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Emmanuel Négrier

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# Performing Arts and Governments in France

**Emmanuel Négrier**

The aim of this paper rests on three aspects. The first is to assess the organization of the policies of support of performing arts in France. We shall examine strategies of 4 levels of government. The State historically plays a central role in cultural public support. Cities are also key actors for it. Departments occupy a peculiar and variable place. Regions are new poles, still minor, of the governmental support of performing arts. For all these actors, we shall analyse their mode of intervention, their level of financing, and the main choices they do according to areas (dance, theatre, music) and types of action.

The second objective is to examine the kind of relationship between the main levels of public action. We shall show that the public action, in show, is mainly marked by multilevel partnerships. If the State is not predominant any more in terms of financial support, it remains crucial within the process of artistic recognition.

The third objective is to analyse the two main changes that affect this different public policies today. The emergence of new territorial institutions, the Metropolitan Communities, affects the financial and space conditions of cultural democratization. The new practices of festivals allow to go beyond the traditional debate about the pertinence of such events in terms of innovation, employment, social and spatial access and territorial attractiveness.

The performing arts have been one of the priority fields of the governmental action for several years. After a long period when its support depended very mainly on the central State, it depends today of multiple public financings and policies. The performing arts (601,5 million euros) account for 36% of the budget of the Ministry of Culture (2,8 billions € - a little less than 1% of the total budget of the State). The State intervention differs according to four key fields, in terms of modes of cultural financing.

The first mode of intervention relates to the field which comes under its exclusive responsibility. They are in particular all the aspects of regulation of the sector. Here, it is the direct intervention that prevails. This type of intervention is, on the whole of the spectrum of action, relatively rare.

The second mode of intervention relates to the vast field of the Public establishments which are under supervision of the Ministry. Here, the nature of the intervention of the State is also very strong, but more indirect. These Public-owned establishments benefit from a financial autonomy and a proper legal identity, within the framework of a contract fixed by the State. This one names the managers of the Establishment, takes part in the Board of directors, finances the functioning of the structure and defines the priorities of its actions, in coherence with the priorities of the Ministry itself. The State has defined, for a few years, a contractual step aiming at influencing the policy of the establishments, by means of a "contract average objectives" which appeared not effective enough. Today, a new stage opens where the concept of

performance appears. The "performance contracts", whose assessment is examined by the Parliament each year, are based on the evaluation of the Establishment's policy on the base of indicators concerning the public, the quality of cultural or artistic offers, financial standing... etc. This support and indirect management of Establishments under supervision represents a very significant part of the total of the State cultural funds. One traditionally distinguishes these Establishments according to their more or less great autonomy, between the Administrative Publicly-owned establishments (example: Center National of Cinematography) and the Industrial and Commercial Publicly-owned establishments (examples: National Theatres). This part of the ministerial financing globally represents 280 million euros.

The third mode of intervention relates to the subsidies the State brings to local authorities or structures. Here, the cultural policy of the Ministry meets the objectives, references and means of territorialized partners. The ministerial action rests on the labels which it defined (dramatic National Center ; National Choreographic center, National Scene, Scenes of Contemporary Music,... etc) to express its own requirements and orientations. It passed by an important volume of conventions of cultural development, since the Eighties. Those are the subject of open negotiations with the local authorities and the managers of a cultural or artistic project. The intervention of the State is thus much more indirect than in the preceding cases, even if its capacity of negotiation remains important, and that it is, directly, the government officials which take part in these negotiations and contracts.

The fourth mode of intervention relates to the subsidies the Ministry brings directly to the artists (individual or collective) on the base of an artistic project. Such a part concerns:

- public commands in visual arts, literature, music, dance, theatre, etc... ;
- support to the theatre and choreographic companies, or to the musical sets for the production of works;
- requests for protection of sites or patrimonial objects;
- acquisitions of works for the public libraries...

