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**FORMS OF SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE
PRODUCTION IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PUBLIC
POLICY**

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

The central idea developed during the thesis is the relation between the sociological research results obtained by experts and the action that takes place in the space of public policies. More specifically, I aimed to observe how this type of knowledge is produced and valued in Romania, in the context of developing cultural policies. The research was guided by three major objectives: (1) identifying the actors taking part in the processes of substantiating and defining both public policies and national strategies; the collaborations between them, as well as the projects in which they have been involved in recent years; (2) observing and illustrating the trajectories of national projects that have benefited from the expertise of sociologists for the research component and (3) capturing and understanding of sociologists' reflexivity about their work in such projects, but also in the context of their professions and their associated responsibilities.

The fact that the Romanian cultural field has had many different management structures in recent years, caused a discontinuity in the implementation of a strategy to support multiple divisions of the cultural sector (Zbranca, 2020). From the perspective of the initiatives that took place within it, I specify here only two of them, significant both for the public sphere and for the independent one. Both were conducted after 2016, an aspect that influenced my choice for the time interval 2016-2023 as a reference period for research. Firstly, it is about the elaboration of the Strategy for culture and national heritage 2016-2022, which represents the updating and completion of the one from 2014, and secondly, I mention the efforts around the public policy proposal „Strengthening a societal status of the artist, author and creator in Romania”.

From the point of view of its contributions, I consider that the study is relevant because it offers an in-depth perspective on the stakes of different types of research processes aimed at social intervention. At the same time, the knowing of the active actors in the field of applied knowledge in the cultural sector; observing the ways in which the results of sociological investigations are used; but also, the analysis of professionals' narratives for their own research represents actions that bring clarity to processes that are not currently sufficiently documented in Romania.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR THE INSTRUMENTAL SOCIOLOGY AND ITS ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

To understand the relationship between sociology and the field of public policies from a historical point of view, the first theoretical section of the paper gives some general epistemological visions on sociology. Although the consolidation of sociology as a discipline involved emphasizing the academic rigors it implies, the idea of extending the role of the researcher beyond the borders of the university space gradually gained attention. Given Burawoy's perspective (2005) on the four types of sociological knowledge (professional, critical, policy and public), I briefly describe each of them, emphasizing both the differences that individualize them and their points of intersection. Then, I contextualize this classification through the reinterpretations and criticisms brought to it by other sociologists (Wallerstein, 2007, Holmwood, 2007, Morrow, 2009, Staszek, 2011, etc.).

I then deepen the topic of scientific knowledge produced for social action and discuss how, on the one hand, the involvement of researchers in social action can be beneficial, whereas the recommendations they make are based on rigorous knowledge, but on the other hand, it is possible that a number of disruptive factors may influence this input – data collection errors, their interpretation, external pressures, lack of multidisciplinary dialogue, etc. Regarding the specific challenges that public policy research can face, both from the perspective of sociologists and those who benefit from the results of their work, I also offer some possible solutions to harmonize this type of collaboration. Along with the specific aspects of the activity of each category of professionals, which can be individually improved, the idea that proposes a collaborative component is to maintain an open attitude towards multidisciplinary (Spalter-Roth, Best and White, 2018), with mutual efforts to understand the needs of stakeholders and willingness to accept (and integrate) new visions in research (Graizbord, 2019). In this way, the process has a better chance of becoming an organic one, with the possibility of reproducing whenever necessary, with no major efforts of professionals (Graizbord, 2019).

Theoretical arguments about the involvement of professionals in instrumental sociology become relevant through their relationship with the empirical material collected for the last chapter of the paper. Within it I was interested to observe the ways in which the research from the Romanian university environment becomes connected to the one for public policies, which are the

intersections and continuities between them (Ritzer and Goddman, 2004; Burawoy, 2005; Quah, 2011, etc.).

