

# The Theatres of the City of Barcelona and Community Art: An Approach

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English translation, Neil CHARLTON

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## Abstract

Over the last decade, cultural and theatre policies have tended to include the concept of “culture as a resource” (Yúdice, 2003) with the aim of going beyond it from a perspective of sustainability of performing practices as such (as a deficient artistic activity). Although there are critical voices that seek to overcome this concept, it is difficult to escape this redefinition of the uses of culture. This article reviews part of the recent literature on community art and the social shift in cultural policies. After analysing the concepts of democratisation and cultural democracy as a touchstone, a list of the social and educational activities of the main theatres in Barcelona is compiled, which shows that, apart from a couple of community artistic activities, most focus their work on audience development through participatory activities, meetings and workshops, aware of the multidisciplinary nature of the new pedagogical trends, which make arguments in favour of the positive values of non-formal education through artistic practices.

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**Keywords:** community art, theatre and education, democratisation and cultural democracy, welfare shift of culture

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## The Theatres of the City of Barcelona and Community Art: An Approach<sup>1</sup>

### Cultural Policies and Community Art: “The Social Shift”

Throughout the last decade, the inclusion and expansion of social and community arts programmes by the main theatres of the city of Barcelona responds to various strategic and structural factors, which are defined based on the different prevailing political notions on the uses of culture, depending on the ideological lines of each authority, both in the areas of local government (which has more directly affected the dynamics of running and planning the city) and autonomous government (as the main showcase for cultural companies), without forgetting the global influence of international cultural policies and programmes. In general terms, the so-called “social and welfare shift of culture” (Vidiella, 2016; Yúdice, 2002) is evident; that is, an ethics of social responsibility is imposed on its own artistic practice, so that a return to society is demanded, some kind of involvement or reciprocity between the artistic and the social, especially by sectors that receive public subsidies directly or indirectly. On the one hand, this often results in a thematisation of certain conflicts or circumstances that affect the daily life of citizens (and the visibility of certain groups at risk of exclusion); in addition to an attempt to involve audiences actively, through participation or collaboration in training workshops that culminate in a show, lessons on various artistic disciplines (movement, dance, writing, acting, etc.); or the promotion of symposiums and conferences where the critical and analytical capacity of the audience on the theatre event and the currents of contemporary thought can be studied, but also where the sensitivity and tastes of participants are examined, in order to create part of the programming

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1. This article is an approach to the operating models of the theatre auditoria in relation to the community social agenda. However, I did not want to fail to mention the Mercat de les Flors and the importance of dance that, in fact, has always been a leading field in terms of integration and citizen participation programmes. It is also worth mentioning the valuable work carried out, for example, by La Caldera, founded in 1995 and which has become an Arts Factory on its own merits. I would just point out that the close relationship between the arts of movement and the social fabric deserves a separate article.

of shows or other parallel activities.<sup>2</sup> On the other, in addition to its social reading, there is a nexus of proximity with the concerns and expectations of entertainment, leisure and the training of citizens, expanding access and participation to culture, these approach strategies also work to nurture the loyalty of sectors of the community that already have cultural habits, as well as to look for new potential audiences. To some extent, there is an implicit marketing strategy applied to culture and the arts, a term that I explain below, as it raises certain mistrust due to its commercial and advertising connotation (Cuenca, 2014).

At the global level, the causes of this social shift respond to the general trend of international cultural policies of the 21st century, which have found that culture can be an indicator, or a regulator, which can serve multiple goals at a reduced cost and, at the same time, is an alternative (creative, educational, recreational and sometimes commercial) to other integration and social welfare policies, which have not always achieved the desired successful results. Thus, the symbolic space of artistic practices (and culture) has assumed a whole series of social attributes and objectives that make it a useful and versatile resource for the “educational and integrating” policies of authorities, since, in fact, some of these features have always been present in the human dimension of the arts and, by extension, in their action-based transformative capacity (through the social actions and events that make them up). This is in addition to the multiplicity of disciplines and plausible perspectives from which to access it: aesthetic, anthropological, philosophical, pedagogical, of knowledge and of thought in general. Thus, amidst other potentialities, the arts are granted a homogenising capacity (in a positive sense, of equality between those who take part), and at the same time it is a space of symbolic representation and, therefore, can incorporate a hygienic component where, on the one hand, the illusion is created that social conflicts and problems are resolved or, at least, everyday conflicts (figuratively) are made visible, and on the other, the psychophysical activity itself is liberating for people who practise it (it has a therapeutic and socialising component). Judit Vidiella (2016) and earlier George Yúdice (2002) detailed all these critical comments on the supposed social commitment of global cultural policies in the new millennium, not free of a certain economic interest (by symbolically dressing up in good intentions the general tendency towards social and employment precariousness, especially since the outbreak of the global crisis in 2008), and a propaganda reversal useful both for conservative and progressive parties that make use of them focusing on the aspects that they most want to emphasise. As explained by George Yúdice (2002: 40) to refer to the seed of this paradigm shift in the instrumental conception of culture:

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2. Later on, I will briefly expand this information, based on the specific activities of the main auditoria in Barcelona that serve as an illustrative example of this article: Teatre Tantarantana, Antic Teatre, Sala Beckett, Nau Ivanow, Teatre Lliure, Mercat de les Flors and Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. The study of the architectural characteristics of the aforementioned theatres is related to historical, political, urban planning and economic factors that are absolutely circumstantial, so that analysing here their morphology and examining the adaptation needs over the years would also outweigh the scope of these notes.

