Temporal Frameworks and Individual Cultural Action: Proposals Resulting from Constructivist Research on Theaters and Museums

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ABSTRACT. The present article aims at exploring how cultural activities, which bear social and historical meaning, fit into the individual’s temporal framework. Temporal frameworks are articulated around two axes: synchrony/diachrony and instant/duration. This article identifies four types of time frames which support individual action. These four time frames are: cyclical present, modern time frame, fragmented time frame and "in rhythm" time frame. Two constructivist studies have been conducted on the topic of cultural activities involving theater and museums. They exemplify the relationship between the individual's temporal framework, his attitude with regard to culture and the type of cultural action he develops.

KEY WORDS. Temporal frameworks, cultural activities, constructivist research.

Introduction

Time has no objective reality independently from mankind. Fundamental questions around time have hardly changed since Saint Augustine. Whether it is apprehended as circular, linear, segmented, oriented towards the future, be it an instant or a longer period of time, time is not a notion that is easy to grasp. Nonetheless, people, as well as organizations, can benefit from the coexistence of these different temporal frameworks, provided they understand the rules of the game. The different disciplines that have studied time have done so on the basis of rigid epistemological choices and from specific viewpoints (Bergadà 1988, 1989). In fact, for researchers, time is representative of not only their own field of investigation, but also the type of human relations they observe as well as of the modes of analysis they apply. Thus, time is differently understood by a historian, an economist, a psychologist or an ethnologist. However, in our own discipline – management –, time cannot be reduced to a specific schema. For researchers in this field, time is thought of as either an objective or subjective quantity (Szalai, 1972), a performance measure or a management tool (Stalk and Hout, 1992). Time can also be considered as a backdrop which structures social and human relations as well as
exchanges (Bergadaà 1990) or as an item which clarifies the link between individuals and their environment (Usunier and Valette-Florence, 1994; Urien 1998).

This article aims at exploring how cultural activities – which bear social and historical meaning (Geertz, 1973; Bourdieu, 1979) – fit into the individual’s temporal framework. Time is not considered here as a variable, but as a framework for action. This article presents four temporal frameworks which coexist in contemporary society. They are: the “cyclical present”, the “modern” time frame, the “fragmented” time frame and the “in rhythm” time frame (Bergadaà, 2006). These frameworks are the basis for individual adjustment strategies. In the field investigations presented here, the first questions that needed consideration were therefore: How do individuals identify themselves with either one of the temporal frameworks? What impact do temporal frameworks have on their cultural activities? The data used to answer these questions originates from two previous research projects: one about theater (Bergadaà, Nyeck, 1995), the other one about museums (Bergadaà, 2006). Theater and museums are understood here as cultural expressions which are simultaneously a product of the mind and experiences shared with other people. In fact, socialization mechanisms – be they parental or environmental – contribute to the meaning individuals assign to their social activities (Kelly, 1983, 1986). These two types of cultural activities are located at the crossroads between social offer and individual motivation. According to the original theories developed by constructivism, individuals develop a personal logic reflecting proposals that coexist in our societies (Mead, 1934; Garfinkel, 1967, 1988; Schütz, 1967, 1970; Goffman, 1973, etc.).

The constructivist paradigm is opposed to that of critical sociology which states that social facts guide individual choices (Durkeim, 1933). The method applied in the present study is inspired by ethnomethodology and symbolic anthropology (McCraiker, 1988; Solomon 1983; Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf, 1988). This article first analyzes the meaning individuals attribute to the social and cultural environment, before reconctructing their network of cognitive meaning (Leiter, 1980). Then, it presents the four main profiles which have emerged from our analyses of theater and museums. In conclusion, it discusses future research perspectives as well as recommendations in terms of
methodology, temporal organization and its links with culture as conceived and experienced by individuals.

**Social Time Frames**

The different types of societies which have overlapped in the course of the 20th century have always been differentiated or even pitted against each other; hence, the distinction between “traditional” societies (also known as “archaic”, “family” or “rural” societies, depending on the authors), “modern” (or western) societies, “postmodern” societies and, finally, “emerging” (or hypermodern) societies. In actual fact, time is a social construct mirroring the link between individuals and their environment. This is why capitalistic societies have integrated individual time in their education programs (Adams, 1990, 1998). Individuals embrace a diachronic perspective (Lewin 1935, 1938) whereby motivation stems from past experiences and is projected onto future plans (Lopata, 1986; Nydegger, 1986). Modernity can only fit into this diachronic perspective where projects implemented in the present are achieved in the future thanks to resources from the past. At the other end of the spectrum are societies which apprehend time synchronically. In these societies, individuals live in an eternal present in which past and future are grasped independently from any principle of temporal causality (Hall, 1976, 1984). This definition of social times articulates around the opposition diachrony/synchrony which constitutes a first axis.

