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Citizen participation in the cultural sector

Alice ANBERREE and Frédéric KLETZ

Confronted by the persistent shortcomings of the cultural democratization policies that have been pursued in France for several decades now, there have been an increasing number of attempts, emanating from both large cultural organizations and more modest establishments, to transform the relationship between cultural structures and the various groups making up the public as a whole. Participatory initiatives –characterized by a growing concern with encouraging members of the public to play a more active role – provide a good example of this trend. At the same time, a large number of experiments have been carried out with participatory approaches in various contexts (health policy, urban policy, etc.), giving rise to a significant amount of research (Boy, Donnet Kamel, and Roqueplo 2000; Rui 2004; Bréchat et al. 2006; Deboulet and Nez 2013) and to the construction of a veritable theoretical edifice concerning popular participation (Blondiaux and Fourniau 2011). Placed side by side, histories of the development and implementation of cultural policy doctrines (Moulinier 2011; Poirrier 2006; G. Saez 2008; Urfalino 2011) and contributions from popular participation theorists have made it possible to compare specific issues in the field with the various forms of popular participation identified by researchers (Arnstein 1969; Carpentier 2012; Pateman 1970; Vigoda 2002) who have distinguished different degrees of involvement on the part of the public in the decision-making processes of various cultural organizations. In Part 1, we shall describe the way in which these theoretical elements are articulated in our article.

Using data from observational analyses carried out at the organizational level, we shall, in this article, study the ways in which citizen participation policies are applied in the cultural sector. Our analysis is based on observations deriving from three case studies (a subsidized theatre developing a schedule of participatory works; a participatory local cultural programme; and a university cultural management unit) resulting from long-term collaborations that made it possible to gather a significant amount of analytical data, including internal documents, interviews with members of the organization in question and their publics, and direct observations. We present our research approach and observations in the second part of the paper.

In Part 3, we identify mediation as one of the main approaches applied to foster public participation, while in Part 4 we discuss potential determinants of the effective development of public participation in the governance of bodies diffusing cultural works. These determinants include the cultural identity of the organization; a knowledge of the background of the receiver-participants; and the level of organizational commitment. Based on these observations, governance is identified as a fundamental factor in the effective development of popular participation. In effect, cultural organizations operate within a framework of constraints largely defined by their tutelary administrations. The three determinants we identified are partially dependent on this system. Therefore, in this paper, we defend the thesis according to which, while the effective participation of members of the public is encouraged by cultural organizations, it is nevertheless very fragile, in that it depends simultaneously on the efficiency of the internal approach taken by the organization in question, and on the governance framework of the tutelary administrations, which do not always create conditions favourable to citizen participation.

1. Theoretical framework: an interpretive framework for citizen participation in the cultural sector

Within the cultural sector, an increasing number of voices are calling for new, proactive approaches to taking various publics into account (Passebois 2002; Donnat 2008). These approaches can take a number of different forms, including the development of amateur practices (Caune 2006); the encouragement of participatory works of art (Bando 2008; J.-P. Saez 2012); the modification of established artistic hierarchies (Moulin 1992); and the legitimization of formerly disdained artistic

genres (Roueff 2003). These attempts to foster a new approach represent an acknowledgement of the limitations of the policy of cultural democratization which has underpinned government action since the French Ministry of Culture was set up in 1959 (Urfalino 2011). Due to this situation, alternative doctrines (popular education, cultural democracy, cultural rights, cultural citizenship) have achieved – or re-established – a greater degree of cultural legitimacy. What these approaches have in common is that they all focus on encouraging an ever-increasing number of collective dynamics by inviting everyone to express themselves and taking their tastes into account, rather than placing an exclusive emphasis on artistic excellence (1.1). Questions concerning public participation in the cultural sector go hand-in-hand with questions about the participation of members of the public in the public sector as a whole (Bacqué and Sintomer 2001; Blondiaux 2001; Blondiaux and Fourniau 2011; Langton 1978) and the participation of clients in the activities of companies (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Divard 2010). These fields of reflection make it possible to identify three potential levels (1.2) and different categories (1.3) of public participation in the activities of cultural organizations.

1.1. From a relatively passive public-as-receiver to a participating public

Ever since researchers in the field of management took an interest in the subject, the cultural sector has been considered a separate category in its own right. Projects developed in the sector and the actors working on them were considered to generate so many specificities that it was taken as read that cultural bodies could not be compared with other types of organizations (Becker 1982; Benghozi 1995; Freidson 1986). A number of specificities were highlighted, including creativity, design, freedom and autonomy, symbolic value, prototype economics, and incommensurable uncertainties. These specificities were used to justify a description of the cultural economy in which offer was entirely autonomous of demand, both pre-existing and generating it (Colbert 1993; Debenedetti and Gombault 2009). For a long time, a similar notion underpinned the dominant cultural policy in France, namely the policy of cultural democratization. This notion places the spectator at the end of the chain, as a receiver of works of art legitimized by a knowledgeable elite as belonging to a shared heritage of masterpieces of value to all humanity, and whose aesthetic strength means that their quality is apparent at first sight with no need of pedagogy or mediation. In this context, the public is merely invited to turn up, to be present, with their reception of works of art implying no visible activity other than that of visiting the cultural organization in question.

However, this policy ran into a wall when it became clear that its ambition to boost demand by the offer had proved to be a failure. The limitations of the policy were revealed by figures on individuals from different sociological backgrounds; in fact, it transpired that the cultural practices of people from various social groups did not change over time (Donnat 2011). Members of social groups with the highest number of academic qualifications were found to attend more cultural events than members of other social groups, and it was discovered that there was a substantial correlation between rates of attendance of cultural events and professional status (managers and members of the liberal professions went to the theatre, traditional and contemporary dance, classical music concerts, and rock and jazz concerts more frequently than middle managers, who themselves attended such events more often than employees and workers). However, against this backdrop, changes are taking place within the cultural sector, as is witnessed by the current use, in conversations between professionals and in schedules, of terms such as “co-production” and “co-creation”, as well as by the participation of members of the public and local residents, by the immersion of artists in the milieu, and by the creation of links with local territories¹ (Bordeaux and Liot 2012). This semantic slippage throws light on the