In the last three decades, progressive theorists and activists who broke as much with the statistical and cognitivist emphasis of traditional Marxism as with the commodified and anti-rational inflections of the arts relegated the aesthetics and the idea of community in the formulation of a political-cultural alternative to domination. The anthropological shift in the conceptualisation of the arts and society is consistent with what could be called cultural power – the term that I use for the extension of biopower in the age of globalisation – and is also one of the main reasons why cultural policy became a visible factor for rethinking collective agreements. The term brings together what in modernity belonged to emancipation (politics), on the one hand, and to regulation (culture), on the other. [...] This union is perhaps the clearest expression of the resource of culture.

The main international political cultural programmes and initiatives that have had a greater or lesser influence on current dynamics in the global arena are the *Charter of Educating Cities*,<sup>3</sup> *Agenda 21*<sup>4</sup> and the international network *Another Roadmap (AR)*,<sup>5</sup> meeting places that propose a set of goals of social, educational and environmental *sustainability* in the management of cities around the world to bring about the implementation of a code of ethics of “good practices”, on an equal basis, in all social fields and, especially, from a perspective of *democratisation of culture*. The concept generates a certain debate because it specifically concerns the action and management plans of the city (in the administrative field) in relation to the cultural rights of citizens,<sup>6</sup> plans that, according to some professionals in the management of arts community practices (related or, at least, that interact with the current local government, Barcelona en Comú and the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona),<sup>7</sup>

3. “The cities that were represented at the 1st International Congress of Educating Cities, held in Barcelona in 1990, set forth in the initial Charter the basic principles that were to constitute the educational driving force of the city, theirs was the conviction that the edification of their inhabitants could not be left to chance. The Charter was revised at the 3rd International Congress (Bologna, 1994) and at the 8th International Congress (Genoa, 2004), in order to improve and adapt its concepts to the new challenges and social needs we face. This Charter is based on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the World Declaration on Education For All (1990), and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)” (IAEC, 2009: 1).

4. “Agenda 21 for culture was approved by cities and local governments around the world committed to human rights, cultural diversity, sustainability, participatory democracy and creating conditions for peace. It was approved on 8 May 2004 in Barcelona by the 4th Porto Alegre Local Authorities Forum for Social Inclusion, within the framework of the first Universal Forum of Cultures” (Pascual, 2006: 2).

5. “The network has its origin in the need to think, research and critically develop arts education practices based on the publication of the *Roadmap for Arts Education*, compiled by UNESCO at the first world conference on arts education in Lisbon in 2006 and 2010. The main areas of the network are: 1) to critically address the hegemony of an education of colonial and western arts; 2) to analyse the policies and practices of education for the arts (and the growing interest in the role of creativity); 3) to highlight alternatives and develop other paradigms for the research on and practice of arts education (Vidiella, 2016: 53).

6. According to the private foundation *Interarts*, founded in 1995 and entrusted, among others, with the co-organisation of the Universal Forum of Cultures 2004, together with the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) and UNESCO, Cultural Rights are defined as “rights promoted to ensure that people and communities have access to culture and can participate in whatever is of their choice. Fundamentally, they are human rights to ensure the enjoyment of culture and its components in conditions of equality, human dignity and non-discrimination. They are rights related to questions such as language; cultural and artistic production; participation in culture; cultural heritage; copyright; minorities and access to culture, among others.” I will not insist on the term, as it is implicit in the content of the article, since, after all, the main issue here is related to the ways in which cultural rights are implemented in communities, taking into account the role of the auditoria and the arts professionals in relation to the communities in their environment. (See the website in the bibliographical references.)

7. The economist and doctor of political science Mauro Castro belongs to La Hidra Cooperativa, an organisation that is defined as “a political company that devotes its work to urban transformation, with the aim of joining the set of professional and social practices that seek to guarantee the right to the city.” The educator and art historian

should tend to develop in a collaborative (and not only participatory) way, in a web of relationships that aspire to *cultural democracy*. As Mauro Castro and Javier Rodrigo (2018: 106) argue:

In the paradigm of the democratisation of culture, culture has been conceived as a fundamental right and corresponds to a policy focused on access to the cultural provision. Under this prism, libraries, theatres, auditoriums and large arts infrastructures have been built to allow the consumption of culture. In this way, access has become synonymous with consumption, and has created cultural audiences and specialised perspectives in the cultural event (Rowan, 2016). In contrast, the paradigm of cultural democracy has a more social perspective of culture, and uses it as a tool with transformative capacity and that reinforces community practices. In practice, these two paradigms are currently hybridised in cultural policies, although the consumer culture continues to be hegemonic in large public infrastructures.