These choices are generally very sensitive, insofar as enter of the questions preferably aesthetic, of taste, even of artistic clientelism. In all these fields, the State aid passes systematically through committees of experts or commissions which are made up of personalities who don't generally belong to the Ministry: artists, persons in charge for cultural equipements, university scholars, art critics. It is thus where the intervention of the State is (virtually) closer to the private patronage, by the direct support to people, that it is surrounded by external councils. Admittedly, such a model cannot be compared with the Anglo-Saxon model of the deputy decision (At Arms' lenght) or of Councils of Arts system. In fact, these committees do not have, in theory, an advisory capacity. The formal decision remains in public administration's hands. But it would be sociologically wrong to consider that the government officials have an arbitrary capacity on the subsidies to artists and individual projects.

In the context of these two last functions (subsidies to public structures and assistances with the artistic teams), the State is minority in the public financing, at the sides of the local authorities.

To these financial supports, directly managed by the Ministry of Culture, it is necessary to add the indirect impact of the specific statute for the workers in the performing arts field (the "intermittents of spectacle" statute). This one is financed within the framework of the Social Security, as a mechanism of inter-professional solidarity (Menger 2005). It is thus theoretically balanced by the receipts provided by the contributions of the employers and paid. But this sector is in a chronic situation of deficit. One can thus estimate that the assumption of responsibility of this deficit corresponds to an indirect source of public financing of the performing arts in France. The deficit, in 2005, reached 979 million euros, for the unemployment insurance of 100000 people (and thus much more than the single budget of the ministry for the culture for the performing arts).

The local authorities are traditional actors of the support for the performing arts, but their weight has been increasingly important in this field. At the beginning of the 20th century, the municipalities took part in the construction of spectacle places, primarily for the theatre and the opera. After the second world war, the movement of decentralization of theatre caused the implication of the cities in the assistance with the artistic teams. After a period marked by the determining influence of the State in the local choices, the political and administrative devolution (1983) diversified and amplified their role. Diversification is related to the emergence of other levels of intervention: the general councils (equivalent of the provincial level in the Latin countries) and the regional councils entered the system. They took part in the financing of the places of spectacle, the artistic teams and the cultural events (festivals). They are predominant today in these financings. For example, here the distribution of the financings of the festivals of music and dance, on the basis of our investigation in 2006 (79 festivals scrutinized):

*Table 1. Financial partnership of French Festivals (2005)*

	<b>Music Festivals (69)</b>	<b>Danse Festivals (10)</b>
Total partnership	26 111 969 €	9 071 772 €
Average	378 434 €	907 177 €
Municipalities	14%	27%
Cooperation districts	7%	20%
Departments	26%	14%
Regions	21%	9%
Ministry Culture	6%	12%
Sponsorship	15%	10%
Others	11%	8%
Total	100%	100%

Source : E.Négrier, M.T.Jourda (2007)

Table 2. Performing arts and sub-national authorities (in millions €)

Level	Ministry of Culture	Financial impact of the worker's special status	Municipalities	Departments	Regions	Total
Total	601	979	1378	498	115	3571

\*including cultural subsidies to amateurs

As table n°2 shows, the local authorities are from now largely dominant, compared to the State (nearly 2 billion euros against 1,6 billion, including the social deficit related to the statute of "intermittent of spectacle"). The distribution in a specific area (2,5 million inhabitants) shows in more details this public expenditure.

Table 3. Volumes and Types of Public Support to Performing Arts in Languedoc-Roussillon (2004)

Public Authority	Total amount	Sensitization and amateur's practices	Professional and semi-professional groups	Festivals	Performing arts buildings
Ministry of Culture	14,2	1,6	2,4	0,8	9,4
Regional Council	6,5	1,2	0,8	1,6	2,9
Department Councils	10,4	2,5	1,3	3,1	3,5
6 main Municipalities	9,0	0,5	0,6	1,3	6,6
4 Cooperation Districts	34,2	0	5,8	3,2	25,2
Total panel	74,3	5,8	10,9	10,0	47,6

Source : [Négrier dir. 2007](#)

The ministry for the Culture is the level which concerns more the professional actors. It however supports the structures of sensitizing and the practices amateurs with height of 1,6 million euros (11% of its budget for the performing arts), thus a little less than the 5 General Councils together (2,1 million). The financing of the festivals is the smallest expenditure (6%). The direct subsidies to the professional teams account for 17% of the total budget. The greatest part goes to the financing of the places of spectacle (equipements).

