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**WHEN THE MARKET BECOMES A TOOL FOR CULTURAL POLICY :  
THE CASE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANCIENT MUSIC IN FRANCE.**

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*In this paper, I discuss the role of the public support in the development of the early music world. I show that this support was implemented by two markets, the market for subsidies and the market for concerts. Because this support is both systematic and uncontrolled, it played a decisive role in the development of this world of art.*

The aim of this paper is to show how the market can be used as a tool for public policy, by examining the specific case of the development of the actors of the early music field in France. Since the late seventies, the interpretation of early music has tremendously evolved: a long forgotten repertory has been rediscovered, and its interpretation has been following musicological canons hitherto neglected – the use of ancient instruments, the reference to ancient treatises on musical interpretation. This shift in musical conventions has led to the emergence of a whole new art world. The public authorities are commonly said to play no role in this development: early music actors are supposed to develop only through their own forces, with few subsidies and with no cultural policy in support of them. This vision is supported by the fact that neither the government nor local authorities ever developed a specific programme to subsidize the development of the early music world. But it is well known that the lack of public programme does not mean that public action plays no role in a social world<sup>1</sup>. In this paper, I will show that public action has had a much more important role than what is commonly considered; and that it has passed through a particular mechanism: the market.

**The market as a tool for public policy**

*From do-it-yourself to market financing*

If one is to appreciate the role of public collectivities in the development of early music ensembles, the easiest way is to start with considering their activities. The

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of the points made by the study of public policies in terms of governance (see for example Le Galès (2003)).

ensemble decides to sell a programme; it hires musicians and make them rehearse; it sells the concerts to theatres, festivals, etc.. When the ensemble has just been created, it can sell programs from time to time and tours consist of few concerts. If it wishes to develop its activities, an administrator has to be hired who have to sell concerts and to organize the productions. The ensemble has then to face two types of costs: artistic costs (mainly, the fees of the musicians) and administrative costs (the wage of the administrator and the logistic costs). How do the ensembles deal with their financial needs?

The first resource is the selling of their concerts. I discussed elsewhere why the ensembles of ancient music ensembles have to face a deficit<sup>2</sup>. The model I proposed is base on two hypotheses. The first one deals with the fact that ensembles are embedded in two markets: the musician labour market, and the concerts market. On both of these markets, they have to be competitive. The second hypothesis is linked to the professionalization process: as long as they remain amateur, they can keep their finances balanced. But as they become professionalized, they have to accept a deficit. When ensembles are amateur, they do not pay their musicians. They can thus propose concerts on the market at very low prices. As they get professionalized, they have to face competition on both markets. On the musicians' labour market, they have to offer wages that can be competitive with those proposed by other orchestras; as these orchestras are subsidized by the state, they can pay very well their musicians. If, while raising their wages, ancient music ensembles could raise their prices on the concerts market, they would still be able to balance their budget. But as they compete with subsidized institutions, they have to keep their prices low, what leads them to run with a deficit. As long as they were amateur, ancient music ensembles could face competition without any subsidy. When becoming professional, they have to accept a deficit to be competitive on both markets. This first resource, then, is not sufficient: if they want to develop their activities, the ensemble has to find some financing which is not linked to their concert activities – *i.e.* public or private subsidies.

Most of the time, these second resources are short-lived: they are not strengthened in a budget renewed year after year. The findings of financings thus constitute one of the main part of the work of the administration, as this administrator puts it:

“We finance ourselves through limited tricks. We find money: there's cash everywhere. It's tiring in the end, because nothing is never sure. And it is not easy: that's why we do a *job*, why this is not a hobby, it requires a real competence” (Interview, 30 september 1999).

Numerous ensembles base their activities on this reconducted do-it-yourself of short-lived subsidies. These subsidies cannot be used to finance administration which requires stable financings. The ensembles have then to stabilize these ressources. When one considers the resources of the ensembles of early music, one realizes that public subsidies are not as absent as the actors of this world of art said. They are combined with other resources to make the survival of ensembles of early music possible. The ensembles are then placed in the center of a hybridized financing system where public and private fundings are based on each other. But if one only insists on this do-it-yourself logic of financing, one will miss the fact that the access to public funding obey, in this world of art, to *stable social forms*<sup>3</sup>. I assume here two hypothesis: first, even if the public action does not follow any explicit programme, its forms are stable; second, these forms can be thought as *tools of public action*. As Pierre Lascoume puts it, studying public action through its tools allow to consider that a policy does not need it to be expressed in an explicit discourse to exist, but can also be based on the instrumentation

