Aesthetic Consumption in Arts Organisations Manangement: An

Autoethnographic Inquiry

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ABSTRACT: *The creative economy relies on arts organisations and on their ongoing capacity of generating significant experiences for their audiences, stakeholders and the artists involved in it. These experiences are considered to be highly aesthetically, although we know very few about how management deal with aesthetics in terms of production and consumption. Our research goal is to elaborate and discuss how aesthetic consumption may become a path to improve the management of arts organisations. The research´s method uses autoethnography approach, involving several arts organisations in Brazil. Research outcomes highlight the importance of aesthetic consumption in the process of managing arts organisations and how it may play a strategic role in their sustainability.*

Keywords: Aesthetic consumption; Arts Organisations; Management; Autoethnography

The creative economy relies on arts organisations and on their ongoing capacity of generating significant aesthetic experiences for their audiences, stakeholders and the artists involved in it. Paradoxically, the sustainability of arts organisations are always a challenge, and their management is weakly connected to issues of aesthetic consumption. Our knowledge about sustainability in an arts organisation is limited to theories of general management for all types of organisations, using theories borrowed mainly from the industrial and service sectors. At the same time, we know that arts organisations face distinct challenges and work in a specific mindset (Stein & Bathurst, 2008). Audiences play a vital role in the sustainability of performing arts organisations. However, little attention has been paid to building enduring relationships with existing audiences as a way of having a more dramatic impact on these organisation's long-term viability (Rentschler, Radbourne, Carr, & Rickard, 2002) On the other hand, the organisational aesthetic studies provide another point of view for management in the organisation (Boje, 2007; Strati, 1995, 2000, 2003; Taylor & Hansen, 2005).

Our research goal is to elaborate and discuss how aesthetic consumption may become a path to improve the management of arts organisations. This article aims to improve our knowledge and the practice of managing arts organisations by integrating theories of consumption and aesthetics. Aesthetics allows reflecting about a different bond between managers, the organisation, and the audience. When aesthetic is associated with consumption, it is oriented by the organisation and by the audience as well.

In order to explore the relationship between aesthetics, consumption and management in arts organisations, we adopt an autoethnographic approach (Adams, 2012; Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2015; Alvesson, 2003; Chang, 2016; Ellis, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) This approach explores researcher experiences confronted with other managers experiences through interviews and participative observation to propose a new understanding of art management. Based on reflexivity and dialogicity, this approach operates as a device of inter-subjective confrontation that allows

researchers to achieve a new understanding of experiences and consequently to the generation of new knowledge about aesthetics, consumption and sustainability in arts organisations.

The contribution of this research is that it provides new perspectives on arts organisations in a domain that is little researched (i.e., aesthetics, consumption and sustainability) by considering them as essential dimensions in and of themselves. We uncovered that consumption is not something external to organisations, but rather a relationship that has to be managed, regularly and aesthetically in order to ensure cultural organisation sustainability. The task of building audiences is much more than a transactional process of just increasing the number of attendees (Hill, O'Sullivan, & O'Sullivan, 2003). Cultural and arts managers deal with the challenge of keeping their audiences involved in experiences that are not limited to the artistic product but may extend to the whole artistic organisational life as well.

1. ARTS ORGANISATIONS: THE ONGOING PRODUCTION OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

The arts mindset has unique features and it is necessary to be aware of some of these peculiarities. Arts managers are a group of professionals that is still in construction and development. Arts managers schools are young and even rare, and most parts of adults managers had their knowledge by practising. On the other hand, some arts managers came from the arts: they are artists themselves, and they must figure out how to manage their business. Many artists work in management functions in arts organisations, and most of them had learnt how to manage the organisation and how to deal with managerial situations by practicing (Avelar, 2010; Cunha, 2007).

The artistic practice offers unique strategies for change and innovation by embracing risk, exploring ideas without determining an outcome, thereby enabling us to think differently and to mediate between individual and collective experience. At the same time, art has been increasingly

subject to market forces, which have the potential to evacuate its critical capacity (McQuilten & White, 2016). Managing in cultural industries is not about efficiently producing a product but about creating and maintaining an organisation that can produce and sell meaning. (Lawrence & Phillips, 2002).