CHAPTER 2. PUBLIC CULTURAL POLICIES. SUBSTANTIATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION

The second chapter of the thesis addresses the scope of cultural policies, presenting a brief history of the transformations they have undergone and developing the idea that because culture is often perceived as not being at the top of states' priorities for funding, policies tend to develop their economic character more and more, to the detriment of the social one. Thus, globally, culture becomes perceived as acquiring responsibilities in solving problems in sectors adjacent to it – economic, social, political (Gray, 2000). The involvement of sociologists in the field of policies, however, may encourage the use of reflexivity in public policy-making practices (Stewart, 2013).

I introduce Romania's situation by describing the legislative framework in which political policies are proposed, elaborated, implemented, and evaluated, but also by capturing those activities in which sociologists can contribute, according to current regulations. Later, I discuss the topic of precariousness of the Romanian cultural field (Pop, Roşu, Zbranca, 2023; Pop, Chiş, Mihaly, Pop, 2019), which is directly linked to the lack of coherent cultural policies to support the work of experts in the field and also to clarify and organize the wider context in which it takes place: cultural heritage, training and professional development, facilitating and maintaining international relations. At this point, I describe some of the causes of the existing gaps and then I detail, with the help of recent studies, how divisions of the sector (public/private) are produced across the field and, also, how the needs of the culture practitioners are not met.

CHAPTER 3. THE MAPPING OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE FIELD PRODUCED IN ROMANIA FOR CULTURAL POLICIES

In the first empirical section of the paper, I present the results of exploring the field of sociology of the action in which knowledge is produced with applicability in Romanian cultural policies. I define the academic field of sociology of the action as being composed of specialists who are either associated with the university environment or are part of research institutions, who have been involved in instrumental research in the cultural field. In the current context, I mean through this type of research any process of knowledge production for the purpose of developing

public policies or for providing specialized advice to private actors at national level. Along with the knowledge of specialists and their work, I also observed the collaborations between them, which allowed me to know in depth the sector of public policy production. As I was interested in observing the dynamics of the field over time, the data analysis considered the 2016-2022 period.

In order to meet the objectives of the research, I have carried out a qualitative analysis of the documents and their contents. The approach allowed me to turn the large volume of data and information that I have accessed into one that was easier to manage and address in this paper. Although it was a vast process, structured in multiple stages – document finding, utility assessment, selection, and detailed verification of the reflected reality – the advantage of the method was to ensure the possibility to make an elaborate mapping of the traces and evidence that sociologists have left in the virtual space through their work and involvement in the cultural policies sphere. The main types of documents I used were those already published, data obtained from other research, but also press materials about cultural policies and research that underpinned their implementation.

First of all I, have identified the factors of competence which, according to the Romanian legislation, can have attributions together with the authorities, in the elaboration of the public policies: the universities and the public institutes and the private research companies. The major limitation I encountered in this stage was the lack of data on the teams of researchers working in these spaces. Thus, the only estimate I made was for the number of institutions and enterprises, and not for the number of their employees. The next step was to identify their initiatives in recent years and analyse the trajectories they have taken. This was an approach through which I tried to form an overview of the situation at national level and how social action is structured – who initiates it, in what kind of contexts, what other actors are involved in, how they contribute and what results they have.

Of the total of the eight public institutes and of the thirty-four private agencies/firms, the analysis space narrowed very much when I started investigating what research projects were carried out. I therefore concluded that after 2016, the only entities that have been constantly and closely involved in studies that support cultural decisions are the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training (INCFC), together with the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES) and the National Institute of Statistics (INS). INCFC collaborates with IRES exclusively for empirical data collection activities, and with INS for the secondary data it provides about the

cultural field. Regarding the Romanian university environment, given the criterion of spatial proximity, INCFC mainly works with institutions in Bucharest, which form sociologists and other experts who can contribute through their work to a better understanding of the sectors – graduates of various socio-human studies, public administration, letters, or philosophy.