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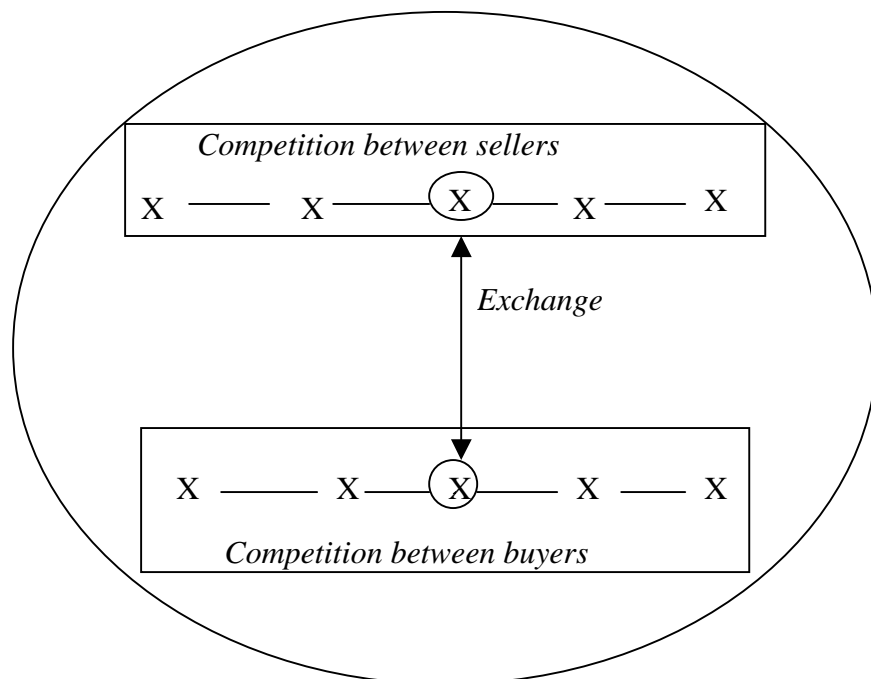
<sup>2</sup> See François (2004).

<sup>3</sup> The notion of “social form” is related to the work of G. Simmel (1999).

of stable tools<sup>4</sup>. These tools can be defined as stable social forms that are invested by public authorities to implement their action.

In the case of early music, I would like to show that the *market* constitutes the main technology of public action. Common wisdom usually considers the markets in opposition to public policy: either the market has to overcome the weaknesses of obsolete public interventions, or policies have to constain the destroying power of the market. In the case of early music, one can see that the market can be a tool used to implement public action: if it is admitted that the market is a specific social form, then this form can be invested, deliberately or *de facto*, by public authorities to make their interventions possible. Policy and market are no longer opposed to each other: one has to think the way they are combined to each other, and the effects they produce.

To make this hypothesis consistent supposes, nevertheless, that a definition of the market can be proposed. This definition is not obvious, as underlined Max Weber when he said that the market was “an amorphous structure”<sup>5</sup>. However, I will use his definition to define the market as a specific social form<sup>6</sup>. According to Weber, “a market may be said to exist wherever there is competition, even if only unilateral, for opportunities of exchange among a plurality of potential parties” (Weber, 1978, p. 635). R. Swedberg makes this definition clearer: a market can be analytically splitted in two sets of interactions. The first one concerns competition between sellers on the one hand, and between buyers on the other hand. Competition is here conceived, according to Simmel (1999b), as an indirect fight for exchange opportunities. This competition makes one supplier and one seeker emerge, who can be implied in the second set of interaction: the exchange. This definition is summed up as follows by Swedberg (1998, p. 43):



I will try to show that in the early music world, public action is implemented through two main markets: the market for subsidies and the market for concerts.

<sup>4</sup> See Lascoumes (2003), and Hood (1983).

<sup>5</sup> In Swedberg (1998, p. 42).

<sup>6</sup> See Weber (1978) ; Swedberg (1998, p. 42-44) ; François, *forthcoming*.