A second axis of analysis emerges from the conjunction of instantaneity and duration (Braudel, 1958). For Bergson (1992, 2003a, 2003b), the key feature of human action is duration. Bergson writes: “If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, nilly-willy, wait until the sugar melts” (1911, p.9). Duration consists in a series of interconnected moments experienced in a purely subjective manner and is no longer a mathematical concept outside the individual: It coincides with a state of consciousness. This assumption has been followed by Schütz in his demonstration about the relationship between individual time and social time (Muzzetto, 2006). However, in agreement with Bachelard (1932), Bergson recognizes that, at another plane of consciousness, individuals can segment duration in discreet moments or a series of specific instants. The
use of clocks is prompted by this temporality. In this case, according to Bergson, time supports pragmatic action. This leads Bachelard to conclude that duration does not exist since all we have are a series of instants in succession.

To sum up the different temporal frameworks, the synchrony/diachrony and instant/duration dichotomies are placed on the two axes of the chart below.

• The first temporal framework is also the oldest. It is based on the idea of a “cyclical present” in which traditional activities occur at regular intervals. In this framework, the cycle of nature and the human life cycle determine each other naturally. Nowadays, this framework is mainly found in third-world countries and regions with strong rural traditions. However, it is also present in places where traditional trades are still carried out. In this case, the present is characterized by customs inherited from the past, which will endure in the future. Activities are occupations which are allocated as much time as necessary for their completion. In this framework, with tradition playing a pivotal role, people tend to be craftsmen: They create objects with intrinsic quality. When buyers and suppliers meet, they establish a relationship based on trust. The amount of time devoted to the transaction between them is appraised in terms of their geographic and cultural proximity. Their mutual recognition of the global quality of the exchanged service is the token of the success of their exchanges. In our societies, this type of framework is a cornerstone in the luxury goods industry, for instance. Thus, nowadays, Swiss high-quality watches are still assembled in isolated valleys they way they were three centuries ago and the way they certainly will be in the future.

• The traditional society of the past gave way to modernity heralded in by the beginning of the 20th century. The “modern” temporal framework coincides with the manufacturing boom in developed countries and the golden age of modern engineering. In this framework, time is functionalized. It is conceptualized as definitely oriented towards the future: Progress must come as quickly as possible. With this idea that time is linear, logical and rational, lack of progress for a company implies its disappearance.
The future is a consequence of past and present causes; it is also what makes it possible for people to plan and make decisions about their future. Individuals are able to apprehend their actions in their duration, and, by doing so, to allocate the time units necessary to achieving their goals. This framework – in which the notion of progress is overbearing – has been analyzed and dissected systematically. In this context, the title of a publication by the Boston Consulting Group is significant: “Competing Against Time: How Time-Based Competition is Reshaping Global Markets” (Stalk and Hout, 1990). Progress results from the optimization of one’s action and leads buyers and suppliers to opt for the absolute and objective arbitration of transaction prices: The one who manages to impose his price ends up being the winner. This framework is typical of western economies, although time may be regarded differently in different sectors. While the framework of a buyer in the fashion industry may be four to five weeks, that of someone buying body parts in the automotive industry may be several months, or even up to a year. Nonetheless, the attempt at optimizing time is, in both cases, the basis of the transaction.

- The “fragmented” temporal framework marks a clear break with the modern, linear and future-oriented notion of time that prevails in the western world. The new framework corresponds to split actions which are not apprehended in their ephemeral character rather than in their duration. It has broken with its predecessor and makes fun of it (see, for instance, Andy Warhol’s artworks). This framework is that of the present or even the instant. In this context, behaviors often become unpredictable. The sense of urgency is the preferred mode of reference for actors who can change from one task to the next very quickly. This kind of behavior has been the topic of many studies (Aubert, 1999, 2003; Laïdi, 1999; etc.). The only organizations adapted to this temporal framework are the ones with the ability to cope in the event of a crisis: Their responsiveness makes it possible for them to iron out difficult situations. In this framework, it is pointless to think in terms of “loyalty”, be it that of customers, partners or co-workers, since actors look for the optimal move in a given situation. This time frame has naturally led to the boom in e-commerce as buyers want to get rid of intermediaries as much as possible and purchase things off the Internet in one mouse click. The paragon for this trend is eBay, which has become the leading e-commerce
platform with 181 million visitors in 2005 (11 million for France only, according to Médiamétrie).