Arts are older as humanity (Berthold, 2011). However, studies about arts management are still very young. Just recently scholars had been paying attention to the field of arts management (Hill et al., 2003; Howkins, 2002; Jung, 2017; Kolb, 2005; Kotler & Scheff, 1997; Radbourne & Fraser, 1996; Rentschler, 1999; Schmitt, Rogers, & Vrotsos, 2003; Stein & Bathurst, 2008; Throsby, 2001), the studies about it began to grow after the 1990s. The majority of researches available runs about the political perspective of cultural industries, and its impacts on society. Even though it is possible to find researches about arts management. However, almost all of them is bounded to functional business theories that are somehow adapted to the arts management field. We can find studies that are about organisational structure and management of arts organisations (Carradini, 2016; Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2009; Hearn, Ninan, Rogers, Cunningham, & Luckman, 2004; Hodgson & Briand, 2013; Kakiuchi, Sumi, & Takeuchi, 2012; Lemmetyinen, Go, & Luonila, 2013; Palmer, 1998; Radbourne & Fraser, 1996; Slavich & Montanari, 2009; Stein & Bathurst, 2008; Stewart, Fichandler, White, Dean, & Bikel, 1986; Vozikis, Clevinger, & Mescon, 1984). It is also possible to find research about the artistic product and the strategies that can be used to bound this product with the arts organisations audience (Bernstein, 2007; Fillis, 2003, 2011; Fillis & Rentschler, 2010; Fillis & Rentschler, 2005; Hill et al., 2003; Kolb, 2005; Kotler & Scheff, 1997; Lee & Lee, 2017; Quero, 2007; Rentschler, 1999; Rentschler & Kirchner, 2012; Rentschler et al., 2002; Schmitt, Rogers, & Vrotsos, 2003; Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006).

Arts organisation deals with aesthetic in all over its process, beyond its products (Le Breton, 2016; Strati, 1999; Taylor & Hansen, 2005). The creation of artistic products goes through aesthetic, and it seems curious how come it is still rare to find researches that consider aesthetic into the

management process of an artistic organisation. If we look deeper into human relations, it will be possible to verify that human being is surrounded by aesthetics and by the sensorial aspects. Sensory perceptions build a whole of meanings about the world, and they are shaped by education and used according to personal history (Le Breton, 2016). The human perceptions, therefore, are built not only by its history or educational background but also and maybe mainly by its sensorial perception. It means that to understand artistic consumption, we shall integrate the knowledge about aesthetics. Aesthetics, on the other hand, is not limited to beauty. When we mean aesthetics, we include the sensorial elements that human being can taste.

2. AESTHETIC CONSUMPTION WITHIN ARTS ORGANISATION MANAGEMENT: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

2.1 Methods

It is known that the arts organisation management field is still little systematised and much of the knowledge about the area was acquired in practice. The arts managers have accumulated a vast experience during their careers, and these experiences help to systematise and advance knowledge in the field. In this way, we understand that such experiences must be harnessed and incorporated into the methodology and not neglected as happens in most cases. Therefore, we argue that autoethnography is the methodology that best applies to the nature of the research we present here. Autoethnography is a method that uses the researcher's experience as an essential input for the production of knowledge (Alvesson, 2003; Anderson, 2006; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Chang, 2016). Unlike the classic ethnographies, in which the researcher is a stranger in the environment, in the autoethnographic researcher is intimate and fluent to the place that she or he is researching. This experience generates a chain of knowledge that will be expanded in the research process.

It is needed that the researcher or one of the researchers involved is familiar to the theme that is being researched and that she or he have accumulated an essential experience in the field. On the other hand, to avoid that the self-experience may be toxic to the research, it may be confronted with other experiences accumulated by other professionals that act in the same field.

In this article, we used 19 years of experience in arts organisation management from one of the authors. We had chosen six relevant experiences that will be the lens through which the phenomenon will be analysed. (Figure 01). This experiences resulted in a narrative (Boje, 2001; Czarniawska, 2004) that analysed the arts management through the aesthetics, consumption and sustainability perspectives. This experiences had given paths through what was possible to understand the arts organisations mindsets, specifications and management models practically. What is considered when arts organisations are managed, what is not and the possible lacks that can be filled with the integration of an aesthetical view into the management thoughts.