### *The market for subsidies*

Because the ensembles of early music cannot develop with a balanced budget, they have to find financings, either through public subsidies or through private patronage. To find their financings, they have to be inserted on the market for subsidies. In this market, suppliers compete with one another : *Directions régionales des affaires culturelles* (DRACs), *Direction de la musique* from the *ministère de la Culture*, local authorities, etc.). On the other side of the market (the demand side), ensembles indirectly fight against each other to get the opportunity to catch a subsidy. To study this market, I propose to focus on the way ensembles are chosen to get subsidies: who are the ones who take the decision, and what criteria do they use?

Until the beginning of the 2000s', most of the subsidies were allocated on an interpersonal basis: most of the time, an isolated state employee decides to give an ensemble a subsidy, and then makes his decision ratified by its administration. The fact that the choice is delegated to a single and isolated man is related to the fact, first and foremost, that the amount of money are not so important for public authorities. For the biggest ensembles, the global amount of subsidies can be around 600 000 Euros, but for most of them, subsidies are comprised between 75 000 and 150 000 Euros<sup>7</sup>. This amount of money is easily mobilized by local collectivities. The roles of these employees can be described as a functional politicisation (Mayntz, Derlien, 1989). If they play a political role, it is not because their actions and careers are linked to a particular party; it is because they play an active role in the definition of the ends and of the means of the policy. This role goes far beyond the neutral accomplishment of actions decided by "political", *i.e.* elected, actors.

This functional politicisation concerns both servant of the *ministère de la Culture* and employee of local authorities. Inside *DRACs* or the *Direction de la musique* of the *ministère*, servants who decide to give subsidies to ensembles of early music are most of the time linked to this world of art; they sometimes are experts from the movement (such as some *inspecteurs de la musique* from the *ministère*), and are often sensibilized to the early music world of art. For exemple, a *Directeur des affaires culturelles*, formerly an archaeologist interested by the movement, worked in Limousin where he gave subsidies to the Ensemble baroque de Limoges, then moved to Bourgogne, where he helped the *Festival de Beaune*, before going to the Pays de Loire where he developed the *Festival de Sablé sur Sarthe*. But if they are able to help some ensembles or festivals, they cannot succeed to put on the agenda of the *ministère de la Culture* a general programme to sustain the world of early music : they are too marginal to do it. In local authorities, the same marginality can be found. Because the amount of money are not very important and because the decisions concerning early music are considered to be relatively technical ones, employees of local authorities are usually able to decide if they want to sustain an ensemble and what ensembles they prefer to help.

### *The market for concerts*

The subsidies the ensembles succeed to get on this first markets are not the only resources they have to finance their activities: they also sell their concerts to producers. This second market does not seem to concern the question I raised at the beginning of this paper, which concerned the role of the public support in the development of early music. At first sight, there is no public support playing through the market for concerts, as the logic of

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<sup>7</sup> As a matter of comparison, one can recall that the Orchestre de Paris received, in the end of the 1990s', about 14 millions Euros, and the Opera National de Paris about 100 millions...

action of actors involved in this market seems to be purely private. Negotiations between buyers and sellers to define the prices of the concerts show, nevertheless, that actors of this markets do not act as pure profit maximizers. If one tries to understand the logic of their actions, one can use the typical distinction proposed by Max Weber between economic action following *budgetary* ends, when actors try to cover their needs; and economic action following *profitable* ends, when actors try to get some profit. If one uses this distinction to understand the way actors interact on the market for concerts, one can see that, most of the time, their action is closer to budgetary action than to profitable action. The shared goal of both sellers and buyers is to make concerts possible, and to survive after the concerts took place. To reach this goal, the actors have to contain their deficit. The aim of the negotiation is then to share deficits. When a relatively wealthy organizer negotiates, it does not try to maximize its profit. He can accept to pay a relatively high price, because he knows that he can afford it and he also knows that his generosity will irrigate the whole world. That is the way the administrator of the *Arsenal de Metz*, a concert room, conceives her role:

“Sometimes, because I have the money, because it is a production that I find interesting, I won’t negotiate too much. When you negotiate all the time, when you want to scrounge everything, this is not always a good calculation: sometime you pay it – there will be less musicians, the singers won’t be those who were announced... Negotiations are ambivalent : one won’t pay more than one has to pay, but at the same time these things cost something, and I don’t quibble all the time, because sometime what is important to me is to have a good quality on the stage, to have rehearsals, to have a very clean concert” (Interview, 12 april 2000).