- A fourth temporal framework – the “in rhythm” framework – emerged by contrast with the fragmented framework, which, in turn, had appeared in opposition to its predecessor. In this framework, a diachronic perspective leads actors to seek stability. Its main characteristic is the ability of people and organizations to promote their will to stay firmly implanted on their respective market. The search for stability becomes the organization’s motto. Stability finds its roots in the ability of people to conceive duration even in times of emergencies or crises. This enables people to be responsive in case of failure and remain as flexible as possible. This framework, which has been dubbed “hypermodern” by some, reconciles both the urgency imposed by the context and the temporal framework chosen by individual actors (Lipovetsky and Sébastien, 2004). Since globalization has now become an established fact, this framework is characterized by the colliding of different variable temporalities. Globalization has led to the coexistence of numerous reference time frames, with both global and local time frames intertwined. Temporal rhythms also vary according to situations and the same person may modify his/her time scheme depending on the type of activities he/she engages in.

**Individual Action and Cultural Dimension**

Constructivist authors have posited that individual actors are able to develop knowledge about social reality based on their relationships to objects and other people (Schütz, 1962, 1964). Because they create this reality, human beings are also capable of verbalizing it, both for themselves and for others (Garfinkel, 1967, 1988). This basic principle of ethnomethodology has led me to investigate the following question: How do individuals express their actions in one of the frameworks defined above? To answer this question, the three following aspects have to be taken into account: What meaning do individuals give to the temporal framework of their own actions? How did they develop the meaning they ascribe to cultural activities? And, finally, how is this culture implemented? This article draws on data from two previous research projects. Three
components of the reality which individuals construct to lead their lives will be considered. They are summed up below.

• One of the key assumptions of ethnomethodology is that social individuals have internalized *time frames* in which they locate their actions. In a previous fact-based analysis on the role of time in individuals’ actions, I had previously found that individuals think of themselves as either actors or reactors with regard to temporal frameworks (Bergadaà, 1990). All the respondents in the study worked in similar contexts and came from a fairly homogenous background. The difference was, nonetheless, that the reactors among them determined their actions by their present and immediate future; they could also express what they wanted to do or achieve, because planning was reassuring to them. In contrast, actors did not want to express their plan of action; they nevertheless knew what they wanted to be or become; their actions were determined simultaneously by their past, present and future, with no marked preference for the present. This article shows how these deep-set attitudes make it possible to determine in which of the four temporal frameworks people locate their actions.

• In addition, according to Schütz, people’s common sense consists of a *stock of knowledge at hand* for one person in a given society. When transposed to the field of culture, this is in line with what Bourdieu defined as legitimate culture (1966). According to him, direct access to legitimate culture is due to either objective appropriation (e.g., purchase of a work of art or a ticket to a show) or subjective appropriation (e.g., visiting an art gallery or a museum). He posits that, by choosing whether or not to conform to a cultural norm, people express their position and their belonging to a specific social group. Furthermore, they appropriate a competence granting them a form of symbolic power which is accepted by others. A previous study on the topic of culture (Bergadaà et al. 1993) had highlighted the existence of four different cultural profiles. For the first group, culture seemed to be a chore; it was deemed difficult; members of the group tended to reject anything that did not automatically fit into their immediate environment. A second group, comprising those who wanted to improve themselves intellectually so as to shine in company, accepted the idea of learning cultural facts. A third group was attracted by the social and relational dimension of culture. Finally, a small group of
people accepted to be challenged and became real independent creators. This article presents the cultural profiles of our respondents as they appeared in the answers they gave.

