Cultural Organizations: Between the Local and the Global (1880s-1960s)

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Venue: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Av. Tibidabo 39, 08035, Barcelona (Spain).

Organized by the *ERC StG project Social Networks of the Past: Mapping Hispanic and Lusophone Literary Modernity (1898-1959)* (Grant agreement No 803860), led by Diana Roig Sanz.

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Given the exceptional circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, the organizers wish to express that we will follow the situation closely and an online version of this conference might be considered if future updates advise it. Even though an on-site format is preferred, a final decision will be provided to all participants at the beginning of September.

Over the last few years, the study of cultural organizations has consolidated itself as an emerging field of research, kindling the interest of a growing number of researchers who work in diverse fields, disciplines, and perspectives—including international relations, sociology, cultural history, and literary history—all of which have brought the complementary qualities of cultural organizations to light.

This gathering aims to highlight the object of study's potential and understands cultural organizations in the following terms: 1) organizations that promote cultural transfer and thus facilitate the circulation of persons, ideas, and symbolic goods (by organizing conferences, exhibitions, and other artistic manifestations; intellectual mobility programs; publications and translations; etc.); 2) spaces that provide cohesion to national cultural fields by articulating the relationships between the various actors in said space (the audience and creators, for example); and 3) agents and organizations that favor the creation of transnational intellectual networks, in a broad sense.

Indeed, cultural organizations have been and still are spaces that reflect the topics of interest, problems, debates, and discourses that characterize a given historic context. Further, they also present specific characteristics in terms of the work they develop, internal organization and functioning, and participant and member lists.

In this sense, criteria such as the geographic environment of their activities (local/national/regional/international) and type of actor (public/private) are among the features that tend to be used to assign certain cultural organizations to one discipline or another. For instance, cultural organizations operating at a local or national level, as is

the case with Amigos del Arte (Buenos Aires) or the Conferentia Club (Barcelona), have mostly been studied from the fields of literary sociology and cultural history. In these fields, entities such as literary circles or athenaeums are often approached through a number of theoretical frameworks that are imbibed with the notion of sociability and thus rely on the intellectual works of Georg Simmel (1981), Maurice Agulhon (1966, 1977), and Roger Chartier (1990), among others. In parallel, in his proposed renovation of cultural history, Jean François Sirinelli considers spaces of sociability as an important object of study, along with networks and itineraries (Sirinelli 1986). Christophe Charle has contributed enormously to the renovation of the field through the study of the intellectual figure, the university, and the transnational networks they both constitute (Charle 1990, Wagner and Charle 2004). Over time, a clear interest in mobility phenomena and cultural circulation has become manifest in the field of cultural history, giving way to what we know as cultural transfer studies (Espagne & Werner 1987; Espagne 2013). Within this framework, a series of notions have emerged to transgress the national frameworks used to consider culture, as well as certain binaries associated with culture (source and target culture, for instance)—the notions of cultural transfer (Espagne & Werner 1987; Espagne 2013), entangled history (Werner and Zimmermann 2002; 2004; 2006) and cultural mediator (Roig-Sanz & Meylaerts 2018) stand out in particular. In this sense, we may analyze cultural organizations in terms of collective instances of cultural mediation.

Nonetheless, regarding organizations whose work is carried out on a local or national scale, it is worth noting that their roles in the internationalization processes of their own cultures are rarely emphasized. By organizing conferences with foreign intellectual speakers, local cultural organizations in fact contribute to the receiving culture's cosmopolitism and promote ties between local and foreign intellectuals. The foreign intellectual can also glean a modern and positive view of the host culture, which can then be projected abroad through her role as a public figure. In this sense, even though the ability to wield influence at the local and national level is not comparable to the work carried out by international organizations, the local and the national do constitute fields in which relations of power are visible on an international scale (Bourdieu 1990, Casanova 1999, Sapiro 2008 and 2009).

In contrast, cultural organizations that operate on the international level have enjoyed further study in the field of international relations, as is the case of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, which preceded the UNESCO. Although the role of culture in nation-building processes is well known (Thiesse 1999), only in the last few decades has the field of international relations started to view culture as something that can not only offer prestige, but also bring power to the international arena, thus yielding fertile ground for what we now know as International cultural relations (Mitchell 1986, Dulphy et al. 1989, Chaubet and Martin 2011) and providing nuance to our traditional understandings of power in international relations, according to which power would exclusively stem from economic and military strength .

