

## 3.5 Cultural spaces

by [Enrique del Álamo Núñez](#)

**An historical journey of the evolution of cultural facilities in our country from the eighties and the cultural policies fostering them. An approach to their conceptualisation and typologies.**

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The idea of cultural space related to the territory, among other meanings, is applied in this case to cultural facilities. The word “facility” was included in the glossary of cultural management of our country by the influence of the specialised French jargon, and its wide use has been proved under the protection of the progressive complexity of cultural policies.

In Western Europe, especially in the seventies of the last century, the welfare state was consolidated so that cultural policies emerged from political, social, and economic conditions. One of the most obvious elements were cultural facilities whose democratic function of integration was appreciated together with the participatory vocation by being included in the approaches projected during the economic expansion between the fifties and seventies. The cultural democratisation, which was the dominant model in those years, was based on the reduction of cultural inequality by assuming the state the mission of connecting citizens to culture. The state therefore produced, managed, promoted, and regulated.

A new model of cultural policy appeared in the seventies and eighties: the cultural democracy (it was partially applied) whose spokespeople were mainly social groups. Culture is understood as a way of life, whereas a set of values, which were in force until then, went into crisis: the unlimited economic growth, the uncritical consideration of progress, and the attention of the state as cultural subject. Passive guidelines of cultural consumption were aimed to be modified by the participation: diversity and creativity had priority, as well as interculturality and multiculturalism. Social groups or movements assumed the role of agent of institutions.

Logically, this change would be implemented in our country later. Despite the economic crisis of the seventies, it became important between 1979 and 1982, when most facilities were built. As from the municipal elections in 1979, democratic town councils launched many cultural initiatives and developed investment strategies to build a variety of facilities all over the Spanish geography. Apart from the existing poor facilities (cultural houses, cultural classrooms, libraries, assembly rooms, etc.), new facilities were included (and, in some cases, the previous facilities were renovated). Such new facilities were specific designs and ideas, thus establishing a heterogeneous and specific view, and in turn were considered as a source of democratic legitimacy of the new society. This was a process generally developed without models defining working methods, contents, and perspectives. There was a lack of a cultural policy model which was part of the emergence of facilities. Such lack of reference was like a lack of definition that increased many dynamics replacing the lack of cultural policies by simply summing projects, which are understood as isolated responses rather than as parts of an overall project. Intervention schemes were promoted to make up for lacks and to manage correctly rather than to invent a design of culture.

Whereas a very important event was taken place in Europe, the Centre Georges Pompidou was inaugurated in Paris in 1977, thus implying a change of the idea of museums and art centres and the establishment of a new model of facilities.

As from the eighties, there was an updating process in Spain to achieve such levels, and local administrations and the state, together with the autonomous regions, made efforts to achieve the following goals: building new cultural facilities to represent and visualise the internal and external modernity of the country, as well as dealing with the demands of those sectors yearning to personify the creation of the moment. These spectacular processes implied the constitution and operation of many and expensive artistic institutions. A very important fact is worth to be highlighted because it was a huge qualitative and quantitative change in the theatre practice of our country: *El Plan de Rehabilitación de Teatros Públicos y Auditorios* [The Public Theatre and Auditorium Restoration Plan]. This plan emerged from an agreement signed by the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Culture in 1985 to reduce the theatre, choreographic, and musical offer. On the one hand, the former was responsible for civil engineering: funds of the so-called 1% Cultural (an item of 1% sets aside for preserving and enriching the historical heritage) were used for this purpose. On the other hand, the latter was responsible for stage facilities. Also, autonomous regions and town councils were included in this plan. It was a state project as all public administrations were involved in the restoration of emblematic theatres in many cities. Such project was a huge investment and implied that town councils were aware of the need to manage theatres as one of the main elements for culturally activating cities. At first, the plan consisted in restoring more than fifty theatres, and many autonomous regions joint to it by developing their own plans, thus increasing the number of theatres. It was undoubtedly one of the most important plans carried out in culture, particularly in theatre: public theatres managed by professionals were modernised, thus leading to the circuit of public theatres, and the idea of theatre production and distribution was highly developed.

