

# Managing cultural organizations: perspectives, singularities, and paradox as a theoretical horizon

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## Abstract

Research on the management of cultural organizations is increasingly gaining interest as we recognize the symbolic and material contributions of the creative economy to the development of contemporary societies. However, we lack an integrated and robust vision of such management, a vision based on a clear characterization of the field and its singularities. This article aims to characterize the academic production on the management of cultural organizations and outline a fruitful conceptual-theoretical horizon to stimulate future research. The methodology is based on a systematic review of academic production published in national and international databases. The analysis of the literature revealed the emergence of three categories: the perspectives about the central issues of the research on cultural organizations (from the technical-operational and political viewpoints), these organizations' singularities (hypersensitivity, hypertension, and hyper-uncertainty), and the paradox as a crucial theoretical-conceptual axis to increase knowledge of cultural organizations. The results provide an agenda for future research based on the concept of paradox.

**Keywords:** Cultural organizations. Management. Creative economy. Paradoxes. Singularities.

## *Gestão de organizações culturais: perspectivas, singularidades e paradoxo como horizonte teórico*

### Resumo

Cada vez mais, as pesquisas sobre a gestão de organizações culturais se destacam, à medida que reconhecemos as contribuições simbólicas e materiais da economia criativa para o desenvolvimento das sociedades contemporâneas. Contudo, carecemos de uma visão integrada e robusta dessa gestão, baseada numa caracterização clara do campo e de suas singularidades. O objetivo deste artigo é descrever a produção acadêmica sobre gestão de organizações culturais e demarcar um horizonte conceitual-teórico fecundo para estimular a pesquisa futura. A metodologia é baseada numa revisão sistemática de produções acadêmicas publicadas nas bases de dados nacionais e internacionais. Os resultados da pesquisa incluem a elaboração de três categorias integradoras da produção acadêmica: perspectivas sobre questões centrais na pesquisa sobre organizações culturais (técnico-operacional e política), as singularidades dessas organizações (hipersensibilidade, hipertensão e hiperincerteza) e o paradoxo como um eixo teórico-conceitual crucial para melhorar o conhecimento sobre as organizações culturais. Os resultados propõem uma agenda para pesquisas futuras com base no conceito de paradoxo.

**Palavras-chave:** Organizações culturais. Gestão. Economia criativa. Paradoxos. Singularidades.

## *Gestión de organizaciones culturales: perspectivas, singularidades y paradojas como horizonte teórico*

### Resumen

Cada vez más, la investigación sobre la gestión de las organizaciones culturales se destaca al reconocer las contribuciones simbólicas y materiales de la economía creativa al desarrollo de las sociedades contemporáneas. Sin embargo, necesitamos una visión integrada y robusta de esta gestión basada en una clara caracterización del campo y sus singularidades. El propósito de este artículo es caracterizar la producción académica sobre la gestión de las organizaciones culturales y trazar un horizonte conceptual-teórico fructífero para estimular futuras investigaciones. La metodología se basa en una revisión sistemática de publicaciones académicas en bases de datos nacionales e internacionales. Los resultados de la investigación incluyen el desarrollo de categorías que integran la producción académica, que se encuentran en forma de perspectivas de análisis (técnico-operativas y políticas) y singularidades (hipersensibilidad, hipertensión e hiperincertidumbre) de las organizaciones culturales. Los resultados proporcionan una agenda para futuras investigaciones basadas en el concepto de paradoja.

**Palabras clave:** Organizaciones culturales. Gestión. Economía creativa. Paradojas. Singularidades.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Cultural organizations refer to a wide and diverse - natures, features and typologies - range of organizations that are based on temporary or permanent arrangements and play key role in processes and activities associated with the design, production and distribution of creative products (Jones, Lorenzen, & Sapsed, 2015). These organizations have different sizes (micro, small, medium, and large), legal constitutions (public, private, and non-profit), organizational forms (permanent, temporary, project based, and networked), and profiles (community, associative, informal, individual and cooperative). Some of them present prevalent marketing nature, which is associated with the idea of mass consumption (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985) supported by the technological reproducibility of art (Benjamin, 1985). Other studies focus on maintaining and safeguarding material and immaterial heritage significantly connected to traditional and/or identity cultures, whose doing is linked to a generic (Bauman, 2012) or anthropological (Laraia, 2006) concept of culture featured by the sense of culture as lifestyle.

There are also organizations whose evident focus lies on artistic production based on the system used by them to legitimize their actions. This system is related to social environment and based on the idea of both symbolic capital and on its distinctive effect (Bourdieu, 2011). These marketing, identity and aesthetic natures can overlap and/or mix to one another in the same organization. Consequently, they enable the dynamic and complex scenario that features the reality of the management applied to this singular field of practices and theories.