¹ To the best of our knowledge, there are no available statistics on the maturity and scope of this trend. Other than the issue quoted by the *Observatoire des Politiques Culturelles*, we would refer readers to current cultural schedules and professional networks, especially regional networks, with a view to verifying that the first often include proposals encouraging spectators not just to attend events, but also to take an active role, and that the second bear witness to critiques in which the key words

evolution of the cultural sector and its newfound focus on the figure of the spectator, whose autonomy vis-à-vis the arts has been rehabilitated. This evolution is also apparent in the resurgence of policy doctrines presenting an alternative to cultural democratization, such as popular education (Leterrier 2001; Restoin 2008; G. Saez 2008), cultural democracy (Bellavance 2000; Urfalino 2011), cultural rights (Groupe de Fribourg 2007; Meyer-Bisch 2008; Romainville 2013) and cultural citizenship (Poirier et al. 2012), which place the spectator at the beginning of the chain. These approaches acknowledge the specific cultures of individuals that should, beyond fixed, discipline-based and aesthetic categories, be recognized by the collectivity. The way in which actors and analysts think about the cultural sector seems, in this regard, to have evolved in favour of the image of a participating public active not only in terms of its reception of works (individual attribution of meaning), but also of a capacity to share its views and desires concerning the collective processes in which it is involved, legitimizing certain works and helping to establish cultural strategies and policies. In this sense, a committed participating public has become an important factor for public administrations and organizations in the development and definition of their strategies.

A focus on the activities of professionals rather than on an acknowledgement of amateur practices; artistic exigency rather than an emphasis on a shared involvement in the production of works of art, whatever they may be; the idea of a communion based on a universal culture rather than an ambition to foster the emancipation of the tastes and practices of individuals. Various cultural policy doctrines are characterized by very different representations of the world of the arts, approaches that neither generate the same strategic processes and orientations, nor the same approaches to including the public. Marie-Christine Bordeaux and Françoise Liot (2012) suggest an initial typology of ways in which members of the public are encouraged to participate in the cultural sector.

- aesthetic forms are associated with co-creation situations and all “potential experiences provided to various publics and to individual members of society, often considered marginalized in terms of the cultural offer, who abandon this status and become involved in so-called ‘participatory’ projects” (2012, 10).
- deliberative and argumentative forms include forums, general assemblies, annual conferences and other kinds of public discussions linked to the national debate on the future of the performing arts. These forms are more closely linked to the sentiment of crisis experienced by actors in the sector than they are to day-to-day cultural life. The authors note that, in reality, most if not all participants are professionals, and that exchanges with non-professionals are largely anecdotal.
- dialogical forms correspond to the “numerous types of meetings-debates organized for members of the public with artists, cultural professionals, and experts (art critics, journalists, academics); these forms mostly take the shape of dialogues with artists, either when they are developing or actually performing their work” (2012, 9).

Consequently, new forms of popular involvement emerge simply from attempts to encourage their presence, or presence: artistic expression in the case of aesthetic forms; critical expression² in the case of deliberative and dialogical forms. Within the framework of popular participation theories, these

defined above are central. At the national level, we should mention, in particular, the professional meetings of the ONDA in 2011 (Artists, Territories, Inhabitants: Shared Cultural Projects); of the AMI in 2011 (Artists and Regional Development?), and La Scène in 2010 and 2011 (Performing Arts and the Recomposition of Territories; Publics of Culture and Knowledge: Creating Meaning through Reinvention).

²Our phrase. The term “critical” is to be understood in a neutral, rather than a pejorative sense, as the expression of a personal opinion. This personal term is reserved to a form of expression that emerged in groundwork observations, a form of expression that corresponds to life narratives.

forms correspond to non-participation, or, as we shall see below, to participation in terms of the power to exert influence.

1.2. Three levels of participation

In the late 1960s, Sherry Arnstein (1969) distinguished three different forms of popular participation:

- non-participation: the real objective of practitioners is, rather than to involve them in decision-making process, to educate members of the public, or, in other words, to “cure” them of a tendency to interpret works of art in an erroneous fashion.
- symbolic cooperation: practitioners develop consultation mechanisms with a view to encouraging the participation of members of the public, but do not commit themselves to taking their suggestions into account.
- effective power: participants have the power to take autonomous decisions or to negotiate with practitioners.

In the wake of this, other researchers in the field of public management have developed similar typologies. These typologies are presented in Table 1. In the various levels of participation described in these typologies, we find categories similar to those developed with a view to encouraging the participation of members of the public. An invitation to be present, or to attend events and exhibitions, corresponds to a level of non-participation; artistic expression corresponds to a potential power of influence over the development of the work in question; and an invitation to become involved in discursive expression corresponds to a potential power to influence the decision-making processes of the organization. Meanwhile, the level of effective power corresponds to an invitation to participate based on the decision-making process, for example, via referenda or interactive governance approaches (Michels 2011).

Table 1 - Summary of levels of popular participation

	Authors	Corresponding approach
Non-participation	Vigoda, 2002; Carpentier 2012; Arnstein 2002	Citizen electors, with no formal influence on decisions
Participation through power of influence	Vigoda, 2002 (responsiveness) Pateman, 1970 (partial participation) Arnstein, 1969 (coopération symbolique)	Citizen clients and new public management Exchanges between citizens and public authorities, the latest conserving the power of decision
Participation through decision-making power	Vigoda, 2002 (collaboration) Arnstein, 1969 (citizen power) Pateman 1970 (full participation)	Citizens as partners of the administration, via informal groups Partnership, delegation of power, citizen control Exchanges between citizens and public authorities, shared decisions

Source: Anberrée (2015)

Returning to the cultural case we are focusing on, we can use this typology, which describes participation rates, to define the various interactions between cultural organizations and their publics. Research carried out in the field of participatory marketing enables us, in Sub-Section 1.3, to identify

other characteristics of the ways in which various publics participate in the activities of cultural organizations.