• Finally, a cultural activity can be a *practice of constructing social reality*, i.e., a subjective and objective means for people to communicate with each other and their surrounding world (Tinley, Kass 1979). I previously conducted a study involving people’s attitudes with regard to theater – a universal kind of cultural expression ever since Antiquity. In France, theater takes on a profound cultural meaning through which individuals identify themselves (Bourdieu, 1979). Thus, in the Middle Ages, the population actively participated in the representations given by itinerant companies. Theater remains a multi-faceted activity: form of expression, leisure activity, status symbol, pedagogical tool, cultural object, etc. (Kelly 1986). The offer in terms of museums has also been studied previously. For a long time, museums were considered as repositories of the official culture and were only visited by a respectful audience. Today, many museums – most notably arts museums – still do not acknowledge the public as a central actor in their project (Jacobi, 1997). However, a shift in paradigm has occurred and offers an alternative to this positivistic approach; hence, the emergence of museums which deal with important social themes for instance (e.g., ecology, primitive art, etc.). They are an interface between society and the scientific community. Their legitimacy comes from the fact that they have to answer the public’s demands (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). This article establishes the meaning people give to the two activities.

**The field researches**

I conducted two different studies at a ten-year interval in two different countries (France and Switzerland). The two different samples are now analyzed in light of the temporal framework exposed above, on the one hand, and, on the other, the importance of the frameworks in people’s cultural activities. The first analysis of cultural activities had to do with culture in general and people’s attitudes towards theater (Bergadaà, Nyeck, 1995). Fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with people who went to the theater
more than five times a year. The second study, which was carried out in Switzerland, involved people who were going to the museum, either on their own initiative or as part of a package tour (Bergadaà, 2006). Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted. The results presented here only pertain to those respondents who go to the museum at least five times a year. The constructivist paradigm\(^1\) informed these two studies. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1988), it allows for a relativistic ontology with several coexisting realities, a subjective epistemology and naturalistic inquiries in the field. The data observed during the three successive analyses reflects the respondents’ spontaneous opinions to the questions in the interview guide (annex 1).

a) The data from the two sets of interviews underwent a second analysis. The content of the transcribed interviews was analyzed with a view to identify temporal frameworks. The aim was to recognize an underlying organizational pattern common to these individuals. In order to do so, the position developed by Garfinkel (1967, 1988) was adopted: It recommends opting for an ethical stance, located outside the research object under study. According to him, social structures are produced locally and supported by the individual’s everyday experiences (they are not forced upon him/her by an outside social order, as was suggested by Durkheim). To highlight the link between the components of this framework and short-term factors, the data was subjected to a descriptive analysis of lexis. The aim was to focus on the most significant topics for the respondents’ temporal positioning with regard to the two axes previously defined, i.e., instant/duration and synchrony/diachrony.

b) Once the respondents were identified as having opted for either one of the four frameworks, elements relating to the meaning they give to culture were analyzed. The aim was to underline its structuring dimension to then understand the link between temporal frameworks, on the one hand, and cultural attitudes developed by individuals, on the other. The idea was to discover how, as time goes by, a given person develops a personal notion of society, knowledge acquisition and culture. An interpretative

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\(^1\) These two research projects have led to two articles which were published in the best francophone periodical in our field. They have thus undergone a formal double-blind reviewing process. Therefore, there will be no detailed description of either the methodology or the results inasmuch as they do not pertain to the temporal and cultural organization of individuals, which is the subject of the present article.
paradigm inspired by phenomenology was used in order to induce the specific reasons expressed by the respondents (Denzin, 1989, 1992). To understand the phenomenon under study “from inside”, an emic posture was chosen, whereby understanding of the personal motivations guiding people in their actions is achieved by means of empathy (Bergadaà, 1990; Hirschman, 1992).

c) The purpose of the third analysis with these two research projects was to determine the different individual profiles with regard to theater and museums. The concepts that have been developed are thus context-specific, on the one hand, and reflexive, on the other: Cultural activities acquire meaning in the light of this personal conceptualization. For this third analysis, the actor’s viewpoint was adopted in order to understand the subjective meaning he gives to his actions (Schütz, 1967, 1970). In this third stage, the aim was to read the transcribed interviews and group them according to cultural practices. This was done by applying an iterative method to all elements that the respondents had spontaneously come forward with.