Cultural organizations are the soul of creative economy. The term “creative economy” can be replaced by others, such as “culture economy”, “cultural industries” and “creative industries”, depending on the scope, on the observed cultural activities and on the adopted methodological basis (Valiati, Miguez, Cauzi, & Silva, 2017). It comprises a wide diversity of activities that range from entertainment and art – for example, book and magazine’s publishing, visual arts (painting and sculpture), performing arts (theater, opera, concerts and dance), sound record, motion pictures and TV – to fashion, toys and games (Caves, 2000). Although terminologies may vary, they are all associated with the exponential role played by immaterial factors in the production of, and demand for, consumer experiences and content products (Grefe, 2015). Creativity has prominent place in, and is valued as accelerator of, innovation and organizational competitiveness (Throsby, 2001), since it generates simultaneous cultural, social and economic impact by mobilizing identities, making territories dynamic and creating circuits of highly specialized economic exchanges. Thus, cultural organizations are a relevant object of study, both in the academic and social fields.

Despite its relevance, academic production about the management of cultural organizations remains disperse and fragmented. We are unaware of systematic reviews about academic productions or analyses that are capable of providing an integrated and consolidated view of this field. Moreover, most studies do not focus on, or even take into consideration, what makes cultural organizations unique. Researchers who try to apply generic organizational or management theories face the risk of generating inadequate or ineffective knowledge and practices. Consequently, they are unable to develop a more integrated and consolidated view of the research field by highlighting organizational and managerial singularities that can help improving this field and better guiding future research. In other words, understanding what makes cultural organizations and their management unique may guide more appropriate epistemological, methodological, and theoretical choices for future research, as well as help managers to improve their management practice.

This article aims to characterize the academic production on the management of cultural organizations and outline a fruitful conceptual-theoretical horizon to stimulate future research. The adopted methodology was based on the systematic review of academic studies published (1990-2020) in national and international databases, such as Spell, SciELO, Sage Publications, Routledge, Periódicos Capes, Library of Congress, Emerald and Academy of Management. The search for articles was based on the following descriptors: “*organizações culturais*”, “*gestão de organizações culturais*”, “*economia criativa*” (Brazilian databases) and “*cultural organizations*”, “*cultural management*”, “*cultural organization management*” and “*arts organization*”, “*creative industries*” (international databases).

The search procedure resulted in 2,969 texts; 138 of them - among articles, books, book chapters, theses and dissertations – presented scientific relevance due to the adopted research parameters and purposes. The material search and selection process was dynamic and took place at different stages. Consistent and coherent productions addressing cultural organizations’ management processes were selected at the first stage. The second stage comprised mapping bibliographic references to find other relevant productions. These references were surveyed, analyzed and added to the research repertoire. The review process was based on the snowball dynamics, which was concluded when new or relevant references no longer emerged.

The current research was organized based on the following categories: management conception (interpretivist or positivist), research focus (management, training or policy), cultural segment (theater, dance, music, heritage, audiovisual, among others), knowledge field the study was developed in (business management, social sciences, communication, economics, among others), adopted methodological approach (qualitative or quantitative) and study type (empirical or theoretical). The analysis process was based on the traditional content analysis (Colbari, 2014), with interpretative focus on singularities of cultural organizations and on their management, but it also aimed at generating integrative categories capable of describing the analyzed academic production, featuring cultural organizations and pointing out a significant theoretical horizon to encourage future research. Thus, more than descriptively and linearly mapping the investigated academic production, the current article enabled a reflective and propositional process with emphasis on the identified challenges and on categories that emerged from such an inductive process.

The content analysis applied to the mapped and selected academic production enabled forming 3 major categories integrating the investigated field, namely: perspectives, singularities and horizon. The first category focused on organizing the scientific production into two major axes of concern. The second one emerged as category due to its potential to guide future research, since it does not represent a massive and generalized concern of existing research. It means that only a few researchers explore, either indirectly or implicitly, what makes cultural organizations and their management unique. The third category was an effort to propose a new horizon for future research to help consolidating the investigated field. All in all, the analysis process opened room for 3 emerging category types, namely: perspectives on what is considered pivotal in research about cultural organizations, singularities capable of indicating specific organizational dynamics of cultural organizations, and paradox seen as substantially relevant theoretical-conceptual axis to help improving knowledge about cultural organizations.

The systematic analysis applied to the herein identified studies enabled understanding the academic production on the investigated subject, in a panoramic and integrated manner. In addition, it highlighted lack of consistent research about the singularities of this field, as well as of theorizations on the management of this organization type. The present article has made 3 contributions to the advancement of research on cultural organizations, namely: it provided an integrated view of the academic production based on 2 organizing perspectives (technical-operational and political); it suggested featuring the investigated field based on its organizational singularities (hypersensitivity, hypertension and hyper-uncertainty); and it indicated a theoretical horizon to encourage future research (paradox).