1.3. Different characteristics of participation

There has also been an evolution in terms of mental representations in the field of marketing. If, in the early days, researchers in the discipline sought to build bridges between potential clients using an offer made up of a range of products with intrinsic value, developed autonomously by different companies, a preoccupation with client needs and how to meet them soon emerged, and companies began to focus on markets (Gotteland, Haon, and Gauthier 2007). In this context, a knowledge of the needs companies attempt to meet was developed via consultation with clients (market studies using questionnaires or interviews) or by collecting available data (for example, in the case of cultural organizations, subscription records of members of the public). These market-oriented approaches do not, in and of themselves, encourage the emergence of popular participation in the decision-making process, and the organizations that introduce those approaches do not make a commitment to take the information collected into account by adapting their offer. Another trend in the field of marketing, this one towards the co-creation of value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Vargo and Lusch 2004), focuses to a greater degree on the participation of clients in the decision-making process. This perspective corresponds, in a similar way to market-oriented approaches, to a situation in which the client (rather than the product) is the central concern of the organization. The difference is to be found in the fact that the client is considered not as the final recipient of an offer that contains intrinsic value but, instead, as the co-producer of that value (which cannot exist without him) thanks to a process in which information is exchanged, a process that constitutes a service delivered by the organization to the client. Co-creation of value and market orientation are not incompatible. Indeed, the first cannot exist without the second.

Ronan Divard (2010) describes this new phase in marketing as “participatory”, identifying five ways of categorizing the kind of client participation it encourages:

- The stage at which the client intervenes: design, selection, improvement of products and services; definition of prices; communication; after-sales and client relations management.
- Transposing this notion onto a cultural organization, we shall consider the following stages applied to an organizational project or a work of art: general orientation, operational design, execution, mediation, reception and monitoring.
- The degree of participation sought, which we assimilate with what we have called “form”: presence-based or expressive participation.
- The one-off, recurrent or permanent character of the action (which simultaneously influences the effects of popular participation over time, with members of the public attending with increasingly less frequency if the actions are non-recurrent, and members of the public capable of participating, since not everyone will be able to attend one-off events, while permanent actions do not imply such a constraint).
- The systematic or partial character of the application of participatory marketing to companies. We understand this dimension, on the one hand, as the existence or otherwise of an iteration between data collected thanks to participatory marketing and organizational proposals, and, on the other, as the scope of the object to which participation is applied. Is it, for example, applied to the project as a whole, or to a product or ensemble of projects (in the case of a cultural organization: a work of art, several works of art, or the schedule in its entirety)?
- The number and nature of participants.

Table 2 presents a summary of the potential characteristics of citizen participation as applied to the cultural sector.

Table 2 - Summary of the characteristics of citizen participation applied to the cultural sector

Form	Presence-based or expressive
Object	Extra-schedule, a work, an ensemble of works, the whole schedule, the organizational project
Stage	Orientation, design, execution, mediation, reception control
Timeframe	One-off, recurrent, permanent
Iteration	No iteration or intuitive iteration: no data collection and analysis mechanism. The organization's data collection depends on the subjective perception of its members. Certain iteration : an explicit data collection mechanism is implemented by the organization

Source: authors

Based on this table and on Table 1, our paper presents an analysis of the participation of various publics that encompasses the forms and levels that participation takes and the objects to which it is applied.

2. Empirical materials

In order to take account of ongoing changes in the cultural sector in terms of the emergence of new forms of citizen participation and their effect on the constitution of the cultural offer, as well as on cultural life in society as a whole, we have attempted to articulate the theoretical framework presented above with data collected on the ground. Our object of observation – organizational practices linked to citizen participation – has yet to be studied in depth and is situated within a changing context. These factors encouraged us to retain an exploratory approach based on a process of abduction as defined by Koenig (1993): “Abduction is an operation which, not belonging to the realm of logic, makes it possible to escape from our chaotic perception of the real world via a process of conjecture about the effective relationships between things[...]. Abduction consists in using observations to derive conjectures that can later be tested and discussed”. Here, we shall structure our observations using the theoretical framework presented above with a view to developing proposals concerning the development of various publics in cultural organizations. In this perspective, the methodology retained is based on a qualitative approach built around three case studies. Various partnerships were developed with organizations in the cultural sector which made it possible to carry out detailed observations on the ground over relatively long periods of time. These partnerships were struck with organizations operating in very different circumstances, a fact that provided us with a number of different forms of citizen participation.

2.1. Presentation of the case studies and positioning of the researchers

In order to underpin our argument, we analyzed the public policies of three cultural organizations within the framework of our research collaborations. These case studies can be said to be heuristic in the sense outlined by Hervé Dumez (2013). Thanks to the application of an abductive approach, they make it possible to understand and enrich existing theory and, in this instance, to boost our understanding of the ways in which citizen participation policies are implemented. In an exploratory perspective, we focused on cases that were very different from one another. However, since the issue of the participation of various publics is closely linked to the question of cultural policy and the doctrines that underpin it, we limited our analysis to organizations whose primary mission is inscribed in a

political dimension, thereby excluding commercial organizations and concentrating on the public and parapublic sector.³Our three terrains are:

- The *Direction de la Culture et des Initiatives* (DCI) – the “Directorate of Cultural Initiatives”– of the University of Nantes. This body applies the University’s cultural policy. It fosters the creativity of staff and students, while at the same time providing support for their initiatives. In order to do so, every term the DCI holds practical workshops organized by professional artists operating in various disciplines. Long-term participatory residencies are also offered on a recurrent basis. On the other hand, the DCI provides support (in logistics, training, and other areas) for the individual artistic projects of members of the university community. This approach is run concurrently with a more traditional schedule based in a campus auditorium and on other sites on campus. Furthermore, the DCI contributes to the visibility of the university’s associative network, itself a source of numerous proposals and publishing a bi-monthly agenda.
- The “*Dale Recuerdos XXIII je pense à vous*” residency was a participatory theatrical piece developed and performed between February and April 2013 in the Community of Communes of the Region of Nozay (CCRN). The director met seven elderly people from the region in order to record their memories. Using the stories they told him, he put on a play in which, after two weeks of rehearsals, the interviewees played themselves. The piece was performed three times, with each performance included in the cultural schedule of two of the institutions that funded it, namely the Community of Communes of the Region of Nozay, and the Grand T, the Nantes theatre subsidized by the Loire-Atlantique General Council. Several events associated with the piece’s theme were organized, notably in colleges and the Community of Communes’ library network.
- The Panier Culture association. The association was set up by artists who were experiencing problems financing and managing their activities and who wanted to help each other out. Panier Culture is a local cultural project based on the AMAP model: “contributors” (those subscribing to one or more “paniers”, or “baskets”, pre-purchase four baskets each containing four cultural proposals, different both in terms of genre (music, literature, the plastic arts, theatre, etc.) and aesthetics (performing arts, co-creation, discovery workshops, etc.). The association properly so-called was set up in September 2011 by people (artists, representatives of associations, and citizens) interested in the project and wanting to become involved. Applying a democratic principle, working groups open to all members have been set up, each of them with precise missions: finding additional participants; establishing contracts governing the respective commitments of artists and recipients; selecting the content of the baskets and organizing their distribution; and coordinating the life of the association. In the first season, the baskets were distributed between April 2011 and April 2013.