It is worth pausing a moment to clarify the controversy generated by both the complementarity and hybridisation of these two terms (democratisation versus cultural democracy), as a symptom of disagreements and, therefore, of attempts to find a balance in the cultural policies that sustain community-based initiatives, taking into account all their actors.

### **Cultural Democratisation, Democracy and Marketing**

Macarena Cuenca (2014) makes a detailed analysis of both concepts from the point of view of education and sociocultural animation. In spite of the background, it reminds us that European cultural democratisation policies have existed for nearly fifty years now and find their seed in the idealism of May 68 (as George Yúdice also suggests above when, indirectly, he refers to some post-Marxist theorists and activists), a time when this designation began to be used, out of a desire to form a non-elitist culture. According to the author, the criticism of the concept by diverse authors (Fernández, 1991; Ventosa, 2002, among others) brings back to the table the well-debated question of “what is a non-elitist culture?”, a question that poses other dilemmas such as the opposition between elitism and populism, professionalization and participation or conservation and innovation.

One of the answers proposed by Castro and Rodrigo (2018: 76) in this regard understands this tension between opposites as an opposition between a “sectorial culture (based on innovation, excellence and elite culture) and a generalist culture (that has community goals with an integral and integrating sense).” It goes without saying that their vision refers to the field of arts and community culture practices outside the professional artistic environment (that is, it concerns the associative activity and social centres in the neighbourhoods and not theatres and arts centres) and, therefore, does not take

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Javier Rodrigo is part of Artibarri, an organisation that has existed since 2003 as: “a resource centre and a network in favour of the development of arts projects of community action.” (See the websites in the bibliographical references.)

into account the theatre system of the city in the field of production, creative processes and performance. After a careful analysis of the operating models of the main social centres, associations and committees of popular festivals in the neighbourhoods of Barcelona (as case studies), it gives a higher value to the social challenges and capacity of organisational self-management as opposed to the aesthetic and artistic challenges, in the same way that it avoids any hierarchy of verticality to defend equalisation in values of social and organisational equality compared with aesthetic values (and artistic *per se*) of what is called *sectorial culture*. It should be taken into account that, in its turn, this *sectorial culture* is conditioned both by production systems and the work circumstances of professional artists, which are mostly precarious or unstable. The challenge that the general arts community projects propose as a horizon is therefore to reach a community management of culture beyond the stratification and cultural cataloguing of artistic practices and objects (Castro and Rodrigo, 2018: 106):

Reviving classical conceptions such as that advocated by Raymond Williams, culture is understood as a way of life of a community, as an everyday and ordinary practice that connects with the values, beliefs and traditions of a group. In this way, through the cultural management of culture, the elitism of unique artistic objects and discourses such as artistic quality or cultural excellence is avoided. This also implies avoiding the metrics that measure culture based on its ability to create or retain “new audiences”. The values of community culture are not based on the fact that people access culture or that there are more spectators or consumers, but instead rely on recognising the active role of people and their cultural rights as citizens (Pascual, 2017).

However, we find an interesting contrast (or, at least, one that challenges the absolute value of this vision) in Macarena Cuenca’s review based on the analysis of other sociologists and educators. Cuenca points out that (2014: 6-7):

Ander-Egg (2000) correctly summarises the essence of both philosophies in strategic objectives. Thus, while the strategic objective of democratisation is access to culture, for democracy, it is cultural participation. [...]

Ander-Egg (2000), like Ventosa (2002), also reflects on the coexistence of democratisation and cultural democracy and argues that they should not be considered strategic objectives of different political projects but should be considered as start and end points of a cultural policy. Thus, it will only be possible to strive toward a cultural democracy after a task of cultural dissemination and having achieved significant levels of access to culture.

Reflections involving a tactical and instrumental distribution or assignment of functions, since if the democratisation (access) plans are associated with political programmes, the culture of participation (through the community arts programmes in this case) are carried out through organisations, associations and platforms that take on the task of making it effective and, therefore, establish a relationship of complicity and mutual convenience — through agreement, financing or contract — with the local authority itself. In spite

of the will or aspiration for these associations, platforms or groups of the community in question (neighbourhood, work, health, school, etc.) to work independently and self-managed in the future, right now there is an institutionalisation of the political commitment for these projects to go ahead. It is what, in other more depressed contexts, George Yúdice (2003: 373) calls an “institutionalisation of the art of the oppressed”, since, as he demonstrates throughout his book, it seems proven that there is no longer an inside and outside of the institution because there is always a structural, ideological and economic framework that links across all spheres.