Given the central role that the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training has in attracting specialists in conducting cultural research, the graphic representation I made had as a unit of analysis the twenty-nine projects identified, and not their authors. It is quite visible in it that there is a core of three people who are part of most of these projects – the general manager of INCFC, the head of the research service and one of the senior researchers at the institute. In addition, the names of five other experts can be noted, each one with six studies in which were involved. Two of them are also part of the INCFC, an economist and another one with sociology educational background, but which is currently involved in the compartment that manages the publications, digital platforms, and databases of the institute. I did not find information about one of the sociologists regarding the current job, but the other two are external collaborators, with teaching positions within the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Bucharest. In this context, I include a methodological note, namely that initially, after the completion of the map, I set out to interview the latter ones to deepen their work experiences, but I failed, as after multiple attempts of contacting, I did not receive positive answers from them.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR CULTURAL POLICIES. CASE STUDIES

The mapping action was a possibility to generally know the research from the cultural field, which created generous space to ask additional questions about how they are conducted. I have thus illustrated in a detailed way the pathways of two distinct research processes in the cultural field, from the perspective of the following aspects: topics addressed, needs that have substantiated their development, methodology followed, data collection processes, social, economic, and political contexts in which they were carried out, specialists who also contributed to the use of results. Unlike the exploration in the previous chapter, where I talked in general about projects in the period after 2016, I bring here an in-depth investigation component of two research for cultural policies. I believe that this stage is significant for the thesis, as it offers a documented perspective on the whole course of research work – from the initial idea to the result and to its valorisation.

In the Romanian cultural space, there have been over time attempts to define legislative contexts that would offer those who are part of the field more security in the development of their work, the tools and training needed for it, as well as a framework in which national heritage is valued and developed. Although they had some concrete successes, these attempts did not gain formal recognition. They kept the status of approaches that proposed informed decisions by empirical data, but which were not politically assumed. From the documentation I made, the period around 2016 was shaped to me as presenting an increased effervescence from the perspective of the proposed actions for the cultural sphere, which attracted my attention. I thus discussed, during this chapter, the course of the national strategy for culture and national heritage 2016-2022” (a process with three stages, respectively three formalization tests - 2014, 2016 and 2023), as well as the proposal for a public policy for consolidating a societal status of the artist, author, and creator in Romania. The cases I have chosen to explore in depth have in common the fact that they are not isolated projects, their ideas being resumed elsewhere, building on them, depending on the socio-economic picture existing at the time of their return to discussion.

Methodologically, I used two research methods: content analysis and in-depth interview. The primary information was obtained using content analysis, which considered public documents such as research reports, press news, public statements of specialists involved in projects. In-depth interviews were conducted with key project researchers. I integrated the results obtained in two case studies, to provide coherence on the processes that characterized the two projects in the cultural sphere.

Both the national strategy for culture and the proposal for the elaboration of an artist's status represented approaches that contributed to the current state of things in the field. Whether they provided empirical data with a role in substantiating political decisions, or whether they supported specialists in the cultural sectors in their work, or they drew their attention to give priority to the need to adopt the legislative acts that define their activity, both have contributed to this area.

The three strategies of culture can be perceived as a chain of actions, interconnected, built relationally, so that the arguments they play become stronger over time. At the same time, all other research (of INCFC), that took place individually contributed to their permanence, in addition to the processes of strategic elaboration, especially those through which the study of cultural consumption was pursued, knowledge of cultural actors and the space in which they operate. In addition, when further data collection steps were needed for in-depth explanations or for updating

information obtained in the past, they were carried out in accordance with previous practices, so that retrospective view to be possible. In this case, I am referring to the investigations carried out by INCFC for substantiating the strategies (2014-2020 and 2023-2030).

Although the results of the strategy proposals were considered by cultural experts from very diverse areas of culture (both nationally and locally), as a reference for their work, what was lacking for a formalized integration of them into the action circuits was political endorsement. If we look at the circumstances of this absence, more precisely the instability that characterized the political sphere in the period I am referring to, the endings of these multiple trials seem understandable. However, those who took on the role of guiding the course of strategy approval have tried to counteract these structural issues, becoming creative on the idea of encouraging the political decision-making process that has so far been postponed, through external regulations, coming from the European space. Whether or not these ideas will be successful remains to be seen in the next period. What is, however, very visible to me is the existence of a break in the cycle that imply the identifying the needs of the field, the involvement of experts (including sociologists) in providing viable solutions for them, thinking of ingenious approaches to make proposals more likely to succeed and finally, their political commitment.