The author´s experience had been confronted with other experiences: the autoethnographic researcher shall cross-examine his/her experience to avoid a limited view of the phenomenon(Alvesson, 2003; Anderson, 2006).   The dialogical strangeness process was done in two poles: the holistic pole, in which the analysis had been done in an integrated way, mixing interviews with managers, observations and documents of organisations, and the focused polo in which only interviews had been analysed (Figure 02).

2.2 Aesthetic Management for Aesthetic Goods

A functional approach to a sensitive field – Arts managers believes in an organised management model to keep the business alive and sustainable. For that, the majority of them replies the management model that had been tested and used by organisations from different nature as

industrial and service organisation to seek efficiency. Sometimes it is possible to observe that the closer the management model of an arts organisation is to the management model of hegemonic organisation is, there is the feeling of well-done work by the manager's perception. Moreover, on the other hand, when managers of arts organisation describe examples of the ideal of the management model, they usually bring the orthodoxal administration rules used in the hegemonic organisation. ORG-A, ORG-B, ORG-D, ORG-E, ORG- insight-C, ORG- insight-D and ORG- insight-F seeks for an ordinary model of management, and they believe that the more functional the administration is, more successful the organisation can be All of them refer to the aesthetics only at the creation department. All the subjectiveness must be on the stage, on the exhibition walls. The more sophisticated aesthetical process leads to an excellence artistic product. It is curious to observe that there is this antagonistic thought between creation and the management of this creation. Each one stays on opposite sides of the scale of pragmatism and subjectiveness.

When ORG-A had been created, their managers had no experience in managing any art organisation, and they have not got any knowledge from university or educational program as well. So their main idea of management relied on the management model of industries, commercial and services enterprises. Even the team was composed by young artists, they wanted to look professional and for that their efforts were in being as much administrative organised as possible. They believed that if they had an organised schedule, board, procedures and plans for any situation, it would give to them much more credibility than the artistic product they were creating itself.

ORG-insight-F once had a problem with their luggage. The artistic material including costumes and music instrumental were supposed to arrive in town by plane. However, only some boxes had come, and one of the boxes in which it contained a scenic prop did not arrive. All the organisation´s effort were to get back the missing box, by contacting air company, contacting the lawyers to a possible lawsuit. That was the first step and the managers spent a long time trying to get back the box.

Nobody was thinking about a creative solution to replace the prop for something else or any kind of solution in the scene.

Aesthetic limited to the artistic product - The aesthetic experience is mostly in the stage, in the expositions, and an advertisement, even though it is noticed that aesthetics surrounds the whole artistic process and experience. However, it is away from the management of it. Coming back to the empirical data of this research, we can observe that arts organisations try to guide their management model into functional and orthodoxal models that are present in commercial organisations, for instance. Since staff chart passing through management rules and solutions, arts organisations tend to follow a functionalist model of management that does not consider one of the essential characteristics of arts organisations, the aesthetics.

There was a significant conflict in ORG-E. During a general meeting in which the main sectors were discussing the organisation strategies, the manager suggested that the communication sector expanded their activities to the institutional communication and to all the communication operations in the organisation. The idea was that everything that was communicated by the organisation: not only folders, advertisements, costumers letters and propaganda, but also internal memorandums, warnings to the staff, contact with suppliers and all the communication that could be internal or external would have the supervision of the communication department that would guarantee that the organisation aesthetic identity could be extended to everyone. The conflict came when the artistic director disagreed of the suggestion. The director believed that communication was at the service of the artistic product and the dissemination of the artistic content of the organisation and administrative matters should not compete with the artistic demand.

Aesthetics anthropophagy: art for the artists and their peers - Even managers are concerned about the audience when they talk about it, we can observe that in the day by day of organisations that follows the non-economic logic, the products are made to be consumed by the artists and in the

most of the time the audience is made by the same people that attend to the organisation. Arts managers still do not advance to capture new publics other than the usual ones. ORG-E has several audiences; it an organisation that has a different kind of products and each product attracts different audiences. Rarely one group of the audience comes to attend to another kind of product. There was an instrumental project that had a constant and faithful audience. The show happened once a month, and every single month, the same people were attending the show. There was another project of dance performances that had itself a constant and faithful audience as well. Both of those audiences went to the same organisation, but none of them attended to another project that was different from the one they were engaged with.

