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**“Towards a Sociology of Arts Managers.
Profiles, Expectations and Career Choices”**

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Introduction

Sociological knowledge on arts and cultural management can be of great help for students, practitioners and newcomers entering the field, as a map to find their way in a complex landscape.¹ It can also provide useful intellectual resources for critical thinking, which is a defining feature of these reflexive occupations. In turn, arts management proves a precious vantage point for a better understanding of ongoing changes at a general sociological level. Arts managers as a professional group are indeed at the core of ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Smith Maguire and Matthews 2012), and of ‘creative workers’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011), themselves a major locus of social change over these last decades of ‘post-industrial,’ ‘neo-capitalist,’ and ‘creative’ economy.

Yet, if there is little sociological research on arts management (Kirchberg and Zembylas 2010), there is still less on arts managers apart from the seminal studies by Paul DiMaggio and Richard Peterson looking at the US case thirty years ago (DiMaggio 1987; Peterson 1987). In this paper, we posit that understanding arts management from a sociological point of view implies studying arts managers as a social group. This entails investigating the range of their socio-professional

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profiles and trajectories, and, on this basis, accounting for their practices, skills and values. It then becomes possible to locate arts management in the structures of class systems and of the workforce, as well as in the complex web of relationships between arts field, the market, private and public patrons, the media and the general public. Eventually, such a framework enables us to specify what arts management is from a sociological point of view. This chapter proposes a first step in this direction. By posing the question of career choices in arts management by students, we shed light on the social conditions, resources and values invested in such occupations. By doing so, our aim is to lay the basis for a comprehensive sociology of arts managers.

Methodology

This chapter sums up some of the results of a large quantitative and qualitative research project on the French case, set in a broader international comparative perspective. A more complete version is presented in our book, *Culture as a vocation*, to which we may refer the reader to this volume for further information and elaboration (Dubois and Lepaux 2016). The survey initially consisted in administering a questionnaire to candidates for entry in core cultural management programs offered by French universities at the second-year master's level in France (some twenty formations). We processed over 1,500 responses between February and July 2009. Having cleaned up the sample, we retained the responses of 787 individuals. In addition to the original results drawn from the questionnaires, this research relied on secondary analysis of statistics from various public bodies. Lastly, we collected three types of qualitative material: 1) a corpus of forty-five application files (CVs, letters of motivation, and career plans) for one of the

programs in our sample; 2) systematic observations of selection interviews for this master's program; 3) twenty interviews with successful or unsuccessful applicants on their trajectories and their educational and career choices.

In the first section of this chapter, we present the main factors leading applicants to consider arts management as a possible and desirable career choice. Then, we analyze the social characteristics of would-be arts managers in terms of class, gender and educational background, and show how these characteristics match the patterns of the job market and of French class structure. This leads, in the third section of this chapter, to better understanding of the expectations and aspirations invested in arts management, and, therefore, to insights on the social meaning of activities in this domain.

1. Culture as a Career Choice

Making a career out of culture has become a conceivable option within the space of professional career choices, particularly for higher education graduates. Career 'choices' cannot only be explained on grounds of individual 'motivation.' What is usually called a career choice hinges on social conditions, and it is subjectively translated into an expression of individual will. Cultural work does not escape this rule (Brook 2015). In this first part, we sum up these main conditions.

1.1. The increase in cultural employment and the invention of new positions

First, the state of the job market. Western European countries have witnessed a massive and continued long-term increase of cultural employment since the 1980s (Feist 2000). From 1995 to 1999, the cultural sector in the EU experienced an average annual rate of employment growth of 2.1%, and during the same period employment figures for cultural occupations within the cultural sector grew at an annual rate of 4.8% (MKW 2001). In the United States, following a 20-year surge that surpassed the growth rate of other workers in the 1970s and 1980s, artists as a sector of the work force, had grown at the same rate as the overall labor sector from 1990 to 2005 (National Endowment for the Arts 2011). Employment in the fields of culture and creative economy has more generally increase in the United States over the last several decades.

In France, the number of professionals employed in information, arts, and performing arts sectors multiplied by 1.7 between 1962 and 1982 and again by 2.5 between 1982 and 2008; as of 2008 there were 4.2 times professionals in these sectors as in 1962—twice that number if the unemployed are also considered. This increase is far greater than that of the labor force in general. Over the entire period these occupations accounted for between 0.35% and 1.08% of the working population (for specific and comprehensive data, see Gouyon and Patureau 2014).

Depending on the definition under consideration, the cultural sector reportedly accounts for 1.7% to 2% of all employment in France, which is equivalent to the 2009 European Union average.

We posit that this increase, even if not linear and variable according to specific sectors and occupations, has progressively contributed to making these occupations conceivable career

choices for a growing fraction of new entrants on the labor market despite often unattractive employment conditions.