One understands, then, why the public support to early music is not implemented only on the market for subsidies. None of the actor of the market for concerts are self-financed, everyone get subsidies. Most of the time, an ensemble who sells a concert to a subsidized festival receives subsidies from public collectivities; but the festival itself can be conceived as an agency redistributing public money it received. The market is a place where deficits are shared, much more than a place where profits are maximized. Cultural policy towards early music is also implemented through the market for concerts. The picture that can be drawn from the public support to the early music world is quite different from the one which was drawn by the actors of this world: there is of course no programme to sustain the development of early music, but a systematic and diffuse support. One can also precise the simple idea of an hybridization of sources of financings of ensembles, and reconstitute forms that implement public support to early music. In this world of art, public action is instrumented through two markets, the market for subsidies and the market for concerts. The picture is modified, but it is not precise enough. One had to establish the existence of public support; one needs, now, to precise its characteristics. Public support to early music is very heterogeneous: even if market for subsidies and market for concerts are both markets, their characteristics are different from each other. I would like to make these differences clearer from a particular point of view: there is a support from public collectivities to early music world; to what extent can this support be called a *political* action? In other words, what criteria can be used to precise the political characteristics of public action implemented through markets and which could at the same time organize their heterogeneity?

## How far are markets politics?

### *The specificity of political action*

On both markets I have just described, the logics of actions committed by actors are very heterogeneous: they cannot be assimilated to *political* actions in the sense supposed by the democratic *doxa*, composed of impersonality, control and spontaneously aiming at the public good. These logics are often hard to untangle. Actors who take decisions have imprecise and varying status: they are at the same time concert buyers, record producers, civil servants, and the efficacy of their strategies depends on the ambiguity of their logic of actions. Bernard, for instance, is a civil servant in the *Département* of the Aisne : he is *délégué à la musique* of this local authority. At the same time, he organizes a Festival in a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Abbey, in which he also developed a record collection. As the presence of early music in this *department* is very important, he was able to give successively subsidies to two ensembles of early music.

The heterogeneity of the logics of actions engaged by the actors of the markets also contribute to make the differences smaller between the criteria used to decide the commitment of public subsidies and those used to decide of private patronage actions. To get the support of a firm, ensembles have to seduce one or two men, whose logics of action are, again, deeply confused: affective, economic, strategic. In other words, when one gets closer to the concrete modalities of decisions, the specificity of public action tends to disappear. The diversity of the logics of actions show *a contrario* that the use of specifically political criteria, distinct of economic, affective or moral judgements, and more generally the aiming at a “public good” are not given *a priori* by the spontaneous conversion of the glance of the actor<sup>8</sup>. The actor is simultaneously engaged in different settings and dispose, for each of this setting, of logic of actions and criteria of judgements he can transpose from one setting to another. To reach the generality and the impersonality supposed by a political activity, these actions and judgements have to be framed by technologies that bring him to adopt specific actions and judgements<sup>9</sup>. For a long time, these technologies were not developed in the market for subsidies. Protected by the discretion of their activities, servants who were taking decisions about subsidies were not supposed to submit their decisions to any formal process: their actions, criteria and judgements were not homogenised and specified as political by any technologies.

In the beginning of the 2000s’, such a technology was developed in the *Directions régionales des affaires culturelles*, simultaneously with the increasing of money allocated to support early music. Before taking any decisions, the musical adviser of the DRAC has now to seek advice from an expert comity, composed of creators, musicians, producers of concerts, musicologists, journalists, etc. The composition of this comity is supposed to take into account the diversity of the geographic and artistic field. An ensemble who wishes to get a subsidy is now supposed to propose a file highly documented and standardized. It is now too soon to make an appraisal of this procedure: the first commissions were set in 2003. But one can see in their development the wishes to homogenise situations from one place to another, to publicize (at least partially) the procedures, to depersonalise decisions by embedding them in deliberation processes<sup>10</sup>. One can expect that the principles

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<sup>8</sup> This point has been made by Weber (2001). For a good example of the process of the definition of what is “public good”, see Lascoumes, Le Bourhis (1998).

<sup>9</sup> Garrigou (1992) detailed the development of such technologies to make the role of the elector a specifically *political* role.

<sup>10</sup> Procedure technologies, as commissions, have been studied as technologies of production of commun good by Manin (1996, p. 234-247).

of competition between ensembles will be partially modified. In the indirect fight which opposed them to each other for the 1980s' and the 1990s', interpersonal and affective factors were the main resources; the formalization and the collectivisation of decisions may diminish the importance of these resources and increase other resources, perhaps more linked to the activities of the ensembles.

