

## **The Cultural Policy of Spain After the End of The Dictatorship**

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### **Abstract**

In this study, we address and analyze how Spain has been able to carry out the process of transition to democracy. More particular, we aim to identify the role of culture in order to ensure the implementation of the Constitution which provided for the division of Spain into 17 Autonomous Communities. However, since the 1960s the country had experienced a much more modern and "open" reality than the oppressive regime that prevailed for a long time. This new reality, which was gradually taking shape, was due to both the economic development and the existence of a relative social balance. However, rapid economic growth was not enough to solve the problems that the country was facing. A democratic political system which would recognize a state of the multinational nature and composition was necessary. Thus, the Constitution of 1978 was introduced, which referred to the right of self-government of the historical nationalities and regions of Spain, while maintaining sovereignty over the indivisible Spanish nation. In this context, we address how Spain eventually created a new image of the country both at a european and at an international level. We present an analysis on the role of culture in the transition to democracy, the institutional model of organizing cultural policy in a democratic Spain, as well as the cultural policy of the governments that followed the fall of the dictatorial regime.

The study is based on bibliographical research and analysis of data collected from archival sources in order to draw useful conclusions.

**Keywords:** Culture, Cultural policy, cultural strategy, Democracy, Soft power.

## 1. Introduction

Spain, after Franco's death in 1975, should enter a trajectory of democratic change socially and institutionally. From the 1960s, despite the oppressive regime that prevailed for a long time in Spain, the country experienced a much more modern and "open" reality, which was due to economic development and the existence of a relative social balance. Spanish society was now mature and ready for both the forthcoming democratic change and the subsequent European integration. However, rapid economic growth has not been enough to solve the problems of territorial imbalance, nor the problems of basic infrastructure in the fields of transport, education, research and development.

## 2. The Cultural Sector in the Years of Transition

The political process of the democratic transition was based on the search for a constitutional consensus, which would overcome the division caused by the civil war. The political change represented the definitive establishment of a democratic system, which recognized the multinational configuration of the state. The 1978 Constitution referred to the right of self-government of the historical nationalities and regions of Spain, while maintaining sovereignty over the indivisible Spanish nation. This "contradiction" allowed political consensus and peaceful coexistence in the transition phase. Spain was divided into 17 autonomous communities responsible for all levels of education, culture, health, social welfare, urban and rural development, and in some cases policy legislation. The political autonomy of the autonomous communities was similar to that of the federal states, but without a formal federal structure. Spain's system of autonomous communities has been described as "the most decentralized state system". In this way, the feelings of historical nationalities were given a way out, where the preservation of their identity and culture was of paramount importance. The Spanish state now had a new territorial configuration which defined three basic administrative levels with broad political autonomy - the central administration, the autonomous communities and the local administration.<sup>1</sup>

The constitution, already in its preamble, referred to the will to protect all citizens of the state, Spanish and non-Spanish, so that they could freely develop their culture and traditions, language and institutions. The right of all citizens to culture was established as a basic principle and it was explicitly stated that public authorities had a responsibility to promote and protect access to it. In the same way, in order to ensure the cultural neutrality of the state, ideological freedom and freedom of expression and creation were established.<sup>2</sup>

The constitution established the framework for the division of basic responsibilities in cultural matters between the autonomous communities and the central administration (Articles 148 and 149). The central government had the responsibility of safeguarding the historical and

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<sup>1</sup> Constitución Española, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Constitución Española, 2011.

cultural heritage from its export and looting, as well as enacting legislation on intellectual property and the operation of the press, radio and television. Also, the central administration had to take care of the facilitation and encouragement of the cultural communication between the autonomous communities, as well as to guarantee the existence of cultural services. All autonomous communities included the cultural sector in their exclusive responsibilities, with the exception of some communities that shared cultural responsibilities with provincial councils, such as in the Basque Country or the Canary Islands. Museums, libraries, handicrafts, conservatories, etc. were under the responsibility of the communities, with the exception of a few museums, libraries and state archives that remained in state hands, although their management could be exercised by the regional administrations. With regard to local government, the law on local government provided powers to municipalities in matters of cultural heritage, as well as in matters of cultural activities and cultural facilities.<sup>3</sup>