As the combined number of those employed in the cultural sector grew, cultural management occupations developed, and new related positions emerged making possible aspirations that were initially motivated by novelty appeal, that is, the introduction of new professional opportunities. These opportunities gradually came to reflect new divisions of labor established in the cultural field. This is a second general factor for career choices in arts management.

While organizational activities enabling the production of artworks and their presentation to the public have existed for a long time, these activities, which were previously undertaken by artists themselves or by volunteers, became progressively specialized, and elicited the development of a professional milieu. Richard Peterson showed how arts management experienced a shift, beginning in the early 1960s from a highly personalized model of the impresario to the ‘administrative’ model, which relies on professional skills that cannot be reduced to personal qualities (Peterson 1987). The transformation that began in the 1960s first came with the emergence of specialized training programs. Like their functions, the backgrounds of arts administrators became increasingly standardized: they progressively shifted from using social skills and connections to maintain rapport with patrons to occupying a more organizational and audience-oriented role, less charismatic and more technical. Paul DiMaggio emphasized the impact of these new funding methods by pointing to what he calls an ‘institutional isomorphism’ effect: interacting organizations tend to adopt compatible structures. Orchestras, museums and theatres began operating more like the public administrations or businesses that provided them

with funding (DiMaggio 1987). This convergence was directly encouraged by the funders and was also promoted by professional organizations.

Where France is concerned, a similar long-term historical account remains partly to be written. Yet, from the 1980s on, it is possible to retrace a shift that is to some extent comparable to what happened in the United States some twenty years earlier (Dubois 2012). While cultural activities underwent a professionalization process that began in the 1960s, it was essentially after the mid-1980s that professional labels pertaining to cultural management occupations were defined and popularized. In part, new positions were created, for example director of cultural affairs positions in municipalities. A similar process occurred during this period in other European countries (see for instance Mangset 1995 on Norway). Specialized training programs and publications appeared. As in the United States, the development of new sources of funding for culture, for example, from private sources, provided conditions conducive to the rise of cultural management. In many other countries, in contrast, funding is mostly public. The recruitment of staff charged with administrative and management duties came about due to significant growth of cultural budgets that began in the late 1970s at the local level, and went on to intensify in the early 1980s under the combined effects of an unprecedented increase in resources for the Ministry of Culture and of decentralization. These new fundings also made specialization necessary, partly in functional terms, due to the increase of administrative workload, but also in more political terms. In practice, increased public spending on culture came about as an effort to demonstrate strict control of expenditures in the public domain eliciting the rise of a managerial rhetoric. As we have seen in the United States case, a direct link can be drawn between changes in cultural policy and the invention of new professional positions.

1.2. The open definition of positions as a factor for attractiveness

This development of cultural management positions has resulted in little standardization of jobs or of paths of access to positions. Unlike professional bodies previously formed by librarians and museum curators, for example, occupations falling into the loose category of cultural management remain somewhat ill defined. The diversity or vagueness of job titles (cultural manager, administrator, mediator, development officer, or project designer), the absence of statistical classification, and their presentation in directories of occupations give some indications of the problem. Due to the heterogeneity of contractual arrangements (civil servants, contract workers, employees of associations, or employees under standard contracts), the strong internal divides within the cultural field between artistic disciplines and sectors, and the vast number of employers with differing statuses, there are no unified recruitment channels. The definition of functions remains largely open and a great diversity of skills comes into play.

This vagueness and heterogeneity might very well be a factor explaining the popularity of these jobs. The diversity of paths of access makes cultural management look like a fairly open sector, and the flexible definition of these occupations allows for the commitment of agents with varied dispositions, offers them a degree of freedom in their jobs, and makes the possibility of failure appear more distant.

The dialectic adjustment between the characteristics of a function or a job and the dispositions of those pursuing it tends to compound the relative fluidity of cultural management as a well-defined occupation. This fluidity, or indetermination, attracts applicants with varied

backgrounds. In turn they contribute to sustaining this indetermination by bringing their heterogeneous dispositions into play. Indeed, another reason for the attractiveness of these fuzzy positions is that they leave those who pursue them the possibility of defining their outlines by contributing with their own personal dispositions. This indetermination can be problematic, particularly when it affects employment conditions. Yet it also contributes to making these jobs attractive: polyvalence and pluri-activity are antidotes to routine; individuals are often, to some extent, able to define their activity on the basis of orientations that are personal or experienced, as such, instead of merely fulfilling pre-established functions. In short, their work gives them the opportunity to achieve self-fulfillment. Lastly, indetermination can also be attractive in that it offers protection against possible subjective feelings of failure. Instability may be perceived as desirable mobility in a world where discovery and change are valued; instead of brutal changes, their career, which they experience as a 'personal project', moves in imperceptible combinations and shifts.