A new paradigm appeared in the nineties, the cultural economism, culture as a resource for economic objectives (in accordance with the dominant politics and economy). In Europe, the crisis of the welfare state influenced public cultural services and the democratising impetus of culture disappeared. Cultural policies were subordinated to other goals or strategies (tourism, urban development, regional development, creative industries, etc.), focusing on isolated actions about high impact staging as well as highlighting the exhibition of spectacular facilities, with the Guggenheim Museum being the major example (it was inaugurated in Bilbao in 1997).

There is nowadays an interesting discussion on the so-called facilities of third (or new) generation, a characteristic of the first decade of the 21st century. Such discussion encompasses from its insertion in the territory to regenerate cities and to establish the construction of citizenship to multidisciplinary approaches which generate dynamics focused not only on culture but also on new considerations of social and pedagogical aspects. In this sense, public institutions promoted new headquarters for creation: LABoral, Centre for Art and Industrial Creation (Spanish initials: CACI) in Gijón, Matadero in Madrid, or the International Centre for Contemporaneous Culture (Spanish initials: CICE) in San Sebastián. Cultural facilities are undoubtedly of great interest in recent years, and many news in mass media are focused on them, particularly on museums (according to data from the Ministry, there are almost a thousand and five hundred museums, collections, and art centres in Spain) and new cultural centres, thus competing at a high level with many offers of the show and leisure industry. There is also a new phenomenon of innovation and renovation: branches, the Centre Pompidou in Metz (France) in 2010, a project of aerial in Asia and perhaps in Málaga in 2015. The Louvre-Lens Museum (France) and the next inauguration of Louvre-Abu Dhabi were aimed in Europe to the same goals as the Guggenheim Museum. Culture is therefore included in the global market of culture entertainment and tourism in which there are distinguished brands as the mentioned above.

Cultural facilities are part of the territory and are accepted by their community, which is represented by allegorical places for social practices (meetings, exchanges, parties), and they operate as one of those practices assumed by the symbolic and territorial culture of the community. According to the form and the model of central or peripheral implementation of the facility and its more or less adaptation to the environment, there will be greater consequences than those functionally visible. Facilities, with all their factors (type of implementation, idea, design and way of operating), contribute to increase the social definition of the territory where they are located. Facilities are therefore progressively configured as instruments of strong impact, not only functional but also symbolic, on their social territory.

In general, cultural facilities in Spain have a lack of precision regarding the competition among the various administrations, and the legislative framework contributes to this aspect. In many cases, numerous cultural facilities have been implemented without a framework of specific management and regulation. In this sense, the structure of the public cultural system is fragmentary. Also, instruments of regulation appeared in some sectors (libraries, archives, museums, and heritage) both in the administration of the state and autonomous regions, and the *Guía de estándares de los equipamientos culturales en España* [Guide for standards of cultural facilities in Spain] was launched in 2003 and coordinated by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (Spanish initials, FEMP), an important landmark.

It is a reference book containing very useful information to provide people in charge with local administrations with the design, construction, and maintenance of ten types of cultural facilities: theatres, multipurpose rooms, museums, collections, heritage interpretation centres, archives with services, archives without services, art centres, cultural centres, and libraries. Authors' goals were to give a powerful instrument to determine functional and economic architectural parameters to be used as references.

Facilities are one of the main axes to intervene in cultural policies. In the mid of the nineties, strategic cultural plans begin to be generalised and the first maps and cultural facilities plans emerged. They are defined as basic instruments for the territorial cultural management and planning. Their main objectives are as follows: the equitable distribution of the facilities guaranteeing the equality of opportunities to access to culture, a modelling of facilities guaranteeing high quality standards, and the optimisation of the adaptation of facilities and resources to meet the most current ideas of culture and its practices, among others.

Based on the consideration that the cultural activity can be carried out in many spaces without a specific characteristic (such as squares, parks, and streets), a facility is generally a public (or partially) built space aimed at permanently creating, training, promoting, and disseminating culture. The building is situated on a certain territory with its characteristics (demography, social structure, socio-educational levels, traditions, etc.) and based on four essential elements:

- Citizens, also called audience, spectators, users.
- Artist and specialists, either individually or in group, who give ideas and contents.
- The objectives and goals making up the strategic lines of the criteria established by the cultural policy of the public administration in charge.