## **MANAGING CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS: PERSPECTIVES, SINGULARITIES AND CHALLENGES**

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Cultural organization management is an interdisciplinary field associated with a range of disciplines, such as policy studies, law, economics, sociology, education, and management. Management topics comprise research about marketing (Botti, 2000; Medeiros, Alves, & Farah, 2015), leadership (Lapierre, 2001), entrepreneurship (Marins & Davel, 2020), finance (Turbide & Hoskin, 1999), performance (Weinstein & Bukovinsky, 2009), and strategic planning (Daigle & Rouleau, 2010). Theoretical contributions mimicking classic business management concepts and principles applied to cultural organizations' management prevail (Byrnes, 2003; Chong, 2002; Radbourne & Fraser, 1996), whereas few studies are relevant efforts to investigate organizations' management processes based on their specificities (Araújo, Davel, & Rentschler, 2020; Daigle & Rouleau, 2010; Lin & Lee, 2014).

The qualitative approach has prevailed among the adopted methodologies, since a significant number of studies were based on case studies aimed at analyzing cultural organizations such as theaters (Davel & Vianna, 2012; Leal, 2018), museums (Boylan, 2004; Cândido, 2013; B. Lord & G. D. Lord, 2005), libraries (Milanesi, 1991), artistic groups (Souza & Carrieri, 2013), opera houses (Luonila & Johansson, 2016), cultural centers (Dines, 2012; Serapião, 2012), orchestras (Cunha, 2019), galleries (Foop, 1997), among others.

## Organizing Perspectives on Cultural Organizations' Management Research

With respect to organization perspectives, the analyzed set of research was organized based on two major nature axes, namely: technical-operational and political. The first axis aimed the micro-managerial level; it adopted normative and prescriptive bias, as well as presented contents that risked reducing management to the application of both a set of tools and managers' practice, to a merely operational domain, since it paid little attention to organizational and contextual specificities. Although the perspective adopted by the second axis was sensitive to specificities of the cultural sector and to its interdisciplinary nature, this perspective was quite disconnected from management processes since it was solely aimed the macro-managerial level and focused the analyses of political and societal effects resulting from public policies on culture.

### Management based on the technical-operational perspective

The secularization of culture and its autonomy as specific social field are recent processes. The task of organizing culture was historically carried out by religious leaders or politicians, since the demand for specialized professionals has only emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rubim, 2005). Thus, understanding cultural organization management as professional practice, and picturing knowledge as reflexive interest field are very new phenomena. Therefore, studies developed under technical perspectives play relevant role in systematizing concepts, practices and experiences.

It was possible identifying efforts aimed at describing and conceptualizing the aforementioned field (Coelho, 1989, 2014). We also identified descriptive contributions about the organization of this sector (Rubim, 2005), the mapping of its actors (Cohn, Luz, Ferron, Herencia, & Savazoni, 2007; Nussbaumer & Rattes, 2005; Nussbaumer, Vinhas, Lins, Leal, Rattes, & Ahmad, 2010), as well as the generalist contributions of it to professional training or qualification (Avelar, 2010; Byrnes, 2003; Cunha, 2007; Olivieri & Natale, 2016; Thiry-Cherques, 2006). The analyzed studies have also shown contributions aimed at training professionals in specific topics, such as cultural project management (Malagodi & Cesnik, 2000; Santos & Davel, 2018) and fundraising (Sarkovas, 1998). Most of these studies presented prescriptive content that was sometimes based on the systematization of tacit knowledge and that did not always escape simplifications.

Based on this perspective, cultural organizations' management is essentially an operational, instrumental and technical act. The subjective, immaterial and political aspects involved in this process are often neglected. Managers appear as the antithesis of the artist and account for a set of rational procedures – such as the elaboration of budget spreadsheets and checklists, filling out forms, financial management, among others - that work as means to the creative instance. The aforementioned process underlies the functionalist and merely rational understanding of management, as well as the mechanistic perception about organization. In addition, it encourages the incorporation of principles deriving from classic management, without taking into consideration the specificities of cultural organizations and their context.

### Management based on the political perspective

On the other hand, when cultural organizations' management is understood as politics, it is seen in its complexity, based on a remarkably critical viewpoint. However, such an approach neglects the practical dimension of this process, since the reflections proposed by it make few effective contributions to the daily management of organizations operating in this field.