From a technical point of view, what Macarena Cuenca notes is that today there has been a substitution of the term *democratisation* with the concept of *creation and development of audiences* (audiences, users or participants in cultural activities). Although the objectives can be considered enriching and constructive for certain sectors of the population that are in a situation of economic, educational and general training precariousness (income, educational level, conflicting social environments), and for citizens in general, it is obvious that there is a necessary delegation of functions to certain agents (suppliers of human teams where cultural managers, social mediators, artists hired as advisors, technicians, and so on, work). Meanwhile, the continuity of these groups or companies is conditioned by the political programmes themselves that influence the visibility of difference, inequality or the potential capacity to solve community art conflicts as a tool of training, expression and social transformation. Related to the creation and development of audiences, in a conventional sense, we find the concept of marketing (as mentioned above) that Cuenca qualifies as follows (2014: 13-14):

Although in the beginning marketing and culture were not, precisely, twin concepts, many authors have researched and written about the subject (Hill, O’Sullivan and O’Sullivan, 2000; Kolb, 2000; Colbert and Cuadrado, 2003; Kotler and Scheff 2004; Sellas and Colomer, 2009) and, today, no one questions the benefits of applying marketing to the cultural sector. However, in the 21st century, the simple marketing approach as the core of the audience development process has given way to a more complex approach that pursues the commitment of audiences through a combination of tools such as education, dissemination, marketing and interaction with artists (Brown and Novak, 2007:21).

It is precisely in the definition of the term culture where we again multiply the definitions that, although they could also be complementary, sometimes become opposite, according to the political interests of the moment. Judit Vidiella provides a detailed summary in the report on “Polítiques Culturals: anàlisi del currículum ocult” (Cultural Policies: Analysis of the Hidden Curriculum), published by CoNCA in 2016, when she talks about the discourses of international cultural policy (Vidiella, 2016: 53):

The guidelines of the Council of Europe and UNESCO opt for a “city of education” model, focused on conceiving culture as an instrument that favours economic development. The notion of culture is understood from three approaches:

culture as identity (property), culture as a practice that is creative (universal, with the idea that creativity is in all forms of work), and culture as education and transformation of society (where policies have a key role).

In the first place, the appropriation of the notion of cultural identity by parties and political lobbies seems quite clear. In terms of Barcelona, there are at least three clearly differentiated trends. Broadly speaking, the nationalist notion, which identifies culture with language, traditions, heritage and sociological and historical specificity (more typical of conservative areas and with a long history in the presidency of the Government of Catalonia), and at the same time is based on neoliberal economic approaches that seek, on the one hand, the profitability of cultural enterprises (managed through a policy of facilities and subsidies) and, on the other, identity projection as a country through a cultural identification that is nourished by the aforementioned approaches; the social-democratic notion, which led to the so-called Barcelona Model, precisely putting into practice cultural democratisation and urban modernisation strategies, in parallel with the projection of the image of Barcelona as a plural and cosmopolitan city open to the world (which, despite its proven success as a model, has encountered tourism saturation and gentrification of the neighbourhoods as a counterpoint);<sup>8</sup> and the current notion of the “common”, which continues the legacy of the previous municipal governments<sup>9</sup> and that thinks of culture as a “common good, made in common” (Castro and Rodrigo, 2018: 23), while seeking to accommodate so-called cultural democracy through collaborative networking practices, with a strong opposition to the risk of commoditization of the arts and economic neo-liberalism. For all three, however, the concept of social development implies the exploitation of culture and the arts through different channels, which often come together at some points and that, among other things, share the problem of economic management, the dilemma concerning the profitability of cultural industries or enterprises, the image of innovation and modernity of the city as a lure (tourist culture versus sustainable citizen culture) and, last but not least, the difficult political understanding between all three visions (and between the forces that represent them) to bring together or distil the successes and rectify the mistakes made in the past.

Moreover, the ways of working that include the term *creativity* have certainly impregnated the labour market at all levels (mainly in technology and communication companies but also in tourism and gastronomy, as in many other commercial and business fields). It also seems quite clear that

8. What has been criticised about the Barcelona Model from fields that aspire to integral community management is, above all, that it was founded on the creation of big cultural infrastructures and events (1992 Cultural Olympiad and Olympic Games, 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures, Library Network, Auditori de Barcelona and other big facilities, as paradigmatic examples) so the grassroots culture was given fewer resources (social centres, neighbourhood associations, self-managed centres, and so on) to enhance, according to them, a consumerist and mercantilist vision of culture (Castro and Rodrigo, 2018: 24-25). Other authors point out how the British labour model of *cool britania* was imitated to take a profit as a creative city, with an investment in infrastructure capable of hosting major events, while undertaking strategic planning as a knowledge society (Rius and Sánchez-Belando, 2015).

