

## Access to culture, cultural democracy and citizenship

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After the Second World War, the notion of citizenship was founded on the right to access to culture, a true extension of social rights. The theory – which found its origins in the French Revolution and which developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – and according to which, to be able to fully participate in democracy and make serious and informed choices, the members of a society should acquire a minimum of education and knowledge, was brought up-to-date during the post-war period. Militancy, which favoured political rights, found a new objective in the affirmation of social and cultural rights. During this period, the notion of cultural policies was confused with that of cultural democracy, which enhanced the image of peoples' initiatives and abolished the barriers between amateurs and professionals. It was only around 1947, 1948, with the beginning of the Cold War, that this participative management of culture gave way to a more elitist conception of culture.

The cultural movements associated with the theoretical and intellectual conflicts of the sixties and seventies (Gramsci, Benjamin), questioned this way of looking at culture in developing the concepts of cultural domination/submission. At the same time, a new definition of citizenship, appeared on the scene, closely linked with urban politics. It manifested itself concretely through the emergence of collective movements (ecologists, students, women's groups) and became visible in cultural politics under the features of cultural development in towns. Through the construction of their civic identity, people were encouraged to win back urban space and to be citizens of their town. This also happened thanks to the reinforcement of the symbols of belonging to a town (the setting up of cultural events, pedestrian areas, revalorisation of "dead spaces", like industrial buildings, which are also means of consolidating citizenship. In the same way, festivals multiplied (London, Frankfurt) and aimed to encourage citizens to rediscover their own town.

Then the concept of empowerment and making citizens responsible took over in this kind of cultural intervention. It was no longer about developing culture for everyone, but of promoting cultural and politic interventionism targeted at particular neighbourhoods or deprived municipalities in order to encourage them to express their political and cultural opinion. This is the case in Hamburg, London and Bologna, with the launching of the "Prophet in his own country" programme, which encourages young townspeople to create cultural centres.

Following this defining and readjusting stage, the notion of citizenship went through an on-going process of expansion and emancipation (women's rights, gay rights), even if the neo-liberal concept had in reality somewhat diminished. In this sense, citizenship became more restrictive and more passive and was confused with consumers' rights, and the question of equal access to the market never came up. This rationalist definition of citizenship, although now strongly criticised, had a real influence, in particular in the nineties, on the cultural policies of municipalities that also tended to use market economy practices in running tourist activities. In this sense, the concept of the quality of life was often reduced to a series of advantages and needs dedicated to the well-to-do classes of the town.

Today the debate is once more open on the question of strategies for the “third way”, notably in Great Britain. Emphasis is placed on the community aspect, but also on the responsibilities and the importance of forms of action that give added weight to associations and to ethnic minority actions. Their efficiency is greater than that of local administration, whose approach commits the sin of universality. However, the question of reinforcement of associative fabric and the opening up of citizenship to multiculturalism and cross-cultures is not yet solved.

To conclude, several questions remain in suspense: -

- how can one allow for reciprocity of communication in order to ensure that a citizen can be an information producer and not just a passive recipient? Castell’s theory, which recommends the development of local powers, communication strategies and civic education to reconstitute a local public sphere, not only at the physical level (squares or agoras), but equally on the media level (local cable television, local papers), remains a seductive hypothesis.
- How are ethnic minorities accommodated into the political cultures of different municipalities? The examples of Rotterdam and Leicester, towns in which a debate exists on cultural policies and on the choice between compartmentalised multicultural and intercultural approaches, are in this sense rich teaching examples.
- Should we encourage the intervention of public authorities, or should we favour a form of intercultural policy that allows for the development of local political actions?
- How can we not only construct social cohesion but also go in the direction of social interaction between different social groups and the municipalities?
- Are we obliged to concentrate cultural financing on impact zones in order to favour intercultural comprehension at local level? How can we avoid the widening of the gap between different neighbourhoods and social stigmata in certain municipalities? How can we organise the town in such a way that permeable zones between different neighbourhoods exist?