Studies focused on the mapping and critical analysis of public policies developed for the herein addressed segment are plenty in Brazil. They can be based on historical and geographic criteria (Barros & Oliveira, 2011; Botelho, 2000, 2016; Calabre, 2009; A. Rubim & Barbalho, 2007; A. Rubim & Rohde, 2008), as well as on sectoral and thematic orientation (Barros & Kauark, 2011; Botelho, 2003; Leitão & Guilherme, 2014; A. Rubim & Rocha, 2010). With respect to international research, several studies present a critical reflection about the supportive State's role (Radbourne, 2002), the impact of creative industries on cities (Brooks & Kushner, 2001), and about investment impact-measurement models (Turbide & Laurin, 2009).

This body of research provides valuable information capable of locating cultural organizations' management in a broad and strategic societal context by highlighting its relevance in different spheres. Based on this perspective, cultural organizations' management is a political act. Its aesthetic aspects remain outside the scope of managers' work, that remains a means to artistic work, but in another way. Managers are now the link between creative instance and public power, since they account for articulating artistic creation to the public policies in place and for dominating State bureaucracy.

## The Singularities of Cultural Organizations

The analysis applied to the academic production enabled observing a fairly generalized idea that cultural organizations are unique and that this idea affects the daily lives of their managers. Yet, the literature lacks deep research aimed at understanding these singularities in order to contribute to managers' work, as well as studies adopting the appropriate research biases and theories to such features. New analysis of the material found in the current study was herein conducted to systematize the first categorization of singularities that stood out as significant in the research, even in an implicit or indirect manner.

### Organizational hypersensitivity

Organizational hypersensitivity refers to the prevalence of the symbolic dimension as typical element of cultural organizations. Their products and services have symbols expressed in several cultural practices that are linked both to the anthropological (cultural traits) and aesthetic (artistic expressions) definition of culture as driving force. The non-utilitarian nature of their goods appears as the main feature of these organizations (Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2009). Cultural organizations' management is not only about the efficient production of a given product; it is mainly associated with creating and maintaining an organization capable of producing and selling meaning (Lawrence & Phillips, 2002). This form of organization is neither "capital intensive" nor "knowledge intensive", but rather "symbol intensive" (Lawrence & Phillips, 2002, p. 431), since it highlights symbolic value rather than using value (Defillippi, Grabher, & Jones, 2007).

Symbolic value is directly linked to the art-autonomy process that have started in the Renaissance period, when social and economic changes enabled separating craftsmanship from art and made art enjoyable and meaningful *per se* (Geffre, 2013; Hauser, 2003). The work of art has gradually distanced itself from the social function linked to the church or to the State, and introduced itself in a system of associations comprising the production, circulation and consumption of autonomous and commercial symbolic goods; but, paradoxically, this system gave to the work of art the *status* of asserting the intellectual and artistic singularity that turn it into something more than a mere commodity (Bourdieu, 2011).

Organizational hypersensitivity unfolds into two aspects, namely: emphasis on the aesthetic dimension of products and services, and emphasis on identity relations. The first aspect is a remarkable feature of cultural organizations, since their products and services derive from a substantial artistic or creative effort associated with culture, arts or just with entertainment (Caves, 2000). This effort corresponds to an appeal to the senses, since cultural goods gain value through subjective experiences that rely on the intensive use of symbols to influence individuals' perception and emotions (Lampel et al., 2009).

On the other hand, the emphasis on identity relations, in a broader and societal scope, is expressed through the link between products and services provided by cultural organizations, and the identity dimension of groups and territories that have different aesthetic properties and symbolic functions that allow creating meaning associated with the construction of identity or social values (Peltoniemi, 2015). Thus, cultural organizations establish links to cultural identities that suggest a sense of belonging to ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and national cultures (Hall, 2014) that are hybridized in the contemporary context, since they result from sociocultural processes that recombine elements to generate new structures, objects and practices (Canclini, 2003).

Based on a more specific and intra-organizational scope, organizational hypersensitivity is expressed as the very relationship between creative workers and their products, since creators are vitally concerned with the originality displayed in creative activities, with technical feats, as well as with the resolution and harmony achieved in the creative act (Caves, 2000). Most cultural goods embody their creators' personal desire to express themselves and to achieve creation in compliance with their own intellectual, identity and aesthetic preferences; they are often fully disconnected from consumers' eventual expectations or demands (Khaire, 2017).



## Organizational hypertension

Organizational hypertension is a singularity resulting from the persistent and striking contrast between the symbolic and economic dimensions inherent to cultural organizations' management. Most organizations operate under several logics and simultaneously activate requirements that are sometimes contradictory. Market logics and artistic-cultural institution logics are the two main actions generating this tension in cultural organizations that, after all, become vulnerable to conflicts and contradictions between distinct logics (Kharie, 2017). The emergence of conflicting imperatives is typical to organizations (Hirsch, 1972) that try to reconcile artistic production demands to those of market areas showing different and opposing natures to survive (Lampel et al., 2009).