The organisation is split into two differet worlds: management and creation– The artistic product plays a central role in the management of many arts organisations. When managers think about the aesthetic in their business, this thought is, in the most of times, focused on the product itself, and it is not expanded to the whole organisations. All the creative effort is focused on the artistic product, and the managerial process is treated as something functional that is separated from the aesthetical nature of the business. It seems that the organisation is divided into two separated parts, the creative one and the administrative one and they occupy opposite poles at the organisation and they rarely dialogue, even though both of them works for the same proposal.

ORG-C had this difference very clear not only in its procedures but also in its spatial organisation. Creative departure worked in a house separately from the administrative sector which operated underground far from the stage, from the rehearsal rooms and far from the collection of costumes. ORG-Insight-F, on the other hand, had the administrative room close to the artistic direction room, but the approach ends there. The organisation were used to travel on tours. The administrative sector was responsible for managing all the tour procedures, but the manager never travelled into a tour. That is, the manager had to manage something far away from her reality because she never

experienced a tour by herself, and the procedures of management were done mechanically. The administrative sector was also responsible for managing the local shows and events in hometown in, but there are no records of participation of the administrative sector in any rehearsal or creation meeting.

2.3 From Aesthetic Consumption to Aesthetic Goods

When the audience attends an art organisation event, the relation with the organisation usually starts before the event itself. Costumers had been informed about the show via advertisements, friends indications and the relation with the art product does not finish when the show ends. Brochures, soundtracks, a snack or dinner at the coffee theatre extends the relationship between audience and organisation that is bounded through aesthetics. However, it seems to be a one-way hand when it is possible to notice that even the audience is bounded to the organisation thought aesthetics, the organisation, by another hand usually does not consider this approach consciously to manage the relationship between both.

Products and services as products and services to financial resources – To all the arts organisations managers researched for this paper, the artistic product is their main product, and the organisation is the consequence of it. However, there are other kinds of products and services in an art organisation that can be offered to the audience, but the managers usually do not give the same importance to them or more than that, they still do not see these products as an aesthetic extension of the organisation. ORG-C, ORG-E and ORG-insight-C have a coffee shop into their buildings, managing by them. The primary function of the coffee shop is to provide some drinks and food for their audience and to provide some profit to the organisation. However none of these organisations, at least, consciously, manages their coffee shops as an aesthetic extension of them, as a way through what the audience can keep the relationship with the organisation and with its aesthetical proposal

or identity. From the menu to the service, from the simplest one to the fanciest one, no one of then creates a real connection with the organisation itself.

Advertisement to sell tickets for the event – All of the organisations that had been studied here use advertisement as the leading way to communicate their activities and events. Electronic media, advertisements in newspapers, production of pamphlets, posters are the main elements of communication. Even these elements are aesthetical by itself; they usually are used as a mean to sell tickets. It is sporadic to see any communication that seeks to provide a strong relationship between audience and organisation, or tries to create a boundary by powering the organisation's brand or aesthetical identity. Audiences are informed about the artistic product, and in all of the advertisement pieces, the name of the organisation must be printed otherwise it will not be recognised, for example, only by the aesthetic identity of the graphics piece. It means that the advertisement, even being a powerful aesthetic element, is used again, functionally. It is not expanded as an aesthetic experience provided by the organisation. ORG-B, for example, has a significant trajectory, but all of their advertisement pieces follow the same model as the other arts organisations in the town. They have outstanding pictures of the company, of the dancers, but it reflects the show they want to communicate.