These brief descriptions provide an idea of the degree to which the organizations with which we worked differ from one another, particularly in regard to their status and the field to which their tutelary administration or principal external referent belongs. Panier Culture is an association subsidized by the economic, social and solidarity branch of Metropolitan Nantes; the DCI is a university department dependent on the presidency of the establishment; and the CCRN was an association (which has since become an EPCC), subsidized by the General Council on behalf of the Grand T. Within the

³ Consequently, our argument takes in more than just public management. It should be observed that the breadth of the field makes it possible to carry out an initial analysis of links of influence between public and parapublic sectors (whether through subsidies, reflections of public policy, or the interactions between various actors; in effect, members of Panier Culture (“Culture Basket”) have had several informal meetings with members of Nantes Métropole, notably to discuss their potential role as prescriber and selection criteria for artists to be supported), even if the subject is not explicitly addressed in this article.

framework of an exploratory approach, this diversity of examples contributes to the emergence of salient points by facilitating the task of identifying which of the characteristics studied are more and which less sensitive to the context. Our analysis is based on a thorough knowledge of all the terrains. In an ethnographic perspective, the relationship established between the researcher and the people he or she meets on the ground is fundamental and can condition the approach applied to the problematic. Consequently, it is of central importance to take into account of the manner in which that approach is constructed. Here again, each of our three fields of study presents its own specificities:

- Our relationship with the University of Nantes' DCI began with a joint-project, organized in the academic year 2010-2011 at the request of both the DCI and the DRAC of the Pays de la Loire region, concerning a study of the cultural practices and mental representations of students at the University. After this study, we attended the six-month cultural practices workshop organized by the DCI in the form of round tables to which everyone taking part in workshops were invited. In addition to these contacts with members of the public, we enjoyed access not only to public documents, but also to a number of internal documents. Furthermore, during the 2012-2013 season we were able to carry out interviews with members of the DCI. Our posture in regard to the DCI was that of a non-participating observer.
- Meanwhile, thanks to our association with the Grand T in Nantes, we became aware of the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency. In mid-2011, the director of the establishment agreed to a joint-project on the theme of the development of cultural democracy, and pointed us in the direction of local cultural projects regarded as being particularly representative of the organization's efforts to develop its relations with new publics and reappraise the ways in which it addressed them. We attended meetings held at the Grand T between artists taking part in the projects, and representatives of districts in the local area likely to welcome them. This enabled us to establish a privileged contact with the cultural development manager of the Community of Communes of the Region of Nozay. We then pursued our observational work in two different directions. On the one hand, we focused on the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency at the CCRN, with periods of observation, questionnaires, interviews, and an analysis of public documents and certain internal documents. On the other, we attempted to establish an understanding of the way in which the Grand T and the territorial cultural projects functioned, interviewing the employees of the organization and of the co-funder, the General Council. Here, we employed a non-participatory observation technique.
- When we established an initial contact with the people who now constitute the Panier Culture in 2011, the association itself did not yet exist. Artists from various disciplines, entrepreneurs, and representatives of different associations, united in the Trempolino association, whose mission it is to support the development of contemporary music in the Pays de la Loire region, met on a regular basis to develop mutual aid and cooperation mechanisms between artists and other people. One of the authors attended the meeting, explicitly presenting herself as a researcher. Later, in order to guarantee herself access to the terrain, she participated in the life of the association as a full member. In effect, at the time, it seemed that acting as a distant observer would have put her in a marginal position and reduced, or even prevented, access to the association's internal discussions and documents (email correspondences, minutes of meetings, and rough copies of formal documents such as subscription contracts and contracts for the sale of works of art). As well as becoming involved in the management of the association, the author took out a subscription to the baskets and attended most of the distributions and associated events. This involvement in the organization made it possible to glean an understanding of its global dynamic and provided access to the majority of correspondence and written documents. On the other hand, it sometimes obliged the author in question to defend the project against the criticism of the external environment (individuals concerned, media, institutions liable to provide subsidies, etc.) and to become involved in the

tensions characteristic of all associations. In such situations, there is a substantial risk of losing the critical distance required for all research. The distance maintained by the other author made it possible to avoid such tensions. He also made comparisons with other researchers in conferences and in presentations delivered to different teams. Furthermore, the author formally distanced himself from the terrain by not renewing his subscription in June 2013. Much of the analysis presented here was carried out several months later in order to take the detached stance required for a rigorous approach.

These three case studies enabled us to collect a substantial amount of observational data concerning the participation of publics in the activities of cultural organizations.

2.2. Observations

In order to be able, in spite of their different sizes and statuses, to compare each of the three case studies, our observations were structured, in the terms of the theoretical framework outlined above, around the same unit of analysis, namely the opportunity enjoyed by publics not merely to attend cultural events, but also to participate in them in an active manner. Thus, each of the organization's proposals inviting each of its publics to interact with one of its representatives, whether in terms of artistic creation, expressing an opinion, or recounting a life experience, is based on criteria identified thanks to citizen participation and participatory marketing theories.

2.2.1. At the DCI

At the DCI, we retained 32 occasions on which the organization invited the participation of various publics. Thirty of them focused on artistic participation, while the other two involved participation in governance.

