Germany (*Raabe Fachverlag*). And in 2000 the first comprehensive Internet network was founded<sup>2</sup>, which includes a monthly newsletter, also published in English, informing its readers about events, new books and current developments in cultural management in Germany and internationally. In the beginning, cul-

tural management was mainly defined as efficient and effective arts management of (mainly) public arts institutions, by adapting economic tools to the cultural sector. It was considered to be a set of tools, taken by the economic sector to "rationalise" the arts sector and opening up new financial resources. In the first books and articles on arts and cultural managers, those were defined as "specialist for economic questions", "fund-raiser", "mediator between arts and economy", or "impresario" (see Siebenhaar, 2003; Berg, 2007).

### The cultural manager as a "commercializer": reservations against cultural management as a consequence of traditional German cultural policy

Today the need for a professional, systematic approach to cultural management at a practical level, as well as in academic research, is taken for granted.

Nevertheless, there are still prejudices towards arts management in countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland, especially in the older generation. A survey amongst graduates of cultural management programs in Switzerland showed that hardly any of them is using the title and self-definition of a "cultural manager" because the image of a cultural manager is still rather that of the "commercializer" (Keller, 2004 & 2008). It was argued that cultural management contributes to the commercialization of arts and culture by working with economic methods. Cultural management was therefore considered to reduce complexity and diversity in the art worlds. These prejudices also have to do with the traditional view on arts and culture in Germany, which has very much formed the cultural policy until now. More precisely, one of the biggest fears of German cultural policymakers and within the arts community is that the freedom of the arts could be limited by management. Safeguarding the freedom of the arts and the artists, as well as keeping them away from direct political influence, became most important for the new German Republic after World War II, as a consequence of the Nazi regime, and is thus also guaranteed in the basic law.

Preserving this independence of the arts, it was also interpreted that the state and the communities have to finance arts and their institutions to become

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see [http://www.kulturmanagement.net/ausbildung/prm/57/v\\_list/edk\\_2/index.html](http://www.kulturmanagement.net/ausbildung/prm/57/v_list/edk_2/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.artsmanagement.net](http://www.artsmanagement.net)

## “THE TRADITIONAL *GERMAN* CONTRAST OF ‘HIGH’, ‘VALUABLE’ ARTS AND POPULAR ‘LOW’, COMMERCIAL ‘MASS’ CULTURE IS GRADUALLY DISAPPEARING IN FAVOUR OF DYNAMIC CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS”

independent from market and audiences interests. Germany’s cultural landscape, compared with that of other countries, comprises a very high number of publicly funded, and often publicly run, high culture institutions: more than 150 state and municipal theatres (nearly every bigger city in Germany has a theatre, fully staffed with ballet, drama and orchestra); over 200 private, often partly-subsidised theatres; 130 state-funded symphony and chamber orchestras; 6,000 museums (half of which are publicly funded); 40 festival halls and some 7,000 festivals per year; around 10,000 libraries (see Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2014). Furthermore, a total of 9.5 billion euros of public money is annually distributed to arts and culture institutions. Germany has a highly institutionalized, and thus very inflexible, publicly financed arts and cultural sector. Public arts institutions are supposed to present “high serious valuable arts”, whereas forms of entertaining arts and culture, preferred by the majority of the population, is left to the private sector. This has led to a strong distinction between publicly funded “serious” arts and low commercial, “entertaining” arts. Within this system and beliefs, the arts/cultural manager was seen as a threat, contradicting the paradigm that good art cannot survive in free markets and that all sources of funding, beyond public sources, could endanger the autonomy of arts and artists.

### Developments and challenges in the arts sector and in society

The traditional publicly financed arts sector and cultural policy in Germany is about to change, due to demographic changes and a growing international influence, which has also consequences for the functions and goals of cultural management.

#### ***Changing structures of arts suppliers and higher appreciation of creative industries***

If the amount of public money for the arts, also in a rather rich country like Germany, is going to be decreasing due to shrinking cities in some parts of the country and increasing social cost, there will be less money for traditional institutions and hardly any money for new institutions. Arts institutions need to find and develop

new financial resources. New forms of co-operation between public arts institutions and private sponsors and foundations need to be sought. More and more new cultural initiatives are privately run, many graduates of cultural management programmes establish their own private cultural enterprises as there is no public funding left for new initiatives in a highly institutionalized system.

Several reports and evaluations in Germany and Europe on the positive economic impact of the creative industries changed the view on privately run culture also in Germany (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie, 2010). Cultural and creative industries have started to be recognized even by official cultural policy as a valuable “player” of cultural life (Mandel, 2007; Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft, 2008).