Communication planning to one event at a time – Arts organisation have its history and trajectory and they are the result of their artistic creations: they are not resumed at one of them. However, all the arts organisations excepted one, studied here, tend to think about their communication planning, focusing at one event at a time separately from the whole organisation identity. ORG-E, for instance, has a recognisable and long trajectory and it has an annual artistic appraisal. Curiously their communication planning considers communicating one event at a time highlighting the event itself. Here it is necessary to make an observation: In Brazil, the country where all the studied organisations are in, theatres can rent their rooms to other productions; can create its

productions or both. Differently, from theatres in which one play or show happens for one or more years, there is a natural rotation of spectacles, and many of them happen in the same organisation during a year. The organisations who have not a building, have its past trajectory and repertory, so in both of cases, we believe it is healthy to build an organisation image and bound with the audience, not only a with activities that happen at one time. ORG-C received other organisations products and produced their art product as well. However, as the ORG-E, the ORG-C had a curatorial program, and through it, the activities were programmed. However, the whole communication turned around the product by product and disregarded the thread that was the organisation itself. The only organisation studied here that has a different way to deal with its communication planning is the ORG- insight-D. It is a festival, and all the planning turns around the festival curator.

Services and customer service disregard from the organisational aesthetic unity - Many arts organisations managers tend to think about their products separately. As if the organisation was one thing away from its artistic products. Moreover, when the arts managers think about products, only the artistic products stay in the top their concerns and the other products and services are disregarded. It is like each thing is separated from each other, and they are not a part of a whole process that is the organisation itself. So, the organisations tend to deal with their customers through its products only and all the meaning and identity that was built by the organisation is dismissed. However, some other organisations can think about an aesthetical unity to involve their customers beyond the artistic product/show itself.

ORG-insight-F can provide an example of how it is possible to link their product with other services. ORG-insight-F is recognized by its amazing shows. They are full of energy, technique and rich and powerful aesthetic. The audience can interact with the organisation through its products and the experience can be extended in other possibilities, like the dance classes that are offered by the

organisation, for instance. The organisation offers dance and percussion classes for audiences one day before or after the shows when they are away and during the whole year in their headquarter.

2.4 From Aesthetic Consumption to Aesthetic Management

Arts organisation managers in most of the times manage their relationship with customers and audience based on the same principles that ordinary enterprises do. ORG-insight-C, for instance, sells theatre plays and all the promotion of sell are based on the marketing tools already known and used by big corporations. Discount in tickets, advertisement is primarily used, but other possibilities of aesthetic consumption experience are not.

Org-insight-D has a way to build an enduring relationship with the audience by a program that is focused on elementary and junior school. They offer tickets to young students so they can attend to some shows. However, the tickets are not only "given"; they are exchanged by another artistic product that must be created and produced by the young audience. The organisation believe that doing this, the young audience grows with the understanding that performance arts are an economic activity, and all the products have a cost and value. Besides, the organisation explain the show the students are about to see, and afterwards, they discuss it. However, again all of this is done focused on one product at a time, and when the show is over, the relationship with the audience and the whole organisation, which is plenty of meaning and aesthetical identity also finishes.

3. AESTHETIC CONSUMPTION FOR ARTS ORGANIZATIONS MANAGEMENT

Aesthetics as an organisational bond - Aesthetics cannot be limited to an artistic product. Is it not an isolated situation, it involves the whole arts organisation, and it may be considered into the entire management process, not only creation. When arts organisation thinks about aesthetics, they

tend to put it into the creative process and the final artistic product only. However, aesthetics is part of the entire process of an arts organisation, and if the arts organisation splits the aesthetics from the other means, it can lose a vital chance to improve its performance and to take advantage of the potential that aesthetics can offer into the management of the organisation. Aesthetics may involve all of the organisation players, not only the audience and customers but also the organisation team, stakeholders and everyone else. The aesthetics are the bond that can strengthen the organisation identity and unity.

Aesthetic consumption as a vital key for management – The primary client of an arts organisation is the audience. The audience represents the customers that will consume and provide sustainability for the organisation. When arts organisation managers care about their customers, it does not mean necessarily that they are refusing their aesthetic and artistic motivation. To think about the audience is the key to keep the aesthetical principles and artistic identity alive. Without customers, the organisation will not be sustainable and will not be able to keep its activities. All of It seems obvious; however, arts organisations tend to avoid thinking about customers during the first steps of their managerial procedures, and in many times, they do not consider consumption in management. There of an effort to make the artistic product recognisable by the peers and critique and the audience is put as a simple consequence of the creative procedures.