The first correspond to the six stages that we envisaged: expressive artistic participation in the orientation of a work of art to be inserted into the organization's schedule of individual amateur projects developed by members of the university community (3 proposals); expressive artistic expression in terms of the design of a work within the framework of practice workshops led by an artist sharing the decision-making process in regard to the final aesthetics of works (10 proposals); expressive artistic participation in the execution of a work, a process in which members of the public follow the precise instructions of artists (directors, plastic artists) exclusively responsible for the final aesthetic; presence-based participation in terms of mediation during explanations of the way in which individual works are developed (3 proposals); presence-based participation in terms of the reception of works at exhibitions and theatrical productions (7 proposals); expressive critical participation at the control stage when publics are invited to take part in juries or to present their interpretations of specific works (2 proposals). None of these solicitations gave rise to a particular collection on the part of the organization, or to an iteration.

Meanwhile, opportunities to become involved in the governance of the organization consisted in expressive discursive participation at the control stage in round tables attended by participants in practice workshops who recounted their experiences; and expressive discursive participation at the orientation stage when members of the university community were consulted within the framework of prospective research, requested by the DCI from students writing their tutored projects or M2 theses about the potential evolutions of its offer. These two approaches were associated with a formalized collection of the suggestions made by participants, making it possible to put them into action. However, things were by no means certain, in that they were dependent on the interpretations, desire and constraints of the members of the DCI.

2.2.2. The Dale Recuerdos XXIII residency

For the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency in the CCRN schedule, we retained 27 occasions on which the organization solicited the participation of various publics. Twenty-three of them invited members of the public to participate artistically in a specific project. Four proposals invited members of the public to participate in the governance of the organization.

Four of the artistic proposals involved guided artistic participation in the design stage of a work. These four proposals included a writing workshop, with the other three designed to help teenagers (high school students and municipal youth advisors) to create a work (dictionary, collection, theatrical play) based on meetings with older people. The expressive discursive participation of these last was invited on three occasions, their life stories nourishing the content of the works. The same type of participation was requested of the actors of the central representation of the residency. These last did not have any influence on the aesthetics of the work, which was known in advance and applied in each of the editions of the residency. They therefore take part in the execution stage. This is also the case with highschool students, encouraged by their teachers to perform a few scenes in the presence of the playwright in an expressive artistic participation situation. Of the other 14 proposals, five consisted in meetings with artists giving rise to an expressive discursive participations at the mediation stage for the works in question, one was a guided visit (attendance at the mediation stage) and nine for shows (including performances by highschool and school children)and exhibitions and for a the projection of a film (attendance at the reception stage, except for one expressive discursive participation at an aperitif for a guided visit). None of these solicitations gave rise to a specific collection on the part of the organization, or to an iteration.

Two other proposals presented opportunities for becoming involved in governance at the control stage upstream of the process. The first was our own research approach, which led us to distribute qualitative questionnaires to high school students, questionnaires to which the CCRN development manager accorded particular attention, while the second was the development manager's close relationship with the inhabitants of the region, a relationship that has generated numerous exchanges with members of the public. Both were examples of expressive discursive participation. Insofar as the first opportunity is concerned, a summary collection was sent to the organization, rendering a formal iteration possible, but not certain. Meanwhile, the second opportunity did not give rise to a formalized collection, and there was, therefore, no iteration, or only an intuitive one. The other two opportunities to participate in governance corresponded to approaches specifically implemented by the organization. These approaches consisted in two working groups, open to volunteers and meeting on a regular basis, one to discuss performing arts scheduling choices, the other to discuss the general orientations of the CCRN's cultural project. They gave rise to an expressive critical participation and a certain iteration (the proposals submitted to the intercommunal commission for validation deriving directly from exchanges within these groups. They were finalized by the cultural development manager in tandem with the local politician).

2.2.3. At the Panier Culture

At Panier Culture, we retained 20 occasions on which members of the public were solicited by the organization. Nine of these occasions corresponded to works included in the baskets. The others corresponded to the management of the association: plenary meetings and working groups; meetings between members (monthly meetings in cafés held when the association was first set up, before the first distribution of baskets, in order to provide an opportunity to share ideas freely in a friendlier atmosphere than is generally to be found in official meetings); and members exchanging their experiences. In addition, there was, on the one hand, a contribution that took the form of a theatrical piece put on in a flat lent to the organization by some of its members, and, on the other, the closeness of the relationship between members, which we consider to have been an opportunity for participation

in itself. In effect, little by little, informal discussions held both in and outside the association became opportunities for discussions about members' feelings, both positive and negative, concerning the project. Indeed, thanks to a kind of micro-lobbying, they became decisive in terms of the management of the organization. In these discussions, concerns and preoccupations were shared and eventually began to appear on the agendas of formal meetings. This is why we have chosen to present the close relationship between members as an opportunity to participate *per se*.

The content of the baskets encouraged artistic participation at various stages in the process, for example in the design of a work, guided by professional artists, the final aesthetic of which was decided by the participants (expressive artistic participation); in two works – an introduction to screen printing and the reading out loud of a text – both in a children's play (expressive artistic participation); in mediation in a meeting-conference on the career of a photographer (expressive discursive participation); and in the reception of five other works (a play put on in an apartment; a theatrical concert; a cello recital; a poetic promenade; and a piano recital, all of which can be described as presence-based participation). None of these solicitations of the public gave rise to a particular collection or to an iteration by the organization.

Meanwhile, the other occasions retained corresponded to participation in the governance of the association, mostly in terms of the project as a whole; to the control stage, upstream of the feedback process; to the monthly café meetings and the closeness of relations between members (expressive discursive participation); to the mediation stage, when the baskets are being distributed (expressive discursive participation); to the execution stage in terms of putting on a play in a flat (presence-based participation); to the project design stages for working and orientation groups and feedback corresponding to a certain iteration approach concerning the data gathered. Other opportunities corresponded to an absence of formal iteration.