Art relationship with the economic dimension of cultural organizations is often seen as taboo by artists and professionals working in the cultural sector. The very study about the economic dimension of cultural organizations remains poorly explored by economics. These studies often disregard economic relevance in comparison to the most traditional industries. Thus, this dimension is reduced to public subsidies or to the pursuit of bringing the economic choices available for this segment closer to parameters taken as standard (Caves, 2000).

This field presents several economic specificities, many of them are shaped by the tension between it and the symbolic dimension. Uncertain demand is one of these specificities, since artistic creation does not obey the law of supply and demand, it rather obeys dimensions of a more subjective nature, both in the creator and consumer spheres (Caves, 2000). This relationship involves predictability, calculation, and diligent fulfillment of consumers' expectations in the most traditional markets, a fact that does not happen in the artistic and cultural field. Most artists who intend to sell their works mistrust pressures from the market and their potential to have negative impact on their artistic expression (Khaire, 2017).

Even the entertainment sector, where such a relationship is closer to traditional economic segments, has values – such as creativity, originality, and surprise – associated with creators' reputation; it energizes economic relations in a particular way. Similar to many industries, cultural organizations do not only depend on novelty to attract consumers; they also need familiar references to help them understanding and stabilizing the demand for cultural products. It must be done to avoid the tension between creating radically-strange products and generating consistent revenue (Jones et al., 2015).

Organizational hypertension can be seen in the creator-producer and artist-manager duality, in the daily management of cultural organizations. The conflict between these two worlds leads to the need of managing in such a way to balance artistic and financial success. If one takes these organizations as two separate worlds - economic (managers) and art (creators) – based on completely different logics, it is possible saying that they are ruled by intense tension (Khaire, 2017).

Consequently, many tension types – identity, creative, organizational, among others – proliferate and unfold in polarities capable of affecting daily management practices, since they require managers to have the ability to balance persistent tensions. Among them, one finds expressing artistic values with economic viability, differentiating their products without making them unrecognizable, analyzing and meeting the existing demand while using their imagination to expand and transform it, concentrating different activities in the same organization while maintaining creative vitality through specialization, and developing creative systems without suppressing individual inspiration (Lampel et al., 2009).

## Organizational hyper-uncertainty

Organizational hyper-certainty refers to unpredictability, which is a strong feature of daily management in cultural organizations, given their hypertensive constitution. Moving amidst so many tensions turns artists, managers and professionals working in the cultural field into equilibrists who often try to reach dynamic equilibrium in an environment of great uncertainty. Uncertainty is expressed in different ways in the work of artists, namely: by reaching a certain acknowledgement level to allow them to live from art; by equalizing a team of creators around the satisfactory aesthetic result, public response to, profitability or sustainability of some ventures; and by generating long-term income-based patrimony through intellectual property (Caves, 2000).

Unpredictability in management processes can be seen in difficulties to identify and clearly establish quality standards (Lampel et al., 2009), as well as in the challenge of adjusting supply (artistic production) and demand (aesthetic taste, appreciation forms, investment availability, among others). Rationalistic planning patterns focused on minimizing risks and on foreseeing scenarios do not fit this context according to which, tacit knowledge, talent, creativity and innovation are

crucial resources for success (Jones & Defillippi, 1996). These resources are amorphous, i.e., they cannot be clearly defined, arise from unexpected sources and lose value for reasons that are yet to be fully understood (Lampel et al., 2009). This factor emphasizes the highly uncertain, dynamic and complex environment of cultural organizations.

Uncertainty in professional environments results from the highly flexible and disintegrated organizational environment typical of most cultural organizations. Consequently, there are different ways to face hyper-uncertainty, namely: multiple occupations, versatility in occupational roles, diversification of employment ties and dependence on public support programs (Menger, 2014). On the other hand, it is worth emphasizing that the hyper-uncertainty environment of cultural organizations also generates favorable conditions for originality and inventiveness, which are driving factors for both innovation and creativity.

## Challenges to, and Proposals for, Cultural Organizations' Management Research

Based on an integrated understanding about research perspectives and organizational singularities, it is possible to better analyze the challenges to the process of theorizing about cultural organizations' management. The first challenge refers to the little attention given to the intermediary dimension of management in order to escape the uncritical pragmatism of the technical-operational viewpoint and the barely operational scope of the political-strategic perspective, and to go beyond case studies in order to enable a broader, more robust and consistent understanding about this field. It is necessary building an articulated and multi-level perspective about management processes in cultural organizations, as well as enabling a more holistic view capable of articulating the micro, *mezzo* and macro dimensions of management.