### *The publicization*

If one analyses the decision process, one can see that the adoption of a specifically political logic of action can suppose the institution of specific technologies framing the action of individuals. But if one only concentrates on the decision process, then one might conclude that the main border is much more between the former public action (before the institution of commission) and the later one (after the institution) than between public action *per se* and private action. But to draw this conclusion supposes to concentrate on one part of the process only, the decision part, and to forget what happens after the decision. What finally appears in the public sphere? "The *Région Basse-Normandie* supports the *Arts Florissants*", or "Péchiney supports the *Arts Florissants*": if the distinction between private and public action can disappear in one considers the only decision process, it is reinstated by the publicization of the results of these decisions. Likewise, two very different decision processes (with or without commission) are concluded by the same announcement: "the state support Ensemble Y". In other words, these actions are more or less *public*, and this publicization has its own logics and its own effects.

The publicization processes are quite simple: a public announcement of the support when it is decided; and its ritual recall, through logos printed on programmes for example. But the consequences of the publicization are not that simple: this publicization aggregates the different (it gathers under the same result two different processes) and distinguishes the same (two comparable processes are distinguished as being for the one a public action, and for the other a private one). The institutionning power of language in the publicization process is a specific case of the "social magic" that Bourdieu (1987) describes, which allows the language to institute divisions, collectives and borders of the social world. This power is not evenly distributed between individuals. If one tries to make the social conditions of possibilities of this social magic explicit, it first appears that they lie, according to Bourdieu, in the position of the individual who talks: it is because he benefits of the delegation of a group (an institution, like a local authority, e.g.) that the actor has the power to talk and to engage this group in a relationship without consulting it. In talking in name of the institution, according to Bourdieu, and through the commitment of this institution toward a partner, the delegate also contributes to make its own group.

But to be efficient, the circular logic of the delegation supposes that it can make disappear all the elements that could break it: the gaps that can exist between the interests of the delegate and those of the institution, in particular, must be hidden to the outside. The actors that engage the public institutions do not interest a lot of people and are not very looked after: because they are discrete, and because they are isolated on the margins of institutions, they have the power to commit it. More generally, as Max Weber (1978) puts it, discretion is one of the constitutive aspects of bureaucracy, which hides the processes it contains and shows only its *outputs*. By hiding the decision processes to external looks, the bureaucratic game makes delegation possible, and then allows instituting distinctions between private and public action. Considering the consequences of publicization also allows drawing a line between public action as it is implemented through the market for subvention and the market for concerts. On this second market, there is no publicization. More precisely, this market is never conceived by any actors of the early music world to be a place where a public

support to early music is implemented: as it is not conceived as a public policy, it cannot be publicized as such.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to appreciate the role of the public support in the development of the early music world. As we have seen, the indigeneous vision is only partly verified: on the one hand, of course, there is no structured programme which could be compared to systematic cultural policy, which could be compared to those developed in support of theatres or classical orchestras (Dubois, 1999); but on the other hand, public support was decisive in the development of the early music world. The dynamics of the movement has been supported by the market form of the public support. Two elements were decisive. First, the fact that the needs of the ensembles were relatively moderate: some hundreds of thousand francs could be for them a decisive resource. Second, the fact that the sources of financing were not concentrated in a single point or organized in a programme distributing resources at a very specific moment, and freezing them forever – as it is the case with more systematic cultural policy. Because of this lack of centralization, numerous ensembles were able to find resources here and there. The inarticulated and omnipresent interventions of public authorities did play a role in the development of the early music world, but on a paradoxical way : inside this world, public authorities do not regulate, they irrigate. This anarchic and uncontrolled irrigation of a world of art has surely contributed to maintain uncertainty under the life conditions of actors ; but it also contributes not to freeze positions of a few dominant actors and to reject all the others on the margins of amateurism. To answer this empirical question, I have had to engage a more analytical discussion on the tools of public action. The first result of my inquiry was that the financing of early music ensembles was based on a do-it-yourself logic; I proposed to complete this first result by considering that this financing went through stabilized social forms, and more precisely through markets. In the early music world, the implementation of public policy went through two markets, the market for subsidies and the market for concerts. I have thus shown that one does not have to necessarily oppose market form and public intervention. The market can be a political technology; it is one of the forms public action can take.

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