9. It is worth recalling that the PSC has governed Barcelona City Council since 1979, with mayors Narcís Serra (1979-1982), Pasqual Maragall (1982-1997), Joan Clos (1997-2006) and Jordi Hereu (2006-2011). Between July 2011 and June 2015 the mayor was Xavier Trias, of the Corvergència i Unió party, and from June 2015 until the present is Ada Colau, of Barcelona en Comú.

the notion of non-formal learning<sup>10</sup> through the educational and experiential use of artistic and cultural resources decisively makes up the current ideological and strategic panorama, mainly as a complement to the lack of resources of formal learning, as a result of the economic cuts, as is well-known, as a restrictive measure of the budgets by conservative policies faced with the obstacles of the economic crises and as a tangential consequence of the political ups and downs in relation to territorial policies. Thus, the role of the artist, as an arts professional, has also been transformed into that of the mediator, invigorator, social worker, socio-cultural worker, therapist, guide or educator (Vidiella, 2016b and Yúdice, 2003). In summary, what today is known as a *facilitator*, a multifaceted figure that acts as a hinge between the group (audience, community, participants) and the institution, the association or the company managing the artistic activity as a service.

Although community arts managers avoid the idea of ideological exploitation of art calling on the “common good”, this caution is due to two reasons. In the first place, because they follow an ethical code of “good practices. It is worth highlighting that the status of excellence or moral goodness is, in itself, proof, or at least, a sign of a political and ideological use of the resources (despite being well-meaning and constructive). And, in the second place, because the notion of *community arts* itself is a way of understanding both doing and applying the arts (the uses) and organising community life and management (structural operation concepts that are equally politicised).

It is opportune to cite the words of Eva García (curator of ART i PART and director of ComuArt)<sup>11</sup> in the effort to mitigate the tension between the authorities and society concerning community arts creation. Hers is a self-critical point of view that seeks to find the place of community action and detect its successes and failures, because both form part of processes in constant development with a high level of weakness on all sides (2018: 79):

The cultural management groups that have not included community arts in their contents and those related with community arts intervention indirectly deal with the management and sustainability of the projects. There are few formal and informal centres to socialise, think and discuss in depth alternatives to ways of producing and relating, based on cooperation, transfer of knowledge and discoveries, articulating resource banks fed by common and shared knowledge. Community arts creation sheds light on the invisibilities and poverty – economic, social and identity – that capitalism generates. Within the projects poverty is being created, understood as precariousness and self-exploitation. In this respect, and trying to be extremely cautious in the approach, we can't forget those people who usually will not form part of the teams but will form

10. The education fields are under permanent revision, mainly in terms of the search for a balance to outline a cross-over approach and interdependence between formal learning, non-formal learning (innovative, through all kinds of creative practices: socio-cultural, environmental, health, occupational, in values, artistic and cultural) and informal learning (complementary, led by self-learning and socialisation) (Vidiella, 2016b: 61-63).

11. The ART i PART programme of community arts creation in the neighbourhoods is an initiative of Barcelona City Council managed by the Institut de Cultura, which invites residents of the city to take part in a community initiative in which they act as creators. ART i PART, which was first held in 2018 in five neighbourhoods of the city, will reach the neighbourhoods of El Besòs, Gòtic and Poble-sec in 2019. Comuart is a non-profit organisation that promotes and supports community creation processes.

part of the actual processes and actions: the communities, the participants, the non-professionals, the emerging artists, and so on, immersed in intensive and demanding processes, being, in some cases, people whose rights are socially infringed. The question of whether they have to be paid or not as artists and its consequences is very present, although it does not tackle as a whole a wider issue concerning the tangible and intangible gains for all those involved in these processes. Each organisation must analyse with rigour and coordination the context and people involved, as well as the conditions that the project requires and, therefore, the commitments and responsibilities, and enable an honest dialogue on the possibilities of each person, their limitations and needs.

Faced with this global reality in which art and education are understood based on a multidisciplinary approach, with a firm moral imperative of solidarity that makes intersectorial cooperation necessary faced with the most weakened social contexts of society, it is quite clear that art (dissolved within the concept of culture) becomes a key tool to initiate social transformation processes that, paradoxically, challenge their own function and their ontological meaning in contemporary society. In this panorama, the theatres of the city cannot remain outside the currents of contemporary thought that determine the overall cultural policy and, moreover, they cannot survive outside the artistic and theatre ecosystems of the city. For the auditoria that do not have a strictly commercial aim concerning the theatre event, beyond putting on shows, a responsibility faced with the integration of social and community programmes prevails. Although most theatres of the city that do not match this profile (as least those listed below) have already carried out this task partially (through meetings with the audience, talks, school visits and other participatory activities), for the time being the so-called “social and welfare shift of culture” has been institutionalised through the collaboration with public and private associations and foundations, has been expanded with self-funded economic resources, or works with human resources that operate within a network of professional and personal cooperation. Let’s look at some of these activities in order to draw some conclusions, while considering the new paradigm of participatory culture.

