THE TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF PUBLIC THEATRES IN RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR STAKEHOLDERS - A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN LEADING THEATRES OF SPAIN AND SOUTH AMERICA.

ABSTRACT:

Most of governmental owned and managed theatres try to achieve two objectives: the artistic excellence and the social and artistic development of their surrounding communities. This second objective is called territorial or community development. It is defined as the adopted commitment with their territory or communities of reference. Therefore, the concept of territory goes beyond the physical space where the infrastructure exists because it also encompasses the contexts that condition and make possible the growth of the artistic project.

This research analyzes the different territorial development strategies of large public theatres in relationship to their stakeholders, using, for this purpose, a representative sample of theatres of Spain and South America with functions of centrality (production theatres in a situation of leadership over the local performing arts sphere).
Both regions share most of their scenic and administrative traditions as well as a noteworthy mobility of their professionals even when the socio-economic context and the development of management patterns are different.

The end result of this research aims to provide an answer to the following questions: How does the theatre, along with its context and its relationship with their stakeholders intervene in the territorial development strategies? Is it possible to identify common elements and establish a classification of the utilized strategies?

The role of the stakeholders is fundamental in explaining the strategic management of the directors of public and non for profit institutions in the cultural field (Tschirhart 1996). However, in the sphere of the performing arts, it is rare to find empiric studies about this topic and the interest has been mainly on the analysis of the indirect stakeholders influence in the design of score boards and administrative indicators (Asuaga et al. 2007; Turbide & Claudin 2009) or in the design of marketing strategies (Conway & Whitelock 2004; Hsieh 2010).Within this last subject, a first research has been done focused in the analysis of the relationships between stakeholders and relational marketing of Spanish theatres (Quero & Ventura 2009). Again in this country, the analysis highlights the constraints of artistic programming strategies of the theaters (Cuadrado & Perez, 2007), and the application of the analytic theoretical framework of structure-strategies-results sequence of the performing arts shows the influence of interest groups in a sector with high government intervention (Bonet & Villarroya 2009). In the case of South America, aside from the already cited work by Asuaga, is important to highlight a recent research on management models of public theatres (Schargorodsky 2010).

The theatres with functions of centrality are increasingly characterized for including obligations that go beyond the excellence of the artistic program as they incorporate responsibilities of cultural democracy (making the artistic experience available to growing sectors of the population) and as a key engine of the performing arts system of their respective region. In the Latin American context, the big social disparity has generates certain access strategies (ex. Very low price policies, in general without a positive discrimination or educational programs and services) In the case of Spain, the current economic crisis demands, more and more, a social commitment from the big cultural institutions. However, in both cases, a lack of well structured strategies can be found.

Furthermore, in both regions, very little is done to formalize the mission, objectives and strategies of the public cultural institutions (or are expressed rhetorically but with little impact in the daily administration). In this order, the transformation from a purely artistic orientation towards one of greater social responsibility is present in a scarce systematic or institutionalized form. Also, the relationship between the politicians and the stakeholders of the cultural sector then to be those of client-provider and the negotiation is made with arguments of rhetoric legitimization (Bonet & Négrier 2010).

In line with the above mentioned premises, the hypotheses of the research are focused on:

- Those theatres with greater management autonomy have more specific social commitments with their communities, which is accomplished in a more explicit project of territorial development within the mission as well as in the number and type of actions undertaken.

-The explicitness of the territorial development project within the mission statement does not imply the unfolding of a specific strategy, with the consequential actions being carried out not the establishment of relationships of cooperation with a diverse number of stakeholders

-The location of leading theatres in the big metropolitan areas or medium cities does not condition a greater or lesser display of a territorial development strategy.

-The artistic or managerial profile of the general director of a theatre does condition the display and unfolding of a territory development strategy.

-Theatres that show a greater commitment with inter-institutional cooperation projects are related with a greater diversity of stakeholders.

-Theatres that involve teachers in their territorial development projects tend to develop a greater number of actions, with a larger number of implicated people.

-Theatres that carry out territorial development projects in collaboration with non-theatrical organizations maintain relationships with a wider range of stakeholders and develop a more diverse set of actions.

This research is founded on a double empirical work. On one side, the information collected through a questionnaire completed by the responsible authorities of the selected theatres and on the other hand, the opinions and thoughts gathered through interviews and seminars carried out with more than twenty directors of theatres in both geographic regions. This work is part of a study of a longer reach that is under construction and it objective is the creation of a theory on the management of public theatres from an organizational perspective.

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