Summarized in Table 3, this categorization of opportunities for members of the public to participate in the three areas on which we worked enables us to describe the ensemble of organizational activities carried out in each one of them:

- At the DCI, we observed a high rate of participation via artistic expression (16 proposals out of 27) at several stages of the creative process (orientation, design, execution), which corresponded to either a degree of influence or decision-making power. In terms of scheduling, this revealed a kind of dual participation – on the one hand, guided participation as part of the work of an artist willing to listen to the observations of members of the public, and, on the other, free amateur artistic participation developing a specific offer. The participation of members of the public also contributed to boosting the organization's artistic schedule.
- In the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency, the CCRN also encouraged popular participation not only through artistic practice carried out more or less upstream of the process (5 proposals out of 18) but also by sharing life stories (4 proposals) and organizing meetings with professional artists (5 proposals). Here, it seemed to simultaneously be a case of boosting organizational proposals and influencing, in meetings with artists, the reception of the public.
- At Panier Culture, the participation of the public was, above all, presence-based (6 proposals out of 16), while the place of artistic expression was less important than in our two other case studies (3 proposals). On the other hand, Panier Culturel was the organization in which the rate of participation was the highest (5 proposals), and the only one in which the approach developed with a view to developing rates of citizen participation explicitly accorded decision-making power to members of the public.

These characteristics of the organizations we observed and the opportunities for participation that they offered their publics encouraged us to elaborate several conjectures about, on the one hand, the

potential organizational roles of the participation of members of the public, and, on the other, its negative factors and shortcomings.

Table 3 - Summary of different types of proposals in the organizations studied.

Organizational proposal	Form of public participation	Object of participation	Stage of intervention	Level of power ¹	DCI	DLR	PC	
Exhibition or show	Presence	A work	Reception	None	7	0	5	
Guided visit	Presence	One or more works	Mediation	None	0	1		
Participation in the logistics of a proposal	Presence	A proposal	Execution	None			1	
Insertion of personal amateur projects into the schedule	Artistic expression	A work	Orientation	Decision	3			
Practice workshop with creation of a final work	Artistic expression	A work	Design	Decision	10	4	1	
Collective realisation of a work on the instructions of an artist or referent	Artistic expression	A work	Execution	Influence	3	1	2	
Sharing life stories	Personal expression	A work	Execution	Influence		4		
Meeting artists	Personal expression	One or more works	Mediation	Influence		5	1	
Participation in a jury, sharing lived experience and interpretation of works already diffused	Critical expression	One or more works	Control	Influence	2			
Presentation of lived experience of interpretation of future works	Critical expression	One or more works	Mediation	Influence			1	
Ease of informal exchanges with publics	Critical expression	Project	Control	Influence	Weak	Strong	Strong	
Sharing lived experience of organisational proposals	Critical expression	Project	Control	Influence	1	1	3	
Consultation concerning future proposals	Critical expression	Project	Orientation	Influence	1	2		
Future proposals preparation group	Critical expression	Project	Design	Decision			1	
Organisational project preparation group	Critical expression	Project	Orientation	Decision			1	
					Total	27	18	16

¹It should be noted that the level of power of influence is a possible factor the realization of which depends on the way in which the organization processes available information. Is it collected or not? Does it give rise to an iteration or not? The answer to these questions is linked to the organizational proposal studied and can differ for two proposals of the same type. This is why this characteristic is pointed out in the text but does not appear in the table. This same holds for publics reached and the timeframe.

Source: authors

3.The participation of members of the public in cultural organizations: above all a mediation tool

This analysis of the processes that cultural organizations apply to elaborating their offer, coupled with various forms of meetings and contacts with members of the public, provide a certain number of important lessons, notably in regard to the role of popular participation in the thinking of the organizations studied.

3.1. Participation considered as mediation vis-à-vis members of the public

When members of the public participate in an expressive artistic manner in the execution of works of art, the aesthetic of those works is determined by the referent artist, and, even if they do make a contribution to their development, members of the public have very little influence over the final result. In this case, although popular participation contributes to a different kind of relationship with various works than the one characterizing the sort of reception associated with the mere presence of the public, it has no impact on collective and organizational dynamics. In terms of citizen participation theory, it can be described as non-participation.

This new relationship to works is seen, in the case of the Grand T, for example, as a means of reaching new publics. The *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* project was regarded as being of interest to people such as hunters and farmers, who usually had no interest in the work of cultural institutions. “Our proposals are not entirely the same in the *department* as they are in Nantes, where the events are more prestigious. In the country, events focus more on entertainment” (a Grand T employee on the subject of scheduling in villages and communes in the countryside around Nantes). This is an example of mediation through participation. This approach does not focus on a questioning of organizational practices and proposals. At the Grand T, the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency is an autonomous proposal, part of a specific schedule constructed in parallel to the schedule of the branch in downtown Nantes.

The participation of members of the public in the design stage is seen as a form of mediation. However, it is different from participation in the execution stage to the degree that it has a transformative effect on the organization's offer.

3.2. Participation as an artistic component of the organizational offer designed to provide support for the experience of spectators

The scheduling of the DCI and the CCRN associated with the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency included a substantial number of proposals inviting members of the public to participate in the design and orientation stages. In these configurations, members of the public were treated as creators – working either autonomously (amateur practice), or under the supervision of professional artists – and accorded a degree of influence, or sometimes even decision-making powers, in regard to the final aesthetic of the work. The fruits of their creations were then presented to other publics as proposals for the organizations' schedules (most of them specifically identified as resulting from a non-professional creative approach). While these proposals were not the object of specific observations on the part of the organizations studied, observations that would enable them to gather data in view of adapting their offer, they nevertheless modified their offer by occupying a particular place alongside entirely professional proposals.

Comments made by practitioners indicate that the proximity between amateur and professional diffusion is perceived as a form of support that helps spectators to discover new artistic horizons, both in terms of the reception and creation of works of art (the latter are able to help the former thanks to a greater knowledge of the discipline). According to a manager at the DCI: “The partnership [between the ONPL, the National Orchestra of the Pays de la Loire, and the university's amateur orchestra] was developed in three stages: a co-creation stage involving the university orchestra and the ONPL; a performance stage on the campus; and then a similar stage at the Cité des Congrès [the venue where the ONPL plays]. If the process had moved directly on to the Cité des Congrès, the students would not have made the effort to attend the event, but due to the process we implemented, a lot of students did actually come.” Meanwhile, a CCRN employee commented: “Scheduling amateur shows as opening acts for professional shows means that families coming to see their friends and relatives performing stay for the rest of the event.”

Thus, in the same way as artistic participation at the execution stage, artistic participation at the orientation or design stage is part of a mediation approach designed to support members of the public in their experiences as spectators. However, it does not give them a greater influence over the final aesthetic of works and, consequently, over the organizational offer in which they are inscribed. Another way in which members of the public can influence the offer of the organization in question is by becoming involved in governance. Our research enables us to suggest a number of hypotheses regarding the positive factors and shortcomings involved.