### **Events organised by the theatres of the city of Barcelona (social and community programmes)<sup>12</sup>**

#### *Antic Teatre*

- Development of arts projects with the community and annual open door days: the “Festa d’Aniversari de l’Antic”, *OFF Sant Jordi*, with presentations, poetry recitals and dramatised readings; the “Festa de la Castanyada”, with the autumn meeting of the Antic Teatre community, with communal lunch and different activities with the residents of the neighbourhood.

12. I would like to express my appreciation for the contributions and willingness of the theatre directors or press offices who have provided me with dossiers and information about their activities. Particularly: Julio Álvarez (Tantarantana), Toni Casares, Víctor Muñoz and Aina Tur (Sala Beckett - Obrador), Mar Solà (Teatre Lliure press) and Xavier Pujolràs (TNC programme coordinator).

- Link with the Associació de Veïns del Casc Antic and with many other associations in the neighbourhood, such as the Xarxa de Cures.
- Community arts projects: centre working since 2011, when a group of residents in the neighbourhood began to work with dance professionals in workshops and approaches to the language of movement. The process is called *Ritme en el temps*. Since 2012, it has presented an annual performance. Between 2013 and 2016 the resulting shows also formed part of the programme of the Festival Grec de Barcelona.
- In 2017 the community arts project with senior people of the Antic Teatre was remodelled, and the playwright and theatre director Marta Galán took it over by exploring the beauty of the ageing of the protagonists, the female residents in the neighbourhood. The multidisciplinary show was called *La bellesa*. It was premiered at the Festival Grec and later participated in the III Fòrum d'Arts Escèniques Aplicades (November 2017, Institut del Teatre, Barcelona) and in the X Jornadas sobre la Inclusión Social y la Educación en las Artes Escénicas (May 2018, Teatro Valle Inclán, Madrid).

#### *Teatre Tantarantana*

- *Pi(e)ce*: Performing Creation Intergenerational Project, which since 2011 has worked with senior citizens and teenagers from schools in the neighbourhood under the coordination of the choreographer Constanza Brnčić and the playwright Albert Tola. The first time involved a creation workshop aimed at young people from El Raval, conducted outside school hours. In the five following editions it involved senior citizens from the neighbourhood and work began with the public secondary schools in the area, during teaching time and in partnership with the teaching staff of these schools.
- Okupa Raval seeks, as its name suggests, to occupy the neighbourhood and explore common and collective spaces in order to turn them into new spaces that can generate stories that portray an equally common and collective reality.
- *Assajar és de covards* is a dramatised reading, a concert and an acting jam session in the same event. A session that involves actors, directors, musicians, photographers and playwrights with the participation of the audience. Event produced and led by the Cia Casa Real one Monday per month at Àtic 22.

#### *Sala Beckett - Obrador Internacional de Dramatúrgia*

- Since 2009, the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona and the Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona have developed *Creadors en Residència* in secondary schools of Barcelona, a programme that introduces the different artistic expressions in public secondary schools through the direct and ongoing contact of a creator with the students. Since the academic year

2011-2012, the Sala Beckett - Obrador has participated, suggesting an artist (or artists) and acting as a mediator with the corresponding secondary school. It has had the participation of the playwrights Cristina Clemente and Helena Tornero, the companies Indi Gest and La Calòrica, the artistic tandem formed by Gerard Guix and Montse Rodríguez, and Iván Morales, Agnès Mateus and Quim Tarrida.

- ELS MALNASCUTS: theatre laboratory for people aged between 16 and 30, professional and non-professional, to experiment in any field of the performing arts. The shows of ELS MALNASCUTS are created based on an open call from which a group emerges.
- The Escola Pere IV in the neighbourhood of Poblenou has taken the performing arts as the backbone of its educational project, and the Sala Beckett, next door to the school, mentors the artistic part of the programme, providing advice to teachers, specific courses and activities to bring students closer to the theatre world.
- Writing and reflecting on theatre: the resident playwright of the Sala Beckett teaches two classes per year, both to the oldest students in the school and their teachers on the craft of writing theatre and basic dramaturgy concepts.
- Guided tours: The different theatre crafts. Guided tours led by different professionals to talk with the students about theatre crafts.
- Teaching theatre and using theatre for education. Specific course for teachers.
- Thought and debate: The Sala Beckett promotes open and participatory contexts for exchanging knowledge, thought, debating ideas, concerns and projects. It also encourages the holding of events on a specific subject.