Of particular interest is the institutional model of the organization of cultural policy in democratic Spain, as well as the cultural policy of the governments that followed, after the fall of the dictatorial regime. During the process of political transition, Adolfo Suarez, after his victory in the general elections, created the Ministry of Culture in 1977, with the aim of the smooth integration of the organizations of the previous regime in the new democratic structure. At the same time, the monopoly of radio information was abolished, during which the coordination with the National Radio was obligatory, the obligatory broadcasting of NODO (Noticiarios y Documentales) in all cinematic screenings was abolished, the radio sector was liberated, the radio stations and newspapers were closed or sold of the National Movement and the creation of the radio and television organization RTVE (Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española, S.A.).<sup>4</sup> Also, an approach was attempted in the artistic fields and in the branches of intellectuals in general and a new cycle was started in order to protect the degraded historical-artistic heritage. After 1982, and the rise of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), the cultural goals focused on the preservation and promotion of the heritage, the general renovation of the artistic equipment with the creation of new theaters and meeting rooms, the support of the creation by introducing new laws on intellectual property, the support of cinema, theater and music. At the same time, attempts were made to reorganize and reduce the responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture, especially since most of the responsibilities had been transferred to the Autonomous Communities. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), despite its ambitious cultural agenda, has failed to bring about a completely different atmosphere, as it has in other areas since the Socialist Party came to power.<sup>5</sup> In 1996, with the formation of the new government of the People's Party, the new Ministry of Culture was replaced by the new

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<sup>3</sup> Maciá M. (1993), 449-456.

<sup>4</sup> García Jiménez J. (1980), Rueda Lafond J. C. (2005), 45-71.

<sup>5</sup> More information on the goals and aspirations of the Ministry of Culture's program during the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) can be found in the 1995 Charter of Cultural Needs (Mapa de necesidades en infraestructuras y operadores culturales de 1995).

Ministry of Education and Culture. His cultural policy did not differ much from that of the last socialist period, with his role being non-intrusive and more liberal. The new government maintained the organizational structure and the policy of protection and dissemination of the Spanish historical heritage that it had inherited from the previous administration. Continued the policy of protection of major museums, archives and national libraries, the promotion and dissemination of the performing arts and music, as well as the protection of intellectual property. It also supported cooperation with private and non-cultural initiatives that strengthened government action. In the field of cultural industry, the Spanish audiovisual production and publishing companies were strengthened, while at the same time the existing protectionism was reduced.<sup>6</sup>

At the legislative level, in the last twenty years Spain has radically amended its legislation in the field of culture. It further developed the basic cultural rights enshrined in the constitution and adopted a set of structural laws for the cultural sectors, such as the 1985 Spanish Cultural Heritage Act (Ley del Patrimonio Histórico Español 1985)<sup>7</sup> or the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Cinema of 1994 (Ley de protección y fomento de la cinematografía 1994).<sup>8</sup> Also, a large number of European directives incorporated into the Spanish legal system. Government agencies involved in the exercise of cultural policy are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Development. The cultural presence abroad is managed by the General Direction for International Cultural Relations, the Spanish Organization for International Cooperation and the Cervantes Institute, which is also responsible for disseminating the Spanish language and culture in non-Spanish-speaking countries.<sup>9</sup>

Of particular interest is the process of transferring responsibilities to cultural issues in the autonomous communities, as well as the development of cultural policy by them. With the approval of the Statute of Autonomy, the various communities began to receive powers and resources from the central administration. The period between 1981 and 1985 was completed the major part of the transfer process. The cultural development of each community depended directly on the will and the available resources for its cultural action. Each autonomous community incorporated in its own way the cultural responsibilities transferred to it. Areas where national sentiment was strong, such as Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country, but also Andalusia and Extremadura, set up advisory bodies which dealt exclusively with cultural matters. The rest of the communities integrated the cultural part in the educational advisory bodies. In general, the development of the regional administration and the proximity that developed with civil society and its requirements led to the development of specific programs and regulatory frameworks, but also to the development of a greater capacity for public intervention. It is worth noting that for the region of Catalonia, as well as for other communities

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<sup>6</sup> Arostegui R., Arturo J. (2005), 111-124.