#### ***Blurring lines between “high” arts and popular “low, entertaining” mass culture, and a broader concept of culture***

The traditional *German* contrast of “high”, “valuable” arts, on one side, and popular “low”, commercial “mass” culture, on the other, is gradually disappearing in favour of dynamic cultural expressions. The different sectors are mixing. Small grass-root theatre companies have started to work together with big public theatres. Public classical orchestras invite pop groups to their concerts to become more popular. This is corresponding with a broader concept of culture: a national survey on cultural participation and interests comparing indigenous population to those with migration background showed that migrants have a much wider understanding of culture, comprising everyday life culture, culture of different countries, regional traditions, popular culture (Keuchel, 2012). For the majority of middle aged and older Germans, culture means mainly high art forms like books of Goethe, music by Bach, or paintings by Rembrandt. The study also shows that this narrow concept of culture is changing within the younger generations. Another result is that the vast majority of the population in general, and especially those with migration background, prefer entertaining culture and attend more frequently the events of private, commercial arts institutions than those offered by public arts institutions.

### ***The traditional “high” arts audience is getting smaller***

This is the result showed by several national surveys and requires from arts institutions to develop new audiences and new opportunities for access and participation. The small group of the highly educated population is the main audience of publicly funded arts offerings, as visitor studies show (Keuchel, 2009, 2011 & 2012; TNS Opinion & Social, 2013). In order to develop new audiences in a sustainable way, arts mediation and cultural education, as well as cooperation with schools, have become very important for arts institutions. Institutions have started to think about systematic audience development strategies in terms of communication and relationship-building, yet with limited success. As audience development research shows, to really gain new audience groups who are not yet interested and do not belong to the typical highly educated milieus, changes in communication and service are not enough: institutions also need to change their programming and their overall mission and need to become more diverse in their own staff too (Mandel, 2013).

### ***Intercultural changes in society as a whole lead to changes within the cultural sphere***

The change of society through migration is another important factor. In Germany already 25% of the population have a migrant background and, especially amongst the younger generation, this percentage is going to grow heavily in the next 20 years, also enforced by the high numbers of refugees in Germany. Arts and culture are considered to be an important field to bring people from different ethnic backgrounds and different milieus together and help “intercultural” understanding. But migration also leads to changes in everyday culture, as well as in the arts sector, and requires from traditional arts institutions in Germany to change their mission, their structures, their employment policy, their programs, and their staff if they want to be relevant for a changing population.

Also the influence of the digital world changes the way of communicating, criticizing and consuming arts by lowering hierarchic structures, providing new artistic initiatives with communication power and enlarging the influence of consumers and arts audiences on cultural productions. The Internet has enforced a culture of collaborative work, sharing, and participating that needs to be adopted by arts and cultural institutions.

The arts world is getting more and more international as people in general have become much more mobile: cultural workers study abroad, do internships in cultural institutions in other countries, take

part in international projects, travel easily. In addition, many cultural workers are forced to leave their home countries and live abroad.

### ***Concept-based cultural policy***

After more than 50 years of muddling through with an ever-growing amount of public money (public expenditure in the arts sector grew far more than in all other public fields (see Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder), a strategic approach to cultural policy in Germany is required in order to cope with demographic and cultural changes in society. Recently and for the first time in the federal state, in some federal countries and local authorities, administration boards have started to set up strategic goals based on cultural development planning (Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft, 2013). Yet it is still a long way to implement these goals into reality as this could also mean that some traditional public arts institutions might be closed down if they are not able to adapt to the needs and interests of the present society. Concept-based cultural policy needs to be connected to cultural development planning in cities, regions and rural areas. It turned out to be a big challenge to organize these processes in a participative way where all groups of the population have a say about what they find important as part of a publicly financed and developed cultural life (Föhl, Wolfram & Peper 2016).

### ***Growing demand for artistic and cultural services beyond the cultural sector***

The role of arts in society seems to change due to a high demand for creative and artistic potential in different fields of society. Artistic creativity is not limited to being presented in theatres, concert halls or exhibitions any more, but becomes very important for example in education, tourism, business management, city development. Beyond the arts world, the potential of the arts to transform society by stimulating innovation and stimulating the individual creativity and social changes becomes more important.