Regarding the public policy for strengthening an integrated status of the artist, its purpose was the same as in the case of national strategies for culture, in accordance with the recommendations of which it intended to be. Initiated in a specific political context, in which one of the Ministers of Culture of 2016 proposed the organizational approach of the actors in the independent sector, the proposal was finished at a time when the political landscape looked different again. Therefore, the efforts of the project team to obtain answers from the ministries were also in this case greater than would have been natural. In this case, however, the adoption in 2023 of the status of the professional cultural worker can be to some extent a success correlated with the approach initiated by the Flower Power Cultural Association. I emphasized the partial nature of the success because it is important to consider that the two initiatives are, however, distinct, both from the perspective of the teams that carried them out, as well as the background in which they took place – The status of the professional cultural worker being part of a more comprehensive project, already formalized by the Romanian National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Beyond the paths that the studied projects had, one aspect that I followed with attention was the role that sociologists have had in them. And so, I noticed in both situations a mix of attitudes – on the one hand was the satisfaction of involvement in projects that brought an extra understanding on the cultural field (in some places they even produced visible changes); and on the other hand, I was able to capture the resignation for the minimal impact that the results of their work had, due to wider implications, extended beyond their concrete work. Part of this resignation is both their speech which explains the difficult processes by which political consensus can be obtained, given the major fluctuations in this sphere, as well as a type of practical knowledge, acquired through previous experiences that exemplified how the results of other research, although well-founded and rigorous, failed to convince political decision-makers.

CHAPTER 5. CULTURAL RESEARCH. EXPERTS NARRATIVES

In order to understand the reflexivity that sociologists who are involved in instrumental research propagate in their own work, the last chapter of the thesis captured some of their narratives. Following the interviews with the seven sociologists and a culture expert (all involved in research for cultural public policies), I described their vision of their own activity, in the context of the dynamics of the framework in which it operates, as well as about possible ways to improve them in the future (of individual work, but also of the whole field). I believe that observing the discourses of sociologists about their work, about relating it with the broader context of social research currently carried out in instrumental sociology, as well as about the improvements they see achievable, are important information to complete the overall picture of the purpose of producing current sociological knowledge.

The research method I used to obtain qualitative data is the semi-structured in-depth interview. I selected the participants in the interviews based on the mapping of cultural productions from the period after 2016, which I reproduced in the third chapter of the paper. Each of the choices I made in this way had a directly connected reason for understanding some aspects that proved unclear during the analysis of documents and secondary data. Thus, I interviewed two people who helped me better understand the two case studies I conducted – an expert from the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, and a sociologist who contributed to the proposal for a public policy on the status of the artist. Along with the factual information about the research steps in which they were involved, I also addressed a reflective dimension on their careers and the

stakes of projects in which they are constantly involved. Starting from the project „UNESCO Culture | Indicators 2030”, which involved both a national and a local research axis, I included in my theoretical sample three teachers from the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Cluj-Napoca – two of them being involved in the local component (of the Cluj Metropolitan Area) and the third in the national component. The latter brought to my study the perspective of an external collaborator of INCFC, from the earliest moments of the institution, which has made consistent contributions to the way in which it has formed the conduct of its research activity. To complete the image of sociologists who contribute to applied research with a role in substantiating public cultural strategies and policies, I interviewed a person employed within the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy, who over the last years has been closely involved in the conducting of INCFC projects, from the perspective of collecting the necessary data. Finally, I wanted to investigate how people working in culture understand the role of research processes for field development, so I had interviews with an artist who is at the same time a sociologist at the beginning of her career and with a specialist with rich experience in cultural management and public policies. Along with the types of research experiences that I have documented through in-depth interviews, I also place the personal one of involvement in two research projects in the cultural sphere, both about the situation at the level of the Cluj Metropolitan Area – Future of work and Culture 2030 (local dimension).