<sup>7</sup> Ley 16/1985 del Patrimonio Histórico Español, 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Ley 17/1994 de Protección y Fomento de la Cinematografía, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Alegre Ávila J. M. (1992) and (1994).

with a strong national feeling, cultural action was considered of strategic importance, since together with educational policy and the media, they were the main tool for the development of their own identity.<sup>10</sup>

The first democratic municipal governments enthusiastically accepted their new responsibilities, "betting" on culture considering the road to recovery as a great celebration. After the end of the enthusiasm of the first moment, the need for trained people in the cultural management became apparent, that would contribute in a substantial way to the rationalization of the local cultural action. The lack of cultural facilities immediately became apparent, something that led the municipalities to create investments, with the financial support and resources of the autonomous communities and the central administration. Infrastructures were built that would contribute to the dissemination of culture, such as museums, libraries, theaters, but also socio-cultural facilities. From an institutional point of view, the municipalities had a wide autonomy for the development of their cultural activity. The great development of local cultural planning presented in the early 1990s was based on the effectiveness of the policies implemented, as well as on the approach to the citizen himself and his activism. In the future, new projects were gradually reduced due to the reduction of available resources from the large initial investment activity, which created a wider discussion about the effectiveness and efficiency of public action and the forms of cooperation developed with the private and non-profit sector.<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between civil society and municipal action has been a difficult issue since the beginning of the political transition. Initially, many people were trained to adapt to the new circumstances and while until then the cultural action they developed was aimed at expressing their opposition to the current regime, at this time they were called to play an active role in local institutional policy. Thus, many cultural associations lost capable and dynamic members and with them the ability to develop their action under new circumstances, with democratic compositions, with more resources, with a new vision and with popular legitimacy. The relationship between the local government and the cultural associations did not function harmoniously and there were strong contradictions in issues related to the use of the new public infrastructure, in the defence of the cooperative autonomy, etc. In the early 1990s, on the occasion of the budget crisis and the legitimacy of public institutions, a general appeal was made to civil society for the management of collective interests. After the end of the 1980s, political leaders realized the need to integrate cultural policy into the development programs for cities. In this way, were created local development strategic plans focused on cultural action. In some cases these projects were supported by European programs aimed at supporting urban reconstruction in historic centers (Barcelona, Cadiz), while in others they were based on the political will to promote the city by utilizing its cultural assets.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.boe.es/biblioteca\\_juridica/codigos/codigo.php?id=17&modo=2&nota=0&tab=2](https://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/codigos/codigo.php?id=17&modo=2&nota=0&tab=2).

<sup>11</sup> Font T., Velasco F., Ortega L. (2006), Márquez Cruz G. (2010), 37-66, Ortega L. (2011), 35-50.

<sup>12</sup> Goldsmith M., Newton K. (1997), 37-76.



Since the establishment of democratic institutions and during the 1980s, public budgets for the cultural sector had been steadily increasing every year. However, from 1992 onwards, after the Seville World's Fair and the Barcelona Olympics, and after Madrid became the European Capital of Culture and successfully supported its role, the resources available for cultural activities gradually began to dwindle. It was becoming increasingly difficult to support investment in culture as a key development strategy. Consolidated cultural expenditure from all Spanish public administrations, excluding expenditure on language normalization, which was particularly important in the Autonomous Communities with their own language, amounted to 333.298 million of pesetas in 1993. Local governments contributed the largest percentage of resources with 54.2% of the total. Resources from the autonomous communities followed with a percentage of 26.2% of the total and finally the central administration contributed a percentage of 19.6% of the total.