The second challenge concerns the lack of theoretical efforts to avoid mimicking approaches used in studies about other management fields. Future studies need to closer focus the singularities of cultural organizations to clearly guide epistemological, methodological and theoretical research choices. In addition, they must understand cultural organizations' management as process featured by the simultaneity and interconnectedness among the different levels (individual, group, and organizational) and dimensions (operational, strategic, and societal) constituting management.

New theoretical horizons applied to studies focused on investigating cultural organizations should address these challenges.

Based on the joint analysis applied to the herein proposed singularities, paradox stands out among them; it emerges as analytical axis to activate future research. Thus, the latent condition of changes and transformations arising from the hypertension, hyper-uncertainty and hypersensitivity intrinsic to cultural organizations is key element to enhance their analysis in future research. This triad of singularities reflects an organizational context expressed by deep tensions, dilemmas, ambiguities and conflicts that can be defined as paradoxical expressions due to their contradictory and persistent nature.

## PARADOX: A NEW HORIZON FOR RESEARCH ON CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS' MANAGEMENT

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Paradoxes are persistent contradictions among interdependent elements whose incidence makes managers face ambiguous or properly contradictory situations (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Paradoxes have attracted the interest of humanity since ancient Greece; they have been assessed since the foundations of the Western and Eastern thoughts, and found echo in several philosophical traditions, such as the Aristotelian logic and Kantian criticism, Kierkegaard's existentialism, and Hegelian dialectics; in religious traditions often called Eastern philosophy, such as Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism; and in other knowledge fields, such as the philosophy of language and political philosophy (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016).

Several dualities such as "autonomy and conformity," "new and old," "learning and mechanization of work," and "freedom and surveillance" are described as organizational paradoxes (Eisenhardt, 2000). Paradoxes are featured by the simultaneous existence of two states of affairs whose qualities have opposite natures. The contradictory nature of their elements and their interdependence (Schad et al., 2016) put usual conceptions to the test, as well as challenge human understanding and action. According to paradox scholars, the persistence and continuity of tensions between opposites is the point to be observed, unlike other traditions based on dualistic approaches, such as those tributary to contributions by Giddens and Bourdieu, or the ones linked to the Hegelian and Marxist's dialectical tradition (Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011). In the case of

Giddens and Bourdieu, the focus lies on the changing, procedural and dynamic nature of relations. With respect to Hegel and Marx, the idea of synthesis, even if temporarily, is used to appease tension. Both contributions, somehow, point towards the end of tension, whereas the theory of paradoxes sees tension as point of interest.

Paradoxes have been increasingly investigated in the organizational study field because they allow analyzing complex situations. The first studies about paradoxes date back to the 1980s, but they have been gaining room in the last decades by focusing the most different topics, such as facing problematic situations (Beech, Burns, Caestecker, Macintosh & Maclean, 2004), sense-making (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), pluralism (Eisenhardt, 2000), personnel management (Vasconcelos, Mascarenhas, & Vasconcelos, 2006), participation (O'Connor, 1995), diversity (Basset-Jones, 2005), creativity (Stierand, Boje, Vlad, Dorfler, & Feuls, 2019; Townley & Beech, 2010), identity (Fiol, 2002; Gotsi, Andriopoulos, Lewis, & Ingram, 2010; Kosmala, 2007), governance (Michaud, 2013), leadership (Storey & Salaman, 2009; Rego & Cunha, 2020), control (Streatfield, 2001), autonomy (Trevelyan, 2001), success (Cunha & Putnam, 2017), network (Keller, 2020) and management (Clegg, Cunha, & Pina, 2002; Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016).

With regard to cultural organizations' management, studies about paradoxes focus tensions in project-based organizations (Defillippi & Arthur, 1998), tensions between creative and managerial identity (Gotsi et al., 2010; Kosmala, 2007), tensions between amateurism and professionalism in creative careers (Bendassolli & Wood, 2010), tensions between creation and market (Lampel et al., 2009; Davel & Vianna, 2012), and tensions linked to cultural diversity promotion (Alves, 2009). The academic production on this topic remains incipient, since it lacks new efforts to deepen what current research only point out, or hint at.

## Paradox Types

Paradoxes may appear in 4 major groups (Smith & Lewis, 2011): learning – which is related to organizational knowledge around tensions such as stability versus change -; organization – which is related to organizational processes involving tensions such as collaboration versus control -; performance – which is linked to organizational goals, such as financial versus social -; and belonging – which refers to identity dynamics, such as individual versus collective. The academic production on cultural organizations does not point towards systematized typologies, it rather indicates polarities typical of this field, such as (Lampel et al., 2009):

- artistic values versus mass entertainment – it represents the struggle of these organizations to stay true to their artistic values while making their activities economically viable in the market;
- product differentiation versus market innovation – it means dealing with the fact that consumers of goods by a given organization want to be surprised, although without losing contact with a recognizable symbolic universe;
- analysis of demand versus market construction it is related to tensions linked to cultural consumption, as well as to its unpredictability, since it is immersed in a remarkably broad value system that is hard to predict or control;
- vertical integration versus flexible specialization – it concerns tensions between activity expansion and organizational skills or specialization;
- individual inspiration versus creative systems – it concerns tension between the idea of creative genius and the understanding of creativity as social phenomenon.