As an introductory phase, I was primarily interested in knowing the educational and professional pathways of sociologists, as well as observing the areas of intersection or chaining over time of the two paths. Secondly, I explored the characteristics of current work, but also the areas of scientific interest in which they invest their attention and energy. Subsequently, I proposed a discussion focused on participation in the production of knowledge for the purpose of public policies in general, but also for the purpose of developing strategies and policies in culture, specifically. I wanted to know how they started, but also how they continued to get involved in these types of projects; what are their motivations, but also the channels on which they came to know the existing opportunities; what responsibilities they had; how they characterize teamwork (sometimes multidisciplinary); which were the results and implicitly the consequences of the cultural projects of which they were part. Finally, we talked about the connections they have with other specialists, about how much they feel they are part of a network, but also about the thoughts they have for their future career and the projects in which they would like to get more involved.

If in research institutes, work is self-evident and most frequently performed for instrumental purposes, as for sociologists who are primarily associated with university space, the motivations are multiple. From the perspective of the context in which the instrumental research is carried out, I understood from those with which I spoke, that specialists from academia are perceived as a desirable and viable partners in practical approaches. First, their efforts are assessed as academically rigorous and thus become legitimate if the purpose of the project is to substantiate decisions.

Sociologists who have chosen a professional path in the field of research have described opportunities to get involved in studies in the field of sociology of action since their university studies. Going through stages of progressive accountability in research projects – from routine tasks during undergraduate studies to some advanced statistical and qualitative data analysis, as well as the elaboration of research reports – sociologists thus take the first steps in forming professional connections, both with other researchers, as well as with public and private actors with decision-making power in different spheres of activity. In addition to the satisfaction resulting from possible decisions based on the results of their work, specialists end up through these interactions to obtain several other advantages: they supplement their income, they gain financial support in deepening their own empirical curiosities, become part of (and then strengthen) their membership in networks of various specialists who open new areas for analysis. However, some of them can easily become disadvantages, as sometimes the volume of research activities (for their main job, as well as for the others) expands so much that it becomes overwhelming, and also, projects that do not exactly align with the scientific interests of researchers can be understood as distractions from the efforts that are really important to them.

Research collaborations, as I have seen in previous sections of the paper, are favoured, and conditioned at the same time by several factors independent of the individual performance of sociologists. I am referring specifically to the proximity to actors – which may be public authorities, research institutes, various private actors who have the potential to mobilize investigative processes that in turn attract specialists. In my research I deepened the cases of two cities (Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest) which can be considered privileged, because they are both well-developed university centres and effervescent cultural areas. I chose the two specifically because I wanted to have a well-cohesive study base and enough initiatives to document and allow me to understand the ways in which knowledge occurs in the cultural sphere. As a future plan,

strategic ideas are already formed, with the purpose of expanding the involvement of INCFC in the cultural area of several local points, so that the substantiation of decisions becomes unitary and respects the same major qualitative lines of action.

During the discussions, the capitalizing on the results of instrumental research by those in the administrative area, seemed to me an exception to the more common version of their annexation to a file that is stored on the shelf of an institution. To prevent such situations, researchers are trying to expose themselves to interactions with people in administrative areas, to develop a way of communication focused on understanding the needs expressed by them. Along with this tactic, they make further efforts to adjust technical reports and methodological details, so that it can be understood more easily by those who do not have in-depth sociological (and sometimes statistical) knowledge. At the same time, I understood that any report that is delivered without being presented is more likely not to be read and that is why they often propose debate sessions on the results. In this way, it also creates the right context for discussion and for possible future enlargements, which may represent new opportunities for involvement in other projects.