1.3. Changes in higher education and the rise of arts management training programs

Along with the development of cultural employment and the characteristics of these occupations, the transformations of higher education and specifically the development of training programs specialized in cultural management have contributed to making these jobs a conceivable professional prospect. First, there is a relationship between transformations in higher education and the rise of cultural work (see Ashton & Noonan 2013 on the British case). In France, the increase in student populations and longer periods of schooling have produced cohorts of graduates looking for professional guidance.² This is especially the case in the general tracks,

including in the humanities and literary subjects. Due in part to the decoupling between these tracks and the *concours* (competitions) of higher education that were their 'natural' extension, bachelor's level graduates have had to seek out alternatives that fit their training and give them the opportunity to access positions that limit the risk of educational downgrading. The choice of culture is a possible response to this twofold quest; most of the applicants to cultural master's programs have this background.

Second, new training programs in cultural and arts management have contributed to occupational choices in this field. In the United States, the professionalization process of arts managers that began in the 1960s came with the emergence of specialized training programs. The first appeared in 1966 at Yale University and at Florida State University; they were followed by programs that initially focused on theatre management but were then progressively extended to all the arts, in arts colleges and business schools alike (Redaelli 2012). In Europe, programs appeared in the 1970s and developed mostly after the 1980s, with support from international organizations like UNESCO and the Council of Europe and then the European Union at the European level (Sternal 2007). The European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centers (ENCATC) was established in 1992. France followed a roughly similar chronology. The creation of training programs specializing in cultural management came in the early 1980s, as part of a broader professionalization of the cultural sector promoted, at the time, by government policies (Dubois 2012).

In France and abroad (Rolfe 1995), the success of these programs among students ensured sufficient enrollment numbers that in turn made possible the creation of new programs which

were always certain to attract enough applicants. However, this ‘demand’ does not exist independently from the corresponding ‘supply.’ The wide diffusion of the idea that one can make a career out of culture through these training programs, without necessarily being an artist, probably goes some way towards explaining why so many pursue them, especially those who are most uncertain about their career. These programs receive significant exposure in the press—especially in the mainstream cultural press, and in career information magazines and handbooks. The diversity of the available training programs leads, in turn, to the diversification of the publics who see cultural management as a possible career path. Few other academic curricula are indeed likely to attract the equal interest of students in history, business, and theatre. Culture became a conceivable and legitimate career choice for all these students not only because the professional world of culture welcomes all of these backgrounds, but also because there are programs available in each of these disciplines.

Ultimately, growing competition upon entry, the rise of training programs, and—to some extent—the attractiveness of these programs and of cultural management occupations all have a mutually reinforcing effect. Access to cultural employment was already highly selective before the development of training programs. Increasingly, however, employers are driving the demand for degrees by those seeking employment who are then encouraged to make considerable investments in their own training. These investments in turn reinforce the competition for access to specialized programs, which are, as a result, often highly selective despite the number that currently exist. This selectiveness likewise makes these programs more desirable, or at any case contributes to making them appear as ‘serious’ options even where they might have otherwise appeared as ‘bohemian’ choices.

2. Profiles of aspiring cultural managers

How are these objective and collective conditions transformed into subjective and individual aspirations? To answer this question, we will now examine the social features of the applicants, and show the role played by gender, social background, education and cultural socialization.

2.1. A feminine vocation

An outstanding feature of aspiring cultural managers, in comparison to those pursuing other higher education degrees, is that an exceptional proportion of them are women: 85% among the applicants and 80% among those enrolled in cultural management master's programs. Similar rates are observed in other national contexts. This proportion far exceeds that of the student populations at large (56.5% of women in 2004). The gendered identities of professional positions ('a man's job' vs. 'a woman's job) often explain positive (by projection) and negative career choices (resulting from the exclusion of activities reputed to be suited to one gender or another). This only partly applies to cultural management. In the French case at least, these positions are too recent or not well enough established to have a gendered identity assigned to them, and crucially, they are far from being held by women as often as one might think. For instance, the positions of directors, programmers and producers in broadcasting and performing arts sectors, which are highly coveted, are mostly held by men (two thirds), a proportion similar to that of theatre and orchestra directors in the United States in the 1980s, for example.

The fact that there is a vast majority of women among applicants to cultural management

training programs may reflect an ongoing feminization process in the cultural sector. The proportion of women executives has steadily increased, since the 1980s, in media broadcasting and performing arts, and among arts and performing arts professionals. The trend is more pronounced in younger generations. A similar trend has also been witnessed for selected categories of cultural management employment, such as directors of municipal cultural departments (Dressayre 2002).