In a context of increase in the cultural expenditure, the Regional Council has priorities that are distinct from those of the State. Its financing of the festivals (24%) is twice more important than that of the State. In the same way, the structures of sensitizing are helped in proportion: 18,6% against 11% for the State. Reciprocally, the regional Council is less present on the artistic teams (12,4% of her budget against 17%), and on the places or equipments (44% of its budget against 66% of that of the ministry). These differences are less contradictions than complementarities.

The Department Councils privilege the financing of the places and the festivals (with 32% for each one). The financing of the structures of sensitizing (such as the ADDM departmental associations for the development of music) and of the amateurs' practices comes second-rate (with 22%). In third rank, we find the financing of the professional or semi-professional artistic teams (14%). But the departmental authorities have different strategies, according to their urban or rural identity, and of

their perception, more or less dynamic, of the stakes of the performing arts. The cities have a more convergent behavior than that of the General Councils. It must take account of the rise of the intercommunalities, which we will comment on further, and who distorts a little the analysis isolated from their strategies as regards performing arts. The weight of the structures of sensitizing and practical amateurs is relatively weak. It is the support to the places which concentrates the greatest part, and by far, of the expenditure of the cities (73% on average). For the Co-operation Districts, one sees that the greatest part is also the support to places of spectacle. It is logical, since one of the objectives of these Districts is to manage, instead of the cities, part of these equipments. On the other hand, these new authorities do not intervene in the financing of the practices amateurs.

This multilevel distribution of the support to the performing arts, within a single region, is representative of French reality, except for one aspect : the role that the great Parisian institutions play, strongly financed by the ministry for the Culture at the central level. The diversity of financing testifies to the existence of different strategies. But it develops within a framework of very usual partnerships. The support of the State for the teams and the places of spectacle is very often managed through labels (national Centers dramatic and choreographic, national scenes, officially agreed teams artistic) which pass by the support of the local authorities. The cross financings are thus almost systematic when a certain level of artistic excellence is reached. On the other hand, the support for the amateurs' practices and the festivals remains more fragmented, and the partnership between the three levels of local authority is less frequent. Lastly, the distribution of the financings, in space terms, remains a major stake: certain cities occupy a considerable place, by their cultural dynamism, in the distribution of performing arts financings. For example, Montpellier (230 000 inhabitants - 10% of the population of the Languedoc-Roussillon region) represents nearly 50% of the total of the performing arts public funds.

## **2. Promising perspectives**

We wish to stress two dimensions. The first relates to the rescalings of certain urban policies as regards performing arts. The second relates to the new role of the festivals in the support for them.

### **2.1. Stake of territorial rescaling**

The emergence of the Co-operation Districts is recent. It is related to the 1999 reform, which reinforced the incentives of the State for the creation of institutions of co-operation between municipalities (Négrier 2005). The cultural field was considered, at the beginning, as less strategic than the sectors of the economic action, housing, the social or transport policies. The implementation of this law was a success. It led to the creation of 186 Urban Cooperation Districts (and 2500 Rural Co-operation Districts). Especially, the culture has been unexpectedly considered as a strategic sector by much of these new institutions and their local actors. 80% of them state to want to intervene in the cultural field. 60% intervene already in this sector. The performing arts are the third field of intervention of these districts in the

cultural domain. That results in the transfer of management, from the municipal level toward the intercommunal level (Faure & Négrier 2001). The interest of this new phenomenon lies in the three following aspects:

- the competence of the Co-operation Districts makes it possible to improve the financing of the equipment of spectacle, because the transfers of management are accompanied by added tax supports on behalf of the State. For example, in Amiens, these transfers had as a consequence, in two years, an increase of 20% of the cultural financings on the territory of co-operation. Generally, the Co-operation Districts which are very dynamic in the cultural field enriched the cultural offer on their territory.
- the transfer of responsibility also allows to develop the presence of the performing arts on a territory vaster than that, traditional, of the central cities. In the map of the equipment of spectacle, one sees that the majority of them are located today in the old centers of the towns. However the demographic development occurs today in a massive way in the periphery of the cities. The transfer of management makes it possible to put in coherence the structure of the cultural financing and the dynamic demographic ones. For that purpose, certain institutions of co-operation develop strategic plans, which aim to improve the geographical presence of the places of spectacles.
- lastly, these co-operative policies aim to reinforce cultural democratization, by improving the access to the spectacle by the population. That passes through the creation of new spectacle equipments, in urban sectors where they missed. That also passes through the access improvement of the populations to the existing places. Certain Co-operation Districts thus modified the obligations of their professionals, so that they decentralize, on the peripheral territories, part of their spectacles. Other institutions are implementing initiatives of free transport to reach the spectacles. In any case, a co-operative policy has a direct effect on the social access: it prohibits the discrimination of the tariffs according to the places of leaving. This is very important for the access to the spectacles. But it is even more important for the structures of artistic teaching (academies of theatre, dance and music). This movement of transfer of responsibility is, still today, rather fragmented. Fourteen co-operation districts spend more than 10 million euros for the culture, while thirteen spend less than 1 million euros. There are resistances to these transfers, on behalf of the local councillors, cultural actors and certain managers of artistic places. It is a traditional resistance against change, but also the fear of a concentration of the capacities to the profit of one single institution or politician. However, one can consider that these transfers will make it possible to concretize new objectives of democratization of the access to the culture, and with the performing arts in particular.

## **2.2. Festivals and the support for the Performing Arts**

France is a particular case in the debate on festivals. Its tradition is less old than that of England, but the State, as from the Eighties, encouraged their creation. The local authorities, as seen below, strongly took part in this rise. Today, the tendency is to a

certain criticism against the "festival multiplication". The ministry for the Culture would wish that the local authorities take part rather in the creation of permanent places, and consider that the festivals are only transitory events, which divert the public money from more legitimate targets (in terms of public, of support for employment, of permanent programming). A recent study, on the festivals of music and dance, made it possible to show that these criticisms are not valid for all the festivals, and clarifies on the contrary the interest of the festivals in various dimensions.

First of all, the festivals make it possible to attract, more than the other actors of the spectacle, the private financing. The patronage and sponsorship account for on average 15% of the resources of the festivals of music. Then, the level of subsidy (approximately 50%) corresponds to that of the artistic expenditure. This means that the public money is a direct support for artistic and cultural employment. Thirdly, these festivals play an important part in the support to contemporary creation, through public commands of new masterpieces, the programming of music or contemporary dance, or the coproduction between festivals. Fourthly, the studied festivals play, more and more, a complementarity role between the moment of the specific event and the annual season of the artistic places. The partnership between places and festivals develops and the teaching actions make it possible to associate the local public (and specifically young people) to these demonstrations. The festivals are a crucial element for cultural and artistic employment: 234 artistic employments and 62 cultural employments per festival on average. Lastly, the festivals have an impact on their territory. One estimates at 122.000 euros on average the direct repercussions of a festival (that is to say 23% of their expenditure) upon its territory.

These reports makes it possible to relativize frontal criticisms with regard to the festivals in general, by revealing "good practices" as regards innovation, employment, economic valorization and territorial attractivity. They allow today the development of new institutional practices, such as conventions between public partners to support the festivals whose strategies are in coherence with these objectives. The stakes are of three types: the stabilization of the resources; improvement of the social and space access; the territorial attractivity.

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