Beyond the attempt to limit the understanding of paradoxes by compulsorily fitting them into pre-existing categorizations, these propositions aim at sharpening researchers' perception about the diversity of contradictions observed in cultural organizations' management processes, on a daily basis.



## Paradox Management

Paradoxes trigger managers' instinct to find solutions. This instinctive mechanism emerges from the idea of paradox as organizational dysfunction. However, a closer look to this topic enables seeing that reality itself is paradoxical. Thus, organizations are intrinsically paradoxical. Paradoxes are inherent to, and underlie management practices performed on a daily basis, rather than an exception that can be avoided or annihilated (Clegg et al., 2002). Neither anomalies nor management tools, paradoxes are better integrated to organizational dynamics when they are understood as constitutive processes of the organization and management process they are embedded in, and cannot be removed from (Rego & Cunha, 2020).

At first glance, the idea of managing a paradox may seem the same as solving it. This impulse starts from the perception that paradoxes are problems that can be solved by rational approaches. However, research brings some lessons for those who prefer understand paradoxes as opportunities. The most contemporary studies on this topic have encouraged managers to see paradoxes as potentialities, rather than as problems (Schad et al., 2016). In order to face paradoxical situations, managers were encouraged to avoid "either this or that" choices to favor an "and also" response.

Another way to think about paradoxes' management lies on distancing oneself from a calculating and cognitive logic to see it as an action opportunity that invites us to play. In other words, it means taking managerial actions focused on desire and emotion, on the recreation of rules – based on creativity –, on the exploration of multiple meanings and on challenging usual behavioral barriers (Beech et al., 2004). According to Poole and Ven (1989), managers can adopt different attitudes to manage paradoxes, namely: acceptance – the organization accepts or encourages the existence of opposites –; separation in time – the organization focuses one pole at a time –; separation in space - the organization places opposing processes in distinct spaces –; and synthesis – the organization creatively combines poles in order to transcend them.

The process of managing paradoxes presents some risks, such as attachment to one pole - the organization feels more comfortable with one pole and ends up forgetting or neglecting the other. Other risks refer to the process of generating oscillatory movements – the organization alternates attention between one pole and the other –; and getting stuck in the middle – the organization commits to solutions that do not satisfactorily address either pole (Rego & Cunha, 2020). Paradox-oriented management processes that are used to deal with risks enable better understanding tensions, since it encompasses complex organizational dynamics, rather than reducing it to simplifications. Thus, it fully considers the interrelationship and interdependence between opposing poles by proposing a synergistic or holistic approach that bets on understanding the interdependence of these poles, rather than on resolutivity as key to practices that are more consistent with challenges faced on a daily basis.

## Paradoxes seen as Process

Paradoxes persist, as well as emerge, over time (Farjoun, 2018). They transform and reconfigure themselves, and do not cease to exist. The latent, recursive and sometimes cyclical condition of tension caused by paradoxes enables a constant dynamic that can alternate moments of sharpening and temporary synthesis, depending on the situation. They can undergo periods of salience, when they are more evident, as well as moments of latency, when they are not in active contradiction state; therefore, they are harder to be observed.

Dormant, unnoticed or ignored paradoxes can change from one state to another at different times or in different parts of a given organization or system (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Lê, 2018). Thus, organizational paradoxes provide a fertile starting point for studies focused on investigating organizational processes (Farjoun, 2018), since their fundamentally temporal (persistence in time) and experiential (active condition) nature builds bridges between the study of paradoxes and that of processes taking place in the organizational research field (Langley & Tsoukas, 2017).

## CULTURAL MANAGEMENT SEEN AS PARADOXICAL PROCESS: A RESEARCH AGENDA

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Cultural organizations' management can be understood as a process within a more holistic and comprehensive way, since it favors a viewpoint based on the temporality and emergence of management flow. Process research is tributary to metaphysical philosophical traditions; thus, it enables organizational studies and approaches organizations based on the perspective about changes and transformations caused both by time and its succession of events (Langley & Tsoukas, 2017). The focus on management process can open room to better understand the organizational practice scope of cultural organizations, since most studies focus their technical-operational and political spheres. Moreover, this procedural focus can provide an integrating link between these two spheres, as well as a more holistic and integrated view of management by disclosing how these spheres are associated with each other.