One explanation for the high proportion of women applying to cultural management training programs is the traditionally observed tendency of young women to enter literary tracks in their studies. Typically, this is attributed to self-imposed decisions to avoid science-oriented studies based on dissuasive effects of teachers' verdicts, parental expectations, and on the emphasis placed on the 'feminine' connotations of literary disciplines. At the later stages of higher education, choices become increasingly connected to professional career plans, as expectations in terms of employment rise. Cultural sector jobs can then appear as a possible and desirable outcome for female students. The large number of young women in cultural management programs may thus result not so much from a direct effect of gender on the "choice" of this sector as from a succession of past choices, informed by gender rationales at every step of the way, and at the end of which the amount and type of educational capital accumulated leads women to perceive cultural sector jobs as viable. A second explanation lies in the differences between genders in the relationships to cultural and artistic practices. It has long been established that more women than men participate in cultural practices—at least in certain fields. It was the case for museum attendance in 1960s France (Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper 1990), and it is more generally the case in the United States today (Christin 2012). Recent studies have

demonstrated a trend toward the feminization of these practices: gaps are widening for practices that were already predominantly female (such as reading), and narrowing for chiefly male ones (such as amateur music). Since a strong correlation has been observed between the intensity of cultural practices and the aspiration to pursue careers in the cultural field, the feminization of cultural practices may very well be among the factors contributing to feminization of career paths in this sector.

It is worth mentioning that the investments of men and women in these jobs differ; they do not target the same positions, and differences are particularly observed in terms of creative versus non-creative jobs. Women still are in the minority among artistic creators. Thus, the combination of the women's more intense cultural practices and greater dispositions, and the presence of a gendered division of labor in which creation is a male business may explain the very large number of women among those pursuing cultural management careers. The same pattern has been observed among librarians and museum mediators. Women are both less inclined to pursue creative artistic careers and more likely to give them up. When artists become teachers, more men pursue careers as artists and teachers whereas women tend to give up their artistic work. These differences can be observed at an early stage, even before the beginning of artistic careers, when we look at professional aspirations. Among aspirants to cultural management careers, fewer women envision careers as artists (32 per cent against 44 per cent of men) and more women give up on this prospect (48 per cent against 40 per cent of men). As a career choice, cultural management provides artists, who don't expect to derive a stable income from their art, to reinvest their dispositions into a stable career. The predominance of women among those who

pursue careers in cultural management can therefore also be interpreted as a result of their greater tendency to give up on creative work.

2.2. A choice for the privileged?

Social status is too rarely taken into account to explain involvement in creative work (Brook 2013), whereas contrary to the optimistic common-sense view, access to positions in this domain is hardly ‘meritocratic’ (O’Brien, Laurison, Miles and Friedman 2016). In our sample, many of the would-be cultural managers have a privileged social background. Nearly half of the students (more than 45%) in these master’s programs are children of executives or of individuals holding upper intellectual occupations. The proportion of students in this category far exceeds that of all university students (30%) and even of all master’s level students (37%). Similar proportions are observed for applicants to the master’s programs, about whom the questionnaire results give us more detailed information. Over four out of five applicants (81%) have at least one parent in the ‘executive,’ ‘intermediate occupations,’ or ‘CEO’ categories, and nearly half (47%) have both of their parents in those categories. In addition to their high level of employment, the applicants’ parents also stand out owing to the high representation of some areas of activity: education, health, social work and, more predictably, of art and culture. Nearly two in three applicants (62%) have at least one of their parents working in one of these. Those sectors generally require high levels of educational capital. This dominance of educational capital is matched not only by reproduction strategies in which school is highly valued, but also by intellectual and cultural dispositions that may lead these individuals to pursue cultural occupations. The second characteristic shared by the sectors is that they have to do with human relations. For that reason,

the cultural sector is conducive to attracting individuals who value the relational aspects of professional activities, and in some cases, invest in it their own dispositions for altruism.

2.3. High levels of educational capital

The educational characteristics of our population show the high level of attainment not only of the cultural managers in place and of those who apply to work in these positions, but also of those who are looking to acquire a degree. They have accumulated high levels of educational capital even before applying to a cultural master's program, primarily exemplified by the conditions in which they obtained their *baccalauréat*. Eighty per cent of applicants to cultural master's programs graduated from high school on or ahead of schedule (against 62% for the student population at large). The somewhat high representation of prestigious selective programs in the early stages of higher education constitutes the second indicator that applicants have high levels of initial educational capital.

Regarding the type of education pursued, and therefore the applicants' type of educational capital, we observe a majority of literary backgrounds in the broader sense of the term. This is shown in the negative by the weak proportion of applicants who studied economics or management at university or in a business or management school (7%), a low proportion for master's programs that often place emphasis on management. Former students in literature (11%), languages (13%) and communication (9%) are more frequently found among the applicants. Within the humanities and social science, history students are the best represented (over 20%, plus 10% of art history students). Then come cultural programs such as 'cultural

mediation,' which are less academic and more job-market-oriented. Students who have undergone training directly related to the arts and culture before applying to a master's program in cultural management make up just over half of the applicants.