Results

The open questions designed for the interview (annex 1) yielded very interesting results which confirm Garfinkel’s idea according to which individuals have the ability to structure their time and culture frame. The respondents speak openly about themselves and the way they construct their lives through cultural elements. They do so regardless of their educational or social background. In addition, they can speak unambiguously about the way they envisage theater and museums. People have good reasons to be what they are, as will be shown below. With regard to temporal frameworks, the profiles below have been developed by considering the following factors: a) attitude with regard to time; b) attitude with regard to fate; c) plans; d) complexity of the world; e) perceived risk. Cultural profiles have been induced by analyzing the following elements: a) attitude with regard to culture; b) origin of culture; c) knowledge content acquisition; d) relationship to others. The following factors have been used to identify cultural action: a) type of theatrical form and relation sought; b) type of museum form and relation sought; c) relationship to others.
“Cyclical Present” and “Reactor” Profile

In the two research projects, the first analysis of temporal framework isolated people who locate their actions in a “cyclical present”. In this category, individuals identify themselves as living mainly in the present because they have certain fears as to the future. Nonetheless, their past is still very vivid in their minds. They accept their fate and avoid planning anything. They sometimes have dreams, but their plans remain rather vague. They think today’s world is a little bit crazy and worry about social issues in the future. Thus, they remain very suspicious of any new piece of information and reject anything that seems “strange” to them as that could challenge their heuristic schemas. They react to events that occur but do not anticipate surprises in their lives. Therefore, these people look for high degrees of convergence with known situations.

In the two research projects, the second analysis, which focused on cultural actions, identified people who are “reactors” with regard to cultural activities. Generally speaking, reactors consider that one has to “possess a certain amount of knowledge”. They think it is up to the parents to pass on the will to acquire culture. For these people, education is somewhat of an obligation, except if it is presented as a game. Their relationships to others are characterized by the pursuit of security and stability. Solidarity in their immediate reference group (family, friends, neighbors) is important and is at the heart of their attachment to the culture of their family and the group they belong to.

The third analysis showed that reactors like going to the theater to see entertaining comedies. They look forward to unwinding; the atmosphere of leisure, pleasure and emotions is what they are looking for. In the study about museums, this profile was found with people who have a liking for big local events. Museums are living memories; they constitute an opportunity for communion in which it is important that children participate. Since reactors do not particularly want to learn or cultivate their minds, they usually go to museums as part of a package tour. At the end of the day, the most important thing for them is to be able to say “I have seen it all” and not to feel frustrated.
at still having a lot of things left to see. Guided tours reassure them since they reinforce the feeling of togetherness with the other people participating in this collective event. During the tour, reactors feel the need to share their experiences with other people. The feeling of togetherness depends essentially on the guide’s ability to create an atmosphere conducive to interactions between the different group members. Timelessness is then a feature of this cultural experience. If the tour meets these expectations, it becomes a place where time stops and where the past, present and future converge.

“Modern Time” and “Organized Actors”

In the two research projects, the first analysis of temporal frameworks revealed people who locate their actions in the “modern” framework. These individuals say they live in the immediate future to avoid thinking about their past with nostalgia. They think the future can be favorable to them provided they manage to plan realistically and fulfill their engagements. They do not believe in chance and hardly believe in destiny: They think they more or less control what happens to them. They find today’s world complex, but this does not bother them, as long as they have a clearly defined line of conduct. Nonetheless, they try avoiding surprises by not putting themselves in risky situations.

The second analysis of cultural action identified some respondents as “organized actors” with regard to cultural activities on offer. These individuals consider culture as part of their intellectual and social duties. Culture is the result of a certain amount of knowledge one should acquire regularly in order to remain in line with one’s background. They accept new pieces of information as long as they come to supplement their knowledge and, at the same time, are in agreement with their opinions and attitudes. Despite the fact that they envisage cultural choices as a matter of taste, to them, knowledge is mainly represented ritualistically in institutional and social contexts. If a piece of information makes them uneasy, they tend to reject it. If news about the environment is unpleasant, they avoid thinking about it. In addition, they like being part of groups who share the same set of beliefs. In actual fact, these groups of social belonging (family, friends) give them input as to what they should know.
The third analysis showed that, because it emphasizes social recognition, theater makes it possible for organized actors to acquire substantial culture. They like to spend some of their free time for intellectual or artistic activities, as long as new content is easily assimilated. In the study about museums, people with this profile tended to regard museums, with their symbolic representation, as safeguards of the cultural heritage. Arts museums are the ones that naturally spring to their minds. Because culture is the cornerstone of civilization, going to the museum seems of paramount importance to them. Their need to learn is fostered by the trust they place in the people in charge of museums. What they like in a museum are its beautiful setting, its intelligent design, its crystal clear visit and the fact that it is nicely done up. The use of signs, written comments and historical indications is also a strong point for them. Invitations to come visit “well packaged” temporary exhibitions are enticing to them. They particularly like “cultural” guided tours. Visits to museums are often described as “pleasant moments to share with one’s family”.