### ***New challenges, working fields and role models for cultural managers***

Obviously the working fields of cultural managers have become much wider and more complex in recent years. It is not only about finding new funding resources and new organizational structures for arts institution, but also about attracting and becoming interesting for new audience groups for the arts, and moreover identifying new fields of society where the

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specific potential of the arts is needed. Cultural managers are key players in stimulating a diverse cultural life including change management processes of arts institutions and cultural governance processes. New challenges for a future generation of academically trained cultural managers are:

- Connecting the economic and the public arts sectors to create synergies
- Developing new, more flexible ways of arts production and distribution
- Fostering new audiences beyond the highly educated "white" elite
- Organizing cooperation between the arts sector and the educational, social, economic sectors
- Enlarging the relevance of the arts within society
- Connecting the real art world with virtual worlds
- Managing international exchanges
- Moderating intercultural change management processes
- Moderating processes of cultural governance, including participative ways of cultural development planning

This also changes role models of the cultural manager. In a simplified way, the following tendencies can be identified over time.

### ***From public institution management to entrepreneurial and leadership attitude***

Whereas cultural managers in the beginning worked mainly in public institutions or in public administrations, the amount of self-employed cultural managers increased. Many of them worked as freelancers or opened micro-businesses, often in collaboration with other freelancers and on the interstice between the economic and the non-profit sector (Mandel, 2007). But also within institutions an entrepreneurial approach of taking responsibility and risk became necessary, in order to change institutions. As the arts sector is changing in Germany and also in other European countries from a mainly publicly subsidised sector to a much wider and more diverse field with different supplies, also from the civil society and the private sector, cultural managers are asked to inter-connect these different spheres.

### ***From administrating the arts to co-creating programs***

Whereas in the beginning the focus was on administrating arts institutions in a more efficient way in order to help arts production to thrive, cultural management changed its focus to the side of the audiences. This also comprises that cultural management is not restricted to organize only the framework of arts production but takes a bigger influence on creating new formats and contexts in arts and cultural institutions to suit the needs of different user groups and thus enforce change management processes in traditional arts institutions.

### ***From arts management to cultural management***

Cultural management is more than arts management. The new challenge for cultural managers is not only to enable more artistic productions for arts institutions, but to enlarge the interest in arts and the social relevance of arts as an important part of cultural life and to convert artistic production into cultural values by bringing it to different publics. That includes empowering more and different groups of society, for them to be part of a rich and diverse cultural life.

### ***From cultural management to inter-cultural change management***

As the population in Germany is changing, mainly due to the big volume of migration, arts and cultural institutions also need to be changed to represent the population as a whole. To find new ways of communicating and programming, and to involve new players with different cultural backgrounds in the institutions, bringing together different cultural perspectives and interests is one of the new challenges. The role of cultural managers have become much more complex.

*A cultural manager needs to fulfil the task of bridging the gap between interspaces. As an external actor who only enters a new cultural field of intervention for a certain amount of time he can*

*be seen as having a very high degree of structural autonomy that makes him the ultimate broker (...) In this way, cultural managers, from a network theoretical point of view, act as 'broker' who bridge the gaps (so-called 'structural holes') between otherwise disconnected subnetworks in order to optimize the coordination between these fields and create synergies (Föhl, Wolfram & Peper, 2016: 21-22).*

## Teaching cultural management as an academic discipline

This wider understanding of the role and goals of cultural managers corresponds with latest descriptions of German cultural management programs where one finds instead definitions like "Co-producer, curator, transformer, change manager, cultural producer, interspace manager" (Mandel, 2015), showing a much wider understanding of the subject. If we define cultural management in a wider sense as managing, mediating and creating (inter-)cultural contexts – by connecting arts, politics and the social sphere as part of the process of collective creativity, and as an influential player of cultural policy and cultural governance processes –, what does this mean for curricular building and training cultural management at universities?

Cultural management has nowadays become a multiple discipline at universities, incorporating academic and technical input from many other disciplines. It is not reduced to an adaptation of business management anymore, but also integrates patterns of thinking from political science, cultural studies, social sciences and the arts. When analysing the curricula and the description of cultural management courses in Germany and comparing them to self-descriptions in the 1990s, there is an overall tendency to a more content-oriented, arts specific and more academic approach compared to a rather toolkit oriented training by methods taken from general economy in the beginning of the 1990s. Meanwhile most programmes ask not only about "How to do" to but also "why to do what" (Mandel, 2015).

The subjects Cultural Sciences and Cultural Policy became more important for cultural management compared to economic strategies. Programmes are less concentrated on administration of public arts institutions and place a bigger emphasis on creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship. All programmes offer seminars on international relations and international cultural policy, as well as international exchange programmes for their students. Most programmes do basic academic research and many include a Ph.D programme. During the last 10 years, academic research in cultural management has im-

mensely grown, also due to Master thesis and more and more Ph.D programs in cultural management. A systematic research approach in German-speaking countries has been mainly initiated by the Association of Cultural Management, founded in 2006, with the goal to improve quality in research and training and the reputation of cultural management as an academic discipline. The *Fachverband für Kulturmanagement* edits a scientific journal (also open to English articles) and organises a scientific conference once a year. Topics of the conference and the journal have been: Scientific research in cultural management (2009); theories for cultural management (2010); cultural policy and cultural management (2011); audience development and audience research (2012); cultural management and the arts (2013); cultural entrepreneurship (2014), and the internationalization of cultural management (2015)<sup>3</sup>.