### *Nau Ivanow*

Apart from the residencies for theatre companies and the specialised playwriting, performance, lighting and theatre production courses, the initiative of Nau Ivanow to get closer to the community is the *Escola de l'Espectador* in La Sagrera, which tries to break the barrier between companies and audience with the objective of showcasing the work of the creative process. The phases open to the residents of the neighbourhood are the following:

- Share with the company the first contacts with the play, the first readings.
- Option of participating in some of the rehearsals in order to discover the creative evolution.
- Contribute to the task of creating costumes and set design (props).
- Attend the different phases of the production process.
- Attend the premiere of the show.

### Teatre Nacional de Catalunya

- It works with La Caixa Foundation through its programme *CaixaEscena*, with a call aimed at young people aged 15 to 18 to create a show. 2018-2019 season: *Youth#4*, conceived and directed by the French director Didier Ruiz, from La compagnie des Hommes, a production that will be performed at the TNC.
- The TNC works with the community in which the building is located (the neighbourhood of El Fort Pienc), contributing to the festival board and other associations, mainly by assigning venues and/or material in the most relevant events, such as its main festival.
- Meeting of social theatre for young people, *Deslímita'm*, organised by imactaT and the Fundació La Roda, which since 2008 has brought together one morning on the same stage the young people who participate in the project *Actuem!*
- Collaboration with the Fundació Èxit with the objective, in internships, of making young people aware of the different crafts and tasks related to the world of theatre: from the electrician to the stagehand, or the builders and tailors. They also look after their training.
- Participant in the programme *Apropa Cultura*: a range of shows and cultural events at affordable prices for people at risk of social exclusion or with disabilities.
- Educational activities complementary to the performances: guided tours, theatre meetings, lectures on theatre crafts...

### Teatre Lliure

- Educational Service: initiatives that match the different audiences, from shows aimed at primary and secondary school students to educational events that complement the performing arts. The programme has worked since 2010 under the motto *El Lliure dels nens*.
- Educational events complementary to the performances: guided tours, theatre meetings... As well as theatre tours and theatre meetings à la carte.
- *Creadors en Residència*: first year in which the Lliure has participated (2018-2019). The resident artist at the Institut Montjuïc is the playwright and director Anna Serrano.
- Collaboration with Àgora-UPF: educational project with universities.
- Accessible performances, in collaboration with ONCE and the Institut Municipal de Persones amb Discapacitat (IMD).
- Recent programme cycles: *NOSaltres*, *Fòrum Dones Lliures*.
- Collaboration with Escenaris Especials, Fundació Arrels, La compagnie des Hommes.

- Collaboration with women's associations and feminist movements: Llibreria Còmplices, Biblioteca Francesca Bonnemaison, Centre de Documentació Joaquina Alemany i Roca, Duoda - Centre de Recerca de Dones, Llibreria Pròleg, Llibreria La Raposa, Llibreria On the Road.
- Workshop of the Kompanyia with Kelly Hunter: social event.
- Collaboration with the Centre d'Educació Especial Montserrat Montero.
- Other projects in which they are involved: *Apropa Cultura*; *Educa amb l'art*.
- Collaboration with Projectes Gratuïtats PAE: provision of free tickets to deserving schools.
- Collaboration with *We Act Assoc*, a multidisciplinary performing arts festival featuring a contemporary and accessible programme, both for an audience with sensorial diversity and for performing arts enthusiasts.

### *Mercat de les Flors*

- *Tot Dansa*: its main objective is to foster and showcase contemporary dance. The project brings this artistic speciality closer to students from public secondary schools in the city of Barcelona.
- *Versió Ciutat Dansa*, a pilot programme promoted by the IMEB (Institut d'Educació de Barcelona) and the Mercat de les Flors, aimed at secondary school students in public schools in Barcelona. It was born out of the need to provide continuity to the already established project *Tot Dansa*. The project promotes dance in Catalonia, linking the schools with associations, public facilities and centres. A networking that culminates in a street show: a choreography led by a renowned choreographer.
- *Tots dansen*: currently the project has become part of the Plan for the Promotion of Dance promoted by the Department of Culture of the Government of Catalonia, which must help increase and stabilise this educational initiative of Catalan scope that brings the language of movement and contemporary dance to a young audience. Aimed at secondary schools, this initiative encourages the participation of citizens and the knowledge of dance in Catalonia.
- In the *Projecte Tàndem Escola Bàrkeno + Mercat de les Flors - Graner*, dance and artistic movement enter the pre-school and primary education curricula in a multidisciplinary form. This educational innovation project seeks to create wide and sensitive spaces, in which the language of dance and the arts of movement are the learning vehicles in the different courses taught at school, as well as another form of discovery and experience.
- Residency Programme, with Graner - Mercat de les Flors as mediator from the 2012-2013 season to the present (2018-2019). The resident artists have been: Àngels Margarit (IES Joan Coromines), Los Corderos s.c.

