

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Project management in the field of culture: a case study of theatre co-productions.

SUPERVISOR

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The dissertation consists of 252 pages, is divided into introduction, four chapters and conclusion; it has the bibliography of 180 entries, as well as the list of figures, charts, and tables.

THE SCOPE OF DISSERTATION

The observation of contemporary cultural institutions informs us about changes in the mechanisms of managing, funding, and organising cultural activities. This indicates that there are visible effects of decisions related to the cultural policy of a particular country or region and to the formulation of new ways to promote, create, and protect culture – decisions to which institutions quickly adapt their activities. New solutions are verified in practice, since they have a direct impact on the number of premieres, exhibitions, concerts, or educational projects. Moreover, it is often the case that the practice of developing new culture-creating expressions precedes the formal and theoretical take on the new phenomena. This is the case with theatres, whose activities have been indicating for several years now the current trends which modify the existing modes of producing and presenting performing arts. Such modifications appear on the pragmatic level - on the level of curatorial and organizational decisions. However, they are not very visibly reflected in the scientific debate on the modern theatre. The main areas of change include ways to create new performances and shape institutional activities, as well as the increasingly popular trend towards interdisciplinarity and the more and more frequent use of projects. These factors - due to their significance to theatres - affect the whole context of work in this particular field of art, ranging from organizational and artistic issues to issues related to the reception of and reactions to new theatrical works. At the same time, what is extremely important is the attempts to understand these fast processes and to answer the question whether these changes to theatre are irreversible - and if so - what their results will be. Therefore, the dissertation analyses the issues of cultural project management and the progressive "projectification" of social and artistic reality in the context of their short-, medium- and long-term impact.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the dissertation, the following research problem has been formulated:

How does the process of making theatre co-productions reflect the understanding and managing of projects in cultural activities? Are the implemented solutions consistent with the project management methodologies? Is the popularity of unorthodox artistic activities, referred to as projects, evidence that we are witnesses to the progressive projectisation of how cultural events are organized and created? Finally, what are the reasons for and effects of this phenomenon?

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The research had a qualitative nature. The basic research method was a case study, which is recognized and recommended in the management sciences. In order to maintain the methodological accuracy, the triangulation of research techniques was applied. The author decided to use documents analysis and in-depth interviews. For research purposes, three heterogeneous cases were selected, making it possible to identify the different features which characterize projects in culture. The course

of the research entailed 20 interviews and the analysis of project documentation in the form of proposals, reports, rules and regulations, and mass media reports.

PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

The data obtained from empirical studies allowed to solve the research problem. The specific nature of the cultural project management is closely linked to a wide array of phenomena occurring in social life, in which a particular emphasis is now put on the speed and brevity of activities. For this reason, the projectisation of theatre fits into the broader context of changes in culture, and the sources of this phenomenon must be considered in conjunction with the past events. It is equally important to pay attention to their effects, as they will shape the future. Based on the research it was possible to identify the distinctive features of cultural projects and projectisation, and to determine their influence on the art of theatre. At the same time, it was possible to specify the opportunities and risks associated with this trend.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The dissertation contributes to the development of the field, especially due to the methodology used. It combines different approaches in order to deepen the relation between arts and management. In view of the practical application of the research results, several optimal solutions related to the project work in culture have been suggested:

1. Consulting the key thematic points of programmes aimed at obtaining public funding for artistic projects with a wide circle of interested people, including artists, audiences and cultural theorists;
2. Reducing the waiting time for decisions made by donors and formulating the project guidelines in a way which does not inhibit artistic visions and allows to choose the proposals which are important for the development of art and audience and yet still feasible;
3. Keeping the project documentation and specifying all the contractual obligations of the parties in project agreements signed between donors and beneficiaries and between the partners of individual activities;
4. Developing adequate control and evaluation tools based on flexible response and continuous learning, and not on unproductive searching for errors;
5. Perceiving projects in culture as processes and not as rigid frameworks of fait accompli which is to be copied;
6. Planning organizational and artistic strategies in advance, selecting projects based on their long-term substantive value to the programme of a given institution, and avoiding involvement in every project conceivable just to keep up the pace;
7. Paying attention to communication and thus implementing the principles of participatory management - to this purpose, it is also possible to use simple on-line tools which protect against excess information and allow you to focus on the currently most important events and topics; organizing regular meetings of all the project team members to make room for better integration and increase the sense of responsibility for the project;
8. More reflection on the legitimacy of copying the activities of other institutions in order to avoid the homogenization of cultural programmes and repetition of the well-tried solutions, which could lead to stagnation;
9. Considering a project as both an artistic and organizational solution and finding the right balance between those two factors.