4. Organizational factors and obstacles to popular participation in the governance of cultural organizations

To varying degrees, each of our three case studies has enabled us to observe approaches designed to foster public participation not only at the artistic creation stage, but also in terms of the governance of the organization, either through consultation at the control stage, or through consultation or decision-making powers applied via working groups at the orientation or design stages of the project. In the case of consultation, the degree of influence wielded by members of the public, and, consequently, the effectiveness of their participation, is conditioned by the desire and constraints of actors within the organization. This form of participation is the one most similar to the principle of exchanging ideas and taking everyone's specific tastes into account, a principle inherent in doctrines offering an alternative to cultural democratization. The development of this principle is a pre-condition for "the proliferation of participatory works [not just being] an alternative that dares not speak its name – and which cannot make up for – a deficit in cultural democracy" (Bordeaux and Liot: 12). In this perspective, identifying the positive factors and obstacles of this development is a crucial issue in terms of understanding the dynamics at work in the cultural sector. Having observed the broad range of situations in which members of the public are able to participate, it would now seem appropriate to discuss their organizational underpinnings. What are their internal modes of organization, and what kind of management levers can be applied to encouraging the implementation of such approaches?

4.1. Three determinants of popular participation

4.1.1. The identity of the organization

In order to suggest an initial approach, we shall return to the example of the Grand T. We have seen that the participation of members of the public is seen, above all, as a form of mediation with new publics. We shall not, in this instance, take into account the feedback and proposals of members of the public involved in the governance of the organization. The Grand T's perspective is coherent with the doctrine of cultural democratization, which focuses on the expertise of professionals in terms of taking into account the tastes of various publics in regard to the offer of the organizations for whom they work: "While in the perspective of democracy, the result is unimportant, from the viewpoint of democratization, we defend works that we believe to have universal value. For me, the result is always at least as important as the process" (Director of the Grand T). This positioning encourages practitioners to construct a specific artistic identity that justifies the centralization of the decision-making process: "Artistic decisions are not taken on a collegiate basis because that is the personality of the theatre" (Director of the Grand T). According to a Grand T employee: "Our mission is not to give the public what it wants; in fact, the public doesn't know what it wants. [The Director], as a director, knows what's worth doing. What's of interest is pointing the public in the direction of things they otherwise wouldn't have even considered seeing." When artistic proposals underpinned by that identity are criticized, the organization defends them. An employee at the Grand T commented: "When spectators don't understand a performance, I defend it with everything I've got. My job is to defend it; we're very attached to the schedule. The alternative is to get depressed or just quit. There are

productions that we're not really that keen on, but we know why they're being put on, and we'll back them to the hilt because we know that, for the kind of thing they are, they're really very good." In such situations, greater participation on the part of the public is perceived as a threat to a artistic identity that must be defended. Again according to a Grand T employee: "Should the public really get involved in artistic choices? All we'd have then would be popular shows, big productions."

In this respect, Panier Culture has essentially adopted a very different approach, in that all its organizational choices are subject to debate. The identity of the association is, above all, participatory, and its artistic identity is constructed against the backdrop of constructive discussion. For example, a proposal concerning a leather case was the subject of an email correspondence and a series of group discussions aimed at establishing which artistic proposals were relevant to which baskets (artistic, artistic artisanal products, etc.). The proposal was eventually rejected consensually. Other discussions focused on a work which, although included in the baskets, was unpopular with some members. This discussion led to the emergence of the idea that the association should indicate more clearly that its intention was to provide access to works with their own personality, rather than to deliver cultural events. Again, this is an example of a collective process whereby a distinction between two different notions is drawn.

The difference between the respective postures of the Grand T and Panier Culture make it possible to gauge whether the artistic identities of organizations are potential obstacles to public participation when they are defined without public consultation and protected from external influence thereafter. One way of getting over this obstacle would be to place an emphasis on a participatory identity which led to a collective construction of an evolutive artistic identity.

4.1.2. A knowledge of the background of participating receivers

The examples of the Grand T, the CCRN, and the DCI demonstrate that the artistic participation of members of the public is seen as a form of mediation with new publics or as an enlargement of the aesthetic horizons of currently existing publics that has the potential to provide support to spectators in terms of their reception and appreciation of works. It is, therefore, surprising to observe the paucity of knowledge that these organizations have of spectators' reception of works and of the various profiles of the publics to which they are addressed. Of our different partner organizations, only the DCI establishes formal statistics, but they are limited to the proposals concerned (exclusively practice workshops), and by the data collected, which is based primarily on the discipline studied by participants. Employees acknowledge at the Grand T acknowledged that there was an absence of formal analysis: "There is no room for discussion (with members of the public) but we can see things with the naked eye (...) The historic record of the shows attended by specific individuals is available, but it is only used for sending emails to punters when we're not selling enough seats" (Director); "The best way of listening to the public is listening to them on the ground and the comments made to us in private life" (an employee).

This absence of information deprives organizations of formal indicators concerning the fit between what they believe their various publics to be and the proposals that they specifically address to them (to what degree does the *Dale Recuerdos XXIII* residency really make it possible to reach a new public? What, in terms of reception, are spectators' perceptions of the professional shows put on by the CCRN compared with the opening amateur acts that they specifically came to see? Does the involvement of spectators in the initiatives of the DCI effectively render them more autonomous beyond the confines of the organization itself? What kind of proposals would be most likely to attain these various objectives?). We also note, within the framework of our reflections, that this shortcoming also deprives organizations of information about the propensity of their publics to participate, as well as their motivations for doing so, and, indeed, their ability to do so. Research in both citizen participation theory and participative marketing highlight the importance of this last point. The

competences of various publics (their capacity to develop and share a point of view, to listen to the views of others, their confidence in public situations) can be a positive factor in terms of participation, or, indeed, a negative factor if those skills are missing. Consequently, when support for spectators not based exclusively on artistic considerations, but also, potentially, on a participatory dimension, and the availability of information on the profiles of various publics can be crucial. However, the availability of information does not automatically imply that members of the public are taken into account by the organization. The level of organizational commitment in this area is thus revealed as a decisive factor in popular participation.