**“Fragmented” Time Frame and “Intuitive Actors”**

In the two studies, the first analysis of temporal framework identified respondents who locate their action in a “fragmented” time frame. These respondents enjoy their life. For this reason, they live in the present which they find exciting. They are not nostalgic. They like to think about their future, however, they live intensely all moments of their lives. In actual fact, they like fragmenting their present in order to engage in multiple activities and discover new things. In the short-term, they have various kinds of plans, but they do not locate them in any given planning scheme which would prevent them from spontaneously seizing new opportunities. They do not really believe in destiny. They think they can become what they are able to become. They are self-confident and very spontaneous. They find the world complex because of its syncretism of sports, money, the media, politics, etc. However, they feel human beings can adapt to anything and that complexity can also lead to enrichment.
The second analysis of cultural action highlighted some respondents as “intuitive actors”. In terms of culture, they constantly try having a better understanding of society, challenging and improving themselves. Cultural activities have to be opportunities for them to interact socially, discover new countries, etc. They try improving their personality and broadening their ideas by acquiring new knowledge. They accept the idea that new information may dramatically change the way they think. They like diversity and their knowledge has to reflect this for them to be able to achieve improvement from a personal but most importantly from a human point of view, since they like meeting new people. Society is a constant entertainment for them: It is alive, interesting and they are actors improvising a part.

The third analysis carried out was aimed at determining the kind of theatrical show intuitive actors like to go to. The show must meet their hedonistic need for diversity: Leisure is perceived as a means to dream and entertain oneself. The experiential relation must therefore be rich and varied. They like to go for a stroll, stop in front an original show, musicians or actors trying on their costumes. The study about museums also showed that the involvement of intuitive actors stems from their liking for big events. They are happy with the idea that visitors may get a feel for the objects on display as they were 100 or 1000 years before, since history becomes “alive”. They also appropriate museums through the souvenirs they can buy and take home with them. That way, they can revive their memories of the museum at home. They are reluctant to take guided tours: They are afraid the guide will misunderstand their needs and background knowledge. Very often, their taste for social events and their curiosity has developed in the bosom of their families. Museums also give them the opportunity to share their impressions with their relatives and friends, since the network of social interactions go well beyond the duration of the visit.

“In rhythm” Temporal Framework and “Creators”

The first analysis of time frames concluded that there existed a set of respondents for whom actions occur “in rhythm”. These respondents feel that present events constitute a process of constant evolution and development. The present is made up of both the
past and the future which manifest themselves constantly. They would like to live in the future, but the future worries them. They perceive the world as being complex and distressing; however, they do not fear directly for themselves. They mention the risk for the youth and their future in a world prone to extremism. As far as they are concerned, they think of themselves as intuitive; they believe in chance and say they are able to seize opportunities as they come along.

The second analysis of cultural actions identified respondents with a “creator” profile. These individuals think of culture as the main means for one’s own personal and spiritual improvement. They have a good understanding of their centers of interest. They say they look for anything that can challenge previous cognitive perspectives. Intellectual challenges motivate them as they open up new intellectual worlds. They look for the meaning of any new piece of information and tend to interpret it immediately and personally. They do not trust knowledge fads and short-term social movements or events. They think of knowledge as a multidisciplinary and flexible whole which they are happy to grasp in a personal way. Their choices are guided by their intellectual and emotional sense of satisfaction. Creators like the idea of “personal improvement” and, therefore, favor an intimate notion of culture where knowledge is self-acquired and comes to feed their intellectual and personal evolution. Other individuals seem to play a negligible part in their acquisition of culture.