Consumption, management and creation working together – After all that was said, we can argue that aesthetics is present in the whole process of arts organisation management. Not only the creative sector but all the other operations have a link with the aesthetical issue. It is usual to split artistic creation to the artistic management and consumption. However, each one of these elements has vital importance and potential to improve the performance of the organisation, and for that, they must work together, not separated as if each one represented a specific interest. Arts organisation can expand the aesthetic to the whole process of management, from human resources, passing

through financial and administration to communication, customers relationship and product. The organisation itself is their main product, and everything that is part of it can be explored and expanded aesthetically.

Conclusion and Discusstion

Arts organisations have a specific mindset in which aesthetics plays a fundamental role in their main products. Arts organisations sell aesthetic through its products and from them, it is possible to comprehend the relations between it and creators, consumers, coproducers, stakeholders. More than that, aesthetics are present in the whole process of creation and distribution of the artistic product. However, it can be observed that managers still do not consider aesthetics as a fundamental part of their management process. It is possible to notice that the products have considerable importance in arts organisations and for their managers.

The arts organisation management model does not consider its aesthetical essence: It is still based on traditional and functional methods. The aesthetical elements that are presented into the artistic products are not extended to its model of management and arts organisation are still wasting a potential chance to improve their performance and their relationship with their customers. For a sensitive and sensorial mindset, the functional model of management does not seem to be appropriate and does not seem to bring benefits as well. The creative process must work together with the management and consumption must not be forgotten. Aesthetic management is the bond that can strengthen the organisation identity and unity.

We argue that this research can implicate further studies to amplify the concept of Aesthetic Management, considering the elements we had discussed above. Arts management scholars can improve investigations about arts organisation management, and new features can be found from the

lens of aesthetic. Also, scholars will be able to use autoethnography as an efficient method to investigate the management practices that are kept in the manager's experiences and background. Managers and practitioners in the arts organisation, on the other hand, will get updated tools to help them to improve and develop their activities.

Figure 1 – Autoethnographic Experiences

Organisation	Kind of organisation	Experience	Duration
ORG-A	Theatre Company	It was the first experience of managing an art organisation by the first author. She had founded the organisation with a graduation colleague, and they both had created and sold drama plays for other companies like hotels, malls, schools, universities.	19 months
ORG-B	Dance Company and Theatre	This dance company had been recognized as one of the most relevant dance companies in the country, and because of that, the government gave the company a theatre to be its headquarters. The first author came to the organisation to implement the new headquarters and theatre management. Afterwards, she was the producer of the company and the one who led the national tours of it	168 months
ORG-C	Theatre	It was a theatre that produced its owns plays and received other artistic productions as well. The author was the head of producers, and she was responsible for all the leading management procedures in the theatre.	29 months
ORG-D	Art production agency	The first author and two other partners created an art production agency. The organisation managed projects of artists associated with it. The agency dealt with different kind of artistic languages such as theatre, music, visual arts, dance, and it had multiple kinds of art projects. The agency also created its projects. It was a profit organisation that expected to sell artistic products that had a meaning to the partners.	50 months
ORG-E	Theatre	During four years, the first author had been the head of operational and management chair of this organisation what is a theatre with more than 50 decades old. This organisation produces its artistic products, and it holds a Theatre Company plus an artistic, educational program and an archive.	50 months
ORG-F	Arts Managers Association	This association is formed by a group of artistic managers of more than 20 theatres and buildings that produces and distributes artistic products. The association has private and public organisations represented by its managers. During the meetings	50 months

		that happen once a month, the arts managers discuss and make decisions about a variety of subjects that are linked to the arts organisation field, like the proposition of public policy, taxes and law determinations. Audience concerns and everything else about the arts organisation practice is discussed.	

Figure 2 - Strangness

Organisation	Kind of organisation	Pole	Strangeness with:
ORG-insight-A	Arts public foundation	Focused	Interview with the president
ORG-insight-B	Public Theatre	Focused	Interview with the director/manager
ORG-insight-C	Private Theatre	Focused	Interview with director/manager
ORG-insight-D	Dance Festival	Holistic	Interview with artistic director, interview with, interview with producer, observation, documents
ORG-insight-E	Orchestra	Holistic	Interview with the manager, performances observation, documents
ORG-insight-F	Dance Company	Holistic	Routine observation, documents, interview with artistic director and financial manager

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