One of the ideas that I found among researchers but also among the experts in cultural management and in literature, there is a need for cooperation within multidisciplinary teams in order to provide the data collected with the most appropriate and valuable interpretations and subsequent uses. Without this common exchange of reflection, the skills and knowledge of each of the experts involved risk not finding the most effective uses for teamwork or other interesting parts. It is gratifying, however, that most of the people I interviewed recognize the importance, but also the benefits of maintaining this dialogue during the projects. Moreover, when they talk about the future, they refer to concrete plans to find professional partners with whom to feel that they are developing skills and knowledge and carrying out more elaborate plans than they could achieve individually. In cases where, in addition to full-time work, sociologists tend to invest time and energy in additional projects, the professional network they belong to is an issue to which they pay attention, whereas it is a way of gaining visibility in the field. At the same time, they keep themselves informed on the dynamics of their areas of interest and the news that appears within them.

Future plans are outlined for each of the specialists according to the maturity of the careers they have built so far. The beginning of the research path is characterized by concrete development plans, but for short periods of time. For those who have accumulated a large volume of data from

the multiple research activities they have carried out, a naturally imagined step is to integrate them into a body that illustrates their value. Some of the opportunities they had materialized in a way that left room for further development, and the next period could be used successfully in this regard. Institutionally, I have noticed the same aspiration to bring together the knowledge already produced – substantial in some cases – and to make it available to other possibly co-interested actors. These actions can solve part of an already known problem of the cultural sector: the lack of data that allows its detailed knowledge from the perspective of things that work well, but also those who deserve to be improved.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents first of all a personal attempt to understand in depth a field that I encountered tangentially in my work as a sociologist. As regards its contribution to knowledge for larger communities of professionals, I consider that there are two major issues that are mentionable. The first of them refers to providing context information, but also detailed, explanatory one, about how one of the multiple professional segments of sociologists works. The secondary one is related to the partial coverage of a generalized need in the cultural field – lack of data to define it.

I describe the process of elaborating the thesis as a chain of activities that have explicitly crossed each other, depending on the questions that were formed as I conducted the investigations methodologically set. The introduction, which describes the general idea of the research and the objectives I propose, is followed by two chapters that theoretically strengthen multiple perspectives of this sphere of work. Starting from a discussion about instrumental sociology, I narrow down the area of debates in literature to the subject of applying the principles of sociological research for the purpose of public policies, stating the challenges that this type of practice faces. Subsequently, I introduce in the paper the next level of specificity, through the theme of public policies in the cultural field and the way in which they follow their path: their initial substantiation, elaboration and finally implementation, respectively their evaluation. I discussed these aspects both in terms of the way they operate globally, but also in the Romanian space.

As contextual information, I describe the Romanian cultural field and the major lack of legislative and formalized frameworks of its functioning, which creates both confusion among

professionals, as well as a long series of shortcomings and difficulties in work. I thus emphasized the critical need to define national strategies, respectively public policies that regulate activity in culture, the relations between practitioners and decision-makers, aspects related to the professional development (individual and for the whole professional category), as well as the wider context in which all this happens (cultural institutions and national heritage). I also made additional clarifications for cases where the major discussion line involved particularities of the independent or private cultural field, respectively public.

Multiple changes at the level of the Ministry of Culture are one of the causes for which Romania does not currently benefit from a solid legislative and public policy ensemble that supports and encourages the activity of artists and cultural workers. By analysing secondary data as well as those from interviews, I can conclude that, regardless of the volume and intensity of the efforts made by cultural experts and researchers, favourable political circumstances, and the openness of political actors to change are essential for strategic proposals to be adopted. And this is an important reason why I focused my attention only on the period after 2016. The research project by which a public policy was proposed with the role of consolidating the status of artists, authors, and creators in Romania, it was possible due to a political context that tried to speed up the formal adoption of decisions in this regard. Its status and development ideas were in line with the provisions of the national strategy for culture proposed for the period 2016-2022. Thus, the two would have aimed together to provide coherence to the sector and to create the right premises for taking over its basic principles and implementing them at the local strategic level. Given their importance in the general picture of the paper, I dedicated a distinct chapter in which I studied them carefully – from the beginning of the ideas, until the presentation of the results and their delivery to the actors with responsibilities in decision-making processes.

