

Cultural management and local development - challenges for municipal managers

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Abstract:

This article discusses the relations between cultural management and local development from the perspective of managers of cultural institutions of the city of Niterói, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Its purpose is to try to identify to what extent the cultural managers perceive how the actions carried out in the organisms that supervise contribute to the local development and in which that contribution consists. It starts from the assumption that cultural action can be a factor of local development, insofar as culture • contributes to enhance the sense of belonging to the community, increasing the self- esteem of the population;

- Allows the accumulation of social capital;
- Promotes citizens' engagement in projects of collective interest, and;
- Generates employment and income opportunities in the creative economy (Lustosa da Costa, 2008, p.26).

To reach this goal, the text proceeds to a qualitative research, based on interviews with twelve leaders of important cultural centers of the city of Niterói. It is a question of constructing a mapping of managers' understandings about cultural management work and its role in the dynamics of local development. The choice of this city was due to the fact that Niterói, besides having a well-structured local development plan, emerges as an important cultural center, despite its proximity to the city of Rio de Janeiro, which, due to its size and importance, could exerting a centripetal force on the neighboring cities, emptying the cultural life of the periphery. In fact, the city is endowed with theaters, museums, libraries, cultural centers and other important equipment, as well as events and manifestations that attract the public from other cities, including Rio de Janeiro.

Before this empirical analysis, the article first recalls the discussion about the relationship between culture and local development, trying to show the ways in which culture can be a lever for development. Indeed, in the last twenty years, much has been discussed about the role of culture in local, regional, and national development (Harriet & Huntington, 2002; Hermet, 2002). This latest debate, prompted by UNESCO itself, seems to have definitely overcome the old ethnocentric visions that put the cultures of peripheral societies as obstacles to development. It is now a matter

of recognizing specificities and enhancing diversity (UNESCO, 1997). Special emphasis will be given to examining the contribution of culture to local development, drawing attention to the experience of the city of Niterói.

Next, it seeks to identify and systematize, from relevant literature, the theoretical bases, intervention instruments and good practices in cultural management. This is not a trivial task, since there is no consensus with regard to the very concept of cultural management, which according to different authors can encompass a series of dimensions that are not always coherent and convergent (Ramos, 2016). The interest in the present case is guiding the work of the manager in the mobilization of people and resources for the achievement of certain ends. That is, in the tasks related to the planning, organization, direction and control of policies, programs, projects, actions, organizations, equipment and cultural events (Thiry-Cheques, 2012). It therefore fails to consider a series of related actions that, although they are part of the universe of cultural action, do not constitute managerial activity.

Finally, analyzing the challenges, the dynamics of cultural institutions and the practices of their managers, it is possible to indicate, from their own evaluations, possible relationships between the work of cultural leaders and the local development project of the city of Niterói. The work is based on a qualitative and exploratory methodology. Based on data from a field survey, with interviews and on-site observation, the article presents experiences and reflections about several aspects considered to be preponderant, in the managers' view, for the development of actions and programs in the sense of promoting culture and local development.

Key words: Cultural management, Culture and local development, Cultural policies, Cultural institutions, cultural managers.