The third analysis established the fact that, for creators, theater is an activity whose main purpose is intellectual improvement. It fosters their personal development and generates new stimulations. These respondents are excited go to the museum, get acquainted with artists and their works, or go to a specific event. Museums thus quench their thirst for discovery. They think that understanding in detail the artworks they are seeing is a way of perceiving the passing of time and understanding the “relay” being passed on from one generation to the next. They rarely go on guided tours. What they miss in museums are employees who could give museum-goers relevant cultural information and with whom they could engage in a one-on-one relation. Creators are curious and sensitive – two characteristics which are often valued by their direct environment. A visit to the museum ought to be shared. Thus, they talk about the visit
and their impressions with their friends and relatives. However, social interactions are limited and few since the beauty of a museum comes from the “inside”, which enables creators to be at one with a work of art or a message.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This research was informed by the constructivist paradigm. The questions formulated in the guide to understand the respondents’ temporal frameworks had been elaborated in the course of several different studies. The qualitative methodology applied was inspired by ethnomethodology. The method used to analyze the data met three different objectives in the two different projects conducted at a ten-year interval. The main advantage of this method is that it was possible to observe the concept under study, beyond metaphors and individual mental representations. The results are very encouraging. The coexistence of four different temporal frameworks was established and each one was associated with a specific individual profile with regard to the cultural offer. The table below presents a synthesis of the results.

| Insert here table 1 |

When conducting qualitative research, researchers are never totally active or passive, since they are part of the research design (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is therefore of utmost importance to check for potential interpretation biases (Kirk and Miller, 1986). This was tested at the end of the analyses by two independent researchers who did not know anything of the results and were not specialists in the field under study. They were asked to categorize the interview syntheses in the four profiles established previously. In addition, the external validity of the model, i.e., its robustness, was also tested, since the same four temporal frameworks and cultural profiles were found in the two research projects conducted at a ten-year interval in two different countries. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the proposal of the present article is reliable and can serve as the starting point to new research on products and services in the culture
and leisure industry. It could also be applied to other fields, such as the search for specific profiles with regard to health, food, etc.

Whereas it is usual to oppose time perspectives which have overlapped in the course of the 20th century, the present research suggests that there is no single temporal framework for people who share the same geographic and cultural space. On the contrary, individuals are able to choose their own temporal framework. In the 21st century, people living in western countries are privileged for that matter since they can live, choose and act in the time frame that is best suited to our purposes. Thus, provided people have the necessary intellectual and financial means to choose, they determine the temporal framework that corresponds best to their actions. If need be, they can even change according to their life circumstances. It is also possible that one same person may locate his/her actions in one time frame or another, according to the circumstances. For instance, the same temporal framework may not correspond to both work and vacations.

The size of the samples has not made it possible to determine the position of people who tend to favor one framework over another. The answer to this kind of question would require a paradigmatic shift to conduct a quantitative study. In addition, the external validity of the present research is further limited because of the structure of the sample. Indeed, all respondents had the same cultural background since there is no significant difference between the two neighboring countries where the studies were conducted. Other studies would have to be undertaken on other population groups to test that there exists no other dimension to the present research object. Such studies could test if differences in religious or cultural backgrounds account for different attitudes with regard to temporal frameworks or profiles. Since the four profiles identified reflect different aspects of our society, it may be of interest to know if people in, say, African or Asian countries conceive time and culture in way that reflects specific aspects of their own societies.

To understand how these temporal frameworks intervene in the cultural positioning of people, the object “culture” was considered simultaneously as the result of the official theater and museum culture and as that of the production of culture by the audience at the time of the encounter with the cultural offer (Rowe et al., 2002; Bergadaà and
Nyeck, 1995; Gainer, 1995). The research shows the respective influence of socialization and formal education (as perceived by the respondents) on the meaning given to culture. The role of the socio-cultural context, which grants more or less importance to socialization and education in constructing cultural meaning, can be categorized along those four categories. Depending on individuals, this construction is influenced primarily by family, friends, the environment or the individual’s formal education. This result is in line with the results found elsewhere on the development of symbolic consumption (Belk, Bahn and Mayer 1982; Kelly, 1986). The present research seems to confirm proposals by other researchers in the constructivist paradigm: The meaning assigned to theater and museums is as much the result of the visitor’s creation as the result of the cultural service provider’s offer, if not more so.