### ***How to teach cultural managers in an academic setting?***

If cultural managers are important "agents of social and political change" and "interspace-managers" who connect different spheres of society, different social milieus and population groups with different cultural backgrounds, how can they be prepared for these complex tasks in an academic setting? If a standardized set of skills (like marketing, fundraising, budgeting) is not sufficient, but rather a mind-set of risk taking and taking over societal responsibility is needed including creative and social competences, how can this be trained in a university context? Methods that were identified in a workshop session of the *Fachverband Kulturmanagement* (Mandel, 2010) included:

- *Real work experiences*: Cultural projects, like producing festivals with students and cooperation with cultural institutions, offer the possibility to combine theoretical ideas and ideal strategic concepts with practical actions. Projects also allow to set students in charge of projects and make them become responsible and gain leadership experience.

- *Research-based learning*: As cultural management is still a young subject, basic research on cultural management processes is needed, as well as continuous research on developments in the vastly changing cultural worlds. Involving students in research processes makes them aware of relevant research questions and enables intensive analysis and discussion processes, as well as a more in depth look at structures, strategies, underlying assumptions.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see [www.fachverband-kulturmanagement.com](http://www.fachverband-kulturmanagement.com)

- *International exchange*: Most programs offer international exchange programs which enable personal experiences in another country and reflections on diversity, and help identify and better understand different perspectives on arts and culture, different systems and goals of cultural policy, different professionalization modes in the cultural world. This is not only a crucial base for cooperation in the international art and cultural world, but also a way to gain intercultural competences, needed to work successful in increasingly international and diverse societies.

- *Artistic strategies, artistic thinking and research*: Involving artistic practise in cultural management programs is a way of stimulating a more innovative approach. As the arts are based on the principle of ambiguity, showing there is not one true answer and not only one way of doing things, a strong connection of cultural management and arts can stimulate a more utopic way of thinking and challenge to invent unusual, new ways of dealing with cultural co-creation.

- *Reflections on role models*: Critical reflections on role models in cultural management as an integrated part of a cultural management programme can help find out about individual goals and missions as a cultural manager, and show that there is not one standardized way of defining the work of a cultural manager, but many different role models.

Main challenges in cultural management training and research remain to find a balanced and fruitful combination of theory and practice. Theoretical reflections from different scientific fields are indispensable to widen the horizon and provide a base for systematic research. At the same time cultural management must remain a discipline that is closely connected to the empirical practise not to lose its relevance.

Encouraging students to think in a "utopic" way and not just to use proven standardized strategies is another challenge. Although professional cultural managers need to have a profound knowledge of strategies and instruments, it is necessary to keep openness for the unforeseen. This includes openness towards future developments in the cultural world and in society as a whole also in the curriculum, which needs to be continuously questioned and changed due to changing topics and needs.

## Conclusion

Cultural management is not restricted to strategic management and leadership but involves also creative work. Management tries to handle and also to reduce complexity in order to make things work. The arts are characterized by being over-complex, unpredictable, produce different meanings and not serve certain goals; the effects of the arts on an individual's life and on cultural life in general cannot be foresaid. Thus, management of arts is always confronted by dealing with uncertainty. This forces an approach to training on arts and cultural management that involves a complex set of subjects and methods and openness. Cultural management today is less about making arts institutions more efficient, but about having an active influence on cultural life, cultural policy and societal changes.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, cultural management has developed in Germany from a mainly economic discipline, trying to organize the public arts sector in a more efficient way, to a more political and at the same time more creative discipline. The general trends of globalisation, migration and digitalisation have been changing the context of cultural management: the international influence on the cultural system, both in cultural

and in economic terms, has been growing; migration has been changing the composition of the population; digitalisation has been influencing the way of producing, communicating and consuming cultural products. Especially the state-financed "high arts" sector in Germany has been challenged by the disappearance of the traditional arts audience and the competition between the growing private cultural industries.

Thus, cultural management has been confronted with the need to find new approaches to enlarge the relevance of arts and culture beyond the traditional institutional structures. These changes are reflected in new concepts of cultural management training at universities: from a toolkit approach to a more scientific and at the same time more interdisciplinary approach, with a wider understanding of cultural management as creating cultural contexts and moderating intercultural change management processes.

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