This divide results from the structural coexistence of two types of educational capital that may be exploited in cultural management. The first rests on the acquisition of cultural skills during schooling under varied forms (artistic in art schools, applied in mediation programs, more academic for art history students). The second attests to the acquisition of generalist skills, and/or ones that are external to the cultural field, strictly speaking (philosophy, law) that may also be exploited in cultural management if they are combined with cultural resources accumulated outside of school. The joint presence, in equivalent proportions, of these two types of educational capital also shows that recruitment in cultural occupations remains largely open. The development of specialized programs has not resulted in a unification of the available training. Many educational trajectories lead to cultural management. This diversity is however nuanced by the examination of the applicants' cultural investments outside of school, which brings a modicum of homogeneity to their backgrounds.

2.4. The role of cultural socialization

Most applicants readily claim that their choice of pursuing cultural management jobs is 'no accident,' in the sense that it is associated with a personal taste for culture and intense cultural practices, which themselves result from the combined effects of gender, family background and educational capital. The professional positions of the parents, the sectors in which they work and

their levels of educational attainment suggest that many would-be cultural managers have experienced an early and intense cultural socialization within their family (with cultural outings in the previous year for around 90% of parents). The parents' cultural practices are of course passed on through a well-established mechanism of reproduction that remains a crucial factor in future practices (Coulangeon 2013). They also produce a cumulative effect of familiarization with the cultural world and of encouragement to make new investments that contributes to make culture a conceivable or desirable *professional* environment. The applicants have experienced an early cultural socialization thanks to their relatives and almost all of them had an artistic practice as a child. Often in connection to this artistic training, artistic practices are also widespread among the applicants: 67% of them have (40%) or have had (27%) a regular practice (at least weekly), and over 25% have two different practices or more. There is also a significant gap when it comes to cultural outings, which are slightly more frequent for applicants to cultural master's programs than for the student population in general and even students in literary and artistic disciplines. The applicants are eleven times more likely to have been to a museum or an exhibit than the students at large. All applicants have been at least on one cultural outing over the previous month.

3. The rationales of a career choice

3.1. A genuine choice

The majority of the aspirants make a genuine choice to be trained and work in cultural management. Enrolling in a second-year master's program in cultural management is often more demanding than continuing their previous studies would have been. It is, lastly, a directly 'professional' choice, in the sense that the program serves as the last stage in preparation for employment. While some of the students develop a vague attraction for culture at a fairly late point, most of them report having chosen to be trained in cultural management when they began their higher education (36%) or even earlier (10%). The fact that students make multiple applications to cultural management programs shows their investment in this career path. Over half of the applicants applied to at least two of these specialized programs. They almost always report wanting to work directly after graduating (88%), and for the vast majority (68%) to work exclusively in the cultural sector. The importance of the applicants' pre-professional experiences also confirms this investment. Three in four applicants have already completed at least one internship in the field of culture; half of them have done several. Half of the applicants report having paid work experience in the cultural sector. While these jobs serve material needs, they also fulfill a specific function of student work: the anticipation of one's professional future.

3.2. Failed artists?

In a sector that revolves around the figure of the creator, the choice of devoting oneself to organizational tasks can be seen as a second choice, where one's activity in service of artists makes up for having given up an artistic career that was out of reach. While there may be some truth to this hypothesis, depicting the applicants as failed artists would be grossly oversimplifying things; indeed, the relations between artistic vocations and the choice of cultural careers are much more complex.

Although it constitutes a minority, the proportion of students who pursue careers in cultural management after having given up on an artistic career is not altogether insignificant (12.5%). In most cases this earlier career choice was not just a vague childhood dream, and is rooted in often recent, sometimes important, experiences as an artist. When this is the case, renouncement of the artistic career may reflect a mythical vision of the artistic vocation as an internal necessity. An applicant explained in this sense during a selection interview that he gave up theatre because he was interested in various things and not driven by the exclusive 'faith' and total involvement he regarded as necessary to be an actor. In other cases, the experience of the everyday life of artists may be a factor, as for this young jazz musician tired with exhausting tours (selection interview). At any rate, these two forms of the rationalization of the relation between artistic vocation and choice of cultural management shed light on the meaning agents may confer on their career trajectories.