Far from being innocent or naive, individuals participate in the production of the social reality that surrounds them. With increasing levels of schooling, education and standards of living, a new type of consumer has emerged: the “entrepreneur consumer”. This new type of customer is part and parcel of the goods and services manufacturing process (Ratneshwar and Mick, 2005). This social actor learns how to live with new trade and communication paradigms. Thanks to easier access to information, his power of action increases constantly (Ratneshwar and Mick, 2005). Individuals thus produce the meaning they ascribe to their own “product consumption” (Moorman and Rust, 1999).

If one considers that individuals produce well-being, hence, personal and interpersonal value, the proposal of a new kind of relational trade (Gummesson, 1993, 1994) should be considered from an ontological point of view, and not only in terms of the company/customer relations. The point is to discover reasons which determine whether or not an individual wishes to engage in a relation with a company offering cultural services. The four profiles identified in the two research projects show different degrees of openness with regard to cultural relations. Yet, when it comes to cultural offer, our field opts for management and marketing practices simply derived from the practices of volume retailers, in a great majority of cases (Andreasen and Belk, 1980). My suggestion is to consider the dimensions which determine people’s relationship to cultural activities so that organizations in charge of culture may be able to define a rich relationship from a
human point of view. In the end, culture can only be construed as a co-creation process which involves everybody and excludes no one.
References


Bergadaà M. (2006) ‘Une stratégie de recherche constructiviste appliquée aux services culturels : l’exemple du Musée Olympique, de son concept et de ses profils types de visiteurs’, *Recherche et Applications en Marketing* 21 (4)


Figure 1: Temporal frameworks and their positions

![Diagram showing temporal frameworks and their positions](image)

- **Instant**
- **Diachrony**
- **Synchrony**
- **Duration**

- **Fragmented time frame**
- **Modern time frame**
- **Cyclical present**
- **"in rhythm" time frame**
Annex 1: Interview guide

In this kind of research, the questions in the guide are hardly ever asked as they stand written on paper. They are used to prod the respondents to answer spontaneously. While interviewers stick to their meaning, they may decide modify them according the respondent’s personality. Empathy in the field is a feature of this kind of research. The questions are not necessarily asked in a given order; they usually follow the course of the respondent’s answers. The interviewer’s encouragements (“yes…”; “mhm..”; etc.) also participate in the informative quality of the answers given.

A – Guide determining the respondent’s temporal positioning:
1. Do you mainly live in the past, present or future?
3. Do you find today’s world complex?
4. Do you find that: distressing? positive? ...
5. If you had a magic wand, what would be the first thing you would change? (control)

B – Guide determining the respondent’s cultural positioning:
1. To you, what does culture stand for?
2. As a child, what function did culture have in your family?
3. When you learn new pieces of information, what happens?
4. What kind of cultural activities do you engage in now?
5. Do you work in the field of leisure or culture? (control)

C – Guide to determine theater and museum activities:
1. To you, what does theater stand for?
2. How did you develop this taste for the theater?
3. Are there any plays you wouldn’t go to?
4. When you go to the theater, do you consider yourself a spectator or an actor?
5. To you, what do museums stand for?
6. How did you develop this taste for museums?
7. Are there any museums you wouldn’t go to?
8. When you go to a museum, do you consider yourself a spectator or an actor?
Table 1: Temporal frameworks and their characteristics in western societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal framework</th>
<th>“Cyclical present”</th>
<th>“Modern” time frame</th>
<th>“Fragmented” time frame</th>
<th>“in rhythm” time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time zone</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Short- and medium-term future</td>
<td>Immediate present</td>
<td>Three zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>Due do fate</td>
<td>Due to oneself</td>
<td>Due to chance and oneself</td>
<td>Due to oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Complicated and disquieting world</td>
<td>Complicated and disturbing world</td>
<td>Exciting and simple world</td>
<td>Simple world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural profiles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural profiles</th>
<th>Reactors</th>
<th>Rational actors</th>
<th>Intuitive actors</th>
<th>Creators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Imposed amount of knowledge</td>
<td>Intellectual enrichment; socially encouraged behavior</td>
<td>Eclecticism; personal development</td>
<td>Personal development as a challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Entertainment; pleasure derived from big events</td>
<td>Acquisition of substantial culture</td>
<td>Entertainment; dream; strong experiential relation</td>
<td>Incentive for intellectual enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums</td>
<td>Obligation; constraint</td>
<td>Safeguard of culture</td>
<td>Propensity to big events</td>
<td>Emotion; answers an urge to discover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>