(IES Milà i Fontanals), Aimar Pérez-Galí (IES Menéndez y Pelayo), Societat Doctor Alonso (IES Montjuïc), Toni Mira (IES Josep Comas i Solà), Bog Bouncers (IES Moisès Broggi), Jorge Dutor and Guillem Mont de Palol (IES Montjuïc), Constanza Brnčić (IES Josep Comas i Solà) and Andrés Waksman (IES Barri Besòs).

### *Arnau Itinerant*

In July 2007 Barcelona City Council gave the green light to the Special Plan of the Teatre Arnau, with the objective of expropriating the property and turning it into a performing arts centre. Moreover, the purchase of the theatre from the Christian Evangelical Chinese Church took place in late 2011. Six years after its purchase, the municipal building continued in a state of abandonment and the situation of the Teatre Arnau was a source of concern for a large number of associations and groups after so many years of deterioration and inactivity. Once the building was acquired by Barcelona City Council, the main question is what its future will be. To discuss it, the function that this facility must perform and the uses it will have, a participatory process was designed that involves part of the cultural sector and the neighbourhood associations of the three districts, and also all the groups that have shown their concern in the preservation of the venue. This cultural and community initiative, which takes place in the neighbourhoods of El Raval, Poble-sec and Sant Antoni, is developed based on:

- A working group comprising associations, professionals and volunteers in charge of building an organisational and community management model.
- Three interlinked work lines (community, memory and performing arts) in each of which a project is developed that enables the community to get involved in the cultural project of the Teatre Arnau.
- Workshops and activities of each of the projects in order to work, based on a community approach, on historical memory, co-produce a community show, conduct training in performing arts and related technical services (lighting, set design, sound, and so on) and produce a performing arts show.

### **Conclusions**

On the two sides of the table, according to the list of activities above, the openly political declaration of principles of the Antic Teatre is striking, which in its website states: “The interest in the current political and social situation, along with the joint desire to root in the community and active participation of the residents, leads the Antic Teatre to engage in the use of art as a social and political tool.” While the presentation of the TNC in the Apropa Cultura website states that:

“is an arts facility conceived as a centre of production and performance of shows whose aim is the growth of the performing arts, with a high level of excellence and artistic quality to get closer to all citizens. It is a public service institution aimed at the cultural enrichment of the country and a useful instrument for the creativity of artists and also the meeting between creators and society.”

The language is revealing. The regulars of the Teatre Antic, which is the smallest of the aforementioned facilities (in terms of seating capacity) know that it distinguishes itself with a commitment that seeks to be activist and that its programme commits to new trends and independent interdisciplinary initiatives. Moreover, along with the Teatre Tantarantana, which also commits to alternative and emerging initiatives, they are the two only centres fully devoted to strictly community arts activities with the participation of the residents as co-creators of a piece. The fact that both La Ribera and El Raval, the neighbourhoods where they are located, are the most conflictive in demographic terms,<sup>13</sup> places the management of these auditoria in a context in which the option of seeking the integration of the social fabric in their programme is coherent by means of “the use of art as a social and political tool.” Moreover, the biggest theatre (also in terms of seating capacity) deliberately uses the words “excellence, cultural enrichment of the country, instrument and public service”. As noted throughout this article, the TNC would be the public theatre that meets the political notions of the autonomous government, which although it carries out educational activities, as could not be otherwise, has other priorities, while the local government gives priority to the trend of decisively encouraging community practices and the social approach. In terms of other theatres of the city, we should not forget that the Teatre Lliure was born as a cooperative with an association of friends and spectators always at its side and that, after becoming a foundation, it was Barcelona City Council, during Pasqual Maragall’s mandate, that offered it the venue of the Palau de l’Agricultura to expand and grow. Like the other aforementioned theatres, all of them place a special focus on audience creation and education through the arts, from a multidisciplinary viewpoint that adapts to the arguments outlined above.

Finally, there are two questions that, more than certainties, seek to awaken concern over the future of theatre. Both address the key relationship between artists and audience. On the one hand, as George Yúdice (2003: 376) predicted at the start of the new century, we should wonder whether the artist has to train to become an “ethnographer”. Consequently, must we assume that all the avant-garde models that sought the fusion of art and life are no longer relevant as soon as they become a service? And, finally, following the reflections of Professor Marco de Marinis in the last issue of this journal (2018), where he criticised the artistic-political drift of participation, alongside the plea to “rehabilitate the spectator”: is it not the audience that makes the performing event meaningful through their response? Let’s hope that

13. Both La Ribera and El Raval have a high level of ageing and solitude in their population, mainly women, an intercultural reality with a strong presence of extracommunity residents and growing touristification rates.

the social and education shift, as well as the community participation initiatives, which of course we must understand from a constructive perspective, also manage to fill the theatres with future, attentive, critical and restless spectators with respect to the performing arts in all their formats.



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