The relation between artistic vocation and the choice of cultural management cannot however be

limited to a more or less forced career shift. We might also consider that they are two forms of the translation of cultural aspirations into professional aspirations, taking shape at different moments in individual trajectories. In other words, rather than seeing the artistic vocation and its vagaries as the reason driving individuals to seek out a career in cultural management, we can identify identical rationales and factors favoring these two choices, based on partly shared dispositions, especially developed during familial socialization. These are specifically cultural dispositions such as practicing an artistic activity or attending concerts or art galleries. They are, more broadly speaking, social ones: turning to non-conventional jobs, valuing personal self-fulfillment, and placing less emphasis on material wealth. Chronologically, they are expressed first under the romantic form of a yearning for art, lasting for the duration of the feeling of freedom and of open future dreams experienced during high school or the first year of academic studies, as familial, economic and professional constraints are suspended. As personal experiences and parental or educational incentives reshape the ‘space of possibles,’ and as graduation nears, the same dispositions may be expressed in a related but outwardly less risky and more ‘serious’ choice—that of cultural management. This choice is then not so much the result of renouncement as it is the translation of an artistic vocation under a more ‘reasonable’ form, that is, one adjusted to the constraints that were previously, and temporarily, put aside.

Lastly, and this is worth some emphasis, the choices of pursuing artistic activities and cultural management are combined as often as the latter follows the former. The applicants who still plan to pursue careers as artists are indeed roughly as numerous (15%) as those who have given up on the prospect. They are ‘serious contenders’ in higher proportions— at least for admission to a cultural master’s program. That is because, in comparison to applicants at large, they have

accumulated more pre-professional experience (active participation in cultural associations, internships, paid professional experience), and they more often have friends and relatives working in the fields of art or culture. For them, the acquisition of skills or at least of a diploma in management, funding, curating or public relations comes as a complement to their artistic skills. They appear to develop a double academic strategy consisting of obtaining a degree liable to support their perspectives of diversification, and acquiring skills they can use as complements to their artistic skills, especially in management, organization, and law.

The combination of artistic and administrative activities takes two main forms. The first is the projection into a double career of artist and manager. In that case cultural management is an activity pursued in parallel with a more uncertain artistic practice, offering a modicum of security in the same world. Cultural management can also be combined with artistic practice following a rationale of functional diversification, whereby artistic and para-artistic activities are not only juxtaposed out of economic necessity but actually relate to each other. The occurrence of such combinations in professional projections reflects a trend towards the growing integration of functions of production, organization and diffusion. The application to a cultural management program then relates to the acquisition of a second (administrative, financial, institutional) skill considered as necessary to artistic activity. Such a strategy reflects a transformation of the capital specific to the artistic field, which is considered to include a 'managerial' component that used to be experienced as an external constraint by former generations and is now internalized as 'part of the job', since 'art's a market'. A somewhat new pattern thus emerges. Artists may rationalize their creative activity by acquiring complementary skills that lead to practical and economic conditions thus putting them at odds with the stereotype of the 'failed artist.'

3.3. The cultural sector more than a specific occupation

The choice of cultural management is more rooted in the attraction to ‘culture’ and the personal and professional perspectives it may offer, than in the contents of a specific activity or the characteristics of a specific job. The applicants have a (genuine) professional interest in the cultural field, but few aim to work in a given occupation, function or structure. This is a vocation to work in the cultural sector, not in a particular job. In this respect, cultural management stands out from other vocational occupations like journalism, teaching, art and research, whose attractiveness comes from the corresponding practices. Choosing a career in culture management means wanting to work in the cultural sector rather than to perform management tasks. While the vast majority of questionnaire respondents report wanting to look for a job in culture immediately after graduating, they are generally vague about the specific jobs they want to pursue. Only a third of the applicants intend to work in a cultural sector in particular – most frequently theater and music. The high representation of the performing arts reflects the fact that this is a very varied sector, which amounts for much of the employment available in the cultural field. Additionally, there are programs specific to other sectors, such as the book and publishing trades or public reading, which likely explains the scarcity of references to them in the applicants’ career plans.

Less than half (45%) of the applicants aspire to hold a function (or several) in particular immediately after graduating, and only a quarter (27%) after a few years. These functions are generally referred to in somewhat elusive terms. The first explanation for that pertains to the characteristics of jobs in the field whose definitions tend to remain rather fuzzy. The general,

vague or multi-faceted nature of the functions and of their titles is not seen as an issue, as it fits the desire of many applicants to have a ‘complete picture’ and do ‘a bit of everything’ during the early stages of their careers. In the longer term, this may also be because polyvalence is associated with high-level executive and decision-making positions (with project supervision and management, as in the following excerpt, looming on the applicants’ professional horizons).