*Table 1: Public Expenditure on Culture by Level of Government (1993)*

	Millions of pes.	%	pes./Resident	% Culture / Total
Central Administration	65.481	19,6	1.685	0,25
Autonomous Communities	87.359	26,2	2.255	1,38
Provincial / Island Councils	31.004	9,3	1.022	2,31
Municipalities > 50.000 inhabitants	67.961	20,4	3.403	3,72
Municipalities < 50.000 inhabitants	81.493	24,5	4.312	5,6
Total	333.298	100	8,574	

*Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995)*

It is worth noting that the percentage invested in the field of culture of each geographical area varied significantly. The provincial communities (Basque Country and Navarre), the Canary Islands, Aragon and Catalonia invested more in culture, not including the cost of the language normalization. At the opposite side was the Community of Madrid, which as a capital, was covered by large state investments. In order to allocate public expenditure on culture, a division was made into five major areas. The general services, cultural heritage, libraries and archives, museums and cultural promotion. Half of the resources were allocated for cultural promotion, while in the case of municipalities the percentage of resources available for this purpose was even higher. In the field of cultural promotion, many activities were included in small municipalities were particularly funded, due to their importance to the local community, both cultural festivals and various other popular cultural events.

Table 2: Public Expenditure on Culture by Sectors and Levels of Government (1993)

	General Services	Cultural Heritage	Libraries and Archives	Museums	Cultural Promotion	Total
Central Administration	7,2	22,9	13,9	18,9	37,1	100
Autonomous Communities	11,4	24,4	14	10,5	39,7	100
Provincial / Island Councils	7,5	9,5	13,4	17,1	52,5	100
Municipalities > 50.000 inhabitants	8,9	4,6	8,7	9,8	67,9	100
Municipalities < 50.000 inhabitants	5,8	6,7	9,8	3,7	74	100

Source: Ministerio de Cultura (1995)

After the first years of the democratic transition, the common goal of all Spanish public administrations that followed was the need to cover the great deficit left by the dictatorship in cultural infrastructure. Gradually, began the renovation of the old theaters began, the restoration of the artistic and architectural heritage, the construction of libraries and multifunctional cultural centers. But this generalized construction fever was based on cultural standards of the past and without taking into account the real needs of the new era and the possible priority of other cultural investments more appropriate to the demands of the citizens at the end of the 20th century. Most of the resources went to some emblematic constructions, while the remaining few resources were required to cover all other cultural sectors. In general, cultural offer was defined by the cultural industries and promoted by the media.<sup>13</sup>

The creation of infrastructure for the development and dissemination of artistic creation led to the professionalization of artistic life, as well as to a slow and small increase in cultural demand, which, however, remained below the European average due to the particular lack of resources available for artistic dissemination and creation. The crisis of the welfare state and the reduction of public resources for the cultural sector disappointed the artistic circles that kept high expectations. Under the pressure of artistic circles and following the neoliberal model of development, the promotion of cultural consumption became a government priority in the following years. In order to reduce the effects of the budget freeze on the cultural sector and to share responsibility with other actors (artists, professionals, associations, companies), the practice of outsourcing as well as external cooperation with the non-profit sector was encouraged. Also an effort was made to upgrade the government's cultural activity by introducing targets, the fulfillment of which was an indicator of efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Uría González J. (2003), 77-108.

<sup>14</sup> Ley 30/1994 de Fundaciones y de Incentivos Fiscales a la Participación Privada en Actividades de Interés General, (1994).

As the public sector ceases to be the direct provider of cultural services, it is necessary to redefine its intervention in promoting and inspecting private action that receives public resources. However, in order to promote cultural production and consumption and to maintain the general interest, what was needed was to study and understand how private forms of production and distribution of cultural goods and services work. The public sector had not strategically studied the forms of promotion and cooperation with the private sector, for-profit or not, except for the provision by the private sector of a general assistance to the national cultural production. There was no balanced policy for the strategy of supporting cultural actors, resulting in unequal treatment either through subsidies or through tax treatment. In general, competition with the private sector for advertising revenue and public preference in order to influence public opinion was predominant.<sup>15</sup>

One of the issues that arose from the implementation of the new way of conducting cultural policy in Spain was the lack of communication and coordination of cultural policies developed in the regions. Although the constitution stipulated that the state should facilitate communication between all regions in order to coordinate the cultural policies they developed, in reality this did not happen. The lack of real political will, the lack of platforms that would support the development of dialogue and lead to the building of consensus, as well as the great impact of each region's identity on its cultural policy, did not help at all to develop the cultural action of individual communities. Also, no cultural or educational policies were used to address the issue of ignorance of Spanish cultural and linguistic diversity.<sup>16</sup>