As a background in which the two steps took place, in chapter three I built an overview for the situation in recent times of sociologists who produce useful knowledge for cultural policies and strategies. I started with a mapping of the spaces that sociologists have at their disposal to get involved in cultural policies - university environments, public research institutes, agencies/private companies. Subsequently, I identified, described, and then graphically represented projects carried out after 2016 that included research components. Most of them were made at the initiative of the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, with various contributions from other sociologists: for the collection of quantitative data collaborations with private research institutes

were carried out, and for the content there were several collaborators, most of them being recruited from the Bucharest academic space, more precisely the Faculty of Sociology of the University of Bucharest and the National School of Political and Administrative Studies. Although priority research areas have varied quite a bit, from one year to another depending on the specific interests of the periods in which the studies took place, some of the major topics I found refer to cultural consumer practices, training needs, knowledge of the cultural sectors, aspects of national heritage, digital impact on the activity and studying the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is perceptible in recent years, both nationally and internationally, a tendency of sociologists to have reflective approaches to the science to which they contribute and to the ways in which they act within it (Voicu, 2015). The last two empirical chapters of the thesis offer an in-depth approach to the subject, through two case studies, but also by rendering the narratives of several professionals in the field of sociology about their work. On the one hand, this information supplemented the analyses of secondary data and documents, which, in isolation, would not have been able to answer all the originally questions. On the other hand, the stories of my colleagues managed to open up to me a number of other ways to look at the involvement of sociologists in culture. At the theoretical level, studying the needs and interests of the parties involved, outlining a picture for the analysed sector (based on the existing data), providing recommendations for useful development principles, but also the evaluation of the consequences after the implementation are all steps that the experts in sociology have the opportunity to take. There is, however, a tension that I set out to study: although sociologists may be involved in multiple phases of the life cycle of a public policy, in practice it sometimes happens that the interactions between them and the authorities are not the most productive or constructive and even determine them not to resort to mutual support.

As I have shown during the thesis, to be part of these processes, a favourable positioning in the field is needed, materialized mainly by the spatial proximity of research or learning institutions that have access to research (and funds for them). A second way to access projects can be represented by other specialists, who already have a rich professional history and who can offer recommendations to potential beneficiaries for other colleagues who are at the beginning of their careers. Once included in the research team, the way projects are carried out is also essential, as most often a good experience later creates opportunities and invitations for the future. The interviews I conducted illustrated to me in a very explicit way that sociologists in academia do not

always deliver results that meet the beneficiaries' expectations, either because they lack some contextual explanations, or because of the too technical content they offer, which remains unexplored by the beneficiaries as soon as they encounter difficulties. One of the major risks when we talk about the limitations of interactions between sociologists and decision-makers is that of resignation accompanied by minimal efforts to carry out tasks, without the desire to find creative solutions to the encountered and studied problems (Hoffstee, 1970). This situation would lead in time to a decrease in the chances of organically forming healthy links between professionals (Graizbord, 2019), and, also, its prevention becomes a responsibility for each of those involved, manifested by trying to work as consistently and empathetically as possible in relation to all existing needs (Ptackova, 2012).

A solution that is relatively within the reach of all involved, is to ensure the possibility of dialogue between different types of experts, which generally allows a better understanding of everyone's needs and creative thinking for useful solutions. Some of the authors cited in the theoretical section of the paper assess as insufficient the contribution that a single perspective can bring (no matter how well-founded it is), when studying societies or communities more and more open to multiculturalism (Lauder, Brown and Hasley (2004). In this context, collaborations between specialists from several areas of science (but also administrative ones) become more constructive and ultimately more productive, due to the challenges that multiple visions that contribute to investigative processes can bring together (Falla, Rios and Alvarez, 2000; Kuka and Tahirovic, 2022).

As regards the relation between research produced for the accumulation of knowledge and that for solving concrete practical problems, the data I collected made visible both a few congruences between them and the continuities that characterizes them. The sociologists I interviewed, although they mainly have activities in the academic space, choose to carry out instrumental research, the results of which they then use both to meet the needs of the cultural field, as well as to satisfy their own scientific curiosities and popularize them in the university sphere. The rigor and work ethic they have formed in academia are then transposed into applied sociology and thus become the main attributes for which potential beneficiaries (public institutions, organizations, independent actors) turn to their expertise. As theoretical contributions show, in addition to the basic research skills mobilized, sociologists are constantly looking to

develop new skills, to be helpful in providing the most useful results to the area of action they study (Wimberley, 1998; Ptackova, 2012).