In this sense, notions such as intellectual cooperation, soft power, cultural diplomacy, paradiplomacy, and exterior cultural action have acquired relevance and contributed to formulating more flexible definitions of international relations and their actors. This has allowed for a more detailed analysis of the potential that exterior action in the cultural field can harness as a mechanism to garner international recognition and thus consolidate any given national project itself. International action in the cultural field can amass different connotations according to each culture's position in the international arena: when it comes to hegemonic cultures, foreign promotion may camouflage an imperialist project, while when it comes to peripheral, non-state, or minority cultures, foreign promotion appears to be a necessary strategy to compensate for a lack of economic and military power, for instance (see McMartin 2019 for the case of Flemish literature, Gonne forth. for Walloon literature, and Kvirikashvili, forth. for Georgian literature).

Despite the potential of this object of study and the growing interest it has awakened in numerous fields, it is worth noting that cultural organizations pose several challenges in terms of 1) the polysemy of the term "cultural institution" (which, in its most common sociological definition, is a synonym for social structure, thus referencing structures such as the church or the family, in contrast to the cultural institution as an organization for sociability and collective action in the cultural field, or to uses that tie the term "institution" to public power); 2) the heterogeneous realities encompassed by the institution (in the strictly cultural field, the term could include bodies spanning from the cultural association, to the writers' association, the library, or state organizations, such as the Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas (Committee for the Broadening of Studies and Scientific Research) (1907), or the Oficina de Relaciones Culturales Españolas (Office of Spanish Cultural Relations) (1921); and 3) the disciplinary fragmentation from which cultural organizations have been studied to date (sociology, history, anthropology, and international relations), which only generates partial knowledge.

In this sense, we lack a shared theoretical framework that would allow us to consider common features and articulate differences. The goal of this scientific gathering is to study organizations, both private and public, that share a focus on the cultural field and, especially, on cultural promotion. We aim to use case studies to analyze their internal operations (organization, members, activities, evolution, changes over time, etc.) and broader context (historical, political, economic, etc.). We will privilege the study of cultural organizations operating from the last few decades of the nineteenth century to the 1960s, given our understanding that said period saw a progressive shift towards globalization in the international literary space through the intensified circulation of persons, symbolic goods, and ideas. Further, we end with the 1960s due to the changes that took place around said time in terms how mass media changed the organizational strategies of cultural life.

The proposed areas of research include the following:

- The internationalization of a culture through the actions of cultural organizations

What are the specific features of power relations in the cultural field and what mechanisms have been used historically to alter or add nuance to these features? Which historical examples might we study, both as successes and as failures? Which cultural organizations and actors articulate cultural internationalization? How is the global manifested in cultural organizations operating at the local/national level? How does foreign action influence national culture? How does the process of professionalization evolve in the field of cultural mediation? How does this shift become manifest in specific practices? How are cultural organizations related to other forms of cultural mediation, such as magazines, conferences, congresses, and festivals?

- Articulating the public and the private

How are public powers related to cultural organizations in the private sector? What is the relationship between private initiatives and the public powers that formulate cultural policies?

- Transnational analysis

Is dialogue possible between cultural organizations in different geographical contexts? Can parallels be established among different and idiosyncratic processes? How can we articulate transnational comparisons without diluting the power relations between cultural areas? What are the specific features of the practices of hegemonic cultures, on the one hand, and of peripheral cultures, on the other?

- The revision of theoretical frameworks and methodologies in the study of cultural organizations

What are the main challenges that the study of cultural organizations faces in terms of accessing and collecting primary sources? What can the digital humanities, big data, data visualization tools, etc., contribute? How can network analysis inform our understanding of cultural-transfer phenomena? What are the advantages and issues with using the notion of the network, either metaphorically or not? How can these be combined with traditional methodologies, such as the bibliographical focus or the prosopographical study?

Submissions:

Authors should submit an abstract (300 words), filiation, bio-note and a short reference list to Elisabet Carbó (ecarboc@uoc.edu) and Diana Roig Sanz (dsanzr@uoc.edu) **before July 31, 2020.**

Papers may be written in English, French, Spanish, or Catalan. During the Conference, an extended summary and a power-point presentation (if used) should be written in English to ensure successful exchanges between participants.

Participation in the Conference is free, but speakers and assistants must register due to the limited number of seats. The organizers will send the link for registration after the acceptance of all papers.

The organizers have planned the publication of a collective edited volume in a top-ranked publisher or a special issue in a well-known international journal. All papers will go through a double-blind peer review process.

Organizers:

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