The cultural policy of the central government was focused on providing resources to Madrid's large cultural dissemination infrastructure, which did not favor cultural exchange or the real democratization of cultural activity in Spain. In addition to this situation, there was a lack of a system of networks that would supply the activities and projects of the central cultural institutions, as well as other emerging projects throughout the country.<sup>17</sup>

The presence of Spanish culture abroad and public intervention in support of it, focused mainly on two areas of high geostrategic importance to Spanish interests, Latin America and Europe. In the first case, the existence of a common language, but also the existence of multiple historical, social and cultural ties, facilitated the relationship between them. Latin America was for Spain a major market for cultural sector, but also a strategic advantage on the road to globalization. The preservation and cultivation of cultural ties therefore had a political and economic dimension. Democratic Spain managed to modernize and expand its relations, which were monopolized by the state during the Francos regime through the Institute of Spanish Culture. However, it failed to completely abandon its traditional Eurocentric vision. Spain's cultural relationship with Europe developed due to Spain's political and economic integration

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<sup>15</sup> Jiménez Blanco M. D. (1989).

<sup>16</sup> Rodríguez M. A., Rius U. J. (2012), 9-14.

<sup>17</sup> Rubio Arostegui J. A. (2012), 205-234.



into the European Union. The fact that it shares a similar level of development, the core values of Western culture, the existence of an increasingly integrated market, as well as geographical proximity, facilitate contact and interaction with European cultures.<sup>18</sup>

The Spanish cultural presence in the rest of the world was more limited. A stable relationship was only in the United States, in some former Spanish colonies or in the nearby Maghreb. Particularly important for the Spanish cultural presence around the world was the establishment of the Cervantes Institute, created by Spain to promote and teach the Spanish language, as well as to spread Spanish and Latin American culture.

However, the gradual penetration of the foreign element into Spanish culture was something that worried the Spanish conservative authorities. During the Frankish regime a strict regime of censorship and control of cultural production prevailed. The dissemination of foreign cultural production was limited and appeared only on screen, in compulsory compilation and for reasons of support of the national industry. With the democratization and entry of Spain into the European Community, the cultural lobby convinced the government of the need to maintain support for domestic European production and the need to distance from the interests associated with North American industry. The great challenge of social, cultural and educational policy, at local or regional level, was how to manage the penetration of world culture and at the same time the development of creativity and local cultural identities.

Spain's accession to the European Community represented integration into the developed world. Thus, there was no opposition to Spain's accession to the European Community, nor any fear of possible loss of sovereignty or cultural identity as a result of the whole accession process. During the socialist governance, Spain's Community policy was largely in line with the rest of the Mediterranean, especially in matters relating to the protection of cultural heritage, the European audiovisual industry or intellectual property issues. During the governance of the People's Party, the traditional position of protectionism was slightly modified and an attempt was made to adopt a more neoliberal discourse, especially in the audiovisual sector, but without finally achieving the realization of this effort. However, what is particularly important is that with its integration into the European environment, Spain became an active member of European cultural programs, received new resources aimed at cultural development, but also at the promotion of its great cultural wealth, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage.

### 3. Conclusion

After the formal end of the dictatorship in 1975, with the death of the dictator, nothing could stop the advent of democracy in Spain. The political process of democratic transition helped to eliminate the divisions that prevailed during the civil war. The forthcoming democratic system of government, which recognized the multinational configuration of the

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<sup>18</sup> Fazio H. (2000), Torreblanca J. I., Piedrafita S., Steinberg F. (2007), 153-166.

Spanish state, represented the final change. The 1978 Constitution secured sovereignty over the Spanish indivisible state, while at the same time defending the right of self-government of all 17 Autonomous Communities into which Spain was divided. The Autonomous Communities were responsible, inter alia, for the cultural sector and could retain their distinctive features, identity and culture. The role of culture in the transition to democracy was essential. Each Autonomous Community had the opportunity to maintain its cultural characteristics to some extent and to implement its own cultural policy, which was a successful choice to alleviate the oppressed national feeling of Autonomous Communities with separatist tendencies. Thus, during the period of transition to democracy, the field of culture had become a field of primary importance for Spain. This was a solid foundation for the country's future accession to the European Union and the even more significant upgrade of the cultural sector.

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