- Technicians who manage and administer the facility: professionals of the cultural management. They are responsible for the optimisation of resources, the maintenance, the development of tools to use policies, the attraction and satisfaction of citizens, and the contribution to frameworks for the work or artists and specialists.

Regarding the typologies, any classification implies a difficulty. Our proposal is to simplify them, although little shades are implied.

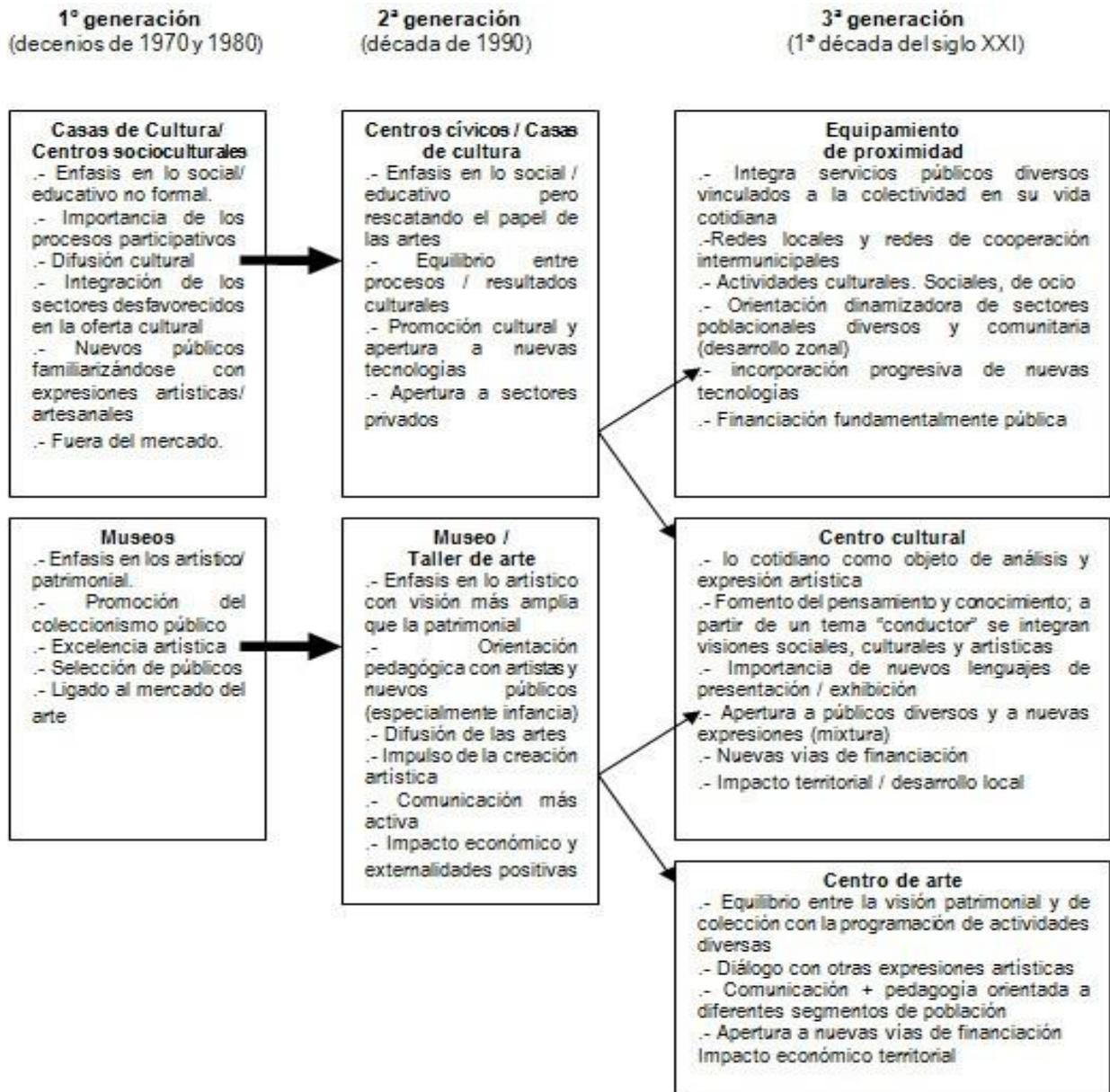
Typologies are grouped in two categories which are in turn divided into a specific typology:

**Formal and regulated spaces.** Spaces designed, built, and used only for culture because of one or more of their aspects.

- **a. Specialised facilities.**  
Those facilities addressed to a specific area of culture.
- Heritage
  - a.1. Libraries
  - a.2. Archives
  - a.3. Museums
- Performing and Musical Arts
  - a.4. Theatres
  - a.5. Concert halls
- Visual Arts
  - a.6. Exhibition Halls
- Facilities of New generation
  - a.6. New cultural centres and new culture factories.
- **b. Multipurpose and proximity facilities.**  
Those facilities designed from a more territorial approach, available for citizenship and located in a closer environment.

**Cultural use of non-cultural spaces.** Public spaces built for other goals, but cultural activities can be performed under certain circumstances and correctly adapted.

**Evolution of cultural facilities**



Source: Roberto Gómez de la Iglesia. 2007

**For Reflection**

- Very stimulating readings:
  - *El efecto Guggenheim. Del espacio basura al ornato* by Iñaki Esteban, Ed: Anagrama, 2007. It is about how the idea of museum has a new dimension regenerating the urban space and creating a new image of the city.
  - *Arquitectura milagrosa. Hazañas de los arquitectos estrellas de la España del Guggenheim* by Llatzer Moix, Ed: Anagrama, 2010. A widely chronicle structured by ten paradigmatic scenes in relation to the architecture-spectacle. Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was the first, and the others imitated it either in a good or a bad way (the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, the City of Culture in Santiago de Compostela, etc.).



- The number 0 of the magazine *G+C revista de gestión y cultura* (May-June 2009) is focused on the future of the cultural centres in Europe, and several opinions show various situations and trends.
- [Manito, Félix](#) (publisher) *Ciudades Creativas*, volume 3, new spaces for creativity: cultural centres of the 21st century (from page 123 to 159). It contains interesting contributions on the transformation of old industrial spaces into new spaces for the cultural production and their impacts on the urban and social environment. Ed: Fundación Kreanta, 2011.

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## Documents

1. **Gutiérrez, Rubén y Zuleta, Silvia** (*Atlas de infraestructuras culturales de España*, Fundación Autor, 2009).
2. **Plan de equipamientos culturales de Cataluña** (2010-2020), Departamento de Cultura, Medios de comunicación, Generalitat de Catalunya.
3. **Peña, Ángeles; Ben, Luis; Gómez, Ana; Zouak, Mendi; del Álamo, Enrique; González, Antonio Javier** (*Cartografía cultural, equipamientos de Cádiz y Tetuán. Metodología de elaboración*, Conserjería de Cultura Junta de Andalucía, 2007).

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**Los nuevos centros culturales en Europa.** Roberto Gómez de la Iglesia (ed.). Vitoria-Gasteiz: Grupo Xabide, 2007. 348 pages. ISBN 978-84-935693-0-3.

**ORTEGA NUERE, Cristina.** *Observatorios culturales: creación de mapas de infraestructuras y eventos*. Fernando Vicario (prol.). [Barcelona]: Ariel, 2010. 283 pages. ISBN 978-84-344-8290-6.

**TEIXEIRA COELHO, José.** *Diccionario crítico de política cultural: cultura e imaginario*. Ángeles Godínez (trad.). Barcelona: Gedisa, 2009. 368 pages. ISBN: 978-84-9784-249-5.

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**ZALLO ELGUEZABAL, Ramón.** *Estructuras de la comunicación y de la cultura: políticas para la era digital*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2011. 414 pages. ISBN 978-84-9784-665-3.