Secondly, the indetermination of career plans also results in part from the lack of linearity of the expected professional trajectories: instead of making regular progress throughout their career in the same job, the cultural managers will likely experience a succession of positions entailing multi-faceted functions that may vary from one post to another. In the application letters and documents, this sense of keeping things open or even of deliberately avoiding specific mention of anything that might be limiting is rationalized, and constitutes more or less deft ways of staging the search of a professional identity founded on function rather than post, on ‘cross-cutting’ work rather than on a specific sector, on ‘project’ rather than category-specific interests, on challenges rather than routine. This tendency illustrates the ‘ideology of de-compartmentalization’ that serves both as a professional posture and as a cultural policy orientation. It is therefore hardly surprising that multi-positionality, or more precisely the mediator’s position at the ‘crossroads,’ is frequently highlighted. The insistent yet elusive reference to a ‘project’ or ‘network’ not only reflects a vision of the social world in which dividing lines are blurred, it is also a way for applicants to state that they share the language in use in the professional sector where they aspire to work, and to use its polysemy to make their aspirations intelligible as well as extensible and adaptable.

3.4. Four typical cases

Having in mind the general conditions and features we have presented in the previous parts of this chapter, four typical cases can help us to account for the variety of social and individual rationales for a career choice in cultural management. The upward social mobility strategies implemented by working-class graduates are the first one. These strategies have in the past resulted in the social diversification of some cultural occupations. They have also been conducive to the emergence of a key component of the ‘new petite bourgeoisie’ which in the 1960s and 1970s made up the bulk of those who occupied the then, new cultural intermediary positions (Bourdieu 1984, Dubois 2014). This social diversification process has now been halted if not reversed as objective chances of social promotion through access to more indeterminate positions have decreased. Such backgrounds are now strongly in the minority, even among aspirants. Only 12% of applicants to master’s programs in cultural management have a working-class background, against 20% of all master’s students.

The dreams and hopes of children from working-class and lower middle-class backgrounds may now seem like unrealistic aspirations as they result from three types of disconnect: from their background, from the higher education system and from the professional world in which they aspire to work. As they enter higher education they are steered away from the ‘reasonable’ career choices promoted by their relatives and peer groups. Studying cultural mediation at the bachelor’s level thwarts their prospects of academic achievement and reinforces their disconnect from their original social circles, without being directly rewarding from a professional standpoint. Indeed, this comparatively lower educational capital does not reach its full potential on the job market due to a triple deficit. First, applicants lack exposure to culture outside of the

educational framework, having less frequent or less legitimate cultural practices (i.e., more television, less reading). Yet, this ‘personal’ culture is particularly expected in a world where it is customary to assert one’s distance from schooling and one’s attachment to the institutional and legitimate forms of culture. Secondly, they lack professional experience, having more rarely had a job in cultural domains (30% against 36%); when they have, the experience is less frequently significant. Pursuing cultural programs at an early stage in their higher education leads them to carry out numerous and often long internships; yet, it is likely that, in part because they occur at an early point in their trajectory, they consist chiefly in performing subordinate tasks or are carried out in structures enjoying little recognition (like small independent businesses). Lastly, they lack social capital, as they less frequently have relatives in the worlds of art and culture. This is a known decisive factor of educational downgrading, hindering the social advancement of working-class graduates. For these reasons, these applicants are quite likely to see their social and educational origins catch up on them later, either by making it more difficult to land a job or by having to content themselves with less prestigious and well-paid positions (in less well-endowed structures) or less valued functions (being in direct contact with the public rather than the artists and partners).

This exclusion of young graduates from lower social backgrounds is an effect of the increasing role of social and professional reproduction, which is the second typical case. The intergenerational transmission of professional positions in the cultural field has increased over the past few decades. If we stick to the applicants that make up our study’s population, it is worth recalling that around 17% of them have parents working in the cultural sector. Although they remain largely in the minority, this proportion is ten times higher than the estimated share for all jobs.

Only a longitudinal study conducted over several generations would allow us to establish this with precision, but arguably this transmission does not so much reflect the continuity of a long line as the extension of recently acquired familial positions. Many of the jobs in the field were created at a time when the parents of today's applicants entered the labor force. The older cultural occupations are frequently based on the transmission of economic capital (as in the case of art merchants), and, as such, are less in line with the typical prospects of newly trained cultural managers. Our hypothesis is that this professional reproduction applies to a large extent to the children of those who in the previous generation had some of the first cultural jobs and thereby moved up the social ladder to reach a level that the new generation is trying to maintain. Today's aspirants are probably the inheritors of the 'new petite bourgeoisie' rather than a new generation of its working-class component.

In addition to contributing to raising the social barriers to entry, this heredity accentuates the institutionalization of the professional positions of cultural management—positions that are now reproduced (or passed on) more than invented. Along with a general societal decline in upward social mobility trajectories, this is another factor transforming the type of investment individuals might make toward their career. One is less likely to experience this activity as a 'mission'—particularly one of cultural proselytism—when the parents' legacy makes it 'normal' to follow a career in culture, than when culture is considered a means to escape a low socio-economic background.