4.1.3. Organizational commitment

In regard to the DCI case study, we mentioned the fact that round tables were organized so that participants in practices workshops guided by artists could provide feedback. Some of the most frequently aired questions concerned the times and prices of the workshops as well as their academic valorization via ECTS credits. Taking the data gathered into account could lead the DCI to adapt its offer with a view to meeting these needs, but in this regard the organization has a very narrow margin of manoeuvre. The times at which the workshops are held depend on the opening times of the buildings which are decided by central services; prices are subject to validation by the establishment's board of directors and the distribution of credits depends on individual formations (of which there are several hundred). Due to this system of constraints, the participation of various publics is given less lustre by the organization taking it into account in their proposals than it would be if it depended exclusively on the desire of the members of the organization. One way of getting around this situation would be to express an explicit commitment to take the participation of members of the public into account. Such an approach would encourage the organization to provide more information on the subject by not only presenting an *ex-ante* report on participation mechanisms and the subjects to which they are applied, but also the kind of information they make it possible to collect and the way in which that information could be taken into account by the organization (what are the adjustment variables? What kind of margins of manoeuvre will be available at the outset?). *Ex-post*, such an approach would oblige the organization to explain its choices in regard to rates of popular participation, which is not the case when such explanations are offered on a one-off basis, without an explicit long-term commitment.

The points outlined above highlight the importance of accurately defining the positioning of the organization vis-à-vis policy doctrines and citizen participation. This positioning implies a choice between a prescriptive role in regard to what constitutes good taste, and a role as a coordinator of a collective choice. Depending on whether one recognizes from the outset the value of the opinions of experts or that of citizen participation, one or other of these perspectives will prevail. Currently, it seems that an emphasis on the value of expert opinion is acting as an obstacle to the development of citizen participation in cultural activities, with a recurrent fear of developing an overly popular schedule if the public is given too much choice in the matter. We find here the problem identified by Irvin and Stansbury (2004) of the way in which power is shared, an approach that some professionals are not willing to accept. According to Yang and Pandey (2011), one of the ways of getting over this reticence is to introduce a transformational leadership mechanism. The selection of the leaders of the organizations that we have studied is often at least partially based on their tutelary administrations which, consequently, play a fundamental role. This role is also fundamental in terms of the expectations that they often express.

4.2. The importance of tutelage. The question of governance.

As we have seen, one of the most influential sections of the policy pursued by the French Ministry of Culture practically since it was set up in 1959, directly concerns the question of cultural democratization (Caune: 2006; Menger: 2001). In the 1970s, the limitations of this vision were highlighted, the main criticism being that emphasis was placed exclusively on works of art representative of the upper and middle echelons of society, leaving the rest of the population in oblivion (the notion of *culture savante*). Some observers regarded this as the reason why the number of visits to cultural centres did not rise, and why the sociological homogeneity of visitors did not change (Donnat: 2009; Benhamou: 2011). An increasing number of commentators argued in favour of the inclusion of cultural tastes and practices previously ignored by the Ministry (amateur practices, local folklore, specific fields such as jazz), while others militated in favour of a de-hierarchization of works of art (Moulin: 1992), or of a greater involvement of amateurs and citizens in the processes of hierarchization of those works, in so doing emphasizing the importance of cultural democracy. This change of policy is one of the most important sources of the kind of organizational initiatives described above, with the Ministry playing a fundamental role by structuring cultural organizations by determining appropriate strategies. The Ministry plays such a role due both to its power as a prescriptor and its tutelage of many of the actors in the sector.

However, while multiple projects were been carried out, in terms of objectives pursued and the ways in which those objectives are quantified, a discrepancy between the theoretical definition of cultural democracy and organizational practices emerged. The indicator constituted by the number of visitors recorded or the number of copies sold seems still to be preponderant in the mental representations of all the actors concerned, as does the objective of providing easier access, especially to "distant" publics, to works of art (the issue of mediation). This objective is different from that of education (with an informed analysis of the experiences of spectators) or that of co-construction through increased opportunities for active participation that go beyond traditional forms of reception. It would therefore seem that the framework of reference for orienting actors in the cultural sector remains that of cultural democratization, and this to the detriment of a detailed analysis of the objectives of citizen participation. Questions can be asked about this discrepancy, notably about what it tells us about the origin of policy demands followed or highlighted by institutions in the cultural sector.

A substantial percentage of financial resources are provided by administrations which, in return, demand precise orientations validated by specific evaluation indicators. The definition of these indicators, their attribution, and the way in which they condition the resources of the organization is likely to directly determine the potential to implement an approach fostering effective participation on the part of the public. In effect, tutelary administrations exert an influence on the three determinants of citizen participation that we have identified, namely artistic identity, since it is inscribed in territorial cultural policies, imagined in terms of a balance between disciplines and branches of the network; knowledge of the itineraries of participating receivers, because developing that knowledge demands considerable resources, both material and human; and organizational commitment, because it constitutes a fundamental element of orientation within the organization, defined by its policy project, itself negotiated with the tutelary administration. The support of tutelary administrations therefore appears to be a factor that needs to be taken into consideration, particularly in citizen participation approaches taken by public sector cultural organizations, and, more generally, in the definition of strategic orientations.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to increase our understanding of how cultural organizations integrate popular participation into their cultural activities, thereby echoing a trend to question cultural democratization policies. The theoretical frameworks of citizen participation and of participatory

marketing make it possible to identify several criteria characterizing organizational proposals: the form and level of participation; the object to which proposals are applied; the stage of intervention; the scope of iteration; the timescale; and the nature of the participants. The application of this interpretative grill to three case studies leads us to surmise that cultural organizations use public participation as a mediation tool to build a bridge to new publics or provide support to spectators. Participation is largely artistic in nature, while involvement in governance is relatively limited. We suggest three determinants to explain this situation: the organizational identity to be either defended or co-constructed; the level of knowledge of participating publics which makes it possible to gauge their participatory competences and act accordingly; and organizational commitment considered as a guarantor that the results of public participation will be taken into account. These three elements are partially determined during negotiations between cultural organizations and their tutelary administrations. It would thus appear that the role of these administrations is fundamentally important.

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