Along with the analysis of secondary data in which I followed the thread of the research that was carried out at national level, the primary data collected through interviews also addressed the issue of studies with predominantly local implications, at the level of Cluj-Napoca. Thus, I could also observe models of good practice, respectively processes that benefited from the contribution of sociologists and which were used as a source of information for different political decisions. Even though these knowledge transfers have sometimes been made rather informal, I think it is important that they existed and managed to contribute to the substantiation of processes with major stakes for the cultural field, such as the status of the cultural worker adopted in early 2023.

Thinking retrospectively about the writing of this paper, I identify aspects that can be characterized as limits, but at the same time facts that can become future directions of development. At the empirical level, I mention the incomplete data I had at my disposal about the authors of the research on culture, but also about the activity and composition of the teams from the research institutes. This prevented the outlining of very precise images about the education and professional training of those involved in research projects with stakes for national strategies and policies, but also about the size of the teams that operate in the private space of the sociological research, respectively the types of work that they carry out within it. Few private market research companies are part of professional organizations, and I think this is an issue that deserves to be investigated in a further research process. Theoretically, such an affiliation would have the role of adopting and maintaining uniform quality standards in research, but also of keeping the community of institutional actors in this sector. In practice, however, the isolated placement of institutes in the imaginary space of the market, denotes a lack of interest for this type of coagulation, which most likely comes, bundled with the perception of the lack of associated concrete benefits. If the formalization of professional networks in the field of sociology were systematically pursued, the data on professionals within it could have more visibility, which would thus ensure more consistency for it.

I believe that the process of mapping initiatives exclusively at national level is a starting point in knowing the whole sphere of sociologists involved in research for public policies. I have dedicated most of the thesis to observing the national framework in which instrumental research is carried out, because I wanted to explore and understand the specific situation of Romania which

has multiple shortcomings in the field of cultural public policies. But my research has opened two other significant dimensions that can be deepened during it: local and international. Regarding the first of them, at county level there are multiple examples of cultural strategies realized, some of them involving sociological studies, and an analysis of them would be useful to test one of the conclusions of this work – correlating the involvement of sociologists in research with their spatial proximity to educational or research institutions. As I have shown in the previous chapter, although it is one of the INCFC's plans, there is currently no uniform practice to be mastered locally in substantiating and developing research strategies. This can be a problematic fact, as strategies can present very different levels of rigor, depending on the methodologies they follow. Another inconsistency is related on the one hand to the dependence between obtaining budgets for culture and achieving a local strategy, and on the other hand the lack of procedures to assess how the allocated funds were used, in relation to the initial directions of the strategy. Thus, even in cases where strategies are legitimized by sociological studies, their implementation can be precarious, given that there is no clear context in which this process is pursued over time, respectively its consequences are assessed.

At the same time, the interviews I conducted gave me a wider picture of how both the field of action of sociologists, as well as the cultural one is structured outside national borders. Thus, sociologists and cultural experts are also part of international projects, which open new horizons for their future implications and connect them to different networks of beneficiaries and researchers. Sometimes, projects at European level are associated with major stakes, so that through the results obtained and the recommendations issued within them, it becomes possible to implement some of the directions for Romania as well. One of the concrete examples in this regard is the last national strategy for culture, which falls into a European-funded project, which provides clear contractual conditions for the adoption and implementation of project results.

From a methodological perspective, a possible development could be to conduct several in-depth interviews with sociologists from other cities, with less activity in the field of instrumental research in the cultural field. Thus, by documenting several educational and professional trajectories, I could gain a deeper understanding of the levers that exist or are missing when it comes to involvement in such projects. At the same time, it can represent a natural path resulting from secondary data analysis, which has already provided a general characterization of the structure of the research space for public policies and the experts who define it.

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