The trend towards higher and more restricted social backgrounds is also influenced by the strategies used by upper class children to fight downclassing, which is the third typical case. As they seek to avoid the risk of downward social mobility or tone down its effects, they leave less room for those who target the same positions in a perspective of upward mobility. In this context, cultural management programs constitute both a way to avoid teaching (now a devalued occupation), which used to be one of the main career paths chosen by students in the humanities, an outlet for cashing in on the cultural dispositions inherited from family socialization and, if not clear professional career perspectives, at least holding out the hope of finding one's place in a world that enjoys a certain degree of social prestige. This is made easier by the fact that the weak codification of cultural occupations and of the paths to access them often creates intermediate situations well suited to avoid experiencing failure, which might happen brutally when seeking more established positions.

The fourth and last case, is the career choice based on self-assertion. This factor can be found in virtually all applicants, but it tends to matter more for students whose training did not specifically prepare them to work in the cultural world and initially offered them more varied prospects, generally more stable and financially rewarding than cultural jobs. In their case this unlikely choice, not directly resulting from their educational trajectory, gives us a particularly illuminating showcase of the personal factor that informs career choices. These applicants are less exclusive in pursuing cultural management. They more often apply to master's programs in other areas and leave the possibility of seeking employment elsewhere open. This diversification results from the self-confidence conferred by their versatile training and often by the combination of high social and educational resources. This confidence in themselves and in their

future leads them to conclude that no option should be ruled out, in principle. Self-assertion in such cases lies in the feeling of freedom that leads them to think that everything is possible, even choices that break from expected standard choices.

Conclusion

Pursuing a career in cultural management can be a response to a wide range of demands that sometimes contradict each other. Applicants may seek to maintain a sense of their own freedom by investing personal dispositions into their career choice, thereby reinforcing the idea that they chose their own path. In some cases, they try to soften the effects of downclassing or keep their aspirations of upward social mobility alive. They need to find a place in the labor market and in social space with resources that are partly out of step with the most frequent and immediate requirements of economic and social life, like graduates from literary disciplines whose knowledge is often considered 'useless' by the wider society. They must also find a way not to disown the dispositions associated with this mismatch, such as bohemian lifestyle and a propensity for critique, while meeting the conditions to fulfill the social and material necessity of having a job.

Cultural occupations are perceived to provide relief from the harshness of the social world by those who pursue them because of the multiple forms of gratification they allow. Putting aside monetary rewards, which are here second to other priorities, these include the social prestige conferred by the cultural world, meeting artists and journalists, having varied and often

collective activities, seeing one's work yielding concrete and publically visible results, enjoying a degree of freedom in the organization of one's work, having the opportunity to leave one's personal mark, the perspective of continuing to learn, the moral satisfaction of helping out (artists, the public) or to work for a common good (like the creation and diffusion of artworks). These multiple forms of gratification may be combined. Crucially, they can also be compensated (meaning that achieving some of them can make up for lacking others), thereby allowing a projection into the future where it is always possible to hope for contentment in one's position, both in terms of work and in terms of one's place in social space.

Whether these hopes are actually fulfilled, for whom and under which conditions is an entirely different story, and one that would warrant further research. By focusing on how careers in cultural management begin, we have largely left aside what follows logically and chronologically. The study of the individuals who invest in such careers and of what they invest in them could be fruitfully extended by analyzing the conditions for actually accessing these positions. Further research could investigate the effects of these initial conditions and paths of access to employment on subjective relationships to work and its constraints. The combination of the aspiring cultural managers' enchanted relationship to work and the instability of their employment conditions might encourage a very intense investment, which in some cases can serve as the basis for a form of exploitation that is especially effective because it appears voluntary, at least for new entrants. It would then be worth documenting the evolution of this relationship to work over time, and of the succession of positions that make up a career. Insofar as cultural management is not strictly divided into clearly identified occupations and statuses, we must do away with the linear view of careers that applies to established positions. Only then can

we recount the succession of positions and activities, and retrace the successive shifts that make up careers, from one function to another (from relations with the public to programming), from one type of institution to another (from a drama company to a subsidized theater) or from one sector to another (from classical music to contemporary dance). Mapping out careers in this way would allow us to identify the space of the positions that define cultural management, a prerequisite for a morphological study of this professional group that remains largely to be done. It is our hope that our research is of some help for researchers who would contribute to the sociology of arts management through the sociology of arts managers—an outcome for which we advocate.

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¹ In the absence of a strict definition relevant in all national and linguistic contexts, we use 'arts' and 'cultural' management or managers interchangeably, even though these quasi-equivalent phrases may sometimes have slightly different uses and connotations.

² The population of higher education students practically doubled between 1980 and 2009, the year of our study – from 1,184,000 to 2,134,000 individuals.