Paradox is a central interpretive key for the procedural understanding of cultural organization based on its singularities: hypersensitivity, hypertension and hyper-uncertainty. By understanding the management of cultural organizations as paradoxical process we establish promising horizons for future research. Such an understanding enables researchers to focus what makes cultural organizations unique and, therefore, to contribute to better understand and practice these organizations. Thus, focusing paradoxes helps identifying and understanding some sets of paradoxical situations capable of affecting such organizations, as well as improving their theoretical and management practices.

We can highlight 3 paradox types mostly seen in the cultural organization context, namely: creativity, identity and autonomy. The first paradox relates to the fundamental tension between the symbolic and the economic, which is expressed by conflicts among artistic authenticity, audience and market reach (Davel & Vianna, 2012; Greffe, 2015; Parush & Koivunen, 2014). The second type refers to tensions linked to the creation and symbolic value generation processes, as well as to the relationship between culture and identity (Alves, 2009; Bendassolli & Wood, 2010; Gotsi et al., 2010; Kosmala, 2007). Tradition and innovation, diversity and uniformity, authenticity and cultural appropriation, purism and hybridity are at stake here. Finally, autonomy paradoxes refer to tensions between control and collaboration, centralization and decentralization (Defillippi & Arthur, 1998; Defillippi et al., 2007; Hoffmann & Dellagnelo, 2009). Hierarchy and freedom, formalization and informality, ephemeral arrangements and bureaucracy, collective creation and creative geniuses, are the tensions triggered by the aforementioned paradoxes.

Other research directions are also possible; in-depth investigation on how paradoxes take place in organizations based on specific artistic languages, such as theater, music, dance, cinema, among others, may reveal new understandings about the role played by paradoxes as conceptual key to explain the management dynamics of cultural organizations. Another possible path lies on investigating paradoxes in both intra-organizational inter-organizational dimensions. Understanding the impact of paradoxes on relationships between cultural organizations can provide clues on how to strengthen projects, networks and cooperation arrangements between them.

If one takes into account that one of the major challenges faced by cultural organization managers lies on promoting balance to create market, build alliances between creator and manager, as well as to build and maintain the organization's reputation (Khaire, 2017), understanding how paradoxes are managed in cultural organizations is another priority in the research agenda. Developing a paradox mindset (Liu, Xu, & Zhang, 2020; Miron-Spektor et al., 2017), which corresponds to taking tensions and their uncertainty-filled context as process inherent to organizations, is a promising way to manage paradoxes. This paradoxical mindset allows recognizing opportunities to develop creative and innovative potentials or to better integrate the multiple levels - individual, organizational, and societal -, that make up organizational practices. Thus, future research should investigate how this kind of mindset can be developed in cultural organizations and what impacts it would have on them.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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Based on the critical review herein applied to an extensive academic production on cultural organizations' management, the current research has shown that, between the uncritical pragmatism of the technical-operational view and the barely operational comprehensiveness of the political view, it is necessary making theoretical advancements to provide an articulated and multilevel perspective about management processes in cultural organizations. It is also necessary to further analyze the singularities of these organizations – hypersensitivity, hypertension and hyper-uncertainty – at the time to select theoretical research capable of effectively contributing to studies in this field. The prevalence of the symbolic dimension as typical element of cultural organizations, the unpredictability atmosphere featuring their daily management and, above all, the contrast between the symbolic and economic dimensions should be further investigated to help better understanding these organizations and their management process. Thus, permanent and structuring art-business tensions form a set of tensions that give a deeply paradoxical nature to cultural organizations' management processes.

Results in the current study have generated 2 types of contributions to future research in the cultural organizations' management field. The first contribution has theoretical nature, since it highlights cultural organizations as promising field for the application of the theory of processes and paradoxes deriving from organizational studies. In other words, studying processes and paradoxes in this specific organizational context can generate new knowledge for organizational studies. Moreover, this process-paradoxical approach may contribute to pave a more coherent and adequate theoretical-conceptual basis to better analyze and understand cultural organizations' complexities and specificities. Consequently, our results have contributed to consolidate the advancement of research focused on investigating cultural organizations and their management process.

The second contribution type has socio-practical nature. We consider that giving visibility and intelligibility to singularities of the organizational context of cultural organizations helps educators to better integrate this content to their training and, therefore, to improve cultural managers' training. In addition, we believe that cultural managers will be able to better understand and qualify their actions, whether through training or through contact with the information provided in the current article. Better understanding the paradoxes inherent to their practice field will help them to improve their awareness of, and consistency in, the dynamics surrounding their organizations, as well as strengthen their management skills.

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